

with the leadership of institutions in the so-called fragile states including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and DR Congo. Partnerships are being formed with African and external stakeholders to pursue our goals for research and education. Our representatives have interacted with other delegates to the World Health Assembly and participated in discussions on the health workforce crisis, SDGs and universal health coverage. We have participated in discussions with the African Platform Forum. Our engagements with Ministries of health and Education and other in-country partners are ongoing.



*L-R: James Hakim, Francis Collins, Peter Donkor, Eric Goosby, Miliard Derbew, Roger Glass at AFREhealth Launch in Nairobi*

The US government investment in MEPI and NEPI through PEPFAR can be credited for the formation of AFREhealth. However, the sustainability of this body remains the responsibility of African health leaders. Unless funder initiatives become locally owned they will neither be sustained nor make the desired impact on the continent. Stakeholders from medicine, nursing, dentistry, public health, pharmacy, laboratory science, nutrition, etc. must overcome traditional barriers and work together to address Africa's health challenges. The 2017 Accra Symposium is the first and will bring together nearly 300 health professionals to deliberate on finding solutions to health challenges in Africa and chart a future for AFREhealth.

## AFREhealth EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

### Chairperson:

Prof Peter Donkor,  
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

### Vice-Chairpersons:

Prof Marietjie de Villiers, Stellenbosch University  
A/Prof Abigail Kazembe, University of Malawi

### Members:

Dr Miliard Derbew, University of Addis Ababa  
Prof James Hakim, University of Zimbabwe  
Prof Nelson Sewankambo, Makerere University

For more information visit [www.afrehealth.net](http://www.afrehealth.net)



**African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth)**



## Brief on the African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth)

Prepared by  
**Prof Peter Donkor**  
Chair of AFREhealth

[www.afrehealth.net](http://www.afrehealth.net)

## INTRODUCTION

Africa remains heavily burdened with infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, pandemics like Ebola Virus Disease, untreated surgical conditions and road traffic injuries. Coupled with this is the increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancers, and cardiovascular disease. Malaria is responsible for significant morbidity and mortality and infant and maternal mortality rates remain unacceptably high. Sadly, the workforce required to tackle these health challenges is in short supply and health training institutions lack the capacity to meet the demand for places. The few available training schools are under-resourced with poor infrastructure and limited faculty. Curricula are often outdated and access to ICT, internet, and other training tools is minimal. The skills, administrative support and funding needed for advancing locally relevant research are also lacking.



AFREhealth Chair Peter Donkor (middle), Vice Chairs Marietjie De Villiers (left), Abigail Kazembe (right)

The African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth) is an interdisciplinary health professional grouping that seeks to work with Ministries of Health, training institutions and other stakeholders to improve the quality of health care in Africa through research, education and capacity building. It is a conglomeration of individuals, institutions, associations and networks from all the geographic and linguistic regions of Africa namely Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone and Arabic. Membership is open to African and external stakeholders committed to an Africa with strong, self-sustaining and robust health systems. It was launched by the joint

leadership of MEPI (Medical Education Partnership Initiative) and NEPI (Nursing Education Partnership Initiative) during the MEPI/NEPI Symposium in Nairobi on 2nd August 2016 through adoption of the Nairobi Resolution on AFREhealth.



MEPI/NEPI Leaders – Nairobi 2016

AFREhealth is an independent body that emerged from the Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and Nursing Education Partnership Initiative (NEPI). MEPI and NEPI were funded by PEPFAR-NIH in 2010 and 2011, when awards were made to selected African medical, nursing and health science schools. Over the past 7 years, the group of Principal Investigators (PIs) from African institutions, worked to enhance education in their schools, to encourage research, promote quality health care and to form a network for Africa. AFREhealth now brings together leadership from more than 60 medical and nursing schools in Africa and seeks to extend the gains of MEPI/NEPI to more schools in Africa.



Signing of Resolution Establishing AFREhealth

## GENESIS OF AFREhealth

Both MEPI and NEPI aimed to support medical professional training and research development, address the critical shortage of health personnel including nurses and midwives, strengthen their quality and capacity, and increase the capacity of selected schools and the educational system overall. Specifically the two initiatives' goals were to: a) increase the numbers and improve the quality of medical and nursing graduates; b) promote retention of graduates where they are most needed; c) improve the capacity for to undertake regionally relevant research; d) build communities of practice within Africa and globally; and e) ensure sustainability. MEPI and NEPI brought together African schools and external partners from US, UK, Brazil and Canada. The collaboration helped to augment the leadership, educational and research capacity of beneficiary schools in Africa.



Even though the focus of MEPI and NEPI was on medical and nursing education, it became clear during their implementation that the needs of other health professions could not be overlooked. Thus, schools of pharmacy, dentistry, nutrition, laboratory science, physiotherapy etc. benefited from the training and capacity building activities under the initiatives. AFREhealth's mission is to be inter-professional, sustain the gains of MEPI/NEPI and expand them to more schools across Africa. This is based on the belief that the complex health problems facing the continent can only be solved by all health professions working together as a team. Since its inception a year ago AFREhealth has engaged