

Reflections on the 29th Conference of the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology in Chennai, India: A Journey of Learning and Connection

By: Sophy Nukeri

Participating in an academic conference as a presenter was one of my goals this year. Consequently, I was lucky to be one of the WAAVP African Foundation partial scholarship recipients. This granted me an opportunity to attend and present at the WAAVP 29th Conference, held in Chennai, India from 20th to 24th August 2023 (Figure 1). My poster presentation focused on providing a scoping review of the potential hybridization of *Fasciola hepatica* and *F. gigantica* in Africa (Figure 2).



The WAAVP 29th Conference was a transformative experience that brought together professionals, experts, and enthusiasts from the veterinary parasitology field. With a rich tapestry of sessions, symposiums, and networking opportunities. One of the defining aspects of the conference was its inclusivity. Attendees hailed from various backgrounds, spanning parasitological fields like parasite epidemiology, tick diseases transmission, host responses against helminths, and novel diagnostics. This diversity not only enriched the discussions but also provided a unique platform for the exchange of ideas.

In addition to the mainstage events, the conference offered a multitude of breakout sessions and symposiums. These smaller gatherings allowed for in-depth exploration of specific subjects and facilitated active participation. I attended a symposium and dinner organised by the WAAVP African Network where various ways to overcome challenges in veterinary parasitology in sub-Saharan Africa were addressed. The engaging panel discussion provided a valuable learning experience that I can apply in my work.

Networking was another vital component of the conference. In the bustling corridors and during coffee breaks, I had the chance to connect with peers, mentors, and potential collaborators. The exchange of ideas and experiences was invaluable, and I forged connections that I believe will have a lasting impact on my professional journey as an early career parasitologist. It was inspiring to see how open and welcoming everyone was, fostering an environment conducive to meaningful networking.



As the conference came to an end, I left with a profound sense of inspiration and a wealth of knowledge. The 29th Conference exceeded my expectations, offering not only a platform for learning and networking but also a chance to witness the power of collective intelligence. It reinforced the belief that when individuals from diverse backgrounds come together, they can create innovative solutions and drive positive change.

In conclusion, the 29th Conference was a transformative experience that left a lasting impression on all attendees. It was a testament to the power of collaboration, diversity, and innovation. I look forward to applying the insights gained and maintaining the connections forged during this exceptional event. The conference's legacy of knowledge-sharing and unity will undoubtedly continue to ripple through our respective fields, contributing to a brighter future for all.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the WAAVP African Foundation Scholarship, 2023 for granting me the opportunity to be one of the attendees of this prestigious conference by providing a return travel from the Chennai Conference, which also allowed me to catch my very first international flight. I would also like to thank my supervisor Prof. Samson Mukaratirwa for contributing towards other expenses of my stay in Chennai and my co-supervisors Dr. Mokgadi Malatji and Dr. Mamohale Chaisi for their assistance during my preparations for attending the conference. This experience is one I will treasure forever.

Figure captions:

Figure 1: Sophy Nukeri at the 29th Conference of the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology in Chennai, India.

Figure 2: Sophy Nukeri giving a poster presentation at the 29th Conference of the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology in Chennai, India.