

SCN Capacity Development Working Group
1st edition Biannual Newsletter
2006

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Patrick Stover

Director UNU/Food and Nutrition Programme (FNP)

Welcome to the first 2006 edition of the semiannual Capacity Development Newsletter. The Newsletter is a response to the Working Group's request to be kept informed of activities undertaken under its "umbrella."

I am certain that most of you are aware that Cutberto Garza was appointed Academic Vice President and Dean of Faculties at Boston College and will no longer be able to serve as the Director of the UNU/Food and Nutrition Programme. Cutberto's vision, enthusiasm and tireless commitment to the Capacity Development Working Group will be greatly missed, but there remains a fervent commitment to continue the momentum that was established under Cutberto's tenure. Cutberto has assured me that he will facilitate the leadership transition and continue his involvement as an advisor to the program. We are fortunate that Sara Shapiro will remain the primary contact for the program through Cornell University and will facilitate the coordination and organization of the network's activities.

It was a real pleasure for me to meet many of you at the SCN meeting in Geneva, and I remain very impressed with the many accomplishments achieved by the various task force sites. The Food and Nutrition Programme's (FNP) focused mission remains unchanged and is expressed through three specific goals: (1) to assist developing regions enhance individual, organizational and institutional capacity in the area of food and nutrition, (2) to undertake research activities that require global efforts, and (3) to serve as the academic arm for the United Nations System in areas of food and nutrition that are best addressed in a non-regulatory, non-normative environment. Capacity development remains the FNP's central focus. The establishment of the capacity development task force in Central and Eastern Europe on 19 May, 2005, completes the initial plans for the international capacity development network and thereby marks a milestone for this initiative. This was achieved during a one-day meeting at the FAO sub-regional office in Budapest. Prof. Arne Oshaug (Norway) and Dr. Fre Pepping (The Netherlands) discussed, along with several representatives from the region, the best practices as learned in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East (Dr. Azza Gohar, the coordinator of the Middle East group also assisted).

The African Graduate Students' Network continues to grow both in numbers and in its planned activities. The group is reaching out to graduate students with the aim of doubling the membership by 2007. As reported in Geneva during the SCN meetings, the group continues its initiatives to liaison with various organizations to provide access to journals, to create an e-group or discussion board for members of the Network for discussion of professional issues and interests related to nutrition in Africa and to share information as regard to fellowships, job opportunities, short-term consultancies, conferences, scholarships, internships, etc. among its members. To that end, the AGSNet has made arrangements with the Collaborative Crop Research Program of the McKnight Foundation based at Cornell University, and the enLINK

initiative of the Nestlé Foundation to provide, and/or inform its members about access to, papers published in some of the high impact nutrition journals.

Below is a summary of recent accomplishments achieved by the task forces sites and working groups. However, there remain many challenges ahead, many of which have been mentioned repeatedly in previous Newsletters. With the completion of the Capacity Development Network, our first priority must continue the focus on enhancing cooperation, coordination, harmonization, etc., among capacity development task forces and the SCN tripartite members, i.e. the UN agencies, bilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations. At the SCN meeting in Geneva, other concerns and opportunities were raised including the potential for expanding the capacity network to include additional countries, the challenges associated with sustaining the African task force sites when key leaders are constantly recruited out of Africa into international, governmental and non-governmental agencies and when financial support of African academic institutions continues to erode. More inclusion of professional societies within task force activities was suggested and the possibility of creating a Capacity Development site on the SCN web site to enable international organizations to identify capacity leaders as advisors was suggested. 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.

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AFRICAN NUTRITION LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Since 2002 four editions of the ANLP have been held in South Africa. In total, 80 people attended these four workshops, covering 20 countries from North to Southern Africa. The programme's emphasis is on development of personal leadership through team building, communication and leadership. The programme also focuses on grant writing, social responsibility and the ANLP declaration. Group work is an important part of the programme and many activities are organized by the formed groups (daily newsletter, introduction of the guest speakers, social evening). Nutrition discipline topics vary over the years (HIV/AIDS, etc.). Subsequent to the first edition an alumni network was formed. Each year two 'junior faculty' from the previous year's group are invited to assist with the programme. The ANLP is organized by North-West University (Potchefstroom) and the University of Venda. Logistic support is provided by Wageningen University (Netherlands). Next editions of the ANLP are scheduled for 1-10 November 2006 in South Africa and March 2008. Deadline for submission is 15 May 2006 and the results of the selection panel will be made known on 1 June 2006. For more information see: www.africannutritionleadership.org

