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AFRICAN UNITY
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ORGANISATION DE
L'UNITE AFRICAINE
CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF HEALTH
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Mbabane, SWAZILAND CAMH/Z (Iv)
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GEN'ERAL ON ACTIVITIES
IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH FOR THE PERIOD
MAY 1989 - APRIL 1991
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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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ACTIVITIES OF THE OAU HEADQUARTERS

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INTERNAL AT THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

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1 The OAU Staff Clinic

Health promotive, preventive and curative services to
the OAU Staff Members, African Diplomats accredited to
Ethiopia and the Organization of African Unity (OAU),
Delegates attending OAU Conferences and Liberation Fighters
recognized by the OAU.

The services the Staff Clinic offers are gradually expanding
as staff increase, more Embassies opened and more equipment
purchased. There are now two full time Physicians in
the Clinic and recruitment of a third one is underway.

A. well qualified Pharmacist assumed duties recently, and
an Assistant X-Ray Technician and an Assistant Laboratory
Technician were recruited in 1990. Accessories for the
X-ray and Ultrasound machines were purchased as well as
some laboratory equipment. A wider range of investigations
can therefore be done in the Clinic than before.

Immunization against five of the six major childhood
diseases (poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis,
measles) has been done in the Staff Clinic for a long
time. BCG is normally given to babies in hospitals soon
after birth. Recently, the Immunization Programme was
expanded to include meningococcal meningitis (Type A e
C), combined mumps, measles and rubella, Hepatitis B and
Anti-rabies vaccines.

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If and when necessary, health education is done, mostly on individual basis. Mothers are encouraged to have babies immunized and to improve personal hygiene so as to prevent diarrhoeal diseases in children. Bigger children and adults are educated about AIDS and other sexually transmittal diseases.

2 Preparation of the 4th Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Health - See report of the First Preparatory Meeting.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES TO AFRICAN MEMBER STATES

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This is mostly through coordination and collaboration with Member States and International Health Agencies, namely, WHO, UNICEF, World Bank, FAO, UNDP, ILO, IAEA, UNIDO, ICRC, League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, CAMAS and ALERT. Although the OAU is not an executing agency, it offers the needed publicity to health decisions and recommendations taken by the collaborating executing Organizations.

Issues that have been of special interest during the period 1989 - 1991 are as follows:

1 Child Survival, Protection and Development, UNICEF Children's World Summit, Convention of the Rights of African Children.

In the 1980s decade, programmes aimed at improving health and survival of children were the few successful programmes on the African continent. Specific examples were the EPI (Expanded Programme on Immunization) and control of Communicable Diseases (diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory tract infections and malaria).

Maternal and Child Health with special emphasis on Immunization of the African child was a sub-item on the agenda of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.

The death toll and morbidity from tuberculosis, neonatal tetanus, measles, whooping cough, poliomyelitis have decreased dramatically with the EPI. This has had the secondary effect of decreasing incidences of serious respiratory infections. In the same way, increased use of oral rehydration solutions has decreased death from dehydration in diarrhoeal diseases. In spite of this, the goal of Universal Immunization by 1990 was not effected even though the levels of coverage were high: 330 - 60%; DPT3 - 45% Poli03 - 45%; Measles - 43%; TT3 (for pregnant mothers) - 23%.

A resolution was passed by the Council of Ministers, with the following targets:-

- to have universal coverage for the six EPI target diseases
- train and use nationals in EPI Programmes
- further encourage community participation
- eliminate neonatal tetanus by the year 1995
- eradicate poliomyelitis by the year 2000
- encourage research at national and regional levels.

For the Charter on the Rights of the African Child, the Children's World-Summit, see Follow up of Resolutions and Decisions of OAU Organs.

Recognizing that the mother is the bearer, rearer and primary educator of children, and yet is underprivileged in society, the OAU opened a Wbmen's Unit to dealewith issues on women in developmeht. Its main concern is to increase literacy of women, encourage women to participate in decision-making and safe motherhood (improve obstetric methods, provide adequate and balanced diets especially during pregnancy and lactation and prevent teenage pregnancies).

