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EPN opens office in Burkina Faso

EPN OPENS OFFICE IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

By H. P. Bollinger

Finally the much awaited opportunity to be more active in francophone Africa has arrived! EPN has opened a new office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. After a three-month working period at the EPN head office in Nairobi, Kenya, the Swiss pharmacist, Hans Peter Bollinger started work in Ouagadougou at the end of October 2003 as EPN programme officer for Francophone Africa. EPN's local host in Burkina Faso is the "*Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques*" (ODE), an organisation that has been active in development cooperation for more than 30 years and is implementing and coordinating numerous projects for church-run institutions. This long planned extension of the EPN secretariat could finally be established, thanks to the good collaboration between the EPN board, EED Bonn (German Church Development Service, which is funding the post of the programme officer for three years) and Pasteur Samuel Yaméogo, head of ODE. And this happened at the opportune time as Pasteur Samuel retired at the end of 2003 after 31 years as head and inspirational leader of ODE! The EPN programme officer has been allocated his own office, with adequate facilities and enough room for growth in the big ODE building. A telephone was installed within days, and so the accessibility is assured for internet and the email system – nowadays, the most important tools for a network.

Pasteur Etienne Bazié, the new executive secretary of ODE, and the more than 60 staff of ODE, altogether, gave Hans Peter a very warm welcome. The new leader has been well informed about the ODE/EPN cooperation right from the beginning. EPN is confident that good contacts and co-operations on pharmaceutical issues within Burkina Faso will soon be made, thanks too, to the close relation ODE has with other organizations in the country. Thus a good basis for its work in Francophone Africa has been set and EPN looks forward to increased work in this part of the world.

Address:

Réseau Pharmaceutique Oecuménique

c/o ODE, Rue 13.03, Porte 235,

Quartier Zone du Bois, Ouagadougou

Tél: ++226 36 34 64 (EPN),

++226 36 34 60 (ODE)

Fax: ++226 36 34 66

Email: epn.faso@cenatrin.bf

AACC 8th ASEMBLY HELD IN CAMEROON

By Stella Feka-EPN Cameroon

The All African Conference of Churches (AACC) meeting was held in Yaoundé the capital of Cameroon from 22nd to 27th of Nov 2003. The opening ceremony started with a colourful church service held at the Boulevard du 20 Mai in Yaounde.

The President of Mozambique and the special representative of the head of state of Cameroon, the Prime minister Peter Mafany Musonge were among the dignitaries who graced this solemn occasion. Hans Peter Bollinger(staff) and Feka Stella (Cameroon member of EPN), were sponsored by the network to represent EPN in this very important Ecumenical celebration.

The assembly brought together more than 1500 delegates from 45 African countries. This was the 8th assembly of the AACC and the theme was *"COME LET US REBUILD"*.

This assembly, according to the moderator of the Presbyterian church in Cameroon Reverend Nyansako Ni Nku, met to seek various ways and means to rebuild the shattered continent of Africa, using the word of God for bricks and mortar. He said Africa has lived in shame for too long and it was time the church took its moral and spiritual responsibility to wreck the ruins and repair the face of the Continent. Africa, he said, is distinguished from the rest of the world with wars, bloodshed, poverty and diseases. *"Burundi, Rwanda, Angola and the Democratic republic of Congo, among others have become blood dishes for the African sons and daughters"* he said with regret.

His Lordship, Pierre Marini Bodho challenged African leaders to join the church so that they could govern with the fear of God.

The visiting Mozambique head of State, in his keynote address, emphasized that he and the African Union have unconditionally recognised the church as an instrumental partner in promoting sustainable development in Africa through Peace, Solidarity and Spiritual awareness. He said the church has remained a veritable liberator to most African countries, including Mozambique, right from the colonial era. President Chissano said the call to rebuild Africa is not the same made in Jerusalem when Jewish foes destroyed the kingdom for certain ethnocentric reasons. According to him the destroyers of Africa are Africans who are not yet prepared to part with tribalism, sectionalism and other egoistic tendencies. Rebuilding Africa entails reconstructing the roads, bridges, houses, museums and other precious socio-economic structures destroyed by our very selves because of lack of moral consciousness and the spirit of equity. The president said Peace does not mean the absence of guns. It entails good governance, transparency and equal opportunity to every citizen. He challenged the church to rally fellow brethren in Africa and impart in them the spirit of unity, the fear of God and respect for humanity so that they could turn their guns and amours into farming tools.

