

## 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:

- Conservation through Public Health: Ecohealth in Action in Uganda
- Coastal Malaria in Northeastern Venezuela: A New Approach to an Old Problem
- Healthy Environments for Children Alliance—A WHO and WSSD Type II Partnership
- Conservation Medicine, Ecological Health, and Poverty—A Global Synthesis Workshop at the 2004 IUCN Congress
- First International Conference on Health and Biodiversity—COHAB 2005, Galway, Ireland

Regular updates are also available at the *EcoHealth* website: <http://www.ecohealth.net>

### CONSERVATION THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH: ECOHEALTH IN ACTION IN UGANDA

Conservation through Public Health (CTPH) is an innovative grass-roots U.S. and Ugandan nonprofit, nongovernmental organization whose mission is to promote conservation and public health by improving primary health care for people and animals in and around protected areas. The vision of CTPH is to prevent and control disease transmission where people, wildlife, and livestock interact while cultivating a favorable attitude to wildlife conservation and public health in local communities. CTPH is the first Ugandan nongovernmental organization focused on links between wildlife and community health for the benefit of both.

This integrated ecosystem and human health initiative is an example of ecohealth principles in action. In Uganda, communities on the periphery of remote protected areas have limited access to basic health services. As such, pre-

ventable and treatable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, scabies, and brucellosis persist. When people are able to reach health units, they often find them unequipped to effectively diagnose and treat diseases. These diseases are all too easily transmitted to the great apes.

In 1996 and 2000, Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka, founder of CTPH, investigated and contained the first and second reported scabies outbreaks in mountain gorillas which were likely the result of contact with human clothing. The outbreaks greatly affected the health of mountain gorilla families. A desire to solve the shared wildlife and human health problems led to the establishment of CTPH in December 2002.

The organization's first integrated health initiative is a community-based tuberculosis treatment program in villages around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, funded by the Development Corporation of Ireland. This initiative will serve to improve community health and reduce the spread of tuberculosis. CTPH has also quickly become involved in complementary community activities to further capacitate local people in the areas of conservation, public health, education, sustainable energy, and enterprise.

For further information, please visit the CTPH website (<http://www.ctph.org>) or contact Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka at [gladys@ctph.org](mailto:gladys@ctph.org)

### COASTAL MALARIA IN NORTHEASTERN VENEZUELA: A NEW APPROACH TO AN OLD PROBLEM

Sucre state in northeastern Venezuela is one of the most malarious areas in Venezuela, with an annual parasite index of more than 60 per 1000 population. During the past 20 years, control efforts have been based on insecticide spraying and mass drug administration. These efforts proved to be costly, ineffective, and unsustainable. Fur-

thermore, the decentralization of the health programs, including the Malaria Control Program, left endemic areas without trained personnel.

During 2003, a new initiative was launched in an effort to strengthen local capabilities and develop surveillance and malaria-control programs that take into account local environmental and social conditions. The National Foundation for Science and Technology (FONACYT) has funded a 4-year project that teams different university and Ministry of Health researchers with local health authorities to develop protocols for considering the ecological, sociological, and economic context of malaria. The research team includes epidemiologists, ecologists, entomologists, parasitologists, sociologists, and geographers. The municipality of Cajigal, Sucre state, was selected for the study because it is considered the main malaria focus in eastern Venezuela, with an annual parasite index of more than 200 per 1000 population.

The protocols for surveillance and control are based on the following operational research components: 1) retrospective, prospective, and cross-sectional eco-epidemiologic studies and malaria stratification; 2) study of the malaria transmission-related variables: human, parasitologic, entomologic, ecologic, and geographic; 3) evaluation of the control measures presently applied and investigation of alternative control methods; and 4) integration of results in a geographic information system that will provide new relevant data, spatial analysis, and thematic maps. The control protocol, produced by the entire team, will be implemented by local health authorities during the third and fourth year to establish an effective and sustainable system for the surveillance and control of malaria that is adapted to local conditions. For more information, please contact Yasmin Rubio-Palis, BIOMED-Universidad de Carabobo, Apartado 2073, Maracay, Venezuela (e-mail: yasminr@telcel.net.ve).

## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN ALLIANCE—A WHO AND WSSD TYPE II PARTNERSHIP

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In the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the World Health Organization (WHO) has taken a lead role in several partnerships, including the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA), the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators, and the Health and Environment Linkages Initiative. These *type II* partnerships (between governments, the private sector, and civil society) are intended to provide creative mechanisms to link the economic, social,

and environmental pillars of sustainable development and to focus on practical implementation of WSSD outcomes.

