

African heart network

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The African Heart Network held its 4th Workshop and Annual General Meeting in Accra, Ghana on 14–15 October 2004.

This year's workshop was a far cry from the 2003 workshop in Cape Town, which involved members from only three countries – Benin, Nigeria and South Africa.

At Accra there were 28 participants from eight countries, with apologies from Benin. This was an eloquent testimony to the success of the No. 1 item in the 2003 Action Plan, which was to increase the Network's membership to at least seven countries (on a continent of 54 countries) within one year. This increase in membership was reflected in the presence of the new members – Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Sudan.

The workshop commenced with reports from the member foundations, especially their activities on World Heart Day. Their various strengths and weaknesses were highlighted, with lack of funds and basic infrastructure, e.g., office space, furniture, computers, etc., emerging as recurrent problems in the newly formed foundations.

The need to get the young foundations twinned with older ones, which will help them with training and capacity-building, was recognized. The older foundations may well have to provide some kind of initial funding (seed money) to get the younger ones firmly established and sustain their progress. Prevention of cardiovascular disease in sub-Saharan Africa was the main theme of this year's workshop, which also covered collaboration with other partners in this endeavour. Partners, including the WHO Regional Office for Africa, the World Heart Federation, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the International Society for Hypertension (ISH), were present at the workshop to identify various areas of collaboration in the prevention of cardiovascular disease in Africa.

WHO was represented by its country representative in Ghana, Dr. Melvine George; WHF by its Director of Development, Ms Helen Alderson; CDC by its acting Director for Non-communicable and Chronic Disease Department, Professor George Mensah; and ISH by its board member for Africa, Professor Y.K. Seedat, from South Africa.

The general consensus was that primordial prevention of cardiovascular diseases through health promotion is the only viable option for Africa to avoid the looming epidemic of morbidity and mortality from cardiovascular disease. The economic situation of most countries in Africa cannot support any other approach to the double burden of communicable disease coupled with non-communicable and chronic disease.

Training was also provided on fundraising and media management to help member foundations raise funds more effectively and to use the media in their advocacy efforts.

The older foundations shared experiences of some of their programmes, such as the Heart Foundation of South Africa's Children's Programme and the Nigerian Heart Foundation's Heart Mark Programme, to show what works and what could be done better, drawing on the experience of others.

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Go red for women

The World Heart Federation acknowledges that women's cardiovascular health is an under-recognized aspect of cardiovascular care and prevention worldwide. The CVD and stroke issue among women has too long been ignored. This is why the WHF wants to develop an international campaign to raise public awareness of women and cardiovascular disease.

The American Heart Association (AHA) and the World Heart Federation (WHF) were very pleased to announce a new collaboration designed to build on the success of the AHA Go Red for Women by expanding the program internationally. The AHA, which owns the global trademark for the program, has extended an international license to the World Heart Federation.

In this way, members of the WHF can benefit from the teaching and tools of the AHA program while adapting them to their national environment.

In 1997, the American Heart Association was the first voluntary health organization to take a stand on women and heart disease, with the launch of its "Take Wellness To Heart" awareness campaign by women for women. In February 2004, the American Heart Association launched Go Red For Women – a continuation of the effort that began in 1997, driving home the message to women that heart disease is their leading cause of death ... a fact

most women still do not know. The Go Red For Women movement empowers women with the knowledge and tools they need to take charge of their health and urges women to take action now.

The Go Red for Women campaign had an extremely successful first year in the United States. Hundreds of millions of women and their loved ones were reached by educational messages. Millions of red dress pins, the symbol of women and heart disease, were given to women across the country.

The WHF proposes to its member organizations standard PR packages, media and marketing materials that could be adapted to a national context and particularities. At the national level, the campaign could be launch at any moment of the year, the most convenient for the organization.

The first announcement of the international launch of the Go Red for Women program was made in Orlando, Florida, in February of 2005 on the occasion of the 2nd International Conference on Women, Heart Disease and Stroke. Already 15 countries were interested to participate to this campaign.

For more information, visit: www.wordheart.org/activities/advocacy/women/GoRed

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WHF 2004 new members

In 2004 the World Heart Federation accepted the following new members:

Continental members

- African Heart Network

National members

- Foundation of Health and Heart, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Emirates Cardiac Society, United Arab Emirates
- Heart Foundation Cardiac Centre, Mauritius
- Macau Association of Cardiology, Macau (China)
- Kenya Heart Foundation, Kenya
- Seychelles Heart and Stroke Foundation, Seychelles

Associate national members

- Foundation for Lay Education on Heart Diseases, Philippines

- Indonesian Cardiocerebrovascular Society, Indonesia

Associate international members

- International Forum for Hypertension Control and Cardiovascular Diseases Prevention in Africa
- Children's HeartLink
- Lown Cardiovascular Research Foundation

Individual Members

Dr. Vang Chu, Deputy Head Division of Medicine, Mahosot Hospital, Vientiane, Laos

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World Economic Forum

For the second time, the World Heart Federation was invited to participate to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum: "Taking Responsibility for Tough Choices", Davos, Switzerland, 26–30 January 2005.

This year the World Heart Federation was involved in four World Economic sessions:

- "Healthy priorities for the Media" where the concrete steps that should be put in place to make global health reporting more comprehensive and less focused on scandals were intensively discussed.
- "Organic of the World, Unite" where it was emphasized that organic foods represent a serious critique of current foods.
- "Living a little too large", session that offer opportunity to stress the role of the industry and the governments to fight obesity.
- "Stopping healthcare's spending epidemic" in which it was discussed the increased costs of new treatments and drugs.

It gave Janet Voûte, CEO of the World Heart Federation the opportunity to challenge senior executives from the food industry to support the World Health Organisation's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. She emphasized the importance of healthy environment and the fact that changing diet and increasing physical activity cannot be achieved by individuals solely as a consequence of improved knowledge.

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