

Press Release

Health experts meet to revolutionize education for health care delivery

04 June 2009/Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso - In a continent where many countries are challenged by weak, under-funded and under-resourced health systems, private-public partnership, community participation in health care delivery and task shifting by health staff are important initiatives to enhance efforts by African countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Community-Directed Intervention (CDI) strategy in health care delivery has proved to be a cost-effective strategy in multi-disease control, capacity building, empowerment of poor communities, and strengthening of health systems.

Over 12 years, the World Health Organization African Programme for River Blindness (Onchocerciasis) Control (WHO/APOC), has been using this strategy to fight river blindness with remarkable success. This approach enables poor, hard-to-reach communities to select their own drug distributors and treat populations at risk annually with ivermectin (Mectizan®), a safe drug donated by the pharmaceutical company Merck & Co Inc.

In the last three years, medical and scientific research by the WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO-TDR) has shown the CDI strategy to be effective in the delivery of multiple health interventions including distribution of for the treatment of river blindness, insecticide-treated bed nets, home management of (Mectizan®), malaria and vitamin A supplementation.

WHO/APOC, in collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO) has developed a draft curriculum and training module for the CDI strategy based on a manual currently being used by over 100 projects in more than 20 African countries.

Health experts, including deans of Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences from 12 African countries will meet at the Transcorp Hilton Abuja, in the Nigerian capital, from 9-11 June 2009 to discuss the use of the CDI strategy in public health service delivery and plans to introduce the strategy into the curriculum of nursing and medical schools across the continent.

The meeting is expected to produce a plan for medical and nursing schools in Africa to pilot the teaching of this strategy, thereby building and strengthening partnerships between health and education systems. **The Honourable Minister of Health of Nigeria, Prof Babatunde Osotimehin, is expected to declare the meeting open with his Education counterpart Dr Sam Egwu, who is expected to deliver the key note address.** The Ministries of Health and Education of Nigeria and the National Universities Commission are co-sponsoring the meeting with WHO/APOC.