Education, health and culture were among the many topics discussed during the assembly. It was emphasised that health and education are key issues

for development. In health the problem of HIV/AIDS was discussed. It was recalled that HIV/AIDS is eating deep into every part of African society. Most cases of street children and of child labour, concern children who have lost one or both parents from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The church should be in the forefront to guarantee that Africa's culture is not lost and should help in taking out some of the bad cultures such as witchcraft. The church should promote dialogue within the various churches to combat HIV/AIDS, poverty and violence.

There were also various other attractions at the meeting, including different display stands. EPN shared a stand with the WCC where they displayed journals and items on HIV/AIDS and also highlighting the EPN. EPN could have been represented better had the two board members, Natalia Cebotarencenco and Peter Okaalet been able to attend.

International Conference on AIDS and Sexual-transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) 2003

By Mr. Hans Peter Bollinger — EPN Programme Officer Francophone Countries

The 13th International Conference on AIDS and Sexually-transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) was held from Sept. 21st to 26th, 2003, at the Kenyatta International Conference Center in Nairobi / Kenya. The biannual event was attended by a total of 7,200 delegates from 109 countries. Scientists, health providers, government officials, politicians, activists, NGOs and FBOs came together to share experiences, to review and discuss updates on major advances, as well as to set strategies and priorities for dealing with the pandemic from an African point of view. The theme “*Access to Care: Challenges*” became really a cry for access to treatment, as the call for affordable ARV drugs dominated many of the sessions.

The 88 page programme book offered full invitations to plenary sessions, meetings, conferences, round tables, capacity building workshops, abstract sessions, poster presentations, community programmes trying to cover not only medical issues of the disease, but also aspects regarding poverty, human rights, gender, youth perspectives, traditional healers even satellite meetings which started at 6pm!. The meeting was an excellent venue for a large input of learning, exchanging and networking..., if one managed to avoid an overdose of information!.

This scientific world and frameset was twice briefly interrupted, during the exhibition and during the closing ceremony, when treatment activists reminded the delegates with banners and chanting of “*You talk – we die*” of their responsibilities outside the conference halls. The Kenya Coalition for Access to Essential Medicines in a peaceful and thought provoking presentation captured the sense of injustice felt by the activists by convening a “people’s tribunal”, a passionate mock trial, which passed – not surprisingly - a guilty verdict on the Government of Kenya, the World Trade Organisation and the large multinational pharmaceutical companies for what they termed “paying lip-service to the fight against the disease”. The event drastically drove home the plight of those denied access to treatment for life-threatening diseases.

The conference started from the faith-based point of view with a satellite session on “*The role of religious leaders in reducing stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS*”. The headline of Pamoja News – Issue 1, the official daily conference newspaper, which read “*Stigma and religion: an inevitable partnership?*”, reminded all painfully that there is still a long way to go to stop stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS within church structures. The outcomes and resolutions of the PreICASA-Symposium, held 19th – 20th were shared with delegates as well as with the larger ICASA body during the round table session on “*Religious and Faith-Based Presence and Responses (Christian, Muslim, Traditional African Religions)*”. Another very well-attended event with religious significance was the abstract session on “*Faith based initiatives*”, where one presenter highlighted that FBOs might do a lot of good work, but they do not publish or write about it and they hardly monitor and evaluate their activities. This is one of the reasons why FBOs are hardly heard of in the scientific world, and why they struggle to get access to available funds.

