

# **NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY**

**2005 Review (Draft)**

## **Overarching Principles**

### **A) Constitutional Right To Health Care**

*Article 29, Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, p.33-34, 1994*

The State recognizes the right of every citizen to protection of health and to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health and with a view to ensuring the effective exercise of this right, the State undertakes:

- a. To take steps to provide for free primary health care in State institutions for all its citizens
- b. To take appropriate measures to prevent, treat and control epidemic, endemic and other diseases
- c. To take steps to reduce infant mortality and promote the healthy development of the child
- d. To promote individual responsibility in health matters
- e. To allow, subject to such supervision and conditions as are necessary in a democratic society, for the establishment of private medical services

### **B) Health Policy Declaration of the Government of Seychelles**

*Reviewed from the 1995 version published in Health Policy, Strategy And Organization In Seychelles, A Sectoral Review For Constructive Reform, (p. 13)*

1. The government of Seychelles hereby commits itself and all the people to an intensive action to attain the goal of health for and health by all, that is: a level of health that will permit us to lead socially and economically productive lives.
2. The government is convinced that the health of the people not only contributes to better quality of lives but is also essential for the sustained economic and social development of the country as a whole.
3. The Seychellois people have the inalienable right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care. This will require considerable public education to create greater awareness especially in health promotion and disease prevention.
4. Primary health care which is the key to attaining the goal of health for all shall form an integral part of both the national health system of which it is

the central function and the main focus and of the overall social and economic development of the country.

5. The government and the people will formulate strategies and plans of action, which will take into consideration the socio-economic factors, available resources and particular health needs of the population. These strategies will be continually reassessed in order to ensure their adaptation to evolving stages of the development and will always include a vision of a high degree of equity and social justice.
6. The government undertakes:
  - To provide policy guidance and strategic support in efforts directed at intermediate and operational levels to establish health systems based on primary health care.
  - To coordinate efforts in order to ensure a coherent nationwide health system in which the national health ideals and philosophy will have full expression.
  - To continue to effectively develop an organized health system in which central referral institutions complete with all the relevant specialties will service strategically located health facilities.
  - To provide incentives in selected health fields to the best of its economic ability, in order to promote this endeavor.
  - To perform the overall responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the health strategy.
7. The government accepts to exercise political will to mobilize and utilize all available resources rationally so that the policy will provide all concerned with the formal framework and the national direction for the development of health in Seychelles

## **Organizational Policy**

### **The Minister**

The Ministry of Health (or its equivalent) shall be headed by a Minister appointed by the President of the Republic of Seychelles. The Minister shall be responsible for the implementation of all the different government health policies and of resource mobilization for the implementation of the policies. The Minister shall ensure that policies are developed, implemented and evaluated by public health sector technicians to guarantee that the government health services remain equitable, responsive to the health needs of the population and sustainable.

### **The Principal Secretary**

The Principal Secretary, also appointed by the President, shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Health (or its equivalent). The Principal Secretary shall ultimately manage all the resources and programmes of the public health sector with the dual aim of implementing government health policies and improving the health status of the population. The Principal Secretary shall be assisted by a Central Management Board appropriately constituted. Special Advisors shall be appointed according to the needs of the time.

### **The Tier System of Health Care Organization**

Traditionally, Seychelles has adopted a tier system for its health care delivery. The national health system shall continue to be based on three main levels of care and each level shall act as a gate-keeper for the next level. Access to primary care shall be free at the point of use as prescribed by the constitution. Access to other levels of care shall be regulated by the government as appropriate.

#### **1. Primary Care**

Primary care or community care shall be the first level of contact of a client or patient with the health system. Primary care/community care shall be organized to meet the basic preventive, curative, and rehabilitative care needs of the population. A loose system of zoning shall be in force for the delivery of primary/community care. Patients shall be encouraged to use the health centre located in their area of residence. The Ministry shall endeavour to ensure that there is one District Medical Officer for every 3000 patient and one district nurse for every 2000 people for each of the major health programmes.

The basic health package of primary care shall include the following services: Prevention and treatment of common ailments for all individuals in Seychelles, family planning services and screening tests for men and women, immunization and developmental assessment for all children, antenatal and post-natal services for all women, health promotion and counseling for all children, adolescents and adults, occupational and environmental health and safety programmes having the health centres as their bases and aimed at all individuals, families and communities. The detailed content of each element of this package shall be defined by the Ministry of Health (or its equivalent).

## **2. Secondary Care**

Patients shall be referred from Primary Care to Secondary Care by the district medical officer according to standing procedures. Victoria Hospital shall be the main referral hospital. Specialized hospitals shall be established as required and patients shall be referred to them according to standing procedures. Secondary care facilities shall be appropriately resourced to deliver the intended level of care.

