



■ Stop Malaria Death lurks in the water

Malindi, on the Indian Ocean. Mrs. Salim sits in front of her small clay-brick house and looks relaxed into the camera: “I slept so well”, she says smiling. This is new. Until recently her sleep was often disturbed by dangerous mosquitoes, which spread malaria. Every year around two million people worldwide die from the disease – 90% in

Africa. The disease is fatal predominantly among small children and pregnant women. “There are suddenly much fewer mosquitoes than before”, reports Nuru Habim Salim. This observation is confirmed by Malindi hospital officer Dr. Anisa Omar from the Ministry of Health: “Malaria was the number one cause of death here for decades. Since 2005 it is the third, after HIV/Aids and tuberculosis.” The reason for this sudden decrease is obvious to the pediatrician: “For the last year there have been much fewer mosquitoes”. The marked reduction in mosquito numbers is the result of, among other things, a pilot project of 2 African research institutes* which is supported by BioVision. The malaria problem is tackled with a series of specific, environmentally

friendly measures: information and education of the population, control and elimination of breeding sites, organic combating of malaria mosquitoes and distribution of bed nets.

Environmentally friendly mosquito killer

“The mosquito larvae are made harmless before they develop into mosquitoes and are able to spread the disease”, explains Dr. Charles Mbogo, project leader and malaria specialist with the Kenyan Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). “In addition, the stagnant pools which constitute breeding sites are treated with the natural bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti). Bti produces a protein that destroys the bowel of the larva.

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ICIPE: International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology
KEMRI: Kenyan Medical Research Institute

Editorial



I remember my shock when in Mozambique in the 1980s I saw snow-white people working in the fields. They had stood unprotected in the falling mist of DDT. This highly effective insecticide does not only kill pests. It is absorbed into the food chain and damages those at the top of the chain such as fish, birds of prey – or people. DDT causes cancer. In the animal kingdom it causes a dramatic decline in rare species, such as the peregrine falcon. For this reason, use of DDT has been forbidden in most countries for decades. And now WHO wants to start spraying DDT again in order to combat malaria. That makes me furious! How can they put the people and nature of Africa in such immense danger only because the chemical is supposedly cheap and efficient? Why do they want to do in Africa that which would never be permitted in Europe and North America? There is no panacea for malaria. But there are environmentally sound alternatives to DDT! And we also know that the problem can only be tackled at its root through an integrated approach that effectively combines various sustainable measures.

It is irresponsible to fight fire with fire. I hope that those responsible rethink their actions in accordance with research and do not allow old mistakes to be made again in Africa. The costs and damage resulting from the reintroduction of DDT are well-known.

*Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren
Präsident Stiftung BioVision*

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Other organisms and the environment remain unharmed. Even drinking water can be treated with Bti.” Special mosquito traps are used for successful control. By means of the traps the development of the mosquito population can be monitored and further specific interventions carried out as needed.

Knowledge is the beginning

Close co-operation and active participation of the affected population are also of the highest priority for Dr. Charles Mbogo. “The people are informed on the causes of the disease, the role of mosquitoes and the danger which lurks in stagnant bodies of water. A disused tyre filled with rainwater or pool near the hut can serve as a breeding ground”, he emphasises. A particular coup was achieved with the training of local people to Mosquito Scouts, who act as agents between the population and the experts in the malaria project. Scouts are responsible for an area of around one square kilometre, where they search out the breeding sites of stagnant water and instruct the population in cleaning up the area, thereby

reducing the risks. They also supervise the distribution of mosquito nets and collect data from the malaria traps.

Mosquito Scouts: Key to Success

The mosquito scouts are recruited from various local organisations such as women’s or youth groups. A trained social worker organises the initial and further training and coordinates operations. For Hafswa Bokia, Mosquito Scout in the Malindi slums, hunting for mosquitoes is a job that secures her existence. From sun-up to sundown she organises waste disposal actions with the inhabitants of the area, gives instruction on clearing sewage canals and urges the pools to be drained and holes to be filled. “The people trust me because I am one of them. But it will take time for them to change their behaviour”, says Hafswa Bokia impatiently. There will be no lack of work for the Malindi Mosquito Scouts. But a good start has been made. In any case more and more people in Malindi can sleep untroubled at night.



Hafswa Bokia, Mosquito Scout in Malindi, hunts out the breeding sites of the malaria mosquitoes and instructs the affected population on the removal of dangers.

BioVision Programme Co-ordinator Verena Albertin and Project Leader Dr. Charles Mbogo in Malindi: Mrs. Nuru Habim Salim is one of the 4,000 mothers with small children who are the first to be equipped with bed nets sponsored by FAWCO, partner of BioVision.





■ A Day in the Life of Nyotumba Bonaventure Illustrator in Kenya

Today I woke up early at 5am. The loud dawn birdsong outside woke me. That would never happen in Nairobi, where I live with my wife and two small daughters. Here on Lake Victoria however, where I am currently working on a textbook, I enjoy the concert every morning. The book is intended for men and women farmers who want to combat maize pests with organic methods rather than expensive chemicals. The method is called Push-Pull and was invented at ICIPE. My specialty is the realistic illustration of all things that can be imagined. Even as a small boy I felt attracted by any sort of drawing tool and drew on everything I could get my hands on. In our house paper was an absolute luxury, so I pitched into my sisters' schoolbooks, to their annoyance. They bore the teacher's punishment for my doodling. My oldest brother was very tolerant and every now and then he got me a piece of paper. I copied everything he painted and drew. One day he challenged me to put my own ideas down on paper. That was an important step in my development to illustrator and designer. I also like to paint pictures. Unfortunately, the people who like my art do not even have the necessary small amount to buy pictures. And so I earn a living wage for my family as a graphic designer and illustrator, like here for the illustration of this textbook.

