

Making a difference through public health



By: Kesete Ghebrehiwet

Ensuring an easy access to potable water, nutritious food, high quality air, broad range of services and addressing other socio-economic issues are among the factors that positively impact public health. Thus, the availability of public health professionals is a base line for the achievement of a comprehensive societal well-being. It is why the formation of Eritrean Public Health Association is of a paramount importance in ensuring the well-being of the Eritrean society.

The formation of the Eritrean Public Health Association is expected to advance Eritrea's Healthcare to a new height. Currently there are around 300 public health professionals in Eritrea in addition to healthcare professionals in other specialties.

Implementation of the objectives of public health, which gives utmost priority to prevention through various mitigation procedures is what has been practiced in Eritrea.

The availability of infrastructures for a wide range of services is, therefore, a necessity for a sound public health. That is why a network of infrastructure in all sectors have been put in place in various parts of Eritrea. The construction of healthcare facilities is among the notable various development packages of the country.

Since public health focuses on improving and protecting the health and well-being of large groups of people, immunization against various contagious diseases and treatment of non-communicable diseases is an area where Eritrea has been giving an utmost priority.

The country has been investing in educating public health professionals who shoulder huge responsibility to keep communities healthy through active involvement in ensuring child wellness, disease prevention and promoting access to healthcare and much more.

Eritrea has continued to make a difference in the provision of cost effective services such as education and easy access to potable water and other services that could impact the health of the society positively.

Various villages in Eritrea have gained access to potable water. Healthcare centers have been constructed in remote parts of the country and healthcare professionals in various specialties and sub-specialties been graduated.

The availability of potable water alone makes a substantial contribution in the overall well-being of the society and in ensuring the overall universal healthcare coverage. An easy access to potable water has been realized in most villages in Eritrea and societal health has improved.

At the official launching conference of the Eritrean Public Health Association (Eri- PHA) held on August 26 at Asmara Palace Hotel, Ms. Amina Nurhussien, Minister of Health, expressed support for the Eritrean Public Health Association saying Public Health is a pillar and a basic foundation of the health sector. The Minister added that the newly established association should work in collaboration with other sister associations and the Ministry will provide the needed support.

In an opening remark he made representing the Ministry of Health, Dr. Andebrhan Tesfatsion, chairman of the Eri-PHA said "The Ministry of Health will do all it can to create an enabling environment to implement the set objectives and improve the health of the Eritrean population."

Dr. Goitom Mebrahtu, representing Eritrean Medical Association (ERIMA), Mr. Philipos Yosief, representing Eritrean Pharmaceutical Association (ERIPA), and Ms. Tibe representing Eritrean Diabetic Association (EDA) have conveyed messages of solidarity to Eri-PHA that they will collaborate and reinforce good partnership with the newly formed Association.

In his presentation about "Policy, strategic orientation of the Health sector" Dr. Mismay Ghebrehiwet, said that a 90% coverage of immunization in Eritrea shows the country's strong organizational capacity, the role of mothers, administrative bodies and the dedication of healthcare professionals.

A country's development is measured through the dedication it makes in public health which in turn contributes to an increase in life expectancies, reduction in infant and child mortality and eradication or reduction of many communicable diseases.

At a time when large parts of the developing world remain plagued by largely preventable or treatable infectious diseases and poor maternal and child health, Eritrea has been making a difference to achieve the universal goal of public healthcare.

Hence, the efforts the country continues to make has been paid off and, as a result the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB and other communicable diseases have been reduced. What is more, reduction in maternal and child mortality is among the major successes Eritrea has registered in the Health sector.

As regards Eritrea's success in the healthcare and particularly in the preventable diseases, Dr. Andebrhan made this remarks:

Eritrea has remarkable achievement in reducing maternal and child mortality and in HIV/AIDS the number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy surpassed the number of new infections. For malaria, Eritrea is an exemplary nation in the African continent for a remarkable reduction in morbidity and mortality.

Since non-communicable diseases are becoming major killers in developing countries, Eritrea's Public Health Association and, mainly, the Ministry of Health are now shouldering a huge responsibility of preventing the dire consequences of diseases such as cardiovascular problems, cancer and diabetics among other diseases.

The establishment of Healthcare related associations plays a significant role in addressing health problems through collective efforts of professionals. It is for this reason, Eri-PHA was planned to be established in 2008 as Eritrean Environmental Health Association and was later revived as Eritrean Public Health Association in 2014.

Eri-PHA now officially established as of 26 August and has elected five members of an executive and three members of audit committees. The Association has now vowed it will be active as of the launching day held on 26 August.

The launching conference was attended by around 200 public health professionals, government officials, representatives of WHO, members of sister associations and invested guests.

Representing Ms. Josiepine Namboze, WHO representative in Eritrea, Dr. Yohannes Ghebrat, conveyed message of solidarity saying: "The WHO will continue to support the Eri-PHA during the establishment and operations of the association as it evolves."

Through organized efforts and the provision of health care to those who have less access to it, Eritrea will continue to register success stories in the delivery of universal healthcare to address Sustainable Development Goals the United Nations developed in 2015 as a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals of 2000 to be completed by 2030. The Eritrean Public Health Association is now expected to make a difference in

the delivery of healthcare and particularly in the prevention of diseases to meet the set out goals

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