

**CPED Staff Participated in the Annual Meeting of Members of the Regional
Advisory Committee of WAHO-IDRC Project on Health Systems
Dakar, Senegal, February 15-17, 2016**

Report by Job Imharobere Eronmhonsele

Background Information

The journey started in November 2011 when the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) began a dialogue with the governance in equity in health systems' arm of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). And in July 2012 the duo WAHO and IDRC built a cooperation which gave birth to a regional project titled "West African Initiative on Capacity building through Research on Health Systems". The purpose of the regional project is to contribute to strengthening governance for equity in health systems. The project was designed to set the foundation for producing and using rigorous and relevant evidence to strengthen equitable and sustainable health systems in West Africa through three inter-related strategies.

Through a rigorous and competitive process, 4 organisations operating in different countries in the region were shrewdly selected to be financially supported to implement the research project in their countries of operation. The organisations are: SERSAP in Burkina Faso, CPED in Nigeria, CREFDES in Senegal and Northern Polytechnic in Sierra Leone. Regional mechanisms (Establishment of a Regional Advisory Committee and a mechanism for Monitoring-Learning-Evaluation) as well as national ones (Establishment of national steering committee composed of relevant stakeholders in connection with the topic of the study) were also set up to guide, monitor, support and learn throughout the implementation period of the regional project.

About the Meeting in Dakar

As part of the work plan of the initiative, a project review workshop was held in Dakar, Senegal, February 15 – 17, 2016. The workshop brought together all

partners involved in the implementation of the regional project. The objectives of the regional advisory committee meeting among other things include to:

- Assess the quality of the implementation of the four research projects of the regional initiative.
- Clarify the next steps towards the production of rigorous and useful research findings.
- Draw lessons from projects implementation and research findings.
- Clarify the next steps towards research teams' and WAHO's readiness for the production of publications and participation in the Vancouver International Conference (November 2016).
- Develop long-term implementation plans for each research team and for the regional level to harness knowledge transfer and influence policy and practices.

Those present include the Director General of WAHO, representatives of IDRC including Sue Godt and the Regional Advisory Committee members including Dr. Artur Jorge Correia, president of the National Health Development Centre, Ministry of Health, Praia, Cape Verde; Professor Rose GanaFomban Leke, Board Chair, National Medical Research Institute, University of Yaounde and Irene Agyepong, University of Ghana among others. Technical experts and consultants for the project in the region were also invited to participate in the workshop. Among these were Professor Benjamin Uzochukwu, Dr. Ayo Palmer, Mohamed Kebbeh and Adama Ndiaye. Other attendees include research team members of the four regional projects along with representatives of the project steering committees. Professor Emeritus Andrew Godwin Onokerhoraye and Job Imharobere Eronmhonsele represented CPED research team while Dr. Francis Onojeta, Ministry of Health, Asaba, Delta State represented the steering committee set up by CPED research team.

After the usual welcome remarks and introduction of participants, Dr. Keita made a presentation of the progress report on the regional project i.e. "West Africa Initiative on the Capacity building through Research on Health

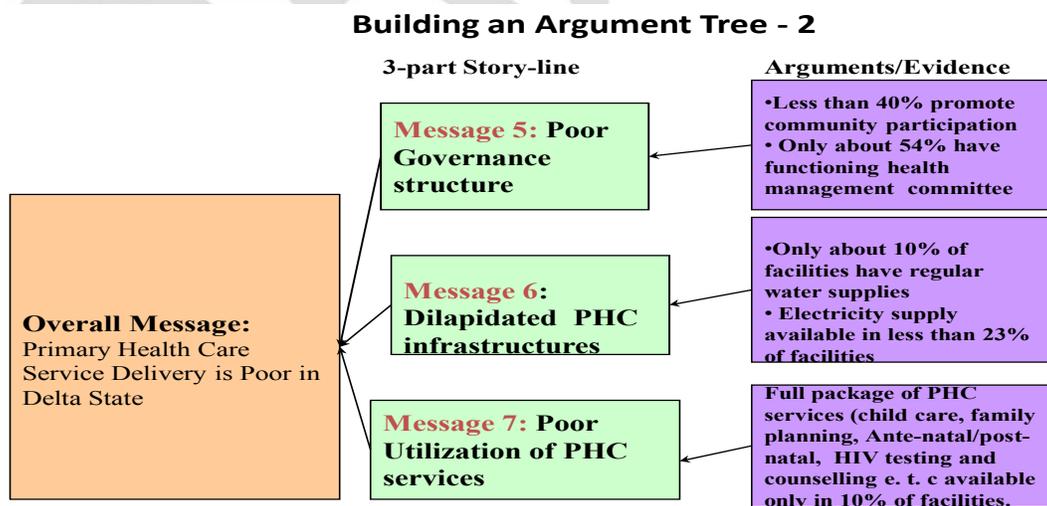
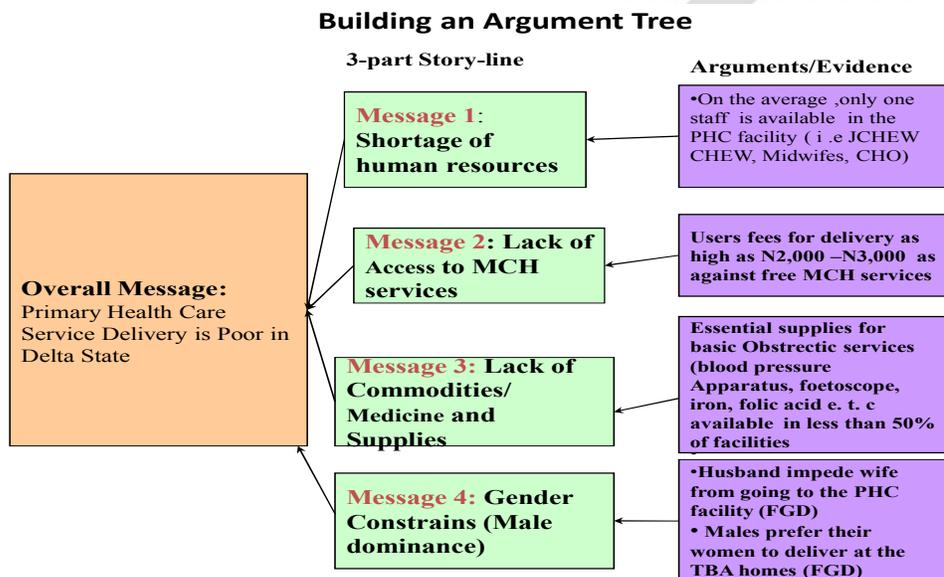
Systems”. While commending all the research teams for the work done so far, Dr. Keita also stated that more works need to be done to able to meet the set objectives of the initiative. He stated that the meeting would enable research teams to learn from each other and share experiences of what works better in their respective countries as well as identify gaps in the implementation of the research. Dr. Keita (regional coordinator for the WAHO project) specially commended CPED for being able to produce policy briefs with actionable recommendations for communicating with policy makers and all stakeholders. He however enjoined CPED to go beyond that and engage policy actors with key recommendations to bring about the needed change in the health systems.

