The 3rd Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA) annual general meeting and the 4th global summit of schools of public health was held in Accra Ghana. The meeting took place from the 9th to 10th December 2012 at the La Palm Royal beach Hotel. The theme was:” Policy and Health Systems Research - The Contribution of Schools of Public Health”.

ASPHA’s mission is to provide a forum for sharing innovative ideas and adapting scientific knowledge specific to their particular environment to promote health, reduce disease burden and alleviate poverty to help accelerate health development in Africa.

ASPHA was established in 2010 by representatives from 14 institutions in Africa. The secretariat is at the School of Public Health, University of Ghana, Legon.

The Objectives of ASPHA are:

- To evaluate the programs, curricula, research projects and Faculty specialities of all participating institutions
- To document the educational resources and identify available resources that can be shared immediately.
- To support an annual general meeting to review educational research projects to be undertaken by members and promote the agenda of the association.
- To support faculty exchange including external examiners within the region
- To develop training workshops for strengthening
  - Information technology development in teaching/learning in member schools
  - PHD programmes supervision, external examinations and research
- To produce a regular newsletter publishing the association’s activities and other pertinent public health issues in the region
For the 3rd annual general meeting of ASPHA, in attendance were the ASPHA executive committee together with representatives and students from the Schools of Public health in Africa. Friends of ASPHA including the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and African Federation of Public health Associations (AFPHA) together with representatives from the American schools of Public health, European Schools of Public health, public health in Eastern Mediterranean (EMRAIN) were also in attendance.

The ASPHA 3rd annual general meeting begun with a welcoming address by the ASPHA President Prof Fred Binka and was followed by scientific oral presentations. The Scientific Presentations included topics on:

- The Capacity of African public health schools for policy and systems research, analysis and teaching
- The implication of health training reforms for public health in Kenya
- A highlight of the regional network of academic institutions for public health in Eastern Mediterranean :EMRAIN
- Core competencies of Public health

The first scientific session was followed by a rich poster session and thereafter the second scientific oral presentation which focused on the following topics:

- Individual and community determinants of neonatal mortality in Ghana: a multilevel analysis
- Multiple pathways to accessing pregnancy and delivery care in urban Ghana
- Maternal mortality from the lens of legislators: How real?

The ASPHA committees then led discussion on:

- Advocacy and fundraising
- Statutes of the association and the association’s operational issues
- Collaborating/partnership with members and partners of the association

A plenary session was then held that focused on the governance of the association together with setting of goals for the next term. Consensus was had by all to have involvement of
more schools of public health and students. It was also discussed that the association now need to have more tangible gains in the next term and collaborate with partners.

The day concluded in a special cultural dinner and dance where guests were entertained by local Ghanaian musicians and dancers and served traditional African Cuisine.

The second day was the 4th Global summit of the schools of public health. Guests were greeted by traditional Ghanaian song and dance and were welcomed by a representative of the Vice Chancer of the University of Ghana Prof Ernerst Aryeetey.

The address by the guest of honour was done Dr Toure Boka who was representing the WHO AFRO Regional director Dr Luis Sambo. In his address Dr Boka touched on key issues that included: Mapping of resources for health especially human resources, The impact of African Public Health graduates, Meeting the needs of health systems development and curriculum innovation to meet developmental challenges.

Prof Irene Agyepong then gave an account on the evolution of health systems research and policy development in Ghana. In her address she stressed the importance of having a shared vision, relationship and communication, understanding and respect from all stake holders in order to achieve policy development.

Prof Sharon Fonn followed with a presentation on health systems research and health systems research from an African perspective. She highlighted that it is imperative that African research is driven by an African agenda and not a donor agenda, this together with a value system of Public health that addresses inequity.

Prof Antoine Flahault then presented the future of global public health where he noted that more collaborative approaches will be important in future together with resource sharing. There also needed to be a bridge between the divide that currently exists between academic institutions, guideline and practice. He stressed that there was a need for a mentoring system for future public health leaders

The Key note speaker was Prof Sir Andy Haines who is a professor of Public health and Primary health care with joint appointment in the Department of Social and environmental Health Research and in the Department of Nutrition and Public Health Intervention
Research. Prof Haines spoke of the importance of policy entrepreneurs and legacy formulation. He emphasised the need for strong regional leadership and strategic direction.

The regional representatives spoke of their appreciation for the association of schools of public health and pledged their continued support. There was a general call for a more collaborative approach on projects and activities by partners.

The meeting then discussed the formation of the Federation of Associations of Schools of Public Health (FASPH). This world body will include all schools of Public Health in the World and their regional partners. The World Federation of Public Health Representative made comment on the structure of the WFPHA and highlighted critical issues of governance, secretariat, funding, membership and management. The meeting concluded that a further discussion would be held at the meeting of the African Federation of Public Health Associations (AFPHA) on 24 – 27 September 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa.

The Global summit was concluded by the ASPHA president and the executive committee handing out gifts to the visitors and thanking them for a fruitful two day gathering.