



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

HEALTH SECTOR MODERNISATION PROGRAMME SYR/AIDCO/2001/0215

Funded by the European Union
Summary of
Short-term Mission Report

on

Strengthening health systems management in Syria

Suggestions for national health accounts, social health insurances,
health systems research and related issues
of the Health Sector Modernization Programme

To *Syrian Arab Republic, Damascus, Daraa, Lattakia*

Duration *10 November – 10 December 2003*

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Contracted for Consortium GTZ / EPOS / OPTIONS by
GTZ International Services

Distribution: GTZ, Lead Agency, Contracting Company, Team Leader: Paolo Operti

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Strengthening health systems management in Syria – Executive Summary

The Health Sector Modernisation Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic – supported by the European Community – aims at increasing equity, efficiency, and quality of health services. At the same time it intends to achieve a maximum of transparency and accountability in public spending. This is to be supported by one of its six planned results, i.e. “framework for sustainable financing of health sector in place”. Recommendations for strengthening the health sector modernization by health economics and health financing initiatives include:

- Existing health benefit and health insurance schemes could and should be described and analysed with the InfoSure methodology developed by GTZ. For assuring comparability quite some information has to be compiled by these schemes from different sources, files and folders. To compensate for this, it is suggested, that the interviewed organizations get small service contracts from HSMP to comply well with this additional burden. Workshops should provide the necessary briefing and back-up.
- A larger scale household health expenditure survey has to be prepared by explorative studies with selected households, with focussed group discussions and with professional group discussions. Direct and indirect costs should be explored beyond the boundaries of the formal health sector. The School of Management of MoH can be very helpful. A new Centre for Strategic Health Studies (CSHS) will host such studies, later on, in various institutes. Institutionalizing studies in such a way provides sustainability for a meaningful preparation of nationally representative surveys and would benefit capacity building.
- Health care provider studies are a cornerstone for developing comprehensive national health accounts. Explorative studies on infrastructure, workload, clientele, utilization, coverage, costs, time budgets, quality and productivity of pharmacies, private practitioners, private and public hospitals could well be performed by properly supervised trainees in the School of Management, later on in all institutes of the new CSHS. This would foster sustainability and would benefit capacity building for informed management.
- Routine information systems for properly handling drugs, medical supplies and salaries in Health Directorates should be slightly modified for generating automatically data relevant for national health accounts. Small contracts to software producers of existing computerized information systems could easily render such a product. Appropriate hospital information systems can generate further missing data, useful for national health accounts.
- Analyses of national government budgets for health should be expanded into the analysis of budgets, funds and/or donations in the hands of decentralized units, like municipalities and villages which use them for health initiatives. The European support for the Healthy Villages Initiative and for an experimental decentralization test in two governorates by HSMP would benefit from this, as well as the development of national health accounts.
- Health financing and economics advice was given for the drafting of a strategically sound expenditure plan for 2004-2007 for the Health Sector Modernization Programme and its twofold strategy: (a) a national Centre for Strategic Health Studies and (b) evidence-based support for local initiatives towards healthy villages and towards decentralization.
- The new Centre for Strategic Health Studies is a true milestone towards modernization. Its basic set-up with four institutes and their core concerns was drafted and advised regarding functions, management structure, human resource and equipment requirements and recommendable budgets for services, research and training. A capacity coaching for new professionals of CSHS by HSMP team members should be started immediately.
- Capacity building in health insurance and national health accounts was fostered by training in the Ministry of Health and in its School of Management. For sustainability it is urgently required to recruit a long-term local expert for health economics and health financing.