

## What's New?

Keep up to date with new initiatives and activities that are fostering research and practice pertinent to *EcoHealth* readers. In this issue, you can find out about:

- Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) Update
- Workshop on Responsible Mining: A Multi-stakeholder Perspective
- Eco-Bio-Social Research on Dengue in Asia: Understanding Ecosystem Dynamics for Better-informed Dengue Prevention
- Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Programs in Disease Ecology
- 11ème Colloque International sur “Développement, Environnement et Santé” (11th International Colloquium on “Development, Environment and Health”)

Regular updates are also available at the *EcoHealth* website: [www.ecohealth.net](http://www.ecohealth.net)

### HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN ALLIANCE (HECA) UPDATE

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HECA, a program initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with many other partners (profiled in What's New? in *EcoHealth*, Volume 2, Number 1), has continued to move forward in examining the risk factors children are exposed to on a daily basis in their environments.

In conjunction with the WHO Regional Office for Africa, HECA organized an interregional consultation on “Improving Children's Environmental Health in Settings – Experiences and Lessons for Policies and Action” in Entebbe, Uganda, from November 29 to December 2, 2005. The participants in the consultation, representing five regions of the

WHO, collaborated to use settings-based action to address environmental risks to children's health, with emphasis on the use of monitoring and indicators as evaluation tools. Conclusions and recommendations were made on themes including effectiveness of settings-based action in addressing environmental risks to children's health; building the evidence base and best practices for effective settings-based interventions for children's environmental health; and building capacity and success by linking between different settings-based actions to address children's environmental health issues. The outcomes of this consultation will be used in other areas undertaking similar projects; the report and presentations are available via the website: <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>

### WORKSHOP ON RESPONSIBLE MINING: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

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The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) hosted a workshop on responsible mining on February 3, 2006, as a side event to the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS). The focus was on the opportunities and challenges of multi-stakeholder processes to foster responsible mining practices. The meeting was based on the premise that minerals and metals are materials upon which modern living depends, but their extraction and development present a number of obstacles that challenge sustainable development. Issues addressed ranged from environmental, social, and health impacts during the lifetime of the mine, to the inequitable distribution of benefits involved in mineral and metal development. Impetus for the meeting included the need to move from isolated company experimentation with good practices to long-term, systemic changes based on ethical and strategic reasons and opportunities to reduce the negative social and ecological effects and associated health impacts.

The workshop was an occasion for “out-of-the-box” thinking and action for the 40 attendees representing different stakeholder groups, including representatives of the mineral and metal industries; industry associations; government officials and policy makers; representatives of the multilateral, bilateral, and national donor organizations; consultants; researchers and mining schools; and mining nongovernmental organizations. Lively stakeholder discussions led to specific calls for further action with a focus on specific concerns of Adivasi/indigenous peoples of India and their close affiliation with natural resources; social investment, compensation, and dispute resolution; governance changes to enable sustainable mining and community benefit; and partnerships and collaboration that overcome the traditional divisions by those denying or defending the impacts of mining. Follow-up to the meeting will be coordinated by the Research and Global Security program at TERI (<http://www.teriin.org/>). Information about the outcomes of DSDS 2006 can also be found at the same site.

### ECO-BIO-SOCIAL RESEARCH ON DENGUE IN ASIA: UNDERSTANDING ECOSYSTEM DYNAMICS FOR BETTER-INFORMED DENGUE PREVENTION

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The UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), launched a competitive request for proposals open to research institutions and scientists from high-burden/hyperendemic countries for dengue fever/dengue hemorrhagic fever/dengue shock syndrome in South Asia and Southeast Asia for research on eco-bio-social aspects of dengue. This research initiative aims at strengthening dengue prevention by better understanding its ecosystem-related, biological, and social (eco-bio-social) determinants, and developing and evaluating community-centered ecosystem management interventions to reduce dengue transmission below threshold levels for epidemic outbreaks. The initiative will support transdisciplinary research that takes into account the links between the environment and factors such as trade, climate change, fisheries, and human behavior.

