

FOREWORD

FROM THE WHO-EM REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Health Sector Reform is a sustained process of fundamental change in policies and institutional arrangements of the health sector, usually guided by the government. Any meaningful reform process ought to be based on evidence and information about the current state of affairs, and potential effect of alternative policy choices. The idea of Health Sector Reform- increasing efficiency, equity and effectiveness in the health sector and thus in health care- has wide appeal. Despite large differences in income, social structure and health status, many countries in the world, as well as countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region of the World Health Organization, are undertaking or considering programs of health sector reform. Lebanon is among the first countries in the Region that plans to embark on an extensive program of the much needed reforms in the health sector.

The book on "Health System and Reform in Lebanon", by Dr. Walid Ammar, Director General, Ministry of Health, Lebanon is a commendable effort that critically reviews and brings together in a single document, the evidence and information necessary for designing, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive health sector reform. Such a work was not only necessary, but is also extremely timely to guide the reform process in the country.

Given that Lebanon spends more than 12% of its Gross Domestic Product on Health, a substantial element of which is consumed through out-of pocket payment in the private sector that is largely unregulated, more than 50% of its population does not fall under any prepaid insurance coverage program, and a large component of the health expenditures is on pharmaceuticals, it stands to reason that the focus of this book is on reforms in the financing of health care in Lebanon.

This technical work has comprehensively "described" the existing situation and stakeholders in the health sector, undertaken a cogent "analysis" of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmatic and systemic aspects of the health sector in Lebanon, and has based its "prescriptions", which are presented in the book as options for reform of health care financing in the country, on sound evidence.

The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization endorses this document and reiterates its commitment to continue to further lend support to the Ministry of Health in its effort to successfully implement Health Sector Reform in Lebanon that brings tangible benefits to the health of its population.

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