

**WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE SCIENCE
ASSOCIATION (WIOMSA)**

**WIOMSA STRATEGIC PLAN AND
OPERATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

Setting research agenda for ensuring sustainability of
coastal and marine environments in the
Western Indian Ocean region

WIOMSA STRATEGIC PLAN 2005 - 2020



**Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association
(WIOMSA)**

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Message from WIOMSA President

With great pleasure I present the WIOMSA Strategic Plan. The plan is a working document designed to help the Association direct its actions in a tactical way for the next 10 to 20 years. More importantly, it will serve as an important basis for developing the resource mobilization strategy that will support WIOMSA activities in the future.

The WIOMSA Board of Trustees in its Thirteen Meeting in February 2004 agreed that the Association should develop its Strategic Plan. Why did we decide we needed to do it now? We are growing rapidly, have more members and getting more recognition, have more partners, the diverse nature of the marine environment, all elements that need clear direction or we would lose the main reason for our existence. The Board envisaged that the main objective of the Strategic Plan will be to give direction to the Association where its main focus should be, as well as to identify objectives and priority actions that will help it attain its aim successfully and cost-effectively.

The coastal and marine environment in the Western Indian Ocean region are facing many threats but they also present many opportunities to those who depend on their resources. WIOMSA recognizes that the region needs integrated research and management strategies that address the threats and better inform communities and decisions makers of the existing opportunities. This reality was recognized during the development of the Strategy and reflected in the aim of WIOMSA's Strategy. The Strategy's aim calls for increased use of scientific information to improve management of coastal resources.

The Strategy was developed through a participatory and consultative process. Inputs were solicited from members, partners as well as other stakeholders through a widely distributed questionnaire. In addition, focus group meetings were conducted to discuss either the questionnaire or the early drafts of the Plan and a regional consultative meeting was held in Mombasa, Kenya in October 2004 to discuss the Plan.

May I on my own behalf and on behalf of WIOMSA Board of Trustees, thank the consultant, Ms Amanda Younge, most sincerely for successfully facilitating the whole process of developing the Strategic Plan. The quality of the document is a reflection of her long-term experience and knowledge of the development of Strategic Plans and the working of non-governmental organizations as well as her commitment and interest in the assignment. I also wish to thank the WIOMSA Secretariat for all the support they provided to ensure that the process of developing the Plan was completed within the set timeframe. Thanks also go to the WIOMSA members and partners who, through responding to the questionnaire, being interviewed, attending the workshop in October in Mombasa, and commenting on the document during its development, have all made a rich and invaluable contribution to the formulation of this Strategic Plan. Lastly, We would like to acknowledge Sida/SAREC for providing funds through the Marine Science for Management (MASMA) Programme that enabled WIOMSA to undertake the development of its Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan is the first to be produced by the Association. In it, we look forward to addressing the many challenges that lie ahead for the Association and region as a whole. We will continually seek input and advice from members and partners on how WIOMSA can better serve its diverse constituents. We look forward to working with members and partners in implementing this strategy. The development of the Strategic Plan should be seen as a continuous process rather than an end to itself.

Dr Nyawira Muthiga
President, WIOMSA

WIOMSA STRATEGIC PLAN 2005 – 2020

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

WIOMSA STRATEGIC PLAN 2005 – 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) was established as a regional professional, non-profit, membership organization, in 1993, and is dedicated to promoting the educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. WIOMSA has a particular interest in linking the knowledge that emerges from research to the management and governance issues that affect marine and coastal ecosystems in the region.

Over time, WIOMSA has built a diverse range of experience in organization of training courses, coordinating research grants programmes, advocacy, networking, and dissemination of technical information relating to the region. WIOMSA currently plays a unique role in the WIO region. Its strength lies in its regional character, multi-disciplinary membership, and good track record in implementation, broad experience and flexibility in its operations.

To guide WIOMSA's activities over the next 15 – 20 years, a consultant was appointed in August 2004 with a brief to draft a Strategic Plan for WIOMSA through a consultative process. This process included a questionnaire survey and a Regional Consultative Meeting held in Mombasa in October 2004.

The WIOMSA Strategic Plan comprises a number of elements, including a Vision Statement for the Western Indian Ocean Region, which reads:

“By 2020 the Western Indian Ocean Region will have healthy coastal and marine environments, whose natural resources are used sustainably and managed wisely through partnerships and collaboration between managers, scientists, governments, development partners and civil society leading to healthy and prosperous coastal communities.”

