Member institutes advance IANPHI’s mission

Peer-assistance model yields early successes

From South America to South Africa, member institutes are putting IANPHI’s peer-assistance model into action to transform NPHI capacity and strengthen public health systems.

Under the leadership of President Paulo Buss, Brazil’s Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz) has provided substantial expertise to support the development of new institutes in countries that lack a coordinated public health focus. With its extensive expertise in institutional development and strategic and operational planning, Fiocruz is assisting several of Africa’s Portuguese-speaking countries in boosting national public health capacity through NPHI development.

In partnership with IANPHI, Dr. Felix Rosenberg, Fiocruz Director of Strategic Planning, and his team conducted an in-country assessment and hosted key leaders from Guinea-Bissau for 10 days at Fiocruz. The group collaboratively developed a strategic plan for integrating Guinea-Bissau’s core public health functions into a single organizational structure within the Ministry of Health.

At the invitation of the Ministry of Health in Mozambique, a team representing Fiocruz, IANPHI, and the architectural and planning firm CUH2A conducted a similar visit to Mozambique to assess the infrastructure for core NPHI functions and the political commitment to and interest in a long-term NPHI creation project.

Other IANPHI members are also sharing technical expertise across institutes and demonstrating South-to-South collaboration. Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP) is spearheading a large project to assess public health functions in seven neighboring nations. INSP, along with Panama’s Gorgas Institute and Costa Rica’s INCIENSA, will work with these countries to develop options for sharing resources and strengthening public health systems and assets in the region. South Africa’s National Institute for Communicable Diseases provides technical assistance to the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, participated in an assessment visit to Uganda, and hosted IANPHI’s first regional leadership conference.

In other partnerships, the U.S. CDC is training staff at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research in new rapid methods to detect drug-resistant TB, and Finland’s KTL is assisting Tanzania’s National Institute for Medical Research in expanding the scope of national disease surveillance to include non-communicable conditions.

For more information on IANPHI’s peer-assistance activities, please visit our website at www.ianphi.org.
The annual Summer School event at KTL in June enrolled 25 participants from 17 countries for a week-long training session on the roles and functions of a comprehensive NPHI. Experts from KTL spoke on several of the key topics and challenges faced by NPHIs, including infectious disease control, chronic disease prevention and health promotion, and environmental health. The event also provided an opportunity for representatives from IANPHI project sites to meet with KTL staff to discuss plans and progress.

Member institutes have hosted other events for IANPHI colleagues, providing venues and support for recent meetings at China CDC and Institut Pasteur du Maroc and a regional gathering at NICD in South Africa. This year’s annual meeting will be hosted by Dr. Marc Sprenger and colleagues at RIVM in The Netherlands.

In our project sites, early successes are yielding new partnerships and funding potential to leverage initial IANPHI investments. For example, in Uganda, supplemental funding from on-campus partners has enabled project staff to expand their training agenda and secure additional resources to establish a comprehensive IT component.

Finally, our South-South collaborations, exemplified by the work of Fiocruz in Brazil, are generating exciting plans and preparations for new institutes in two Portuguese-speaking African countries—Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

Each of these efforts demonstrates progress toward our goal of fostering an interconnected community of public health leaders committed to strengthening public health systems by strengthening NPHIs. With your continued help, advocacy, and participation, we can bolster these alliances and our collective ability to improve global health outcomes.

Pekka Puska

NPHI PROFILE
National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)

The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)—IANPHI’s host for the October 2008 Annual Meeting—is the premier center of public health expertise in the Netherlands. Under the leadership of Director-General Marc Sprenger, the Institute has grown from roots in the Central Laboratory for Public Health in the early 1900s to its current status as a national and regional center of excellence with 30 units, more than 1,500 employees, and an international reach stretching far beyond its Bilthoven campus.

RIVM’s stated mission is to benefit people, society and the environment, matching its staff’s expertise, knowledge, and research with that of colleagues from around the world. The Institute accomplishes this mission through research, policy support, national coordination, intervention programs, and provision of information to professionals and the general public. Using sophisticated networks and state-of-the-art diagnostic and surveillance tools, multidisciplinary teams conduct research, monitoring, modeling, and risk assessment to underpin policies on disease control, food safety, and environmental protection.

RIVM’s activities cover the range of core NPHI functions, with research spanning every area of public health, from radiation and toxicology to influenza and obesity. The number and breadth of RIVM publications in international, peer-reviewed journals attest to the rigor and applicability of the research conducted by the multidisciplinary staff. Their many international collaborations maximize the impact of their expertise and contribute to global solutions to common threats and challenges.

RIVM is an active and supportive member of IANPHI, ensuring that NPHIs are part of the integrated solution to achieving improved health outcomes and offering valuable peer assistance to projects planned in low-resource countries. For more information, visit the RIVM website at www.rivm.nl/en.

