



HEALTH AT THE G8: THE ULTIMATE DELUSION

The Ngo's working on health do not endorse the document on Africa and development regarding health. It lacks concrete actions even in light of the looming health catastrophe due to the world economic crisis.

“A very disappointing Communiqué, which leaves out crucial issues. Despite the economic crisis, we should have seen greater efforts to support global health”. The assessment of Italian and international organizations working in developing countries are firmly negative on the “Development and Africa” G8 Communiqué. “First of all, there is no mention of a **disbursement plan of the USD 60 billion** that should be delivered by 2011 to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and to strengthen health systems, promised in Heiligendamm in 2007 and confirmed last year at the Toyako Summit” – says Annalisa Stagni from **Action for Global Health**, a European NGOs network. “We want the G8 countries to sign a roadmap with clear modalities and timelines of disbursement of the USD 60 billion. This is the minimum amount required to cope with the weakness of the health systems of Southern countries”.

If the rich countries will not contribute to strengthen the health systems, for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health service provision and to fight pandemics, the impact of the economic crisis on developing countries can be catastrophic. To avoid a health crisis which would undermine both the fundamental human right to health and the economic growth of the Southern countries, it is crucial to support the public health systems – including addressing the shortage of health workers. In fact, as poverty increases, people will rely more and more on the already fragile public health systems, increasing their risk of collapse. Masaki Inaba of **Africa Japan Forum** notes that while the document highlights the need to strengthen health systems, the indicator of 2.3 health workers per 1,000 people contained in last year's G8 Communiqué is still far from being reached. In the next 10 years there will be a need for USD 26.4 billion for pre-service education in Sub-Saharan Africa, to fill that region's gap of 1.5 million health workers.

The total lack of any reference to the financial crisis which the **Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** (GFATM) is presently facing is unbelievable and of great concern”, comments Stefania Burbo of the **Italian Network against AIDS**. “Particularly, if we consider that this financing mechanism for the fight against the three pandemics was launched at the previous Italian G8, the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa, when Silvio Berlusconi was Prime Minister. In two points the Communiqué acknowledges the fundamental role played by the Global Fund in the last eight years - thus becoming the first financing tool for programs of fight against AIDS – and invites GFATM to keep supporting health systems in developing countries. There is no reference, however, to the resource gap - which equals USD 3 billion for 2009 and 2010. There are already approved programs which risk to remain only on paper, with the absence of an additional financial inflow from donor countries. These activities are vital if we want the positive trend registered until now by GFATM in saving millions of human lives to continue in the coming years.

“The continuing absence of a plan for realising **Universal Access to treatment for HIV/AIDS** is equally striking. The 2010 deadline is rapidly approaching and the goal – to which the G8 have committed for the first time in 2005 – will not be reached”, says Birte Rodenberg of **Action against AIDS Germany**. “In 2008, out of nearly 10 million people in need of antiretroviral therapy, only 3 millions have had access to it”.