The revised WIOMSA Aim or Purpose Statement now reads:

“The aim of the Association is to advance regional co-operation in all aspects of coastal and marine sciences (including socio-economic and management sciences) and management, and to support sustainable development in the Western Indian Ocean Region, while promoting interdisciplinary and multi disciplinary approaches.”

Underlying this Aim, is the WIOMSA's Vision:

By 2020, WIOMSA will be recognized widely as a leader in promoting the development of marine and coastal science professionals, advancing marine and coastal science, and promoting the conservation and sustainable development of coastal and marine environment.

The Association's success to date has created confidence, respect and support. Success has also raised expectations, and could potentially lead to a loss of focus. In order to reduce this risk, WIOMSA will be guided by the following operating principles:

- All WIOMSA activities will seek to forward its Vision Statement;
- WIOMSA activities will be regional, strategic, collaborative and catalytic;
- Continuity will be maintained particularly in those areas where WIOMSA has made its greatest contribution to date, viz. its support for research, the WIOJMS, its symposia and its capacity building courses for scientists and managers; and
- WIOMSA activities will be carried out in a democratic, transparent, equitable and accountable way.

The Strategy contains six thematic components, each with a strategic objective and priorities:

1. Fostering research excellence through facilitating the development and updating of a regional a research agenda, supporting improvements in research quality, and supporting the development of a critical mass of excellent scientists in all relevant disciplines;
2. Developing expertise for effective management and sustainable development;
3. Raising public awareness and enhancing access to relevant knowledge and information;
4. Promoting networking, cooperation and exchange of knowledge between researchers, managers and local communities; and
5. Promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practices.
6. Institutional strengthening of WIOMSA. This will involve: Enhancing participation by members, especially at country level; Broadening the membership base, particularly to include more social scientists and practitioners and Raising WIOMSA's profile in the region and internationally.

In the immediate future and as a priority, WIOMSA will focus its activities on a resource mobilisation strategy, designed to ensure that WIOMSA achieves financial sustainability.

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Vision: “By 2020, WIOMSA will be recognized widely as a leader in promoting the development of marine and coastal science professionals, advancing marine and coastal science, and promoting the conservation and sustainable development of coastal and marine environment.”

“The aim of WIOMSA is to advance regional co-operation in all aspects of coastal and marine sciences and management, and to support sustainable development in the Western Indian Ocean Region, while promoting interdisciplinary and multi disciplinary approaches.”

WIOMSA STRATEGIC THEMES

Fostering research excellence

Developing expertise for effective management

Raising awareness and enhancing access to knowledge and information

Promoting networking, cooperation and exchange

Promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practices

Institutional Strengthening of WIOMSA

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To foster research excellence in the WIO Region through continuously updating a regional research agenda which addresses relevant priority issues; improving research quality; and developing capacity in all relevant disciplines

To implement activities that strengthen the capacity of coastal and marine scientists as well as practitioners for effective assessment and management of coastal and marine resources in the WIO Region

To provide a forum for communication and exchange of information on coastal and marine issues amongst different stakeholders within and beyond the region

To provide a forum and develop mechanisms for networking and exchange of knowledge and information on coastal and marine issues amongst scientists, managers, and local communities

To identify and raise urgent and critical issues and to suggest and advocate appropriate measures and policy responses as well as alternatives

To implement activities that support institutional strengthening of the Association in order to successfully deliver on the other Strategic Themes

WIOMSA STRATEGIC PLAN

2005 – 2025

1. BACKGROUND

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) was established as a regional professional, non-profit, membership organization, in 1993, and is registered in Zanzibar, Tanzania, as a non-governmental organization. It is dedicated to promoting the educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region (consisting of 10 countries: Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion (France)), with a view to sustaining the use and management of its marine and coastal resources. WIOMSA has a particular interest in linking the knowledge that emerges from research to the management and governance issues that affect marine and coastal ecosystems in the region.

WIOMSA has about 900 individual members as well as about 30 institutional members from within and outside the region. Membership consists of marine scientists (i.e. natural and social scientists), coastal practitioners, and institutions involved in the advancement of marine science research and development. The Association's broad objectives are to:

- Provide a forum for communication and exchange of information amongst its members that promotes and fosters inter-institutional linkages within and beyond the region;
- Support marine and coastal research by offering research grants;
- Implement programmes to build the capacity of marine scientists and coastal management practitioners; and
- Promote policy dialogue on key topics by organizing meetings and seminars on scientific findings and policy implications of science.

