



NEWSLETTER

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP



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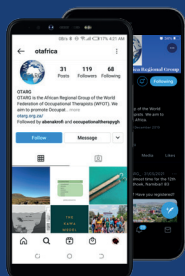
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SEASONS GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

We have made it through another year of the pandemic by adapting, relearning, rethinking, and adjusting our lives. Our beautiful profession equips us with skills that we have used in different ways to shape our lives and those of service users. In addition, we shape the lives of organizations, groups, and different spaces that we find ourselves in. On behalf of the OTARG Exco, I wish you all the strength, courage, and resilience as we continue to navigate life.

Once again, we thank you for your support of the work that we do as a regional group in promoting occupational therapy. Through the ups and downs of this past year, especially having to make difficult decisions about the 12th OTARG Congress, we have felt your support. A big thank you to the Namibian Association of Occupational Therapists (NAOT) and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) which worked tirelessly to try and bring the congress to reality. Despite not yet having a definitive decision about the congress, we are hopeful that we can work out something and we will communicate the final decision at the beginning of 2022. As an Exco we celebrate our VP Programmes who obtained his PhD; this shows that while serving you, we continue to grow scholarship on the continent. Another achievement was by members of the Uganda Association of Occupational Therapists (UAOT) and the Tanzania Occupational Therapy Association who were awarded the Elizabeth Casson Trust scholarship. Congratulations and good luck on your journey!

We have also increased our visibility on social media, thank you to the media team. Let us continue supporting the good work by subscribing and following OTARG on social media platforms.

I wish you all a joyful, peaceful end of the year. Happy holidays to you all!



Dr. Matumo Ramafikeng
OTARG President

MESSAGE FROM EDITORIAL TEAM

We made it to the end of 2021! We appreciate you all for sticking with us this year; your inputs & support are invaluable. We hope you have a safe and relaxing holiday season as we enter another eventful and amazing year. Gear up for the 2022 OT ride!

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AFRICA REGIONAL GROUP AT 25: SO FAR SO GOOD

Hurray OTARG is 25!, An initiative which started like every other development ideas in 1995 has now become a major force driving the development of Occupational Therapy in Africa. This WFOT regional group has not only achieved the dream of the founding fathers, but has also continued to advance the course of the global visioners for Occupational Therapy development in the continent. A little reflection down the memory lane, aptly attest to why is worth celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the regional group. Therefore this OTARG memoir is thus chronicled with a special focus on the conception of the OTARG idea, the commission of the pioneers and their commitment, the consolidation by successive leaders, the commendation of the agents of development and a charge for the future.

THE CONCEPTION OF THE “OTARG IDEA”

According to OTARG archive, although the idea of having the regional group was conceived in 1995 it did not materialize until 1996, when it was finally decided on at the WFOT council meeting in Nairobi, Kenya and was later inaugurated in the same year in Durban, South Africa. The idea was born out of the need to develop Occupational therapy in Africa. This led to drawing specific development objectives which later became the “great commission” the pioneers had to run with. The inauguration which was convened by Rosemary Crouch, South African (OTASA) Delegate to WFOT and Chairman of WFOT Education Committee at that time was also financed by WFOT. The meeting was attended by invitation by the members

of Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA) who had come to attend the OTASA National Congress.

THE COMMISSION FOR THE PIONEERS AND POSTERITY

According to the WFOT leadership then, the objectives for creating OTARG regional group are:

- Developing service of Occupational in Sub-Sahara, Africa
- Encourage membership of Africa countries with WFOT
- Support the existing Occupational therapy programme in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa and assist in the emerging training in Tanzania and Mauritius.
- Promote the development of training in more African countries.

THE COMMITMENT OF THE PIONEERS AND SUCCESSIVE LEADER

The OTARG group started with 9 African countries namely; Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe. With a sense of duty, the pioneer executives who were Justine Nanyonjo (Chairman), Uganda, Jacqueline Laurent Mauritius (Vice Chairman), James Botela (Secretary), Kenya, Rosemary Crouch (Treasurer) & Ann Nott (Treasurer), South Africa pursued the objectives with commitment. Their commitment led to the springing up of more programmes and enhanced standardization in practice within the region. The first 2 programmes impacted by the development, were the Tumaric University, Tanzania and later in Mubaglo Hospital in Kampala, Uganda. The approval of the curriculum for Kenya and Tanzania later led to the approval by WFOT, paving ways for the full membership of both countries with WFOT. Successive leadership of



OTARG have continued to consolidate on the progress in the region with more programmes coming up, increasing participants in OTARG and WFOT conferences and increased involvement in the WFOT activities.

CONSOLIDATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRIDES

With consistent consolidation by successive leaders of OTARG, OT in Africa has continued to grow. Just within these few years, many developmental strides have been registered especially in the area of improved service delivery, increased number of academic programmes. Also, Occupational therapists in Africa have risen to positions of prominence with many having very significant positions in the academia, politics and industries. Occupational therapy professionals in Africa have established projects and participated in programmes with great impact on community and national development of many countries. Many Occupational therapists in Africa are key drivers of government's projects and even projects by WFOT and World Health Organization. More importantly, many Africa Occupational therapists have been contributing to the development of the profession outside the Africa region as many are currently working as lecturers and clinicians in reputable institutions across Europe, America, Canada, Asia and Australia. The membership of the OTARG has now risen to 12 with three more countries

on the verge of joining. In addition to organizing standard conferences that attracts global participants in the profession by the past leaders of OTARG, the current leadership of OTARG is creating opportunities for programmes to be supported to attain the WFOT minimum standard of training occupational therapists. In the same vein, the leadership has been able to draw up a plan for the further development of Occupational therapy education by creating a special portfolio for programme development among the executives.

Similarly, the global visibility of the group has also been enhanced through the creation of social media platforms with constant interaction with professionals within and outside Africa. More so, the present leadership of OTARG has been able to partner with reputable organizations to facilitate grants and aids for solving public health problems with the recent ones being the grant by Occupational Therapy Without Borders (OTWB) for the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Also, just recently, the regional group had the support of Elizabeth Casson Trust for the educational development of OT practitioners with Diploma certificates in East Africa to obtain their bachelors in Occupational Therapy. This gesture has brought respite to Occupational therapists in that region, whose dream of higher qualification has for long been limited by fund. The students' body in the region has also benefited from the recent developments as they are now better linked together through accessible platforms and have continued to enjoy a high sense of inclusiveness through increase involvement in OTARG activities.

COMMENDATION OF KEY PLAYERS IN OTARG DEVELOPMENT

OTARG has indeed come along way. Many thanks to the WFOT leaders for their far-sightedness in creating the group and their consistent unflinching supports. Also to the pioneers and past leaders, we commend your sacrifice

in laying a solid foundation on which we have continued to build. To our esteemed members and students, we are saying thank you for sustaining the spirit of "Umbutu" which has brought OTARG this far: We are, just because you are. And to the current leadership of OTARG, thank you for your wealth of experience and diverse creative acumen which have been very significant to the recent achievements of OTARG.

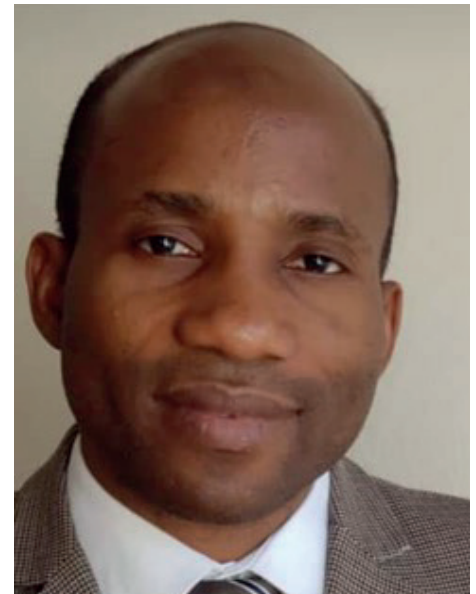
More importantly, our unreserved appreciation goes to WFOT and other OTARG international partners such as ECT, OTWB who have continued to support the growth of Occupational therapy through sponsoring special projects, grants for higher education in OT and conferences. We are ever grateful!

