

The **Combat Diseases of Poverty Consortium** brings together scientific, academic, NGO and private sector expertise to build educational and research capacities for combating diseases of poverty. The CDPC aims to network researchers across geographical borders and disciplines, in order to foster a scientific exchange and opportunities for new collaborations. The **CDPC newsletter** serves as a platform for the exchange of information between CDPC partners and other interested parties.

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Welcome to the 10th edition of the CDPC newsletter! The CDPC has been busy as usual. In December, the CDPC and NUIM co-hosted the Irish Forum for Global Health conference, which turned out to be a great success with over 100 participants despite heavy snowfalls, and excellent presentations and discussions taking place over the two days (page 1 and 2). Recently, we have formalized a CDPC training alumni network in order to strengthen and harness the potential that lies in our trainees. Judy Tatwangire has taken over the role of CDPC alumni representative, and hers and John Villiers' reports in this edition of the newsletter (page 3 and 4) illustrate how CDPC trainees and partners in East Africa are beginning to form a strong network of support, which facilitates the training of both Irish and East African trainees. We are hoping to see more southern-led CDPC initiatives develop through this network in the future. Finally, I would like to thank all contributors to this newsletter and encourage all CDPC partners and trainees to support the newsletter with short articles. It aims to enhance and facilitate communication within the CDPC, so if you would like to see your research or recent publications featured, **please send me your contribution for the next newsletter by the 25th of March 2011!** -Dr. Martina Schröder

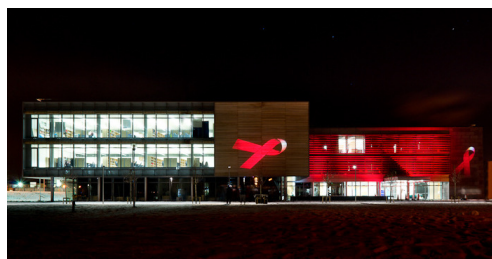
CDPC hosted Global Health conference

"Here scientists speak from the heart"-Dr. Philip Onyebujoh (WHO)

- provided by Richeal Nic an Ri, MSc student in Immunology and Global Health, NUI Maynooth

The Irish Forum for Global Health (IFGH) held its third biennial conference here at NUI Maynooth, supported by the CDPC and Irish Aid, bringing together experts from different sectors concerned with issues affecting the developing world. The theme of the conference - "Partnerships to address health and Diseases of Poverty Challenges" could not have been more suitable, indicating the importance of the relatively recent alliance between academia, state services, NGOs and the private sector to tackle the challenges of global health. The network of researchers from different disciplines at the conference reflected this notion and provided opportunities to discuss issues such as inequality, climate change, nutrition, health service provision and diseases of poverty. The conference was opened by Prof Tom Collins, President of NUIM, and Dr David Weakliam, Chair of the IFGH, followed by plenary talks by Tom Arnold, CEO of Concern Worldwide, Philip Onyebujoh from the WHO Tropical Disease Research programme, and Michael Devlin, Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED). Altogether, over 50 presentations were featured during the two day conference, including plenary sessions and smaller breakout sessions on HIV/AIDS, Interventions, Diseases of Poverty, Health systems and services, Equity and access, and Climate change, environment, food security, nutrition.

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Lighting of Lontas building at NUIM to mark World AIDS Day 2010

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Several current and former CDPC trainees had the opportunity to present their work during the conference, namely Irish trainees Richard Forde and Rachel Bermingham, Stephen Gikuru from Egerton University, Kenya, and Titus Lugendo (TANOPHA, Tanzania). The CDPC also invited Prof Robert Thornton (Witwatersrand University, South Africa) to present a plenary talk at the conference, in which he discussed the arguments of his widely-read book, 'Unimagined Community: Sex, Networks, and AIDS in Uganda and South Africa.' Drawing on a lifetime of engagement in Africa, Thornton focussed an anthropological lens on the differing epidemiological characteristics of HIV in Uganda and South Africa. Moving away from a narrow focus on 'individual behaviour', Thornton instead suggested that HIV infects 'social structures,' and that only an analysis that can grasp the social structural determinants of disease patterns can help us understand how best to address the epidemic.

