



## **GLOBAL FORUM 6 CONFERENCE, 12-15 NOVEMBER 2002, ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

### **EQUINET SECRETARIAT BRIEFING DECEMBER 2002**

TJ Ngulube, CHESSORE, R Loewenson, TARSC

EQUINET recently participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Health Research Forum and the first to be held in a developing country, in Arusha Tanzania since its establishment in 1998. The GFHR is an independent, international foundation established in 1998, and funded by Rockefeller Foundation, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, the government of Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

The GFHR made one of the meeting's primary goals to address the so-called 10/90 gap. Only 10 per cent out US 70 billion dollars spent worldwide on health research by the public and private sectors is devoted to 90 per cent of health problems faced by poor countries. Most research money, according to GFHR, is spent on diseases like cancer or degenerative conditions, which are more common in affluent nations.

The meeting in Arusha aimed to discuss recent progress in helping correct the 10/90 gap, disseminate key research findings, and develop longer term action plans for promoting health research for development and fight against poverty. The Global Forum's host partner was the National Institute for Medical Research of Tanzania (NIMR), an institution founded in 1980 to promote, coordinate, monitor, evaluate and undertake health research on behalf of the government of Tanzania.

The third landmark report of the Global Forum, The 10/90 Report on Health Research 2001-2002, focuses on the crucial role of health and health research in the fight against poverty; progress in the definition of priorities for health research; the development of partnerships and networks in key research areas; and the application of a new tool for developing the priority research agenda. The Report covers progress in helping correct the 10/90 gap in health research over the past two years and outlines plans for the coming years. The report is available at <http://www.globalforumhealth.org/pages/index.asp>

The meeting was attended by participants from 85 countries and 23 international organizations. The Vice President, Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein gave the key-note on the opening day. Minister of Health Anna Abdallah, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry Mariam Mwafisi, and other members of the Tanzanians government took part in the forum.

TJ Ngulube of EQUINET attended the meeting. He notes some issues arising from the meeting:

- Research capacity in the developing countries was observed to be low, and much work remained to be done in order to remedy the situation. Issues of declining economies, the brain drain, lack of skills and capacity building programmes, poor north-south and south-south cooperation, a poor research environment, and others were cited as contributing factors. The situation was particularly bad for Africa.

- The lack of a research culture and of research ethics committees were identified as other contributing factors to poor research in developing countries. The issue of research ethics bodies was particularly cited for urgent attention as a way to get research moving in developing countries. In this regard, the African Health Research Forum was launched at the meeting and set as its priority the task of assisting African countries to establish ethics bodies.
- The role of research in development was identified to be critical. Some of the on-going global health programmes (such as the Roll Back Malaria) will be driven by a research agenda. In this regard, it was pointed out that more resources will be given to those countries and programmes that come up with evidence based plans and that trial and error efforts without evidence are less likely to attract donor funding.
- Gender issues were identified as critical to human development efforts. As such, solutions that did not integrate a gender outlook were seen as inadequate. Research should try to integrate a gender perspective for a holistic picture of any situation.
- Issues of governance in health as well as priority setting and resource allocation were identified as critical areas for health research and implementation. Notably these are already amongst EQUINETS top priorities.

The African Health Research Forum was formally launched at the Global Forum 6 in Arusha. The forum aims to bring together the health research community in Africa with a view to promote networking and capacity building for health research. Among the key issues identified for immediate action were the establishment of ethics bodies in Africa, the brain drain and losses of skilled personnel from Africa and the creation of a network of health research networks on the continent. The newly launched body has received pledges of support from the WHO and the IDRC in Canada. The EQUINET co-ordinator (R Loewenson) is a member of the steering committee.

In order to narrow the 10/90 gap, it was observed that there is need for complementary approaches and efforts to PULL the resources by developing countries and research institutions; and also to PUSH the resources to developing countries by the developed countries and institutions of the North. This calls for joint commitments and links north and south.

A number of organizations and research groups exhibited their research works at a 'market place' specially set up for the purpose. EQUINET publications were displayed at the market place and popularly received.

The next Global Forum 7 meeting will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2003. It is suggested that EQUINET make provision to send at least two representatives to such a global meeting to disseminate its findings to the global scientific community. EQUINET should also aim to submit abstracts for such meetings.

*Information on the Global Forum for Health Research is available from <http://www.globalforumhealth.org/>. A listserv has been set up for the African Health Research Forum at [African Health Research Forum@yahoo.com](mailto:African_Health_Research_Forum@yahoo.com) Messages posted on this address are accessible by a wide audience of stakeholders. Information on EQUINET is available in hardcopy from the EQUINET secretariat at TARSC, 47 Van Praagh Ave, Harare, email [admin@equinetafrica.org](mailto:admin@equinetafrica.org) or from our website at [www.equinetafrica.org](http://www.equinetafrica.org) .*