



SACEMA
DST/NRF Centre of Excellence in Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis

SACEMA NEWSLETTER NO. 4, December 2006

November has been a busy month at SACEMA between running conferences and holding a variety of meetings. At the same time we have been getting our marketing materials together and are very proud to launch our new logo as above. We hope to have encapsulated the idea that mathematics, denoted by the integral sign, can triumph over diseases!

We have held our inaugural Scientific Advisory Committee meeting this month as well as our second Board meeting, and have received applications for our bursaries and postdoctoral positions. We will shortly be making decisions regarding these applications and hope to be able to report on our students and postdocs early in the new year.

A new website for SACEMA has also been developed and is currently hosted at: <http://www.sun.ac.za/sacema>. We have been keeping it updated with all our doings, and it includes information and photographs from the November conferences. Any comments on the new website would be gratefully received, and can be forwarded to Margaret on mward@sun.ac.za.

We would like to wish those who have been involved with SACEMA and who have given us support during 2006, all of the best for the holiday season and for the New Year. We look forward to working together in 2007.

Best regards

The SACEMA Team

New IRD Staff at SACEMA

SACEMA is working in collaboration with the French Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), particularly their research unit GEODES, in the area of epidemiology. GEODES has sponsored two of their staff members to work with SACEMA in Stellenbosch for several months to assist on the Masiphumelele project with the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre.

Both Nicolas Bacaer and Pierre De Beaudrap arrived during November and are settling into the way of life in Stellenbosch.



Nicolas



Pierre

TB & HIV Modelling Conference

SACEMA hosted a conference entitled “Bridging the Gap between Modelling and Reality: the added value of interdisciplinary collaboration in the fight against TB and HIV” from 6-8 November in Stellenbosch. This was organised by Dr Wim Delva of Ghent University, with logistical support provided by SACEMA. There were many international participants, including those from around Africa, Europe, India, and the USA.



Group photo of the TB and HIV Modelling Conference

The first day of the conference was run as a workshop on population-based modelling, micro-simulation and remote sensing, run by Leigh Johnson of UCT and Richard White of the LSHTM. This included a ‘hands-on’ practical to allow participants to engage with the modelling techniques. The following two days provided an interesting combination of keynote lectures in pivotal areas of disease modelling, shorter oral presentations as well as poster presentations. Copies of these presentations should shortly be available on the conference website: <http://www.tbandhivmodelling.org/>

Some photographs from the wine-tasting and dinner at the Anura wine estate are also available from the SACEMA website (http://academic.sun.ac.za/sacema/tb_hiv_photos.htm).

Micro-simulation Meeting

This meeting was funded through SACEMA and convened by Dr Alan Matthews of the Physics Department at UKZN. It was held from 20-24 November on the Mostertsdrift premises in the Manor House next to the SACEMA offices. The intention of the workshop was to bring together researchers from South Africa and abroad who are interested and involved in micro-simulation projects in a hands-on way. The programme included an overview of micro-simulation and its application, a technical review of current and planned models as well as a view towards future work.

One of the key applications considered during the meeting was the modelling of HIV and TB data from communities in the Western Cape, in collaboration with the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre and the Desmond Tutu TB Centre. SACEMA has received funding from the World Health Organisation to develop a microsimulation module created by Statistics Canada that can be used in modelling HIV and TB data collected by these Centres. In particular we are interested in modelling the dynamics of the interaction between HIV and TB epidemics.



Group photo of the Microsimulation Meeting

Researchers and micro-simulation experts from the following institutions attended this meeting: SACEMA, University of Witwatersrand, University of KwaZulu Natal, Desmond Tutu HIV Centre, Desmond Tutu TB Centre, University of Cape Town, World Health Organisation, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Erasmus Medical Centre (Holland), Institut Pasteur, Institut de recherches pour le Développement (France), Stats Canada, and Harvard Medical School.

The meeting resulted in much sharing of information between the above parties, with the consensus being that it was a very positive event that should set the basis for valuable future collaboration.