

SCN Capacity Development Working Group
1st edition Biannual Newsletter
2005

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Cutberto Garza

Director UNU/Food and Nutrition Programme (FNP)

Welcome to the first 2005 edition of the Capacity Development Newsletter. The Newsletter is a response to the Working Group's request to be kept informed of activities undertaken under its "umbrella."

Since the last Newsletter, the African Graduate Students' Network, the group that debuted their plans at the March 2004 SCN meeting in New York City, has progressed in making plans for its first "face-to-face" meeting at the International Nutrition Congress to be held in Durban in September 2005. The group has sent out requests to various bilateral groups and foundations seeking financial support to help gather their members to exchange research and training experiences and their dreams and aspirations for Africa's future. The wealth of young talent identified by the network continues to generate optimism. No doubt this group will be key to the creation of Africa's future. *I hope that everyone to whom the group has reached out will be of assistance to them and thus help sustain the idealism and dreams that we hope always accompany youth.* See the section below that relates to their work for a contact.

The Capacity Development Working Group's newest members are the Eastern European regional task force. Fre Pepping from Wageningen University and Arne Oshaug (Norway) met on May 18th and 19th in Budapest. I was able to join them by telephone at the start of meeting. As have been all other groups, this one too is truly energized. I am confident that this group will be as enthusiastic and energetic as the previous addition to the network, the Middle East Task Force. Dr Azza Gohar was able to share the Middle East Task Force organizational experiences with the Eastern European group that met in Budapest.

And in Africa, the International Nutrition Foundation continues to work to enhance individual and institutional capacity. This foundation's close cooperation with UNU and IUNS is truly outstanding. The support it has received from the Ellison Foundation to build individual and institutional capacity in the area of nutrition and infection is a model for all us all.

And as has been repeated in previous Newsletters, perhaps too frequently, the Working Group's major challenge remains the cooperation, coordination, harmonization, etc. (pick the politically correct term de jour) among capacity development activities undertaken by the SCN tripartite members, i.e. the UN agencies, bilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The Working Group re---re---re-reaffirmed its commitment in Brasilia to empower regions by supporting the development and implementation of the regions' long-term capacity development

plans integrating specific problem solving activities with long-term capacity development. Realization of these aspirations requires matching actions with rhetoric.

I "lifted" the previous paragraph and this one from previous Newsletters because the principal challenge remains the same and is growing in urgency. Increasingly governments, international agencies, and NGO's recognize the lack of individual, institutional, and organizational capacity in food and nutrition as among the principal impediments to progress, yet we appear to be stuck at the "talking" stage and in danger of our working group becoming what Philippine colleagues refer to as a **NATO** organization. And no, the acronym does not refer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but to "**N**o **A**ction, **T**alk **O**nly."

As we have in previous Newsletters, the Working Group's secretariat welcomes your suggestions on how this Newsletter and/or other vehicles can be used to catalyze the Working Group's aspirations into action. One often repeated suggestion raised initially at the Berlin meeting of the SCN was the imposition of a "tax" on ourselves for purposes of enhancing training, e.g. allocate the equivalent of 2% of funds UN and bilateral agencies and NGO's spend in placing "expatriates" in developing countries and the equivalent of 2% of the salaries paid by such agencies to professionals from developing countries when any of us hire such professionals to work outside their country of origin. Although such suggestions have a downside (e.g. this one makes nutrition activities "more expensive"), the upside (e.g. contributing to a sustainable work force) may compensate amply for shortcomings. It holds the promise of breaking the dependency on expatriates. No action has been taken on this suggestion nor have other bold ideas been forthcoming.

Cutberto

AFRICAN GRADUATE STUDENTS NETWORK (AGSNet)

The membership of African Graduate Nutrition Students Network (AGS-Net) has increased substantially recently and currently stands at 87 members from 22 countries. The membership drive is on-going. The AGSNet website <http://www.unu.edu/capacitybuilding/foodnutrition/ags-net/Index.htm> is the network's principal tool for member interactions. The website serves as a one-stop database shop to assess emerging nutrition capacity in Africa as represented by its future professionals. Its members' current profiles can be accessed at <http://www.unu.edu/capacitybuilding/foodnutrition/ags-net/Members.htm>. The website also links members to various sources of literature and information on conferences.

Inaugural Conference

AGSNet Inaugural Conference is planned for Durban, South Africa, a day before the IUNS International Nutrition Congress (INC) on September 18, 2005. The Conference theme is "Nutrition and Infection in Sub-Saharan Africa". The session will include a key-note address by Dr. Wafaie Fawzi, professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health, group discussions and plenary and student poster sessions. It is anticipated that at least 40 AGSNet members will participate in both the AGSNet inaugural congress and the INC.

