

June 2002

PHM AT THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY - 2002

The Peoples Health Movement (PHM) was invited by the World Health Organization to participate in the first Technical briefing session at the World Health Assembly, organised by the WHO-Civil Society Initiative and to present the Peoples Health Charter. Over 35 members of PHM attended the World Health Assembly, this year from 13-17th May 2002 and participated in various meetings and lobbying initiatives and also participated in the technical briefing. The initiative was organised by the WHO/WHA Circle of the PHM. On 13th May 2002, the PHM participants attended the special briefing session organised by WHO-CSI for NGO participants. The PHM delegation was the largest group in the briefing session and among other concerns raised two issues (i) the need for caution in putting not for profit NGOs and civic society in the same group as 'for profit – private sector' in the public-private initiatives; and (ii) the need to look at the relevance of some of WHO's concerns including themes from WHO day from the socio-economic-cultural-political-epidemiological situation of the poor and marginalised of the world – the larger majority. After the briefing, the PHM delegation had its own first briefing and strategy planning session at the same venue (this was the first of many such meetings throughout the 5 days). In the afternoon, the PHM delegation attended the formal inauguration of the World Health Assembly.

On 14th May 2002 from 9 – 12 noon, PHM delegates participated in NGO Forum for Health Session at WHA on 'Partnership for Action in Health' and presented the People's Charter for Health as an alternative approach to health. The main messages from the PHA event were shared including that Health for All and Comprehensive Primary Health Care should be the fundamental principles which guide international health policy and that there was great concern about the ability of WHO to respond to the forces of globalisation, in terms of analysing the health impact of global economic change and in terms of the role of WHO in relation to other global institutions such as WTO, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The meeting was followed by a press conference and Ravi and Sr. Ani attended it as PHM representatives.

One of the highlights of the PHM presence at WHA was the presence of a three member, full time media team, which included Unni and Nupur from India and Sathya from Malaysia, who were responsible for lobbying with the press and highlighting PHM concerns and PHM responses to emerging initiatives of WHO through formal/ informal press briefings, interviews and press conferences. As a PHM media strategy a backgrounder on PHM and five press releases were distributed to the press and many of the delegates as well. (a) Peoples Health Movement – a backgrounder on 13th May, with quotes from David Werner, Dr. Ekbal and Halfdan Mahler (b) Health Care – WHO cares? Poverty, War and Debt – greatest threat to world health says PHM, – 13th May 2002 (c) WHO Industry partnership – Who influences Who?, 14th May 2002 (d) Global campaign to be launched Revive the vision of Alma Ata!, On 15th May 2002 (e) the Peoples Health Movement marches on – from Dhaka to Geneva to Porto Allegro, 17th May 2002 (f) Peoples Health Movement condemns ongoing attacks on civilians in Palestine and the violence in Gujarat- on 17th May 2002.

All the PHM participants attending WHA took time off from WHA on 16th May to participate in a full day sharing, reflecting, 'battery charging' session on Peoples Health Movement and post PHA initiatives at World Council of Churches on 16th May. The day started with a



Coordinating Group of the PHA: Asian Community Health Action Network (ACHAN); Consumers International (CI); Dag Hammarskjold Foundation (DHF); Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK); Health Action International (HAI); International People's Health Council (IPHC); Third World Network (TWN); Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)



PHA Secretariat, Gonoshasthaya Kendra, PO. Mirzanagar, Savar
Dhaka 1344, Bangladesh; tel: + (880) 2 770 8316; fax: + (880) 2 770 8317
email: gksavar@citechco.net; website: www.phamovement.org

symbolic gathering of participants in the centre of Geneva with Peoples Health Charters and posters and publications by the side of the special 'broken chair' monument dedicated to those people especially children who have lost limbs in post-war undetected mine explosions. The full day meeting including a self introduction round; followed by an exercise to list out ones ongoing involvement in PHM and ones contribution to a Vision of PHM and some tasks for the future; then time for sharing by each participant which included initiatives and processes from all parts of the world. In the afternoon, there was screening of some videos including 'Hey Ram' on the Gujarat crisis which lead to great concern and the press statement on 17th condemning the attacks in Palestine and Gujarat. Finally, there was a concluding session on future challenges and organisational issues chaired by Qasem and Ravi. PHA participants also attended other sessions organised by NGOs to express our solidarity. One was a briefing and a discussion session by WHO and Save the Children, UK, in collaboration with Medact and Wemos on 'Poverty Reduction Strategies and Health: Action & Roles' and the other one was on 'Consumer improves quality of care' organised by KILEN – Consumer Institute for Medicines and Health, Sweden, which was part of the IOCU (Consumers International) delegation to the 55th WHA.

