

# RESCAP-MED FIRST NEWSLETTER



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## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

**RESCAP-MED** is a project to build research capacity, relevant to public health research, aiming to create a Mediterranean regional network for NCD researchers, in 5 disciplines: *Epidemiology, health economics, environmental health, medical anthropology, and health policy evaluation.*

The main purpose of **RESCAP-MED** is to enhance capacity for public health research on non-communicable diseases (NCD), and the social determinants of these diseases, in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. We intend to achieve this aim in two ways:

1. Strengthening skills in a number of disciplines relevant to improving public health, including reducing social inequalities in health.
2. Enhancing networking, cooperation, and coordination between researchers in the Mediterranean region, by
  - Creating a Mediterranean regional network for NCD researchers
  - Creating a funded fellowship programme linked to this research network

## What kind of project is RESCAP-MED?

Funded by the EU (2 million Euros, for 3 years, 2012 – 14), a successor to MedCHAMPS, but a different kind of project with a wider set of partners

Awarded in response to a call for 'Building sustainable capacity for research for health and its social determinants in low and middle income

Professor Peter Phillimore is scientific coordinator of RESCAP-MED. A social anthropologist by training, he is based in Newcastle University's School of Geography, Politics and Sociology (where he teaches) and the Institute of Health and Society (where his research is done).



He has a PhD from Durham University, based on ethnographic fieldwork in north India. For many years he researched health inequalities in the UK (with Prof. Peter Townsend), and later the health impacts of industrial pollution (with Prof. Raj Bhopal), before he led a comparative project in Germany and the UK on environmental politics and cultures of risk in petrochemical towns. Research on public health in Mediterranean countries was a new development starting with MedCHAMPS (for which he led one work package and was for a period acting coordinator). He is involved with another research capacity-building programme, in India, having been co-chairing the Research Committee of the Public Health Foundation of India-UK Universities Consortium until this year (funded by the Wellcome Trust). He has published widely on environmental health topics (including on risk and trust), and has recently been co-editor of *The Peter Townsend Reader* (Policy Press 2010) and *Contesting Recognition: culture, identity and citizenship* (Palgrave 2011).

## **FIRST RESCAP-MED MEETING, LONDON, UK 25th-26th January 2012**

The first consortium meeting for launching RESCAP-MED was held in London, UK during 25th-26th January 2012. The meeting was attended by the leaders of Work Packages (WP) as well as Project Management Committee (PMC), Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Project Monitoring and Advisory Committee (ProMAC) members.

During this meeting, an introduction to RESCAP-MED aims and objectives, deliverables and milestones, and expected impact was made.

The objectives will be progressed by creating a Mediterranean regional network for NCD researchers which will provide: Research methods training workshops, workshops on grant writing and writing for peer reviewed journals, two international symposia, and a visiting fellowships programme, supplemented by a pilot web-based learning scheme. The Consortium Agreement (CA) was discussed, and the development of methodological approaches relevant to several work packages was made.



## **Non-communicable diseases (NCD)** –

particularly cardiovascular diseases (CVD), diabetes, and cancer – are increasing dramatically in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, a trend evident in low and middle income countries throughout the world. This trend is placing ever-increasing pressure on health systems in these countries, and impacts greatly on the lives of those who are directly affected by these chronic illnesses. Unrelenting urbanization and societies with an ageing population profile underlie the rise in NCD. Decreased physical activity and sedentary lifestyles, coupled with changes in eating habits and a new reliance on processed food, contribute to the growing epidemic of obesity, while tobacco use continues to rise in the region, especially among women. These major risk factors link social and economic determinants with people's lifestyles, and have uneven effects within the population, accentuating inequalities in health which mirror wider socio-economic disparities.



*Dr Shahaduz Zaman* MBBS, MPH, MA, PhD is a medical anthropologist trained in Amsterdam, currently working as Senior Researcher on MedCHAMPS WP5. Before 2009 he worked as Associate Professor and MPH Programme Coordinator at James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, Bangladesh. He has completed two multi-country ethnographic research projects as PI - "Globalization as a social determinant of Health" (WHO-funded), and "Communicable Diseases: Vulnerability, Risks and Poverty" (DFID-funded).



**Non-communicable diseases** are also expensive to treat and manage, requiring long-term support. Health services throughout this region face a new challenge coping with the growing burden these diseases impose. Until recently most of the countries in the region have lacked the organizational capacity, and in many cases the financial capacity, to tackle the increasing burden of NCD.

Initiatives to deal with this burden on health services in the region are now emerging. But little attention has yet been given to building the region's own research capability to map and monitor the public health task of managing and improving the nation's health. That is the purpose of RESCAP-MED. It is why we bring together epidemiology with disciplines which address the social and economic causes and consequences of disease: health economics, environmental health, and medical anthropology. Together these embody what the World Health Organization means by a social model of health.

