

Health Systems Action Network: Towards stronger national health systems

A Health system is defined to include all activities whose primary purpose is to promote, restore or maintain health [1]. The health system acquires its organizational shape and dynamicity through interaction between the institutions, people, resources and the management processes that underpin its structure and functioning. Increasingly, lessons are emerging that; efforts directed at improving population health should take a holistic approach to the health system. Funds and resources targeting solitary health interventions were proved to be not successful in so many occasions. Without a health system that can use money well, spending turns to be inefficient, useless or even counterproductive [2]. As a result, global health initiatives and donors are rapidly moving into funding health system strengthening instead of focusing on targeted interventions alone. Weak health systems pose huge challenges to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and improving health of the nations. These weak health systems need to be strengthened, hence the global slogan of health system strengthening (HSS). However, considerable intellectual, technical and managerial efforts are to be invested to enable HSS. Designing and implementing strategies to strengthen health systems is a daunting challenge facing different countries especially in the developing world. To help the process of HSS, some global initiatives were recently released in the health arena. One such initiative is the Health Systems Action Network (HSAN).

HSAN is a global network of committed professionals for strengthening health systems through effective involvement of diverse stakeholders and better management of resources that is guided by evidence [3]. Following a series of consultations, HSAN was formally launched in 2006 in Toronto, Canada during a consultative meeting which involved health systems experts from around the globe.

HSAN's vision is to be a leading global network facilitating the development of equitable, accountable and sustainable health systems for improved health outcomes.

The mission of the network is to promote stronger national health systems through strategies facilitating better coordination and streamlining of stakeholders and resources. The overarching goal of HSAN is to enhance access to information on what strategies work in making health systems strong and to avoid duplication of efforts that have been found of little use in strengthening health systems.

Recently this year, HSAN launched its website in a new shape at <http://www.hsanet.org>. The website includes background and information about HSAN and its activities in addition to resources on HSS and important links to other relevant websites. People and professionals in different capacities can sign in to join HSAN. It is hoped that, this network will add value to the ongoing efforts to enhance performance of health systems worldwide.

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References

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