



Bamako Global Ministerial Conference on Research for Health Post meeting evaluation, February 2, 2009

COHRED comments

1. The conference was a success, resulting in bringing together key people and institutions involved in research for health, increasing networking, and promoting commitment. It also established 'research for health' as a concept and approach – even though meaning and implications still need work going forward. The meeting also put on the map, for the first time, the crucial importance of organised civil society in supporting research for health and health equity in all aspect of the research enterprise.
2. A particularly successful feature of the conference was to create a format in which there could be active interchange between the technical and the political components of the conference. What did not succeed in Mexico, was a success here. The shared venue and the format of the roundtables allowed active interaction between conference participants and political heads of departments and countries. While the way in which the roundtable participants were selected was not inclusive, it did allow, in our case at least, to have several entry points for inputs from our side. Working on this model for future joint meetings, offers a real way forward to an 'integrated' conference.
3. One critical note we wish to make – we think it is inappropriate to read declarations in public, and have them subsequently edited and substantially modified by an unknown group that is not representative of those who have agreed on the final text. This is detrimental to getting engagement and commitment to the cause of research for health.
4. Overall, we think that this meeting was a success, and that a new meeting in four years can be useful. At the same time, we reviewed experiences with the previous meetings in Bangkok and Mexico. It is clear that all three meetings had an important message: *National Health Research Systems* in Bangkok, *Health Systems Research* in Mexico, and *Research for Health* in Bamako.

It is also clear that in each case the stresses of organising the conference led to serious tensions between the partners – which unnecessarily increase transaction costs. We will therefore support the appointment of a consultant to help us learn from these experiences, with the goal of organising a meaningful conference with greatly reduced transaction costs and, indeed, increased collaboration between partners as part of the outcomes. Given that the institutions involved in meetings are likely to be the same but that the core people involved in organising the conference are equally likely to be different, we should invest some time, effort and funding in preparing an operational guideline of best practices for the next meeting, based on the experiences from Bamako, Mexico and Bangkok.

Lastly, we want to thank all partners for their efforts and energy to make this a success. COHRED will be available for a new meeting in 2012 – and we have every hope that the process of organising will be more collaborative, inclusive, more productive and more of a pleasure!