

Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE)

Improving the lives of marginalised communities

Improving people's lives

Free access to peer-reviewed scientific journals has greatly improved the quality of research and teachings in universities and research institutions in the developing world according to Wilkista Nyaora Moturi, Head of the Environment Studies Department at Egerton University, one of Kenya's seven public universities.

Moturi believes that access to peer-reviewed journal portals like Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE) is now addressing the pressing need in developing countries for better access to up-to-date scientific evidence, and helping to roll out valuable information and processes that lead to improvements in people's lives.



Wilkista Nyaora Moturi

“My access to OARE when I did my PhD programme did not only enable me as a person to achieve my goal but also to improve the quality of life among the Ogiek people in Mauche and Newsiit where diarrhoea and coughs, among other preventable ailments, have been ravaging lives of children and many adults in a vicious disease circle.”

Marginalised communities

Mauche and Newsiit are two remote areas located on the fringes of the famous Maa Forest in the scenic Rift Valley in Kenya and inhabited mostly by a marginalised community. As such, due to their poor sanitary routines, they often suffer from colds, coughs and respiratory tract infections – which are preventable.

Whilst conducting her research paper, Moturi investigated the effect clean water and sanitation could have on childhood diarrhoea and other health risk factors.

“Diarrhoea is a serious cause of death amongst children in these areas, comparably to many other parts of Kenya, destroying people's lives – regrettably, this is a very preventable condition,” argues Moturi.

“I discovered that poverty, financial constraints and especially lack of information were some of the key obstacles to making simple, yet very important lifestyle changes, to prevent life-threatening conditions. Effortless steps such as: boiling water,

covering food, washing hands and burying faeces appropriately could drastically reduce the rate of child mortality associated to acute diarrhoea.”

Upon completion of her research paper, Mokuti decided to organise informal educational gatherings in predominantly affected communities in order to spread the word on how to implement more hygienic routines in their everyday lives. First, she decided to mobilise the people to clear the contaminated yards which were breeding grounds for worms.

Moturi also collaborated with volunteers and leaders from local centres to set up free clinics for children in these underprivileged areas. The free clinics also gave them the opportunity to reach out to more locals and teach them how to reduce their risks of infections.

“The free clinics were used to attract people and give them education after finding there was apathy among the people about the existing situation and no self efforts were being made to reduce this”, confirms Moturi.

Moturi organised campaigns and clinics with the assistance of a university department which deals with community welfare, nutrition, environmental science and clinical medicine. Working together, they set up free camps.

“We are not only bettering people’s lives, we are saving them. Throughout our mission, our free access to OARE played a pivotal role. OARE served as a source of critical information which we have researched and are now putting into practice”, Moturi explains.

Teaching students using OARE

In addition to her volunteer work in the community, Moturi also teaches at the Egerton University on both natural resource and environmental issues. Using OARE, Moturi is able to take part in international public-private consortiums coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Yale University, and cooperate with leading science and technology publishers – allowing her to not only be involved in current affairs, but also benefiting her students with OARE materials.

“Students under my supervision for their Master’s thesis also benefit from the free access to OARE. I guide them to the relevant articles and forward to them materials which I deem relevant to their chosen topic of study”, she stated.

When in 2003 Moturi decided to further her academic accomplishments by pursuing a PhD, being able to review comprehensive and up-to-date scholastic journals relating to her research was absolutely vital.

“When I decided to take up a PhD, OARE became an indispensable tool. It not only helped me find literature on environmental health but also allowed me to view how other researchers had structured their projects, allowing me to fine tune my own research plan and apply an appropriate methodology. Moreover, OARE kept me motivated through access to a wealth of information and helped me remain unbiased in my analyses”, she enthused.

OARE also permits users to download journals and save them on flash disks thus providing flexibility to read anywhere and continuously improve their work. Reflecting on her days as a Master’s student, Moturi says it was difficult to source current material as it was scattered across numerous institutions throughout the country, much time was wasted locating and getting to the relevant material. “On my chosen topic of study, there are only a few textbooks published and, unfortunately, they are not in this part of the world. Most of the literature available at the University was outdated and of very little help to my studies.”

About Research4Life

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