



African Countries being categorized as developing countries should not be an excuse for having a Weak/Poor Health System

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Abstract

To ensure optimal health status of Africans, we need a strong health system, we shall surely have it if all health concerned stakeholders understand and put into the consideration the fact that achieving optimal good health status is an important and primary goal to be primarily considered in all planned actions. Health system strengthening has been clearly stated in many African countries. However, weak health system still exists in many of these countries. As such poor health status continues to appear for many Africans. To be categorized as developing countries seems to have been equalized to existence of weak health system in Africa which is not true, because to be in the phase of development would mean to do all possible actions so as to achieve such needed development. In line of that one would suspect strong health system to take the first priority because health and development are closely related and development provides the means for health while health is the key component of development. This paper highlights viewpoints that, to be categorized as developing countries should not fairly be an excuse for having the chronic weak health system in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, Africans, developing countries, health, health system, weak health system

Introduction

To ensure optimal health status of the people in Africa, we need a strong health system, we shall surely have it if all health concerned stakeholders understand and put into the consideration the fact that, to achieve optimal good health status is an important and primary goal to be primarily considered in all planned actions. Health system has been defined as all organizations, people, and actions whose primary intents are to promote or restore or maintain health (Malakoane et al., 2020). Across many Africans' countries the concept of health system strengthening has been stated but not appropriately addressed. In Africa Weak health system continues to exist, as such poor health status also continues to exist. The faults are ours, because our efforts have been not united. Developing countries can do much in the momentum of strengthening their health system if they first understand that being developing countries means to have at the maximal level all possible means designed to lead to the development.

African countries should learn from history as means of re-thinking on the strategies designed to strengthen their health system.

Based on historical foundations Africans can design stronger approaches for strengthening their health system. History teaches, it has been said that, those who do not know where they

are coming from cannot know where they are going. Africa having been colonized and gained independence would mean to move together with common goals and mainly put more emphasis on the process of optimizing health status of Africans. Although much has been done numerous evidences indicate that, Africans have not learnt from their history and this continue to lead to the existence of many problems of which weak health system is among the uncountable to mention.

Wars and conflicts in Africa are still marked among the contributors leading to weak health system. From the past up to now, wars has been marked as habitual actions in many parts of Africa. But what is mostly forgotten is that, wars destroy and they do not construct. To mention few negative impacts of wars: war leads to the occurrence of many refugees (Akokpari, 1998), deaths of many intellectual people, increase the occurrence of many diseases (malnutrition, typhoid, Cholera etc.). By recognizing the fact that, body changes in pain, hunger, fear and rage would remind all Africans to stop all possible factors leading to the occurrence of wars and conflicts. Such recognition would bring the best outcomes by removing suffering from many people and concentrate to developmental activities. This would also further mean the occurrence of optimal good health status which is the final outcome of well and strongly established health system.

Historical many African countries were marked as poor countries, but as of now they are marked as developing countries with clear agenda of transformation into middle developed or developed countries (middle or high income countries). Strengthening health system without giving an excuse that, it is not possible to strengthen health system while still developing is the best approach to lead Africans' countries to achieve their agenda. In fact it has been confirmed that, health and development are closely related and that development provides the means for health while health is the key component of development.

African countries and constantly slow change of epidemiological transition for various diseases a painful fact, and remained unanswered question to answer.

The suspected epidemiological transition for various diseases has been slow in developing countries. Epidemiologic transition describes the trajectory of changes in the pattern of disease and causes of death in a given country (Santosa, 2010). Notably, epidemiological transition has five stages, namely, 1) pestilence and famine, 2) receding pandemics, 3) degenerative and human made diseases, 4) delayed degenerative diseases, 5) inactivity and obesity.