When WIOMSA was established in 1993, the region was characterized by very few marine scientists, the majority of them being fisheries biologists; (a decade later, the number of marine scientists with MSc and PhD degrees has increased significantly); absence of research priority setting mechanisms at the regional level; poor dissemination and communication of research results to various stakeholders and interest groups; little exchange of information and research collaboration amongst scientists in the WIO; links to priority management issues were sporadic; and absence of a research grants programme that responds to priority needs of the region.

Over the years, WIOMSA has succeeded in providing a wide range of services and opportunities to its memberships as well as a broad spectrum of national, regional and international organizations. WIOMSA has built a diverse range of experience in organization of training courses, coordinating research grants programmes, advocacy, networking, and dissemination of information.

WIOMSA promotes marine science research through the award of research grants under the Marine Science for Management (MASMA) and the Marine Research Grant (MARG) programmes. MASMA's research grants are competitive and designed to support research activities as well as training courses/workshop in the region. The grants, which range from

US\$ 15,000 to US\$ 50,000 per annum, for a maximum of three years, are available to teams of scientists or individual researchers from the region as well as from Sweden.

WIOMSA is committed to supporting the improvement of regional capacity to meet the challenges of regional coastal and marine problems and prospects. In addition to the on-going capacity building programme in Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and Marine Protected Areas (MPA), WIOMSA has organized and hosted a number of regional workshops and meetings that provided the linkage between science and management. One past such workshop was the Experts and Practitioners Workshop on Integrated Coastal Area Management of Eastern Africa and the Island State, held in Tanga, Tanzania in 1996. This Workshop provided input to the Second Ministerial Policy Conference on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Eastern Africa and the Island states held in Seychelles, October 1996.

In August 2002, WIOMSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNEP as the secretariat to the Nairobi Convention, whereby WIOMSA will be responsible for providing research, technical, managerial and advisory support to UNEP as requested. Through this MOU, WIOMSA has been involved in the planning and organization of the Third (Mozambique – 2002) and Fourth (Madagascar-2004) Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention.

WIOMSA in collaboration with UNEP since 2002 is hosting a regional Group of Experts on Marine Protected Areas for the Eastern African region (GEMPA). GEMPA has been established with the aim of building a constituency for marine protected areas in the region and to provide a forum for linkages and dialogue between MPA practitioners and experts, and between governments and non-governmental organizations.

WIOMSA currently plays a unique role in the WIO region. Its strength lies in its multi-disciplinary membership, good track record in implementation of projects and programmes, broad experience and flexibility in its operations. Being a regional NGO, WIOMSA's extensive networks and contacts within and outside the region provide an invaluable resource to its activities.

The main focus of the Association has shifted over time in response to the rapid changes, challenges and opportunities available in the region. While at the beginning WIOMSA was strongly academically oriented, its work today is more broadly linked to scientific research, capacity building as well as linking of science to management processes at different governance levels. Its most significant achievements to date have been its support for research development, its journal (Western Indian Ocean Journal of Marine Science, WIOJMS) and its provision of capacity building for both scientists and managers through training courses, workshops, symposia and other forms of information dissemination and shared learning.

An emerging role is that of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders from different disciplines in collaborative research projects, participatory decision-making, training programmes and discussion forums around key issues, and playing a key role in setting the coastal and marine research agenda in the region.

2. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A strategy addresses the growth path of an organisation, and seeks to ensure that the organisation's activities make a difference. A strategy will help an organisation to focus its activities and guide its choices to increase its impact. A key element of a strategy-development process was involvement of stakeholders (both internal and external) in developing the strategy. The more effective the involvement, the greater the buy-in and commitment to implementation by stakeholders.

WIOMSA's Strategic Plan has been developed in a consultative and participatory manner. The process was designed to provide the Association with the opportunity to reflect where it was coming from and where it wanted to be in the next 10 to 20 years. WIOMSA also wished to identify threats as well as existing and potential opportunities, and the organization's strengths and weaknesses in facing these challenges. The process of developing the Plan was conducted in the following manner:

A consultant was appointed in August 2004, with a brief to undertake a review of existing documentation at WIOMSA Secretariat to assess their relevance in the development of the Strategic Plan, and to develop a questionnaire for circulation to the WIOMSA Board of Trustees members, WIOMSA Secretariat, the Country Coordinators, selected members, and partners from Canada, Ghana, the Netherlands, UK and USA. Also heads of research and academic institutions in the region, and representatives of partner organizations such as UNEP, WWF, IUCN-EARO, CORDIO, WCS, etc., received and filled the questionnaire. A total of 55 individuals responded and duly filled the questionnaire. Members and partners in Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius, Tanzania and the Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island, convened small meetings in their respective institutions to discuss and fill the questionnaire. In addition, specially arranged small consultative meetings were held between the consultant and selected individuals, which also contributed to the drafting of the Plan.

