

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT / RAPPORT TECHNIQUE FINAL REPORT - MESHA CONGRESS 2019

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**Kenya Science
Journalists Congress III
REPORT**

***Establishing effective relationships between
science journalists and scientists.***



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Who we are

Who we are

Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA) is an association of journalists and communicators who are specialized in environmental, agriculture, health, technology and development reporting. It is a non-partisan and not for profit making organization which has been in existence since October 2005.

Vision
An informed and empowered population conscious of emerging issues in agriculture, environment and health issues in Kenya and the region.

Mission
To promote the development of agriculture and environmental communication through an interactive and holistic approach that involves journalists and other stakeholders in improving science journalism in Kenya and the region.

Main objectives

- a) To enhance awareness on environmental, health, agricultural and sustainable development issues through simple and easy to understand stories and messages.
- b) To carry out investigative journalism on the enactment and implementation of appropriate environmental and developmental policies and laws and respect for human rights.
- c) To network and exchange information with like-minded organizations, research institutes, scientists and stakeholders with a view of improving science communication in the region.
- d) To liaise with stakeholders to fund and foster training among journalists, scientists and communicators on science writing.
- e) To serve as a focal point and hub of information and expertise in agriculture, environment, health and development issues.
- f) Advocate for accurate, balanced and development friendly communication of environmental, health and sustainable development issues.

Membership

- Professional and practising journalists
- Scientists and researchers
- Journalism students
- Pharmaceutical, research institutes, universities and parastatals.
- NGOs and CBOs in science.

Areas of Concern

1. Agriculture
2. Health
3. Environment
4. Climate Change
5. Industrial Development
6. Policy

The problem with science journalism: we've forgotten that reality matters most



Violet Otindo, MESHA Chairperson

As science journalist, a lot of our time is spent reporting on new studies, natural phenomena and how research may affect our lives. But there is another key piece to science, and that is the people who produce it.

It's the job of science journalists to look beyond data – we have to look at the people doing the science and whether they have conflicts of interest. There is a continued misunderstanding of what science journalism is, and how it differs from other forms of science communication.

As science journalist, a lot of our time is spent reporting on new studies, natural phenomena and how research may affect our lives. But there is another key piece to science, and that is the people who produce it. When we ignore these people – or omit key facts that cast researchers or their work in a negative light – we miss important stories.

At its best science communication, like any nonfiction writing, tries to portray truth. Science communicators do this by explaining how a natural phenomenon works, or highlighting how scientists learned something new. But how that truth is portrayed – and what is included or left out – depends on the writer's intentions. Science journalism is different. "Science journalism's ultimate loyalty, when practiced properly, is to the closest possible depiction of reality, period. As Science journalists may write about science, but it's also our job to look beyond wonders, hypotheses and data. It is to look at the people doing the science and whether they have conflicts of interest, or trace where their money is coming from. It is to look at power structures, to see who is included in the work and who is excluded or marginalized, whether because of gender or race or any other identity.

All these factors matter because they influence who has access to the production of science, and who has influence over its production. It matters, too, that readers deserve the full context of his scientific communication, including how he approached it and who supported it. As journalists we fail to do justice to what science is by somehow artificially presenting it as an inhuman, dispassionate inquiry. It's human. People make human decisions and anyone who works in the process of science who is honest about that will say that. If we're any good at what we do, we present science in a full human context.

As MESHA we believe in this but we also know that this doesn't mean science journalists are always gunning for scientists, or that every interview is fodder for an exposé. Most science journalists I've talked to were drawn to this work because they love science; some even used to be scientists and decided to leave the bench for the reporter's notebook. But we should maintain our skepticism (a hard task, to balance skepticism with general delight) and shouldn't gloss over misdeeds or questionable behavior.

More worryingly, sweeping aside poor research or dubious activities can also erode the public's trust in science. If your goal as a writer is to get people to question their assumptions and grapple with the world as it really exists, and not as they want it to exist, then doing things like hiding your affiliations or writing a piece in support of someone without acknowledging that you have a previous public or personal relationship is going to make it harder for people to understand the world as it is.

At MESHA, we know that, all this isn't to say that science communication – and specifically science advocacy or activism, with all its agendas – is inherently bad. But the intentions of the writer should be clear. My opinion remains that reality matters no matter how complicated it may be. It's all about transparency. If you have an agenda, state your agenda, and if you're claiming to be objective, then demonstrate the objectivity.

Our media ecosystem blurs these distinctions even more, with bylines of both journalists and advocates appearing at the same media outlets. "There are a lot more voices, and it is a lot more confusing to all of us who the advocates are and who the independent journalists. Regardless of this blurring, the fact remains that the production of scientific knowledge thrives on criticism and debate – look no further than the peer review process and the dreaded, though perhaps mythical, third reviewer who is notoriously harsh or the heated conversations in the Q&A sessions at scientific conferences for proof.

Which is why the media for Environment, Science Health and Agriculture (MESHA) is at the forefront to keep journalists abreast with emerging issues while ensuring we uphold the novelty of the profession. In an effort to sustain interactions among journalists and scientists, MESHA held the 4th Kenya Science Journalists Congress in November 2019 in Mombasa.

Similar forums were held in October 2013 and November 2015. The Congress brought together key science journalists from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Malawi. We hosted over 130 participants in this forum. These countries do share borders hence time and again the journalists always find it hard to tackle cross border science issues some of which have already ended up in conflict.

