

## **Iraq pressing ahead with health sector reform modernization programme**

15 January 2011 - Amman, As part of the implementation of the Iraq public sector modernization programme (I-PSM) phase one, the Federal Ministry of Health of Iraq and the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan region, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), conducted a five-day meeting from 11 to 15 of January 2011 in Amman, Jordan, to discuss and finalize the development of study tools and design for the health system functions and performance, review the health system in Iraq and renew the Government's commitment to the health sector modernization programme.

The meeting was attended by key policy-makers and senior officials from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Higher Education, the Iraqi Parliament, international academia, international WHO staff and consultants and representatives from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF. Also present were core members of the I-PSM programme Ministerial Advisory Committee, as well as members of the Iraqi national study team.

H.E Dr Salih Al-Hasnawi, the former Minister of Health of Iraq and member of Parliament, stressed the importance of this initiative for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and improving the health status of every Iraqi and said " the Government of Iraq is working in collaboration with WHO to modernize the public sector by adopting a public sector reform strategy for all of government and launching its implementation in three key sectors, health, education and water supply and sanitation, aiming at improving the quality and delivery of services at all levels, including at governorate and district levels".

During the discussion H.E Dr Tahir Hourami, Minister of Health, Kurdistan region, Iraq, emphasized the importance of capacity-building activities embedded within this initiative and argued that the assistance of UN agencies and other partners to boost the progress in achieving the stated objectives would be crucial to the success of this initiative.

The first three days of the meeting were devoted to an interactive workshop to discuss and finalize the development of study tools and design for the functional review and the health system performance assessment exercises, as well as to discuss and agree on implementation modalities and a timeline for the two studies. During the last two days of the meeting, a policy seminar on health systems strengthening and leadership in Iraq was held with the objectives of renewing the Ministry's commitment to the health sector modernization programme, allowing an exchange and sharing of global, regional and national experiences in health sector reform and to solicit the visions and expectations of key policy-makers with regard to the reform process.

During the opening of the policy seminar, H.E. Dr Al-Hasnawi said, “The needs and vision of Iraqi citizens are crucial for this important endeavour and the modernization programme needs to take this into consideration.” He further reaffirmed the strong political support and commitment to this process.

Dr Syed Jaffer Hussain, WHO Representative for Iraq, further reiterated the strong leadership and ownership of this process by the Government and reaffirmed that WHO and other partners would provide whatever support, knowledge and tools required by the national study team to effectively carry out the challenging task ahead. He also highlighted the fact that this exercise was an important opportunity for the Government of Iraq to use health as an entry point within the larger framework of development in the country.

It should be noted that this meeting is a follow-up to the recommendations of the first I-PSM meeting that took place in Beirut on October 2010. And it is part of a US\$ 55 million four-year programme funded by the United Nations Development Group-Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG-ITF), using various contributions from donors including the European Union.

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## **The I-PSM programme in Iraq**

The I-PSM programme is a US\$ 55 million four-year United Nations interagency comprehensive programme funded by the United Nations Development Group-Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG-ITF) with the aim of supporting the Government of Iraq in its efforts to modernize its public sector with the ultimate goal of improving governance and quality and delivery of services at all levels, including at governorate and district levels.

The programme comprises two discrete phases: Phase 1 (Year 1) focuses on conducting sector evidence-based diagnostics and outlining options and practical steps for the formulation of a national public sector modernization programme based on the findings. The two major diagnostic exercises planned for Iraq are a functional review of the health sector and the health system performance assessment. The second phase (Years 2 to 4) will focus largely on sectoral reforms to strengthen service delivery through a well-articulated reform and modernization road map. In line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), three sectors have been selected to serve as pilots given the readiness and work that has been done by the

line ministries (health, education and water and sanitation) involved in these sectors.

Following this, the Iraqi Ministry of Health has established the I-PSM programme Ministerial Advisory Committee who will work with WHO and other partners to facilitate and guide the modernization process. In addition, the Ministry of Health has also nominated a national study team that will work under the umbrella of the Committee to undertake the functional review and health system performance assessment exercises.

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