To begin the day one activities proper, each research team was asked to do a group work with the help of the technical experts and consultants to assess the quality of the teams’ research project with respect to Implementation- design, quality, methodology, findings and urgent needs for the team to successfully complete the research project. After the group work, each team made a presentation based on the comments from the group discussions on the status and main results of the research project implementation. CPED Executive director and the health systems project team leader **Professor Emeritus Andrew Godwin Onokerhoraye**, who represented the project Principal Investigator (**Professor Gideon E. D. Omuta**) at the meeting, made a presentation on behalf of CPED research team. The other 3 research groups also made presentations on the status of their implementation and this was followed by comments, suggestions and recommendation for improvement by all research teams.

Each research team were encourage to do more rigorous analysis of their data in order to come up with more actionable recommendations that can influence policies both at the state, national and west Africa sub-region.

The second day of the programme witnessed a slight twist from proposed agenda for the meeting. This in my opinion was due to the presentations made the previous day. The organizing team (WAHO, IDRC and the RAC) saw the

need to build the capacity of each research team to be able exhume key messages from the various research team work with respect to the findings of the research that can influence stakeholders for action. **Professor BSC Ozochukwu** took the research teams through the needed work to be done to achieve this. Thereafter, each research team (organization) was asked to do a group work and come up with a single message called 'building an argument tree' following the model below.



CPED Research team came up with the argument tree as shown above and was later presented by **Job Eronmhonsele**, who represented CPED Junior research team for the health systems project in Delta State. This was followed by comments and suggestions for improvement as well.

To further strengthened the various teams on policy engagement, the two organisations from the Anglophone countries (Nigeria, Sierra Leone) and Francophone (Senegal and Burkina Faso) were asked to jointly discuss what the roles of researchers are in moving from research findings to health policy. The steering committee members present, WAHO/IDRC group as well as the RAC members individually as a group brainstormed on their role in moving research findings to health policies both at the national and regional level.

The third day of the meeting was basically a half-day event. After the usual recap of the previous days' work, Dr. Keita of WAHO and Professor Irene Ayepong, University of Ghana and a member of the Regional Advisory Committee made presentations on the links/synergies between the regional project and other initiatives in the ECOWAS region including the new project of WAHO on "Innovating for Maternal Newborn and Child Health in the region" and how to capitalized on the initiatives.

This was followed by a discussion on the preparations for the World Symposium of Research on Health Systems to be held in Vancouver, November 14-18, 2016. It was gathered that abstracts have been submitted and virtually only 1 abstract each from the countries in the sub-region have been accepted for presentation so far. For example, only one abstract each has been accepted from Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal e. t. c. However, the Symposium organizing committee still invites abstracts for individual presentations linked to the six sub-themes of the symposium. For more information, please visit the website: www.healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2016. It was also emphasized that the competition is high and abstracts arising from the health systems projects in the region for submission, should be as many as possible to increase the chances of getting at least one accepted. Especially junior researchers and

postgraduate students were encouraged to apply and register for the conference.

To finalize the meeting process and chart a part way for what lies ahead, each research team, again, was asked to draw up an action/activity plan for the remaining period of the project.



PIC: GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS AFTER THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WAHO-IDRC DAKAR 15-17/02/2016

Professor Onokerhoraye presented the plan on behalf of CPED to include more engagement with policy makers to utilize recommendations of the research as well as organizing a workshop where all key stakeholders will be invited to consider the research report and chart the course for implementation to bring about the needed change.

The meeting was well organized and was declared closed by the DG of WAHO.