

Riding shutdowns in developing world

The recent US government shutdown hit researchers in the Antarctic particularly hard (G. E. Hofmann *Nature* **502**, 431–432; 2013). But spare a thought for the feats of endurance shown by scientists from the developing world, who continue working in such harsh environments while contending with chronically unpredictable political factors in their own countries.

These scientists regularly battle long-term, government-induced setbacks to their research programmes. Regardless of their scientific importance, these studies do not receive widespread publicity when things go wrong — because such events are so frequent. But adverse environmental conditions offer only a limited logistical window for researchers, and natural systems will not wait for the resolution of political brawls.

Examples of such successful long-term research programmes from developing-world scientists include Indian and Brazilian initiatives in the Antarctic (S. D. Gad *Curr. Sci.* **95**, 151; 2008, and P. Artaxo *et al. Tellus* **44B**, 318–334; 1992), and an ongoing subantarctic marine-mammal study by South Africans that has so far lasted for 40 years (M. N. Bester *et al. Afr. J. Mar. Sci.* **33**, 511–521; 2011).

P. J. Nico de Bruyn *University of Pretoria, South Africa.* pjndebruyn@zoology.up.ac.za