

Redouble HSR efforts

Evidence is continuing to accumulate that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the successful implementation of major global health initiatives for health are severely constrained by severe inadequacies of health systems. In addition there is both inadequate production and utilization of research results for action or policy decision-making. We need to move quickly to address the above deficiencies using the relevant disciplines including social sciences, clinical epidemiology and public health specialties. Little progress has been made globally in the last decade. A major bottleneck is insufficient human resources that are well qualified and committed to undertake research in this field. Even when well-trained and committed personnel are available in institutions and networks like INCLEN, they do not get adequate support and resources to motivate them and enable them do what is needed.

Only very recently are major efforts being made to strongly advocate and stimulate action for addressing issues related to health systems research. At least two major recent developments in this regard deserve recognition and attention by all stake holders who have an influence in the health sector: The Joint Learning Initiative started by Rockefeller Foundation, having extensively examined inadequacies of human resources for health, has issued a detailed report with a series of recommendations that need to be translated into concrete action for results; The WHO Task Force for Health Systems Research has identified a number of priority research topics for which international collaborative research could help generate the knowledge necessary to improve performance of health systems.

The time is now for all individuals, institutions and networks for health to redouble their efforts and work to harness and act on the recommendations made by the above two initiatives. Equally important is that all stakeholders who have an influence in resource allocation for the health sector should review those recommendations with the intent to stimulate action that will lead to generation and use of quality research that will have impact on the health systems and health policy.

Nelson Sewankambo

Professor Sewankambo is currently Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Makerere University, Uganda. He has published numerous studies on HIV/AIDS epidemiology, prevention and treatment and contributed significantly to successful HIV/AIDS control programs in Uganda. He served as a member of the INCLEN, Inc. Board of Trustees (1998-2000) and INCLEN Board of Trustees (2001-2003).