HECA was initiated by the WHO in collaboration with several key partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Environment Program, national governments, and nongovernmental organizations. HECA's mission is to "provide a world-wide alliance to reduce environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and sometimes work, by providing knowledge, increasing political will, mobilizing resources, and catalyzing intense and urgent action." Key risks addressed by the alliance are water, sanitation and hygiene, indoor and outdoor air pollution, chemicals, insect vectors of disease, and unintentional injuries. In any given setting, children may be exposed not just to one of these risk factors, but to several simultaneously. In response, HECA promotes a "settings" approach, which recognizes the complex and interconnected nature of children's environmental health issues and the need for responses and actions that cut across issues and sectors. HECA is now funding a variety of country-level projects that focus on home, school, and neighborhood settings, addressing multiple risks in an integrated and cross-sectoral manner.

HECA-related resources include an *Atlas of the Children's Health and the Environment*, a Gallery of Healthy Environments for Children Artwork, and HECANET, an international mailing list. HECA has helped to profile Healthy Environments for Children at numerous international events and conferences since WSSD. Information about these and other HECA initiatives can be found at <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>. General inquiries can be directed to [heca@who.int](mailto:heca@who.int). Future *EcoHealth* issues will provide updates on the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators. Find out more at <http://www.who.int/ceh/indicators/en/>

## CONSERVATION MEDICINE, ECOLOGICAL HEALTH, AND POVERTY—A GLOBAL SYNTHESIS WORKSHOP AT THE 2004 IUCN CONGRESS

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A global synthesis workshop on Conservation Medicine, Ecological Health, and Poverty was featured at the November 2004 International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources Congress. The workshop focused on the role of conservation medicine as a solution-oriented practice designed to achieve ecological health for humans and for the environment and to understand the

interrelationships among wildlife, domestic animals, humans, and the environments they share. Workshop speakers examined these and related themes, including the links between biodiversity and human health (Eric Chivian, Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School); schistosomiasis as a case study of the interplay between biodiversity and health (Thomas Kristensen, Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory); perspectives from India on how climate change affects wildlife and wildlife-human conflicts (R. Sukumar and Mahesh Rangarajan, Asian Conservation Foundation); and the links among agriculture intensification, biodiversity loss, and agricultural pest explosions (Damayanti Buchori, PEKA, Indonesia). Mary Pearl and Alonso Aguirre from Wildlife Trust and the Consortium for Conservation Medicine also addressed the role of conservation medicine in relation to policies for human settlement.

A recurring theme from the workshop was the need for improved wildlife health-monitoring stations and professional training in response to the emerging and resurgent wildlife diseases such as West Nile encephalitis and monkeypox that are spreading to affect humans, other wildlife, and domestic animals. Societies around the world are currently poorly equipped to deal with such emerging diseases, lacking professionals with the transdisciplinary skills to link ecosystem, animal, and human health issues. Workshop discussion highlighted that the poorest communities stand to benefit most from actions that prevent disease emergence, not least because vaccines and treatments often do not reach them.

The importance of understanding the links between poverty and human, wildlife, and ecosystem health will continue to be a focus for conservation medicine initiatives. For more information, check updates on <http://www.conservationmedicine.org> and <http://www.wildlifetrust.org> or contact Lisa Schloegel (e-mail: [schloegel@conservation-medicine.org](mailto:schloegel@conservation-medicine.org)).

## **FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH AND BIODIVERSITY— COHAB 2005, GALWAY, IRELAND**

Conference on Health and Biodiversity (COHAB) 2005 will be held in Galway, Ireland, August 23–25, 2005. This

important global event aims to provide an international forum for scientists, professionals, policy makers, and stakeholders to address the issues linking ecosystem health, human health, biological diversity, and international development.

The ecosystem approach to human health recognizes the need for integrated public health policies and development programs that view the protection of ecosystems as an important part of achieving their objectives. COHAB 2005 will highlight the importance of wild species, habitats, and ecosystems to international development and will promote systemic approaches that address population health in the context of ecosystems and the services they provide.

Themes to be covered at the conference include:

- The value of biodiversity to food security and drug discovery.
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Pathogen pollution and the ecology of infectious disease.
- Biodiversity in ethnomedicine and traditional knowledge.
- The value of wild species as sentinels of ecologic health and as models in medical research.

A special session of COHAB 2005 will discuss policy options for addressing the health problems posed by biodiversity loss.

COHAB 2005 is being organized by the Moore Group in association with the Centre for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, the Consortium for Conservation Medicine at Wildlife Trust, the EcoHealth Journal and Network, the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Conservation Union, and other international partners.

For information on the conference program, registration details, and abstract submission, visit <http://www.cohab2005.com> or contact Conor Kretsch (e-mail: [info@cohab2005.com](mailto:info@cohab2005.com)).