

PD-ABQ-119

96250

# SANA

Sustainable Approaches to Nutrition in Africa

## Trip Report

### Participation in the 16th International Congress on Nutrition and Meeting on Public Nutrition

*Montreal, Canada: July 24 – August 1, 1997*

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### **Introduction**

The Sustainable Approaches to Nutrition in Africa (SANA) Project is now a four-year cooperative agreement between the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and the Africa Bureau Office of Sustainable Development (AFR/SD) to strengthen and improve program-oriented nutrition training and research in Africa. SANA was created in response to the Bellagio Global Initiative to improve nutrition programs by strengthening the linkages among programs, training, and research.

In July, SANA project director, Ellen Piwoz, and Lamine Thiam, SANA regional advisor for West Africa, attended the 16th International Congress of Nutrition in Montreal, Canada. Dr. Piwoz also attended the pre-Congress meeting on Public Nutrition. The 16th International Congress of Nutrition is held every four years and is an important forum for discussing nutrition research, programs, and policies worldwide. The pre-Congress meeting was organized specifically to discuss issues related to advocacy, training, and research in support of nutrition programs among an audience of donors, educators, program managers, and policymakers throughout the world. Participation at both meetings by three African nutritionists who work with SANA, Dr. Milla McLachlan (South Africa), Dr. Abiud Omwega (Kenya), and Mrs. Louise Sserunjogi (Uganda), was supported by the SARA Project.

The objectives of the present trip were:

- 1) to participate in the discussions related to future advocacy, training, and research in the emerging field of public nutrition and to share information on SANA activities and lessons learned;
- 2) to discuss the results of the SANA mid-project review with SANA partners and plan follow-up activities with each partner;
- 3) to meet with representatives of African institutions and networks, and other donor organizations interested in improved program-related training and research, and/or supporting nutrition networks in Africa; and
- 4) to debrief on the results of the West Africa regional workshop on the food box adaptation for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).

A list of participants at the pre-Congress meeting on Public Nutrition is found in Appendix A. The persons participating in subsequent training and networking discussions is found in Appendix B.

### Results

#### *Participation in the Public Nutrition Meeting*

The Public Nutrition meeting was organized on the premise that bringing together a range of institutions dealing with nutrition issues at the population level would provide a greater synthesis of the various issues affecting nutrition, facilitate the development of a coherent agenda for training and research, and support better and more implementation of policies and programs to improve nutrition. The idea for this meeting emerged directly from the 1994 Bellagio meeting on program-related nutrition training and research (which motivated the creation of SANA), and subsequent communications and work related to the Bellagio Global Initiative.

During the meeting, several issues and experiences were discussed. The following observations are noteworthy:

- 1) The concept of public nutrition represents a convergence of interests about the process of improving the nutrition situation in populations, rather than a rigidly defined new discipline. It also may represent the concept of nutrition in the public interest, which introduces new areas, such as advocacy, which are also important for training, research, and program and policy development.
- 2) There are diverse underlying motivations for the different participants to unite under the cause of "public nutrition." The many researchers and academics present at the meeting, primarily from U.S. and Canadian universities, are motivated by constraints they face within their own academic institutions. The representatives from the multi-lateral agencies are eager to define nutrition in broader terms in order to gain greater appeal and support. UNICEF, for example, which had many representatives present, was eager to place nutrition within a framework of human rights ("the rights approach"). The Asian Development Bank, on the other hand, was eager to link nutrition to human capacity and economic development in order to appeal to its own decision makers and counterparts. Throughout the meeting, however, the perspective and needs among persons working in the field was rarely at the forefront of the discussions.
- 3) The appropriate roles for donors, universities (as training centers and researchers), and technical assistance organizations were never clearly articulated. Although the need for better communication and respect among different types of partners was discussed, the bounds and limits of each entity's participation in supporting programs at the country level was not explicitly stated. This left the impression that programmers on the ground had

little say in defining the issues and that problems would be solved by "a small group of powerful individuals and organizations, mostly from the developed world."

The meeting agreed that concrete steps need to be taken in support of the concept of Public Nutrition. Those relevant to SANA and Africa are:

- 1) National and regional initiatives and networks focusing on public nutrition issues should be supported.
- 2) Local (regional, national, and grassroots) initiatives to understand and address nutrition problems should be documented and analyzed. Documentation and dissemination of appropriate community actions and models are of highest priority.
- 3) People working in the field should be assisted and supported in ways that will enable them to disseminate and publish their work and lessons learned in this field.
- 4) Nutrition should be given a focus, through training and advocacy, within new disciplines (beyond health and agriculture), including economics, education, environment, and social welfare.

