



Outcomes of the Health Sector Meeting

In the past 20 years, progress towards establishing health as a fundamental human right that must reach every human being has been seriously undermined by the advance of neoliberal politics.

The adoption of market mechanisms on public health and the increasing share of private sector services have reduced the access to health care to many sectors of population, which has also increased health care costs and caused general degradation to the services received by many people. The access to quality care increasingly depends on the socioeconomic status of people and their place of residence, as Carl Leinonen said yesterday, in his speech.

For health workers, the commercialization of health services has meant lower wages, job insecurity, increased workloads and worsening of work conditions. Through the prism of market mentality, the staff is regarded as a burden, a recurring cost, not as an essential element of health care. This situation has resulted in difficulty to attract, train and engage staff, and therefore, a global deficiency of health workers. WHO estimates that, presently, the market lacks some 4.3 million health professionals to provision health services worldwide.

In addition, the overall decline in the quality of services has created conditions conducive to violence in the workplace and undermine the safety and welfare of patients. Health systems under financial pressure, often neglect health and safety standards at work or do not use proper materials, exposing staff to risks. In countries where health systems are overburdened and unable to address the growing epidemics, staff are increasingly exposed in the workplace.

On the other hand, unions despite having raised their flags of struggle to expose the hidden privatization of these policies and the commercialization of health, **have not had the capacity to affect in a real and effective way the strengthening of public health**; and conversely, their struggles have only provoked public discontent, when they are left unattended for reasons of strike - and antipathy in the communities that demand a timely and quality care.

Clearly, the asymmetry between trade union organizations that require presential meetings to share experiences and build sectorial partnerships based on shared platforms, have reduced the systematic work of the health sector in the region. Support agencies and PSI itself have mentioned the need to promote and encourage sectorial partnerships, but this requires a degree of knowledge and balance that allows understanding and raises empathy among the different realities in the region.

Organizations realize that job insecurity, loss and/or absence of labor rights and the privatization and reforms implemented without the participation of workers **are due to a lack of trade union tools in distinct themes related to trade union and labor subjects, to the fragmentation of the sector, the lack of a common strategy at regional level, which end up impacting the presence of unions that are not able to stop privatization, the commercialization of health services that deepen the FTAs and other agreements such as TISA and TTP, and are unable to anticipate policies promoted by the government, which ultimately impact** workers in the sector who count on poor working conditions, precarious contracts and suffer greater violation of labor and union rights.

Workplan

Objectives

- To strengthen unions in the health sector by strengthening their regional coordination.
- To improve working and union conditions of health workers.
- To promote health as a human right safeguarded by the State.

Strategic Lines

- To set the health sector as a PSI priority. A person must be hired, in the short term, to dedicate exclusively to the health sector at global and regional levels.
- The Regional Coordination of the health sector unions must operate actions at regional, subregional and national levels.
- Campaign for the protection of labor and union rights of health workers in the region, including actions of solidarity and advocacy.
- Campaign against privatization and the development of a specific work against multinationals. The idea is to raise awareness on the negative effects of privatization and commercialization of services promoted by agreements such as TISA.
- To develop a regional campaign to promote health as a human right and a State obligation.
- To generate effective and efficient channels to allow the exchange of experiences, problems and struggles of health sector trade unions in the region.
- To form strategic alliances with users and civil society.
- The development of an Education and Training Program that empowers health workers on the effects of privatization on working conditions, with emphasis on women and youth

Actions and short-term tasks:

Communication channels

- To open a Facebook account to share problems, actions and experiences (responsible: Solange Ribeiro, Brazil)

Campaign against privatization

- Writing a letter signed by the participants of this forum against privatization and outsourcing in the health sector and in defense of labor rights.
- Organizing a global action against privatization that provides regional, subregional and local visibility. It should be done on the same day and time and shall be led by PSI. (September 17 as the date suggested)

Campaign for labor and union rights

- To draft a declaration of solidarity to the following countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Bolivia and Ecuador to reject the violation of labor and union rights in these countries. (Responsible: health unions of each country will propose the text to be disseminated)

Mexico, April 21, 2015