## **3. Tertiary Care**

Tertiary care shall be offered locally or overseas according to the needs of the patient. The Ministry shall have an overseas treatment programme. A Board of Consultants shall recommend patients for overseas treatment based on a set of guiding principles recommended by the board and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. No effort shall be spared to improve Victoria Hospital or other new local treatment facilities to enable them to provide tertiary care and in so doing reduce the number of patients sent overseas for treatment. Patients and/or their relatives shall be required to contribute to the expenses of the overseas treatment programme depending on their ability to contribute. It shall not be the Ministry's responsibility to repatriate cadavres of patients who die while on overseas treatment.

## **Health Planning Policy**

Health planning in Seychelles shall be outcome-oriented. It shall seek to improve the health status of every individual, family and community living in Seychelles and shall seek to do so at every stage of the life cycle. Equity, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency and community participation shall be the core principles guiding health planning. Appropriate demographic and

service delivery statistics shall be methodically kept and consulted by the health planners.

### **Health Financing Policy**

Health care in Seychelles shall be financed by the following ways:

- General Taxation – up to 80%.
- Donour funds – up to 15%. Donor contributions shall be sought according to the priorities identified in the National Strategic Framework.
- User fees – up to 5% for selected services that are considered non essential or health services that do not fall within the realm of primary health care.

Primary Health care shall remain free at the point of use as prescribed by the Constitution of Seychelles.

### **Health Human Resource Policy**

The Ministry of Health (or its equivalent) shall endeavour to localize all posts in the public health sector. The appropriate manning level for each service shall be established by the Planning Division in collaboration with the services in question. Succession plans and training plans shall be established.

Recruitment of Seychellois nationals to the public health sector shall be on the basis of qualification and dedication. Pre-service and in-service training shall be provided to all individuals meeting the requirements for training and subject to availability of funds.

Expatriate health professionals shall be invited to support the efforts of Seychellois nationals in health service delivery. Expatriate health professionals must be able to communicate in one of the national languages in order to be employable in Seychelles.

### **Care Process Focus**

The public health sector shall uphold the proven adage that prevention is better than cure. Disease prevention strategies shall override all other health strategies. This philosophy shall be matched by the necessary allocation of resources.

## **Life Cycle Focus**

### **Neonatal Health Policy**

The Health System shall seek to keep abreast of all developments in technology and in medical science in order to develop the best neonatal care programme possible in Seychelles. All possible effort shall be invested to ensure that neonatal mortality and morbidity continually decreases. The Health System shall try to save the lives of all babies born below 28 weeks gestation. However, babies born below 28 weeks shall not be included in the calculation of infant mortality.

### **Infant Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the care needs of all infants. All possible effort shall be invested to ensure that infant mortality and morbidity continually decreases

### **Child Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the care needs of all children past the stage of infancy. Special emphasis shall be placed on shaping behaviours and creating environments that are free of health risks. Children under fifteen years presenting for non-emergency care shall be required to have a parent or guardian present.

### **Adolescent Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the care needs of all adolescents past the stage of puberty. Special emphasis shall be placed on further promoting healthy living and shaping risk free behaviours. Parental or equivalent consent shall be required before invasive procedures are performed on adolescents below eighteen years.

### **Geriatric Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the care needs of all individuals who have reached retirement age. All aspects of feasible domiciliary health care shall be provided to those in need.

### **End Of Life Care Policy**

The Ministry shall develop programmes and provide adequate resources to ensure that appropriate care is given to all individuals during the final stages of their illnesses. Patients shall be enabled to die in dignity. Neither passive nor active euthanasia shall be allowed in Seychelles.

### **Burden of Disease Focus**

#### **Heart Health Policy**

The reduction of risk factors associated with cardiovascular diseases shall be central to the effort to improve the health status of individuals, families and communities living in Seychelles. Appropriate programmes and adequate resources towards this effort shall be invested.

#### **Mental Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the mental health needs of all individuals, families and communities living in Seychelles. A modern approach to mental disease prevention and treatment shall be adopted.

#### **Policy on Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the needs for the prevention and control of all the priority communicable diseases in Seychelles. A Medical Officer Of Health shall be appointed by the Minister of Health to lead this effort. Appropriate disease surveillance and response and diagnostic and treatment facilities shall be set up.

#### **Dental Health Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the oral health needs of all individuals, families and communities living in Seychelles

#### **Emergency Care Policy**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be organized and resourced to meet the emergency care needs of all individuals, families and communities

living in Seychelles. An emergency response plan shall be developed, tried and tested as appropriate.

### **Substance Abuse Reduction Policy**

The public health sector shall work with other agencies to reduce the impact of substance abuse on the health of the population. Appropriate prevention and treatment programmes shall be put in place.

