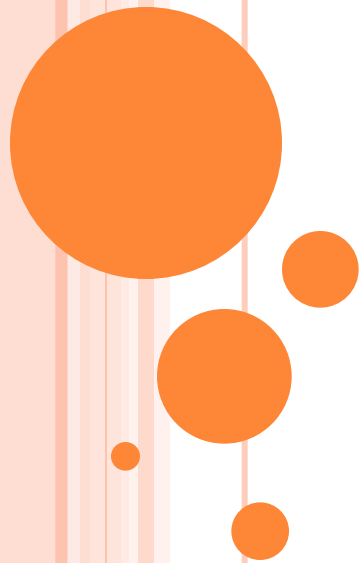


Making Research Real



“When research is socially relevant and benefits people, it gets the necessary media uptake”.

“As difficult as it is for researchers to engage with the media, it is also difficult for reporters to engage with the research, identify a human-interest angle and write research-related stories in an interesting way that captures the depth of the research”.



MAKING RESEARCH REAL

CHANGING LIVES: MAKING RESEARCH REAL



Ugandan App for Pain-Free Malaria Test

By Amy Fallon
In his 21 years Brian Gitta has had malaria too many times to count. And over the years, because of the numerous times he has had to have his blood drawn to test for the disease, he has developed a fear of needles. It is little wonder then that he and three of his fellow computer science students worked hard to develop a mobile phone app that detects malaria –

without the use of needles.

Research findings may be widely published in scientific journals, peer-reviewed and academically admired – but are they filtering through to the public, and bringing about tangible improvements to everyday life? In partnership with www.research4development.info, IPS is seeking to answer these questions, enliven the debate about research, and help to ensure that it does indeed change lives.

Multimedia



IPS gratefully acknowledges the support of the Department for International Development.



India Goes Bananas Over GM Crops

By Ranjit Devraj
India's environmental and food security activists who have so far succeeded in stalling attempts to introduce genetically modified (GM) food crops into this largely farming country now find themselves up against a bill in parliament that could criminalise such opposition.



Genes Cannot Be Patented, U.S. Supreme Court Rules

By Carey L. Biron
The nine judges of the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously Thursday that naturally occurring DNA, including component parts of that genetic material, cannot be patented.

Tweets

@Camz99 @Camz99 8m
Fracking, Seismic Activity Grow Hand in Hand in Mexico - ipsnews.net/2014/04/fracki...
Retweeted by Steve Vogel
Show Summary

The Gender Wire @thegenderwire 8m

OBJECTIVES

- Encouraging use of media as a way to disseminate research not often covered;
- Thereby promoting research uptake.

Outputs

- A series of newsfeatures covering a range of research issues

Outcomes

- Generating news features (multimedia) that is used or followed up by other media;
- Popular research areas social grants, science, water



SOUTH AFRICA: Who Says Research Can't Be Dramatic?

By IPS Correspondents

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Nyasha Musandu

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 28 2011 (IPS) - In the early 1990s, a group of researchers set off for a small rural village in the eastern part of South Africa. Their intention was simple: teach the community how to rehydrate sick babies.

Armed with a one litre soda bottle, a simple rehydration recipe, posters, pamphlets and talks, they spent weeks sharing their knowledge as part of a national initiative to reduce child mortality.

But months later, there appeared to be little change in the village. Researchers sent to document the campaign's success were surprised. The instructions were correct and had been distributed; the message had been received... but no one in the community had a one-litre bottle.

It was a simple oversight, easily rectified by changing the guidelines to use a different container to make up the recipe – every kitchen in the village had a cup.

Soul City's Dr Sue Goldstein tells this story to illustrate how it's possible to fail to communicate simple, useful scientific knowledge without an adequate understanding of your target audience.

Tailoring the message

- research is not made for media.
- Time is an issue for journalists on a deadline
- Journalists should be involved from the start
- Researchers fear the media will “dumb down” or
- disrespect their work through their reporting;

EMERGING
ISSUES



Examples

This story was pitched on the basis of a clinical study conducted in Botswana. The study found that pregnant and breastfeeding mothers given ARVs could reduce the incidence of mother to child transmission by 99%.

Unfortunately the research was two months old and there had to be a way to bring a fresher angle to it. This was done by looking at the impact the research had on people; to follow up to see what was being done with the research recommendations; and to find out from mothers if they were following the recommendations.

An outcome was the discovery that although this research was done in Botswana, many women did not know about it or had not fully accepted it although the WHO was disseminating the results all over the world. **Doing the story was useful in bringing the research results to the people and finding out what people actually know.**

Africa, Changing Lives: Making Research Real, Children on the Frontline, Development & Aid, Headlines, Health, Poverty & MDGs

BOTSWANA: HIV-positive Mothers Not Convinced to Exclusively Breastfeed

By Alma Balopi

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Alma Balopi

GABORONE, Sep 1 2010 (IPS) - "An HIV-positive woman must never be encouraged to breastfeed because regardless of what the doctors or researchers say – it is too dangerous for the baby," says Koziba Kelatthe an HIV-positive mother who was advised by health workers not to breastfeed her child.

It has been over a year since the Harvard-Botswana Mma Bana Study (meaning "Mother baby" in Setswana) found that HIV-positive mothers who take combinations of antiretrovirals (ARVs) can safely breastfeed. The groundbreaking study, conducted in Botswana, was the first randomised study in Africa to compare highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) regimens used during pregnancy or breastfeeding. It produced the lowest rate of mother to child transmission in comparison with other studies done in Africa.