AFRICAN GRADUATE STUDENTS NETWORK (AGSNet)

AGSNet held its inaugural conference in September 2005 in association with the ICN meeting in Durban, South Africa. The AGSNet conference was attended by 39 of its members from 13 African countries studying in 19 universities world wide. The conference also was attended by 4 of the network's advisors and 7 invited guests. AGSNet members also participated in and presented papers at the 2nd Congress on IT in the Advancement of Nutrition in Africa, held from 16-18 September, 2005 in Cape Town, South Africa. The next AGSNet meeting will be held in Morocco in 2007 and will coincide with the Federation of African Nutrition Societies (FANUS) meeting.

For further details please contact Joseph Mensah-Homiah (jm324@cornell.edu) or Nkosinathi V. Mbuya (nvm3@cornell.edu) or view the website at:
<http://www.unu.edu/capacitybuilding/foodnutrition/ags-net/Index.htm>

ASIAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE (CASNA)

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In November 2005, CASNA provided funding support for 2 participants from Thailand and Vietnam to attend the 4th South East Asian Nutrition Leadership program in Jakarta, Indonesia. CASNA is hosted a training course at CFTRI, Mysore, India on 'Capacity Building in Food Safety in Nutritional Outreach' from 3-7 April 2006. CASNA also will co-host and participate in the Capacity Building International Symposium at CFTRI during 23-25 June, 2006. CASNA's current website is: www.casna.net.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT / STRENGTHENING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Dr. Azza Gohar, Regional Task Force Coordinator

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Dr Gohar, MENANA coordinator, was invited to attend the kick-off meeting, "The Capacity Development in Food & Nutrition Meeting in Central and Eastern Europe", at the FAO/Budapest Office in collaboration with UNU-FNP. Dr Gohar shared her experiences forming the Middle East & North Africa region task force and helped launch the initiative in Central & Eastern Europe using the Conceptual Framework of MENANA group. MENANA's plans for 2007 include the development of a regional website, food fortification initiatives and beginning monitoring and evaluation projects of the region's food and nutrition status.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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An inauguration meeting of the newly formed Central and Eastern Europe network was held in Budapest, 13-14 February 2006. The meeting was intended to formally initiate the network, identify the present challenges in the region and goals to be met in the areas of capacity development. Specific regional focal areas are: reduction of obesity, improvement of dietary

habits and nutritional status, education and information dissemination, nutrition research, monitoring and evaluation. The next meeting will be held 16-17 November 2006 in FAO SEUR.

EAST AFRICAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT/STRENGTHENING TASK FORCE

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The HIV/AIDS training manual that was developed by the Regional Centre for Quality Health Care (RCQHC) has been used widely since its publication by training programs, universities, and other institutes in East and South Africa. To further capacity development, one program manager and one university instructor from each of five countries who have used the training manual extensively and have demonstrated leadership in nutrition and HIV/AIDS in their countries were selected to participate in a new program. The individuals are taking part in a series of activities to build their capacity as resource persons who can be contracted to provide quality technical assistance to HIV/AIDS programs. RCQHC would like to begin a leadership program with these individuals in the near future.

LATIN AMERICAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (LACDI)

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Current UNU-LA-FNP activities have focused on the development of the Regional Nutrition Research Network and the Leadership Training Workshops with selected young professionals held every three years as a complement activity of the Latin-American Nutrition Society (SLAN) Congress. The Regional Nutrition Research Network is composed of five Nutrition Working Groups, created as a strategy to focus on nutrition priority regional problems: Acute Malnutrition, Stunting, Micronutrient Deficiencies, Nutrition Related Chronic Diseases (NRCD), and Food Security. Each one of these WGs is, at different stages, working on multicenter proposals. Additional activities during 2005 were the planning of two projects that are still in progress: the creation of an informational database of Nutrition Masters and Ph.D. programs in Latin-American countries; the development of the first phase of the Nutrition-Health Virtual Library in collaboration with BIREME/PAHO/OMS.

The following are planned for 2006: a two day workshop of the NRCD WG, April 20-21 to discuss alternative strategies to carry out its mandate and establish a complementary WG dedicated to Infant Obesity. During the SLAN Congress in 2006, all WG coordinators will participate as expositors at specific Symposia. Presentations of the results of the Network projects also will be made. A third Steering Committee (SC) Meeting also is planned as a parallel activity. WG coordinators will be asked to present their yearly report and coming year (2007) activities to the SC.