Unlike other congresses before it whose hallmarks were field trips and sit in presentations, the third Kenya Science Journalists Congress included hands on skills building sessions on diverse story telling techniques including new media and data journalism. Further a session was dedicated to equipping scientists on how to handle the media to avoid being misquoted. Within this context, rural based journalists from Kenya and Malawi shared their experiences on reporting science within their localities. A special one hour session was dedicated to journalists on how to write clean copy given that our experiences in the past conferences had showed that the quality submitted to editors were poor leaving editors and sub-editors to re-write most of these stories thereby running the risk of missing scientific facts in some of the stories. We teamed up with the Media Council of Kenya who provided a top editor from within their ranks to undertake this session.

Lastly, the congress allowed experts to share other emerging issues in their areas of interest. The Congress deliberately brought into focus key cross border science issues and how the journalists can competently, objectively and safely cover these issues.

**Violet Otindo,
MESHA Chairperson**

**Science journalists are not science advocates.
And scientists aren't science.**

Preface



Aghan Daniel, MESHA Secretary

A journey of a thousand miles, they say, begins with the first step. This saying, more than any other that can be used to describe birth of great idea, does fit perfectly into our journey at The Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture.

When MESHA was set up by its forefathers, no one could imagine the shape of the organization thirteen years down the line. By that time, we were only trying to be brave in our dream. Their dream at that time was to provide a platform where science journalists can meet with each other and network. We also dreamt that one day, scientists and science journalists would sit together and discuss science matters as equals.

Those who attended the third Kenya Science Journalists can attest to the fact that this dream has been turned into a reality. The number of scientists who attended the congress showed us that there is a thirst for interaction between science journalists and scientists. We also realized that we are one and our aim is shared responsibility towards the common man who is eager to consume science.

The kind of interactions that we had in Mombasa went a long way to indicate to us that science journalism in Africa is making remarkable progress, with widespread improvements in the quality and quantity of science in the media. The opposite of this was also demonstrated because scientists are also making in roads in relating well with the journalists.

Another high point for us at the Congress was the fact that by holding a media science café within the Congress, MESHA, once again led from the front and showcased to journalists from other countries in attendance the rare experience to attend a science café. Like last year, this session helped us reach more organisations whom we have approached to partner with us to do other science cafes jointly.

We believe that our chosen topic (whether women are involved in making choices while choosing family planning methods) will distill interesting issues which our partners can pick and deal with in subsequent cafes. By them experiencing how the session was handled, they got a better picture on why they should work with journalists and how.

Finally, we too learnt our lessons.

It still remains that there is urgent need for journalists to be consistently retrained on science communication and to be supported to write stories regularly. Our association has to go out there and seek the hands of the many organizations or development partners who are to be convinced that that there is need to fund journalists. In this regard, MESHA has to ensure continuity, sustainability and consistent coverage of science and development issues as they arise through such forums which bring together key science journalists and experts. With the proven capacity to follow up on journalists they have trained before, we wish to continue with our efforts to do the same with scientists and communication officers.

**Aghan Daniel
MESHA Secretary**

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Acknowledgement

The third Kenya Science Journalists Congress provides a unique gathering for science journalists and scientist from the East Africa region. The congress, organized by MESHA since 2013, usually provides a gold mine for science stories emanating from what our science based institutions do over the years.

The Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA) once again expresses its gratitude to the board and the Secretary of our giant association congress organizing team for the support they gave to ensure that the congress in Mombasa was conceived, planned and executed meticulously.

Our major partners, African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) deserve special mention for their provision of funding and technical support to the congress. Being a third time congress for East African journalists, we were overwhelmed with the many positive responses and support from these two organisations. Without this support, the congress would probably still be at its conception stage.

We also thank the following organizations for the support they accorded the organizing team in terms of resources and technical input.

These are the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, Bayer Crop Science, AGRA, Media Council of Kenya, Water Fund, AVAC and *icipe* for standing with us. We also sincerely thank persons and organizations who were behind the successful field trips such as KEMRI-Wellcome, KEFRI, *icipe*, Kenya Wildlife Service and Haller Park.

This section on gratitude will not be complete without special mention of all our speakers, the rapporteurs, the tweeps, the hotel management for the serene environment accorded to us during the conference and all the participants from all over the region for being part of this great forum.

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Agatha Ngotho, MESHA Deputy Secretary

We also thank the team that toiled to ensure we produced the Daily Conference Bulletin led by our Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Aghan Daniel, Geoffrey Kamadi and Francis Mureithi with support from myself. Special mention also goes to the participants who supplied all the stories and photos in good time. Your articles were of very high quality and we enjoyed working on them.

**Agatha Ngotho, MESHA
Deputy Secretary**



The Deputy Director in charge of Freshwater Systems, Dr Enock Wakwabi, while giving his remarks at the opening ceremony of the Third Kenya Science Journalists Congress on behalf of the Director of KMFRI. He urged journalists to highlight the work that the research institute does in undertaking research in “marine and freshwater fisheries, aquaculture, environmental and ecological studies, and marine research including chemical and physical oceanography.” He was representing his director, Prof James Njiru. The deputy director added that Mikoko Pamoja, based in Gazi Bay, is the first community type project in the world to restore and protect mangroves through sale of carbon credits. Success of Mikoko Pamoja made institute win the coveted UN’s Equator Prize in 2017 as a blue solution to climate change challenges.



MESHA CHAIR SPEAKS: Basing welcome remarks on the no human is limited motto, MESHCHA chair, Violet Otindo said that science journalists associations should up their games because just like humans, no association is limited. She urged MESHCHA members to maintain their integrity and keep the warmth and confidence that the association is slowly beginning to see in their engagements with scientists.