The Technical briefing on Peoples Health Charter was the much awaited highlight of the PHM presence and participation in WHO. The session was held on 17th May and chaired by Dr. Manuel Dayrit, the Secretary of Health of Philippines and was attended by senior officials of WHO including DG of WHO. Dr. Brundtland welcomed the group and presented WHO's key concerns and her interest in Civil Society partnerships. Dr. David Nabarro stayed back to answer all the questions and comments after the briefing. Zafarullah and Ravi presented the background of the PHA mobilisation and key elements and concern of the Charter and Maria, Mwajuma and Ellen shared about post PHM concerns and initiatives from Latin America, Africa and Europe.

After the Technical briefing session, the PHM participants met for the last time on 17th late afternoon for an informal final meeting chaired by Qasem to identify specific action strategies and volunteers to convene or follow up on these strategies and initiatives. There was discussion and suggestions on a Communications / Media Circle (to be convened by Andrew, UK) some ideas to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Alma Ata with reflections by PHM groups including a joint Health convention at the next World Social Forum at Porto Allegro in February 2003; follow up on special issues of Contact magazine and Development Dialogue on Post PHA initiatives; and matters of strategy and clarification of procedures for representing PHM at meetings, the need for further mobilization and regional meetings to identify the members of the evolving Peoples Health Movement Council; need to support the PHM Secretariat etc.

During the WHA several contacts were made with individual and organizations. A team of seven resource persons from PHM – Maria, Sr. Ani, David (Sanders), Thelma, Mwajuma, Dorothy and Ravi met Dr. Peter Piot and some of his colleagues to understand the concerns and initiatives of UNAIDS and the concerns and suggestions of PHM participants on the HIV/AIDS problem in their own countries and regions.

The Global Forum for Health Research (Louis Currat, Executive Secretary and Andres de Francisco, Senior public Health Specialist) contacted some of the PHM participants to explore how PHM could participate in the next Forum 6 at Arusha, Tanzania in November 2002. Many other organisations met up with some of the PHM participants and discussed some possibilities of dialogue, working together or informed about meetings at which the Charter could be presented. All of them were requested to keep in touch with the PHM Secretariat and ways and means to follow up on the requests would be evolved by the secretariat and its support group. (Detail report on WHA-2002 will be available on request shortly from PHM Secretariat)

Hence PHA should not be involved in short term project. They also translated the Charter in Nepalese language and brought out a beautiful poster on the Charter.

In **Bangladesh** 2nd National conference of People' Health Movement was organised on the theme "Towards implementation of People's Charter for Health". Besides PHA participants, the conference was attended by Minister of Health and State Minister for Environment of Bangladesh. This meeting was preceded by six divisional meetings in Bangladesh. Besides discussion on Charter, workshops were held on Globalisation and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers- Bangladesh perspective. The participants also formed a National Circle of PHM to take the movement forward. They also printed an adopted popular version of the Charter in Bangla and brought out a beautiful poster on the occasion of the conference.

Post-PHA Activities

ASIA

In **Philippines**, Health Workers Day was celebrated May 7 and they had a motorcade from the Lung Center of the Philippines up to the House of Representatives where a Congresswoman who supports campaign for people's health gave a privilege speech on the plight of health workers and how they are also very much affected by the onslaught of globalization. The PCH and the PHM was also highlighted.

In **Nepal**, PHA participants met and formed the National Circle. They call it as People's Health National Coordinating Committee. The Executive Board meeting of the Peoples' Health National Coordinating Committee unanimously elected Prof. Mathura Prasad Shrestha and Mr. Shanta Lall Mulmi as link person of Nepal National circle for PHA. The Board also constituted a programme planning committee under the convenorship of Mr. Shanta Lall Mulmi. The members have voiced that PHA is a concept, a movement.

