

## ICIPE's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

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In 2020, ICIPE, the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology celebrates its 50 years anniversary. Established in 1970 by the renowned Kenyan scientist, Professor Thomas Risley Odhiambo, at a time when Africa had limited scientific capacities due to historical reasons, including that research on African issues, especially tropical medicine, had predominantly been conducted overseas. During the pre-independence years, the scientific sector in Africa was dominated by expatriates, and university structures in many African countries were developed rather late.

ICIPE stood out in a number of ways – as an idea conceived by an individual scientist, and by envisioning itself, not as a national institution, but as an international organisation with a mandate for Africa and the tropical regions. Moreover, ICIPE chose to focus on a very specific area – insect science; aiming to generate knowledge in previously neglected areas like physiology, behaviour and ecology of disease vectors and crop pests. ICIPE's overall vision was to push the frontiers of science and to direct its relevance at tackling the major challenges affecting the continent with a special emphasis on the needs of the small-scale farmers.

Among its main results we can mention ICIPE's malaria program with its focus on mosquitoes as disease vectors, and the development of a range of tools and strategies to control mosquitoes. Furthermore, ICIPE conducted substantial research on neglected tropical diseases. In 2011 the Centre established the Martin Lüscher Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratory, focusing on diseases such as the Rift Valley, yellow and dengue fevers, leishmaniasis, tungiasis, and the schistosomiasis.

The tsetse control management programme is another fascinating centrepiece of ICIPE's achievements. As part of this programme, ICIPE developed and disseminated vector strategies, adapted to smallholder livestock keepers in Africa. Approaches such as tsetse traps and tsetse repellent collars for livestock are among its most prominent results. ICIPE's research concentrates on the integrated pest management strategy, combining environmental safety with economical and technical feasibility. Standout successes are the Push and Pull technology, the biological control programmes of the stem borers in maize and the management of the diamondback moth of cabbages.



One of the first trial sites in the development of a climate-smart push– pull at the ICIPE Thomas Odhiambo Campus. © ICIPE

ICIPE's head office is based in Nairobi (Kenya), where the Institute enjoys similar status and facilities of other international research centres. In 1993, ICIPE established an additional research centre based in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), which in a few decades was able to become a successful development partner, especially in youth development programs focusing on bee keeping and honey production projects.

Switzerland has been a very close partner of ICIPE for several decades. The first core contribution of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to ICIPE dates back to 1972. Since then, SDC remained a key institutional partner. Its total contribution during all

these years has been over 41 million Swiss francs. Beside these core contributions, ICIPE is also eligible for SDC project funding, resulting in such projects as “Empowering smallholder farmers’ transition to sustainable agriculture through effective and efficient digital pathways” and the project to “Combat Schistosomiasis in the Lowland of Ethiopia”, which were recently approved.

Among the highlight of the relationship between ICIPE and Switzerland we can certainly mention the year 1994, when Dr Hans Herren took over the leadership of the institution and contributed substantially to elevating ICIPE to becoming a global player. As a highlight of Dr. Herren’s leadership we must mention the introduction of the 4Hs research paradigm in 1995, encompassing: Human Health, Animal Health, Plant Health and Environmental Health. This innovative paradigm at the time, became rapidly a mainstream approach used broadly in the development sector. Additionally, ICIPE collaborates with several Swiss partners, such as the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL), the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF), the Federal Institute for Technology (ETHZ), the Center for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Berne and, last but not least, Biovision.



*Schwarzia sp. (Hymenoptera: Apidae) to be named icipensis (in litt.) is a cleptoparasitic bee that invades the nests of pollen-collecting bees, deposits its egg(s), and the larvae that hatch from the eggs feed on the pollen of the unsuspecting host. It is a previously undescribed species named after icipe to commemorate its 50th Anniversary © ICIPE*

For its 50<sup>th</sup> year commemoration, ICIPE published a [nice and highly interesting report](#), which I warmly suggest all of you to read. Besides the different achievements and developments of the institution, the document includes different success stories, which are not always very well known to the larger public. At the end of the report, ICIPE presents its new slogan “Insects for Life”, which is meant to accompany the organization into the future. This slogan is a dual expression of the interlinkage between the 4H Themes – Human Health, Animal Health, Plant Health and Environment Health – and the unwavering commitment to the Centre’s longstanding vision and mission. ICIPE will be guided by its Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2025) document, identifying challenges and opportunities for the future.