Based on the above, the consultant prepared a first draft of the WIOMSA Strategic Plan. WIOMSA held a Regional Consultative Meeting on 22-23 October 2004 in Mombasa to discuss, enrich and endorse the draft Strategic Plan, which was circulated before the meeting. The Mombasa meeting was attended by 29 people including Board members, Country Coordinators and representatives from partner organizations and institutions. The regional organizations and institutions represented included NEPAD's Coastal and Marine Secretariat, Nairobi Convention, IOC of UNESCO and WSC. Discussion at the meeting focussed on reviewing and revising the draft Strategic Plan and taking it further into priorities for action. The Strategic Plan was redrafted after the meeting to incorporate the views expressed at the meeting, and circulated for comment before being finalised.

The revised version was then submitted to the Board of Trustees in February 2005 for discussion and endorsement. The Board approved the Plan subject to incorporation of its comments.

3. THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

The Western Indian Ocean marine region includes the coastal areas of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and La Réunion (France) (Figure 1). The region has high level of marine biodiversity and rich marine and coastal resources, including some of the Indian Ocean's most diverse coral reefs, mangrove forests, sand dunes, sea grass beds, globally significant marine and coastal habitats, high species diversity and high levels of regional endemism.

The ten Western Indian Ocean nations are at different stages of economic, social and political development. These differences are reflected in the range of individual economic indicators from those with a per capita gross national product of over \$ 8,000 per annum, to those with \$500 per capita, as well as differences in social indicators (e.g. health and literacy). Similarly, national institutions reflect comparable variations in strength and infrastructure. Some 30 million people now live on the coast in the region, and many of these – not the least poor people - are dependent on coastal and marine ecosystems, which contribute significantly to the livelihood of coastal communities and the economies and welfare of the countries. In the recent past, these ecosystems have started to show signs of degradation, attributed to both natural factors (coral bleaching caused by climate change driven by humans) and anthropogenic causes (pollution from both land-based and marine-based sources, municipal and industrial waste).

The coastal and marine environment is increasingly subjected to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic disturbances at different intensities and in various combinations. The main disturbances include destructive fishing methods, damage and destruction of habitats, over-exploitation of resources, marine pollution, introductions and invasions by exotic species, the use of new technologies, such as seaweed farming and aquaculture, and conflicting use of resources and pressure from growing coastal populations, urbanization and tourism. All these disturbances combined put increasing pressure on the coastal ecosystems. Underlying causes include inappropriate policies and programmes relating to resource use and access, inadequate enforcement and limited resources for implementation.

Countries in the region recognize the urgent need for better and more effective management of their coastal and marine resources to improve the quality of life of the people including to reduce poverty, to sustain national economies and to maintain the productivity and diversity of these valuable ecosystems for the future.

Within the framework of regional agreements and conventions, a range of plans and strategies are in place at both national and regional levels, in relation to integrated marine and coastal area management, marine and coastal protected areas and coral-reef conservation initiatives. Increasingly, more work is being done at all levels on developing plans and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal living resources, particularly fisheries.

Complex decision-making processes required for managing coastal and marine environments are generally weakened by inadequate information and research inputs. Therefore, it is essential that appropriate environmental, social and economic information is available for assessment of impacts of existing and planned activities, and that a sound scientific base exists which can accommodate the changing needs of environmental management institutions as well as society at large. More importantly, it is essential that society is provided with a sound platform of expertise and information upon which wise

policies on and practices of resource assessment and management are built. Consequently, input from the scientific community needs to be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

In addition to the information needs, it is necessary that research capacity building is continued to meet long-term scientific and economic development and the environmental needs of the region.

It is important to emphasize that research is not a luxury even for the very poor countries such as most of the countries in the WIO Region, but a necessity. Research is needed to analyse and monitor the situation, and to adapt and apply knowledge and experience developed in other regions.