Following the review of letters of intent, 12 multidisciplinary teams were invited to attend a proposal development workshop in Bangkok in May 2006. Up to six of them will be selected in September 2006 to implement their proposals.

Winning teams will receive up to a maximum of US \$160,000 to do so. For more information, please visit: [http://www.who.int/tdr/grants/grants/seb\\_dengue.htm](http://www.who.int/tdr/grants/grants/seb_dengue.htm)

### INTEGRATIVE GRADUATE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMS IN DISEASE ECOLOGY

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Two U.S. universities with interdisciplinary graduate programs in ecology of infectious disease have been awarded grants as part of the highly competitive National Science Foundation (NSF) grants for the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program. The total grant amount is over US \$6 million, enough to cover about 80 2-year fellowships for Ph.D. students from the United States over the next 5 years. Designed and proposed independently by disease ecologists at the University of Montana and the University of Hawaii, both IGERT programs feature development of an interdisciplinary research and training program. In the spirit of the NSF IGERT's mission, the programs are aimed at producing a new cadre of scientists with interdisciplinary backgrounds and deep knowledge, along with technical, professional, and personnel skills to become leaders and creative agents for change. For more information on the program, visit: [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=12759&org=NSF](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=12759&org=NSF)

Both programs take advantage of their unique settings as natural laboratories for the study of infectious diseases, but also include opportunities for studies and research internationally. In the 2005–2006 academic year, the University of Montana launched their program, *Montana Ecology of Infectious Disease (M-EID)*, focusing on two general research areas involving field and laboratory experimentation. One research area focuses on the distribution of disease-causing organisms in the landscape, employing mathematical modeling, analysis of spatial data, and visualization methods. The other research area addresses the ecological and evolutionary dimensions of host-pathogen relationships, employing experimental statistics, bioinformatics, and molecular genetics. These will encompass different temporal and spatial scales and different levels of biological organization, which require different analytical and experimental approaches. For more details, including contact information, visit <http://meid.dbs.umt.edu/default.aspx>

The University of Hawaii's IGERT program, *Ecology, Conservation, and Pathogen Biology (ECPB)*, launched in the 2006–2007 academic year, focuses on interdisciplinary

training at the interface of the biomedical and ecological sciences, exploiting many of the same research tools as the Montana program to investigate the ecological and evolutionary dynamics of host-pathogen biology across spatial scales. However, the program takes advantage of the Asia-Pacific Region's tropical ecosystems as well as research partnerships in Southeast Asia and China focusing on pathogens causing diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), avian influenza, dengue fever, and leptospirosis. It consists of four thematic areas: marine ecosystems and disease, watersheds and waterborne pathogens, population biology of pathogens, and complexity and emerging zoonotic pathogens. The overarching theme is emerging infectious diseases, how they originate and spread, their impact on humans, domesticated animals, and natural ecosystems, and their biodiversity. Further information can be found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/ecohealth/ecpb>

### **11ÈME COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR “DÉVELOPPEMENT, ENVIRONNEMENT ET SANTÉ” (11TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON “DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH”)**

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A conference in Bamako, Mali, from June 12–16, 2006, is designed to bring together international experts in public

health, specialists in sustainable development, local technical consultants, as well as industry and agriculture representatives, political and economic decision makers, and researchers. The event will provide a unique opportunity for francophone discussion and knowledge exchange focused on exploring the development and evolution of approaches to integrate human health and ecosystem management. The conference will emphasize the challenges of an ecohealth approach, including social, ethical, cultural, economic, ecological, and institutional factors. Intervention strategies at various political levels will be shared with the aim of understanding how to bring about change using ecohealth concepts.

The conference was organized by the International Francophone Secretariat for Environmental Evaluation (SIFÉE) in partnership with the Francophone Institute of Energy and the Environment (IEPF) and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainability of Mali with support from IDRC. The Ecosystem Approach to Human Health (Ecohealth) Program Initiative of IDRC organized a session to discuss lessons generated by a variety of projects using an ecohealth approach in francophone countries. More information is available at <http://www.sifee.org/bamako2006.htm>

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