

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### THE NATIONAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF ETHIOPIA

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The social goal of "health for all by the year 2000" (HF N2000) through primary health care (PHC) is adopted by the nations of the world with full recognition and acceptance of the close interrelationship between health and socio-economic development since, as has often been said, health leads to, and also depends upon improved conditions of life. This was reiterated at Alma-Ata when it was declared that, as an integral part of socio-economic development, good health for the whole population cannot be attained through the efforts of the health sector alone but requires coordination with the activities of other sectors (1). Such coordination is particularly important in developing countries where resources are scarce. Hence, the need for the establishment of national health development networks (NHDN) where: 1. "health development" is defined as "the process which enables the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being of the individual, the family and the community to be improved, in the broader framework of socio-economic development" (2) and 2. NHDN is defined as "an institutional arrangement whereby a country can mobilize, organize, coordinate and strengthen its own technical capacities to meet the challenge of achieving "health for all by the year 2000" (2). The Ethiopian NHDN or NHDN-E is expected to serve such a purpose through the coordinated efforts of the relevant government agencies.

Although the idea of an NHDN, like the idea of PHC, has been with us for quite sometime it was at the end of 1981 that the NHDN-E was established by the National Revolutionary Development Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council (NRDC/CPSC) with the active support of the Ministry of Health as well as the cooperation of the Commission for Higher Education, Addis Ababa University and other related agencies. As a technical body with a supportive, advisory role to decision-makers in health and related areas, it provides multi-sectoral technical support to policy makers in such areas as health planning and implementation, health manpower development, the development of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, the promotion of "Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries", and other relevant activities for the achievement of health for all through primary health care (4).

In order to be able to carry out such a role, the NHDN-E is organized in the form of the NHDN-E Committee, which is responsible to the NRDC/CPSC, and the NHDN-E Nucleus (secretariat) located in the Department of Community Health of the Faculty of Medicine, Addis Ababa University and responsible to the NHDN-E Committee. The NHDN-E Committee is at present composed of 18 institutions (see inside cover of this Journal) which meet at regular intervals, to discuss and decide on the activities, the budget, and other affairs of the NHDN-E (4). NHDN-E enjoys the full support of such international organizations as WHO and UNICEF.

So far, activities carried out by NHDN-E, in collaboration with other relevant agencies, include seminars, workshops and symposia on such important topics as occupational health in Ethiopia the role of hospitals in PHC; and, the training of trainers for PHC. Also, in addition to the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development, the NHDN-E publishes an update PHC to promote exchange of inter-country experiences in PHC and cooperates with the Ministry of Health in the publication of a health newsletter.

## **REFERENCES**

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4. National Health Development Network. Ethiopia. 1982. Functions, Rules and Regulations.