THE CHARGE FOR THE FUTURE

While we continue to celebrate the silver jubilee of our regional group, it is important we remember that though we have come a long way as a professional group, there is still a long way to go. Many countries in Africa need to commence Occupational therapy programmes. Existing programmes and facilities need to be strengthened. Many programmes need to attain WFOT approval. More field work opportunities need to be created with adequate supervision. There is need for more contextually- relevant researches with a special focus on the overall well-being of our communities. More Occupational therapy practitioners need to be involved in politics so as to garner the political will that can drive the necessary change for OT growth in Africa. More Occupational therapists are needed as captain of industries. There is also need for more Occupational therapists in Africa to pioneer emerging areas such as COVID-19 and other pandemic, climate change and disaster management in their countries. More mentors with global reach and local touch in the Africa context are needed and more OTpreneurs need to emerge that can create jobs and fill the increasing vacuum of under and unemployment

in the Africa region. As members of OTARG, we need to remember as well that there cannot be a better time for us all to bring to the table our creative ideas and connections for the advancement of our dear profession in the region. With all hands on deck, we are certain that we will break new grounds and actualize the OTARG of our dream. Once again, congratulation to us all and long live Occupational therapy in Africa.

**BY ELEYINDE S. TEMITAYO
OTARG, SECRETARY**



“ We are, just because you are. And to the current leadership of OTARG, thank you for your wealth of experience and diverse creative acumen which have been very significant to the recent achievements of OTARG.

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AFRICA REGIONAL GROUP

The Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG) is a non-profit professional organization 1123-116 NPO Department of Social Development, South Africa as well as an official regional body of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) with the primary objectives of the organization to:



- (a) act as the official African organization for the promotion of Occupational Therapy, under the auspices of WFOT.
- (b) promote co-operation amongst OT's, OT Associations and between them and other allied professions.
- (c) promote professional ethics and advance the standards of practice in OT.
- (d) promote establishment and development of Occupational Therapy training in the African region.
- (e) facilitate regional exchange and placement of OTs and OT Students.
- (f) facilitate the exchange of information and publication and to promote research.
- (g) be involved in matters where OT expertise can contribute to policy making in general preventive, curative and rehabilitative health matters.
- (h) organize and execute the running of a biennial international congress for the organization.
- (i) where finances permit, and only through the finances from the income of the book/s under the auspices of the organization, subsidize attendance of OTs to the congress who could otherwise not be able to attend the congress.

OTARG currently has 12 member countries (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Madagascar and Lesotho) in Africa who pay a Biannual membership as country members, which gives them access to a free newsletter and an opportunity to vote for positions of executive committee. Membership is categorized as; Individual, country and student. Any practicing Occupational Therapist can pay for OTARG membership.

OTARG has remarkably grown since 1996 and so has the Occupational Therapy profession on the continent. OTARG is governed by a constitution and recognized as a non-profit organization which is run by an executive committee of Although not all African countries are members of OTARG, most have an Occupational Therapist and are also starting Occupational Therapy education programs. Over the years OTARG has published the textbook of, "Occupational Therapy; An African perspective by Rosemary Crouch and Vivian Alers", which shows various practices of Occupational Therapists across the continent, resources used, techniques and many more.

The Congresses are the key to the continuance of OTARG and have been running since 1999 in Mauritius, Uganda 2001, Mombasa 2003, Moshi 2005, Zanzibar 2007, Malawi 2009, Zambia 2011, Zimbabwe 2013, Uganda 2015, Ghana 2017, Rwanda 2019 and Namibia 2021. Every congress is unique with its own theme, an organizing committee from the individual countries, a scientific committee that review all abstracts from all over the world. The congresses are a great platform to share; new evidence-based practice, research, new occupational therapy education programs, challenges, successes on the African continent and the rest of the world, creating networks and getting support from like-minded professionals. The congress fee is used to run the congresses in terms of; venue fee, meals and other administrative costs.

OTARG is financially dependent on membership fees to cover administrative costs and the entire executive committee are volunteers with a passion for the profession. However, there is a great need for OTARG to have other sources of income and grants to enable payment for website, congress fee payment for the executive as well as other OTARG related activities for the development of the profession on the continent like; advocacy to various stakeholders at ministry levels and other government as well as non-governmental organizations. This will enable the growth of the profession on the continent in terms of developing Occupational therapy education programs, departments and others.

