The Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA) has conducted its 27th annual conference in the UNECA Conference Center in Addis Ababa from February 22-24, 2016.

The conference was officially opened by the message from H.E. Dr. Kesetebirhan Admassu, Minister of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The Minister, through his representative - Dr. Mahlet Kifle, highlighted the contributions of EPHA, particularly in the areas of health professionals training, strengthening the health extension program and the development of the recently launched Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP).

Besides, the Association has brought notable changes and is currently working with the Ministry to ensure quality and standardized health services throughout the nation, the minister said.

“The Association is also expected to strengthen its contribution by conducting problem-solving research and facilitating policy advisory,” the minister added.

Science and Technology State Minister Prof. Afework Kassu on his part said, Members of the Association have been contributing greatly in conducting valuable researches linked to public health, capable of devising policies, and improving community health practices.

He also has affirmed the government’s commitment in supporting EPHA and other national institutions that are engaged in conducting scientific researches.

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Realizing the importance of research for economic growth, in the second GTP the government has increased the budget for research and also established a National Research Council which is now undertaking multifaceted activities. As to its mandate, the ministry supports associations like EPHA that conduct researches, the state minister noted.

Dr. Jeffrey Hanson, Country Representative of CDC-Ethiopia, through his delegate, Dr. Ashenafi Haile on his part expressed successful on-going partnership with EPHA in the implementation of large scale projects. He further expressed appreciation for the role of EPHA in strengthening and development of public health in Ethiopia.

The representative emphasized the role of EPHA in capacity building programs which is geared towards improving public health in Ethiopia. He said that his organization would continue the partnership with the Association in areas pertinent to both organizations.

Dr. Fikreab Kebede, President of EPHA, welcomed all members and partners to this important meeting and thanked those who contributed to the success of the annual conference.

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Role Model

Dr. Asfaw Desta
Senior Public Health Service Awardee

Born in 1937 in Nekemte, Wellega, where he attended elementary school, Dr. Asfaw then moved to Addis Ababa to complete secondary school at Menelik II School in 1955. He then continued higher education in four different universities in three countries, eventually obtaining:

- Certificate in biology from the former University College of Addis Ababa in 1959 (since degrees in science were not conferred at the time);
- BSc degree from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, in 1961;
- MPH degree from the University of California at Berkeley, USA in 1965; and
- PhD degree from the John. Hopkins University in 1970.

Except for short-term training programs consulting services, and to attend conferences and workshops in different countries at various times, he has always been committed to staying and working in his country devoting almost all of his working life to public health in Ethiopia. After three years as a science teacher in schools in Addis Ababa and Debre Zeit, he joined the public health profession where he has worked for about 40 years. He served in teaching, administration, supervision of research and community health services, as well as providing advisory, consultation, and editorial services in various settings. This included the former Gonder Public Health College, Addis Ababa Medical Faculty, the Ministry of Health, where he was

employed in public health for the first time, and other governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations. He also served as Secretary General of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society which, at the time, had a famous nursing school.

After joining Addis Ababa University, he continued serving the Ministry of Health in various capacities by being member of various committees and taskforces, including member and Secretary of the Ministry’s Advisory Board (1989-91) member and Deputy Chairman of the Minister’s technical advisory group for the establishment of a public health school (1992-94) and member and chairman of the committee for “Post basic training for nurses”.

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The first MPH program in Ethiopia was started by the Dept. of Community Health of the Addis Ababa Medical faculty during his time as head of that department which later became the first school of public health in Ethiopia. He was simultaneously the head of the then WHO-sponsored National Health Development Network in Ethiopia (or NHDN-E) and the Editorial Office of the EJHD, both of which had their centers in the DCH. He was the founding member of EJHD and served as its Board member, Editor-in-Chief and Editorial consultant for many years. He has also served in many of the EPHA committees, including as a member of its Advisory Council. He holds the record as the first to register as a life member of the EPHA.

After retirement from the Addis Ababa University, he continued to work a short-term consultant for many national and international organizations within and outside of Ethiopia. He has served in many non-governmental organizations as a volunteer and a life member, including in the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society. He has also worked for MIDROC’s Selam Health Care PLC for about three years as an advisor and Director of its Nursing School.

He has authored and coauthored, over 20 published and unpublished scientific papers and also reviewed over 90 scientific papers and books for various journals.

Role Model- Institutional Awardee

Organization for the Development of Women and Children-Ethiopia (ODWaCE)

This organization is a pioneer Ethiopian Residents’ Society committed to the abandonment of harmful traditional practices that affect the health of women and children. For the last 29 years, it has been striving to promote favorable traditional practices through research, networking, capacity building, and Behavioral Change Communication.

