

BiosafeTrain News

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Editor: Joy Owango

Dear Colleagues,

Most of our "first cohort" students have finished or are in the last stages of their degrees. Gerald Kyalo (Makerere University) and Jane Tei (University of Nairobi) have defended their MSc Thesis while Dennis Obonyo (University of Nairobi) is expected to present his Thesis by December.

Once the project's first cohort of students will have completed their degrees, another group will begin. Announcements are already being made and we are in the process of selecting new students.

We took part and were also co-organisers in the 1st All African Biotechnology Conference, which took place on 22-26 September 2008. Impressions of our activities at the conference are in the newsletter.

Best wishes

Joy Owango, Editor.

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Jane Tei M'Ringera, second BiosafeTrain fellow to finish her MSc programme

Jane Tei M'Ringera, one of BiosafeTrain's MSc fellows has completed and successfully defended her Thesis. She is the second student to complete her MSc programme. Her project title was *Competition between cultivated rice *Oryza sativa* and wild rice *Oryza punctata* in Kenya*. Jane was given a certificate of award by the University of Nairobi and is expected to graduate in October 2008. She would like to do a PhD in Plant ecology and work in biosafety-related programmes.

BiosafeTrain students' papers accepted and published

We have the first papers, emerging from our students' work, accepted in international peer-reviewed journals. The first two students are Jane Tei M'Ringera and Dennis Ndolo, both from the University of Nairobi, who had their manuscripts accepted. They are the recipients of the Student Paper Prize, presented at the African Steering Committee Meeting, late September 2008, in Nairobi.

Jane's manuscript was accepted on 26 August 2008 by the African Journal of Agricultural Research, while Dennis's was accepted on 5 September 2008 by the Journal of Applied Biosciences. Her manuscript is entitled *Competition between cultivated rice (*O. sativa*) and wild rice (*O. punctata*) in Kenya*, and Dennis' manuscript is entitled *Bt-transgenic maize does not deter oviposition by two important African cereal stem borers, *Chilo partellus* Swinhoe (Lepidoptera: Crambidae) and *Sesamia calamistis* Hampson (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)*.

James Kanya sponsored for course on data handling management

James Kanya, one of BiosafeTrain PhD fellows was sponsored by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark for a course on *Data Handling Management*. The course took place from 17 to 27 August 2008, and was on the use of Stata 10 Statistics Software and on data handling and management .

The course was organized by the University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID) Kenya and DBL-Centre for Health Research and Development, Denmark.

He will use this program for analyzing his data and his first thesis draft on his research is expected by December 2008.

BiosafeTrain student fellowships announced

With our first cohort of students from Phase 1 almost done with their projects, BiosafeTrain announced the next fellowship round at the University of Nairobi. Quite a number of applications were received and sent to the Board of Postgraduate Studies for official processing. The shortlisted students will be informed in the month of October 2008. Similar announcements were sent by our partners, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), the University of Dar-Es-Salaam, Makerere University and are all in the process of short-listing the students.

Dennis Ndolo attends the International Entomological Conference, Durban, South Africa

Dennis Ndolo, one of BiosafeTrain PhD students gave a talk at the 23rd International Conference in Entomology that was held in Durban, South Africa 6-12 July 2008. The title of his talk was *Effects of Chilo partellus Swinboe (Lepidoptera: Crambidae) and Sesamia calamistis Hampson (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae) sublethally fed on Bt maize on the biology of Cotesia flavipes and Cotesia sesamiae Cameron (Hymenoptera: Braconidae).*

“ There were several excellent presentations which included, among others, studies on host location by the braconid parasitoid *Cotesia flavipes* and suitability of ‘wild’ and ‘cultivated’ stem borer species, effects of insect-resistant transgenic crops on non target organisms and studies on the diversity of *Teretrius nigrescens*, predator of the larger grain borer, *Prostephanus truncates*, modeling the attractivity of colours for aphids and parasitoid host searching behaviour, just to mention a few”, says Dennis.

He further adds that participation in the conference enabled him to meet and exchange ideas with scientists of diverse entomological disciplines from all over the world, which, was a rewarding and enriching experience. During the conference he also had the opportunity for a field trip where he learnt a lot about sugar cane pests in South Africa.

This was Dennis’ first international congress attendance.

