Report on Activities of the Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA) for 2018

Delegates at the 2018 ASPHA Conference
The Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA) was established on October 23, 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya with its secretariat based in Ghana. It currently has 48 institutions covering Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries. Our mission is to serve the collective needs of public health institutions in the education and training of Public Health professionals by building their capacity to maximize and excel in academic training and advocacy, and in the process serve to provide a strong unified voice for promoting public health in Africa, particularly in relation to current debates on Global Health and Health Systems strengthening. ASPHA also provides a network for people from these institutions to share individual knowledge, expertise and public health training methods to improve the quality of trainees who graduate from these institutions; share and address their individual problems and also to devise innovative techniques to solve home grown challenges.

ASPHA recognizes the enormous contributions of Schools of Public in Africa in training of public health workforce to combat disease and poverty on the African continent thus bringing them together to achieve this common goal is of great importance. The Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) [SDG 3] cannot be achieved without the engagement of the public health workforce. ASPHA members strongly believe that prevention is better than cure. The quantity, distribution and skills-mix of the health workforce are the lynchpin of the health care system which will help improve healthcare in Africa in terms of coverage and quality. This means that improving public health training and empowering faculty is necessary to achieving SDG 3.

Over the years, ASPHA have assisted Universities to establish Schools of Public Health and also individual members have served as intellectual and academic pull for the benefit of other Schools. The Association meets on an annual basis to share scientific achievements of its members in the areas of new knowledge created and new approaches to teaching Public Health. In line with this, we organize yearly conferences and general meetings which bring together both young and senior faculty from all member Public Health institutions in Africa to discuss the health challenges of Africa and Public Health Education. This provides us the avenue to share
knowledge in Africa. We also invite other stakeholders from other continents to share their knowledge with us.

Currently, our flagship programme is to develop a Core Competencies document for Public Health training at the Master’s level (Master of Public Health [MPH]) to serve as the basis for teaching in Public Health across Africa. It is the conviction of ASPHA that through sharing experiences and curricula of institutions we can develop a position on Core Competencies in Public Health required in MPH graduates, with particular emphasis on the needs of health systems in Africa. This position will be used to assist in future quality assurance activities to support African Public Health institutions to review their own curriculum. It will also assist them as they move from ‘department’ status in their Universities to ‘school’ status and to develop guidelines for future accreditation approaches to MPH training on the African continent.

In order to achieve this milestone, several meetings, workshops and conferences have been held with the major one occurring in 2018 where the curriculum from various African institutions were completely scrutinized and discussed. The core competencies for graduate training in other regions were also shared at the conference.

The 2018 ASPHA Conference was held from October 22nd to 24th 2018 at Holiday Inn, Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa. The conference was hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand and co-organized by the Africa Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). The meeting brought together over sixty (60) participants from seventeen (17) different countries (Asia-Pacific region, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Great Britain, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somali, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, United States of America and Zambia) including representatives from Africa CDC. The theme for the conference was ‘Transforming and Harmonizing Public Health Training and Education in Africa: Need for core competencies’.

During the conference, delegates agreed to finalize the African Public Health Core Competencies framework which was developed after the 2017 AGM. This competencies framework when finalized will assist in transforming and harmonizing public health trainings and education in the
African continent hence resulting in a highly qualified and universally accepted workforce that can drive the African public health agenda. The meeting deliberated and reached a consensus to:

- Work collectively towards the development of an African Public Health competencies and strengthening public health skills through a collaborative approach with all stakeholders.
- Generate a list of core competencies that will form the basis of the African framework.
- Finalize the harmonized core competency framework for Africa with an oversight from an established technical task force.
- Develop an advocacy strategy to intensify awareness
- Build consensus among key stakeholders of the process and mobilize resource to support the initiative.

The list of key competencies identified for the formation of the framework included: Leadership and management, Communication, Advocacy, Negotiation, Organizational change management, Systems thinking, Policy and Planning, Collaborative Leadership, Diversity and inclusiveness, Awareness of Power, Politics, and Social determinants of health.

The conference also provided a forum for Public Health professionals to deliberate and share experience on emerging public health issues and the way forward. A communique (appendix 1) was developed based on the proceedings from the Conference.

This year’s (2019) conference will also help with the development of the competencies where we will understand the public health workforce need, challenges and solutions. The theme is “Universal Health Coverage in Africa: The Role of Public Health Workforce” which will be hosted by the School of Public Health, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda from 14th-16th October, 2019. They will also be celebrating 25 years (Silver Jubilee) of providing public health education in Africa.
COMMUNIQUÉ FROM 2018 ASPHA CONFERENCE
JOHANNESBURG: 24 OCTOBER, 2018

Theme: “Transforming and Harmonizing Public Health Trainings and Education in Africa through Postgraduate Public Health Core Competencies Framework”

The 2018 Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA) conference, co-organized with Africa Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), and hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa from 22nd to 24th October 2018, agreed to develop African public health core competencies to be used by public health training institutions. The core competencies will assist in transforming and harmonizing public health trainings and education in the continent hence resulting in globally competitive public health professionals that can drive the African public health agenda. The meeting brought together over 60 participants from Schools and Departments of Public Health in 17 African countries under the theme “Transforming and harmonizing public health training and education in Africa: need for core competencies”. The meeting was also attended by experts in Public Health from Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific who also shared their institutional experience, which proved to be valuable lessons for proposed ASPHA initiative.

