



Peru launches MeTA



Oscar Ugarte, Minister of Health for Peru

Peru launched MeTA on 13 and 14 November 2008 in Lima. Over 120 delegates attended including representatives from stakeholder groups in government, the pharmaceutical industry and civil society, members of the Peru MeTA council and the International MeTA Secretariat. Over the two days stakeholders participated in several workshops and discussions focussed on six key areas: drug financing; drug regulation, including orphan drugs;

public sector procurement of medicines; transparency and management; rational use of medicines; and generic medicines.

At the opening of the launch Dr Oscar Ugarte, Minister of Health, gave a brief overview of Peru's health policies, pointing out that the strategy of universal access to health should enable everyone to access health services and medicines. A process of decentralisation in Peru means that regions will make key decisions around medicines: which medicines, how many and when to procure them. For this to happen effectively, the regulation of medicines needs to be reinforced. Dr Ugarte also strongly advocated transparency and accountability as articulated in Peru's national plan on anti-corruption in health to be implemented at national and regional levels.

Catherine Nettleton, British Ambassador to Peru said; "If transparency is the first principle of MeTA, then the second is a multi-stakeholder approach that brings together all the parties that can make a difference to increasing access to medicines. This means drug companies, distributors and retailers. It means pharmacists and other professionals. It means governments, regulators and technical agencies. And, crucially, it means civil society. Working together can itself help improve data collection and quality – it can open up more sources and support better scrutiny. But most importantly, it also builds an opportunity for accountability. Shared information is essential to knowing how well we are doing in achieving our aim."

'Grupo Impulsor' in Peru

Since June 2008 a group composed of government, civil society and industry have been meeting to draft a work plan to address improving transparency and access to medicines in the country. It is the work of this group – Grupo Impulsor – which has

led to the launch of MeTA. Grupo Impulsor includes the Ministry of Health, DIGEMID (the national drug regulatory agency), the Defensoria del Pueblo (national Ombudsman's office), Colegio Medico del Peru (Physicians Medical College), Health Action International and ALAFARPE (the Association of Transnational and National Pharmaceutical Organisations).

Grupo Impulsor's work to-date has focused on establishing the first draft of a national work plan for improving transparency and access to medicines for people who are most. Grupo Impulsor will continue to make progress, streamlining the work plan according to national recommendations, and the broader hope is to enlist the active support of other key leaders in the country to ensure the final completion of the plan. In this process, the NGO CIES plays a valuable role as facilitator and as technical secretariat, convening weekly work group meetings and facilitating and organising the national forum under Grupo Impulsor's guidance.

Transparency in Peru

Prior to the MeTA project, the Peruvian Government has for some years demonstrated its commitment to transparency. Through the Ministry of Economics and Finance (MEF), the Government has put in place web-based portals that provide access to information on government spending. In the Ministry of Health (MINSA), the Government has provided valuable systems, also web-based, which provide information on medicines purchases. In other areas the Government has supported the work of participatory budgets, opening the space for discussion around public financing. Peru is also participating in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

At the MeTA Peru launch delegates wanted to create a bigger debate about transparency and accountability in all matters relating to the administration, distribution and promotion of medicines to the point that they can be evaluated by all stakeholders. They also put a strong emphasis on the regulation of medicines, considered part of a good governance agenda. From this transparency and accountability perspective, MeTA is seen as a window of opportunity to look at different issues related to cross sector politics. It is a platform for action with five strategic areas: legislation; research; organisational development; capacity building and transparency; and the design and development of pro-poor interventions. These are the core areas of MeTA Peru, with the ultimate goal of access to medicines for the poorest and most vulnerable people.