### **Gender Focus**

Services shall be organized in such a way as to ensure that both the male and the female gender benefit equitably from the services on offer. Services shall be made user-friendly taking in account gender considerations. Every effort shall be invested to ensure that males participate in family planning programmes. Every effort shall also be invested to ensure that women do not die as a result of the child-bearing process.

### **Policy For The Physically Impaired**

Primary, secondary and tertiary care facilities shall be structured in consideration of the needs of the physically impaired. Physical access to health facilities shall be adapted to the needs of the physically impaired.

### **Policy on Infrastructure and Technology**

#### **Technology**

Primary, secondary and tertiary health levels shall be equipped with adequate technology to discharge the functions attributed to them. Every effort shall be spent to ensure that technology used in the health sector is safe and secure through continuous training of staff, systematic maintenance and renewal and standardization of equipment. The information technology network shall be extended to the very last outpost of the public health sector.

#### **Infrastructure**

Buildings shall be erected or purchased (depending on cost-effectiveness) to meet the needs of programme delivery and health status improvement, at primary, secondary and tertiary care levels. Health centres and Hospitals shall be

erected after thorough consideration of the added value that new ones will bring to the system of health service delivery. Existing buildings owned by the Health Department shall be staffed and equipped to allow them to provide maximum benefit to the maximum possible number of people. The same principles shall govern the edification of new structures.

### **Rational Drug Use**

Rational drug use is central to the treatment policy of the public health sector. Doctors shall be encouraged to prescribe sensibly through out their practice. Dangerous Drugs of Addiction and all other drugs (all of which are potentially dangerous) shall be controlled and dispensed in accordance with international standards. The public health sector shall ensure that all drugs imported into the country and prescribed to patients are always of internationally recognized standards.

### **Alternative Medicine**

Alternative or complementary medicine is now considered an essential part of the health system. The public health sector shall support the setting up of internationally recognized forms of alternative medicine. The necessary operating framework for these services shall be put in place

### **Medical Documentation**

Appropriate documents as defined by the Principal Secretary of Health, shall be kept by all health services providing care to patients. These documents shall be confidentially kept in a retrievable form for the period of time stipulated by the law. An official of the Ministry shall be appointed by the Minister as Chief Records Officer of Health. The Chief Records Officer of Health shall be responsible for the storage, retrieval and approved sharing of all health records. Patients shall have a right to see and to be explained the contents of all documents in their medical records. However, these records shall remain the property of the Ministry of Health (or its equivalent). The Ministry shall not share or allow the sharing of any piece of information in the patients' records to persons who are not legally authorized to have such information.

### **Protocols, Guidelines And Operations Manual**

All services shall have operations protocol and guidelines clearly spelt out in operations manual. Standards of care shall be governed in part or in whole, depending on the circumstance, by these guidelines. With the assistance of

appropriate internal or external consultants, technical heads of services shall ensure that guidelines are produced and used accordingly.

### **Informed Consent And Health Protection**

Informed consent shall be required for all medical procedures on all individuals as well as for the participation of all individuals in medical or other health related research. The public health sector shall take every possible step to protect all individuals from health and other practices that endanger their health.

### **Patient Choice**

A Patient Charter shall regulate the relationship of the patient with the health system on a day to day basis. Patients' right to choose a health professional of their choice shall be subject to the availability of alternative health care provider.

### **Complaints**

Every complaint made by a patient/client about the delivery of health care services shall be considered duly by the appropriate level of management. The Ministry shall take every possible step to prevent professional or management malpractice by its employers and shall take every step to make reparations where and as appropriate.

### **Collaborative Working**

The public health sector shall work in close partnership with all stakeholders in health including private medical practitioners and non-conventional health care providers. The Ministry of Health shall continually seek the opinion of health service users in planning, implementation and evaluation of all health programmes, projects and activities, both at national level and at peripheral level.

### **Dissemination Of Information**

The public health sector shall function in a fully transparent manner and disseminate all information necessary to enable members of the public to prevent disease, to make the most efficient use possible of available health services and to take care of their own health. Health promotion and public relation teams shall be appropriately constituted for this purpose.

### **Research**

The major areas for research in the public health sector shall be those priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework. The Ministry of Health shall encourage its officials to receive training in research methodologies, shall encourage the organization of such training and shall provide funds for research, based on these priority areas. The Ministry shall promote a culture of inquiry into the best methods of delivering health care and evidence based practice.

### **Membership of International Health Organizations**

The public health sector of Seychelles shall participate actively in sub-regional, regional and global health organizations serving the short term, medium term or long term health interests of the country. The public health sector shall glean best practice experiences from these organizations and shall share its own experience as appropriate.

### **Monitoring And Evaluation And Health Policy Review**

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the above mentioned policies must constitute an important function of the public health sector. The health policies shall be reviewed as required to meet the needs of changing times.