Two major highlights of the conference were the John Kevany memorial lecture delivered by Dr Zeda Rosenberg, Chief Executive Officer of the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM), and the 2010 Father Michael Kelly Lecture for World AIDS day on "HIV and AIDS: Accomplishments and enduring challenges". Dr Rosenberg updated us on the development of topical microbicides which, if proven to be effective, would give women the means to protect themselves against HIV infection. Microbicide research and development received a boost recently when the CAPRISA trial of 1% Tenofovir gel showed encouraging results with 39 percent fewer infections among women who received the gel compared to women who received the placebo. Dr Rosenberg credited Irish Aid with facilitating the work of the IPM at an early stage. The particular vulnerability of women to HIV infection was also highlighted by Prof Michael Kelly, who has been living in Zambia for over 50 years, and has written extensively about the mutual links between education and HIV infection.

Quite shocking statistics were circulated throughout the two day conference and I worried that these might have an overwhelming effect on the capability of the human mind and our ability to take action. One billion people in the world have no access to drinking water. Tuberculosis, a disease which strikes the most vulnerable- those already infected with HIV and those living in abject poverty, kills more young people and adults than any other infectious disease. 33.3 million people are infected with HIV and 16 million children have been made orphans due to AIDS. Almost US\$1 million worth of malaria drugs are missing or have expired in Tanzania's medical warehouse. Finally, Ireland's aid budget was reduced from €920 million in 2008 to €722 million in 2009, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the health of people in the poorest countries. Consequently, issues such as the importance of the social context, intervention strategies and the protection of aid funding were critically discussed during the conference. Towards the end of the conference, Father Michael Kelly launched his book "HIV AND AIDS: A Social Justice Perspective" which, according to Dr Dick Stellway from the VIVA Network AIDS Forum, is likely to be regarded as a seminal contribution towards a paradigm shift in the strategy to end AIDS. Fr. Michael Kelly was also joined by the HIV activist James O'Connor, who is acutely aware of the human cost of living with HIV after his own diagnosis in 1991 and related his experience to the audience in an inspired fashion. The conference ended with the lighting of the Iontas building, which was facilitated by the Dochas HIV and AIDS working group. It was part of the global 'Light for Rights' Campaign (www.lightforrights.org) to commemorate the more than 25 million people who have died of AIDS.



Lighting of Iontas building with IFGH conference participants



At the Fr Kelly book launch (l-r): Dr Noel Murphy, Titus Lugendo, Michael Abila, Prof Robert Thornton, Stephen Gikuru, Dr Diarmuid McClean, Sylvia Wanzala and Dr Martina Schröder.

The full conference programme is available on the Irish Forum for Global Health website. Conference presentations will be uploaded shortly.

<http://www.globalhealth.ie/conferences>

TCD Academic Chairs First All Ireland Children's Research Network

A new Children's Research Network for Ireland and Northern Ireland will bring together professionals who produce or use research on children and families across the island of Ireland. This network is chaired by Professor Catherine Comiskey, the Director of Research at Trinity College Dublin's School of Nursing and Midwifery and a CDPC partner, and aims to support a wide range of research, practice and policy professionals to better understand and improve the lives of children and young people. The Children's Research Network will be inclusive, independent, and non-profit and will provide opportunities for its members to share their work and learn from one another. http://www.tcd.ie/Communications/news/news.php?headerID=1665&vs_date=2011-1-1

-provided by Catherine Comiskey (CCOMISKE@tcd.ie)

One Year after the CDPC Training: Where am I and where do I see myself?