**RESCAP-MED** brings together research institutes in six countries of the region – **Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey** – in addition to the World Health Organization’s East Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO-EMRO) in Cairo.



**Professor Peter Phillimore, Professor of Social Anthropology**

Institute of Health & Society



**Professor Simon Capewell, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology**

Institute of Psychology, Health and Society



**Professor Julia Critchley, Professor of Epidemiology**

St. George's, University of London



**Dr Kathleen Bennett, Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology**

Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics



**Professor Belgün Unal, Professor of Public Health**

Department of Public Health, School of Medicine





**Professor Wasim Maziak, Professor of  
(Epidemiology)**

Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies



**Dr Abdullatif Hussein, Associate Professor of  
Public Health (Epidemiology)**

Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH)



**Professor Habiba Ben Romdhane, Director  
Cardiovascular Disease Research Laboratory  
(CAVEPLA)**



**Professor Yousef Khader, Professor of  
Epidemiology and Biostatistics**

Department of Public Health and Community Medicine



**Professor Abba Sibai**

Faculty of Health Sciences



**Dr Awad Mataria, Pharmacist & Health Economist**

Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO-EMRO)

A key purpose of **RESCAP-MED**  
is to strengthen regional South-South  
cooperation in building research  
capacity on the selected NCDs

## Dead Sea, Jordan 19-20 May 2012



Niveen Abu-Rmeileh: PhD, MPH, is a Research Fellow of Statistical Epidemiology and the Coordinator of the Epidemiology Unit at the Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University. Her research interest is focused on epidemiology of chronic diseases, reproductive health and psychometrics. Dr. Abu-Rmeileh is a member of several national committees seeking to reform and rationalize the Palestinian health care system, including the 'Health Information System Thematic Group, the 'Cancer Control National Committee', and the 'National Population Forum'.

She was a member of scientific committees for international and local scientific conferences. She has taught health statistics, quantitative research methods, environmental statistics, and population and development courses and has conducted training courses for health professionals and mid-level technocrats in various topics including research methods, statistics and demographic methods.

### Dead Sea, Jordan Meeting Summary

On May 19th and 20th, a meeting was held in the Dead Sea in Jordan for RESCAP-MED country representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the training needs assessment element of the RESCAP-MED project, as well as to finalize any pending logistical issues in relation to WP3. Participants included Yousef Khader from Jordan, Peter Phillimore from the UK, Faten Tlili from Tunisia, Rouham Yamout from Lebanon, Bulent Kilic from Turkey, Niveen Abu-Rmeileh and Doaa Hammoudeh from Palestine. Due to the ongoing conflict in Syria, Fouad Fouad was unable to attend the meeting but participated via Skype.

The first session began with an overview of the RESCAP-MED project, its objectives, current work plan and expected outcomes. This was followed by an introduction of the mapping exercise and a presentation by each country representative of their respective results.

The second session comprised of an introduction to the rationale behind the training needs assessment tool and its components. A constructive discussion took place that dealt with unclear components, and final modifications of the tool were agreed upon. It was also decided that Syria representatives will translate the final questionnaire into Arabic and validate the translated version before it is utilized. All country representatives also agreed to pilot the questionnaire prior to distributing it to ensure it is valid. Participants then discussed other qualitative needs assessment methods, including key informant interviews and focus groups. It was decided to include between 6 and 10 key informant interviews and 1 or 2 focus groups. The key informant interviews and training needs assessment questionnaire will both run simultaneously.

Participants concluded the session by finalizing a work plan for July and August, including the development of a reporting system for the mapping phase and training needs assessment fieldwork. All final country analyses should be completed by mid-September and will include mapping results and the training needs assessment questionnaire results. The final WP3 report is set to be completed by the end of September by the WP3 leader, however, each country is required to prepare a brief summary of their country reports.



## Egypt 11-13 Nov 2012



**Dr Awad Mataria** is a Health Economist working at the Eastern-Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization. He is a pharmacist by training and has a Master in Health System Analysis from the Université de Rennes I – Rennes/France, and a Ph.D. in Health Economics from the Université de la Méditerranée – Marseille/France. He also did part of his training at the Université de Lyon I – Lyon/France, and at the National School of Public Health – Rennes/France. Dr. Mataria's areas of expertise cover research in economic evaluation of health care interventions (cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-utility analysis and cost-benefit analyses); using economics in health care priority setting, financing and organization of health care systems; measuring the benefits of health care mainly using stated preferences techniques; and National Health Accounts. He has presented in several regional and international conferences and has published his work in various reputed Journals of high impact: e.g., *Journal of Health Economics*, *Health Economics*, *The Lancet*, *Health Policy*, *European Journal of Health Economics*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Applied Health Economics and Health Policy*, *Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics & Outcomes Research*, and *Pharmacoepidemiology & Drug Safety*.