### ***Meetings with SANA Partners***

Several meetings were held to discuss the results of the SANA mid-project review and follow-up activities with specific partners, including the University of the Western Cape, the Network of African Public Health Institutions (NAPHI), and the Nutrition Training and Research Improvement Network (NUTRINET). Results for each are discussed below.

#### **University of the Western Cape**

The University of the Western Cape has made great progress in redesigning the short course on Community Nutrition. Following the workshop in November 1996 to re-view the course, it was updated and offered at the winter school session in June/early July. As a result of these activities, it was decided that instead of developing replicable training modules for the one-week general course, efforts should be concentrated on designing a new course for program managers and those who train implementors of community nutrition activities.

Following the short workshop in June 1997, UWC prepared a detailed outline for this new course, which needs to be translated into a participatory training package. The UWC also decided that to introduce this course, and support efforts for its replication in other training institutions, an orientation workshop is needed for the resource persons who will be involved in the subsequent training. The need to coordinate with

## ***Results***

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other training initiatives in South Africa (e.g., the FAO training initiative) was also recognized during the June meeting.

During discussions in Montreal, the following issues became clear. UWC would like to develop a course that utilizes and builds on the experiences of training institutions and programs in other regions of the world. Therefore, they would like to request SANA support for bringing in expertise from several countries, for example, from the USA, South Asia, and the UK, as well as from additional African institutions. UWC is currently developing a short list of possible consultants whom they would like involved in the course design and introduction (i.e., the orientation for resource persons). This list will be submitted to SANA for further consideration. Decisions on how to proceed will be made jointly (within the next few months). UWC also would like further technical assistance from SANA to develop the new course into a viable training package. Dates for this will be determined.

It was useful to learn that previous participation by Dr. Omwega of the University of Nairobi in the November 1996 workshop was viewed to be extremely valuable. Dr. Omwega was subsequently hired as a consultant by FAO to provide technical assistance to the South African government for the FAO-supported training initiative in South Africa. This development will be extremely helpful in making sure that the SANA-supported UWC training activities are well-coordinated with other training activities in the country and region.

### **Network of African Public Health Institutions**

Meetings were held with Milla McLachlan, Abiud Omwega, and Louise Sserunjogi about the NAPHI workshop and follow-up. A meeting report was submitted by NAPHI Chair, Dr. Gilbert Bukenya. SANA is still waiting for the final financial accounting. In the mean time, proposals for constraints assessments were expected in Nairobi by the middle of July. SANA regional advisor for East Africa, Debbie Gachuhi, has received one proposal (from Zimbabwe), which arrived without a budget. Additional information was requested from the Zimbabwe team and is expected by the end of September. Draft proposals and inquiries were sent to Debbie from Tanzania and South Africa, but as of early September, no final proposals were received. Therefore, the November workshop to discuss the assessment findings will have to be postponed.

After he completes his assignment in South Africa, Dr. Omwega is available to offer with technical assistance on this activity, and to document the experience for NAPHI, which is interested in expanding the methodology to define training needs in other disciplines.

### **Nutrition Training and Research Improvement Network (NUTRINET)**

NUTRINET was established in October 1996, following a meeting organized by the University of Nairobi, with support from UNICEF, WHO, DANIDA, IDRC, and SANA. Following the October meeting, it was agreed that the next step was a meeting of the established Steering Committee to define activities and prepare a proposal for funding them. The departing UNICEF regional food and nutrition advisor, Dr. Festo Kavishe, indicated that funds would be available for this meeting from a grant received from IDRC. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, these funds could not be accessed and the Steering Committee was unable to convene this important meeting. Several steering committee members were present in Montreal and a meeting was requested by Dr. Wambui Kogi-Makau to discuss next steps.

The plans for the NUTRINET meeting in Montreal were modified when it became clear that many individuals and institutions interested in networking for improved nutrition programs in Africa were present in Montreal. During meetings with the larger group, it became clear that a viable next step would be to organize a NUTRINET steering committee meeting in conjunction with the upcoming UNICEF/Micronutrient Initiative (MI) meeting on improving programs that address iron deficiency in the East and Southern Africa Region, currently planned for mid-November 1997. This was desirable because NUTRINET had identified strengthening iron deficiency programs as one of its priorities, and UNICEF and the MI wanted to get broader participation in the November meeting.

NUTRINET coordinator, Dr. Kogi-Makau, and Steering Committee member, Dr. McLachlan, wrote a proposal to the Micronutrient Initiative requesting support for Steering Committee members to participate in the regional meeting as well as hold a two-day Steering Committee meeting around it. NUTRINET has requested SANA participation in their November meeting. UNICEF also has indicated interest in working with SANA regional advisor, Debbie Gachuhi, to plan the agenda for the longer workshop.

