



**Health Policy Unit in the
Secretariat for Health Policy, Planning and Research**



**Federal Ministry of Health,
Republic of Sudan**

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Health Policy Unit

1. Background

Till recently, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) and its various departments were involved in health policymaking, but the process had been ad-hoc.

In order to institutionalize a health policy unit has been established in the Secretariat for health policy, planning and research. During its short life, this unit has successfully led the process for framing national health policy and developing of the 5-year strategic plan (2007-11). Recently it finalized a policy for private health sector.

1.1. Mission

The health policy unit will contribute to improving the health of the population of the Republic of Sudan by promoting a culture of strategic and system's thinking in developing long term scenarios for the health and health system development.

1.2. Objectives

In order to achieve the above mission, the health policy unit has following objectives:

1. Undertake holistic analysis of the context¹ for health system issues referred to by the authorities or identified from the routine information system and research;
2. Design policy options through a robust policy analysis², ensuring these are based on the explicit principles – the greater why of the reforms³;
3. Bring in evidence, including local and international experience on strengths and weaknesses of policy options for an informed choice by the policymakers;
4. Build capacity of policymakers and senior managers in the area of health policy analysis and promote a culture of informed decisions.

¹ Context means the 'problems' the reforms are aimed to solve and include changes in the demographical, epidemiological, educational, technical, cultural, political and economic situation.

² In the literature, terms 'policy study', 'policy analysis' and 'policy science' are used. According to some, policy study is the descriptive accounts and policy analysis for prescriptive exercises, with policy sciences as an umbrella phrase to cover both. Others, however believes that policy analysis incorporates also the policy process, and serves both to describe and prescribe the policies.

³ The principles and purposes set out policy guide for the stakeholders; and may be drawn from the political or closely related ideological reasons and determine the overall direction of policy process. This is critical, because this concerns the laying down of objectives, which in turn influence the contents of the reform package or policy contents, and thereby determine the resulting shape of the health sector.

1.3. Roles and functions

In order to achieve the mission and objectives, as laid down above, the health policy unit will undertake the following roles and functions:

1. Identify with the involvement of stakeholders, especially health policy makers, on periodic basis, the key health system issues;
2. Undertake/assist other departments in policy analysis for key health system issues and design policy options, including position papers, policy briefs for the policymakers and recommendations for updating legislations;
3. Coordinate with the Directorates of Research, Statistics, other departments in the FMOH and the allied agencies creating and disseminating health information;
4. Outsource researches to the eligible institutions for answering specific policy questions for which information is not available or is inadequate;
5. Assist the relevant sections in the FMOH, after a policy on a specific health issue has been agreed, to develop plan and implementation mechanisms;
6. Ensure the development of a national health system observatory and databases to provide information on health system and local and international experience; and
7. Act as an caretaker and archive the policy process to provide evidence and lessons on what works and what does not;

2. Organizational linkage

The organizational relationship of health policy unit, as a part of the secretariat for health policy, planning and research is as in

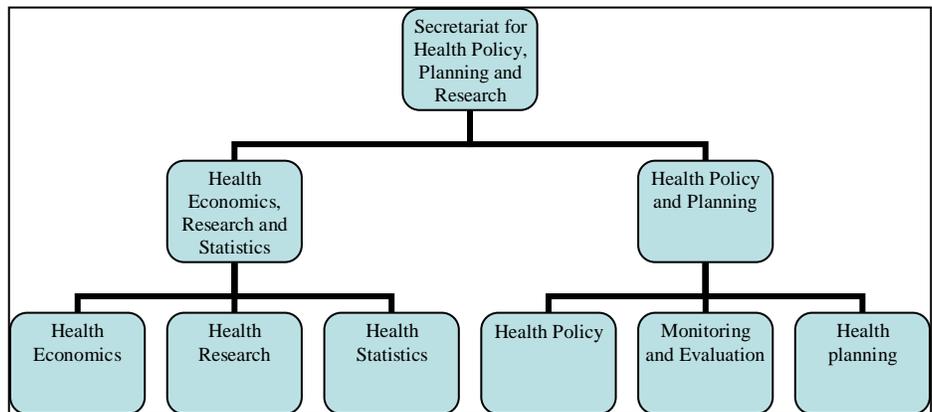


figure. But, it also relates technically with other departments in the Federal Ministry of Health for guiding them in policy analysis and design policy options for health system issues. In addition, the health policy unit works as a secretariat for a health policy forum, which is a think tank constituted in the Federal Ministry of Health.