

Press release: 21 July 2006
For immediate release

SciDev Net

Science and Development Network

SciDev.Net news team wins top UK science writing award

The Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) news team has been awarded "best science journalism on the world wide web" by the UK's top science writing body.

The prize was presented to SciDev.Net by the Association of British Science Writers (ABSW) for its online coverage of the consequences of the tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean in December 2004, claiming 300,000 lives.

Its timing coincides with calls to improve the region's tsunami early warning system, put in place in the aftermath of the 2004 disaster. This week, a new tsunami struck the Indonesian island of Java. Although the threat was detected, the warning messages did not reach the coastal communities, contributing to a death toll that is currently nearing 550.

SciDev.Net's coverage is grouped into a continually updated feature known as 'Tsunami update' (see: www.scidev.net/ms/tsunami/). This combines regular news coverage of tsunami-related research, policy decisions and events with detailed background information about the causes of the disaster, analysis of its consequences and comment about lessons for the future.

SciDev.Net's coverage of the tsunami was coordinated by news editor Mike Shanahan, senior correspondent Catherine Brahic and South Asia regional coordinator T. V. Padma.

Other contributors to 'Tsunami update' during 2005 include SciDev.Net freelance reporters Sanjit Bagchi in India, Mustak Hossain in Bangladesh, Dilrukshi Handunnetti and Nalaka Gunawardene in Sri Lanka, Ochieng' Ogodo and Kimani Chege in Kenya, Abiodun Raufu in Nigeria, and Marilyn Smith in France.

In announcing the award, Ted Nield, the president of the ABSW, said that the short-list for the web-writing awards had provided a strong set of contenders that all made full use of the web's capabilities. "Our winner delivered a really high quality writing product," said Nield. "Science writing for the web has finally arrived."

David Dickson, the director of SciDev.Net, said that he and the organisation's news team had been thrilled and honoured to receive recognition of its work by the ABSW. "I would like to thank all of those who contributed to this achievement, which demonstrates that one can combine good science journalism, the new possibilities opened up by the Internet, and a commitment to improving people's lives," he said.

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The SciDev.Net news team has decided to donate its UK£2,000 prize money to the Disasters Emergency Committee, a coalition of aid agencies providing ongoing relief in areas affected by the 2004 tsunami.

Also at the 2005 ABSW science writing awards, Sonja van Renssen, who worked as an intern at SciDev.Net in the summer of 2005 and contributed to 'Tsunami update' during this time, won the category of "Young broadcaster of the year" for a radio programme about the ethical dilemmas raised by military research.

To view this press release online visit: www.scidev.net/ms/absward

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Notes to Editors

Disasters Emergency Committee

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) is an umbrella organisation representing 13 leading UK aid agencies. Its members are: ActionAid, British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International UK, Christian Aid, Concern, Help the Aged, Islamic Relief, Merlin, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund and World Vision. It conducts donation appeals to alleviate acute human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the effects of a major overseas disaster, ensures that the funds raised are used in an effective, timely and fully accountable way and facilitates the coordination of swift international humanitarian assistance. Donations to the DEC can be made via their website.

www.dec.org.uk

ABSW science writing awards

The ABSW's annual science writing awards are sponsored by the life sciences company Syngenta. Other recipients included Jim Giles of Nature, whose feature "The Dirtiest Place on Earth" received recognition as the best feature in a specialist periodical. The veteran television broadcaster David Attenborough received a lifetime achievement award for his wildlife documentaries.

The awards were presented by Lawrence McGinty, health and science editor at Independent Television News, and Martin Taylor, chairman of Syngenta. Full details of this year's awards — plus the accompanying press release — can be found at:

<http://www.sciencewritersawards.co.uk/science/past/2005/index.htm>

Earlier this year, David Dickson was presented with the 2006 "Award for Meritorious Achievement" by the US-based Council of Science Editors for his leadership of the team that has created SciDev.Net. See: <http://www.scidev.net/ms/prize/>

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The Science and Development Network

The Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) seeks to help individuals and organisations in the developing world make informed decisions on science and technology related issues that impact on social and economic development.

It does this by providing reliable and authoritative information through a free-access website containing news, views and analysis about science and technology in the developing world.

In addition, SciDev.Net builds regional networks of individuals and institutions who share its commitment to improving science and technology communication, and organizes workshops and other events in the developing world to build capacity in this field.

SciDev.Net is supported by the journals Nature and Science, as well as the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World

www.scidev.net

Funders

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<http://www.scidev.net/register>

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