As part of the activities planned under the EU-funded project **RESCAP-Med**, the “Health Economics and Health Care Financing” and the “Non-communicable Diseases” units at WHO-EMRO are organizing a capacity building workshop under the title of “*Introduction to Economic Evaluation with special Application to Non-Communicable Diseases*”.

**A three-day Capacity Building Workshop** is being organized by EMRO to introduce researchers from the academic and research institutions partner in the RESCAP-Med project to the principles of Economic Evaluation of Health Care Programs and its application.

The **purpose** of the Workshop is to build national research capacities in the area of economic evaluation of health programs in Mediterranean countries partner in the RESCAP-Med Project.

By the end of the capacity building workshop the participants will be able to:

- recognize the fundamental purpose and use of Economic Evaluation in setting priorities in the health sector;
- identify the different types of Economic Evaluation and their distinguishing features;
- appreciate countries' use of Economic Evaluation in setting health priorities to monitor, manage and prevent non-communicable diseases under specific country setting.





**Professor Belgin Unal, MD, PhD** Professor in Public Health, has experience in cardiovascular disease epidemiology and modeling. She has PhD in Public Health (University of Liverpool, 2004). She developed the IMPACT model for England together with Professor Simon Capewell (UoL) and Professor Julia Critchley (St George's University of London) and has published widely in this field. She also has expertise in conducting observational and interventional research.

The magnitude of inequities in health varies in each country and also varies between countries. Populations of lower social classes are subjected to the Adverse health outcomes including non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Knowledge accumulated revealed that the gap between the different populations is widening over time.

The symposium will be organized in order to enhance and build research capacity in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean region on social determinants of health focused on NCDs. Symposium will be organized in Istanbul between 6-7 May 2013.

The aims of this symposium are to provide knowledge on how inequalities affect different population groups, how to measure those differences, and how this knowledge may help to identify and promote effective policies and institutional changes to reduce health inequalities derived from these social factors. One of the targets of the symposium is strengthening both the disciplinary capacity necessary to explain the social and environmental factors causing the rise of NCDs and inequalities between populations and countries.

There will be three types of sessions during the symposium. First, keynote lectures on fundamental information on social determinants of health. Second, specific topics such as employment and gender related inequalities will be accounted for the in-depth review of the literature. Third, free paper sessions and country profiles will provide practical information in the Mediterranean region as well as the partner countries.

Younger researchers who are interested in social determinants of health and non-communicable diseases are one of the main target groups of the symposium.

**Following the symposium, DEU are co-hosting a two-day course with colleagues from Barcelona which researchers from RESCAP-MED partner countries may find valuable to attend.**

## Istanbul Symposium

- **Date of the symposium: 6-7 May 2013**
- **Venue: Hotel Cevahir, Istanbul**
- **Submit online to: Web-page: [rescapistanbul2013.org](http://rescapistanbul2013.org)**
- **Submission opens: 10th Jan 2013**
- **Deadline for submission: 31th Jan 2013**
- **Registration fee of the Symposium (includes symposium CD, coffee breaks and lunch)**
  - o **160 Euros until 31 Jan 2013**
  - o **Onsite registration: 200 Euros**
  - o **Post symposium course registration fees: 120 Euros**

## Symposium Organising Committee

Name	Institution	e-mail
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Dr Kathleen Bennett, BSc, PhD is employed as an epidemiologist/statistician and has over 20 years' experience of undertaking medical research. After completing her BSc in mathematics and statistics at Southampton University, UK she spent 2 years working as a clinical trials statistician in the Pharmaceutical Industry before returning to Southampton to complete a PhD in statistics. She now works in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics in pharmacoepidemiology and regularly teaches in research methods, epidemiology and statistics. An administrative assistant is expected to join the team from August 2012 to assist in the organisation and planning of the fellowship programme.

## Description of the fellowship program

The fellowship programme is led by Dr Kathleen Bennett, Trinity College Dublin. The aims of the programme are:

1. To establish, organise and implement a competitive visiting fellowship programme, open to staff in southern partners of the consortium.
2. To organise mentoring for fellows where appropriate.
3. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this fellowship programme (in consultation with WP8).

The visiting fellowship programme performs the key purpose of enabling new skills and knowledge to be acquired over a longer period and foster careers as independent researchers.

### Visiting fellowships intend to:

- (i) Involve exchanges of personnel both for mentoring as an independent researcher and for pursuing research collaborations.
- (ii) Facilitate each stage of the research process from scoping work and literature review to research design and grant, through to publication.
- (iii) Operate on both a south-south and south-north basis.
- (iv) Last for shorter or longer duration (typically 4 weeks to 3 months), but probably mainly of shorter duration.
- (v) Meet the needs of both early career and mid-career research staff.
- (vi) Cover both academic and operational (i.e. Ministry of Health personnel) researchers

**Main areas to be given priority for the fellowship programme are the following applied in inter-disciplinary context: Epidemiology, Health economics, Environmental health, Medical anthropology, Health policy.**