Prevention and Control of AIDS in Africa:

"In many countries, sexually transmitted infections have become a public health nightmare" says Hiroshi Nakujima MD, Ph.D, Director-General of WHO. These diseases have reached epidemic proportions globally, Africa being no exception. They threaten life in many ways and if sexual behaviour is not modified and effective new prevention and control programmes are not implemented immediately, the resulting disease and mortality rates will be even more staggering.

The OAU has actively participated in. many medical and sociological conferences on AIDS. Well aware that prevalence rates and sociological problems related to AIDS will continue to escalate in the 19903, this topic was a sub-item on the agenda of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and a resolution was passed recommending continuation of dissemination of information and education of the public and research towards finding a cure or caccine against this disease.

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A staff member of the OAU and Consultant Pathologist has spent a year in USA doing research and putting AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE". The OAU has done a few clinical trials on KEMRON, low dose natural interferon elpha for sublingual administration and came up with prqwising though inconclusive results.

Special Health Fund for Africa/African Health Policy Studies.

On our Continent, Health Development Programwwg were frustrated by several constraints partioaiarly n the 19805. The most prominent were:-

(i) Global economic recession

(ii) Heavy external debt burden in many African Member States

(iii) Massive population increase in African countries

(iv) The new plight of AIDS affecting the young productive population making worse the already bad disease burden

(v) Disasters eg. armed conflicts, civil strifes, drought, famine,x floods, earthquakes, disease epidemics ect.

Programmes have therefore, depended mostly on external donations which have preset priorities and the sustainability of which is unreliable. In order to rectify this:

The World Health Organization (Africa Region) and the Organization of African Unity launched the SHFA (Special Health Fund for Africa) during the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers - for details, see Implementation of Resolutions of the 3rd Conference of African Ministers of Health - See annex.

(b) Consultations were done by World Bank to get views of African policy-makers on how to improve the health of Africans with the aim of preparing a policy for Governments to identify more effective health policies and the World Bank for encouraging and supporting desirable reforms in the health sector. For details, see Agenda Item - African Health Policy (World Bank and Health System Financing).

Cooperation between OAU and UN System in the Area of Economic and Social Integration.

The health sector has to share responsibilities with other Ministries and government agencies and the private sector to ensure health of every individual, family or community. Active participation of everyone is vital and is only possible through decentralisation of health care. Health being an indispensable foundation for development, budgetary provisions for health care delivery have to be made available through promotion of health care financing. National programmes that emphasize training, improving nutrition general and medical education have to be made.

It is to be recalled that pursuant to the UN General Assembly Resolution A/44/17 on cooperation between the OAU and the UN, a meeting between the OAU and UN Systems was held under the OAU's auspices, in April 1990, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting which was attended by most of the OAU and UN Specialised Agencies focused on selected priority areas for joint action during 1990/1991.

At the end of the meeting, the OAU and UN agreed on a set of recommendations on a joint programme package for cooperation in such areas as:

- (a) economic cooperation and integration with special focus on the African Economic Community;
- (b) food and agriculture;
- (c) refugees, displaced persons and emergencies;
- (d) environment and development;
- (e) human resources development; and
- (f) science and technology.

As a follow-up mechanism, it was agreed that each UN Specialised Agency will work out with the relevant OAU Department/Specialised Agency the operational modalities for the implementation of the Programme. Preparations are currently underway for a mid-term review of the implementation of the OAU/UN Joint Programme, review which will be conducted during the next meeting between OAU and UN Systems in April 1991.

The Regional Director of WHO/AFRO had undertaken to push on with the implementation of the Declaration "Health as a base for Development" to attain the objective of "Health for all by the year 2000".

He also offered to lend in his contribution to strengthening the OAU Health Office and to the preparation of the Fourth Conference of African Ministers of Health.