For further details please contact Joseph Mensah-Homiah (jm324@cornell.edu) or Nkosinathi V. Mbuya (nvm3@cornell.edu).

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT / STRENGTHENING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Dr. Azza Gohar, Regional Task Force Coordinator

Summary of the Presentation on Nutrition Capacity Development in Middle East & North Africa (MENANA) Region

Dr Gohar was invited by the SCN Secretariat to represent MENANA in the SCN 32nd Session in Brasilia from 18-22 March 2005 and to present the newly formed MENANA group's progress. Dr. Gohar's presentation included a brief description of the nutrition situation in the region followed by a short history of the establishment and principal activities of the National Nutrition Capacity Building Task Force that includes distinguished scientists & nutritionists from different organizations and universities throughout the Middle East.

Among the group's activities was the First Regional 2-day Workshop on Nutrition Capacity Development, July 2004, Cairo (NNI/UNU/IUNS) under the patronage of the Egyptian Minister of Health and Population., which was organized by National Nutrition Institute (NNI), funded by UNU, and included participants from 11 countries from the region (Sudan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt), representatives from UN agencies, FAO, UNICEF and various Egyptian nutrition-related Organizations & Institutes. A brief description of the group's first workshop was presented and the group's 10 year action plan was described. The group's 5 priority areas were reviewed (i.e., Nutrition Research, Nutrition Training, Nutrition Academic Education & Accreditation, Nutrition Advocacy / Education Communication, Nutrition Networking).

Another of the regional workshop's main outcomes was the establishment of MENANA "The Middle East and North African Nutrition Association" and the choice of priority activities to be implemented before the next Regional Group Meeting & MENANA elections later in 2005. These activities included establishing a regional Nutrition Capacity Building website that will include a database of selected, sensitive, simple nutritional status indicators to monitor regional nutrition status, support of Libya's Food Fortification advocacy efforts, and support of Bahrain & Kuwait Ministries of Health's efforts to build nutrition capacity among their medical students (i.e. nutrition curriculum).

Dr. Gohar has recently been appointed the Director of the Egyptian National Nutrition Institute and will begin the new position in August, 2005.

For information contact Dr. Azza Gohar: azzagohar@hotmail.com

ASIAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE (CASNA)

Dr. Emorn Wasantwisut

A workshop entitled "Raising the Profile of Nutrition: an Asia Pacific Workshop," was held in Kuala Lumpur on 25-29 April 2005. It was designed to enhance the capacity of government staff from health and related sectors to promote investment in nutrition interventions at the country level.

Its format was designed to strengthen the capacity for advocacy and to implement effective communication strategies to influence key stakeholders important for mobilizing resources. Thirty participants from CASNA and other countries in South East Asia and West Pacific regions attended.

LATIN AMERICAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (LACDI)

Dr Juan Rivera and Dr Fernando Vio

Regional Directors, UNU/Latin American and Caribbean Region

UNU Latin-American Food and Nutrition Program Steering Committee Meetings

At the first UNU Latin-American Food and Nutrition Program Steering Committee Meeting (FNP-LA-SCM) Santiago Chile, November 9-10, the functional structure to support regional activities was formally created with the following participants: CInyS/INSP¹ Director Dr. Juan Rivera, INTA's Director Dr. Fernando Vio, SLAN² President Dr. Helio Vannucchi. The fourth member, elected by consensus, was Dr. Wilma Freire, former Chief, Nutrition Unit. Ricardo Uauy also attended this meeting. The principal roles that UNU has played in LA in the past were identified and the plan of action for 2005 was also analyzed. This plan of action includes strengthening of research networks in the region through the support of Working Groups' (WG) research activities working in 4 priority areas that resulted from an analysis of the prevalence of nutrition in 9 LA Countries and their stated priorities. The WG will develop multi-center proposals, including at least two LA countries which will be submitted to donor and bilateral agencies for financial support. The 4 priority areas are: Stunting, Micronutrient Deficiencies (Fe, Folic Acid), Nutrition-Related Chronic Diseases, and Acute Malnutrition. Two other priority areas were agreed upon (Childhood Obesity and Food Security) for which a WG will be created.

At the second FNP-LA-SCM, Brasilia, Brazil, March 13, the new UNU Latin-American Food and Nutrition Program structure was formally reviewed and approved by the group. It also was agreed that Juan Rivera would serve as the group's new Regional Director until August 2006.

