EDITORIAL

Poverty and human development in sub-Saharan Africa

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations are key determinants of poverty reduction and human development. These MDGs are:

MDG1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
MDG2 Achieve universal primary education
MDG3 Promote gender equality and empower women
MDG4 Reduce child mortality
MDG5 Improve maternal health
MDG6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
MDG7 Ensure environmental sustainability
MDG8 Develop a global partnership for development.

All the above goals are closely interlinked with health matters, which this Journal seeks to promote by encouraging scholars working in Africa and others to disseminate their research results for use in the achievement of the MDGs.

According to the United Nations MDGs Report of 2006, the number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 140 million in 2004 (MDG1). The same Report gave the following statistics on sub-Saharan Africa:

On MDG2, the proportion of children of primary school age out of school by sex: 42% girls, 38% boys. MD3: Gender disparity in employment: 32% women, 35% men. MDG4: Under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births - 168, the highest in the world. MDG5: 46% of skilled care deliveries, where almost half of the world’s maternal deaths occur. MDG6: Number of new tuberculosis cases per 100,000 population (excl. HIV-positive persons) – 281, the highest in the world. MDG7: Proportion of land area covered by forests – 27%, the 5th lowest among 10 regions in the world. MDG8: Youth unemployment rate – 18.3 %, the third highest among the 10 regions of the world.

The above statistics on sub-Saharan Africa appear dismal, but there is hope. The member states of the region have been making aggressive strategies, which are supported by the Regional organizations like the WHO Regional Office for Africa and the African Union. More recently, the 59th World Health Assembly passed Resolution WHA59.24 to establish an intergovernmental working group (IGWG), which will develop global strategies on the above critical issues. The report of the WHO Commission is titled: Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights (www.who.int/igwg) The IGWG global strategy has a number of objectives, namely, 1. Prioritizing research and development needs, 2. Promoting Research and Development, 3. Building and improving innovative capacity, 4. Transfer of technology, 5. Management of intellectual property, 6. Improving delivery and access, 7. Ensuring sustainable financing mechanisms, and 8. Establishing monitoring and reporting systems.

It is expected that the strategies being developed will assist member states in the sub-Saharan region in the attainment of the MDGs, but especially in poverty reduction and human development. Scholars in the sub-Saharan Africa must adapt their research and publications to solving the problems of poverty and human development in the region.

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