

Building global partnerships to improve research communication

By Audrey Pinto

In March, Banalata (Bono) Sen, PhD., program coordinator for the NIEHS Global Environmental Health (GEH) program, made good on the Institute's long-standing commitment to international collaborations. In response to an invitation from the [Public Health Foundation of India](http://www.phfi.org/) (PHFI), one of India's premier public health institutions, Sen conducted a workshop on research writing and publishing in peer-reviewed journals.

Sen's course was part of a two-week professional development workshop in New Delhi, funded by a Wellcome Trust training and capacity building grant and sponsored by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). Twenty junior faculty members and postdoctoral candidates at PHFI participated in Sen's three-day seminar.

Helping scientists from developing countries publish innovative research

Teaching the workshop was a logical move for Sen, who has long advocated for partnerships, education, training, and outreach for researchers and scientists from low-income and middle-income countries (LMIC). She developed the workshop while working for the NIEHS journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* (EHP).

Sen's passion was evident, as she described the workshop's origin. "While working at EHP, I saw innovative research being rejected because the researchers did not understand how to target their written findings for a specific journal," she explained. "My workshop evolved out of the need to raise awareness of the peer-review publishing process, so that scientists from LMICs could create a successful product."

The response to Sen's workshop was enthusiastic. "Bono's workshop was extremely illuminating - her friendly, interactive, and responsive style of instruction suited the audience very well, and the content of the workshop was varied and interesting," said one of the organizers, LSHTM epidemiologist [Pat Doyle, Ph.D.](http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/people/doyle.pat)

"The participants especially valued the practical sessions that combined technical aspects of scientific writing with understanding the complete process of writing for publication."

Nurturing collaborations with public health organizations in LMICs

"Scientists from LMICs do not receive the same type of training, nor do they have access to the wealth of resources available to students and researchers from developed countries," said Sen. Along with language issues, these deficits can hamper publication of unique scientific findings and limit opportunities for collaborations within the global community of researchers.

"This workshop and partnership with PHFI started when I was working as the program manager for education and outreach for EHP," explained Sen. "Although my relationship with PHFI started at that time, the collaboration dovetailed very nicely with my current role as program coordinator of GEH, and as lead coordinator for training and capacity building for the NIEHS World Health Organization (WHO) [Collaborating Centre](#) for Environmental Health Sciences."

Recognizing that environmental health problems cross national and international borders, NIEHS identified global environmental health as an integral component of its 2012-2017 [Strategic Plan](#) and established the GEH program in 2013.

(Audrey Pinto, Ph.D., is technical editor for the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*.)



Leading the workshop was a natural fit for Sen, who has long worked to establish partnerships with public health agencies overseas. (Photo courtesy of Arushi Chandra of PHFI)



The junior faculty and postdoctoral students enrolled in the workshop responded enthusiastically to Sen's course. (Photo courtesy of Arushi Chandra of PHFI)

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