

# Internationalising public health

Prisca Zwanikken on strengthening public health schools in Africa through networking in international health

**tropEd** is a network of institutions for higher education in international health. It was established in 1996 to provide people with an opportunity to do postgraduate studies in different institutions across Europe. Today, tropEd also collaborates closely with institutions in Asia, Africa, and the Americas to provide internationally-oriented, cross-cultural postgraduate education opportunities.

One of the outstanding features of tropEd is a **Master in International Health (MIH)**, which members developed and launched in 2005. Its main aim is to raise awareness of important global health concerns. The programme is offered across member institutions, allowing participants to study in several European institutions, each with its own area of specialty.

**Graduates of the MIH** have the skills to identify and critically analyse key factors shaping the health and well-being of populations in low- and middle-income countries and are qualified to formulate effective and appropriate responses to complex health-related issues. Applicants include physicians, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, and other health professionals with at least 2 years of work experience in the field. The programme consists of a core course, advanced modules, and a thesis. The European Credit and Transfer System (ECTS) facilitates transfer of course credits between institutions at the same academic level.

**tropEd aims to promote excellence in teaching and training**, and has therefore developed high-quality standards and a system for accrediting the course modules offered in the master's programme. Member institutions propose modules which are then submitted to a rigorous accreditation process carried out by the tropEd General Assembly. Currently, there are more than 150 accredited modules offered across the network.

**Institutes that would like to become a member of tropEd** must support the aims of tropEd and be able to show that their institution has the capability to provide high-quality education in the field of international health. They carry out a self-evaluation process and undergo a site visit by one of the tropEd member institutions. A number of issues are reviewed, such as the institutional arrangements for training and the institute's readiness to receive international students.

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Applying institutions, European and non-European institution alike, are advised on possible improvements before becoming a member of tropEd. Currently there are 33 European and 8 non-European institutes in tropEd. Two institutes are in Africa: the School of Child and Adolescent Health, University of Cape Town in South Africa, and the School of Public Health and Social Science, Muhimbili, University of Health and Allied Sciences in Tanzania.

**The tropEd network is a learning network.** Institutes applying for membership, collaborating institutions and full members learn from each other on new topics in international health and developments in postgraduate education such as 'serious gaming' and innovative methods for assessment. For example, scholars from the Royal Tropical Institute and Edinburgh have taught qualitative and quantitative methods in health research in Cape Town. Similarly, African scholars have come to the Royal Tropical Institute to teach and develop innovative learning methods.

**The tropEd network is currently working to expand its membership to more institutions in the South** while continuing to improve the quality of the MIH. tropEd welcomes new partner institutions, especially from Africa. It is a unique opportunity to collaborate together in teaching and training, exchanging staff and students, improving quality and using innovative methods to improve human resources.

For further information, visit the websites: [www.troped.org](http://www.troped.org) and <http://erasmusmundus.troped.org>.



*Luu Ngoc Hoat, Vice Rector at Hanoi Medical University and Erasmus Mundus Scholar during an expert meeting at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam to discuss 'what works and why' in human resources for health interventions.*