



## First Quadrennial Report of the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness

October 2005 to December 2011

### 1. Introduction

Pioneering work was done in this first report period. Some changes and adjustments had to be made to the original organizational structure and rules applicable to the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness (ACGMHD) in order to improve cost effectiveness and the flow of communication.

It was a time of challenges, excitement and discovery of the human capital in the Deaf communities of Africa. The implementation of the train-the-trainer programme was a special highlight. It brought together the Deaf leaders of Africa and gave practical and positive effect to the ACGMHD vision: To join efforts in order to improve the quality of life of Deaf people and their families in Africa.

### 2. History and Background

In October 2000 the World Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness accepted the bid of the National Institute for the Deaf in South Africa to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mental Health and Deafness World Congress in 2005 (see photograph). This set in motion a movement for mental health and deafness in Africa. A partnership between the Foundation Friends of Effatha (De Stichting Vrienden van Effatha (SVE)) in the Netherlands and the National Institute for the Deaf (NID) in South Africa gave momentum to the bring together of people (Deaf and hearing) in the interest of the health and well-being of Deaf people and their families on the African continent.



Preliminary discussions from 2001 to 2003 between SVE and NID led to the hosting of the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Workshop on Mental Health and Deafness from September 28 to October 1, 2004 at NID with ten African countries attending. Those present expressed the passionate desire to form an Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness and that this should take place during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mental Health and Deafness World Congress 2005 where there would be an increased attendance of Deaf people from the African continent.

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Workshop on Mental Health and Deafness, with an increased attendance of 85 Deaf people from 37 African countries, from October 24 to 25, 2005, during the week of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mental Health and Deafness World Congress, the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness (ACGMHD) was founded.

UNITING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF DEAF PEOPLE IN AFRICA

SECRETARIAT

The African continent was divided into five Regions (Northern, Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa), each with two representatives (one Deaf and one hearing).

This first ACGMHD Committee of ten were: Botanyi Komonyo (Central Africa Region, Deaf, D.R.C.), Marie Louise Kanda (Central Africa Region, hearing, D.R.C), Bob Emmanuel Mugabo (East Africa Region, Deaf, Rwanda), Nalugya Joyce Serunjogi (East Africa Region, hearing, Uganda), Aminata Rose Diallo (West Africa Region, hearing, Senegal), Akouètè Blibo Kassa (West Africa Region, Deaf, Togo), Arssi Abdelaziz (North Africa Region, hearing, Morocco), Rachid Hechmi (North Africa Région, Deaf, Tunisia), Mammopa Evelyn Phae (Southern Africa Region, hearing, Lesotho), Makhubu, Makhosini (Southern Africa Region, Deaf, Swaziland). The meeting set guidelines for the drafting of a statute.

At its first meeting in Morocco, from December 4 to 6, 2006, the ACGMHD Committee elected Mr. Abdelaziz Arssi as President and Mr. Makhosini Makhubu as Vice-president of the ACGMHD.

Of the original ten members, seven are still active and present at this the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Workshop of the ACGMHD.

### **3. Purpose of the ACGMHD**

The main purpose of the ACGMHD is: Uniting efforts to improve the quality of life of Deaf people and their families on the African continent.

### **4. Committee Meetings**

To attend to the business of the ACGMHD the following meetings were held:

4.1. The ACGMHD Committee (of ten) met on four occasions: October 28, 2005 in South Africa (during 3<sup>rd</sup> Mental Health and Deafness World Congress in South Africa October 24–30, 2005), December 4-6, 2006 in Morocco, September 8-11, 2007 in the Netherlands, August 26-30, 2008 in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4.1.1. Strategic planning was done and training workshops were held to equip members for their responsibilities.

4.1.2. Members were issued with laptops, fax/copier/printer machines and received training in e-mail communication and basic computer skills.

4.1.3. Criteria were laid down for project and action plan submissions and approval.

4.1.4. Planning for regional activities was done.

4.1.5. Members submitted action plans and projects.

4.1.6. Representatives submitted regional reports were to the ACGMHD Committee.

4.1.7. Concern was expressed regarding limitations in executing regional action plans due to

4.1.7.1. across border restrictions

4.1.7.2. vast areas

4.1.7.3. work load of representatives

4.1.7.4. lack of communication response and maintenance

4.1.7.5. budgetary constraints

4.1.7.6. representatives putting their own country and organizations first

4.1.8. The previous point was referred to the Management Committee for the necessary restructuring.

4.2. The ACGMHD Management Committee met on six occasions in South Africa: March 14-16, 2007, January 26-28, 2008, March 11-12, 2008, March 11-12, 2009, March 29-31, 2010, August 24–27, 2010.

4.2.1. Organizational structure of the ACGMHD was adapted to meet new needs and implemented.

4.2.2. Task and responsibility descriptions were put in place for the Executive Secretariat, Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and Committee Members.

