



IUBMB Trainee Initiative

- Monthly Minutes -

From us and for us

Hi there, nice to see you again!

Our second interviewee is Oswald Yedjinnavenan Djihinto – a member from the Federation of African Societies (FASBMB). Currently he lives in Ouidah in Benin (that is pretty much at the Gulf of Guinea), so let's dive in and see what is going on there...



What we are up to !

The last event launched by the FSBMB was an introductory session to bioinformatics in Africa. Oswald explained: "Where I study, there is a lack of interest in bioinformatics, also resources are scarce and thus, we wanted to provide students with a basic understanding and a sense of what is possible. The event was a success; however, I was a bit disappointed to see that although participants from other continents were present, we couldn't capture anyone from West-Africa. In other words, events held in English do not attract French-speaking folks. This is something I want to change."

I asked what Oswald could advise for organizing events: "Don't get demotivated when trying to recruit speakers and they don't answer right away. Stay strong and persist, often, this is the key to success!"



A glimpse in the future *

You might wonder what is next on the agenda? Buckle up for an amazing idea!

Hey Oswald, what will be your next event? "We are not sure yet, we will discuss in our next meeting. However, I see many students graduating from their masters still lacking solid experience in how to do a PCR or even electrophoreses. Since many labs and universities lack the resources, students leave with insufficient skills. Therefore, my dream would be to create a platform where students could visually learn these techniques. That would help with the language-barrier and, also, provide a great tool for practically learning lab-techniques. Something like an online lab in which you can click tools and do experiments virtually – guided with some information. A big project but that would really make an impact, I think."



Informative – Brief – Uniting - For all of us -



Our knowledge is your knowledge



Malaria is still a huge problem in Africa, especially since many mosquito populations develop resistance against common insecticides. Oswald is also researching in this area, trying to find new targets for developing alternative vector control strategies.

What is your most promising target at the moment?: “We have some in the pipeline but a cytochrome which is essential in the 20-Hydroxyecdysone would be the top candidate” (For all whose biology classes are looonnggg in the past, that is a hormone essential for insect growth & development).

Anything interesting you stumbled upon lately?: “Indeed, a paper describing a new method for improving malaria diagnosis. The new method “Deki reader” shows that previous test had a pretty high false-positive rate! Meaning that many people were treated unnecessarily (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-018-2356-8>).”

Something personal ?



In my conversation with Oswald, it became very clear that research in Africa lacks a lot of resources. “Students and researchers give all they got to advance but many fundamentals are just missing.” Some time ago he reminded me: “Nobody here knows what sustainable laboratory practice should be, just because we even struggle getting our experiments done.” Thus, let’s take a moment to appreciate their fight!



Anything else you want to add Oswald?: “The IUBMB TI is doing great work! However, here in West-Africa, there is very few spreading of the word about our initiative. The infrastructure on our institutions is simply not supporting such initiatives. That is very sad because so many people would benefit!”

However, Oswald seemed to me very engaged and maybe, one day, he will be the one changing the system. All the best to you and that the French community can be our target soon too!

It was again very much of a pleasure
See you next time!

