

Press release: February 1, 2016

## **The Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia Launches an International Institute for Primary Health Care**

The Government of Ethiopia, in collaboration with its partner, the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, is pleased to announce the formation of the International Institute for Primary Health Care. We aim to make the Institute a world-class center for training and research on primary health care (PHC) and to contribute to accelerating progress in improving the health of people in Africa and beyond through the strengthening of PHC services.

Ethiopia is one of the very few countries in sub-Saharan Africa that has achieved the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United Nations for mothers, children, HIV, malaria and tuberculosis to be achieved by 2015. Significant progress has also been made for reducing levels of childhood malnutrition. The national mortality rate for children younger than 5 years of age declined from 123 per 1,000 live births in 2005 to 59 in 2014, making it one of only 11 of 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to have already achieved MDG-4 before the 2015 deadline. The maternal mortality ratio declined from 1,400 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 420 in 2014. Furthermore, Ethiopia achieved MDG 6 –

control of HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, and other important diseases– well ahead of the 2015 deadline. The incidence of HIV in adult population has declined by 90%; and malaria deaths have dropped by 50%; and there were improvements in the detection and cure of tuberculosis to reach the 2015 target.

There is widespread consensus that the significant progress in Ethiopia can be attributed to the development of Primary Health Care (PHC) programs and systems, including the introduction and full implementation of the Health Extension Program (HEP) since 2003, that have strong community-based services provided by Health Extension Workers. PHC remains the core of Ethiopia's health system; hence, it is important to design a mechanism to sustain the gains made so far and to address the challenges that come with time.

Ethiopia has become a leader throughout the world in accelerating the achievement of "Health for All" through PHC. Because of its demonstrated health achievements, Ethiopia has been receiving visits from Ministers of Health and other health officials from countries throughout Africa

and beyond who want to learn firsthand how Ethiopia achieved these remarkable results. During the past three years alone, ministerial-level health officials from more than 20 African countries have come to Ethiopia for this purpose. Moreover, many more African countries have shown interest in learning from Ethiopia's successful community-based PHC program.

There is currently no international institute which is closely linked to a successful national program and grounded in exposure to fieldwork dedicated to expanding and strengthening of PHC programs at scale throughout Africa and beyond. The establishment of an International Institute for PHC will produce major benefits nationally as well as internationally by helping other countries design and implement PHC programs at scale that will accelerate progress in improving the health of populations in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond while strengthening the current country implementation model. Hence, the Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia is establishing an International Institute for Primary Health Care. The Institute aims to strengthen the internal processes and management of the PHC and HEP systems and also contribute to the revitalization of the global movement of 'Health for All' through the PHC approach. Using Ethiopia's rich experience and best practices

in the implementation of innovative PHC approaches and community-based health programs at scale, the Institute will have the following key objectives, focusing on PHC and community-based health programs:

- Provide short-term trainings for designing and strengthening PHC programs for national and international trainees;
- Provide short term trainings and support for managers at all levels of the PHC and CH systems on business process and management of the PHC;
- Provide short-term trainings in line with the "transformation agenda" of the Health Sector Transformation Plan of Ethiopia, including Woreda transformation;
- Carryout need-based health systems implementation research on PHC and community-based health programs;
- Serve as a resource center for the Federal Ministry of Health, its Regional Health Bureaus, and other institutions in Ethiopia and beyond;
- Organize fora to communicate research findings, policy changes, and other updates;
- Launch and Issue an international Journal on PHC; and,
- Host visits from other countries in Africa and beyond.