

Health Policy Forum
**Health Policy Unit, Secretariat for Health Policy, Planning and
Research**



Federal Ministry of Health,
Republic of Sudan

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1.1 Background

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.

However, in order to support the Health Policy Unit and to ensure a wider stakeholder involvement in the policy process, an Evidence Informed National Health Policy Forum is established.

The Health Policy Unit in the Secretariat for Health Policy, Planning and Research is the secretariat responsible to organize, document and archive the proceedings of the forum. Also it is charged to follow up the decisions taken in the forum.

1.2 Existing arrangements

Health policymaking is an important component of the health governance; and for this purpose at least two structures are involved at the Federal Ministry of Health.

The issues after having been discussed and an initial consensus reached at the programme or directorate level are brought for discussion to the Undersecretary's Council. The relevant programme or directorate presents technical and programmatic arguments that form the basis for the council's decision that are disseminated through circulars and decrees for implementation.

Recently, another forum has been created. The Minister for Health meets with the senior management of the Federal Ministry of Health, and at this forum different issues are brought under discussion. This forum provides political backing to the many administrative decisions made in the Undersecretary's Council.

1.3 Health policy forum

Health Policy Forum is established in the Secretariat for Health Planning, Policy and Research, Federal Ministry of Health. It is a body that links the technical expertise with the decision making authority with the following aims and objectives:

1.3.1 Aim

The health policy forum or a think tank is a body to guide and steer the policy process for important issues in the Federal Ministry of Health, and in this manner advocates, contribute to improving the effectiveness of organizational decision making.

1.3.2 Objectives

In order to achieve its aim, the health policy forum acts to:

1. Organize information, relevant to the health system issue being considered, for proposing policy options;
2. Broaden the stakeholders' base and a platform to involve them in the policy process for reforms/interventions in the health sector;
3. Indicate gaps in the existing policies and practices – what works and what does not - and define priorities for further discussion and review; and
4. Constitute a bridge or link between the programmes and directorates with the decision making authorities.

1.3.3 Roles and functions

1. Considers the health system issues identified by reviewing the routine health information and statistics and those referred to it;
2. Reviews the available information about the health system issues and identifies the need for more information and evidence;
3. Organizes studies, empirical or secondary, to gather information and evidence about the health system issue;
4. Undertakes the process for developing policy options to tackle the health system issue for presentation to the policymaking bodies;
5. Provides guidelines and technical assistance to the relevant programmes and directorates for implementation and follow up of the policies;
6. Builds capacity by providing special sessions and by involving the managers in the Ministries of Health in evidence based decision making;

1.3.4 Membership

In order for the Health Policy Forum to be effective and for its longer term sustenance and that it is taken seriously by the senior officers as a forum and the views expressed, it should be headed by strong and influential patron and brings together experienced and high status members, capable of undertaking reviews and research.

In line with the above pre-requisites, the forum has two types of members. The first category forms a steering committee, while other is technical team, whose members are drawn depending on the nature of the health issue on agenda for the policy process. In addition, the national and international partners are invited to the forum.

1.3.4.1 Steering committee

1. Assistant undersecretary health policy, planning and research (chairperson)
2. Director, health policy unit (secretary)
3. Director General, health economics and research
4. Director General, health policy, planning and M&E
5. Assistant undersecretary (relevant to the issue on agenda)
6. Director General, programme or department (relevant to the issue on agenda)

1.3.4.2 Technical team

1. Director, health policy unit (chairperson)
2. Director, monitoring and evaluation (secretary)
3. Director, health systems research
4. Director, health statistics
5. Director of the programme or department (relevant to the issue on agenda)

1.3.4.3 Partners from outside the ministry of health

Depending on the nature of the issue on agenda for policymaking, members will be drawn from the following

1. WHO representative
2. UNICEF representative
3. Ministry of higher education
4. Ministry of finance
5. Ministry of investment
6. Ministry of social affairs
7. Media (TV, radio and press)
8. Armed forces health services (police and army)
9. National health insurance
10. Legislative council-health department.

