

## EIM Africa: A Continent in Transition



Traditionally, much of the focus of international health organizations has focused on the huge burden of infectious (or communicable) disease that has rampaged across the continent of Africa. More recently, non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes, have surpassed infectious diseases as the leading cause of mortality, not to mention their staggering, long-term economic costs. Yet, international aid

continues to dedicate a majority of its funding towards eradicating communicable diseases. Fortunately, a number of leaders in physical activity, sports medicine, and public health have stepped up throughout Africa to make sure that physical activity is an integral part of any plan to combat non-communicable diseases and that it should be a vital sign in all African healthcare institutions.

In **South Africa**, **EIM** has had an established presence for a number of years. In recent years, a stronger collaboration has emerged between EIM and the South African Sports Medicine Association (SASMA). This past October, SASMA held their 16<sup>th</sup> biennial congress, at which the 2<sup>nd</sup> EIM Africa Regional Meeting was held. Within the SASMA congress, EIM was selected as one of the three featured programmatic tracks. Speakers engaged the audience on talks of the public health benefits of exercise as medicine in the elderly, bone health, pregnancy, and how these benefits could all be best recognized through their implementation in health care systems. Additionally, at the conference EIM leaders from across Africa met to share their successes, challenges, and best practices.

Elsewhere in South Africa, key stakeholders are working on developing a training program for community health workers – those individuals on the front line in providing health care to the poorest communities of the country – to educate and empower them in providing guidance on physical activity and healthy living. Furthermore, EIM South Africa has now launched an online training program to train and recognize biokineticists, personal trainers, and physiotherapists on how to receive patient referrals from health care providers and work with individuals with chronic,



medical conditions. Finally, EIM South Africa is extremely fortunate to have the strong support of its industry partners including Technogym and Coca-Cola.

In **Nigeria**, though there is a [national health promotion draft policy](#), there is no legislation compelling the Federal Government to reduce or combat non-communicable diseases. However, in the state of Osun, the government has begun organizing “[Walk and Live](#)” programs. These monthly walks take place in the city of Mombasa, Kenya in an attempt to keep citizens of the state fit and to bring the importance of physical activity to the forefront of the public. The state of Osun has also made it mandatory for physical education to be taught in elementary schools to encourage children to enjoy participating in daily physical activity from an early age. On a national level, leaders from the [Nigerian Heart Federation](#) and several leading physical activity organizations have begun discussions towards the formal launch of EIM Nigeria. Finally, students at [Olabisi Onabanjo University](#) in the state of Ogun State are working hard to establish their University as the first EIM on Campus program in Nigeria.

In **Ghana**, the EIM National Center is hosted by Active Living & Wellness Ghana ([ALWAG](#)), an organization that works to promote Active Healthy Kids & Adults, Live Well Ghana, and the Ghana Physical Education & Sport Thinktank (GPESTT). EIM Ghana has established partnerships with the National Sports Authority Medical Directorate, the National Association for Sport for All, and the Ghana College of Physicians & Surgeons. To date, EIM Ghana is in discussion with the Narh-Bita Hospital and the Ghana Civil Service polyclinic in an effort to include physical activity assessment and prescription as a part of a newly planned integrative care unit. Finally, the first EIM on Campus chapter in Ghana has been established at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST) Campus in Kumasi, Ghana.

In **Kenya**, leaders from [Kenyatta University](#), one of the leading academic institutions in Kenya and all of Africa are putting together the final details in establishing an EIM National Center. To date, they have secured the support of several major medical, health, and physical activity societies in Kenya. Kenyatta University has also been selected to host of the 2016 Physical Activity and Sports for Health and Development in Africa (PASHDA) conference in September 2016, at which the 3<sup>rd</sup> EIM Africa Regional Meeting will also be held.