4.2.3. Training and strategic planning workshops were held with ACGMHD Committee Members.

4.2.4. Regional letterheads were designed as well as a pro forma Regional Constitution for those who desire to establish a branch of the ACGMHD in their own regions.

- 4.2.5. An assessment and Evaluation Workshop with the main sponsor was held in March 2009. The need for Deaf communities in various countries to have direct contact with Head Office regarding assistance was recognized and addressed. The policy was changed to allow Deaf communities and service providers in different countries to submit requests and projects directly to Head Office and not only through regional representatives. Changes were made to the Rules Applicable to the ACGMHD in line with the referral by the ACGMHD Committee's meeting in D.R.C. Kinshasa in August 2008. Restructuring was done and the Rules Applicable to the ACGMHD changed accordingly.
- 4.2.6. In line with the restructuring process the name of the Management Committee was changed to Management Board and later to Governing Board to better describe the tasks and responsibilities of the top structure.
- 4.2.7. The need for local leaders to be trained in leadership and management skills was identified and a Train-the-Trainer programme was developed and implemented.
- 4.2.8. Deaf organizations that had asked for assistance with their own Sign Language development and the production of training packages were supported by the DeafNET Multi-Media production team and Sign Language experts.

*Right: Here the DVD with Burundi Sign Language is presented to representatives from the country.*



- 4.2.9. A part time programme coordinator was appointed for the Great Lakes Area on a trial basis to support DeafNET and ACGMHD activities in that area.
- 4.2.10. Preliminary planning was done for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Workshop of the ACGMHD and the Quadrennial Meeting in Swaziland.
- 4.2.11. Interim and annual reports were submitted to the Foundation Friends of Effatha (SVE), the main sponsor) and the National Institute for the Deaf (NID) in South Africa, the mother organization.

## 5. Activities

### 5.1. International Conferences

#### 5.1.1. Moroccan International Forum – November 30 to December 2, 2006



A Deaf Forum was established in Morocco under leadership of the Chairperson who consulted with the Deaf associations in Morocco. The newly established forum successfully organized and hosted this first conference by a region with the theme: “Breaking the Barriers of Deafness together”. More than 150 people – Deaf and hearing – attended, the 23 speakers consisted of six local, one from the World Federation of the Deaf, thirteen international experts and three from the Africa Contact Group for Mental

Health and Deafness. The ACGMHD made a financial contribution.

#### 5.1.2. World Federation of the Deaf in Madrid – July 2007

The Executive Secretary served on the WFD's panel of experts on mental health as World Coordinator for WFD mental health experts. He was also the International President of the Mental Health Commission responsible for the Congress on Mental Health and participated at the congress to the cost of the WFD. Representing the ACGMHD at the congress were the



Chairperson, Mr. Abdelaziz Arssi, and the Vice-chairperson, Mr. Makhosini Makhubu. DeafNET was represented by Mr. D Ebersohn en Ms Susanna Krige, both young Deaf leaders. The theme of the congress was: “Human Rights through Sign Languages”. The report of the Mental Health Congress as well as the resolutions of the congress can be obtained from the ACGMHD Head Office.



The ACGMHD had an exhibition stall at a strategic and prominent place in the exhibition area which was visited very well by congress delegates. It turned out to be a good marketing opportunity for the ACGMHD as was shown in the increasing number of Deaf people in Africa who wanted to be part of the ACGMHD.

#### 5.1.3. European Society for Mental Health and Deafness – September 2007

The congress with the theme: Joining Forces, was attended by the ACGMHD committee members. An evening was set aside by the Organizing Committee of the congress for the ACGMHD to be introduced. It gave Committee Members opportunity to network and recruit partnerships for projects in their regions. Preceding the Congress, the Committee held intensive strategic planning sessions and gave feedback to the sponsors, de Stichting Vrienden van Effatha (Foundation Friends of Effatha)

#### 5.1.4. ACGMHD Regional Conference in Kinshasa – August 2008

The regional representatives of the central region organized a high impact conference. It was combined with the first Train-the-Trainer Workshop.



#### 5.2. Train-the-Trainer workshops

A curriculum for Leadership and Management training was designed by DeafNET’s team. A summary of the curriculum is available from DeafNET on request. *Below:*

##### 5.2.1. Central Region in Kinshasa – August 2008

The training was attended by 62 people from 11 countries: Burundi (3), Republic of Congo Brazzaville (2), Gabon (2), Rwanda (2), Democratic Republic Congo (46), Uganda (1), Lesotho (1), Swaziland (1), Morocco (1), Togo (2), South Africa (1). The full report is available from the ACGMHD Head Office on request

##### 5.2.2. Lesotho teachers and Deaf learners – June 2009

The workshop was attended by 29 teachers and 4 Deaf learners. The full report is available from the ACGMHD head office on request

##### 5.2.3. Swaziland Deaf leaders and service providers – August 10-14, 2009

The workshop was attended by 8 adult Deaf, 4 young Deaf, 4 teachers of the Deaf, 2 medical professionals, 3 community workers. One of the attendees is currently studying at the NID College in South Africa. A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD Head Office on request.

