



NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

JANUARY TO NOVEMBER 2010

Introduction

Since 2008 Sikika has been doing analysis on the health governance news reported in the local newspapers. The aim of this activity is to assess the viability of the media houses to report on issues relating to social accountability,¹ especially in the health and HIV/AIDS sectors and to assess if the reported news reflects policies and plans set for the development of health care delivery in Tanzania. This analysis is also aimed at reminding the government of its promises through policies, plans and strategies for the development of health and HIV/AIDS sectors. It also informs citizens on the current issues reported in the arena of health and HIV/AIDS sectors.

Methodology

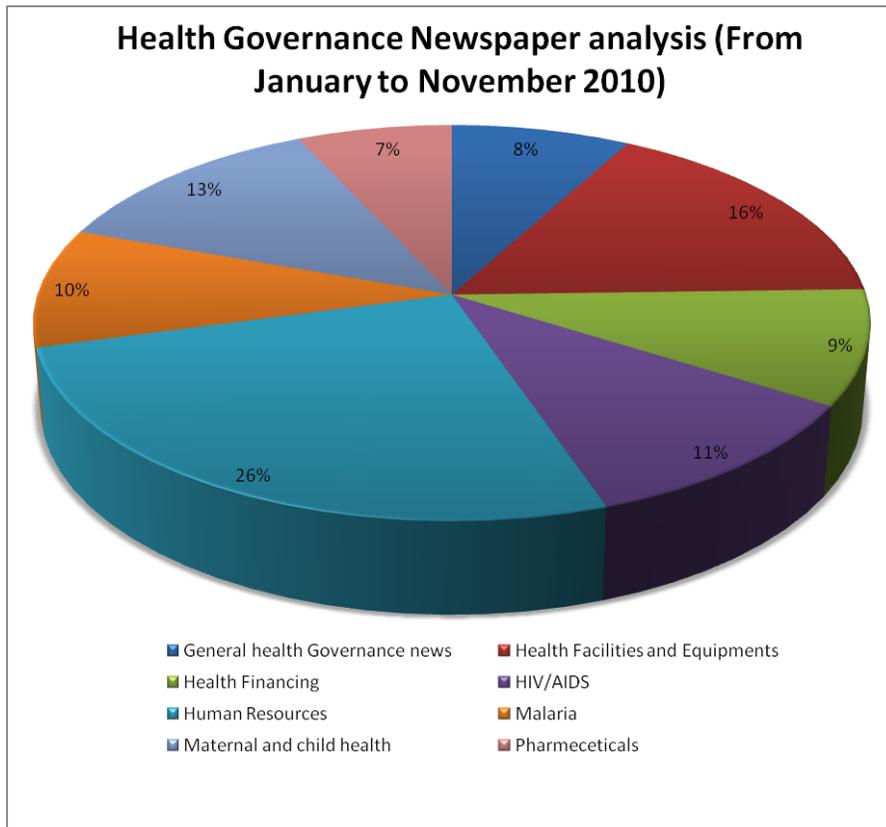
This analysis involved the desk review approach where major daily and weekly news papers such as Mwananchi, Mtanzania, Tanzania Daima, Daily News, Habari Leo, The Citizen, This Day, The Guardian, Guardian on Sunday, Sunday citizen, Sunday news, Kulikoni, Nipashe and Raia Mwema were reviewed and health governance news reports were cut and analyzed. The news papers involved covered the period of January to November 2010, though most of the news papers for this year were overloaded with general election news especially on CHADEMA and CCM campaigns, leaving other issues such as health with low coverage

Findings and observations

According to this analysis, a total of 277 health governance news were reported from that period (January to November 2010). Among the issues reported are: Health Facilities and Equipment,

¹ Social accountability means that right holders have the right to obtain justifications and explanations from private sector or government officials who have the responsibility of managing the use of public resources. The duty bearers not only have the obligation to provide justification and explanations but also to take corrective actions in situations where public resources have been misused hence fail to realize human rights (CSA, 2010).

Health Financing, Human Resources, HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Maternal and Child Health, Pharmaceuticals and General Health Governance news, as illustrated below



Source: Reviewed news papers of 2010

From those categories, the following were observed in this analysis:

Human Resource for Health

Human Resource for Health (HRH) has remained a major challenge for the provision of quality health care delivery in Tanzania. This is also evident in the reported news relating to that category. According to this analysis HRH news obtained a great portion of 76 (26%) out of 277 reported news. Issues reported under this category ranged from HRH shortage to unethical practices conducted by some health workers. The news that was reported the most in almost all the news papers analyzed was that of the transfer of 57 health workers from Mwananyamala hospital due to malpractices. Other frequently reported news in this category also involved issues of the government strategies and public recommendations to overcome the alarming shortage of the HRH.

Number of strategies and recommendations mentioned in these newspapers are:

- a) The use of *e-health*². This is a cost effective strategy for strengthening the human resource workforce and improving performance by eliminating distance and time barriers through telemedicine and continuing medical education, improving access to existing global and local information and knowledge.
- b) The *Tanzania - India pact*. This is a collaboration and agreement signed between Tanzania and India to provide comprehensive and affordable health care services in Tanzania and also increasing numbers of scholarships for Tanzanian students to India.
- c) The government to improve remuneration for HRH in a bid to curb the brain drains in the health sector. Furthermore, strong measures by the government to be taken for malpractices by some health workers such as corruption, use of abusive and unfriendly languages and the use of alcohol when working.

