

## Of Institutions and Persons

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The Ethiopian Journal of Health Development (EJHD) is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, no mean feat as the stories told in this special issue show. Fortunately, most of those who have contributed to its launching and sustainable development are still around and have contributed in one way or another to this issue<sup>1</sup>.

With hind sight, it is easy to perceive that EJHD fills an important gap for scholarly communication in public health and was, therefore, bound to survive. But we know that the most necessary of human institutions sometimes fail because selective and short-term interests could eclipse collective and long-term goods - witness the current economic crisis and the whole problem of climate change. If, therefore, EJHD has survived and thrived, it is because certain institutions and persons with foresight have prevailed. Many such institutions and individuals have, as will be seen in the various articles in this special issue, contributed but some merit special mention.

The Department of Community Health of the Faculty of Medicine (now School of Public Health), Addis Ababa University - a small, under-resourced and often beleaguered institution is one of these. It, against all odds and great sacrifices, held the banner high. Its staff could certainly be proud of their contributions to date. They need not be reminded that, even if the prospects seem much brighter now with the growing recognition of 'health as development' and larger numbers of public health schools and departments, the 'wise leadership' challenges in the next 25 years should not be underestimated.

The Research and Publications Office, Addis Ababa University which, in spite of a large number of contending priorities, stood firmly behind the Journal in its dire need and helped it weather the difficult years after the demise of

the National Health Development Network-Ethiopia. EJHD is now facing the challenges of the e-media age and foresight and leadership of a new type for which RPO could provide the wider arena for reflection and strategic positioning is required.

The Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission (now a Ministry) has been instrumental in supporting the publication of the Journal and, as importantly, in ensuring that it reaches public health workers in all parts of Ethiopia. Unfortunately, most public health decisions in the world to date are based, at best, on 'expert opinion' if not and more frequently, on 'political expediency'. ESTC should, countinced in the next 25 years, to leverage evidence-based decision through strengthening journals such as EJHD.

EPHA's establishment in 1989, at the height of the crisis for EJHD, was 'God-send'. EPHA has been good for its "scholarly organ" as the Journal has been good for the Association. As EPHA approaches its own 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and strategizes to face the New Millennium, innovations in its relationship with the Journal and making it a strong voice for better evidence-based health development in Ethiopia will be required.

Surprisingly, MOH does not loom large in these first 25 years of the Journal. Let us hope it will claim its rightful place in the next.

Institutions are critical but it is people who translate their vision and missions. Again, a large number of people have been instrumental in the success of EJHD. The Journal is beholden to **all** those who have indefatigably contributed as members of the Editorial Board and Editorial Consultants. Dr Fisseha Haile Meskel was the Editor-in-Chief in the formative, turbulent years (1984-1991). Dr Asfaw Desta has been on the Editorial Board from the start and served as Editor-in-Chief from 1992- 1994. Professor Derege Kebede served as a Publication Officer for several years before becoming Editor-in-Chief, 1995-1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Except for the regrettable and untimely deaths of Drs Adanech Kidanemariam, Desta Shamebo, Zein Ahmed whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

Professor Yemane Berhane has been the Editor-in-Chief from 2000-2009. Gebre-Emanuel Teka, that stalwart of public health education and practice and the longest serving member of the Editorial Board, should also be mentioned. The workload on these persons should not be underestimated. These positions are held on voluntary, part time basis. That the Journal was able to weather the various challenges, was published on time and attained reputable status is, to a large extent, the

outcome of their dedicated and able commitment and leadership.

It is, therefore, fitting to acknowledge and congratulate, in the name of all the friends of EJHD, all such institutions and persons on the occasion of this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to strongly appeal to all to continue the good work! Thanks to all the inadvertently unmentioned contributors!

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