



HEALTH LINKS BETWEEN THE UK AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

CIEH Seminar

9 March 2009

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The Tropical Health and Education Trust

- Founded in 1988 to strengthen basic health services and medical education
- Creates long-term partnerships between UK health institutions and the developing world to fight disease and neglect. We call these Health Links.



Benefits of Good Health Links

- Sustainable: institutional, not personal
- Manageable pattern of exchanges (eg 2 weeks at a time). Mixed economy can be ideal.
- Respond to priorities identified by overseas partner: fundamental principle
- Interdisciplinary – build capacity in different dimensions over time

- Two-way benefits, mutual inspiration, development awareness
- Direct empowerment of overseas partners on the front line
- Capable of strategic relevance to country plans, eg to health worker training, if properly developed
- Can strengthen institutions, systems and general services, not just projects.

Gondar-Leicester programme; the first postgraduate surgeons 2007



The Potential: A Case Study

- King's College Hospital/THET/Somaliland Partners
- From small Link and seedcorn (2001) to Health Systems Strengthening Programme (2007 onwards)
- Lancet article July 2006



LORD CRISP'S REPORT

- “Global Health Partnerships” published February 2007
- Followed inclusive consultations which focused minds and built momentum
- Strong support for Health Links – good for strategic goals of international development (health systems strengthening based on Country Plans)...
- And good for UK NHS people and health professionals
- 16 recommendations for how Government can do more to encourage more Health Links of better quality

Government Response, March 2008

- Ministers: “We believe that there are significant benefits for developing countries, and indeed the UK health economy, that come from long-term sustainable partnerships in the health sector....We will ensure his key recommendations are taken forward with the minimum of delay”. (Himm.)

- Permanent Secretaries (DH, DFID, NHS Chief Executive, CMO) : “We recognise that UK institutions have valuable expertise and experience in the health sector and that sharing this with developing countries has mutual benefit”
- They commend Crisp Report to the NHS and all UK health and healthcare organisations.
- UK Government Global Health policy “Health is Global” also commends Links

The Resulting Opportunities:

1. Leadership

- Government – a new climate? Let's hear it from Cabinet Ministers
- NHS – let's hear it from the top
- New Framework can be significant – NHS Employers and Confederation – revision process underway
- Good signs of competition among NHS Trust Leaders
- Increasing buy-in to professional and personal benefits for NHS people, integration in strategies for HR and/or CSR

2. Finance

- Government commitment to finance UK International Health Links Centre – “one stop shop” for information
- New grants scheme for Health Links – important first step forward - £1.25 m pa for three years
- Possibilities of support from DFID offices overseas or from developing countries’ donated budgets – if Links are strategic, aligned, harmonised.

Potential for Environmental Health

- There are now c. 100 Health Links. Can they grow an environmental health dimension?
- THET Links database – Links section of THET's website www.thet.org.uk. Pinpoint local UK Links partner.
- Infiltrate Links gatherings, eg April 2nd THET conference in Cardiff, and push environmental health dimension
- Alternative way in via community twinning schemes, eg Gold Star community twinning scheme coordinated by Wales Council for Voluntary Action or local government links
- Innovative networks of environmental health, GPs, etc, cf Peter Minhinett example

Thank You



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