These stages have distinct description. Stage one (pestilence and famine) is predominated by malnutrition and infectious diseases as the cause of deaths (Santosa, 2010; Version, 2000). Higher children's mortality, and low mean life expectancy mark this phase. stage two (receding pandemics) encompasses the principles of improving nutrition and public health services which lead to decrease in rates of deaths related to malnutrition and infections (Defo, 2014; Version, 2000). Stage three (degenerative and human made diseases), is marked by increased fat and caloric intake and decrease in physical activities leading to higher prevalent of non-communicable diseases for instance hypertension, diabetes, atherosclerosis etc. Mortality from non-communicable diseases exceeds mortality from malnutrition and infectious diseases. Stage 4 (delayed degenerative disease) is marked by high morbidity and mortality due to cardiovascular diseases and cancers. Availability of better treatments and preventive efforts assist to avoid deaths from these diseases. Stage 5 (inactivity and obesity), overweight and obesity increase at unacceptable rates coupled with increased rates of hypertension, and diabetes etc. Putting more emphasis on preventive measures for instance

reducing smoking rates and encouraging physical activities is recommended to reduce the burden of diseases appearing in this stage.

By closer look on what is in African countries, it is unacceptable that, the marked diseases in each stage are now highly prevalent in developing countries (Defo, 2014; Global, 2014). Sub-Saharan African countries remain mostly in the first stage. Many innocent children are still dying due to under-nutrition and infections continue to be the common cause of mortality and morbidity in all age groups. Probably, this tragedy continues to appear due to weak health system in these countries. Indeed this happens while African countries are ever saying that, they are developing. Would such development be achieved and sustained without strong health system? Probably, the answer is no. To sustain such development, African countries should optimally respect the facts aimed to strengthen their health system in all of their planned actions.

African countries and failure to fully implement some commitments, the factor which leads to weak health system

A number of commitments are ever formulated globally and many countries opt to achieve them. In fact some countries achieve those commitments at an optimal level. However, others especially developing countries of which Africa belong do not. The fact which is too painful as most of those commitments are mainly made in line of supporting the people of developing countries to gain optimal health status.

To mention few examples, firstly, by 1978 the whole World opted the commitments to adopt the concept of primary health care (Rifkin, 2018). Primary health care was and is still the most powerful approach to use for strengthening the health system in developing countries (World Health Organization [WHO] & [UNICEF], 2018). Since its inception few worlds' countries have fully adopted its principles and put them into the practice. The health system of these few countries which have maximally adopted primary health care has actually advanced with optimal good health outcomes for their population. The question is, why have some other developing countries failed to practice primary health care optimally? It is hard to find an answer for such question but, most people will give an answer that, it is because they are still developing. In the brain of an intellectual person, such answer would not stimulate an impulse leading to integration, processing and accepting such information.

Secondary, in 2015 the commitment designed to strengthen surgical practice (lancet commission) was established. This commission is line of supporting the achievements of sustainable developments goals by the year 2030 (Meara et al., 2015). This commission looked as if it is splendidly designed with suspected outcomes of optimizing the health status of surgical patients. As of that time globally, it was estimated that about 5 billion people had no easy access to surgical care (Meara et al., 2015). Most of these patients were found in Africa and possibly such prevalence persists or has increased as surgical services have not advanced. Universal access to safe, affordable surgical and anesthesia remain a problematic in many African countries. However, the commitments to strengthen surgical practice remains mutedly mentioned. Intuitively, there is no promising evidence in developing countries that, by 2030 this mission will have been achieved. Thus, that said waiting to hear in 2030, a painful word that, the failure, was because of being developing countries.

African countries and failure to fully use their resources, the factor which leads to weak health system

African continent is full of uncountable resources of which when utilized properly would lead to the desired development which is the key component of health. Numerous evidences

indicate that, Africans have failed to use their resources properly. To mention few examples, Africa continent is marked as the continent with fertile land than any other continent however; due to failure to use such land properly food insecurity which is the cause of under-nutrition is ever reported. Africa is also among the highly populated continent, but lack of human resources is also ever reported across the continent of Africa. Without proper use of resources no developments and as such no strong health system of which poor health status of the population is the common manifestation.

African countries with numerous intellectual people but constantly understaffed health sector remained unanswered question

The most obvious fact, but a painful one, is the continuous occurrence of understaffed health sector in African countries yet there are many intellectual people in Africa. "In 2006, World Health Organization (WHO) alerted the world to a shortfall of 4.3 million trained health workers globally"(Workers et al., 2008). As of that time African and Asian countries were the most affected. Such recognition led WHO to affirm vision 2020, which aimed to ensure enough health workers for all world's countries and the projection was made that extra 8.5 million healthcare workers will be needed by 2025. Despite such agenda of WHO which alerted countries to train enough health workers, numerous evidences indicate that many countries are still with shortage of health workers.

