

## LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD IN THE DEBATE ON USER FEES FOR HEALTH CARE IN AFRICA: ESSAY COMPETITION

15 Feb 2008

What do you think about user fees for health services in Africa? Do you feel strongly about the near absence of authentic African voices on this controversial and vital issue of our time? Then here is your chance to let your voice be heard by writing a good analytical piece of not more than 1,500 words on this contentious and 'hot' topic. Apart from having your article published if it is among the five best papers, you would also stand the chance of winning the sum of \$1000 in cash and sponsorship to attend the first African health economics and policy conference in 2008.

The African Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA), in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR), is pleased to announce that we are sponsoring a competition for analytical papers on the theme of user fees for health services in Africa. AfHEA is an emerging association of African health economists and other experts in related fields, aiming to strengthen the capacities of its members in the field of health economics and allied areas (eg health financing and policy), as well as to promote the use of health economics tools and evidence in decision making within the health sectors of African countries. The Inaugural Conference of AfHEA is scheduled to take place from 8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> October 2008 in Accra, Ghana, under the theme: "Priorities of Health Economics in Africa". People wishing to attend and/or present a paper at the conference may check the AfHEA web site [www.afhea.org](http://www.afhea.org) for details of abstract submission, conference costs etc. For information about the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR), please visit [www.who.int/alliance-hpsr](http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr).

The objectives of this user fee competition are:

- To solicit and publicise **high quality, analytical contributions** from African health economists as well as financing and policy experts on the role of user fees for health services in Africa, in order to give greater space to authentic voices from the continent in the debate.
- Through this work, to help further the institutional development of the African Health Economics and Policy Association.

This competition is open to all those working or studying **within** the continent of Africa in any related field (health economics, financing, policy, public health, related research) **including individuals who are not members of AfHEA. It is particularly meant to encourage those who are in direct contact with the realities of African people but who have largely not had similar input into the international debates on this issue**, dominated as these have been by donors and international agencies. This target therefore includes those working in policy (say Ministries of Health) as well as academic and other institutions, as well as individual consultants in these fields. Africans working within

donor and international agencies can of course also participate. For any joint work submitted, all authors must satisfy the above conditions. In addition, in order to qualify, your paper must not exceed 1,500 words. In addition to papers based on research findings, equal weight will be given to other analytical approaches such as ethical or political ones. Papers will be accepted in either English or French. **At least one of the awards will be reserved for a submission by a full-time student in health economics or related field.**<sup>1</sup>

The authors of the 5 best papers will be given prizes of \$1000 each and each of them will be funded (for travel, lodging and conference fees<sup>2</sup>) in order to participate in a round-table discussion on the same theme at the AfHEA inaugural conference in 2008. For joint submissions, only one cash prize of \$1000 will be given for the paper and only the lead author will be entitled to free travel to the AfHEA conference to make the presentation. In addition, AfHEA and the AHPSR will seek to have those five papers published, either in a journal (for example as a round table discussion in the World Health Bulletin), or as part of a stand-alone publication on this theme in both English and French.

The papers will be judged by the following African experts<sup>3</sup> drawn from the fields of health policy, economics and financing:

- Dr Eva Pascoal (Mozambique, WHO-HEC)
- Professor Di McIntyre (South Africa, Health Economics Unit)
- Dr Francois Diop (Senegal, Abt Associates)
- Professor Kodjo Evlo (Head of Economics at Univeristy of Lome, Togo)
- Dr Georges Nsengiyumva, ancien Directeur-General du Ministère de la santé du Burundi (actuellement Directeur de la Recherche au Centre National de Référence en matière de lutte contre le VIH/SIDA)
- Dr Miloud Kaddar (Algeria, WHO-Geneva)
- Dr Chris Atim (Ghana, PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative)
- Professor Germano Mwabu (Kenya, Harvard University)
- Professeur LOUKOU Yao Guillaume (Cote d'Ivoire), coordinator for elaboration of « Plan National de Développement Sanitaire (PNDS 2008 - 2013) » and for EPIVAC.

Essays will be judged on their originality, their contribution to understanding the user fee debate in Africa, their analytical rigor, and adherence to the other terms stated above. Essays may treat the question from the angle of the experience of particular communities (or even individual testimonies), or at the national or regional level. Experience and lessons in finding alternatives to user fees, so long as the relationship to the previous or co-existing user fee situation is demonstrated, will also be accepted.

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<sup>1</sup> Strict conflict of interest rules for judges will be applied; judges cannot provide support in any form to any applicant.

<sup>2</sup> Up to a limit based on costs agreed with AfHEA.

<sup>3</sup> Judges will be required to adhere strictly to conflict of interest rules including not assisting their students in preparing the papers.

Please send your article in electronic form (MS Word 2003 format or pdf version), no later than 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, with your name and **full** contact details enclosed to the following email address: [afhea08@gmail.com](mailto:afhea08@gmail.com). All submissions will be duly acknowledged. Winners will be notified by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 and the results published in the AfHEA online forum (<http://groups.google.com/group/ahpernet>) as well as the AfHEA and AHPSR web sites.