1.2.5 The OAU/CAMAS Round Table Meeting on Health and Politics in Africa.

This meeting that took place in Maseru, Lesotho (18

- 19 September 1990) was organized with the financial and technical support of the OAU, WHO/AFRO and CAMAS, UNICEF participated actively in the deliberations. The meeting was initiated because the concerned parties realised that:

- Health, a pre-requisite for socio-economic development as decreed by the 1987 Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government so far has been a luxury of a few privileged Africans.

- The year 2000, the goal set for everyone to have access to health services is fast approaching and yet, Africa is no where near achieving this goal.

- There is clear evidence that in many African countries, politics have played a negative role in economic, health and social development.

- Since health is a prerequisite for socio-economic development and peace a prerequisite for health, it was deemed imprative that the health sector plays an active role in implementation of the Declaration of the 1990 Assembly of the Heads of State and Government on "The political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world".

After analysing the situation and identifying politics related constraints that have hampered health development, the meeting came up with recommendations to Member Medical Associations and concerned International Organizations on how to overcome the problems. The main recommendations were on ensuring democratisation with public accountability; encouraging public participation in planning and implementation of health policies; prioritisation in fund allocation, attention and encouragement of local and external investment and prevention of brain-drain (of medical manpower), A full report of this meeting is distributed. (See doc. CAMH/t (iv) adol.2)

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PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL MEETINGS,
SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS OF THE HEALTH AGENCIES

Annual World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland
in May 1989 and 1990.

The OAU General Secretariat participated in the two
Sessions of the WHO World Assembly during the Biennium
1989-1990. At both Sessions the Secretary-General was
represented by the Assistant Secretary-General in charge
of ESCAS who delivered messages on behalf of the
Secretary-General.

The representative of the Secretary-General addressed
the Assembly on the work of the OAU and perspectives
for health in Africa in the 1990s. At the meeting of
the African Group, the OAU urged Member States in arrears
to pay their contributions to WHO. Member States were
reminded to submit progress reports on implementation
of the Resolutions of the 1989 OAU 3rd Conference of
African Ministers of Health.

The main theme of the 43rd WHA was "INVEST IN PEOPLE'S
HEALTH" and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe gave
an address on "HEALTH DEVELOPMENT AND THE EFFECT OF
WORLD ECONOMY ON THE HEALTH STATUS OF PEOPLE IN THE
COMING DECADE". He stressed that health is a fundamental
human right of all peoples, existing inequalities in
health status of peoples are politically destabilising,
socially, immoral and economically counter productive;
there is need for a new international economic order
and that better quality of life contributes to world
peace. He urged Member States to review their performance

during the 1980s and correct mistakes and step up efforts to reach the goal of HFA. by the year 2000. He added that intervention is also necessary for other issues like hunger and poverty, rampant population growth, environmental degradation and agricultural neglect.

1.3.2 (3) & (b) The WHO Executive Board and Regional Committee Meetings

(3) The General Secretariat was represented at the Executive Board meeting by the OAU Permanent Representative in Geneva.

(b) As regards the meetings of the WHO Regional Committee, the OAU attended the 36th Session of WHO/EMRO held in Iran from 30 September to 4 October 1989. The Director of the Department of ESCAS represented the Secretary-General and delivered a message accentuating activities undertaken by the OAU in close collaboration with the WHO and UNICEF.

The Secretary-General was also represented at the WHO/AFRO meeting by the Director of the Department of ESCAS.

This Fortieth Session of the WHO/AFRO (5-12 Sept. 1990) which coincided with its Fortieth Anniversary was graced by the presence of His Excellency Army General Dennis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo.

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In his message to the Conference, the OAU Secretary-General reviewed all the difficulties encountered by Africa in the socio-economic and political areas and their negative impact on health and education.

In that connection he highlighted the cooperation existing between the WHO and the OAU.