#### *Meetings with other institutions and networks*

Additional meetings were held with:

- ◆ Olivia Yambi, UNICEF regional advisor for Food and Nutrition in East and Southern Africa to inform her of the various SANA-supported activities in the region, to share SARA publications, and to discuss areas of mutual interest, particularly related to harmonization of training and networking activities.

## *Results*

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- ◆ Pauline Kisanga, coordinator of IBFAN, to discuss their upcoming meeting and activities in the area of HIV and breastfeeding.
- ◆ Jenny Cervinkas, programme coordinator for the Micronutrient Initiative to discuss SANA activities and the MI's interest in supporting networking activities in Africa.
- ◆ Tina van den Briel of the International Agricultural Centre in Wageningen, Netherlands, to discuss their planned future support for training in nutrition in East and Southern Africa.
- ◆ Prof. Akinyele, of the University of Ibadan, to discuss his interest in establishing a network for English-speaking West African countries.
- ◆ Dr. Cuberto Garza, Cornell University, to discuss UNU activities in support of nutrition training.
- ◆ Various individuals interested in learning more about SANA and potential applicants for the SANA/SARA nutrition advisor position.

### *Debriefing on the West Africa Regional Training on the Food Box Adaptation*

BASICS regional advisor for Nutrition, Dr. Serigne Diene, and SANA regional advisor for West Africa, Lamine Thiam arrived in Montreal at the start of the ICN meeting, immediately following the close of the 18-day workshop held in Dakar. Several meetings were held to review the outcome of the regional training, lessons learned, and planned next steps in the region.

The regional workshop went extremely well and was viewed very positively by all participants. Follow-up technical assistance is expected in Morocco (in September), Mali, Benin, and Niger at the present time. Active participation by WHO/AFRO and other members of BASICS throughout the training was extremely positive.

Several lessons were learned from the workshop:

- 1) One week was not sufficient time for the facilitators to review the entire training guide and make needed modifications prior to the workshop. About two weeks is recommended.
- 2) The field work was very important but logistically difficult to organize. One person must be responsible for all the logistics. Nearby households should be selected.

- 3) Countries understood the **TIPs** methodology and the **IMCI** adaptation steps. Some countries will use the methods outside of the **IMCI** context to improve nutrition messages and counseling.
- 4) The training modules will be revised based on this experience by **SANA** consultant, **Maty Ndaiye**. The objectives can be made more practical rather than cognitive. Overall, the workshop was viewed as timely, practical, and corresponding to participants' expectations. The teaching approach was participatory and appropriate. Participants were extremely satisfied.
- 5) A smaller workshop with fewer participants would allow for more personal attention and supervision during the group work, field work, and other discussions. However, introducing the methods to all the **ORANA**-member countries was also positive.

For the other regional activities, the following decisions were reached:

- 1) The regional training on nutrition advocacy and **PROFILES** will be postponed because of low demand for it at the country level.
- 2) A consultant, **Idrissa Diop**, was hired by **AGETIP** to work on the community nutrition initiative, a joint **BASICS/ORANA** activity with the World Bank. They have begun work on the assessment instrument. **Lamine** will work with **Mr. Diop** to finalize the instrument and possibly use it in some countries. Hopefully, the workshop to present the assessment findings will be held in December in conjunction with the **ORANA** meeting.
- 3) It is now time to begin planning the **ORANA** regional meeting in December. The meeting should have a technical focus, for example on the **BASICS** Minimum Package.
- 4) **Lamine** will assist **Serigne** with the follow-up technical assistance on the food box adaptation for **IMCI**, where appropriate.

### Next Steps

- 1) The **UWC** will submit a list of names for consultants to provide input into their new program implementors course. **SANA** will review their course outline and provide guidance on its content.
  - 2) **SANA** regional advisor, **Debbie Gachuhi**, will meet with **Olivia Yambi**, **UNICEF**, to discuss the agenda for the regional meeting on iron deficiency and areas of **SANA** support.
  - 3) **NUTRINET** will organize the Steering Committee meeting, and request **SANA** input as necessary.
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## *Next Steps*

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- 4) Follow-up meetings will be arranged with Jenny Cervinkas, MI, and Dr. Garza, Cornell University, to discuss initiatives of mutual interest for nutrition in Africa.
- 5) SANA project director, Ellen Piwoz, will travel to Senegal in early October to discuss SANA support for regional activities and begin planning the December meeting of ORANA focal points.
- 6) SANA will communicate with NAPHI to encourage them to follow-up with the participants at the May 1997 workshop.

*Appendix A: Participants at the Public Nutrition Meeting*

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## **PUBLIC NUTRITION MEETING**

**July 24-26, 1997**

**Université de Montréal (Canada)**

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