Consultation Report on “Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) Pandemic and Sudan: The importance of Health Promotion”

11 November 2015, Al Salam Rotana
Khartoum, Sudan

Part of
“The Project for Strengthening Peace through the Improvement of Public Services In Three Darfur Sates 2015 to 2019”

For
JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency
FMOH: Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan

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Background:

SMAP II is aimed to support peace building in 3 states in Darfur, Sudan through the improvement of public services. One of the key strategies is to engage communities to maximize their capacities through community mobilization. In facing the pandemic of NCDs in Sudan, health promotion and community mobilization are effective approaches as well.

For the starting phase of the SMAP II project, it would be important to gather lessons and wisdoms learned in community mobilization from the field dealing with NCDs by various experts. We launched a seminar, “NCD pandemic and Sudan: the importance of health promotion” on November 11th 2015.

Target audience of the seminar was FMOH, SMOH officials, NGOs, and Sudanese academics that have been engaging NCDs in the community level. The format of the seminar was three presentations and a panel discussion followed by a reception for networking. (Please refer the final program in the Appendix 1)

Procedure:

- The seminar was started 30 min. later than scheduled, at 2:30pm, due to late gathering of the audience.
- The format of the seminar consists of three lectures and panel discussions by 5 panelists, primary care physician from the US, an NCD expert in FMOH, a representative of the NCD program from Gazila University, an NCD expert from WHO and a CT surgeon/Public Health expert.
- The participants were encouraged to jot down their comments and questions on blue cards distributed at their table. Amira and Mohamoud collected these comments and questions throughout the seminar to capture as many comments and questions as possible.
- Dr. Layla from FMOH HP department introduced speakers and served as the MC.
- The AV system did not work properly at Rotana Hotel; the slide projector failed during on of the presentations and one of the microphones did not work throughout the seminar.
- The lights set up by the media were too bright but could not be adjusted.

Presentations:

“The Roles of primary care in the era of NCDs: Importance of Health Promotion”,
Masahiro Morikawa, MD, MPH
“NCDs in Sudan”, Dr. Manal from FMOH
“The effort of NCD program in Gezila University”, Dr. Salwa, Gezila University

The her colleague, the director of newly developed NCD center in Gezila, Dr. Motar presented what NCD center in Gezila is doing through his program. They do train rural based family physicians with NCD skills.

Before the coffee break, we opened up to the floor for questions and comments. Variety of comments and questions emerged, from importance of primary prevention to treatment guidelines and protocol formation. After we took questions, we had coffee break.

Panel discussions:

Two more guests joined panel discussions, Drs. Mai from WHO and Dr. Ahmed ElSayed from Sudanese HTN association. The facilitator was myself.

Panel discussion was stated in response to the questions and comments posed before coffee break from the audience.

The first topic was guidelines and protocols. Dr. Manal explained the procedures to develop guidelines and how they would train peripherals of health care workers. Dr. Ahmed pointed out that the message should be simple and repeatedly communicated. Drs from Gezila University repeatedly pointed out and bring the discussion towards research and guideline formation, but I clarified that the intention of the discussion was for health promotion and community involvement.

Dr. Assad from Gezila University described the most of the prevalence data on NCDs in Sudan is collected at the hospitals and it doesn’t reflect true prevalence in the communities. The majority of participants believe that NCDs are silently epidemic in Sudan and we are already a little bit behind to address the issue.

Profs Elfatih and Mustafa both stated the importance of primary prevention and community engagement and tried to redirect the focus of discussions to primary prevention rather than secondary prevention brought up by many clinicians in the audience.

Prof Elfatih asked the panel about how we could engage the grassroots people in the communities and convince them to shift to healthy behaviors. Not much successful examples were shared by the audience or panel, I only pointed out the importance of persistence and our buy-ins.

Dr. Ahmed shared the fact that how successful the business community is to promote cigarette smoking among youngsters based on meticulous analysis of their behaviors and peer pressure. I explained that the business people seemed to have gone a few steps ahead of public health officials in terms of their capability of behavior research and social psychology.
I asked the panel the potential of law enforcement by smoking ban in public spaces like the NY State, but the practicality of practice and leadership in Sudan seemed to be still in question. Likewise, a few people asked federal regulation of pharmaceuticals but it was unclear and we did not delve into the problems during our discussion.

