

## The Extended Regional Network on Asian Schistosomiasis (RNAS<sup>+</sup>) announces its 7<sup>th</sup> workshop

With generous support from the UNICEF/World Bank/UNDP/WHO Special Programme on Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), the DBL Centre for Health Research and Development, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and the Ministry of Health, China, the RNAS<sup>+</sup> meeting and workshop will be held in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China between 5 and 7 September 2007.

### *Theme:*

Lectures on the RNAS<sup>+</sup> target diseases are invited from international and national scientists with a focus on participation of the member countries. Country reports on particular issues and different scientific endeavors will be issued and a training course will be given on the methodology of disease burden assessment; participants will also review the progress of RNAS<sup>+</sup>, revising the action plan for research, training, surveillance and control of schistosomiasis, and address the status of food-borne trematode infections and other important zoonotic helminthes.

### *Working group activities:*

- Review of progress, and revision when needed, of the action plan formulated for research and control of schistosomiasis.
- Presentation and discussion of the country reports on the status and what has been achieved with regard to the RNAS<sup>+</sup> target diseases (schistosomiasis, cysticercosis, clonorchiasis, opisthorchiasis, fascioliasis, etc.).
- Discussion on an action plan for the next five years on research and control of schistosomiasis and other targeted diseases in the region.
- Development of a general review on epidemiological status and research needs regarding the targeted diseases, including the generation of action plans for addressing issues in an integrated manner.

### *Aims of the training course:*

- To provide an understanding of the concept of disease burden and the principles for its assessment.
- To give a full account of methods for the collection of data; and
- To review techniques for evidence-based estimates with reference to how to integrate this activity with the health and agricultural health information systems in the different countries, through
  - securing a useful, reliable foundation for estimating the true burden of the RNAS<sup>+</sup> target diseases (schistosomiasis, cysticercosis, clonorchiasis, opisthorchiasis, fascioliasis, etc.) in order to provide justifications for the governments in the region to address its most challenging diseases;
  - development of protocols to conduct disease burden assessments for the different target diseases.

**Dates:**

The workshop will be take place from 5 to 7 September 2007. Participants are welcome to arrive before or on 4 September 2007.

**Tentative programme:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Programme</b>
4 Sept. 2007	10:00 - 22:00	Registration in the lobby of Lijiang Wangfu Hotel
5 Sept. 2007	9:00 - 12:00	Training course (concepts)
	13:30 - 17:30	Training course (methodology)
6 Sept. 2007	8:30 - 12:00	Training course (protocol development)
	13:30 - 17:30	Working group meeting (country reports)
7 Sept. 2007	8:30 - 12:00	Working group meeting (discussion of country reports)
	13:30 - 17:30	Working group meeting (group presentations and summing up)
8 Sept. 2007	8:30	Field visit to a schistosomiasis control programme in a mountainous region (arranged by RNAS+); or individual trips around Lijiang and/or neighbourhood Yunnan Province (Tourist Agency to offer registration at the hotel)

# The 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Geospatial Health

## Jointly Sponsored by the Global Network for Geospatial Health (GnosisGIS) and the Extended Regional Network on Asian Schistosomiasis (RNAS<sup>+</sup>)

An International Symposium on Geospatial Health will be jointly hosted by the Global Network for Geospatial Health, RNAS<sup>+</sup> and the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases, Shanghai, China. It will be held in the ancient town of Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China from 8 to 11 September 2007 directly following the meeting the RNAS<sup>+</sup>. The symposium is planned as a forum for Geospatial Health issues, including general papers and concurrent workshops on the control of fish-borne parasites, and other parasites in Asia.

The last 15 years have seen an ever increasing reliance on cartographic representation of the distribution of infectious diseases, particularly that of the parasitic infections and their vectors. Today, geographical information systems (GIS), remote sensing (RS) and Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS) are well-known tools of the trade and few scientists working in the fields mentioned can manage without them. The tools are as complex as the disciplines studied, thus expertise is essential, not only for the presentation and analysis of some particular data but also for the technologies used for their collection. It is hoped that the meeting will contribute to cross-fertilization between technical and health-oriented disciplines thereby promoting the further rapid development of an exciting new science. The theme chosen for the symposium is directed at the formation of a collaborating working group on the best use of geospatial methods for the control of fish-borne zoonotic parasites in Asia. Additional concurrent workshops will be organized to address issues related to geospatial health methodology in the control of other diseases, including leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis and malaria.

