

8. THE WAY FORWARD

The past year has seen further consolidation of efforts in recent years to building the Centre as a strong, productive partnership. Key in this regard has been the HEAD study, with its foci on research and research capacity development, in which all of the partners play significant roles. Further strengthening of the HEAD study will be a key feature of the work of the Centre over the next year, including analysis of the data, fast-tracking publications, quality control, exploring avenues for dissemination of the information and translation of the research into policies and programmes.

Projects such as the development for WHO-AFRO of information materials on Children's Environmental Health in Africa will serve to further build the partnership, and strengthen ties with WHO-AFRO.

In line with a recommendation from the 2004/5 Advisory Panel, the highly successful experiential learning arrangement between the Wits SPH and the MRC, will during 2007 be extended to the UJ Faculty of Health Sciences. Under the umbrella of this initiative, staff and students from the UJ Faculty of Health Sciences will be placed at the MRC for mini-internships and will also participate in research planning processes to building research capacity. In order to support this process, the UJ Faculty of Health Sciences, will contribute R50 000.00 to the Centre.

A process has been embarked on to have the Centre designated as the MRC Collaborative Research Group: Environmental Health. This is in line with the new MRC research strategy that is currently under development. While such a designation will not alter the day to day operations of the Centre, it will ensure the sustainability of the work of the Centre.

The published output of the Centre remains an area that requires strengthening. Since the Centre already holds a large body of unpublished work, the potential to make rapid gains in this regard is high. In the coming year, greater effort will need to be made to find the appropriate vehicles to increase the publications portfolio of the Centre.

In addition to an improved publications output, it will be important over the next year, to increase the visibility of the Centre as a focal point for urban health research and expertise.