He concluded by making an appeal for contribution to the Special Health Fund. It should be noted that at all these WHO meetings, the OAU did not fail to articulate its news on specific questions concerning:

- Women, Health and Development;
- Nutritional deficiency syndromes;
- Promotion of Breast feeding;
- Communicable Disease control;
- Tropical Diseases;
- AIDS;
- Expanded Programme on Immunization;
- Health for All Through Primary Health care;
- The state of Health in the Occupied Arab Territories:

Aids is now allowed to be transported to these areas through the UN Bodies and the International Red Crescent Society.

Meeting of the African Advisory Committee for the development of health

The OAU General Secretariat participated in the meeting referred to above from 11th to 15th June, 1990, at which documents on "the Promotion of Research Development within the overall framework of African Health Development", were discussed.

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WHO Organised Seminars and Workshops:

In November 1990: a Representative of the OAU participated in the African Workshop. on "Health Sector Management in Technological Disasters" in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was organized by the WHO/EPR (Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response) in collaboration with the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS). The main recommendations of the workshop were that Member States which do not have should _set up Chemical Safety and Response Programmes and that inter-sectoral and international cooperation in chemical disaster management should be promoted.

Annual Congress of the CAMA:f)

November 1989: The 7th Cdngtess held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The main theme was "The Role of African Physicians in the Prevention and Control of AIDS and HIV Infection". The OAU Secretary-General's key Inote address at the Opening Session was very well received and an OAU representative participated actively in the technical discussions. Recommendations to Member Associations to further inform and educate the public, give tender loving care to patients and families and step up reseach efforts to find a cure or vaccine were made.

December 1990: The 8th Congress held in Accra, Ghana: The main theme was "Health of Mother and Child in Africa". A representative of the Secretary-General of OAU addressed the Congress on this subject. Recommendations for improvement of health of mothers and children in Africa through better obstetric care, prevention of teenage pregnancies, early immunization of basics etc., were made for implementation by Member Associations back home.

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3.4 Workshop of the IPPF'S (International Planned Parenthood Federation) Centre for African Family Studies based in Nairobi, Kenya.

This took place in Harare, Zimbabwe in September/October 1990 as a Family Planning Communication Course.

The OAU sent a representative who, on return, prepared a questionnaire on sex education for teenagers that is being distributed to teenagers attending the OAU Clinic. The response has been low so far and no conclusions have been made.

HEALTH RELATED ACTIVITIES OF THE OAU REGIONAL OFFICES

The OAU/STRC Regional Office in Lagos, Nigeria is dealing with some health issues namely: traditional medicine, medicinal plants, the African Pharmacopoeia and some tropical diseases like - guinea worm and onchocerciasis. This is in addition to its other activities.

The OAU/IBAR Sub-regional Office of the OAU/STRC is based in Nairobi, Kenya. It deals with human Zoonoses like - hydatid disease and trichinellosis among its other veterinary activities.

The permanent Delegation of OAU in Geneva coordinates health issues between OAU and WHO; ILO on occupational diseases; IAEA (Vienna) on nuclear and irradiation safety; UNESCO for Health Information and Education and ICRC for emergency aid in case of disasters.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS OF OAU ORGANS

-3.1 Assemblies of the Heads of State and Government.

3.2 Ordinary Sessions of the Council of Ministers.

3.3 Sessions of the OAU Conference of African Ministers of Health.

Normally, the resolutions and decisions of the Conference of African Ministers of Health are submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration and subsequently, they are tabled for the Assembly of Heads of State and Government for necessary approval. These resolutions and decisions after receiving the political support of the Summit would be considered for implementation by Ministries of Health of Member States in cooperation and collaboration with International Health Agencies. Since the 1987 (Cairo, Egypt) 2nd Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Health, the main theme for implementation of health strategies has been the Declaration AHG/Decl. 1 (XXIII) of Heads of State and Government on "HEALTH AS A FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT" though the theme of 1989 was HEALTH SYSTEMS FINANCING.

3.1.0 Resolutions and Decisions of Assembly of Heads of State and Government:

AHG/Decl. 2 (XXVI) Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization. of African Unity of "The Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental changes Taking Place in the World".