Mr Bozo Jenje and MESHCHA chair are all ears to a presentation being made at the showpiece.



Ms Anita Chepkoech, a science reporter from the Daily Nation at the event.



Eng Sylus Openji: He told journalists that Water Fund aims at ending drought emergencies, climate proofed infrastructure for improved water supply and sanitation in arid and semi-arid areas. He added that water fund, cites increased salinity of brackish surface water resources.



Kioko Kivandi, a radio expert from Egerton University follows the proceedings keenly.



Barrack Okoba of FAO: He said that the seed sector in Africa is dominated by foreign investors and it was time more local investors came on board.



Journalists Dominic Mwambui and Jeremiah Orondo side by side take in the science.



Otula Owuor MESHAs patron noted that the association had done him proud by the quality of discussions in Mombasa.



Philip Muasya, Chapter leader Kitui County as captured in the Congress.



Journalists Margaret Matunda and Ms Lucy Mkanyika follow the proceedings keenly.



Aggrey Ombeki makes a contribution during the meeting



Cromwel Busolo of Nairobi University giving his remarks at the Third Kenya Science Journalists Congress.



Ms Cynthia Mauncho a communication officer at KEMRI Wellcome.



Paul Sarwatt, senior journalist from Tanzania's Raia Mwema newspaper quets his thirst in Mombasa.



Christine Nguku of Media Council of Kenya: She asked journalists to think about reasons science is not clearly understood even when they do their pieces in the simplest languages. She told them to ask critical questions that respond to the needs of the society.



A journalist from Mombasa makes a contribution at the Congress during the science cafe.



Ms Consolata Opiyo, a HIV advocate said that at all costs people should protect themselves against acquiring HIV noting that taking drugs lifelong is never a walk in the park.



Ms Vivian Abaga of Health Journalists Network in Uganda (HEJNU), Uganda, makes a point at the Congress.



Ms Lilian Mwhaki of KMFRI shows journalists a mangrove propagule which gives rise to a new mangrove tree.

FIELD TRIP NUMBER ONE

Mombasa Marine Park and Reserve - Allure of natural beauty

Warm azure ocean, swaying coconut palms on white sandy beaches are to be found in the Mombasa Marine National Park and Reserve. This is a unique and fascinating marine park in the county of Mombasa.

The marine park and reserve is sandwiched between two creeks - the Mtwapa and Tudor - and its blue waters are ideal for wind surfing, water skiing, snorkeling and diving.

Mombasa Marine has top-class soft sand beaches where sun-worshipping tourists flock to relax and soak up the peace and tranquility of their surroundings.

With a species list of over 150 hard and soft corals, fans and sponges and over 500 species of tropical fish Mombasa Marine Park & Reserve is a beautiful place to visit. The marine parks is also home to Manta Rays, Turtles, Angelfish, Lionfish and a multitude of other colorful and charming marine animals including crabs, starfish, stone fish, cucumbers sea urchins, turtles, and migratory birds including crab plovers.

A popular destination for snorkelers and scuba divers, a short time in the azure waters will unlock a magical world centred on a magnificent coral reef. The reefs close proximity to the shore makes it easily accessible to novice divers and snorkelers. Advanced drivers will enjoy a visit to the outer coral reefs where large brain corals attract an abundance of sea life. The rugged skeleton of the MV Dania, an old cargo ship sank in 2002, offers one of the world's best wreck dive experience.

FIELD TRIP NUMBER TWO

Haller Park, Bamburi

The story of Bamburi Cement is one of mining and environmental management responsibility. Bamburi Cement factory was built in the early 1950s, and started limestone mining and cement production in 1954.

The location of the plant was remote, 10km from Mombasa town, and about 2 km from a village called Bamburi, which gave the plant its name.



MESHA journalists walk through a mangroves forest: Experts say that blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves can make important impacts to Kenya's Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement.

Bamburi quarry rehabilitation started in 1971 pioneered by Dr. Rene Haller, a Swiss agronomist hired by Bamburi Cement. This was a pioneering enterprise at the time. The vision and aim of the rehabilitation project was to restore indigenous coastal forests in the former quarries to support conservation of local biodiversity.

The local indigenous forests were under threat from habitat destruction and fragmentation, despite high biodiversity and endemism. Over the years, Lafarge Eco Systems (the environmental arm and subsidiary of Bamburi Cement) has built diverse ecosystems of forests, grassland and wetland habitats. The rehabilitation involved landscaping, research and establishment of pioneer plantations of trees, followed by planting of target coastal vegetation mainly indigenous, rare, endangered, fodder, herbs, and species of potential economic value. Animals were introduced to support ecological functions. The restored quarries generate ecosystem services and goods ranging from hydrology, air purification, and sale of trees, firewood, fish, ecotourism, recreation and education.

Environmental education is playing an important role in awareness creation and inspiration towards biodiversity conservation. Bamburi's quarries have become a globally recognized showcase for successful quarry rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation in the former barren quarries. Two of the quarries are open to the public as Nature Parks, generating revenue from various activities which support conservation.

The two parks have a visitation of over 200, 000 visitors a year of which over 90,000 are students. This project is Bamburi Company's showcase of environmental sustainability through promotion of harmonious co-existence of industry and Nature, where industry and nature support and complement each other.