I posed the question of how technology would change the practice of community intervention and training in the future but both WHO and FMOH did not understand the exponential acceleration of proliferation of technologies such as smartphones. They only mentioned the anomaly of spread of technologies in the community level and they said they did not consider it as an common vehicle for intervention in particular context.

Lastly we cheered up health sector participants from the three Darfur states and confirmed we were ‘all in’ behind them for community-based intervention for SMAP II.

Other comments and questions from the floor:

Who would play a key role in NCD health promotion in the community?

It is important to include media/TV and radio to incorporate education and community mobilization

Needs for NCD surveillance system in Sudan

Address the shortage of equipment and drugs in tertiary care health facilities.

Needs for ‘evidence generation’ for the flight with NCDs in Sudan

Needs 5S training in all levels in health sector

What is the effect of passive smoking?

What are the preventive measures employed in other countries for DM and HTN?

Health messages should include pictures and illustrations other than words for better communication.

What are preventive measures planned by FMOH for NCD?

Health promoters should be trained on NCDs and prevention.
Implications and Thoughts For Future Planning:

- If we examined the venue, we should meticulously check actual AV equipment and microphone system on site before hand.

- Flexible scheduling is the key since many participants showed up more than 30 minutes behind the schedule.

- It was difficult to grasp the estimate of number of participants; it ended up mostly my personal connection and FMOH people.

- We should network more with prominent players such as professors in major universities and hospitals.

- Panel discussion with dual system: questions and comments (Q+C) at the microphone and written Q+C were more inclusive to capture wide range of questions and comments.

- The seminar provided useful opportunity to showcase JICA project especially to prominent players and key figures at the same time.

- All panelists agreed that health promotion and community mobilization require sustained commitment from the SMOH.

- The panelists found that it is not the health knowledge to change people’s behaviors, rather program implementers should be creative to employ different strategies to encourage behavioral change.

- New technologies, tablets, smart phones can help the way we deliver health information and would substantially change the way we interact with target communities.
Appendix 1:

Invitation to a Seminar for Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Pandemic and Sudan: The “Importance of Health Promotion”
11 November 2015, Al Salam Rotana, Khartoum

The Project for Strengthening Peace through the Improvement of Public Services in Three Darfur States
JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency
Federal Ministry of Health

Curbing non-communicable disease (NCDs) pandemic is the urgent agenda in the next decade among global health communities. NCDs are now the prevalent cause of morbidity and mortality in the world including low and middle-income countries. The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) 2010 study demonstrated that the 3 most important risk factors for NCD mortality and morbidity are hypertension, smoking and alcohol, all of which are amenable for prevention or ‘upstream’ interventions. Scarcity of healthcare resources required to treat full-blown diseases denotes the importance of health education and community-based interventions to contain NCD pandemic.

This seminar is intended to update audience on NCDs and provoke discussions on effective interventions among medical communities and in the field. We will bring in three speakers to discuss different aspects of NCDs. Interactive panel discussion facilitated by Dr. Morikawa will elucidate issues and strategies in community health which can make a difference in NCD outcomes.

Objectives
At the end of the seminar, participants should be able to;
1) Address the significance of NCDs,
2) Understand the importance of health promotion and other community-based interventions to tackle NCDs, and
3) Identify tools to address NCDs in their communities

Intended participants
1) Government officials
2) NGO/UN workers
3) Sudanese healthcare specialists
4) Epidemiologists and public health officials
5) Community workers

Venue
Al Salam Rotana, Khartoum
Speakers:

“The Roles of primary care in the era of NCDs”
Mori J Morikawa, MD, MPH
Ann S. & Anthony J. Asher Professor in Family Medicine & Community Health
Case Western Reserve University/University Hospitals Case Medical Center
Cleveland, USA

“Current state of NCDs in Sudan”
Manal Alemam, MD
NCDs Director, Federal Ministry of Health

“Community intervention to curve NCDs in Sudan”
Salwa Elsanousi, MD
Associate Professor
Department of community health
Faculty of medicine
University of Gezira

Schedule (11 November 2015)(organized by HP Directorate, FMoH)

13:30-14:00 Registration
14:00-14:05 Welcome from the organizer (by Deputy Director of Health Promotion)
14:05-14:45 “The Roles of primary care in the era of NCDs”
14:45-15:25 “Current state of NCDs in Sudan”
15:25-16:05 “Community intervention to curve NCDs in Sudan”
16:05-16:20 Break
16:20-17:30 Panel discussion: “Lessons learned: community-level interventions for NCDs”
17:30-20:00 Reception

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