

IFMBE Working Group on Developing Countries

Report of the Activity 2016 - 2017

AC Meeting, 10th June 2017, Tampere, Finland

Chair:

Mario Forjaz Secca

Members:

Mladen Poluta (from Africa - South Africa)

Kenneth Nkuma-Udah (from Africa - Nigeria)

Peck Ha Tan (from Asia - Singapore)

Fatimah Ibrahim (from Asia - Malaysia)

Luis Vilcahuaman (from South America - Peru)

Martha Zequera ((from South America - Colombia)

Luis Kun (from North America but originally from South America)

Ernesto Iandanza (Chair of Clinical Engineering Division)

Leandro Pecchia (Chair of HTA Division)

Monique Frize (from North America - Chair of the Cos)

Andrel Linnenbank (Past Chair of CoS)

Anna Worm (from Europe - works for THET, has worked for EWH)

Shauna Mullally (from North America - works for UNICEF and has worked for THET)

Cari Borrás (from IUPESM and IOMP)

Saïde Calil (ex-chair of WGDC)

Marc Nyssen (Treasure of IFMBE)

Herbert Voigt (ex-President of IFMBE)

The last meeting of the Working Group on Developing Countries (WGDC) was held in April at MEDICON 2016, in Paphos, Cyprus, where the general business of the year was discussed and future directions talked about.

The purpose of the working group overlaps with the aims and activities of several other Divisions, Committees and Groups of IFMBE and sometimes it is difficult to separate those activities that involve the developing countries from the specific activities of each of these other groups, therefore we opted to work in close collaboration with CED, Council of Societies as HTTG and share several activities related to developing countries.

Since the middle of 2016 Anna Worm, Shauna Mullally, Mladen Poluta, Ernesto Iandanza, Leandro Pecchia, Saïde Calil and Mario Forjaz Secca, as members of CED, have worked on the CED task of implementing an e-course for BMET's in Africa. The leaders of this program are Anna Worm and Shauna Mullally. After the definition of the courses to be taught, there will be a pilot program for a selected group of students that will start in Gambia, Zambia and Mozambique.

In October 2016 took place the Meeting AfroBiomedic 2016, in Abuja, Nigeria, organized by Kenneth Nkuma-Udah and attended by Marc Nyssen, Anna Worm and Mario Forjaz Secca. Although the conference was intended to be a focal point of the people interested in Biomedical Engineering in Africa, the total number of attendees was

close to 150, and most of these students, so the discussions that took place were not decisive. Anyway, the conference was a good opportunity to appreciate the liveliness of Biomedical Engineering in Nigeria.

Since March 2016, after the meeting organized by Anna Worm and THET in Johannesburg, there was talk of starting an African Federation of Biomedical Engineering African Activities Working Group. The movements and e-mail exchanges had already started, but in Nigeria, on conversations with Marc, Anna and Mario and Adriana it was considered that an extra Federation would involve too much finances and extra man power, and Marc Nyssen suggested that a Working Group on African Activities (similar to the existing Asian Activities Working Group) would be preferable and that this group could be the embryo for a future African Regional Group. The main motivators of this Working Group within IFMBE were chosen to be Marc, Anna and Mario and Mario has been very active for the past six months exchanging e-mails with the representatives of 17 Biomedical Engineering groups in African countries to set up this working group. The response has been very positive, and we need to find a conference in Africa where we can all meet in the near future with the officers of IFMBE to formalize the creation of the group.

Several of the members of the WG went to the 3rd Global Forum on Medical Devices (Mario, Martha, Ernesto, Leandro, Anna, Cari and Marc) and although there was no particular meeting of the WGDC, Mario Forjaz Secca gave a talk called "The involvement of IFMBE in Developing Countries" and there were several sessions focused on developing countries, and several of them either organized or with talks by members of the WGDC focusing on developing countries. As an example, there was a Symposium called "Defining Medical Imaging Requirements for Rural Health Centre", which was organized by Yadin David Cari Corras and Mario Secca. Although it was officially organized by IUPESM HTTG, two of the organizers are members of the WGDC and the topic overlaps with the aims of the WGDC, so it was organized with the collaboration of the WGDC.

Mario Forjaz Secca has been living in Mozambique since November 2016 and has developed there a strong activity in Biomedical Engineering in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Mozambique, in order to create a post of Biomedical Engineering consultant at the ministry, and a private university, in order to start the first Biomedical Engineering BSc in the country. These activities are being pursued with the emphasis that Mario is the Chairman of the WGDC in IFMBE and that the activities will be developed in collaboration with the Federation.

In conclusion the WGDC has been fulfilling its function as agglomerator of activities involving developing countries but should take more leadership.

Criticisms:

- The president has been living for the past year in Mozambique, and although working mainly in the area of Biomedical Engineering, he has been too absorbed by the new and has not been keeping the e-mail correspondence and communication as active and up to date as intended.
- We should be meeting and communicating via Web conference, rather than just e-mails.
- We need more involvement of all members in the WG and more involvement outside Africa.