



**World Federation of Public Health Associations**  
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique  
Federación Mundial de Asociaciones de Salud Pública

## **Presidential Report 2007-2008**

**S.M. Asib Nasim**

I am pleased to present the report of my concluding year at term as President of the WFPHA. At the outset, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude and thanks to all of you for vesting the responsibility unto me as the President of the only professional society of the world representing and serving the broad field of Public health “the WFPHA”.

I like to dedicate my report in memory of Dr. Allen Jones, the past Secretary General, a personal friend of mine, who contributed significantly in shaping the Federation to where it is now, reaching the helm of global public health leadership. Allen left us only a few months back, leaving a memory of attainments and achievements.

Let me remind you that although the world is plagued with many health problems and challenges, ranging from the threat of avian flu to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, and the age-old causes of mortality and morbidity, in some ways this may well turn out to be the golden era for public health. Why do I say this? Because of three reasons:

**First**, today we have an unprecedented global consensus on priorities for human development. All nations of the world have signed on to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, and health outcomes figure very prominently among the MDGs.

I am happy to note that the World Federation of Public Health Associations and its 70 national chapters also strongly support the MDGs as a strategy to achieve more equitable distribution and greater access to resources, so that all people of the world can achieve health and a better quality of life.

**Second**, perhaps for the first time in human history, medical and technological advances, as well as progress in disseminating health information, education and communication make it possible for us to imagine that “Health for All” can indeed be a reality, not just a distant dream.

**And third**, although getting funding support to meet the needs of the poorest people in developing countries continues to be a great challenge, health issues are now commanding the interest and support of many world leaders, and have become the favorite subject for public-private partnerships. Not only ministers of health and other public health leaders, but by philanthropists and activists ranging from Bill Gates to Warren Buffet; and from Bono to Bill Clinton now champion such partnerships.

We can now proudly say public health seems to be at the heart of the world's development agenda.

In this backdrop, the year can be seen as organizational strengthening of member associations as well as the Federation itself.

After assuming office, we concentrated our focus on institutionalization of democracy at all levels of decision making of its structure and to elevate the Federation to its optimum for carrying out its responsibilities as the global organ of the public health. I can proudly conclude, with all your effort, our endeavor was engineered in reshaping the Federation towards that strategic direction.

The year was devoted to reaching understanding and consensus on some critical issue on governance of the Federation. Consensus was reached to work on this issue in refining and fine-tuning those for broader consensus in the next 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Federation. As agreed, I am happy to put forward those issues:

**Strategic Plan:** The issue of developing a strategic plan for the WFPHA was felt necessary in order to deepen and broaden the organizational capacity of the WFPHA. I took the privilege of putting forward the draft strategic plan, developed through a participative process at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Study and Conference Center in May 2007, covering the five-year period 2007 - 2012 and fine tuned at a retreat at Geneva during last February 2008. It updates the Federation's vision, mission, goals and strategies and serves as a road map for activities in support of the achievement of the goals. The vision and mission statement and values agreed are as follows.

**Vision:** To lead the quest for a healthy global society.

**Mission:** WFPHA is an international nongovernmental, multi-professional and civil society organization, dedicated to promoting and protecting global public health.

**Values:**

Right to Health: We hold that health is a fundamental human right and a public good.

Social Justice: We advocate for equity and non-discrimination and the elimination of health disparities.

Diversity and Inclusion: We promote a global public health perspective that includes diverse social and cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability.

Partnership: We use partnership as the basis for mutual learning and capacity building.

Ethical Conduct: We believe in the ethical practice of public health for individuals and populations.

A small committee was formed, aimed to finalize the Strategic Plan, relate the strategies to specific activities and projects, and to define persons responsible for individual tasks.

**Partnerships:** The Federation should forge broad based partnerships and networking, sharing information to better prepare each and every country to meet the challenges of

the future. Partnering with WHO on the Global Database for key networking was acknowledged. WFPHA has also been invited to work on WHO's Global Directory of Health professionals – Avicenna. WFPHA has joined the board of Avicenna.

**Strengthening the WFPHA:** To help build on and support the strategic plan Pfizer provided US\$300,000.00 over 3 years. The fund would be used to build infrastructure of the WFPHA. For undertaking assessment of the need of the global public health workforce a partnership arrangement has also been made with Rockefeller Foundation.

**Communication Process:** For further strengthening the communication channel among member associations a newsletter has been introduced. This newsletter became a source of information sharing and provided updates on major global public health events among member associations.

**Constitutional By-Laws:** The existing amended Constitution and the Bylaws does not fully support the governance of the Federation in meeting the future changing role of the Federation. After reviewing the By-Laws a detail Operation Guideline was drafted which was elaborately discussed and would be tabled in the 42<sup>nd</sup> AGM for consensus and approval.