Fig. 1. Map of the WIO region

4. WIOMSA’S CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

WIOMSA has evolved over time as it responds to the rapid changes and opportunities available in the region. At the beginning WIOMSA was narrow-focused in its activities with emphasize academic-oriented activities while, WIOMSA’s work today is more broadly linked to scientific research, capacity building and linking of science to management processes at different governance levels. This change has been prompted amongst others by the recognition by the Association and its partners that WIOMSA has a role to play in addressing the issues highlighted in the preceding section.

With this evolution, WIOMSA is faced with a number of challenges:

- **Loss of focus.** As WIOMSA grows, a number of choices will need to be faced. The Association's success to date has created confidence, respect and support. Success has also raised expectations, some of which are not realistic in terms of current staffing. Raised expectations could potentially also lead to a loss of focus.
- **Divided attention.** As WIOMSA's staff complement increases, divergences emerge between the needs of membership and the imperatives of the WIOMSA Secretariat and its work programme. An emphasis on democratic, transparent and equitable practices should serve to minimise the negative impact of such divergences.
- **Limited membership base.** Currently most of the Association's members are natural scientists from English-speaking Mainland countries. Broader membership base to include more members from French-speaking countries as well as more non-natural scientists such as decision-makers and practitioners.
- **Multidisciplinary approach.** Transformation of the multidisciplinary ambition into true collaboration of natural scientists and social scientists. The challenge is to attract the attention of and motivate the social scientists and to convince the natural scientists that collaboration is necessary for management oriented research. Social scientists in the region are not well informed about the activities of WIOMSA, including the possibilities to formulate projects and apply for funding. Social scientists rarely take the initiative to formulate projects in collaboration with natural scientists.
- **Working with the communities.** WIOMSA need to establish true partnerships with the communities in which the research is undertaken. The research findings have to be brought back to communities, packed in a form that is digestible and useful.
- **The Association's reliance on a single donor.** Most of the Association's activities are funded by Sida/SAREC.
- **Absence of resource mobilization strategy.** The few fund-raising activities undertaken by the Association to support mainly one-time events such as organization of courses/workshops, have been largely done on an *ad hoc* basis. Though successful, these efforts were done in isolation and therefore contributed minimally to the Association's resources in the long-term.

There are a number of opportunities existing within the Association and in the region at large, which if fully exploited; they could be of great benefit to the Association and the region as whole. These include:

- WIOMSA is a membership based NGO with a strong presence in all ten countries within the region and several countries beyond. Its regional character, multidisciplinary membership of scientists, both natural and social, and its extensive networks are relevant and unique qualities of the Association, and providing a base from which successful implementation of the Strategy is ensured.
- WIO region has been and still is a priority region for support for regional research and management-oriented projects by different funding agencies. WIOMSA provides a proven framework through which such projects could be planned and implemented
- WIOMSA has developed effective partnerships with many national, regional and

international organisations and agencies including UNEP, IOC, WWF, IUCN and WCS. WIOMSA needs to explore further on how it could benefit more from these partnerships.

In order to address the above-mentioned challenges and take advantage of existing opportunities, WIOMSA will be guided the following operating principles:

- **Guided by WIOMSA’s vision.** All WIOMSA activities will seek to forward the WIOMSA’s Vision and in doing so contributing towards realising the Regional Vision Statement;
- **Setting priorities.** WIOMSA activities will be regional, strategic, collaborative and catalytic;
- **Maintenance of continuity.** Continuity will be maintained particularly in those areas where WIOMSA has made its greatest contribution to date, viz. its support for research, the WIOJMS, its symposia and its capacity building courses for scientists and managers;
- **Democratic organization.** WIOMSA will carry out its activities in a democratic, transparent, equitable and accountable way.
- **Resource Mobilization.** WIOMSA will need to be more active in generating income and in fund-raising.

5. WIO REGION VISION

WIOMSA’s Vision for the Western Indian Ocean Region is as follows:

“By 2020 the Western Indian Ocean Region will have healthy coastal and marine environments, whose natural resources are used sustainably and managed wisely through partnerships and collaboration between managers, scientists, governments, development partners and civil society leading to healthy and prosperous coastal communities.”