MIDDLE EAST

In **Iran** PHA participant Dr. Mohamad Ali Barzgar arranged meeting with like minded people and discussed

the content of the Charter. All of them are in agreement with its content and support it. The participants requested Dr. Barzgar to act as contact person of PHM in Iran till they elect a link person. The group likes to extend their activities at different provinces and grass root levels. Dr. Barzgar met with the Minister of Health of Iran and briefed him about PHM with relevant papers. They also translated and printed the Charter in Farsi language for wider distribution through discussion meetings at various levels.

EUROPE

In **Europe**, PHA participants from the region met on 4th and 5th December 2001. On 4th they arranged a conference on 'Health for All: A Question of Social Justice'. It was wonderful because of the diversity of speakers and the breadth of experience, knowledge, energy and clear commitment to achieving 'Health for All' by the participants. It was a great opportunity to share ideas, network and galvanize more support for the PHM. The day was divided roughly into three areas looking at both domestic and global perspectives.

1. the impact of trade rules of health
 2. the impact of privatisation of health services
 3. Democracy, civil participation and influence in shaping health.
- Usefully the UK press were interested with deliberations and a wider audience was introduced the PHM which is vital if PHM is to continue raise its profile to strengthen the work.

On the second day the participants had in depth discussion on the Proposed structure of PHM and welcomed the document. They also developed some joint action plan with International Federation of Medical Students Association (IFMSA), WEMOS- Netherlands and Public Service International Research Unit (PSIRU) on various issues. Participants from different countries and organizations expressed their interest to initiate and coordinate issue based circles.

In **Italy**, more than 6000 persons have signed the Charter and more signatures are pouring in. The Charter was translated in Italian and printed in 1500 copies. A slightly edited version of the Charter was printed in AIFO's monthly magazine in Italian (AdL) in September 2001, distributed in 80,000 copies. In December 2001, AIFO used the Charter as the theme for its calendar for 2002, printed in 10,000 copies. Since then, the Charter has been in many other forums – like as annex to the magazine of Italian workers union, as a supplement with a monthly magazine Vita, in the Italian Journal of paediatricians, etc. The Charter was also put on the AIFO web page in both Italian and English versions.

Networking with other organizations and movements: The Charter has been seen as part of the struggle in which many other organizations and movements are involved like cancel the debt campaign, anti-mine campaign, healthy cities campaign, anti-globalization forums, ATTAC-Italy, essential drugs campaign, etc.

In October 2001, AIFO organized an international workshop on Poverty & Development, during which the Charter was also presented to persons coming from different countries.

In the beginning of November 2001, the biannual AIFO national conference was organized in Assisi, which focused on PHA Charter. Many Italian NGOs and movements participated.

THE AMERICAS

In **Latin America**, Shortly after the PHA, the Spanish-speaking participants, mostly from Latin America, set up an electronic list serve to continue to share with one another. It is called REDLATINAMERICANASALUD or Latin American Health Network. Many people in Latin America, in those countries that had

Who to contact?

CONTACT the **Regional Coordinators/PHM link persons** at your respective regions/countries to get into the PHA loop!

East Africa

Mwajuma Saddy Masaiganah
Mwasama Pre and Primary School
P. O. BOX 240, Bagamoyo, Coast Region
TANZANIA Tel.: 00255 23 2440062
Fax: 2440154 E-mail: masaigana@africaonline.co.tz

Arab Region

Dr Jihad Mashal, UPMRC
PO Box 51483, Jerusalem, Tel.: +972-2-583-4021
Fax: +972-2-583-0679
E-mail: jihad@shabaka.net

South Africa

David Sanders, IPHC, University of Western Cape,
P Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa.
fax: 27-21-959 2809; email: lmartin@uwc.ac.za

Asia

Prem Chandran John, ACHAN, Post Bag 1404,
Madras 600 105, India; tel: 91-44-823 1556;
fax: 91-44-827 0424; email: achan@eth.net

Southeast Asia

Edelina de la Paz, ACHAN, 201C M Recto St,
Barangay Addition Hills, San Juan, Metro Manila,
Philippines; tel: 63-2-726 8977; fax: 63-2-726 2682
email: hain@phil.gn.apc.org

India

Dr. Ekbal B.
Prof. & Head of the Department of Neuro-Surgery
Medical College Hospital, Kottayam 686008
Kerala, India Tel.: 91-0471-444362
Fax: 91-0471 307158, E-mail: ekbal@vsnl.com