BIOSAFE TRAIN IN THE REGION AND WORLD-WIDE

BiosafeTrain participates in Evidence-based Advice to Policy Workshop, 29 & 30 June 2008

Prof. Jenesis Kinyamario and Dr. Nelson Amugune from BiosafeTrain, Nairobi, participated in a regional workshop on *Evidence-based advice to policy* which was held on 29-30 June 2008, in Nairobi. The theme of the workshop was *The role of Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and paring scheme between members of parliament and scientists in East Africa*. Prof. Kinyamario and Dr. Amugune presented a paper entitled *Emerging trends in biotechnology and their impacts on policy*. The workshop was organized by the Kenya National Academy of Sciences.

BiosafeTrain at the 1st All Africa Congress on Biotechnology

BiosafeTrain participated at the 1st All Africa Congress on Biotechnology which was held in Nairobi on 22 - 26 September 2008. The congress was organized by the African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF). BiosafeTrain was a co-organiser and was in charge of the biosafety session and biosafety related activities of the conference. A total of nine BiosafeTrain colleagues from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania took part in the conference , which attracted four hundred and seventeen participants from thirty nine countries in the world. - Prof Jenesis Kinyamario was one of the keynote speakers with a talk on *The ecosystem services concept provides a conceptual basis for biosafety tests of genetically manipulated plants in the developing countries*. PhD student Dennis Ndolo gave a talk on *Effect of Bt-transgenic maize on ovipositional response in two important African cereal stem borers, Chilo partellus Swinhoe (Lepidoptera: Crambidae) and Sesamia calamistis Hampson (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)*.

BiosafeTrain also had a stand at the conference where the rest of the students who were invited presented their posters on their research in Biosafety Risk Assessment. The new insect-proof glasshouse block at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI), another part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain was visited by the delegates during the field day excursions which was part of the congress.

KARI Biosafety Glasshouse Block opening planned

Plans are underway on the opening of the new insect-proof glasshouse block at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI), another part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain. Construction was completed in April and inspection and certification of the laboratory has

already being done by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS). The launch is expected to be in the first week of December 2008.

IMPRESSIONS OF BIOSAFETRAIN'S PARTICIPATION AT THE 1ST ALL AFRICAN BIOTECHNOLOGY CONGRESS 2008



Bather Kone from the Biosafety Unit with the African Union. He was one of the keynote speakers during the Policy and Biosafety Communication, Awareness and Networking session at the congress organized by BiosafeTrain.



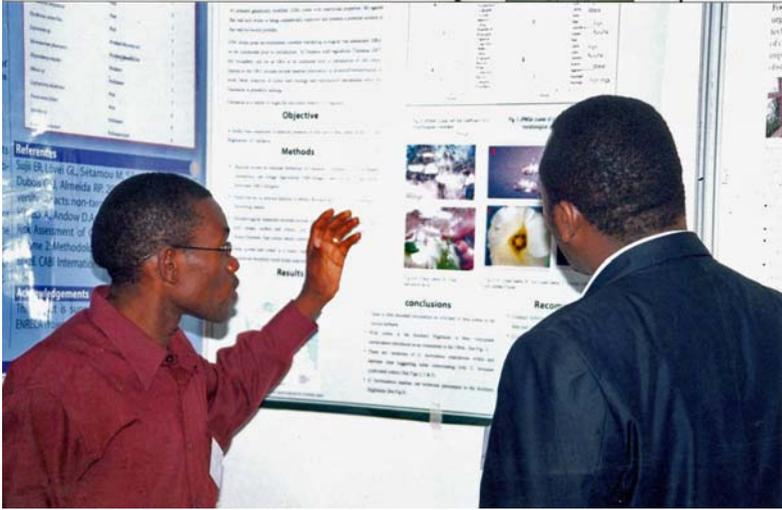
PhD student Dennis Ndolo gives his talk at the conference.



Prof Jenesio Kinyamario, University of Nairobi, BiosafeTrain Kenya Coordinator. Prof Kinyamario was one of the keynote speakers during the Policy and Biosafety Communication, Awareness and Networking session at the congress, organized by BiosafeTrain.



Dr Richard Edema, from the Makerere University and BiosafeTrain's Uganda Coordinator explains the project's research to one of the congress participants.



Shilla Oshingi one of BiosafeTrain's MSc fellows from the University of Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, explains his research to one of the congress participants.



Prof Kinyamario is interviewed at the Congress by left Dr Simon Outram and Julius Mugvavwa from Innogen, The ESRC Centre for Social and Economic Research on Innovation in Genomics, The Open University. Innogen is producing a documentary on agriculture focusing on biosafety and biotechnology in Africa. The documentary will be used for academic purposes