



UNIVERSITY OF
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The College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science
School of Life Sciences

Public Lecture

Defeating River Blindness in Africa –
Impact of Research and Community Empowerment

By

UKZN Honorary Graduate,

Dr Uche Veronica Amazigo

SYNOPSIS: Nigeria-based public health specialist and scientist Dr Uche Amazigo has made an outstanding contribution to the control of River Blindness, a neglected disease afflicting rural communities in 19 West African countries. She undertook pioneering research that formed the scientific basis for establishing the UN/World Bank-administered African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC).

Amazigo successfully co-ordinated and implemented the World Health Organisation's African Programme for *Onchocerciasis* (River Blindness) Control based on community-directed treatment with *ivermectin* (CDTI), allowing community participation and the opportunity for poor communities to make decisions in one of the biggest ever control programmes for a single disease. Showing visionary leadership skills and the ability to motivate and initiate new programmes and secure set objectives, she repositioned APOC from a River Blindness control body to an elimination programme. Her achievements are impressive and include engaging bilateral and multi-lateral donors and the private sectors to support over 120 000 communities in the control of River Blindness in Africa.

Amazigo was awarded her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (Biology and Medical Parasitology) from the University of Vienna in Austria in 1977. Currently an international consultant on public health with emphasis on community-directed interventions, she was from 2005 to 2011 Director of APOC managing the control of River Blindness in 19 West African countries and maintaining the achievements in a further 11 countries. Her research experience includes strategies for controlling neglected tropical diseases and community-directed interventions. She was previously a scientist with the World Health Organisation, a senior lecturer in Medical Parasitology at the University of Nigeria, a research associate – International Health and Population at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston in the United States, and a research assistant at the Department of Medical Parasitology and Health at the University of Vienna in Austria.

Thurs 18 April: 13h00-14h00 (refreshments from 12h30):

Life Sciences Seminar Rooms 1&2: Westville Campus

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