For further information contact for example the website www.awcfs.org (as the official website www.icasanairobi2003.org has not been updated since the opening of the conference) - and look out for the 14th ICASA in 2005 in Abuja / Nigeria!

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

HOPE AMIDST HOPELESSNESS

Godwin Aja, EPN member Nigeria

Church Health Action Group RDU and HIV/AIDS prevention and control festival held as part of the first young men/women Christian Association Retreat at the NYSC Orientation Camp, Shagamu, Ogun State, Nigeria July 14 – 17, 2003.

Previous workshops supported by EPN led to the establishment of a platform for church denominations in Ikenne, Shagamu and Ohaozara Local Government Areas (LGAs), to come together to discuss and address issues related to medicine use and other health problems such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. The Church Health Action Group (CHAG-Shagamu), comprising of 7 elected representatives meets monthly to review progress and plan immediate and future church-based health promotion programs.

In furtherance of this goal, CHAG Shagamu organized health programs as part of the 2003 Young Men/Women Christian Association Retreat. The goal was to promote rational use of medicines and HIV/AIDS prevention among young people in Shagamu zone.

Originally, this program was designed to promote rational use of medicines. However, it became necessary to include HIV/AIDS as part of the program since churches are becoming more open and committed to HIV/AIDS issues. Undoubtedly, EPN believes that “working with and through churches offers a real opportunity to combating HIV/AIDS.”

Participation and Presentation:

832 young people of ages 18 – 25 made up of 450 young men and 382 young ladies attended. The programme also included competitions calling for poems, posters, stories, recitations and leaflets on the topic areas: HIV/AIDS and Rational Drug Use (RDU). Selected works were presented and displayed during the retreat. Those who designed the works received gifts and cash prizes. The designers of the best posters explained the content while the authors of the poem and recitation read the works to the excitement of the audience. Further questions and issues on RDU and HIV/AIDS were answered and clarified.

Thirteen church denominations including Catholic, mainline churches, Pentecostal and African Instituted churches were represented.

ABC book and poster Distribution:

Participants who answered questions or contributed meaningfully to the discussions received the ABC book and the winning posters. Extra copies were given to the churches they represented. Recipients (grouped according to denominations) submitted an outline of RDU and HIV/AIDS programs they intend to run within a defined period of time. The goal was to ensure effective use of the materials distributed.

Appreciation:

We sincerely acknowledge with a million thanks the support of the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) morally and financially.

NEW PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS

THE REALITY OF HIV/AIDS

by Ann Smith and Enda McDonagh.

A new book, *The Reality of HIV/AIDS*, by Ann Smith and Enda McDonagh, issued in September 2003, aims to explain why the pandemic is the greatest contemporary challenge to human development. The book is the result of collaboration between Trocaire (the Irish Catholic Agency for World Development) and CAFOD (the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development of England and Wales). The Reality of HIV/AIDS offers readers a rich resource for understanding and tackling the pandemic, provided by authors who have a long experience of working with the virus. HIV/AIDS is placed in a Christian perspective and the book addresses also scriptural and theological insights into profound questions raised by the virus, such as suffering, death, sex and healing.

PUBLICATION

The highly interesting presentation of Dr Sue Parry, Southern Africa Regional Co-ordinator for the WCC Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), entitled "*Responses of the Faith-based Organisations to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*" has been made available as booklet of 20 pages and can be ordered at the WCC under the email-address of tz@wcc-coe.org (in English only so far).

Book Resource on HIV/AIDS

101 Case Studies Exercises for Training in the Care of HIV/AIDS Patients in Resource-Limited Settings. This book is a teaching tool for instruction in the care of patients infected with HIV. This book is not intended for experienced physicians who practice in optimum clinical settings.

