

Development and Health

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Health is of paramount importance as a precondition for development. Over the past years awareness of this has grown again among the general public in the face of the dramatic AIDS development which is coming to a head in a number of developing countries. Therefore, health plays a major role in Germany's development cooperation as one of mankind's basic needs, among which are also education, food, housing and access to safe drinking water. Accordingly, the share of expenditures in the health sector amounted to an average of 8% of our total development cooperation spending in the past 5 years.

Whereas formerly health had been considered as a separate field of negotiations under German development cooperation, today it has become an integral part of poverty reduction in the sense of a holistic approach. Poverty is the main cause of death in most of the developing countries. Outbreaks of sickness occur more easily and stay around much more tenaciously because people have to live under totally inadequate housing conditions, with no hygienic drinking water supply and sanitary installations, adequate food, access to family planning services, school education and sufficient income. Therefore, fighting poverty always means also to nurture the environment for better health among the people. To achieve this, health systems themselves must be improved, quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Such improvements include, besides an adequate infrastructure and supply of drugs, especially the availability of people having the know-how needed to be able to help. The good will and the commitment of many individuals is required here.

I am therefore particularly happy that this year again efforts have been successful to compose a comprehensive and internationally oriented range of courses in which also German institutions take part; I wish to thank the Austrian Medical Association for their involvement in putting together the courses. In particular, these courses help medical staff to be assigned also in developing countries to acquire the necessary know-how. I am thinking here not only of medical services in cases of emergency and humanitarian aid, but also of the more comprehensive tasks of development co-operation in general, i.e. providing knowledge on financial issues, the economic implementation of projects and controlling measures, which must be considered so as to render support fully effective.