



CCIH Annual Conference Explores Best Practices in Christian Global Health

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Approximately 150 attendees from the U.S, Africa, Asia and Europe attended the Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) 28th Annual Conference at Marymount University in Arlington, Va. June 20-23, 2014 to share experiences and best practices, and join in Christian fellowship. The theme of the conference was

Transforming Lives: Christians in Global Health, with four sub-themes digging deeper into the work of Christians. The sub-themes were *Strength in Partnerships*; *Excellences in Practices*; *Compassionate Care in Crisis*; and *Voice for the Vulnerable*.



Gil Odendaal, Ph.D., D. Min., Vice President of Integral Mission at World Relief kicked off the 28th Annual Conference on June 20 with an inspiring discussion of what it means to integrate "word and deed" and how Christians working in global health need to strive to bring healing to body *and* spirit. Dr. Odendaal shared his experiences growing up under apartheid in South Africa and how that influenced his calling to serve. He also challenged participants to evaluate how their

churches were being inclusive and encouraging participation by all in God's kingdom.

The following plenary session, *Strength in Partnerships*, featured the work of three Christian organizations who use partnerships to deliver care and health services. Emily Sarmiento, Child Sponsorship Program Director, Compassion International, described the organization's partnership model working with implementing churches and sponsors. Ms. Sarmiento explained that the

model encourages local partners to work with each other for greater impact in releasing children from poverty.

Debbie Dortzbach, Director of Health and Social Development, World Relief, presented World Relief's program in Turkana, Kenya which involves partnership with Wheaton Bible Church and other partners to empower vulnerable farmers by training them on irrigation systems and how to marketing practices. Lara Villar, Vice President for Strategy and Organizational Performance, Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB), explained how CMMB's CHAMPS (CHildren And Mothers PartnershipS) program encourages large scale social change from better cross sector coordination rather than isolated interventions by individual organizations.

The plenary session, *Awakening Our Voice: Advancing Excellence in Christian Global Health*, was moderated by Doug Fountain, Vice President, Operations Support, Medical Teams International and featured panelists Tom Davis, MPH, Chief Program Officer, Feed the Children; Todd Nitkin, MD, MPH, Senior Advisor, Monitoring and Evaluation, Medical Teams International; and Anne Peterson, MD, MPH, Director, Public Health Program, Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences. The panel discussed differentiating doing "right" from doing "good," meaning that Christians need to ensure their programs are achieving their intended goals through proper measurement and monitoring and evaluation, as well as the concepts of stewardship and accountability practices and maintaining a sense of humility in our work.

The challenge of maintaining Christian values while serving in demanding professions and in diverse locations and settings was explored in the plenary session, *Living Out Your Faith in Your Work*. Moderator Pamela Mukaire, Dr.PH., Loma Linda University questioned panelists Ron Mataya, MD, Associate Professor of Global Health, Loma Linda University School of Public Health; Jonathan Quick, MD, MPH, President and CEO, Management Sciences for Health; Anbrasi

Edward, Ph.D., MPH, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health; and Kathy Griffith, Grants Office in Community-based Primary Health Care, United Methodist Committee on Relief. Panelists shared personal testimony on the importance of their spirituality and maintaining a balance with their professional lives.

Rick Santos, President and CEO, IMA World Health moderated a session on *Compassionate Care in Crisis*. Melissa Crutchfield, Associate General Secretary, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR); Nicole Hark, Deputy Director for Asia and the Middle East, Lutheran World Relief; and William Sage, Consultant to Faith-based Organizations shared their experiences working with FBOs responding in crises. A theme that emerged during the panel was the natural connection between FBOs and churches in communities, which makes them powerful partners and is an advantage for FBOs responding to crises. The importance of engaging local community organizations to facilitate the transition from relief and recovery to development after a crisis was also discussed.

The final plenary session featured Reverend David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World, who spoke on the *Biblical Basis for Advocacy*. According to Rev. Beckmann, many Christians, especially in the U.S., do not understand that they have a responsibility to help change laws and structures in a way that will provide opportunity for people in need. He discussed Jesus' statement of "the judgment of the nations" which is judgment of not only individual actions, but also of nations and we all have the responsibility to be involved in public policy and advocate for the protection of those in need.

[View videos of sessions and copies of Powerpoint presentations](#)

On June 23, the day following the final conference sessions, nearly 40 conference participants went to Capitol Hill for CCIH's Annual Advocacy Day. They visited 26 congressional offices and discussed the importance of global health programs and shared stories of the impact of Chris-

tians working in global health. [See Report of Advocacy Day](#)

Ending Extreme Poverty: The Challenge for Christians in Global Health

The theme of the 2015 CCIH Conference is *Ending Extreme Poverty: The Challenge for*

Christians in Global Health and is expected in June 2015. Watch www.ccih.org over the coming months for updates.

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Cite this article as: Erb K. CCIH Annual Conference explores best practices in global health. *Christian Journal for Global Health* (Nov 2014), 1(2):98-100.

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