FIELD TRIP NUMBER THREE

By KEMRI Wellcome Trust

Mental Health Awareness campaign and visit to Sickle Cell Clinic

The KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP), with hubs in Kilifi, Nairobi and Uganda is a multidisciplinary health research Programme. We conduct integrated epidemiological, social, laboratory and clinical research, with results feeding into local and international health policies, while also building capacity for the next generation of African research leaders

Research at KWTRP is supported by platforms that include state-of-art laboratories, a demographic surveillance system (KHDSS) covering over 270,000 residents, clinical trials facility and a vibrant public engagement strategy.

This field trip will be based on a mental health project that was recently launched in Kilifi that seeks to raise awareness on mental health illnesses and reduce stigma and discrimination.

The proportion of people with mental illness who access mental health care is very low in sub-Saharan Africa. A major contributing factor is stigma and discrimination towards people with mental illnesses. This project is a mental health awareness campaign which is being conducted in Kilifi County along the Kenyan Coast.

The awareness campaign slogan is "Difu Simo" - a Kigiryama phrase which means "Breaking free". It involves use of participatory approaches and awareness walks to sensitize the public about mental illnesses. The aims of the project are to improve knowledge about mental illnesses, reduce stigma towards people with mental illnesses to encourage them to seek health care and bring the worlds of biomedical treatment and traditional healing in dialogue about a holistic approach to treat and re-integrate people with mental health issues back into the community and live healthy lives.

The awareness activities of the Difu Simo project are being conducted in a specified area of Kilifi County called the Kilifi Health and demographic Surveillance System (KHDSS). This area was demarcated by researchers from the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in the year 2000 and it comprises about 280,000 residents of Kilifi County. The area was selected to capture most patients admitted to Kilifi County Hospital.

What questions are we trying to answer in this observational study?

Studies from Europe, the United States and the Caribbean have produced excellent clinical descriptions of sickle cell disease in those regions. However, these descriptions and some of the management recommendations that are commonly put forward there, may not necessarily be directly applicable to sickle cell disease in the African context.

We aim to describe the clinical characteristics of a cohort of children below 18 years with sickle cell disease who attend the sickle cell disease clinic at Kilifi County Hospital, with a focus on clinical outcomes and the causes and frequency of hospital admissions.

The REACH Trial clinic

In Europe, the USA and other developed countries, children and adults with Sickle Cell Disease who take hydroxyurea regularly have been shown to have much fewer and less severe symptoms from their condition. Hydroxyurea is registered for use in treating Sickle Cell Disease in these countries, including Kenya. It is taken as a daily capsule or compounded solution on a long-term basis. However, the use of hydroxyurea is sporadic and dependent on the clinician seeing you.

Hydroxyurea works to reduce the symptoms of Sickle Cell Disease in a way that also has an effect on the blood. This effect is to temporarily reduce the number of all types of cells in the blood, including cells that fight infection (white blood cells), those that cause blood to clot (platelets) and those that carry oxygen around the body (red blood cells).

If the number of blood cells is reduced by a small amount, this will not affect the person's health and treatment with hydroxyurea is continued as normal. If there is a bigger reduction in the number of blood cells, the dose of hydroxyurea can be reduced to make sure that the child's health is not affected.

For this reason, where hydroxyurea is used in other parts of the world, people on treatment must have their blood checked at least once every month to measure the number of cells in their blood and adjust the hydroxyurea treatment where needed.

What is the question?

So far, although some doctors in Kenya are using hydroxyurea to treat people with Sickle Cell Disease, there have been no studies to check how children respond to this treatment and what doses of hydroxyurea should be used routinely in countries in Africa. This study aims to find out how children with Sickle Cell Disease in Kilifi respond to treatment with hydroxyurea, including what doses should be used and whether the changes in blood cells are the same as have been seen in other settings where the treatment is used routinely.

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FIELD TRIP NUMBER FOUR – IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON MANGROVE FORESTS

Mikoko Pamoja ('mangroves together') is the world's first community-led mangrove conservation and restoration project funded by carbon credits. The project is situated within the mangrove forest of Gazi Bay, coastal southern Kenya, with around 5,400 residents living in the two local villages of Gazi and Makongeni. Mikoko Pamoja covers a total of 117ha of state owned mangroves.

These support the livelihoods of local people by providing building materials, firewood, tourism and coastal protection as well as nursery grounds for fish. Over the crediting period from 2012 to 2032, the project aims to protect 107 ha of natural mangrove forest and 10 ha of plantation as well as planting 4,000 trees annually.

The resulting avoided deforestation and forest degradation along with the newly planted trees generate 2,250 tonnes CO₂ yr⁻¹ of carbon benefits, equivalent to approx. > USD 13,500, sold on the voluntary carbon market.

Revenues raised from the sale of these carbon credits are used to run the project and for community development. Spending decisions are made democratically by local people and investments have included the purchase of new school books and furniture, provision of water points/piping, and improving sports facilities.



Dr Mike Okal of icipe fields questions from journalists at the field visit site.

FIELD TRIP NUMBER FIVE – INNOVATIVE TSETSE

The *icipe* Animal Health Theme focuses on the development of sustainable tools and strategies for controlling insect-borne livestock diseases. Primarily, the Centre has focussed on tsetse flies, the vectors of Animal African Trypanosomosis (AAT, or Nagana) and Human African Trypanosomosis (HAT, also known as sleeping sickness).

Nagana is a major constraint of agro-pastoralism, food security and development in Africa, causing over three million cattle deaths each year, leading to annual losses estimated at US\$ 5 billion. Tsetse flies also have significant implications for land use and crop production.