There is an increasing recognition of the public-health importance of fish-borne zoonotic parasitic diseases and a new awareness in Asia of the lack of tools for their control and links between disease, cultural traditions, and poverty. The full picture involves the current intensification of agriculture and aquaculture, as well as water development projects. The side-effects include environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. The conference will address the two most important liver flukes, *Opisthorchis viverrini* and *Clonorchis sinensis*, closely related trematodes that have similar life cycles and epidemiology. Cholangitis, choledocholithiasis, pancreatitis and cholangiocarcinoma are the major clinical problems associated with the long-term chronic disease patterns seen with these infections. The focal distribution complexity of the life cycles and risk factors suggest that fish-borne zoonotic diseases are strong candidates for the application of geospatial analysis tools in control programme management. The ability to record and analyze multiple risk factors on regional or local scales within decision support systems can enable health workers to implement surveillance and guide control programs that target chemotherapy to high risk communities or zones where morbidity of disease would be expected to be highest.

The conference objectives are to discuss and suggest recommended public-health strategies for control of fish-borne parasites in the Greater Mekong Sub-region based on ecological forecasts that consider the population biology of trematode-snail-mammalian systems and the environmental, cultural and agri-economic risk factors that determine the geospatial distribution and abundance of disease. A working group network is scheduled to be established with the participation of regional researchers, public health workers and aquaculture specialists to develop and implement GIS-based ecological forecasts to guide control programs for fish-borne parasitic disease. An expected outcome is development of a 5-year plan to share data from current and future research projects, health ministry control programmes and aquaculture specialists that can be

used to implement better control methods for fish-borne zoonotic parasites in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region using geospatial tools for control and ecological forecasts.

***Date:***

The meeting will be take place from 8 to 11 September 2007, following the RNAS<sup>+</sup> workshop. Participants in the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium on Geospatial Health who are not attending the RNAS<sup>+</sup> workshop are invited to arrive on or before 7 September 2007.

***Programme:***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Programme</b>
7 Sept 2007	10:00 - 22:00	Registration in the lobby of Lijiang Wangfu Hotel
8 Sept 2007	8:30 - 12:00	Plenary Session: Geospatial Health in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region: current status and approach to control of fish-borne zoonoses, malaria and schistosomiasis
	13:30 - 17:00	Concurrent workshops: integration of public health, animal health, snail ecology, socioeconomic data, intervention records and research data in a geographic information system (GIS)
9 Sept 2007	8:30 - 12:00	Concurrent workshops: ecological modeling, GIS and remote sensing: Health Maps as a control tool
	13:30 - 17:00	GnosisGIS working group recommendations: towards a Regional Information System for Control of Fish-Borne Parasitic Diseases in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region
10 Sept 2007	8:30 - 12:00	GnosisGIS business meeting: publications, plan of action, future meetings, funding, collaboration group picture
	13:30-17:30	Individual trips around Lijiang and/or Yunnan Province (the tourist agency to offer registration at the hotel)

**Venue:**

**Lijiang Wangfu Hotel**

**Address:** 9 Yigu Xiang, Nanmen Street, Ancient Town, Lijiang

**Tel:** +86 888 5189 666

**Fax:** +86 888 5189 929

**Location:** Lijiang Wangfu Hotel is situated in the South Gate of Ancient Town, 3 km from the Lijiang International Cultural Communication Center and 27 km from the airport (about 45-min.'s drive).

**Nearby attractions:** The Black Dragon Pool Park, Lijiang Ancient Town and the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

**Visa application:**

Participants who require invitation letters for visa application should fill out the registration form and also provide family data and a brief information regarding current research interests and reason for wanting to attend the meeting(s). Upon receiving this, we will issue an invitation and a Visa Confirmation Letter which is needed for your application at the Chinese Embassy, or General Consulate, in your country.

**Travel information for both meetings:**

International participants are recommended to arrive at the Kunming International Airport directly, or via Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, etc. by air, and then fly from Kunming to Lijiang Airport (more than 10 daily flights of about 45 min. are available from 7:00 to 22:00). All preannounced participants will be met by staff from Lijiang Wangfu Hotel.

**Contact persons:**

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Further information about these meetings is available at the websites  
[www.GnosisGIS.org](http://www.GnosisGIS.org) and [www.rnas.org.cn](http://www.rnas.org.cn)