



**The Congress Committee, Zanzibar, September 2007**

# **OTARG NEWSLETTER**

**(Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group)**

**January 2008**

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**Member Countries**

Botswana  
Kenya  
Malawi  
Mauritius  
Namibia  
Nigeria  
Rwanda  
South Africa  
Tanzania  
Uganda

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**Office-bearers of OTARG:**

Chairperson:  
**Alfred Ramukumba**  
Vice Chairperson:  
**Brenda Ephraim**  
Secretary  
**Liza Wegner**  
Treasurer  
**Christa Meyer**  
WFOT Representative to OTARG  
**Julian Kamwesiga**  
Student Representative  
**Bertha Mbuya**



## EDITORIAL

It is more than a year since the last OTARG newsletter was published. This year we are going to try to bring out two Newsletters as this will be the main method of communication between OTARG Countries in a non-Congress year, until the website gets up and running.

What a triumph the 5<sup>th</sup> OTARG Congress in Zanzibar was! Congratulations to Mohammed Sharif, occupational therapist in Zanzibar and Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Congress. Your efforts and those of your committee members (seen on the front page) will long be remembered as furthering the aims of the development of the profession of occupational therapy in Africa. Well done. Your wonderful smile is an inspiration to all!

There is more to hear about this in the report back from the Congress and the OTARG Meeting below.

It is always difficult as editor to get reports from the various African countries but I hope you will notice a new report from Malawi! This is a first, and you will notice also that the next OTARG Congress will take place on the shores of Lake Malawi in 2009 as an invitation from a small group of Malawian occupational therapists. How privileged we are to have such a host, but this is how it goes in wonderful Africa!

Please note the new committee of OTARG elected in Zanzibar. Congratulations to Professor Alfred Ramukumba, re-elected for another term as Chairman. We are so lucky

to have him in this very important position. He is an inspiration to all of us!

To all OTARG members and friends, please keep the OT ball rolling in Africa...

**Rosemary Crouch, Editor.**

## **Report on the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Congress of the Occupational Therapy African Regional Group in Zanzibar, Tanzania from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2007.**

The theme of the Congress was “Occupation and Culture:  
Affirming Diversity in Occupational Therapy”

The Congress took place at the Bwawani Hotel in Stonetown, on the beautiful island of Zanzibar.

The congress provided an opportunity to explore how culture influences the understanding of occupations, and its use in practice. The diversity of occupational therapy practice was affirmed by exploring the different interpretations and applications of occupations and cultures. There were three parallel sessions every morning and workshops in the afternoon. The keynote speakers were:

- Hanneke van Bruggen, Executive Director of ENOTHE from the Netherlands
- Juli McGruder from Tanzania
- Sarah Mkenda from Tanzania
- Pam Mclaren from South Africa.

120 delegates from 15 countries attended the congress and there were occupational therapy students present from Tanzania, Norway, Kenya and South Africa. A number of Occupational Therapy Assistants also attended the Congress

The congress showed a distinct improvement in the level of the scientific programme and the level of research papers. There were accounts of the development of new occupational therapy programmes and services and the use of new activities and techniques. Educational programmes and needs were discussed. The workshops covered techniques, research and the development of an African occupational therapy model. Jennifer Creek and Angus McFadyan ran a workshop on

the development of an African occupational therapy publication. Congratulations to the Scientific Programme Committee steered by Lana van Niekerk who selected excellent speakers and papers.

Finances were well organised and covered the costs of the Congress. Not one of the 5 OTARG Congresses have ever run at a loss. This says a lot for the local occupational therapists who are prepared to go that extra mile and keep costs low. It is however stressful for the organisers to strike the balance between an acceptable, attractive venue and one that is cost-effective!

The Social events were wonderful as usual, and the closing dinner was held at a beautiful beach resort. Delegates shopped until they dropped in colourful Stonetown and had a chance to eat at lovely restaurants and to visit the surrounding islands. Many new friends and acquaintances were made.

The Congress ended on a high note with many compliments and positive statements. Much fun was had by all.

### **The OTARG Biennial General Meeting**

This meeting took place during the congress. The following member countries were represented:

Kenya  
Malawi  
Nigeria  
South Africa  
Tanzania  
Uganda.

Sharon Brintnell, Executive Treasurer of WFOT, represented WFOT at the meeting.

The New Executive of OTARG was elected as follows:

- Chairperson, Alfred Ramukumba – South Africa
- Vice Chairperson, Brenda Ephraim – Tanzania
- Secretary, Lisa Wegner – South Africa
- Treasurer, Christa Meyer – South Africa
- WFOT Rep. Julius Kamwesiga – Uganda

- Student representative, Bertha Mbuya – Tanzania
- Newsletter, Rosemary Crouch – South Africa

Items of importance from the Agenda were:

- Communication within OTARG by email, the development of a website and the continuation of the Newsletter.
- The importance of the relationship between OTARG and WFOT. OTARG is a regional group of WFOT.
- The finances, which are sound and will still be held by Sharon in Canada.
- The next Congress which will take place in Malawi in 2009 on the shores of Lake Malawi.

