

MEDIA RELEASE

Government of Sudan and World Health Organization strengthen health activities in building capacity and advancing services

Khartoum, 26 February 2007 - The Government of Sudan and the World Health Organization (WHO) join forces to reiterate its commitment in advancing health services and building the capacity of the health sector in the country. The commitment is sealed by high level Government and WHO officials during the visit of Dr Hussein Abdel-Razzak Al Gezairy, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), in Khartoum on 23-27 February 2007.

Sudan's Minister of Health Dr Tabita Botros Shokai and WHO RD Dr Al Gezairy held several meetings with various health actors; and visited the sites to look into the status of major health activities initiated by the government and WHO. WHO's Regional Director was accompanied by the Director of the Health Protection and Promotion Dr Haifa Madi, the Regional Advisor for Child and Adolescence Health Dr Suzane Farhoud, and the WHO Representative in Sudan Dr Mohamed Abdurrah.

One of the major activities focused on during the visit is strengthening the implementation of the integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI). IMCI is designed to address the causes of the mortality and morbidity of children below five years old. The IMCI strategy combines improved management of childhood illness with aspects of nutrition, immunization, and other important factors influencing child health, including maternal health. IMCI also proved to be one of the most potent health strategies in a humanitarian crisis.

Since its endorsement in 1996, the IMCI programme has been expanded to cover 1,344 health centres, clinics, and hospitals operating in 62 localities in 14 states.

This year, FMoH, WHO and the field health partners will continue to undertake the joint collaboration to provide access to quality management and services to the most vulnerable groups; strengthen the IMCI trainings; develop adequate human resources to ensure sustainable actions for IMCI implementation; and implement communication/ information activities to improve family knowledge and skills that will ensure prompt home care of children.

Blindness remains to be a major problem in Sudan. On Sunday, FMoH and WHO signed a project cooperation agreement between the Albassar International Foundation, the organization responsible for operating the Makkah Eye Complex in Khartoum. The agreement states that Albassar International Foundation will rehabilitate the eye clinic in Southern Sudan and will train local health care workers. The agreement also stipulates that 5,000 free surgery will be done all over the country, provide free eye glasses to school children and free lid surgery to senior citizens. WHO will provide the needed surgery kits and equipment for the eye clinic in Southern Sudan.

Another health aspect looked into during the WHO RD visit is the continuous improvement of core competencies of health care workers in the country. To accomplish the crucial task, the FMoH with partners from professional communities and in cooperation with WHO worked to put together the foundation for an effective continuous professional development (CPD) system in Sudan. The CPD Centre is capable of maintaining and improving up-to-date competencies of its qualified health workers. FMoH and WHO have been working closely to develop the annual workplan which will highlight the competencies needed for health personnel particularly those working in the remote areas.