

# Task Force on Science Journals, Poverty, and Human Development: Activities Get Under Way

**Paul Bozuwa, Chair**

The Board of the Council of Science Editors commissioned the Task Force on Science Journals, Poverty, and Human Development in January 2005. The task force held organizing meetings and brainstorming sessions at the annual meeting in Atlanta in May 2005. Jeffrey Sachs, director of Columbia's Earth Institute and special adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Millennium Development Goals, was the keynote speaker for the meeting, and his passionate portrayal of the dire consequences of global poverty infused the task force with a tremendous sense of purpose.

More than 50 members of the task force have engaged in a variety of activities that fall broadly into the following categories:

1. Developing research and publishing capacity in the developing world.
2. Raising awareness of the issues of poverty and the role that science journals can play in combatting poverty and its consequences.
3. Identifying programs that involve the science-publishing community and the issues of poverty.
4. Establishing a Statement of Principles that describes the responsibilities of journal editors to the developing world.

Over the summer of 2005, a great deal of energy was put into the AuthorAID initiative, a project initiated by Phyllis Freeman and Anthony Robbins, coeditors of the *Journal of Public Health Policy*. AuthorAID seeks to match volunteer author editors with developing-world authors to mentor the process of manuscript preparation. In addition to the mentoring process, AuthorAID intends to build a Web-based knowledge community to assist developing-world authors. A proposal for AuthorAID was developed and is now under consideration at the Swedish International Development Agency.

Another major effort of the task force has been to write the Statement of Principles, a document that articulates the responsibilities of science journals, particularly their editors, to the developing world. The statement was drafted by James Butcher, of *The Lancet*, and has benefited from comments from the task force via its intranet site. A final version of the statement will be presented to the CSE Board for endorsement in May 2006 at the annual meeting. Then the hard work of disseminating the statement to journal editors in a compelling manner that turns the words into action will begin.

Concurrent with the dissemination

of the Statement of Principles will be a resource document that identifies existing programs that can help journal editors to act on the principles outlined in the statement.

This spring at the annual meeting in Tampa, there will be a task force retreat open to all CSE members on Monday afternoon, 22 May. We will have the benefit of discussions with the directors of such initiatives as AuthorAID, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, and *SciDev.net* (a Web site that anyone with an interest in science and the developing world should mark as a "favorite"). We are also lucky to have Calestous Juma, the author of the Millennium Development Goals on Science and Technology, speaking at the retreat.

The main meeting is focusing largely on sustainability and equity. Keynote and plenary speakers include E O Wilson; Gary H Toenniessen, director of food and security for the Rockefeller Foundation; and Frank Tugwell, an expert on renewable energy at Winrock International. Individual sessions will explore poverty and human development from the perspectives of technology, veterinary science, and access to literature.