It is now just over a year since I completed my training under the CDPC in Ireland. My training ended on the 18th December 2009 and I returned to Rwanda where I have been working for over two and a half years now. The training made a great contribution to my career development and has in turn inspired me to build capacity in others at work. One immediate impact of the training was that I realised the need to continually keep up with evidence-based medicine through research and attending scientific forums. I have since embarked on training and mentoring a number of students and colleagues on how to carry out research and also ensured transfer of knowledge in research methods. I have supervised and tutored medical, anthropology and biotechnology students in designing their research. Currently the medical officers here are all involved in research under my supervision. Furthermore, I am now involved in an International Medical Students rotation with Macmaster University in Canada and have so far supervised two of their medical students. I also supported one of the Irish CDPC trainees, John Villiers, who worked in Burundi with Concern. This meant that I got to visit John in Burundi and make a memorable trip to Bujumbura. You should all go and visit this place! And finally, I hosted a PhD student from Ireland whom I had worked with in Derek Doherty's lab during my CDPC training. Through a collaboration with another CDPC alumnus, Dr John Bosco Kalule at Makerere University, we were also able to arrange for Enda to spend some time in their lab where he had a wonderful learning experience and got a lot of work done.

In terms of my personal research, I had one of my articles published in the renowned journal *AIDS* last year. I also drafted more manuscripts which will soon be submitted for publication. I was awarded a Young Investigator award by the prestigious CROI conference, so I was able to attend this conference in San Francisco and present my work on IRIS mortality in HIV infected Ugandan children on ART. I learned a lot and met other scientists in the field of HIV with the hope of establishing collaborations in the future. In addition, I also presented two posters at the 'International Pediatric Congress', which was held in Johannesburg in the aftermath of the football worldcup. There, I was able to become part of a group of Paediatricians beginning to form the 'Eastern Africa Paediatric Association' and the 'African Society of Paediatric Infectious Diseases'. As a result, the first meeting of the 'Eastern Africa Pediatric Association' took place in Nairobi in December 2010. It was yet another wonderful opportunity to do strategic planning.

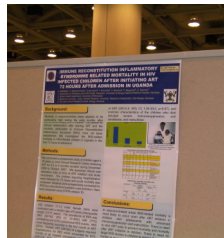
I have also developed a new North-South research collaboration between my institution and Umea University in Sweden. We finally received ethical clearance and hope to soon commence on a prospective study on Malaria and borrelia co-infection. On this study I will be mentoring a least 3 medical officers and a laboratory technician to build local capacity.

I have also started a project to actively review past medical records in my department to assess the burden of disease on the Pediatric and Neonatology unit as far as morbidity and mortality are concerned. I have been able to present preliminary work on this at local, regional and international meetings. For example, at the CDPC workshop in Dar es Salaam I shared work on neonatal mortality in my hospital, which I subsequently also presented at the 2nd International Conference on Preventing Maternal and Child Deaths: 'Towards the MDGs 2015' in Kigali in July 2010.

Finally, I am working towards developing a specialized Pediatric HIV clinic in my hospital unit where HIV and TB pediatric patients will be reviewed.

I also took advantage of several further training opportunities, such as laboratory management courses run by CDC and the American society for Clinical Pathology, WHO and the Clinton foundation in Kigali, advanced training in pediatric HIV management and PMTCT, the PATA conference on Pediatric and Adolescent ART care in Africa and training of trainers by the Ministry of Health in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Now it is time to begin another busy year, hopefully with more achievements both academically and socially. As I have also taken on the role of the CDPC Alumni representative, I am looking forward to working closely with my fellow CDPC alumni on strengthening our local network here in East Africa and to develop new collaborative research ideas.



- provided by Dr Judy Orikiiriza Tatwangire, a senior paediatrician at the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, Kanombe Military Hospital Kigali. Judy trained with the CDPC in the autumn of 2009 and is now the CDPC Alumni representative. Photographs show Judy at the CROI conference in San Francisco and the poster she presented there. Feel free to contact Judy for more information (itatorichdr@yahoo.com).