The Organization was established in 1987 and officially registered with the Ministry of Justice in 1993 and re-registered in October 2009. Its membership is composed of individuals committed to the total elimination of harmful traditional practices. It is also a member of an African regional organization, namely the Inter-African Committee whose members are drawn from 28 African countries.
The responsibility of coordinating the current established network of more than 40 Governmental and Non-Governmental member organizations for eradication of FGM rests on the shoulders of this organization.

As a pioneer organization operating in the area of Harmful Traditional Practices, this organization has managed to conduct national level surveys and researches supported technically and financially by its partners, including the dissemination of results to the public. The National Baseline survey on Harmful Traditional Practices (1997), the National Follow-up Survey (2007), regional reports of Afar, Somali, and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ State are some of the major activities.

It has also been able to produce and distribute various IEC materials and training manuals on Harmful Traditional Practices in national local languages. This organization was formerly known as “National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE)”; it then became EGLDAM, and now ODWaCE (Organization for the Development of Women and Children -Ethiopia)

ODWaCE is the winner of the 27th EPHA annual conference Institutional Award.

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**EPHA Conducts its General Assembly Meeting**

The Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA) General Assembly held its regular meeting in the afternoon of its first day. The assembly convened on different issues and endorsed key documents of the association including, the annual report of 2015, plan of action for the coming fiscal year and the audit report. The assembly also discussed other issues pertinent to budget and implementation.

On his report president of the Association Dr. Fikreab Kebede said 13 regular and 3 extraordinary Executive Board meetings had been conducted in the past fiscal year, adding, “The association has about 6,000 registered and 2,000 active members.”

Finally, the General Assembly elected Dr. Kebede Derbie and Dr. Belaynew Wassie as new Executive Board members of EPHA.
Dr. Abera Kumie graduated in Medicine in 1983 from the former USSR. He received Master of Science (MSc) in Public Health in 1991 from Tulane University’s School of Public Health, Louisiana, USA. He graduated with PhD in Public Health in 2009 from Addis Ababa University, Medical Faculty. Currently, he is working in the school of Public Health, college of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University and he is Post-doc student, since January 2015.

Dr Abera’s professional career started in 1983. He worked in the Ministry of Health as an expert, in various capacities at department and division levels till 1993. From 1993-1998, he worked in Addis Ababa Regional Health Bureau as a specialist, expert and department head in the field of Environmental Health. From January 2000 to February 2003, he was a Lecturer in in Addis Ababa University’s Faculty of Medicine.

Dr. Abera Kumie has published a total of 39 publications, with 31 total service years within Ethiopia. He has also served as a member and representative of EPHA for many years.

Dr Abera Kumie has been a volunteer EPHA reviewer year after year. He contributed a lot in the development of Public Health in Ethiopia. Since May 2003 to date, he has been working as an Assistant Professor on Public Health with specialty in Environmental Health.

Currently, he is a coordinator of PhD training programs, teaching undergraduate medical students and graduate (MPH) students, involved in research works independently and with students, advising and supervising both undergraduate and graduate students for their senior papers, undertaking public consultancy activities, and sitting on various academic committees.

Dr. Abera Kumie is the winner of the 27th annual conference of EPHA Senior Public Health Research Award.
During the event a minute of silence was further held for the untimely deaths of Dr. Hailu Yeneneh, ex-Secretary of the General Assembly, Dr. Yohannes Kebede EPHA member and Ato Dereje Seyoum, EPHA member and secretariat as well.

Around 300 oral and poster scientific papers were presented. The oral and poster presentations are believed to contribute to the development of science and technology and widening evidence base in public health.

The three-day conference, with the main theme of “AttainingUniversal Health Service Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals Related to Health: Opportunities and Challenges,” brought together more than 1,000 advocates, researchers, health professionals and other stakeholders from all over the country and abroad.

Over the course of the three days conference, numerous scientific papers with various thematic areas were thoroughly discussed.

A ceremony to mark the official inauguration of the Website for online article submission for the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development (EJHD) was also held. The electronic submission system is believed to simplify access to the journal and encourage contributors to easily submit articles. All were cordially invited to visit the website: www.ejhd.org.

The 15th cohort .... From 10

He said the trainees shall present their findings to local leadership and also better recognize opportunities like the EPHA annual conferences to present what they had already produced during the training. He also emphasized that trainees should remain in touch with their mentors to take their current knowledge and skill to the next level.

In his keynote address, the Mekelle University School of Public Health representative also stated that the school is committed in delivering all its potential for such capacity building efforts as part of its community service.

On the occasion, discussion was also held with the graduates and other partners on the training program and very important feedback was obtained.
Dr. Belay Tessema first graduated in Medical Laboratory Technology in Diploma from Gondar College of Medical Sciences in 1998. He then earned Bachelor of Sciences (BSc) in Medical Laboratory Technology in 2003 from Jimma University. He also earned Master of Science (MSc) in Tropical & Infectious Diseases from Addis Ababa University in 2007. Lastly, he graduated and received his PhD in Medical Microbiology, Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases and Clinical Immunology from University of Leipzig, Germany in 2012.