The meeting deliberated and reached a consensus on: working collectively towards the development of an African Public Health core competencies and strengthening public health practice through a collaborative approach with all principal stakeholders (Public Health England, Faculty of Public Health UK, International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI), Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER), Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH), Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH), Association of African Universities); a need to urgently finalize the harmonized core competency framework for Africa with an oversight from an established technical taskforce; and developing an advocacy strategy to intensify awareness, building consensus among key stakeholders of the process and resource mobilization to support
the initiative. The list of key competencies identified for the framework include: leadership and management; communication; advocacy: negotiation; organizational change management; systems thinking; policy and planning; diversity and inclusiveness; social determinants of health; and Getting research into policy and practice (GRIPP).

Over the years ASPHA deliberated on having core competencies for Master in public health graduate programme in Africa. Such programmes should take into account factors that have affected public health in Africa in addressing the particular needs of the continent, and assist in reducing the observed high health burden among many countries. The competencies are intended to serve as a resource and guide for those interested in improving the quality and accountability of public health education and training.

About ASPHA

ASPHA’s mission is to spearhead excellence in public health practice in Africa, continually adapting to evolving context in the continent, through advocacy, influencing public health policy, research and training to promote health, reduce disease burden and alleviate poverty and by extension sustainable development in Africa. Learn more about ASPHA at: www.asphaafrica.net

About the Africa CDC

The Africa CDC mission is to strengthen Africa’s public health institution’s capacities, capabilities and partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks based on science, policy, and data-driven interventions and programmes. Learn more at: http://www.africacdc.org
Appendix 1b (French version)

Communiqué de la conférence ASPHA 2018
Johannesburg, le 24 octobre 2018

Thème : ‘Transformer et harmoniser les formations et l'éducation en santé publique de troisième cycle en Afrique à travers le cadre de compétences de base’

La conférence 2018 de l'Association des écoles de santé publique en Afrique (ASPHA), coorganisée avec les Centres africains de contrôle et de prévention des maladies (CDC Afrique), et qui s'est tenue à l'Université de Witwatersrand à Johannesburg en Afrique du Sud du 22 au 24 octobre 2018, a décidé de développer les compétences de base en santé publique en Afrique, exploitables par les institutions de formation en santé publique. Les compétences de base aideront à transformer et à harmoniser les formations et l’éducation en santé publique à travers le continent, ce qui se traduira par la formation de professionnels de la santé publique compétitifs à l’échelle mondiale et capables de diriger l’agenda de la santé publique en Afrique. La réunion a rassemblé plus de 60 participants issus d'écoles et de départements de santé publique de 17 pays africains sur le thème « Transformer et harmoniser la formation et l'éducation en santé publique en Afrique: nécessité des compétences de base ». Des experts en santé publique venus d'Europe, d'Amérique du Nord et d'Asie-Pacifique ont également pris part à la rencontre et ont aussi partagé leur expérience institutionnelle, qui s'est avérée être une précieuse leçon pour l'initiative proposée par ASPHA.

La rencontre a délibéré et a abouti à un consensus sur les points suivants: (i) travailler collectivement au développement des compétences de base en santé publique en Afrique et renforcer la pratique en matière de santé publique grâce à une approche collaborative avec tous les principaux acteurs (Public Health England, Faculté de santé publique du Royaume-Uni, Association internationale des instituts de santé publique (IANPHI), Association des écoles de santé publique de la région européenne (ASPHER), Association des écoles et programmes de santé publique (ASPPH), Consortium universitaire de santé publique pour l'Asie et le Pacifique (APACPH), Association des universités africaines); (ii) la nécessité de finaliser de toute urgence le cadre de compétences de base harmonisé pour l'Afrique sous la supervision d'un groupe de
travail technique établi; (iii) et développer une stratégie de plaidoyer pour intensifier la sensibilisation, créer un consensus entre les principales parties prenantes sur le processus et la mobilisation des ressources afin de soutenir l’initiative. La liste des compétences clés identifiées pour le cadre comprend : le leadership et la gestion, la communication, le plaidoyer : négociation, la gestion du changement organisationnel, la pensée systémique, la politique et la planification, la diversité et l’inclusivité, les déterminants sociaux de la santé, l’intégration de la recherche dans les politiques et les pratiques (IRPP).

Au fil des ans, l’ASPHA a délibéré sur la nécessité de disposer d’une liste de compétences de base pour le programme de master en santé publique en Afrique. Ces programmes devraient tenir compte des facteurs qui ont affecté la santé publique en Afrique pour répondre aux besoins particuliers du continent et contribuer à réduire le lourd fardeau de santé observé dans de nombreux pays. Les compétences sont destinées à servir de ressources et de guide à ceux qui souhaitent améliorer la qualité et la responsabilisation de l’éducation et de la formation en santé publique.

À propos de l'ASPHA
La mission de l'ASPHA est de conduire l’excellence dans la pratique de santé publique en Afrique, en s'adaptant continuellement à l'évolution du contexte sur le continent, par le biais d'activités de plaidoyer, en influençant les politiques de santé publique, la recherche et la formation pour promouvoir la santé, réduire le fardeau des maladies, réduire la pauvreté et, par extension, le développement durable en Afrique. En savoir plus sur ASPHA sur: www.asphaafrica.net

À propos du CDC Afrique
La mission du CDC pour l’Afrique est de renforcer les capacités, les compétences et les partenariats de l’institution de santé publique africaine afin de détecter et de réagir rapidement et efficacement aux menaces de maladies et aux épidémies reposant sur des interventions et des programmes fondés sur la science, les politiques et les données. En savoir plus sur: http://www.africacdc.org