5.2.4. Burundi, Rwanda and D.R.C. – October 2009

The workshop was attended by 40 people from 4 countries: Burundi (27), Democratic Republic Congo (5), Rwanda (5), South Africa (3 trainers)

A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD head office on request.

5.2.5. Southern and Eastern Region in South Africa – November 2009

The workshop was attended by 33 people from 15 countries: Botswana (2), Ethiopia (2), Kenya (2), Mauritius (1), Madagascar (1), Malawi (2), Uganda (2), Zimbabwe (2), Zambia (2), Namibia (2), Cameroon (1), South Africa (10: 3 trainees, 2 interpreters, 4 trainers, 1 organizer)

A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD head office on request.



5.2.6. Western Region in Nigeria – November 2010

The workshop was attended by 74 people from 10 countries: Nigeria (52), Gambia (1), Benin (7), Mauritania (2 + 2 trainers = 4), Togo (2), Burkina Faso (1), Senegal (1), Cameroon (1), Mali (2), Netherlands (1 trainer), South Africa (2 trainers).

A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD head office on request.

5.2.7. Northern Region in Morocco

5.2.7.1. October 14-16, 2008 in Fez Morocco

The workshop was attended by 19 people (7 Deaf, 10 hearing, 2 interpreters) from 4 countries:

Egypt (2+2 interpreters = 4),

Tunisia (2), Mauritania (1),

Morocco (4 + 8 trainers and assistants = 12)

A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD head office on request.



5.2.7.2. Training of Deaf leaders in Tunisia 3-5 April 2009

The training aimed at capacitating 20 Deaf leaders in Tunisia in project mounting and SL promotion



5.2.7.3. 16/19 January 2010 Fez Morocco

Training of 40 medical professionals in deaf culture and SL

5.2.7.4. December 6-9, 2010 in Fez Morocco

The workshop was attended by 21 people from the following countries: Democratic Republic Congo, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria (see picture).



A full report of the workshop is available from the ACGMHD Head Office on request.



### 5.3. Special Events

Head Office was invited to attend a special occasion on August 21, 2008 when the Bible in Sign Language was presented to the Deaf of Swaziland. It was an opportunity to sensitize dignitaries of government and the hearing community to Deaf culture and Sign Language.

### 5.4. Public Education and Awareness

Sensitization and Awareness programmes form part of all the out reaches and were done in South Africa 2007, Democratic Republic Congo 2008, Burundi 2008 and 2009, Swaziland 2008 and 2009, Lesotho 2009, Nigeria 2010. These programmes are done in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### 5.5. Education and training

Training of teachers of the Deaf in the Social Competency Model was done in 2 schools and 2 centres for disabled persons. The Management and Organizational modules of the model were done at the NID.

### 5.6. Sign Language Development

The multi-media production team of DeafNET and experts from the communities in question assisted Deaf communities to design and produce training packages: Burundi (August 2009), Mauritania (2009/2010), Gambia (2010), South Africa (2008 and 2010)

### 5.7. Information service

A website was designed and launched on the internet in 2008. A data base containing information on various aspects of hearing loss, assistive devices, services, suppliers, statistics and relevant publications is in an ongoing process of expansion and adjustment to address new information needs.

### 5.8. Vocational and Occupational Training

The NID is a registered Higher Education and Training College and opened its doors also to Africa. Currently 12 students (not including those from South Africa) from the following countries are studying at the College: Botswana (5), Zambia (4), Namibia (1), Zimbabwe (2)

### 5.9. TB and hearing loss – Swaziland August 2009

It came under the attention of the ACGMHD Management Board that in some cases medication given to TB patients can cause deafness. In Swaziland more than 30 patients became deaf and in



South Africa DeafNET is currently busy establishing how many patients are affected. The incoming board will have to give attention to the needs of these patients.

5.10. HIV / AIDS

Included in the leadership and management training is a module on HIV /AIDS. The purpose is to give leaders the necessary awareness and skills to equip Deaf communities with knowledge regarding risk behaviour, to be preventative and to advise people living with HIV / AIDS and their families where to get treatment and support.

6. Conclusion

Since the early beginnings of the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness tremendous growth and development has taken place. ACGMHD has obtained international recognition and is highly respected in Africa.

The outgoing board would like to convey its sincere gratitude to SVE and NID for financial, logistical and expert support.

This quadrennial meeting will be decisive with regard to the direction of the ACGMHD in the future.

The outgoing board wishes the incoming board wisdom and resolve to lead the ACGMHD on its way forward in Africa and internationally.

Abdelaziz Arssi  
Chairperson

February 11, 2011  
Date

A L Smit  
Executive Secretary