**Major Conferences attended:**

Attended the 135th Exposition of the American Public Health Association in Washington DC, November 3-7, 2007, at the invitation of the American Public Health Association. Also attended the breakfast meetings hosted by the Federation, Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) and APHA including the meeting of the governing board of APHA.

Joined the conference *Equity, Ethics and Right to Health*, at Salvador, Bahia, Brazil in July 13-18, 2007.

I became familiar with the WFPHA activities in September 2000 at Beijing during the 9<sup>th</sup> congress. Since then till today I attended all of the AGMs and all the congresses. Beginning with a member of the nomination committee, I was given the responsibility to chair the nomination committee and then was elected and given the responsibility of President-Elect and finally President of the Federation. Over the years since 2000, I witnessed the beckoning of the Federation and its growth. I witnessed how relentlessly few people struggled and contributed to the day to day business of the Federation in guiding the member associations to raise their voice in all corner of the globe to address the public health challenges. Some of them retired, some left for other priorities and some passed away. I want to remember and acknowledge all of their contribution and commitment.

The global need is a well-equipped public health workforce empowered with required tools, knowledge, infrastructure and commitment to respond in any situation. Public health needs reinvigoration in preparing dauntless professionals to act as harbinger of hope for those in need. These professionals, additional to contributing effectively to the multifaceted public health domain, needs elevation to take on a broader perspective of public health, to comprehend the political economy and gaining competency and skills to be able to lead and guide policy decisions and strategic design at community, district,

national, state and global level. These necessitate partnership, networking and collaboration among public health workforce, national public health associations, public health schools and global health organizations and institutes. The World Federation of Public Health Associations should take on this coordinating role in joining efforts to strengthen the Public Health profession and to improve community health worldwide.

Based on the experience, I would like to put forward the following actions to the next board for consideration. These perhaps are my unfinished agenda, which I intended to complete during my tenure, but the actions barely could be initiated and needs to be continued. The actions are:

- The Federation needs to develop core set of policies to define basic values of public health followed by more specific policies on issues of importance and relevance.
- After reviewing roles and responsibilities, an operational guideline and an Executive Board manual needs to be developed for better administrative functions of the Federation. There is also need to establish more formal communications with the membership.
- For better operation of the Federation a self-sustainable offices linked to the Secretariat and the President is essential. Option should be explored to operate a satellite office of the Federation at Geneva as the Federation is being registered under Swiss Law. A right balance also needs to be established between central decision-making and consultation, either with the EB or member associations.
- Strengthening of the financial base is crucial. A strategic fund raising campaign needs to be initiated at the earliest convenience. Business opportunities need also to be explored.
- Reinvigorating the functional responsibility of the Regional Liaison Officer (RLO). These positions are viable options for regional cooperation and collaboration

I welcome and congratulate Paulo Buss, a recognized and time tested public health leader as the new President of the Federation. I also like to welcome and congratulate the newly formed executive board members, the new chairs and members of the newly formed committees and trust that their effort will bring new dimension to the Federation. I earnestly believe that their leadership capabilities aligned with the goal of the Federation will enable them to provide required strategic guidance of the Federation

Allow me to end this report by thanking all those who have actively worked for the Federation and have contributed to its activities. In particular, sincere thanks are due to:

- ❑ All the Executive Board members who supported me and guided me in taking all the major actions for the Federation.
- ❑ Dr. Barbara Hatcher, Secretary General for piloting the team of staff
- ❑ Ms. Charlene Bright, who has been champion in keeping the house in track along with Ms. Morgan Tailor and Vina HuLamm.
- ❑ Dr. Alena Petrakova, our liaison officer at WHO and a trusted ally
- ❑ Joan Bell Davenport, our treasurer and also contact person at Geneva

- ❑ Members of the Executive Board of the Federation, who through their wisdom and knowledge, has continuously supported me in delivering my responsibilities
- ❑ The American Public Health Association, for continually making available to the Federation not only part of its infrastructure, but most of all, making the necessary financial support available for having a secretariat.
- ❑ The Canadian Public Health Association for its SOPHA program in support of Public Health Associations of many countries.
- ❑ And last but not least, Presidents and members of our National Public Health Associations and the Deans of the Schools of Public Health around the world who have actively participated in making working for the Federation so gratifying.

Before I conclude and prior to leaving the office, I want to bring a personal note to all of your notice. Very recently some correspondence were made among ourselves which in my personal opinion, are not warranted for and are not normal in expression and which crossed the level of decency and good gesture among fellow colleagues. I would refrain myself on elaborating further on these issue. Nevertheless, condemning those acts, I acknowledge this as a failure on my part to restore good rapport among us. I would appeal to all of you, for the greater interest of the Public Health Professional across the globe in general and for the Federation in particular to shun these acts and maintain harmony and peace among each other. Let us do so to ensure that all our children not only survive but also thrive in a world of health, peace, equity and dignity.

On behalf of my wife, my two sons, and myself, I like to thank you all.

**Let's pledge to strengthen our own profession.**