Project director, Dr. Joseph Makhema, from the Botswana-Harvard Partnership (BHP) which conducted the study, said it influenced the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on the use of HAART to prevent mother-to-child transmission. At the 2010 HIV Conference in Vienna in July, the WHO passed new recommendations saying mothers may safely breastfeed provided they or their infants receive ARVs during the breastfeeding period of up to one year.

But Kelatthe and other HIV-positive mothers and even doctors in Botswana are unconvinced that this will be truly effective or implementable.

Seated on a bench in the waiting area at the Infectious Diseases Care Clinic (IDCC), Kelatthe smiled shyly. She was one of the many women waiting for her prescription of ARVs. She fiddled with her medical cards as she told IPS that her child, who is now two years old, is HIV-negative thanks to the PMTCT medication she took. "Maybe if I breastfed it would be a different story now," she said implying that if she had been on PMTCT and breastfed she would have passed the virus on to her child.



Soul city

Using the medium of soaps, Soul City identified entertainment and sports as the most common way people consumed media;

Soaps, especially those aimed at women, were effective in raising social issues because:

- medium can carry different amounts and types of information;
- can present emotions;
- viewers can identify with the characters;
- show change over time;
- allow audiences to engage.

Africa, Changing Lives: Making Research Real, Development & Aid, Headlines, Health, IBSSA, Poverty & MDGs

SOUTH AFRICA: Who Says Research Can't Be Dramatic?

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Tailoring the message



WHAT JOURNALISTS WANT

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Isalah Esipisu

NAIROBI, Sep 3 2010 (IPS) - Despite a bumper harvest of maize just a few months ago, many residents in the eastern part of Kenya are facing hunger and starvation. While granaries in the region may be full, the grain cannot be freely sold, let alone eaten.

"It is said to be contaminated. Government experts have warned us that it has aflatoxins," said Judith Mwende from Mutomo village, in Kitui district east Kenya.

Aflatoxins, locally known in the region as 'mbuka', have affected nearly all the residents of Kenya's Eastern Province. Aflatoxins are toxic, carcinogenic by-products of fungi that colonise maize and groundnuts, among other crops. It is poisonous to humans and animals.

With tears rolling down her cheeks, Mwende recalls how she lost her mother and daughter six years ago. They were just two of the 123 residents in the area who died after they consumed aflatoxin-contaminated maize in 2004.

"When we harvested it, we thought it was food. Little did we know it was poison. And now here it comes again. We planted maize for food, yet what we have is poisonous stuff in our granaries," said the middle-aged mother of three, who is among several other seasonal farmers in the area. Mwende only plants crops when the



Aflatoxins are toxic, carcinogenic by-products of fungi that colonise maize and groundnuts, among other crops.
Credit: Isalah Esipisu/IPS



- Researchers who can explain clearly why research matters and the ethics and validity of research
- To know and have contact details of the person conducting the research or spokesperson
- Researchers who are willing to speak to the media and be quoted
- For researchers to explain issues in simple language
- Research findings packaged in accessible language and format
- Researchers to invest in developing a relationship that will allow journalists to freely contact them and ask questions and clarify issues and to do so in a less formal way in the story development process and for the purposes of sustained coverage



- To be taken seriously
- To be involved from the start and provided with tidbits and snippets they can use for shorter stories of the research in development
- Timing – delays due to institutional protocols can result in the story losing its news value (need for research communications strategies & tactics)
- For researchers to understand that you can only change the facts in a story – when a journalist sends you a story for review they are not asking you to rewrite it



- Dissenting voices which make for a more interesting and multi-source story
- Background images; (accessible) facts and figures; graphs (data presented visually as factboxes and sidebars)
- Colour and images in description that give a human angle to the story
- Researchers who tweet – this is a useful tool for journalists to identify researchers who can be good sources for stories



Stories on Making Research Real – Changing Lives at

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/changing-lives-making-research-real/>

Languages ▼

Monday, April 28, 2014

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Africa, Biodiversity, Changing Lives: Making Research Real, Climate Change, Development & Aid, Environment, Farming Crisis: Filling An Empty Plate, Food & Agriculture, Headlines, Poverty & MDGs

Sorghum Proving Popular with Kenyan Farmers

By Isaiah Espisu

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Isalah Espisu

MAKUENI DISTRICT, Kenya, May 22 2011 (IPS) - Gadam sorghum was introduced to semi-arid regions of eastern Kenya as a way for farmers to improve their food security and earn some income from marginal land. The hardy, high-yielding sorghum variety has not only thrived in harsh conditions, it has won a place in the hearts – and plates – of local farmers.

In 2010, East African Breweries Limited (EABL), the regional beverage giant, was seeking around 12,000 tonnes of sorghum to brew beer.

KASAL, the [Kenya Arid and Semi-Arid Lands](#) programme of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), introduced gadam sorghum in eastern Kenya in 2009 for commercial production.

"The programme is a public-private partnership with an aim to improve income and food security among smallholder farmers in arid and semi arid parts of Kenya," said Dr David Milano, the programme's national coordinator.



Pictures for this story

This story includes downloadable print-quality images -- Copyright IPS, to be used exclusively with this story.

▶ Gadam sorghum. Credit: Isaiah Espisu/IPS

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author: Teach For America

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