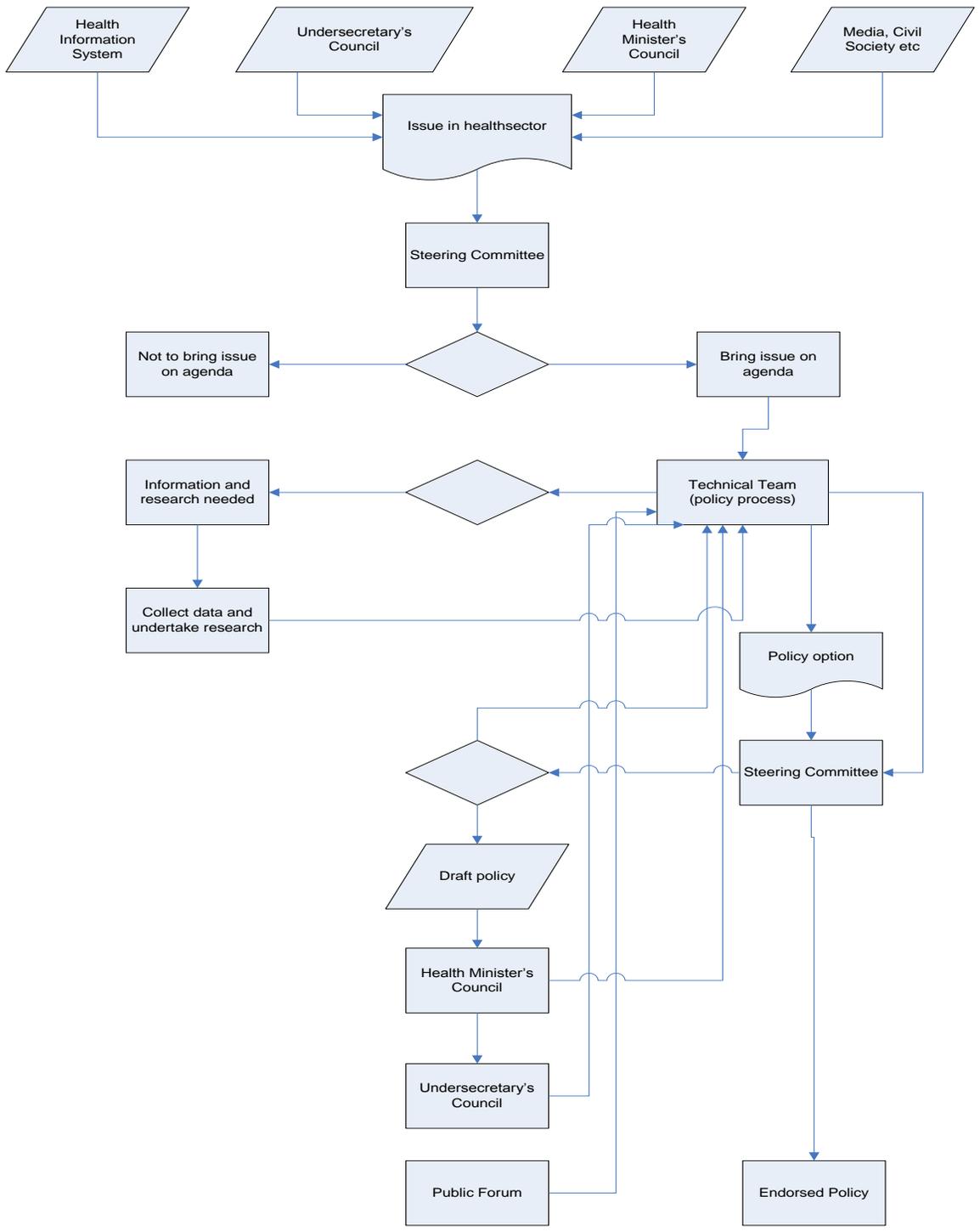
1.3.5 Flow of work

The Health Policy Unit in the Secretariat for Health Policy, Planning and Research is the secretariat responsible to organize, document and archive the proceedings of the forum. Also it is charged to follow up the decisions taken in the forum.