Over the past 40 years, *icipe* has developed a series of environmentally friendly tools and strategies for the control of tsetse and trypanosomosis, including the NGU traps and tsetse repellent collars, which are currently in use in several sites across Africa. More recently, *icipe* has commenced groundbreaking research for the control of insect transmitted camel diseases, while continuing to explore strategies to manage other vectors like ticks.

The *icipe* tsetse fly repellent collar technology is a critical component in the sustainable control of the tsetse transmitted trypanosomiasis (nagana), a fatal disease that kills millions of cows every year. The collars contain a blend of chemicals identified from waterbuck, an animal that is present in tsetse fly infested areas, but which is not fed on by the flies.

The *icipe*-developed blend was officially registered by the Kenya Pest Control Products Board (PCPB) in 2018. Worn around the neck of cattle, the repellent collars provide substantial protection to cattle. In pilot sites, the tsetse repellent collars have been shown to have a significant impact on the livelihoods of farmers.

They have reduced the rate of nagana by more than 80%, meaning that the cows are generally healthier, therefore producing more milk and meat, and draught power to cultivate land. *icipe* is now collaborating with private sector partners to commercialise the technology.



Field work: icipe tsetse fly learning centre.



Vice chairman of MESH, Allan Obiero of Radio Ramogi consults the secretary just to make sure things move smoothly at the fete. Mr Obiero led the members in posting over 500 tweets at the Congress.



Victor Bwire of the Media Council of Kenya said that the new curriculum on climate change would be useful to all science journalists in Africa. He urged media associations like MEtraining members.



A Rwandese participant, Ms Janat Twahirwa absorbing the science being communicated at the event.



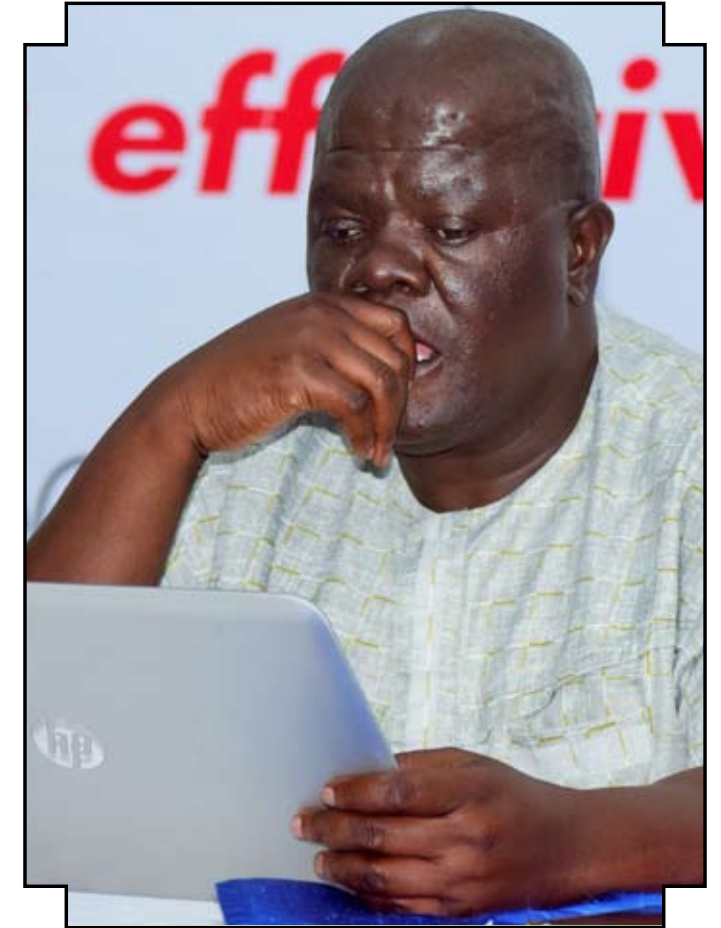
Subramanian Sevgan of *icipe*: He said that globally over 2 billion people consume more than 1900 edible insect. In Africa, he noted that there are nearly 500 of such species. He noted that feed production must increase by 70% to be able to meet the global demand in 2050. He said that experts at *icipe* estimate that 90,000 tonnes of dry insect is required to replace fishmeal in Kenya with a potential of injecting 14,000 jobs per year. He added that the country needed 5 to 10 years to reach the threshold of commercializing insects production.



Ms Faith Mwafurirwa from Malawi is all ears to the speaker of the moment.



Sarah Natoolo, a broadcaster from Uganda and her colleague from Tanzania, Upendo Masha caught on cameras at the Congress.



Aghan Daniel of AFSTA: at the AGM held alongside the Congress: He said that the MESH leadership had delivered to the members a memorable congress and challenged journalists to use the meeting as a gold mine for science stories.



Mr Mekonnen Teshome of Ethiopia: He said that it was impressive that MESH has continuously brought African science journalists and scientists together for the past ten years.



David Omwoyo of Media Council of Kenya asked journalists to pay attention to climate change reporting.



Dr Moses Cheruiyot, Kenya Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Council (KENTTEC)

2. CONGRESS PRESENTATIONS

2.0 AGRICULTURE

2.1 Tsetse flies menace and eradication techniques

According to Dr Moses Cheruiyot, Kenya Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Council (KENTTEC) Coast Regional Coordinator, tsetse flies affect 38 of the 47 counties in the country. All six counties of the coast region in Kenya are affected.

In Kenya 11 million people are at risk of infection of sleeping sickness. The effects of Nagana (caused by Tsetse flies to cattle) is death of animals, abortions in animals, loss of milk, inability to plough farms when the animals become sick and weak, hence affecting farmers at household level.

Control techniques of Tsetse flies

Dr Cheruiyot noted that Trypanosomiasis/Nagana is one of the Neglected Tropical Diseases, saying that there is a challenge in completely eradicating it because of little attention by the government.

“The government has not prioritized the eradication of the disease which has a lot of impact to farmers. The support from the government is not adequate,” he said.

The officer noted that controlling Tsetse flies and eradicating Trypanosomiasis is very expensive. He appealed to the government to invest in the eradication campaign.

Dr Cheruiyot at the same time lamented that there was also very little attention from the media on sleeping sickness disease on humans and Nagana in animals. This, he said, contributes to the disease being neglected. The disease has also contributed to the decline in livestock export, thus affecting the economy at household level and the country at large.

Due to the neglect, farmers have turned to use of concoctions because the government has failed to invest in preventive measures of the Nagana causing flies.

He praised *icipe* for coming up with scientific innovations to control tsetse flies, saying that the government needed to invest in rollout intervention measures by *Icipe* so that poor farmers at the grassroots are able to access.

Potential story for journalists - In Faza Island, animal ownership is held by women, thus Dr Cheruiyot thinks this is a good story to explore especially poverty eradication aspect at household level and sustainability of family resources.

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2.2 Certified seeds to improve Kenya's maize yields - By Mainza Mugoya of TASAI

The presenter disclosed that Kenya's average maize yield of 1.5 tonnes per hectare could match those of African leading producers of the crop if farmers use improved seeds. The latest report by The African Seed Access Index (TASAI) indicates that Egypt, with a yield of 7.7 tonnes per hectare, leads the continent in maize production.

South Africa, with a yield of 6.4 tonnes per hectare, is the second largest producer of maize followed by Ethiopia with 3.7 tonnes per hectare. Uganda, which has been exporting maize to Kenya, produces an average of 2.5 tonnes per hectare, while Malawi produces 2.0 tonnes per hectare. Some of the African countries with poor yields include Mozambique with 0.9 tonnes per hectare, Rwanda (1.2) and Tanzania (1.5).

New Technology

According to Mr Mainza Mugoya, Programme Coordinator, The African Seed Access Index (TASAI), Kenya and other African countries stand a chance to boost their yield if they adopt new technology.

The official, however, regretted saying even with improved seeds in the market, smallholder farmers were slow in adopting the seeds attributing this to quality, affordability, accessibility and competitive seed systems serving smallholder farmers.

He said the low number of breeders in most African countries was also to blame. Seed Companies For instance, the number of breeders in Kenya for priority food crops is 34 in comparison to Egypt which has 74 and South Africa 54 and Tanzania 46.

“Improved seeds are resistant to pests and diseases and they adapt well to climate change and have improved nutritional value besides longer shelf life,” said Mr Mugoya. He further cited that by 2017, Kenya had released about 98 varieties of maize seeds in a bid to respond to climate change. However, the deadly fall armyworm is still ravaging maize crops in Kenya's food basket of South Rift Valley.

Staple Food

In his presentation he mentioned that Kenya was still recording a low maize production despite heavy focus on the staple food crop. Other key food crops such as cow pea, sorghum, beans, soya beans and pigeon peas and rice have recoded under investment from the national government.

By the end of 2017, a total of 314 maize varieties were released in Kenya with 43,954 tonnes sold to farmers. In comparison, sorghum had 30 varieties, beans 31 and cowpeas 10 varieties released.



Mainza Mugoya of TASAI

To stamp out fake seeds which affects farmers' confidence and productivity in formal seed system, local companies introduced security labels in the packaging materials. “Formal seed sector is moving towards liberalisation and we need to adopt a seed systems approach to address challenges in the African seed sector,” concluded Mr Mugoya.

Improved seeds are resistant to pests and diseases and they adapt well to climate change and have improved nutritional value besides longer shelf life.

3.1 A drug, known as hydroxyurea, currently under clinical trials in four African countries may be the panacea for prolonging lives of sickle cell patients, an expert has said.

According to Mr George Muchama of KEMRI Wellcome Trust programme at Kilifi Referral Hospital in Kenya's Kilifi County, the drug has been on trial in Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola for the past four years and the clinical trials are expected to be concluded in 14 years' time.

Specifically, he stated that the clinical trials seek to investigate the safety of hydroxyurea as a supportive treatment in children with sickle cell disease. Scientists, he said, are hopeful that if successful, lives of persons with sickle cell will be prolonged under good management and patient care with the help of the drug.

International Development Research Centre Centre de recherches pour le développement international They added that the success of the study will also lead to a larger trial that will inform national management policies for all children born with sickle cell anaemia in Africa, Kenya included.

Even though the drug has been effective in other parts of the world like Europe, no trials of hydroxyurea have been conducted in Africa where the safety and effectiveness of the drug remain unknown.

Muchama said the situation might be different in Africa and therefore the clinical trials are aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the drugs and also its safety among users in the continent.

Reports from the trials team indicate that the drug which makes the body to produce foetal haemoglobin which neutralizes sickle cell has shown substantial progress in the management of the condition. So far, 150 children at the referral facility have shown some signs of improvement, an indication that the drug is likely to work in the region. He said they are optimistic that the drug will be effective at the end of the trials; something he said will be a breakthrough in the fight against the disease in the region.

The sickle cell disease specialist however said the affordability of the drug may stifle its uptake by the patients especially those from poor families.

