



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

NEWSBLAST

# National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH)

VOL. 1 NO. 3  
NOVEMBER 2009

## DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly half of the world's  
population lives on less  
than US\$2 a day.  
.....

1.2 billion people live in  
abject poverty.  
.....

50,000 people die from  
poverty-related causes  
every day.  
.....

## Out of Africa: An Urgent Call to Improve Health and Quality of Life throughout the World

From October 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, NCCDH's Senior Scientist – Early Child Development, Dr. Mollie Butler travelled to Nairobi, Kenya for an historical five-day Global Conference co-hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of the Republic of Kenya. *Promoting Health and Development: Closing the Implementation Gap* was held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre and included more than 600 delegates from 102 countries, including Canada. Individuals from across the globe were also able to follow the conference and contribute their ideas and suggestions using the social network site [www.connect2change.org](http://www.connect2change.org). At least eight Canadians actively participated and helped to shape the final *Call to Action* document.

His Excellency the President of Kenya, Honourable Mwai Kibaki officially opened the conference. Keynote speakers included Sir Michael Marmot, Former Chair, Commission on



[www.nccdh.ca](http://www.nccdh.ca)

Social Determinants of Health (who is also a partner and friend of the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health) and Professor Miriam Were, Laureate, Noguchi Prize and co-founder of the Uzima Foundation.

*“We need to place equity at the heart of everything we do, as a matter of life and death (and) not simply about the health system...Every minister is a health minister...therefore one indicator is that health equity is improving...Health equity should (therefore) be central to the whole of government planning.”* from Professor Marmot’s Keynote Presentation



## Collaboration In Action

A plenary to introduce the conference themes and working groups and to explain the process to be used to develop the *Call to Action* was held on the first afternoon of the conference. The conference packages included six working documents, five of which described the key discussion tracks. Interestingly these tracks reflected the themes found in the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986):

- \* Individual Empowerment – Health Literacy & Health Behaviours
- \* Community Empowerment
- \* Health Systems Strengthening
- \* Partnership and Intersectoral Action
- \* Building Capacity for Health Promotion

Over the course of the conference, participants attended sub-plenary sessions and discussed one of the tracks in five facilitated groups. Feedback from these sessions was shared with the document scribes. These writers were extremely responsive and respectful of everyone and the final document reflected a culmination of participant engagement and dialogue which required several rounds of drafting, consultation and painstaking integration of comments and ideas.

*“My suggestions that practitioners be included in the audience list and that practitioners required evidence-informed knowledge (for decision-making) was accepted as the assembly reviewed the final draft.”* – Dr. Butler

More specifically, the document identified key strategies and commitments required to close the implementation gap in health and development. The document also aligns with “...the aspiration of Member States, reflects the vision of the Alma Ata Declaration...supports recommendations of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health” and calls upon all governments and stakeholders to respond urgently.

*The Nairobi Call to Action for Closing the Implementation Gap in Health Promotion* was read to the assembly by Professor Oladomeji Oladepo, Dean University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Professor John Catford, Dean, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. The *Nairobi Call to Action* was overwhelmingly adopted with a warm round of applause.

*“The Nairobi call is like the African lion and it must roar around the globe and we are the ones who are going to make it possible.”* – Kenyan Public Health Minister, Beth Hugo

## DID YOU KNOW?

Every three seconds a child dies from poverty-related causes.

800 million people go to bed hungry every night.

880 million people lack access to basic health-care.



## A Taste of Africa

Each day, Conference delegates were thoroughly entertained by Kenyan youth groups who sang traditional and religious songs, danced, and performed acrobatic maneuvers. Many of the skits and songs were designed to support positive health choices, engage youth and encourage social change. There was also a cartoonist who drew pictures to represent key daily messages and a participant wall where questions were posed then answered by participants. Each morning a summary of participants' feedback and favorite cartoon was reported to the general assembly.

Participants were well looked after during the course of the conference and on the afternoon of the third day, were given an opportunity to participate in one of 10 field trips around Nairobi. Dr. Butler visited the Uzima Foundation founded by Drs. Fred and Miriam Were. The Foundation supports vulnerable youth, focusing on peace and justice, leadership development, clean and safe fun, control of HIV/AIDS and economic development. African Day ended with a Gala event, with the Honourable Minister of Public Health and Sanitation leading one of the dances.

As he officially closed the conference, His Excellency, Stephen Lalonzo Musyoka, the Vice President of the Republic of Kenya echoed the intended urgency in the *Nairobi Call to Action*, stressing "We have no option (but) to answer the call and get to work."

*"Asanta sana (Swahili for thank you), to all who worked so tirelessly to organize, facilitate and ensure the success of the conference. It was an extraordinary privilege to be amongst so many knowledgeable and committed people as we worked together and shared ideas on how best to shape the 7<sup>th</sup> global health promotion Nairobi Call to Action. Indeed if there is to be greater "health equity" in people's lives throughout the world, the urgency of the Call to Action cannot be over stated."* – Dr. Butler

Visit the NCCDH blog (<http://nccdonline.wordpress.com/>) and follow the links to hear Dr. Miriam Were's thoughts on her keynote speech.

## DID YOU KNOW?

African governments spend an average of \$14 per person a year on debt service and just \$5 per capita on health care.

Zambia spends twice as much repaying its debt as it does on education

(Facts courtesy of the Make Poverty History Campaign [www.makepovertyhistory.ca](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca))