

Conference on Regional and Interregional Cooperation to Strengthen Basic Sciences in Developing Countries  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – September 1-4, 2009

***Challenges and Constraints in  
South-South collaboration  
- the experience of AFASSA***

**Vijaya Kumar**

**Chairman, AFASSA**

# ***Regional and Inter-Regional Cooperation***

## **Promoted by ISP for more than 25 years**

- **1981 Mahidol University – Vichai, Manat**
  - **First Regional Fellowship of IPICS**
  - **Exposure to a good developing country laboratory**
  - **Research Direction and Strategy**
- **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre – Ashok Bannerjee**
  - **Harshani Bulumulle, Vijaya Kumar – Bioassay training**
- **Inter-regional - ICIPE, Kenya – Dr. Saxena**
  - **Premaratne Bandara**
  - **Biopesticide/Botanicals programme**
- **Hosted by us**
  - **Manandhir, Student from Nepal**

# ***Regional and Inter-Regional Cooperation***

## **Usefulness of cooperation**

- ✂ **Provides novel insights to a young researcher**
- ✂ **Access to Facilities not available at home lab**
- ✂ **Training in new techniques adaptable at home**
- ✂ **Exposure to possible constraints**

## **Possible pitfalls**

- ✂ **Instrument problems – Repair turnaround time**
- ✂ **Non-scientific problems**
  - ✂ **Visas**
  - ✂ **Finding suitable accommodation**
  - ✂ **Political situation**

# ***Successful outcome at Peradeniya***

## **Access to more funding**

- ✂ **Initial work – result of cooperation – attracted funding**
- ✂ **SAREC funding from 1994 to 2003**
- ✂ **Capacity improved – Training, Infrastructure**
- ✂ **Extensive bioassay facilities established**
- ✂ **Field testing**

## **Products for local farmers**

- ✂ **Protein bait for fruit and melon flies**
  - ✂ **Being manufactured and sold in Sri Lanka**
- ✂ **Improved Neem based pesticide**
  - ✂ **Easier to register than new natural products**
  - ✂ **Ready for production**

# ***Africa Asia South America (AFASSA)***

## **Concept of AFASSA**

**Coordinate Activities of several networks**

**Federico Dajas (Uruguay), Rune Liminga**

## **Why AFASSA ?**

- **Advanced Labs in Chemistry/Biology in the South**
  - **Some extremely well-equipped**
  - **Some specialized in niche areas**
- **South-South collaboration – no mechanism**
- **Research directed on problems of the South**
- **Synergism generated by such collaboration**
- **Facilitate training of young scientists**
- **Organize Symposia/Meetings**

# ***AFASSA Activities***

## **Studentships**

- **Training of young scientists**
  - **Network Laboratories, Other Advanced Laboratories**
  - **AFASSA – Facilitator, provides travel support**
  - **2009 – Akanmu from Ile-Ife, Nigeria to Montevideo**

## **Symposia**

- **Several held over the years**
- **Usually coinciding with other symposia – funding**
  - **2008 Kasane, Botswana (with IOCD-ISDNP Symposium)**
  - **2010 Sri Lanka – ASOMPS post-Symposium (planned)**
- **Participation of young scientists funded**

# ***Constraints***

## **Funding Constraints – Ambitious aims**

## **North Training preferred over South by students**

- **Instrument problems – No longer true in many labs**
- **Delays in access to materials, chemicals**
  - **Particularly if undertaking a “home” research problem**
- **Non-scientific problems**
  - **Accommodation – Many campuses have guest houses**
  - **Public Transport facilities**
  - **Visas – Cameroon AFASSA student refused entry**
  - **Bureaucracy – Delays, hindrances**
  - **Assurance of a safe and secure environment**

## **Lack of Awareness of available programmes**

# *How can we face these challenges ?*

## **Increase awareness – Publicity**

- ✎ **Web-site: [www.afassa.org](http://www.afassa.org) fully functional**
- ✎ **Brochure distributed through network/conferences**
- ✎ **Information on laboratories and facilities**

## **Provide individual membership of AFASSA**

- ✎ **Improve awareness and obtain commitment**

## **Plan training programs carefully**

- ✎ **Resolve potential problems before the studentship**

## **Mobilize more funding for AFASSA activities**

- ✎ **Variety of sources**

# *Afassa web-site: www.afassa.org*



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[Home](#)

[Afassa News](#)

[Why Afassa](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Strategies](#)

[Membership](#) ▶

[Afassa  
Fellowship](#)

[Who  
Supports  
Afassa](#)

[Blue Print of  
Afassa](#)

[Contact Us](#)

### What is Afassa?

Afassa is an acronym for Africa, Asia and South America and stands for a group that co-ordinates activities of several networks involved in natural products research (NPR) in Africa, Asia and South America.

AFASSA was founded at the Intercontinental Symposium on Natural Products Research in Montevideo in 1999 under the chairmanship of Dr. Federico Dajas of Clemente Estable Institute, Montevideo University, Uruguay.

# Website – Network Symposia News



## Afassa News

Home

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Afassa  
Fellowship

Who  
Supports  
Afassa

Blue Print of  
Afassa

Contact Us

Regional and Interregional Cooperation to Strengthen Basic Sciences in Developing Countries, September 1-4, 2009, United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - An International Conference on the Strengthening of Research and Higher Education in Basic Sciences by Regional and Interregional Cooperation; Relevance for Developing Countries. Organized by Sida-Uppsala University, Sweden-Addis Ababa University Ethiopia. Further details at: <http://www.isp.uu.se/nwc/index.html>

Natural Products Research Network for Central and Eastern Africa (NAPRECA) 13th Symposium, Kinshasa, 10-14 August, 2009. Theme: Drug Discovery from African Rainforest. Pre-Symposium, Kinshasa, 03-08 August, 2009. Themes: New Trends in Chromatographic Separation Techniques and Modern Methods of Structural Analysis of Natural Products. Contact: Prof. Dr. Dibungi T. Kalenda, NARECA DR Congo President. Phone: 00243816900320, Fax: 003227065818 Skype: dibungikalend

XIVth Asian Symposium on Medicinal Medicinal Plants, Spices and other Natural Products XIV, Karachi, Pakistan 2010 (Dates to be finalized)  
Contact Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, H.I., S.I., T.I.  
Director International Center for Chemical & Biological Sciences  
University of Karachi

# *Symposia*

## **Suggestion by ASOMPS Organizers:**

- ✧ **ASOMPS presently held every three years**
- ✧ **Similar Conferences held in Africa, South America**
- ✧ **NAPRECA/LANBIO**
- ✧ **ASOMPS conference held every year**
- ✧ **Moving from Asia to Africa to South America**
- ✧ **A is ASOMPS = Asian, African, American**

**Will promote inter-regional co-operation**

**AFASSA asked to facilitate**

- ✧ **Coordinating Group has accepted in principle**

# ***Conclusions***

## **Regional/Inter-regional cooperation**

- **Must be encouraged – Of immense value**
- **Will lead to more relevant research**
- **Relevance in terms of impact on society**

## **Funding – New and large sources required**

- **Can inter-governmental groups like EU be attracted ?**

## **Overcoming constraints**

- **Will South-South-North cooperation be an incentive?**
- **Support from Supporting Agencies required**
  - **Sorting out Visa problems**
  - **Facilitate quick resolutions e.g. of instrument problems**

# *Acknowledgements*

Organizations which have supported AFASSA over the years:

- **IPICS (ISP)**
- **IFS**
- **OPCW**
- **UNESCO**



**THANK YOU**