The chairman closed the meeting by stating that OTARG is more than a Congress organising body now. It has developed to a point where it is now more active in educational matters including the support of new training programmes and now it is to become involved in publications.

The chairperson concluded with “food for thought” in terms of developing bursaries for occupational therapists to attend congresses. The committee is to work on this and also in developing a website.

### **Rosemary Crouch**

#### **NEWS FROM UGANDA**

The Uganda Association of Occupational Therapists (UAOT) is now 11 years old. The occupational therapy family in Uganda has grown in size and strength over the years. The number of OTs now in Uganda is 88 and is distributed over the country. This has increased the proportion of Ugandans with knowledge of occupational therapy services. New students now have the knowledge of OT before they join the programme and other health workers have increased referrals to occupational therapy services. UAOT in its annual general meeting early this year constituted the new executive. The president is Ms Ndagire Rose, Vice president is Mr. Julius Kamwesiga, the Secretary is Mr. Beene Richard and treasurer is Mr. Mpango Richard.

In the just ended 5<sup>th</sup> International OTARG congress in Zanzibar, four occupational therapists from Uganda participated. These were Sam Ouma, Francis Ekwan, Moses Kiwanuka and Julius Kamwesiga. The number of OTs from Uganda was limited by the limited sponsorship. Otherwise those who attended had good presentations and I am sure they gained enormous experience from the congress. Thanks to the sponsor who enabled them to attend.

The Occupational Therapy training school is now 13 years old. It's a three year Diploma programme. We have formed collaborative networking with overseas Hospitals and OT Training Institutions especially in Europe. This involves exchange of students, teachers and OTs working in hospitals. The exchange programmes have promoted sharing of experiences and knowledge that in turn improves quality of training and health care services. The exchange of OT teachers, hospital staff and students has inculcated a cultural, sensitive workforce ready to improve the quality of life of those in dire need of OT services.

With the Ugandan government policy of equalization of opportunities and social inclusion of all citizens, its hoped that OT development in the country will be promoted.

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**Delegate Uganda**  
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## **NEWS FROM MALAWI**

### **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN MALAWI**

The profession is new and been unknown since 1960. It was started by expatriates who worked at Zomba Mental Hospital in the 1960s. The first Malawian occupational therapist graduated in 1982 and is based at Zomba Mental Hospital. At the moment there are 6 Malawian occupational therapists. 2 are employed under the Ministry of Health and the rest in Non-Governmental Organizations.

The writer of this article works at a referral hospital in the southern part of Malawi

(Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital). She was sponsored by Leprosy Guild UK under GWEN Gibbs Scholarship. Thank you Gwen for the great help may God reward you in the way he knows best.

### ***Awareness activities***

Being a new and unknown profession the following activities were done:

Special referral forms to the occupational therapy/physiotherapy department were made

- Presentations were done to both qualified and student doctors on what occupational therapy is.
- Formation of the stroke team
- Formation of the albino clinics together with the dermatology clinical officer
- Monthly visits to the Utale Leprosarium where people affected by Leprosy are re-trained in self care and productivity activities.

### ***Future plans***

- In-service training for clinicians and nurses in all the hospitals in Malawi
- Career talks to secondary school students in Malawi
- Formation of an occupational therapy association.

Welcome OTARG in 2009 to the Warm Heart of Africa.

**Dorothy Chinguo**  
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## **NEWS FROM MAURITIUS**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 nine (9) students, who were the first batch of occupational therapists to be locally trained at the University of Mauritius, were awarded their degree in Occupational Therapy. More rewarding, 8 of them are already practising full time. 5 of them were recruited by the Ministry of Health at the start of last month. 2 of the newly qualified occupational therapists are employed by NGO's and there are lots of other NGOs who are, little by little looking for the services of an occupational therapist. This is a great start for Occupational Therapy in Mauritius. The long

struggle which started long way back has at last started to pay back. Many persons and bodies have campaigned hard to launch/implement this Occupational Therapy programme for the first time at the University of Mauritius. Still there is a long way to go but occupational therapy has started at least to be recognized.

It is up to the new occupational therapists to keep raising the profile of this profession and sensitize decision makers so that occupational therapy finds its due place in other ministries/sectors in this country.

### **My personal contribution**

One year has elapsed since I first joined the Ministry of Health and I am posted at the only public institution for persons with mental health problems. I enjoy a wonderful career as an occupational therapist. Most of the people around are supportive and this has helped to lessen my apprehension when I first joined.

