Building resilient sub-national health systems- Strengthening Leadership and Management Capacity of District Health Management Teams

Venue: Shangri La, 92 Beach Road, Lumley, Freetown Sierra Leone

15-17 March 2016

The outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone has had a major impact on the health status of the population and on already fragile health systems. As we move from E(Ebola) to H(a resilient health system), district health management teams (DHMTs) will play an important role in rebuilding of the health systems.

DHMTs are responsible for planning, organising and monitoring health provision, training personnel, engaging with communities, supplying drugs and equipment, and ensure that quality and equitable health services reach populations. However, evidence shows that DHMTs in low resource countries have not been effective enough in overseeing provision of health care services at sub-national levels. This has been partly attributed to inadequate capacity in planning, budgeting, financial management coupled with weak monitoring and evaluation of plans and budgets.

In light of the recent Ebola epidemic and the push towards decentralization, more resources and responsibility are being committed to DHMTs. It is therefore imperative that DHMTs are properly equipped with the right set of leadership and management skills to deliver cost effective, high impact health service programs in their respective communities.

Post-Ebola national recovery plans from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone articulate the critical importance of improving service delivery at the sub-national level, hand in hand with a population-focused public health approach.

The three-day workshop will seek to gather best practices for how to address leadership and management capacity gaps and challenges at the sub-national level in the three Ebola-affected countries by bringing together expertise on management and capacity building to brainstorm around the current prevailing issues and recommend innovative strategies to best address these issues.

The workshop will convene notable experts from within WHO, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development partners, ministries of health and capacity building advisors alongside DHMT representation, to jointly develop practical approaches on how best to design and implement effective capacity development programs for DHMTs in post disaster/outbreak countries.

The emphasis is on bridging the knowledge gap, recommending intervention packages, and identifying delivery models that address leadership and management capacity at sub-national levels. This will be drawn from evidence-based experiences of experts around the table. The workshop deliberately convenes key specialists on the subject alongside district team representation. Further, representation from ministries of finance, local government, implementing partners and civil societies allow perspectives and input into effective implementation of national recovery plans at the frontline.
This workshop is the first in a series of WHO country-focussed meetings on improving district-based health systems. Follow-up workshops will be scheduled to monitor improvements, cross-fertilize thinking and harness critical elements of the improvement process to stimulate change at the frontline.

Objectives of the Workshop:

1. Assess current policy, leadership and management challenges/needs at the national and sub-national level that are critical to attaining effective healthcare delivery systems at the sub-national level in Ebola affected countries.

2. Review international and regional best practice as well as available technical resources to address capacity building needs of DHMTs.

3. Identify recommendations, strategies and intervention models that would address challenges identified.

Expected outcomes

1. Clear and collective understanding of current needs in policy, knowledge, leadership and management challenges at the sub-national level in the Ebola affected countries.

2. Recommendations, intervention models and strategies to address management challenges at the sub-national level including partner coordination mechanisms.

3. Mapping of available resources to address capacity building of DHMTs.