We are expecting the government to work on the recommendations provided by reporters in these newspapers in order to reduce the gap and challenges associated with Human Resource for Health.

Health Facilities and Equipment

According to this analysis Health facilities and equipment news obtained 16% (46 out of 277 of all the news reported). In this category the issue that was frequently reported was on the inspection of the hospitals, dispensaries, clinics and health centers in Dar es Salaam, of which more than 20 facilities were closed down, and others warned for malpractices including having unqualified staff and prescribing fake drugs.

Another issue reported under this category was on the challenges facing the health facilities and equipment. The government has formulated good strategies and plans for developing and upgrading health facilities in Tanzania such as, The Primary Health Service Development Program (popularly known as MMAM), Health Sector Strategic Plan III and Tanzania National Health Policy. However a lot of challenges have been reported facing this category as evident in the analysed news. According to this analysis among the challenges reported facing the health facilities and equipment category were the lack of equipment such as x ray machines, electricity, water, ambulance, beds etc. For instance, the news on the shortage of beds which led to some patients sleeping on the floor when admitted to several facilities was reported by *Nipashe of June 9th 2010 (under the title "Pregnant women in Mbeya give birth on floor due to lack of beds")*. The government needs to act on the reported challenges in order to improve health services for citizens.

² Is a rapidly developing application of clinical medicine where medical information is transferred through the phone or the Internet and sometimes other networks for the purpose of consulting, and sometimes remote medical procedures or examinations.

Maternal and child health

Maternal deaths and deaths of children under five continue to be a threat in our societies despite the decline as according to Tanzania Demographic Health Survey 2010 Preliminary Report. The report shows that out of every 100,000 live births, 454 mothers die during childbirth. This category is another important area which was also reported. According to this analysis maternal and child health occupies 13% (35 out of 277 of all the news reported). Since the problem of maternal mortality is much associated with inadequate funding for the health sector, to reduce the maternal death and deaths of children under five the government should increase the health sector budget so that to be able to provide all the required necessities in health facilities. Moreover, the government should also implement all the promises in the National Health Policy, 2007 on the provision of free health services for pregnant women and children under five years.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS news continued to occupy reasonable space in the newspapers. For this period (from January to November 2010) HIV/AIDS news occupied 11% (30 out of 277 of all the news reported). Most of the interesting news reported was on the discovery of the medicine for treatment of HIV/AIDS and the promise that Tanzania would be among the first countries to get the medication. Also the news on the initiative for East African countries to develop a policy that will guide the region's response to HIV/AIDS was frequently reported. This is a great step toward fighting the killer disease.

Although there are good intentions to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country, there have been some bottlenecks that may hinder these initiatives, such as over dependence on donor funds to fight the disease, importation of fake condoms as reported by *Daily News on 17th April, 2010* and also the absence of care especially in the provision of nutritious food for people living with HIV and those taking ARV's.

Malaria

Malaria is a leading killer disease in Tanzania. People who are most vulnerable to the disease are pregnant women and children under five years. According to this analysis, malaria news occupied 10% of all the news reported (27 out 277).

The government has played a great role in fighting the disease by developing different plans and strategies. This was evident in the news reported under this category that the most reported articles were on the plans to subsidize malaria drugs. The plan aims at cutting down the price of malaria drugs from between 4,000/= and 15,000/= Tsh. to between 500/= and 700/= so as to make them affordable to the citizen. The implementation was expected to start from July 2010; however, we have not seen a reduction in the prices of malaria medicines.

The other news reported was on the plans to distribute two treated mosquito nets to every family as a continuation from the first phase where a family got only one mosquito net. The implementation is yet to start. We are expecting that the distribution of these mosquito nets will reduce the number of people infected from malaria, although this is not a permanent solution for the disease. The government should think of permanent solutions such as elimination of mosquito breeding sites by residual spray to all vegetation surfaces, non-running water as well as proper medications for malaria disease.

Health Financing and Pharmaceutical

Health financing and pharmaceuticals news was also reported. According to this analysis they occupied 9% and 7% (26 and 19 out of 277 of the health governance news reported in the news paper respectively). Among the other challenges currently facing the health sector apart from the shortage of human resource for health, is the low budget and the mismanagement of medicines and medical supplies. For health financing, the government is yet to implement the Abuja declaration of setting 15% of the government budget to the health sector as the 2010/2011 financial year budget is still at 11% of the government budget. Even so, the little that was allocated has been misused.

Conclusion

For the health governance reported news, we are expecting that all the different recommendations and opinions provided through these newspapers will be taken care of. This should not be the government's role alone, but rather each stakeholder should take his/her part to strengthen healthcare provision in Tanzania. Sikika is recognizing the work of all reporters and it encourages them to do more in order to build a healthy and responsible society for the development of our country.