

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA
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8 April 2009

Dr Paulo Buss
The President
World Federation of Public Health Associations

Dear Dr Buss

It gives me pleasure to attach the 2008 annual report of the Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) and to use the opportunity to introduce the organisation and its new executive committee, elected at the June 2008 conference.

As you know, the mission of PHASA is to build an association of those involved in health and health-related activities to promote greater equity in health in South Africa, for the ultimate purpose of impacting positively on health outcomes. PHASA recognises the importance of the social determinants of health and advocates for the equitable access to the basic conditions necessary to achieve health for all South Africans as well as equitable access to effective health care.

PHASA's main strategies for achieving its mission are to:

- Build an *effective organisation* of interested individuals committed to public health principles;
- Create a *multi-disciplinary environment* of professional exchange and debate, study and activity through its annual conferences. Thus far, PHASA's biennial conference has provided a forum for knowledge sharing and the presentation of public health research findings and evidence on scientific matters, ranging from tobacco control legislation to the importance of health system strengthening in implementing HIV&AIDS programmes.
- Support the *publication* of relevant materials through its website and quarterly newsletters
- *Network* with other public health organisations and related organizations. To this end, PHASA is an active member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA).
- Embark on initiatives to place the *Public Health approach* higher on the national agenda.

The current executive committee list is attached as an appendix. The current executive is multidisciplinary, with collective expertise in public health, health systems research, health policy, epidemiology and biostatistics, occupational health; social and behavioural sciences; health service management; and monitoring and evaluation. Apart from its technical skills and expertise, the PHASA executive has extensive experience of doing

participatory research and of consultation with stakeholders and of developing practical recommendations for improved health system functioning and addressing the social determinants of health.

The PHASA executive committee represents a broad constituency of skilled individuals committed to equity, non-partisanship and Public Health as a discipline.

Yours sincerely



Professor Laetitia Rispel

President: PHASA

Public Health Association of South Africa – Executive Committee

1. **President:** Professor Laetitia Rispel, Centre for Health Policy, School Of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
2. **Vice-President:** Dr Flavia Senkubuge, School of Public Health, University of Pretoria
3. **Treasurer:** Professor Debbie Bradshaw, Medical Research Council
4. **Deputy-treasurer:** Professor Thandi Puoane, School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape
5. **Secretary:** Dr David Pienaar, School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town
6. **Executive member:** Professor David Buso, School of Public Health, Walter Sisulu University of Technology
7. **Executive member:** Professor Rodney Ehrlich, School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town
8. **Executive member:** Dr Irwin Friedman, Health Systems Trust
9. **Executive member:** Dr Annete Gerritsen, School of Public Health, University of Venda
10. **Executive member:** Dr Ria Kirsten, Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town
11. **Executive member:** Dr Stephen Knight, School of Public Health, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
12. **Executive member:** Professor Supa Pengpid, School of Public Health, University of Limpopo
13. **Executive member:** Dr Laela Mpolokeng, School of Public Health, University of Limpopo

**2008 ANNUAL REPORT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF
SOUTH AFRICA (PHASA)**

Public Health Association of South Africa

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President: Prof. Laetitia Rispel

Secretary: Dr. David Pienaar

Membership: 360 people registered as they attended the 2008 PHASA conference in Cape Town

Publications:

- Published two newsletters (May 2008 and February 2009) of the Public Health Association of South Africa. Have stopped distributing hard copies of the newsletters. These are now sent out to 1 172 people as an e-newsletter.
- The newsletters are also available online at <http://www.phasa.org.za/>. A number of notices are sent out more frequently by email.
- The Southern African Journal of Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases serves as the official journal of PHASA and other members of the Federation of Infectious Diseases Societies of Southern Africa (FIDSSA).

List of conferences and meetings:

- The 4th Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) Conference was held in Cape Town from the 2nd to 4th June 2008. The theme of the conference in keeping with the 30th Anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration was “Making Alma Ata Principles a 21st Century Reality: What will it take?” More than 360 people attended from more than 20 countries. The guest speaker was Dr T. Sundararaman the executive director of the National Health Systems Resorts in New Delhi India, a co-founder of the People's Health Movement in India.

The three conference tracks were: Evidence for Action and Evidence of Action; Health in Context; and Necessity and Invention.

