

The PPHSN and the Health Sector Reform Agenda from Samoa's Health Sector Reform Perspective as per Strategic Objectives

Introduction

This document was produced to serve as a background paper for Dr M.Nuualofa Tuuau Potoi's 'Brief on Health Sector Reforms and PPHSN's Plan of Action', at the 8th PPHSN-CB meeting, 24-26 July 2002.

It is based on the reform agenda as outlined in the Government of Samoa's Health Sector Strategic Plan 1998-2003, but it can also be applied more broadly to reforms that are ongoing in many other countries in the region.

There are several strategic objectives of the Samoa Health Sector Reform agenda in which the PPHSN Plan of Action could fit. These are:

1. To provide health services to improve, promote and protect health;
2. To improve the quality of health services;
3. To ensure the communities' access to safe, appropriate and affordable treatment options;
4. To provide sustainable and well-coordinated health programs according to health sector goals and objectives;
5. To improve the quality of advice to Government on health sector funding, policy, regulation, legislation and management;
6. To build the capacity of health sector managers to effectively and efficiently manage health services; and
7. To train and develop the health work force to ensure sustainability of quality health services¹.

1) To provide health services to improve, promote and protect health

There has been a shift in emphasis from curative to preventive health services. The PPHSN has the potential to be instrumental as a public health surveillance tool to provide and share information with colleagues in the region about relevant epidemiological data, clinical experiences and current emerging issues.

In this way, member countries can use information provided through the network to be proactive with preventive efforts, including immunisations, public health campaigns, and preventive strategies for re-emerging infectious diseases. Members of the network can share information about successful health promotion strategies.

2) To improve the quality of health services

Resources in the PPHSN such as the established PacNet (and when further developed in the future, LabNet and EpiNet) can contribute to improved regional and

1. Government of Samoa, Health Sector Strategic Plan 1998-2003, p.11

national communication, surveillance and responses to communicable diseases. This could be broadened to non-communicable diseases as currently envisaged as an additional priority to the PPHSN's TORs and as outlined in a brief prepared for Dr Potoi entitled 'Inclusion of NCDs into the PPHSN'.

LabNet can provide capacity for laboratory testing through shared services, thereby maximising the use of limited resources in the region. The PPHSN Outbreak Surveillance and Response Guidelines are currently in draft form and, once implemented, will hopefully improve the quality of surveillance and response to outbreaks in the region. Improved surveillance, laboratory services and public health response have a direct impact on the quality of health services provided, as long as the appropriate management processes are in place.

3) To ensure the communities' access to safe, appropriate and affordable treatment options

Sharing of information, guidelines, expertise and resources under the framework of the PPHSN allows greater parity of access to quality care across the region.

4) To provide sustainable and well-coordinated health programs according to health sector goals and objectives

Health sector priorities are now shifting from communicable diseases towards non-communicable diseases, as they are the most common cause of death and morbidity and are showing an upward trend in prevalence and incidence. NCDs now consume a large proportion of the health care budget and this trend is increasing. It is well recognised that this trend will increase further unless prevention is emphasised. The PPHSN could enhance communication, coordination and collaboration on NCD programs as well as CD programs.

5) To improve the quality of advice to Government on health sector funding, policy, regulation, legislation and management

Quality advice depends upon quality information, which is enhanced by the information and communications technology (ICT) offered by the PPHSN. The PPHSN aims to provide relevant and useful information to the right people at the right time. Policies, regulations, legislation and management strategies need not be developed in isolation; many countries in the region will share similar policy needs and could share expertise, information and resources through the PPHSN. International Health Regulations (IHR) could be shared through the PPHSN.

6) To build the capacity of health sector managers to effectively and efficiently manage health services

The devolution of management responsibilities and budget control has been a central tenet of health care reform in Samoa, as in many other parts of the world. Clinician-led management is a current trend in health reform, whereby heads of clinical departments are given more autonomy over management of their own teams and budgets. This should, theoretically, lead to more efficient micro-level decision-

making. The PPHSN would enable individual clinician-managers to make more informed health care and management decisions through communication and the establishment of collaborative networks.

7) To train and develop the health work force to ensure sustainability of quality health services

The PPHSN offers some training workshops and modules, conferences, and has the potential for distance education for health care workers in the region. For example, it offers workshops on basic and advanced public health surveillance, and the use of Epi Info 6 software. This will serve to improve local capacity for public health surveillance and response in the region.

Conclusion

Health care reform is an ongoing reality in Samoa, as elsewhere in the Pacific region and the rest of the world. From Samoa's Health Sector Reform perspective, PPHSN is currently contributing to the reform process. It has the potential for further contributions, depending on availability of resources and the implementation of its Plan of Action, and on the possible inclusion of NCDs into its scope of activities.

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