Written by: Sarah Matovu

25 YEARS OF OTARG A STORY TOLD IN PHOTOS



25 YEARS OF OTARG A STORY TOLD IN PHOTOS



INTERVIEW WITH GHANAIAN PIONEER; DR PETER OWUSU NDAA

“What have your experiences with OTARG been like?”

Personally, I think it's been great being a member and as an association too it's very useful for getting therapists in the region together and knowing them. Being with OTARG has also given me the opportunity to be exposed to a whole lot of like-minded professionals, you know, and it's been great.

“That's amazing.

Can you share some of your most memorable experiences working with OTARG?”

I think the most memorable was my first conference with OTARG, that was 2011 in Zambia. I had just come over [from the UK] and I had been given the task [to start Ghana's first OT program] and I didn't even have an office, let alone a desk and table. I heard of this conference, and I thought it'd be good to attend. What makes it great was that I attended with my outgoing dean; Prof Wiredu and the incoming dean; Prof Ayikumi, so you could see they were both pro OT. So, the three of us went to Zambia just to have an experience of what at all we are coming to start over here, what are they like in the continent of Africa. I knew of what OTs in the UK and other places, I didn't know for Africa. So it was a very great experience to go and meet professionals from the continent and from other countries outside Africa.

“What vision do you have for OTARG? Would you say we're on our way to

achieving it?”

I think OTARG has a vision and OTARG is the regional representation of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists so everything that is coming from our mother umbrella is what we try to trickle down through OTARG, and I know the WFOT deals directly with the member countries but when we talk of OTARG, we picture all these countries together and we look at what is good for the continent. We know we get a lot of stuff from outside the continent, but I believe you've been to some of the OTARG conferences, and you see how they try to fit it to our context. I think this is spearheaded by OTARG, if not members of OTARG. I know in any case we get some support from other countries, but I think OTARG is doing well in trying to make OT also well known. When it comes to advocacy, creating awareness about our roles, I think we're on course.

“How do you see the future of OTARG? What do you think can be done to shape this future?”

I think OTARG as an association is growing, I think if I'm not mistaken it started in 1996 and we've come far. Looking at our numbers, and the countries being accredited by WFOT in the region; I think we've seen about five or more countries joining. OTARG is growing. The vision is just to bring occupational therapists, professionals in the region together and share best practices, also dwell on other experiences outside the continent

and try to contextualize those and just make it work here like it's working in developed nations. Personally, I think we are moving, we are on course. What I'd like OTARG to do more of, is to assist member countries to develop the profession. I know OTARG is doing that through WFOT or WFOT is doing that through OTARG, but I think we can do more than we are doing now particularly in the area of academia if we want to develop our profession. You know even in Africa there's more development in some areas than others, for example if you go to South Africa, OT is well developed there.

So, what I am looking forward to seeing in the near future is crisscross of faculty in some of these educational institutions to support them to have successful education or training of professionals on the continent so that we can all together enjoy the vision. I'm hoping through OTARG we can get other institutions to support others, I think it'd be a very good adventure to take. We need to discuss this because perhaps they don't even have the time, they may also be talking about shortage of faculty, thinking of their salaries, and the number of students. I think this can be discussed further and we can begin to support ourselves within the continent and not always look for people to come from outside Africa.

“Thank you so much for your time, Dr Ndaa”

**Interviewed by:
Syvettelana Quarshie**

RWOTA GOES ALL OUT TO CELEBRATE WORLD OT DAY 2021

RWOTA celebrates occupational therapy day every year by doing different activities. This year it was celebrated individually by members at their respective working places where they organized their own way to celebrate it and at the end of the day an online meeting was held via Google Meet where all occupational therapists and students were gathered together to celebrate.



Join the OTARG Virtual Community today!

Get instant updates on all OTARG activities and updates, interact with OT's across Africa & the world beyond. OTARG seeks to build a massive hub to foster cooperation, knowledge sharing & the promotion of all things OT. Get on now! You'll fit right in.



Click the icons!

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- Turn on post notifications & use #OTARG in your posts.