One single tablet of the drugs cost Ksh.40 (USD0.4) and those with sickle cell diseases should use at least two tablets daily at a cost of Ksh.80 (USD0.8). Even though the trials show positive progress, Mr. Muchama said preventing inheritance of the disease remains a key challenge.

He said every couple getting married should undergo a test to determine whether both of them have sickle cell disease, and in cases where they are found to have it, seek for advice before they sire a child together.

3.2 SPECIAL SESSION: Media Science Café on Family Planning and HIV Prevention: Are women really at the centre?



Dr Maricianah Onono

Dr Maricianah Onono of Kemri-Wellcome Trust Kisumu stated her presentation noting that the ECHO results gave hope to women and girls contraceptive use, but opened a can of worms on the increased incidences of STIs, and therefore stressed on the need for an aggressive HIV/Aids and STIs prevention measures.

In her presentation she challenged the media to include more women voices in their stories and to stop angling women issues negatively to the detriment of the fight against HIV and for improving reproductive health outcomes.

"It is self-defeating for the media to continue vilifying unmarried adolescents 18 years and under who take contraceptives and instead they should put women at the centre while reporting on HIV and Family Planning," Dr Maricianah Onono added.

Women, she noted, are often underrepresented in clinical trials on HIV infections, citing that only a paltry 8.3% of participants enrolled in HIV cure studies are women something the media should highlight so that designers of research studies bring more women on board at the planning stages.

"Despite women being with higher risk of getting HIV, they were not included in the study done by Gilead," she lamented.

She made this comment in regard to a recent drug known as Discovery which will be licensed as a PrEP that can only be used by men and transgender.

Dr Onono went on to observe that there is need to mobilize stakeholders within and beyond the health sector to help create awareness on HIV prevalence.

Finally, the researcher told journalists to report continuously about the need to include women and especially adolescent and young girls in HIV and Family Planning research. Ms Consolata Opiyo, the 2018 Avac Fellow representing the voice of activists stressed on the need for an aggressive healthcare systems to cater for women and girl's reproductive health needs.

She also talked about the need to demystify the myths and misconceptions on the use of PrEP use adding that it should be embraced by those who are at high risk of contracting HIV which is a virus that causes AIDS.

Other emerging issues during the media café plenary session included issues of regulatory framework especially in regards to abortion and GBV and the need to unpack the myths.

The issue of contraceptive coverage in Africa and how we can we accelerate its use depending on preferred choices and their safety.

One single tablet of the drugs cost Ksh.40 (USD0.4) and those with sickle cell diseases should use at least two tablets daily at a cost of Ksh.80 (USD0.8). Even though the trials show positive progress, Mr. Muchama said preventing inheritance of the disease remains a key challenge.

There is need to mobilize stakeholders within and beyond the health sector to help create awareness on HIV prevalence.



Richard Munang, the Sub-Programme Coordinator on climate change at UN Environment - Africa Office.

4.1 Reporting Climate Change: Equipping the Messenger

There was a concern that scientists need to entrust their information with the journalists as they have been trained to break down scientific terms into simpler languages that readers/listeners/viewers are able to understand.

It is on this basis that the Media Council of Kenya in partnership with Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) is developing a curriculum for climate change reporting to equip practising journalists with appropriate skills in climate change reporting across the East African region.

There was also a concern that science journalists need to be facilitated with travel allowance when going to the field to seek and publish/broadcast science stories. This was based on the fact that training science journalists alone without facilitating them to go to the field and collect stories from the communities is not useful enough to spread news with regard to climate change.

In the same note, scientists need to package their information in such a way that the audiences is able to comprehend and relate easily with their surroundings.

There was consensus that science stories in the Kenyan media has increased over the past years and even there is need for more of such climate change stories.

4.2 Sustainable Financing of Climate Change Proofed Water Projects in Underserved Areas in Kenya

Water Fund is a government parastatal under Kenya’s ministry of water, established under the Water Act 2016, though it has been in existence for many years. Its mandate is to finance water and sanitation projects in areas that are underserved in the 47 counties.

Water Fund is financing development of water resource that is resilient to the effects of climate change. This is in a sense that right from the design stages, there must be issues of climate change that need to be looked into.

There was concern media focuses mainly on publishing/airing negative stories in the development of water resources rather than the positive ones that would facilitate inflow of funds into more projects in the communities.

However, a section of the media argued that project implementers tend not to share their success so that they are published or aired.

The Congress was also informed that for sustainability of the project, the county governments across the country will contribute 13% towards the project development.



Senior Communication Officer at Nacosti, Ms Mildred Mugambi expresses delight during one of the sessions.



Paullette Kemunto of Water Fund during one of the sessions



Ministry of Environment’s Njeru Ngare and Mr Maina represented the ministry at the Congress.



5.0 ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

5.1 Blue economy: An allure to greater fortunes in Kenya – By Dr Jacqueline Uku, senior scientist Kenya Marine & Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI)

The presenter noted that Kenya is increasingly embracing the blue economy for its potential to address pressing needs such as extreme poverty, hunger and acceleration of sustainable development.

Concerns are however that maritime business activities are still in their infant stages and the full economic potential of marine resources has not been exploited.

According to the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the country has a maritime territory of 230,000 square kilometres and a distance of 200 nautical miles offshore, which is equivalent to 31 of its 47 counties.

Dr Uku explained that blue economy is about exploiting resources such as the oceans, lakes, rivers and other bodies of water in activities such as harvesting of living resources such as sea food, extraction of non-living resources such as seabed mining and generation of new resources such as energy and fresh water.

“We need also to think of the sea weed businesses as well as agro processing activities, to support the economy of the country,” she said.

