



The African Project of the WFUMB

Presentation Munich, 15/11/2014, Harald Lutz,
Bayreuth/Germany

The World Federation for Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology, established in 1972, is the umbrella organization of the national societies for the use of ultrasound in medicine and has about 50,000 individual members all over the world. The interdisciplinary national societies are organized in 6 regional federations, one for each continent. The regional federation for Africa, the MASU (Mediterranean and African Society for Ultrasound) was established in 1985 by members of the Italian, French and Spanish societies as a means of promoting the use ultrasound in the countries of (North) Africa.

In the beginning, the work of the WFUMB focused on ensuring the safe use of ultrasound equipment. At a later stage, from about 1995 onwards, this focus shifted more and more to educational concerns. It was also around this time that the WFUMB, on the initiative of its former president Barry Goldberg (USA), started to cooperate with the WHO in its capacity as an international NGO. A report on "Training in Diagnostic Ultrasound: Essentials, Principles and Standards" was compiled in 1998 (WHO technical report series; 875).

In 2000, the organization's next president, Harald Lutz (Germany), initiated the WFUMB's "African Project" under which the Federation is supporting courses for ultrasound in several sub-Saharan countries by dispatching 2 or 3 foreign (mainly European) teachers at a time. These courses (basic ultrasound, interdisciplinary) are mainly being organized in close cooperation with colleagues from the host countries involved.

The aim of these courses has always been to establish and maintain long-term patterns of cooperation. In support of these objectives, teaching materials are produced and distributed, scholarships are being provided to young doctors, and invitations to international meetings are handed out to key persons. In the



first few years of the programme, the purchase of medical equipment was also sponsored.

Around the same time, WHO official Harald Ostensen (Geneva) established a “global steering group for education and training in diagnostic imaging”, aiming to coordinate the activities of various organizations in developing countries. The WHO created centers of excellence (COEs) for basic radiology in these regions, one for each continent, while the WFUMB - in cooperation with the WHO - established COEs for ultrasound in several parts of the world, starting in Dhaka (Bangladesh) and including the first African COE in Kampala, Uganda, which was opened in 2004 with Michael Kawooya as its director.

Encouraged by the success of these centers, the WFUMB soon established additional centers for education and supported them over the years by dispatching teachers, teaching materials and, initially, small amounts of money for purposes of maintenance and administration. Africa alone has four such centres: one each in Lagos (Nigeria), Lomé (Togo, covering French-speaking West Africa), Nairobi (Kenya) and Addis Abeba (Ethiopia), the most recent addition to that list.

Over the years we have identified some problems and obstacles for the project. To the untrained eye, these problems might appear to concern matters of infrastructure and transport, but a closer analysis reveals that a more severe problem is the lack of information about the activities of other organizations that are working in the same field. This is why the WFUMB is not only planning to improve its programme on a general level (establishing education centers of various levels and specializations and “satellite” branches of the big centers, encouraging the use of telemedicine as a way of connecting centers and satellites, and introducing an E-learning programme), but also intending to enter into closer cooperation with other organizations such as the ISR and the Bergen group of gastroenterologists, along the lines of the successful partnership model we recently pioneered in Addis Abeba.

Professor Dr Harald Lutz

Bayreuth / Germany