



Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS)

Workshop on Status of Health Research in Ethiopia

Press Release, 14 December 2012

A one day workshop on “**Status of Health Research in Ethiopia**” organized by the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS) opened today at Desalegn Hotel, Addis Ababa. The objective of the workshop is to discuss and validate the findings and conclusions of a study on “**Mapping of Health Sector Research Landscape in Ethiopia**”. The study was carried out by senior consultant experts in the health sector with the major objective of assessing the mandate, capacity and status of health research establishments (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and identification of the major policy and capacity gaps that need to be bridged by the concerned parties in the health sector. Prof. Demissie Habte, President of the Academy opened the workshop.

The preliminary findings of the study indicate that the need for evidence-based decision making in the context of constrained resources is well established and also recognized in the Ethiopian health policy and strategy documents. The study also concludes that over all research activities have increased and the potential for further increase seems high even though the number of researchers remains comparatively low. Institutes specifically dedicated to health research are few but the number of health related university institutions is growing rapidly. Some of the major once have Health and Demography Surveillance Sites which, if well coordinated and supported, could generate a relatively representative prospective data on/for Ethiopia. There are also a large number of other institutions (regional labs, hospitals) whose capacity for research has yet to be

tapped. The study also concludes that there is encouraging growth in research activities but is still relatively low in absolute numbers compared to other countries.

The study also concludes that there is a pervasive feeling that research is not adequately influencing policy decision. Effort and capacity to develop policy-makers friendly briefs is limited even though there is growing awareness of the need. There is also some attempt at increasing research literacy among the general population. Overall, the human resource base for health research is highly constrained with very few (low proportion) with high skill & experience for example at PhD or equivalent (high research skill) level. There is almost no incentive to do research other than for promotion. Major problems of retention (brain-drain) of qualified and experienced staff are also reported.

Researchers, academicians, health practitioners and policy makers representing research institutes, universities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and the private sector are participating in the workshop. The deliberations will contribute towards validating the primary findings and enriching the study report with the ultimate objective of fostering capacity building, coordination and financing of health research in the country. The workshop is sponsored by the Royal Society (UK) – Pfizer African Science Academies Program.

Undertaking consensus studies and creation of discussion platforms on various science and technology issues of national concern are among the main activities of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences. Such undertakings enable the Academy to provide evidence based policy advice to the Government and other organizations engaged in policy making, education and research. The Academy held a similar workshop on 06 December 2012 on “Integration of Nutrition with Agriculture and nutrition”. Another workshop is also planned for 27 December 2012 on “Quality of Primary Education in Ethiopia”.