His professional career started in 1998 when he worked as a Technical Assistant in the Department of Medical Laboratory technology, University of Gondar former Gondar College of Medical Sciences.

- From 2003-2004, he worked as a Graduate Assistant II in the University of Gondar;
- From 2004-2008, he was Assistant lecturer and Lecturer in the University of Gondar;
- Since 2011, Consultant of International Laboratory Capacity Building program of American Society for Microbiology;
- From 2012-2015, Assistant Professor of Medical Microbiology and Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases in the University of Gondar;
- From 2012-2013, Director of Postgraduate Program of University of Gondar;
- Since 2013, Head of School Biomedical and Laboratory Medicine in University of Gondar;
- Since 2014, Executive Board member of Ethiopian Medical Laboratory Association and Editor-in-Chief of Ethiopian Journal of Laboratory Medicine;
- Since 2015, Associate Professor of Medical Microbiology and Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases in the University of Gondar;
- Since 2015, WHO/TDR Clinical Research and Development fellow at Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FINDB), Geneva, Switzerland;
- He has more than 40 publications in national and international journals.

Dr. Belay Tessema is the winner of the 27th EPHA annual conference Young Public Health Research Award.
Menschen für Menschen, or “People for People”

Menschen für Menschen, “People for People” which is founded by Karlheinz Böhm is one of the winner of the 27th EPHA annual conference institutional award.

In 1981, angered by the indifference of people in rich countries to poverty in Africa, this humanitarian organization is founded by an Austrian actor and human rights activist who founded an aid group dedicated to helping people in Ethiopia. The Foundation aims to enable the local people to develop their environment and their country out of their own activity and consequently to improve their standard of living.

Today, the organization runs integrated rural development projects in nine Ethiopian regions. It developed the idea of "integrated rural projects" to initiate lasting and sustainable change.

In cooperation with the local population, there is an integrated and interlocked approach to development activities in the various project categories. These programs include agro-ecological projects, construction of water systems, students' hostels and construction of schools as well as the improvement of the health care system and, to a growing extent, education programs and projects to improve the situation of women in the society. Moreover, the Foundation also handles infrastructural and individual projects.

Some 360 schools were set up with help from the foundation; hundreds of wells were dug and acres of arable land created. A credit system it put in place enabled women to become financially self-sufficient. It also tackled the sensitive topic of female genital mutilation (FGM).

Though the founder of this prominent organization died, aged 86 in May 30, 2014, he lives in through his deeds and actions.
EPHA Recognizes Individuals and Institutions

During the 27th Annual Conference and General Assembly meeting, three distinguished public health professionals and two institutions were recognized for their remarkable contributions to the development of public health in Ethiopia. The recognition was given in four different categories, namely:

1) Life service years in public health,
2) Senior public health researcher’s award,
3) Young public health researcher’s award and
4) Institutional award.

Dr. Asfaw Desta, Dr. Abera Kumie and Dr. Belay Tessema received gold medals and certificates of recognition in the first three categories respectively, while the Organization for Women and Children Development in Ethiopia (ODaCE) and Menschen für Menschen (MfM) received the Institutional Awards. All of the awardees received certificates of recognition from the guest of honor, His Excellency, Professor Afework Kassu, State Minster of the Ministry of Science and Technology and Dr Mahlet Kifle, representative of the Minister of Health.

The 15th Cohort LSI Trainees Graduated

The Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA), in collaboration with the University of Mekelle, graduated 13 health professionals trained in Leadership in Strategic Information (LSI) on January 26, 2016 in Mekelle town.

During the graduation ceremony, which was held in Milano Hotel, trainees presented and defended the findings of their research and projects on monitoring and evaluation plan.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Ato Semegnew Mengestu, Deputy Executive Director of EPHA, underlined the importance of engaging partners to discharge their responsibilities to best exploit the output of the training.
Words seem inadequate to express the sadness we feel about Mr. Dereje Seyoum’s passing. We are very sorry for the profound loss of our colleague. We want to express our most sincere sympathies to his families and friends. Dereje was a highly valuable EPHA management committee member. He was a wonderful employee who understood the meaning of the word “work”.

He was always more focused on the good of the Association than on his own benefit. He made many great contributions to the EPHA and helped it move forward in numerous ways. Dereje had honored as a global cancer ambassador for Ethiopia by the American Cancer Society. His work in EPHA will not be forgotten. He will be greatly missed and everyone here is saddened by his coming to an untimely end.

He will always be in our hearts and memories!