

OBITUARY



Dr Rainer Gross

Your Excellency, Mr Chairman, friends, ladies and gentlemen

I was given the sad task of reminding us of the death of a close friend of this institute, and a valued colleague to many of us, Rainer Gross. He died on the last day of September, five Saturdays ago, in his home in Germany amidst his family.

Had he been here today, he would have been pleased about, and proud of, this conference, proud of your institute and its development, and of its staff and students. And that justifiably so as he had been closely involved since the very beginning with the institute's reorientation and strengthening process that started in 1991 in the course, and as part of the establishment of the SEAMEO-TROPMED Network of regional institutions of reference for training and research in health and nutritional sciences. At that time, *GTZ ie, the Agency for German Technical Assistance*, which massively supported both the planning for, and implementation of this network, and more specifically the establishment of a Regional Center for Community Nutrition (RCCN) at the University of Indonesia, assigned Rainer Gross the task of chief technical advisor to this project. In this function, and over close to a decade, Dr Gross intimately collaborated with, and provided ready assistance and support to the respective national directors of RCCN, Prof Darwin Karyadi, and Prof Soemilah Sastroamidjojo.

It was a challenging task that required a lot of tact and diplomacy, solid technical know-how, and most of all, never ending hours of work. The fact that by today the institute has graduated its 13th batch of students, many of whom now hold important posts in practically all countries of the region, and has placed many of its former academic staff and students in responsible positions with international organizations and academic institutions world-wide, attests to the hard work, and the excellence of collaboration and good will that existed and still exists today between the national institutions charged with, and involved in this process, and the foreign donor, then represented by Dr Gross.

Within the institute's development, he was especially active in stimulating and propagating high quality research relevant to national and regional needs, identifying suitable training sites for, and generously sponsoring academic staff development, and establishing a network of world-wide linkages with health and nutrition professionals and institutions alike.

After 2000 when Rainer Gross left Jakarta, he helped to set up a similar training program at *La Molina* University in Lima, Peru, and for the last 3 years served as chief of nutrition at UNICEF headquarters in New York. When I visited him there in March of 2005, and even though already very ill, he was hard at work getting the next 5 year child survival strategy drafted.

At the age of 61, Rainer died far too young. In terms of his professional curiosity and involvement, in his enthusiasm for taking on challenges and subsequent input of working hours, and with respect to his achievements in whatever tasks assigned to him, he had done far more than what might be expected and what normally may be achieved in a single life-time, almost as if he had feared of running out of time.

He will be remembered as a close and dear friend by all of us, as mentor and *Wegbereiter* for professional aspirations by many of the institute's past and current academic staff, and as an invaluable contributor to the improvement of child health and nutrition by the international community of health and nutrition workers.

AAK, Nov 1, 2006

Delivered at the opening session of RCCN's conference on "*Optimizing Research to Determine Strategies for Malnutrition Alleviation in Indonesia*".