She also regretted that, the country has not developed its coastal tourism sector, artisanal fishery, aquaculture and the like. Within this context, marine experts are further confident that paying more attention to exploits of the blue economy can significantly enable Kenya to improve its volumes of global trade.

“Kenya’s share of the region’s blue economy is 20 percent. Approximately, 93 percent of this share is within the tourism sector and this means that there are many other sectors that have not been explored,” Dr. Uku.

But Kenya is not the only country exploring its prospects. Other African countries such as South Africa are already reaping big from it. Research by the United Nations Development Programme shows that at least 70 percent of African countries are either coastal or islands, consequently, marine experts emphasize that there is need to harness such valuable coastlines.

5.2 Purposes of Oceans in climate change mitigation and adaption

With regard to oceans contribution to avert climate change, there was a concern that the global temperature is raising and that the trend could worsen the rate of ice melting in the region’s mountains such as Mt. Kenya and Rwenzori, and subsequently leading to a rise in the sea water levels that comes with various negative effects such destruction of water ecosystems, flooding among others.

Similarly, there was a concern that the rate of carbon emission into the atmosphere is on the rise, a development that could spark a rise in temperatures and its associated devastating effects.

Also, there was a concern that there’s need to conserve the available forests such as the mangrove along the coast to protect the environment. Failure to do so implies a disaster in waiting like it was recent in Angola.

The other concern was that the ocean is tired as a result of pollution, a development that could result into a more environmental catastrophe in future.

5.3 Waste Management and Air Pollution

The presenter, Mr. Maina, mentioned that wasteful practices can however be avoided by embracing waste management practises such as people getting products with less packaging, choosing refillable containers for shaving cream and toothpaste among others to make our environment clean and safe for both human, animal and plants.

It is for the above reason as to why the government through the Ministry of Environment came up with strategies such as National Solid Waste Management Strategy 2015-2030.

He mentioned other Policies, bills, acts and regulations that have also been put in place to safeguard the environment among them;

Environment Management Policy 2013; Management and Coordination Act 1999; Impact Assessment and Audit Regulations, 2003 and other Draft Sustainable Waste Management Policy 2019.

Sustainable Waste Management Bill 2019 and Draft Strategic Assessments, Integrated Impact Assessment and Environmental Audit regulation 2018; Waste Management regulations 2006 and Air Quality Regulations 2014; Draft Deposit Bonds Regulations 2014; Waste Tyre Management Regulations 2013; and Draft Chemical Regulations.

The presenter at the same time mentioned the need to keep away from shifting blames between our country Kenya and the neighbouring Uganda and instead pull resources and concerted efforts in eradicating pollution.



Active participation: It was time to undertake an energy to neutralize the humidity in Mombasa

6.0 KEY RESOLUTIONS

1. MESHA should continue to work closely with agencies that can help strengthen the collaboration mechanisms to better cover science issues in Africa. That emphasis should be laid on reaching out to African audiences with fresh scientific findings for science journalists to keep the science agenda in Africa at the forefront. This way, the relationship between scientists and science journalists will be enhanced.
2. The training for scientists on various components of journalism and communication should form a key part of the next Conference.
3. Training for journalists should be done a day to the opening of the conference.
4. MESHA should network with other associations who in turn should reach out to their governments to ensure they put at least some budget to support science journalism.
5. That a vibrant whatsapp group for science journalists should be strengthened. Already, MESHA has over 80 science journalists who operate under a whatsapp group The Chosen Ones. More journalists should be added to this group to share whatever science is being done in Africa.
6. That the Kenya Science Journalists Congress be renamed The East African Congress of Science Journalists so that the congress is attended by journalists from all over East Africa, and the neighbouring countries.
7. That each journalist must show evidence that they are science reporters by ensuring that they publish at least two science stories each month.
8. It was also agreed that community radios need to be brought on board because they reach a critical mass at the grassroots level with messages.
9. MESHA was requested to bring more TV journalists on board too as it was realized that the number of TV journalists in the audience was low. A target of ten TV journalists was proposed.
10. MESHA needs to strengthen its mentorship to include science journalists from other countries beyond Kenya.
11. Journalists who report on science need to think out of the box to remain relevant either as freelancers with serious media houses in order to survive as local ones continue to scale down staff.
12. Journalists were challenged to push for agenda setting stories.
13. Delegates to future conferences need to look for sponsors on their own, who could sponsor them on costs like accommodation for the meeting, airfares, etc.
14. MESHA was asked to initiate and share a database of news sources in agriculture, health and environment that journalists can contact to get comments so that the experts become easy to access by the journalists

Links and hyperlinks to stories published

1. https://drive.google.com/file/d/16K6uYgZ_96hw3cRTLHrPhVlnCgxmJA/view
2. <https://audiomack.com/song/radio-kaya/icipe-yavumbua-mbinu-mpya-ya-kukabilia-na-mbungo-kwale>
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20. <http://hejnu.ug/scientists-and-science-journalists-break-ice-at-the-2019-congress/>
21. <https://meshascience.org/study-traditional-healers-key-to-end-mental-health-stigma/>
22. <https://meshascience.org/marine-park-extols-virtues-of-local-community-in-conservation/>
23. <https://meshascience.org/researcher-include-more-women-in-health-research/>
24. <https://meshascience.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Mesha-Bulletin-2019.pdf> (over ten stories)
25. <https://www.nation.co.ke/business/seedsofgold/scientists-curb-deadly-tsetse-flies/2301238-5367388-c401ilz/index.html>

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