About IANPHI
Funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IANPHI is a catalyst for the development and growth of the world’s national public health institutes (NPHIs). In collaboration with countries and partners, IANPHI works to develop stronger and more coordinated public health systems through the establishment of NPHIs. IANPHI is also a professional association for NPHI directors, providing a platform for advocacy and collective action in addressing public health challenges and opportunities. www.ianphi.org.
Tobacco control: we need to do more
IANPHI seeks member institutes to play a role

As tobacco use soars largely unchecked in the developing world, the public health community is being called on to reverse a global pandemic. Aside from HIV infection, smoking is the only cause of death now on the rise worldwide. Without urgent action, tobacco will be responsible for 8 million deaths each year by 2030. The world’s poorest countries bear the brunt of this burden.

More than 150 countries have ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the world’s first global public health treaty, calling for countries to adopt a range of anti-smoking measures. Some institutes among IANPHI’s members are also stepping up to the challenge.

With China home to the largest smoking population in the world, the China CDC has launched an anti-smoking campaign, “Toward a Smoke-Free China,” in collaboration with Peking Union Medical College and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The project aims to establish, through the China CDC, a national network of stakeholders in tobacco control.

Tobacco-control initiatives will be part of China’s 2008 Olympics as well. Promoted as “tobacco-free” Games, the Beijing Olympics are viewed as an opportunity to invigorate the battle against smoking in the country.

The first nation in the western hemisphere to ratify the WHO Framework, Mexico is also at the forefront of tobacco control efforts. Since 2000, Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública has identified tobacco as a priority for research and capacity building. INSP conducted the first study in Mexico to estimate the healthcare costs associated with smoking and produced the first comprehensive review of tobacco control in the country.

The European Network for Smoking Prevention includes several IANPHI institutes among its members. The Public Health Institute of Iceland, Sweden’s National Institute of Public Health, and Latvia’s Public Health Agency are among those combining efforts for tobacco control in Europe. Estonia’s National Institute for Health Development is focusing its efforts on youth—conducting yearly Smoke-Free Class Competitions to prevent the onset of tobacco use in non-smokers and encourage smokers to quit.

IANPHI is keen to work with our members and partners to do more to address this newest destabilizing threat to global development and health. “Through our model peer-assistance approach, we can facilitate the exchange of scientific expertise and help countries seek support for public health measures to reverse this global epidemic,” says Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, IANPHI President. We urge member institutes with an interest in scaling up tobacco control programs and strategies to contact Ms. Allison Greenspan at agree2@sph.emory.edu.

KTL summer school in Helsinki
NPHI directors and other public health experts from 17 countries gathered in Helsinki in June to participate in the second annual KTL Summer School program on the Role and Function of a Comprehensive National Public Health Institute. The program is a collaborative project between IANPHI and KTL, Finland’s NPHI.

Attendees included representatives from IANPHI’s current and planned project sites in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Mexico, Serbia, and Macedonia.

From left: Dr. Belsy Acosta Herrera (Cuba), Dr. Mario Henry Rodriguez (Mexico), Dr. Vonthanak Saphonn (Cambodia), Dr. Amha Kebede (Ethiopia), Dr. Sam An Ung (Cambodia), Dr. Nicolas Barro (Burkina Faso).
Japan’s NPHI supports Asia-Pacific countries in chronic disease control

Non-communicable diseases such as cancer, heart disease and stroke, and chronic respiratory diseases are major causes of morbidity and mortality globally, with a rapidly increasing burden in developing countries. However, strong evidence shows that these conditions are largely preventable through just a few public health interventions—tobacco control, dietary change, and physical activity.

Over the past 30 years, the United States and many countries in Europe have been able to turn the trend and reduce the heart disease burden. In Asia, Japan has been particularly successful in reducing the country’s very high stroke rate.

To date, Japan’s National Institute of Public Health (NIPH), in collaboration with WHO, has organized four international visitors’ programs to showcase Japan’s experience in prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and to assist in developing action plans within and between participating countries. The most recent course took place in April 2008 on the NIPH campus in Saitama near Tokyo. Participants included 19 experts from nine countries across Asia and Western Pacific—from China to Papua New Guinea.

Nearly 100 public health experts and policy makers have participated in Japan’s visitors’ program since its launch in 2005. Alumni are creating a critical mass of expertise for management of non-communicable diseases in the region.

IANPHI Annual Meeting
October 12–15, 2008
Save the date

All members are invited to attend IANPHI’s Annual Meeting on October 12–15, 2008. The event will be hosted by Dr. Marc Sprenger and colleagues at RIVM in Bilthoven, The Netherlands.

The agenda will feature interactive sessions on strategic planning and disease surveillance as well as opportunities to meet formally and informally with NPHI colleagues and IANPHI staff, partners, and donors. Please visit the website for additional information.

Meetings and events
A selection of events of interest to IANPHI members and colleagues

August 3–8, 2008
XVII International AIDS Conference
México City, México
www.aids2008.org

August 26–29, 2008
First Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa
Libreville, Gabon
www.unep.org/health-env/

August 27–31, 2008
World Cancer Congress
Geneva, Switzerland
www.worldcancercongress.org

September 20–24, 2008
18th World Congress of Epidemiology
Porto Alegre, Brazil
www.epi2008.com

November 16–29, 2008
Fifth Public Health Pre-Deployment Course
Ottawa, Canada

November 17–19, 2008
2008 Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health
Bamako, Mali
www.bamako2008.org

December 3–7, 2008
15th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa
Dakar, Senegal
www.icasadakar2008.org