

Organization: African Centre for Global Health and Transformation (ACHEST)

Project Location: East Africa Lake Victoria Region

Web address: www.achest.org

Title of Grant: “A broad-based regional Lake Victoria biodiversity informatics project.”

Grant Amount: \$50,000

Principal Investigator: Francis Omaswa

Organization Background:

The African Centre for Global Health and Transformation (ACHEST) is an initiative promoted by African and international leaders in health and development that functions as an independent “think tank”. Past efforts at identifying and implementing solutions that are handed down from outside that are not rooted in African history and culture and lacking ownership of African countries and populations have often failed to achieve their full potential. The value added by ACHEST is to promote and advocate the use of grounded knowledge and evidence to strengthen Africa’s capacity to contribute and benefit maximally from engagement with the rest of the world.

To achieve this, ACHEST is: (1) forging alliances and partnerships within Africa and around the world; (2) undertaking policy and strategy oriented research focused on Africa’s engagement with global partners in health and development; (3) promoting and advocating for the development of capacity of African professionals and institutions to pursue excellence and to engage in national, regional and global discourse on Africa’s development; and (4) implementing strategic communications among African and global leaders, policy makers and professionals.

Grant Description:

ACHEST now plans to focus its efforts on the biology of Lake Victoria. Although there has been significant biological research on Lake Victoria, the current uncoordinated nature of the resulting data and associated scientific materials has made their access and usage cumbersome, leading in many instances to duplication of effort. The intention of this project is to explore the feasibility of an initiative to create a biodiversity database about Lake Victoria to protect the natural hydrology and fauna and flora of the Lake and its watershed.

The Problem:

Despite massive amount of research carried out in the region including the just concluded World Bank funded Lake Victoria Environmental Management, it is still almost impossible to obtain information in any aspect of biodiversity in the Lake Victoria Basin. Whenever such information is available, its distribution is either highly restricted or accessibility limited. The inaccessibility has compounded taxonomic problems and

slowed down studies on reemerging fish species. In fact there is no complete list and description (including field guides) of the diversity of both flora and fauna in the Basin. Current efforts are uncoordinated as there is no single centralized database on lake's biodiversity to provide information on existing data, ongoing data requisition or even new initiatives.

The Solution:

The ACHEST grant will enable JRS Trustee-scientists from East Africa and other scientists from the Lake Victoria region in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to cooperatively work together to develop a specific fundable project that could be backed by JRS and other supporters to preserve the Lake ecosystem.