Europe

Pam Zinkin, MEDACT/IPHC, 4/45 Anson Road,
London N7 0AR, United Kingdom; tel: 44-207-609 1005;
fax: 44-207-700 2699; email: pamzinkin@gn.apc.org

Pacific

Mary Murray, 42 Urambi Village, Crozier Circuit,
Kambah ACT 2902, Australia; tel: 61-26-231 7746;
fax: 61-26-296 2530; email: memhnh@ozemail.com.au

Ken Harvey, School of Public Health,
La Trobe University, Bundoora, 2083, Australia
tel: 61-3-9479 1750; fax: 61-3-9379 1783
email: k.harvey@latrobe.edu.au

Latin America

Maria Hamlin Zuniga, IPHC, Apartado #3267,
Managua, Nicaragua; tel: 505-2-662 225;
fax: 505-2-662 225; email: iphc@cisas.org.ni

Hugo Icu Peren

ASECSA
6a. Calle 4-70 Zona 1. Quitas Los Aposentos
Chimaltenango
Guatemala
Tel.: +502-8391332, 8395850
Fax: +502-8391332
E-mail: asecsa1@intelnet.net.gt

representation at the PHA, have been involved in discussions about the event, and especially about the People's Charter for Health. These events have taken place in local communities and in national and regional events. Documents and press reports have resulted from these events. Many people know about the PHA and about the Charter and are looking for ways to make it relevant to their local situations.

One significant result of some of these activities and discussions, is that health activists have decided to work on building awareness of the effects of the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (FTAA) on the health of the people. The FTAA goes beyond the WTO!

Two people represented the PHA at the Social Forum in Puerto Alegre, Brazil. They were able to distribute the Charter at the Forum and make many contacts at different workshops and events. Julio Monsalvo from Argentina has written an inspiring report that is being translated into English at present. It will be available very soon.

AFRICA

In East African region, PHM participants from the region organized a meeting in Tanzania as a Post People's Health Assembly activity. The focus of the meeting was:

- reflect on the experience of the Assembly (by those who attended or were involved in the preparations)
- share that experience with others who were not involved
- briefly explore the ideas for developing a global People's Health Movement, including explaining the concept of interlinking circles of interest as a structure for such a movement
- brainstorm health issues that are critical for people in Africa
- introduce the framework of the People's Charter for Health and
- explore whether it provides a useful tool for people in Africa to organise around or to use within their activities

- plan a focus for joint future work in Africa, including ideas on how to carry it out
- explore what role participants from Africa could play in the forthcoming WABA Global Forum meeting and related events planned for Tanzania at the end of September 2002

At the end participants form a Regional Circle of PHM for the East African Region with Mwajuma Saiddy Masaiganah as their link person to PHM.

FEW FUTURE EVENTS PHM IS GOING TO BE REPRESENTED

1. WABA Global Forum II - Arusha, Tanzania - 23-27 September 2002. Contact WABA Global Forum 2, WABA Secretariat, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia Tel: 604-6584816 | Fax: 604-6572655 , Email: secr@waba.po.my, Website: www.waba.org.br | www.waba.org.my
2. The Global Forum for Health Research next Forum 6 meeting at Arusha, Tanzania 11-15th November 2002.
3. Asia Civil society Forum, 2002 – UN/NGO Partnership for Democratic Governance, Bangkok, 24-29 November 2002 (Email : congo.gva@congo.org) (Website : www.congo.org)
4. Asian Social Forum 2003 from 2 – 7 January 2003 at Hyderabad, India, Contact: Meena Menon, WSF-India Secretariat, Working Women's Hostel, G-Block, Saket, New Delhi 110017, India, Tel: +91 11 6569943 Email: wsfindia@hotmail.com
5. World Social Forum at Porto Allegro in February 2003; Contact: David Sanders, Public Health Programme, University of Western Cape, P Bag X17, Belville 7535 Cape, South Africa Tel.: Fax: +27-21-959-2872 / 27-21-959-2809 E-mail: lmartin@uwc.ac.za

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PHA Secretariat
Gonoshasthaya Kendra
PO. Mirzanagar, Savar
Dhaka 1344, Bangladesh

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