

Civil Society Organization's Statement The Joint Annual Health Sector Review 2017 Policy Meeting, January 2018

Honorable Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Hon. Members of Parliament, Chief Medical Officer, H.E The Ambassador of German, UN country representatives, Development Partners, Staff of the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MOHCDGEC); President Office – Regional Administration Local Government (PO-RALG), Representatives of the Private Sector, Fellow Representatives from the Civil Society Organizations, ladies and gentlemen.

This statement has been prepared by a number of NGOs working in the health sector at the national and local level on policy, advocacy and health delivery programs. These NGOs feel honored to be among the speakers in the opening of this policy day event for the health sector. In this particular gathering, NGOs views and recommendations emanate from experience of their programmes throughout the country and observations of the performance of the government in the governing and steering the health sector.

Honorable Minister,

We would like to begin by acknowledging and commending the efforts made by the Ministry of Health and PO-RALG in the implementation of the HSSP IV and more specifically by being able to meet the policy commitment for the year 2016/17 made on governance and leadership, however it is also noted many of the other commitments were not adequately implemented. We also commend the government for engaging stakeholders in the recent review of the national health policy and hope that this exercise will be completed in this financial year. Otherwise we remain hopeful that, these efforts and the political will of the government and all the partners will create a smooth environment in achieving quality health service for Tanzanians.

Honorable Minister,

While the HSSP IV is on its third year of implementation its fiscal needs are still unmet to a larger extent. This is an ongoing challenge despite the remarkable efforts that are being put in by the Government and its partners in the implementation of the strategy. The HSSP IV estimated financial needs stand at about 22 trillion Tanzania shillings for the period of five

years whilst the ongoing yearly health sector budget allocation so far have been at about half of the estimated needs.

CSOs, therefore call for immediate deliberation by the government and all health sector stakeholders to reduce the existing gap without largely depending on donors.

Honorable Minister,

CSOs understand that the use of electronic revenue collection system has to a great extent improved both quality of financial records and revenue collections at health facilities. While we commend for such improvement, it would be of interest to understand the effectiveness of this system and to what extent the reported increased collections will be able to contribute to the reduction of the existing HSSP IV financing gap and future projections.

Honorable Minister, CSOs are concerned on the slow progress and now lack of clarity on the government's commitment in approving the Health Financing Strategy and introduction of the mandatory insurance scheme. In reference to 2016 and 2017 policy commitments, there was a clear determination to complete the Health Financing Strategy and introduce mandatory single health insurance. However, the proposed 2018 policy recommendations are not clear on how the government intends to achieve mandatory health insurance.

Honorable Minister,

Budget for health commodities continues to show improvement. We acknowledge and commend efforts to reduce perennial stock outs through both central supply system and use of prime vendor. Despite the budget improvement, some health facilities continue to receive less and incomplete orders from MSD. This uneven supply of commodities from MSD causes shortages that obstruct the provision of quality health services and they demoralize health care workers who fail to help patients because the appropriate supplies are not available at the right time.

CSOs continue to call for full disbursement of health commodities budget at the beginning of every financial year. We also call for improved coordination and communication between MSD and LGAs to ensure efficiency of both central supply system and prime vendor mechanisms.

Honorable Minister,

As we are all aware the availability of human resources for health determines quality and reliability of health services. The shortage of health workers currently stands at 51% and is more severe in the rural areas, where majority of the population resides. Furthermore, many health facilities are still manned by unskilled personnel, as reported during the Joint Annual Sector Review Meeting in 2017 by RMOs.

On-going analyses on Workload Indicator for Staffing Needs (WISN) indicate critical shortage of skilled Health care workers in all the primary health facilities in terms of numbers and skill mix. On this basis we recommend for deliberate and affirmative actions to support the LGAs with the necessary resources for recruitment of health workers.

We also commend the government for increasing number of health facilities providing tertiary care e.g. Mloganzila and Benjamin Mkapa Hospitals, however we urge for urgent measures to ensure availability of specialists to improve functionality of these facilities. Efforts must be invested in providing more training opportunities for more health workers to become specialists in the specified needed areas. The Government must guard against redistributions of specialists from functional referral hospitals that have very few and that could cripple services in the particular hospitals and lead to staff demoralization.

We further call upon development of a Public-Private Partnership Innovative recruitment plan that will facilitate absorption of the qualified medical professionals who are in the job market. This will minimize the overstretched and limited quality of health care, which is contributed by the severe shortage of existing health workers.

Finally, we would like again to commend the government and stakeholders for coming up with generally good policy commitments, which we believe if implemented within the agreed time line will contribute to improvements in health service delivery.

Asanteni Sana

CSO Policy Statement 2018

Read by

Alice Monyo of Sikika on behalf of CSOs/ NGOs working in the Health Sector.