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All Communications should be addressed to:
The Secretary for Health



In reply please quote No.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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MALAWI

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH

Ref. MED. /1/24

9th November, 2005

Dr. W. Ehret
Private Bag 8
MASIP
Lilongwe

Received 14th Febr
2006!

Dear Sir,

TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS TO BECOME HEALTH SURVEILLANCE ASSISTANTS

I am pleased to write you, in response to your letter of 21st October 2005 which was submitted to this office on November 1, 2005. Thank you for bringing this information to our attention. We also thank the people's initiative of nominating community volunteers who should work as health scouts; hence the interest of training them as Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs).

Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) are specially trained at particular training centres. The ministry plans to have two of such training centres in each health zone. For your information northern region is zone 1 and its training centres are at Mzimba and Karonga district hospitals. Trainees at times cross can be trained at other training centers in the other zones. Full time HSA training is for ten (10) weeks, which includes practical and theoretical sessions. The training programme has a specially tailored training curriculum. The training centres have full time trainers and normally take classes of up to 30 participants.

HSAs can be nominated and supported by the community in liaison with the nearby health facility. One has to be an interested individual who is ready to work and stay in the community. In order to facilitate communication, the minimum level of education is Malawi Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) or its equivalent. Those with MSCEs are also taken and these may find it easy later, whenever they want to go for further training. There is no gender discrimination in the HSA training programme. The ministry also targets the HSAs in the ratio of


1:1,000 population. This means that one HSA caters for about 1000 population. To train one HSA requires not less than MK65, 000.00. This money is for food, weekly allowances for the individual, his/her transport at the beginning and the end of the course, learning materials and other incidentals during the training period. Therefore considering the number of people you want to serve, you may see that four HSAs are either few or too many.

In 1978, after the declaration of the Alma-Ata that led to the beginning of Primary Health Care, the Ministry of health had tried to use volunteers. The volunteers did not have much support because they were not MOH employees. Hence we started this cadre of HSAs. You may have to liaise with Nkhata-Bay DHO on this requirement and the people's requests can later be considered. For your information, the ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with MASAF from where you may consider having funds for training the HSAs. This can be achieved through a decentralized manner through the district commissioner.

We appreciate your concerns in the promotion of health care interventions in the district.

Sorry for the late response.

Yours faithfully


Dr. WOO Sangala

CC: District Health Officer
Nkhata Bay District Hospital
Nkhata Bay,