The issues often defined by the Steering Committee of the Health Policy Forum, the Health Minister's Council, and Undersecretary's Council or identified by the general public, media etc are referred to the Technical Team of the Health Policy Forum for undertaking the policy process.

The technical team will deliberate on the issue and seek information. In case adequate information is not available and requires dedicated study that will be launched. Once the technical team has developed policy option, it will be presented to the steering committee. In case of any comments the technical team will further deliberate on the issue and review the policy option.

The policy option developed by the Health Policy Forum will be reported by the Director of Health Policy Unit in the Health Minister's Council for further discussion and to seek political backing. The remarks received will be considered by the technical team and upon finalization the draft policy will be presented to the Undersecretary's Council. In case of any comments, the technical team of the health policy forum will respond and the final draft will be presented in a public forum for final endorsement.

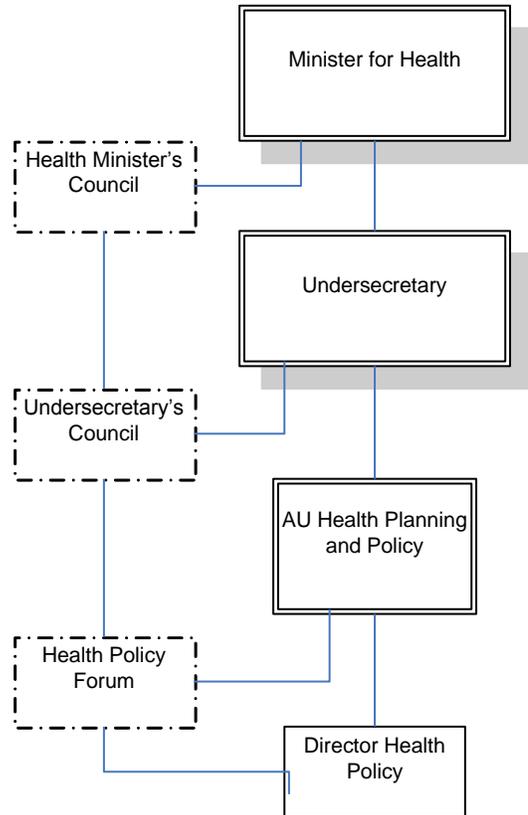


1.3.6 Linkages

The linkages of the health policy forum are shown in the figure. This virtual body is a think tank comprising: technical team and a steering committee. This forum is headed by the Assistant Undersecretary for Health Planning, Policy and Research.

The Health Policy Unit, which is one of the Directorates in the Secretariat for Health Planning, Policy and Research, acts as a secretariat for the Health Policy Forum. In the manner, the health policy unit is responsible for organizing the activities of the forum, preparing the working papers for different issues under discussion, keeping minutes, finalizing the policy options taking into account the comments made by the different stakeholders.

The draft policy developed by the forum is presented to the Undersecretary's Council and the Health Minister's Council as indicated above in the work flow defined for the policy process. Once the policy is finalized, the health policy unit is responsible for archiving the policy process and disseminating the policy developed for various issues in the health sector.



1.3.7 Agenda

The Health Policy Forum (Steering Committee) is responsible to identify and priorities issues for bringing to the agenda for policymaking. Nonetheless, based on the health system's building block model, the following are the suggested areas:

- 1 Governance and stewardship
 - 1.1 Decentralization and Levels of care
 - 1.2 Health information and research
 - 1.3 Patient safety and quality of care
 - 1.4 Coverage and accessibility/equity/
 - 1.5 Health technology assessment and management
 - 1.6 Intersectoral partnership and collaboration

- 2 Human resources for Health
 - 2.1 Production
 - 2.2 Career pathway
 - 2.3 Recruitment, employment and distribution
 - 2.4 Retention
- 3 Health financing and allocation of financial resources
- 4 Drugs and pharmaceuticals
- 5 Health services delivery
 - 5.1 Maternal and child health
 - 5.2 Disease surveillance
 - 5.3 Communicable disease control
 - 5.4 Non communicable disease control
 - 5.5 Health promotion
 - 5.6 Emergency early preparedness and response
 - 5.7 Occupational health
 - 5.8 Environmental Health