

Two decades of Investment For A Healthier Society (Part I)

Written by Kesete Ghebrehwet



Gezayn Hikimnan Gorebabt- roughly translated as a hospital next to my house- a song performed by Yatana music Group in the opening of Health Ministry's symposium reflects the availability of healthcare services in respective localities. Concerted efforts that have been made are indeed significantly remarkable that primary healthcare services throughout Eritrea have become easily accessible through the construction of new health institutions and renovation activities that created smooth network of synergy among health institutions of different levels.

The symposium that showed the over all strategic plans of healthcare services, their implementation on the ground and the achievements registered in the last 20 years of independence discussed on varied topics of health care delivery from 11-13 of march at the Expo Hall.

Effective, quality, sustainable, and easily accessible health care delivery has been the major guiding principle of the Ministry of Health. This basic principle could only be fulfilled through active engagement of communities. To this end the Ministry has been working on the implementation of projects, considering popular participation as part of the over all strategic plan.

In effecting such a sound health care system, political commitment of the government takes the lead. Need-based priority of health care service that is empowered through good communication has been playing deceive role in achieving remarkable accomplishments in the health care which enabled Eritrea win international acclaim.

To build a comprehensive health care system that secures people's physical, physiological, and social well being, concerted actions have been undertaken in the development of health care services through the implementation of various programs. Putting in place the necessary infrastructure, providing medical equipment, securing sustainability of medicine supply as well as human resources development have been some of the major achievements in health care services.

The papers presented in the symposium focused on development of health care facilities,

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medical services, human resource development, maternal and child health, pervasion and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, environmental health, provision and production of medicines and medical supplies, advancements in health laboratory services and ophthalmology among others.

In a paper he presente



d Dr. Mismay Ghebrihiwet, adviser to the minister of health discussed about policies and strategies of the health care system in Eritrea. He said that policies are based on preventive, curative and also rehabilitative procurers from the focal point of the health care strategy. He also said that healthcare system needs to be promotional so as to upgrade populations' understanding of health and healthy style of life and thereby address health related problems from their grass roots level.

Another area of major achievement in the sector is the development of human resources. Dr. Andom Ogbamariam, director general of research and human resource development at the ministry stated that the ministry has been engaged in training new health care professionals as well as upgrading skills of senior health workers through post graduate courses so as to provide sufficient number of health care professionals that would be deployed throughout the country. The department also conducts regular assessment of the competency and performance of healthcare workers. The number of associate nurses and nurses has amply increased in the last seven years. The college of Nursing and Health technology has graduated a total of 783 nurses while a total of 784 associate nurses were upgraded to nurses in the past 20 years. The ministry has also been giving degree and advanced diploma training courses in anesthesiology, midwifery, ophthalmology and psychiatry. More importantly Dr. Andom indicated that necessary preparations have been made for advanced degree, masters and doctoral courses.

Laboratories are integral parts of health care facilities. Since they play major roles in screening, experimenting and conducting tests for health threats as well as controlling qualities of medical supplies they are interconnected with other health care facilities. Though many of the health care facilities through out the country have their own laboratories, the national health laboratory (NHL) serves as an institution of standardization for the all laboratories through conducting advanced and intensive laboratory tests. Pointing out that the NHL is now equipped with high-tech screening and experimenting supplies, Mr. Meles Sium, head of the central laboratory said they have been conducting laboratory tests services of varied specialties of microbiology, immunoserology, clinical chemistry, hematology, histopathology, and food analysis. According to Mr. Meles, DNA test and culture sensitivity for TB screening has recently been introduced in the laboratory.

Health care facilities were in a much deteriorated state during the early days of independence. However, they been flourishing throughout the country since 1991. As such the number of hospitals has increased form 16 to 28 and the number of health centers from 5 to 56. The total number of health stations has increased form 127 in 1991 to 335 in 2010.

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