I love to see the spontaneous smiles on the face of the clients I work with and I try to bring whatever positive changes I can in their lives. I agree that there are more to be done: for instance, the set up for a day care centre for the higher level clients who are institutionalized has long been a topic of interest. Shortly the proposal for this strategic plan will be sent to the Minister of Health and suitable stakeholders. I am keen to be involved in this project as an occupational therapist.

At present occupational therapy service is provided in 6 public hospitals and a new occupational therapy department will soon be available in a district hospital.

Furthermore there is an opportunity to explore occupational therapy private practice in Mauritius with a good standard. Training occupational therapy students need not worry about finding work when they qualify. My wish is that we, all the occupational therapists do not work individually and find ourselves fragmented but work as an integrated group for our clients and the development of the profession.

**Anil Sobhun**  
**Occupational Therapy Graduate**  
**University of Mauritius**  
**asobhun@yahoo.com.**

## **NEWS FROM NAMIBIA**

The Namibian Association of Occupational Therapist will hold their 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on 25 October 2007, where the new EXCO for 2008/9 will be elected. To celebrate International OT day, we will have a short introductory First Aid workshop open to the public. Currently we still need attendants in order to present the course.

The most important event of the year 2007 was the well organised and presented workshop on Sensory Modulation by Annemarie Lombard and Ray Anne Cook from South Africa. In conjunction with this workshop, the NAOT hosted a one-day public presentation by Annemarie Lombard on sensory modulation, attended by 40 teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, parents of children who attend occupational therapy and others.

On the front of OT development, all is (unfortunately) very quiet. The Public Employment Commission has urged the University of Namibia to undertake a thorough feasibility study before the University might consider introducing occupational as a professional bachelor's degree. The onus to provide the funds for this study lies on the meagre financial shoulders of the NAOT, who has knocked on the doors of ENOTHE Mundus for possible assistance.

The Interim Allied Health Professions Council of Namibia contacted Alfred Tshinetise Ramukumba, head of the Occupational Therapy education programme at Medunsa University, well known to all of you, to assist Council with the development and introduction of council examinations for occupational therapists. Due to election of new Councils (the Interim phase has lapsed), this venture has not yet taken off.

The NAOT had once again, a meeting with the Namibian Association of Medical Aids Funds (NAMAF) to negotiate tariffs for private practitioners. This time we had the opportunity to promote the profession as well as to negotiate tariffs, and were positive that the Affordability Sub-Committee lent us their ear. The result, we learned was an

increase of 18% effective from 01 January 2008 was granted.

The NAOT hopes that the Association its members will be in a better financial position in order to attend the next OTARG Congress.

**Helga Burger, WFOT Delegate**  
**pompie@mweb.com.na**

### **NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African participants in the OTARG Congress in Zanzibar have returned home with interesting stories about their travels, but most importantly have been very complimentary about the hospitality, quality of papers presented and organisation of the Zanzibar congress. A sincere thank you to all the people involved that made the congress so successful, especially the Congress Committee and the Scientific Committee.

The OTARG Congress is not only about gaining knowledge and experience, but also networking and meeting others in the same field of practice. Communication is essential for this, and today E mail is amazing technology that can connect people instantly and easily. An OTARG website is in the process of being set up which will also be informative and connect people from different countries. Each country will be informed of the launch of the website when it happens. Please also refer to the OTASA website for information from South Africa [www.otasa.org.za](http://www.otasa.org.za)

South Africa proudly congratulates Alfred Ramukumba for his second term as the OTARG president, Christa Meyer as treasurer, Lisa Wegner as secretary and Rosemary Crouch as newsletter editor. Congratulations to all the executive members from Tanzania and Uganda. This team will certainly strengthen the organisation and encourage OTARG to grow to represent further countries in Africa.

Malawi, OTARG is really looking forward to coming to your country for the next congress!

South Africa sends encouragement to Butani Butao and the Malawian Congress

Coordinating Committee together with Pat de Witt and the University of the Witwatersrand Occupational Therapy School of Health Sciences as the Scientific Committee, assisted by Pretoria University and the University of Limpopo, for the planning of the next OTARG Congress in September 2009. See you there!

**Vivyan Alers**  
**South African OTARG Delegate**  
**South African second alternate Delegate to WFOT**  
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### **MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY**

The secretary of OTARG, Lisa Wegner has a comprehensive list of the participants that attended the Zanzibar OTARG Congress. We would like to encourage as many people as possible to join OTARG as this strengthens Occupational Therapy in Africa and the network between the African countries. The cost for two years is South African rand, R70 which is very worthwhile. This entitles the member to receive the OTARG Newsletter twice a year and to be informed of congresses and other exciting developments.

Please contact Lisa Wegner to become a member of OTARG on the E mail [lwegner@uwc.ac.za](mailto:lwegner@uwc.ac.za) or mobile phone +27 82 332 7167

**START SAVING NOW EVERYONE. THE 2009 CONGRESS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!**

RBCrouch January 2008