In addition to the follow up and support of WG activities mentioned above, the 2005 plan of action considered the following activities:

- Formation of the Food Security WG with a regional focus that considers diet quality in addition to energy sufficiency and the formation of a Childhood Obesity WG.
- Reinforcement of Human Capacity Building by a study of the accreditation of current graduate regional programs in nutrition; the support of long distance courses, and follow up of 2006 Leadership Workshop organization.
- Development of a Virtual Library in Nutrition (BVS-N) and Latinut project, which are being worked out in collaboration with BIREME/PAHO.

¹ CInyS/INSP: Centro de Investigación en Nutrición y Salud, Instituto de Salud Pública (*Nutrition and Health Research Centre, National Institute of Public Health*)

² SLAN: Sociedad Latinoamericana de Nutrición (*Latin-American Nutrition Society*)



**Fourth seminar of the
AFRICAN NUTRITION LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME
Raaswater, SOUTH AFRICA,
8-16 November 2005**

The fourth edition of ANLP will be held from 8-16 November 2005 in Raaswater, South Africa under the Directorship of Johann Jerling (North West University, South Africa) and Kombi Mbhenyane (University of Venda, South Africa). The aim of this programme is to assist the development of future leaders in the field of human nutrition in Africa. Emphasis will be given on understanding the qualities and skills of leaders, team building, communication and nutrition information in a broader context, and to understanding the role of nutrition science in the world around us. The programme is designed primarily for final year PhD students and postdoctoral fellows; however, candidates with comparable working experience in human nutrition sciences studying or working in Africa should also apply. Preference is given to candidates under the age of 40 years. The maximum number of participants is 25.

Further information, application forms and online registration can be obtained on the internet:

Website: <http://www.africannutritionleadership.org/>

E-Mail: info@africannutritionleadership.org

SOUTHERN AFRICA CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT/STRENGTHENING TASK FORCE

Dr. Pauline Kuzwayo

Regional Coordinator for South Africa

SANCADI was established as the first of the African nutrition capacity development initiatives. Soon after its formation it concluded a strategic planning exercise in which it was agreed to create a “learning co-operative” comprised of regional institutions and provide a mechanism for mutual transfer of expertise and capacity.

It was decided that the primary focus of SANCADI would be the development of capacity for programme implementation and evaluation. There was consensus amongst the active nodes of SANCADI that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is presenting new and major challenges in nutrition and that capacity development was urgently required in this area. Accordingly, the expertise of the Regional Training Centre for Quality of Care has been used to strengthen capacity in Southern Africa through the training of selected academics, managers and practitioners. Two successful courses have been held in East Africa and trainees have been furnished with materials to assist them in conducting similar training activities in their home countries. The current challenge is to sustain and expand the capacity already developed through outreach support and ongoing mentoring.

In association with the HIV/AIDS crisis, severe childhood malnutrition is becoming an increasing problem in the region. Although feasible approaches and guidelines exist to optimally manage the problem, it is apparent that significant capacity building is required throughout the region to ensure their proper implementation. SANCADI has resolved to focus effort on this area over the next period, drawing on expertise that has been developed in institutions in South Africa and Malawi.

Finally, given the combined effects in the region of drought, economic stress and political instability, and HIV/AIDS, household food insecurity has become more widespread. Governments and regional bodies such as SADC recently have shown increased interest and commitment to address this problem. SANCADI has begun, and will continue, to advocate for greater attention and resources to be given to food and nutrition security and its determinants in the Southern African region.

SANCADI's work has been constrained over the past period by the lack of designated personnel with the time and resource base to ensure coordination of its activities. This deficit is soon to be corrected with the appointment of a part-time coordinator who will be based in the region and report to the SANCADI coordinating group.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL EUROPE GETS MOMENTUM

Dr Fre Pepping

Regional Coordinator for Eastern Europe

On 19 May 2005 the capacity development initiative for Central and Eastern Europe got underway. A one-day meeting at the FAO sub-regional office in Budapest involved Dr Fre Pepping - Wageningen Univ, Dr Arne Oshaug - Akershus Univ Norway, Prof. Stefka Petrova - MOH Bulgaria, Dr Mirjana Pavlovic - Public Health Institute Subotica, Stjepan Tanic - FAO Hungary, Andriy Rozstalnyy - FAO Hungary and Dr Azza Gohar, the regional task force coordinator for the newly initiated Mid-East group, the best practices as learned in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East were discussed. It was agreed that a regional core group of four persons will prepare a two-day meeting with 15 - 20 persons to be held on 1-2 December 2005. The venue most likely will be Budapest. The core group will present the outcome of this meeting at the 2006 SCN.