I had no clue about Push-Pull when I came to the research station at Lake Victoria. But within the framework of a seminar with experts, researchers, farmers and teachers we developed within a few days a manual that was easy to understand. I draw according to precise specifications from the scientists: maize plants, harmful insects in all stages, from egg to larva to hatched stem borer. The advantage of precise drawing over photography is clear: Ink drawings can be easily copied. Colour photos are expensive to print and are unsuitable to be copied. That is important, since farmers in Kenya earn very little money. Teaching materials must also be cheap if they are to be successfully distributed. And this is exactly what Push-Pull is all about. Farmers take the know-

ledge learned in courses and apply it in their fields, then show all interested friends and neighbours. That is why there are so many illustrations, so that people with little schooling can understand the manual. When I am back in Nairobi, I will draw a few of the rare birds from here around Lake Victoria and tell my girls Rochelle and Irmina a story about them. I love that. Maybe because my mother always knew a good story to tell at bedtime. I dream about turning some of these African stories into picture stories. I am sure many children would like them.

Recorded at Lake Victoria by Andreas Schriber 2006

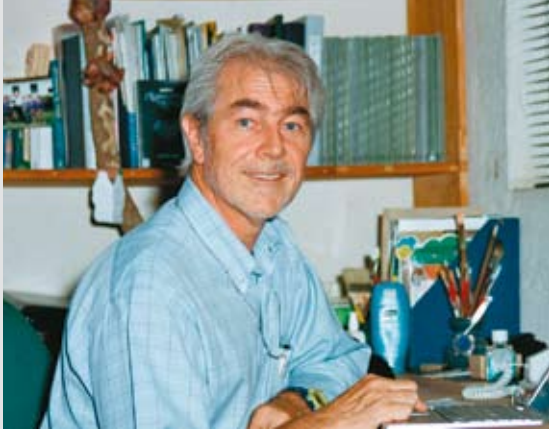


■ Push-Pull in Maize New start with focus on women

The principle of the Push-Pull method against the maize stem borer is impressive: the bean plant *Desmodium*, which covers the soil, is planted between maize stems and pushes the parasites out of the field with its scent. It simultaneously destroys the aggressive weed *Striga*, enriches the soil with nitrates and protects the soil from erosion. Napier grass around the perimeter of the field attracts the stem borer to its sticky blades with its scent. The maize is protected from insect damage and the harvest can be greatly increased.

But despite improved harvests, up to now distribution of the methods in Kenya has slowed down. One of the main reasons for this is identified in the traditional division of labour between men and women farmers in Kenya. The additional effort required for organic methods is predominantly taken on by the women. They have scarce time for this alongside managing the household, bringing up the children and finding water and firewood. Aside from this, many more enterprises are being led by women farmers. Cause of this is the low life expectancy of around 40 years, which can be traced back to the spread of HIV/Aids.

To accommodate these circumstances, BioVisions follow-up project at Lake Victoria has a strong socio-economic component: alongside the question of disseminating knowledge among women, great importance is ascribed to the reduction of additional burdens and discussion of traditional gender roles.



■ New at www.biovision.ch
Hans R. Herren's Web-blog

Visitors to www.biovision.ch are a mouse click away from access to an in-depth view on projects, goals, and organisation. One of our new features is a 'blog' in which Hans Rudolf Herren reports on what moves him, whether philosophical, pragmatic, current or private events. Below is link where you can find out what is occupying our foundation president most at the moment.

www.biovision.ch/blog

■ SBB Campaign
**Those with brains
campaign in the train**

BioVision ambassador Simone Niggli-Luder, biologist and twelve-time world champion in orienteering is using her prominence this November and December in SBB trains, all in the service of BioVision. The rail poster campaign is important in promoting BioVisions public profile. We thank Victorinox and other business partners for their sponsorship!



■ Beauty Contest in West Pokot
Culture and sport for peace

On 23rd September, 3000 Turkana, Pokot, Marakwet and Samburu met for a friendly competition in Turkwel, West Kenya. Champions from the various tribes competed in a distance event, singing competition, and –as in the picture above- a beauty contest. “It was very impressive to see people from these tribes, who are often enemies, gathered together in a happy celebration of peace”, reports Rolf Gloor, Project Leader in BioVision Project Cabesi and co-organiser of the occasion.

■ Pulling in the same direction
Swiss Alliance Against Hunger

On the Occasion of World Food Day 2006, the Swiss Alliance Against Hunger was founded in Bern, to which BioVision, as well as other institutions, aid organisations and businesses belong. The foundation is a reaction to the World Food goal of FAO in 1996, when 184 heads of state and government committed themselves to fighting world hunger with all means possible. The newly founded alliance wishes to finally follow up these big words with action. Anton Kohler, leader of the Swiss FAO office in the Federal Office of Agriculture and intellectual father of the Swiss Alliance: “ We all want to pull in the same direction, using synergies and realising concrete projects together.”

Hope for Africa!



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