The seven preconference workshops are listed below:

- Your Life or your Liberty. When is it legitimate to limit Human Rights for the Public good?
 - Significant differences or Significant others? Reconciling Qualitative and Quantitative research traditions in Public Health.
 - Lies, damn lies and statistics? Epidemiology for journalists.
 - “If you don’t like the news go out and make some of your own”. Media advocacy and Public Health.
 - HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health: Understanding and claiming rights
 - Getting the evidence right. Practicing evidence-based Public Health
 - Task-shifting: second-rate care or opportunity for health systems?
- The 3rd Conference of the Parties to the WHO framework Convention on Tobacco Control held in Durban from 17th to 22nd November 2008 was attended by two PHASA members Flavia Senkubuge and Stephen Knight as part of a delegation representing non-governmental organisations through the Canadian Public Health Association and the World Federation of Public Health Associations. The occasion incorporated a number of satellite meetings of Associations of Public Health from other African countries.

List of ongoing Research & Development projects:

nil

List of activities prepared/planned for the next reporting period:

A new 13 member PHASA executive was elected at the conference in Cape Town in June 2008. In September 2008, a one day *lekgotla* (workshop) was held to discuss our key strategic goals for the coming year. We re-iterated PHASA’s stated mission of building an association of those involved in health and health-related activities to promote greater equity in health in South Africa, for the ultimate purpose of impacting positively on health outcomes. As a group, the Executive decided that PHASA should best position itself as an organisation committed to Public Health development and capacity building in South and Southern Africa.

The consensus areas that the current PHASA Executive decided should be focused on during their term of office include:

- Collaboration and strengthening of relationships with organizations and individuals in the local, regional and international Public Health arenas;
- Creating local/regional Public Health networking forums, increasing membership and building regional Public Health capacity ;
- Effective communication strategies, both internal and external;
- Policy engagement and influence in Southern African Public Health matters

To this end we made the following decisions:

1. Hold an annual conference

Previously, conferences have been held biennially. We decided to commit to an annual conference, which would alternate between one of the three large centres (Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban) and several smaller centres. Attendance will be open to the regional and international Public Health community. Our 2009 conference will be in Durban, and the 2010 conference in East London.

2. Develop Public Health capacity in South Africa and beyond

Although we have a membership of some few hundred, the Executive Committee is currently the driving force of the organisation. As a consequence we discussed the possibility of dividing the country into three 'hubs', more or less in keeping with the distribution of the executive members.

These would be the:

- Western hub, including members from the Northern and Western Cape;
- Eastern hub, with members from the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal; and
- Central hub, which would account for the remaining inland provinces.

The idea is for the regional hubs to organise local Public Health education events and to take responsibility for developing local membership. Furthermore we felt that PHASA should extend relations beyond South Africa's borders and make contact with Public Health practitioners in the SADC region more generally. To this end we discussed the possibility of each of the three hubs being charged with communicating with their direct neighbours, along the following lines:

- Western Hub – Namibia and Botswana;
- Eastern Hub – Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique; and
- Central Hub – Zimbabwe and countries further north.

We are committed to bringing representatives from each of these countries to our 2009 conference. We plan to discuss the development of Public Health capacity in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) with delegates from these countries at this conference.

3. Establish a Public Health Achievement award

The Executive agreed to establish a public health achievement awards, the purpose of which would be to raise the profile of Public Health and to celebrate notable achievements in the field of Public Health. Our intention is to launch the awards at the next PHASA conference, and funding is being sought for the awards.

4. Revive special interest groups

A Public Health Registrars' Forum has been approved by the Executive, and the details of its functioning are being worked out. We will encourage the development of other special interest groups too.

5. Raise our media profile

We have appointed an editorial sub-committee. We have made decisions to update and grow our website and to increase the frequency of our regular newsletter. To this end an editorial sub-committee has been appointed which will oversee these developments as well as investigate the viability of a Public Health journal. This committee was tasked with producing a firm proposal on a South African Journal of Public Health before the next PHASA conference.

7. Establish a permanent secretariat

We are planning to appoint an executive secretary for PHASA in order to assist with building PHASA and giving effect to the strategic goals defined by the Executive.