This publication is available from:

Health Learning Materials Unit

Africa Medical & Research Foundation (AMREF)

P.O. Box 00506-27691, Nairobi, KENYA

Tel:254-20-605220, 605331/4

Fax: 254-20-609518

Email: almasm@amrefhq.org

Att: Health Learning Materials Unit

Costs: KShs.200/-

ACCESS TO FREE WEB INFORMATION

The WHO pre-qualification project has issued its 12th edition (dated 15 December 2003) of the "Manufacturers and suppliers whose HIV-related medicines have been found acceptable, in principle, for procurement by UNAgencies" -see <http://mednet3.who.int/prequal/hiv/hiv-suppliers.doc> ↵

Facing the challenge,

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has written a guide for potential customers about their not-for-profit preferential pricing programme which is designed to give the world's poorest countries affordable access to medicines they so vitally need. The guide explains what products are available, who is eligible and what steps eligible customers need to take to place an order.

The full range of GSK antiretrovirals (ARVs) and anti-malarials is available to qualifying customers at single, not-for-profit preferential prices direct from GSK. GSK does not seek to make a profit on these preferential prices – the prices are set at levels that meet their costs, thereby ensuring they can sustain supply of these high-quality products for as long as they are needed. Supply of all products requires that the products must be licensed for use in the country to which they are to be supplied. For more details contact GSK on email: Facing-the-Challenge@GSK.com or see their website: http://corp.gsk.com/about/developing_world.htm

PAG & EPN BOARD MEETINGS

- Event:** Board Meeting
- Date:** 15th – 16th July, 2004
- Venue:** Kinshasa, DRC
- Event:** Board Meeting
- Date:** 4th – 5th October 2004
- Venue:** Moshi, Tanzania (to be confirmed)
- Event:** PAG, meeting
- Date:** 6th – 7th October, 2004
- Venue** Moshi, Tanzania (to be confirmed)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Event:** ICIUM 2004
- Date:** March 30th – April 2nd 2004
- Location:** Chiang Mai, Thailand

International Conference on Improving Use of Medicines (ICIUM) 2004 will bring together about 500 policy makers, researchers, clinicians, and representatives of national, international, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations from around the world. The conference will address among other issues; improving medication use from the international, national, hospital, and primary health care perspectives. For further information on ICIUM 2004, please see www.icium.org or Dr. John Chalker, email: jchalker@msh.org or Dr. Dennis Ross-Degnan Email: drossdeg@hms.harvard.edu.

- Event:** Health Care and Management in Tropical Countries
- Date:** 15th June – 11th June 2004
- Location:** STI, Basel/Switzerland

The HCMTC is a 3 months full time diploma course organized once every year at the Swiss Tropical Institute (STI) in Basel. The course aims to introduce a range of skills and knowledge needed to work as a member of a District Health Management Team. For further information please contact Swiss Tropical Institute, Course-secretariat email: courses-sti@unibas.ch

Event: **Health District Management**

Date: **14th June –2nd July 2004**

Location: **STI, Basel, Switzerland**

Health District Management: Planning & Programme Design is open to participants with a STI diploma "Health Care and Management in Tropical Countries (HCMTC)" or an equivalent degree. A few scholarships are available for participants from developing countries. For further information please contact: Swiss Tropical Institute, Course-secretariat email: courses-sti@unibas.ch

Event: **Medical Practice with Limited Resources**

Date: **June 12th – July 4th 2004**

Location: **Ifakara, Tanzania**

A 3-weeks course, organized by the Swiss Tropical Institute, in collaboration with St. Francis designated District Hospital, Ifakara, Tanzania, and other centres of clinical expertise in Africa, Asia and Europe. For further information please contact Swiss Tropical Institute, Course-secretariat email: courses-sti@unibas.ch

Event: **The XV International AIDS Conference**

Date: **July 11th – July 16th 2004**

Location: **Bangkok at the IMPACT Exhibition & Convention Center**

A 3-weeks course, organized by the Swiss Tropical Institute, in collaboration with St. Francis designated District Hospital, Ifakara, Tanzania, and other centres of clinical expertise in Africa, Asia and Europe. For further information please contact Swiss Tropical Institute, Course-secretariat email: courses-sti@unibas.ch

will take place July 11-16, 2004