Research on Malnutrition in Burundi with Concern



-provided by John Villiers, MA student in Anthropology at NUI Maynooth and CDPC trainee. John is pictured with Judy Tatwangire (see page 3) in Bujumbura at Lake Tanganyika.

It's now 3 months since I got home from Burundi. Seems like no time! As a CDPC fellow, I conducted research in Uganda and Burundi on malnutrition. The topic of my research was the investigation of an NGO project that develops a food supplement to address chronic malnutrition in children in north-western Burundi. I must thank the CDPC for sponsoring me. It really is a great privilege to get such support to conduct research.

The first person I met when I arrived in Kampala was Keith Greene, another CDPC trainee, so I had no shortage of Irish support. As part of my fieldwork, I met with Dr. Anne Katahoire, head of Child Health Development Centre at Makerere University and a CDPC partner. Anne provided me with excellent background information for the project and introduced me to Herbert and David, the other anthropologists at Makerere, as well as other staff, who were very generous with their time. Anne also put me in touch with NGO's in Kampala. Each contact would lead to other contacts which was great. Networking is so important, especially in anthropology! I also met with Dr John Bosco Kalule and Dr Judy Tatwangire, who both trained with the CDPC in Ireland. Kalule and Judy provided me excellent insight into my project.

Of course things never go according to plan! A few days after my arrival in Kampala I slipped into a drain and tore a ligament in my knee. These things happen so I decided to stay in Kampala for a month to let it heal. It suited me fine as Anne helped me to find more contacts to keep me busy including staff at IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute), UNICEF, Makerere University and GAIN international. I also took language lessons at the Rwandan embassy as Kinyarwanda and Kirundi are very similar. After a month, it was time to move onto Burundi. I took a bus, travelling to Rwanda first where Judy met me and showed me around for a couple of days. It was just before the elections so there were posters everywhere, a bit like Ireland at the moment. After 2 days, I got the bus to Burundi. Crossing the border was no trouble. Burundi is a beautiful country, not even the size of Munster. I landed at the bus depot and rang the number Concern gave me. Within minutes, a vehicle came out to collect me and I was soon practicing my French and Kirundi with Severin, the logistics officer for Concern. We went straight to the office where I met the team. It was great to be associated with Concern. They have lots of contacts in Burundi and have a very good reputation. Most of my time I was in Bujumbura but I was also went to Gitega, the second city, to meet some contacts. In Bujumbura, I was able to meet UNICEF, FAO, and the World Bank to gain their views on malnutrition in Burundi. I was also able to gain access to libraries at the University of Bujumbura and other archive locations which provided me with interesting historical data for my thesis. I also spent roughly 5 weeks up in Cibitoke in the north-west conducting research with communities there. Cibitoke is a beautiful part of the country, with mountains everywhere. Driving up and down the mountains was one of my favourite times during the trip. When we reached a colline (hill in French), everyone was more than happy to speak to me to discuss the project. Judy came to visit me in Bujumbura for a weekend. We had a great time and saw some of the sights around Bujumbura such as the Independence monument and the national stadium.

My time in Burundi went by very fast. I visited Judy on my way back in Rwanda. We took a trip up to the north-west to Gisenyi to see Lake Kivu. After I left, I spent a week in Kampala where I wrote up more of my field notes. I met with Anne on my way back and she advised me to write as much as I could while it was still fresh in my head. I realise the wisdom of her words now when I read over my notes about events I had completely forgotten about! I must thank Dr Tom Strong and Dr Anne Katahoire and the CDPC for giving me the chance to conduct my research as well as for the academic support they provided me with while I was in the country. I must also thank all the staff of Concern Burundi, in particular Denise Holland, Country Director, for her efforts. And I thank my supervisor Dr Abdullahi el-Tom for providing me with excellent advice before, during and after the field work.



Church in Cibitoke



Independence monument in Bujumbura



Focus group meeting with me observing.