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See the Report of the joint OAU/CAMAS Round Table Meeting that took place in Maseru, Lesotho on 18 - 19 September 1990 and the theme of which was "HEALTH AND POLITICS IN AFRICA". .

Resolutions adopted by the 50th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, July 1989:-

CM/Res. 1220 (L): Resolution on the 3rd Ordinary Session of the OAU Conference of African Ministers of Health:

(a) A progress report main Agenda Item "HEALTH AS A FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT" was submitted to the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Council. of Ministers with sub-item:

(1) Special Health Fund for Africa (SHFA).

The SHFA was launched before the closure of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and is to be coordinated by the HFA (Health for All) Unit in WHO/AFRO while activities are handled by the WHO/EPR (Emergency Preparedness and Response) Centre in Addis Ababa and the WHO Representative to OAU and ECA. By November 1990, the fund had an initial contribution of US\$350,000.00 and a target of raising an initial capital of US\$10 million. The Federal Republic of Nigeria contributed US\$250,000.00, the rest by different African donors. The OAU Secretary-General, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the SHFA is preparing to mobilise OAU Staff Members to contribute to the fund according to respective incomes.

(ii) (a) Maternal and Child Health with Special Emphasis on Immunization of the African Child - See 1.2.1 on Child Survival, Protection and Development.

(b) No. CM/Res 1230 (L) in Resolution on Strategies for the Decade for the African Child (1990-2000):

The OAU, in April 1990 organised a meeting in Addis Ababa to draft strategies for . Ratification and Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the Child.

The World Summit for Children took place in 1990 as scheduled and was very successful. Many African Heads of State and Government and the OAU Secretary-General honoured this Summit with their ' presence. The largest gathering in history of 71 World Leaders came up with with Declaratin "We do this not only for the present generation, but for all . generations to come. There can be no nobler goal than giving every child a better future". The target was to reduce the infant mortality rate to 5. 50 per 1000 live births, targets on health, nutritional and educational goals with programmes for implementation by all the world's people (including children) with leaders giving the necessary financing.

(iii) Communicable disease control with special Emphasis on Prevention and Control of AIDS in Africa -

See No. 1.2.2.

(iv) No. CM/Res 1215 (L): Resolution on the Integration of women in Development.

. At the level of the OAU, a Unit of "Women in Development" was opened to specifically deal with women affairs. The main strategies of the Unit are: safe motherhood, women and AIDS, nutritional deficiency disorders, education, participation in development, policy-making etc.

At Member State level, many Member States have Ministries of Women's Affairs and more and more women are holding high government posts.

(v) No. CM/Res. 1241 (L): Resolution on the refugee situation in Africa:

Due to prevailing conditions in many Member States, the refugee situation has not improved. The OAU Secretary-General is trying to assist warring factions come to peaceful settlements and also to improve the situation of refugees all over Africa.

3.3 2nd and 3rd Ordinary Sessions of the Conference of African Ministers of Health; April 1987 in Cairo, Egypt and April 1989 in Kampala, Uganda respectively:

At the level of the OAU and for main resolutions, see paragraphs 1.2.1 to 1.2.3 and 3.2.

CAMH/Res. 9 (II): Resolution on Leprosy

Rehabilitation and Training in Africa:

WHO/AFRO organized a meeting in Brazzaville, Congo in November 1989 to check on how to strengthen training and rehabilitation in Leprosy. More Member States are now using facilities at the ALERT Centre (All Africa Rehabilitation and Training) in addis Ababa.

CAMH/Res. 2 (III): Resolution on Emergency Preparedness and Response to face Epidemics and Natural Disastrs in Africa.

The OAU is working closely with WHO/EPR.

Preparations are underway to convene a Regional Meeting in September 1991 to identify priorities for emergency preparedness and response in Africa.

Also see Paragraph 1.3.2 (c) and separate the document: Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Resolution CAMH/Res.

(III) on Emergency Preparedness and Response to face Epidemics and Natural Disasters in Africa.

CAMH/S (III): Resolution. on the Dumping of Toxic and Industrial wastes in Africa - See separate document on this resolution.