In Africa the shortage of health workers continue to be serious problem which is a major factor leading to remained unacceptable morbidity and mortality for various diseases. Why such shortage continues to appear when there are many intellectual people in Africa. Brain drain has been reported among the contributors leading to insufficient health work taskforces; however, many African countries have not taken an action to stop the occurrence of brain drain (Chief Africa's hopes for new UN, 2017; THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION, 2018). But even the health workers who have opted to remain to work in Africa are not motivated. Furthermore, many health workers are not employed yet almost in each country of Africa there are understaffed hospitals. By looking the problems of insufficient health taskforces, one can ask a question where are an intellectual people of Africa? Opting to strengthen health system of Africa without knowing and empowering many intellectual people of Africa to support such agenda is serious mistake which is ever done in many African countries. Thus, there is chronically persisted weak health system in Africa.

Africa and its sleepy youths should awaken up, as possible solution for strengthening their health system.

Youths comprise a higher portion of the population of Africa. It is usually said that, the youths are the future Africa. Yes it is true the youths are the future Africa. But the question is, is it just to be a future African? Or it is a future African with better health, good manners and with the capacity to work so as to achieve an optimal health status? Sleeping is temporally physiological process in which the brain slows its activities. It is characterized by low response to the surrounding environment. In daily life being sleepy would mean slow response or no response to a certain planned actions. Across the whole Africa continent many actions designed to strengthen the Africans' health status are on the ground. However, what remains painful is that, many people have not responded and utilized these actions at an optimal level. For instance, HIV/AIDS protective measures have been available for many years. However, new HIV infections are reported every day. Further example, measures designed to avoid the use of abusive drugs, such as tobacco, alcohol (the dangerous toxin of the brain) have been stated but many people including the youths have not responded to them.

Africans should change behavior as possible solution for strengthening health system.

The evidence is clear human behavior affects health. The morbidity and mortality of numerous diseases in Africa continue to be highly unacceptable because some Africans have not changed their unhealthy behavior. For instance new HIV infection and deaths related to it continue to occur in many parts of Africa. But who does not know the dangers of HIV? Presently, should it be right to write and interpret an abbreviation of HIV as Human Ignorant Virus? Possibly some people still lack knowledge about the dangers of some diseases and how to prevent them; the reason why they have refused to change their unhealthy behavior. Human beings are regarded as rational decision makers whose knowledge informs their actions. The knowledge regarding to health promotion and disease prevention is mostly insufficient or not well perceived by many Africans. Thus, continued unchanged behavior leading to poor health status. To strengthen health system in developing countries behavior change approach is profoundly needed and this can be achieved via optimizing health education.

Factors leading to weak health care system in developing counties to be given prompt attentions, the possible solution to lead to strong health system

Numerous authors have written many on the factors leading to the occurrence of weak health system in Africa. Few examples of those factors includes: Corruption, Poverty, Insufficient use of the knowledge, Lack of political will, Ignorance, High fertility rates, Political instability etc.

With respect to knowledge, human brain must work at two levels. The first level should encompass to acquire knowledge and use the knowledge. By closer reasoning insufficient use of the knowledge would be regarded as common factor leading to weak health system in Africa. Advance in technology has led to easy dissemination of knowledge but many Africans bleakly use technology to acquire and utilize such knowledge. For instance, in the field of medicine it is ever emphasized that practical approach with the optimal use of evidence based medicine would lead to the advance in medical practice. However, many health professionals including policymakers have not adopted this approach. This is the dangerous fact, as resources are wasted for nonfunctional interventions and poor health outcomes are ever reported at all levels of health sectors. The second level encompasses the fact of generating new knowledge via conducting researches. Developing countries have not put emphasis on this level yet health sector is ever requiring new knowledge. To ensure the progress of health system of developing countries there is a need to invest more in research activities and put more efforts on innovative processes. Furthermore, more emphases are needed to stop other factors leading to weak health system.

Conclusion

It is fundamental crucial to remember that, African countries still need to strengthen their health system. As Africans making our health system stronger by moving together with clear stated goals and united efforts, opting to achieve best health outcomes and provide the best health care services and achieving the highest patient and population satisfaction is the most energetic approach to lead us to self-sustainability.

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