Key indicators include:

- The region uses ecosystem-based management approaches that consider the natural environment as well as quality of human life (indicators of quality of life could include poverty eradication, building prosperity, gender equality, democracy, health care, education, cultural diversity etc);
- More entities in Governments, development partners, NGOs and the private sector are making effective investments in integrated coastal management (including ecotourism and sustainable fisheries programmes) and research;
- All countries in the region are fully committed and have adequate capacity, information and resources necessary to ensure that coastal and marine issues and processes are well understood and well-managed (at all levels);
- A representative network of resilient, viable and well-managed marine protected areas exists, incorporating participatory management; and
- More collaborative initiatives effectively address both local and global issues (eg. global trade and climate change effects such as sea level rise and coral bleaching).

Achieving the Vision for the WIO Region:

To achieve the Vision for the WIO Region, a number of elements would be required. The most important of these would include:

- Supportive and competent management, research and training institutions;
- Good governance, healthy economies, strong partnerships and collaboration, within the region and beyond;
- Sufficient, excellent research outputs;
- Adequate training and capacity building;
- Adequate information sharing, networking and public awareness on coastal issues;
- Effective advocacy; and
- Sustainable financing and adequate resource mobilisation.

There are other organisations apart from WIOMSA that will play a role in realising this Vision. However, unlike most of the other organisations in the region, WIOMSA is a membership based NGO with a strong presence in all ten countries within the region and several countries beyond. Its regional character, multidisciplinary membership of scientists, both natural and social, and its extensive networks suggest that it will be playing a very specific role in helping to achieve the Vision.

6. WIOMSA'S VISION AND AIM

WIOMSA should play a significant role in catalysing events and processes that will contribute to the Vision being realised. In order to do this, WIOMSA itself will need to change. WIOMSA's purpose statement in the Constitution will need to be amended, as agreed by participants, as follows:

“The aim of the Association is to advance regional co-operation in all aspects of coastal and marine sciences (including socio-economic and management sciences) and management, and to support sustainable development in the Western Indian Ocean Region, while promoting interdisciplinary and multi disciplinary approaches.”

Underlying this aim statement is a vision of WIOMSA:

By 2020, WIOMSA will be recognized widely as a leader in promoting the development of marine and coastal science professionals, advancing marine and coastal science, and promoting the conservation and sustainable development of coastal and marine environment.

As a leader in marine sciences (natural and social) in the Western Indian Ocean Region, WIOMSA will be characterised by:

- A dynamic and interactive body of member scientists and institutions (including management agencies), providing scientific knowledge and management practices in support of the well-being of coastal population and of managing the region's natural assets for long-term sustainable benefits;
- Regional and international recognition as a source of reliable and accessible scientific knowledge on the WIO Region;
- A well-established regional organisation providing forums and regional learning networks;
- Sourcing and maintaining substantial funding attracted by a reputation for fostering scientific excellence and merit;
- Inclusion of its journal, WIOJMS, in the major abstracting systems and citation indices; and
- Recognition as an indispensable partner by governments, international organisations, donor agencies, NGOs and major regional initiatives in the WIO Region.

7. STRATEGIC THEMES

The Strategy contains six thematic components, each with a strategic objective and priorities. They are as follows:

7.1 *Fostering research excellence*

Strategic objective:

“To foster research excellence in the WIO Region through continuously updating a regional research agenda which addresses relevant priority issues; improving research quality; and developing capacity in all relevant disciplines.”

WIOMSA will foster research excellence through the following:

- Facilitating the development and updating of a regional research agenda;
- Supporting improvements in research quality; and
- Supporting the development of a critical mass of excellent scientists in all relevant disciplines.

Each of these is outlined briefly below.

7.1.1 Facilitating the development of a regional research agenda

At present there is no consensus in the WIO Region on a research agenda, although WIOMSA has participated in the development of a research agenda for the MASMA grant programme. Achieving the WIO Vision will require some alignment of research activities of various agencies and experts, so that priority issues are addressed. WIOMSA is strategically well placed to initiate such a discussion with other stakeholders in the region and beyond. The MASMA priorities, which were developed through an extensive consultative process, could form the kernel of a broader research agenda for the region as a whole. WIOMSA could convene a broad consultative scientific meeting, divided into the five areas already identified in terms of MASMA priorities, to discuss gaps and activities to be implemented to address these. Prioritisation of research items will need to be based on a set of agreed criteria. These should include scientific quality, regional applicability, relevance for management and relevance to poverty eradication.

7.1.2 Supporting improvements in research quality

WIOMSA will continue to support improvements in research quality in the WIO Region. There are a number of ways that WIOMSA can do this; the most important include:

- Forging closer links with industry (user groups) as well as planning and implementing joint research projects with them;
- Supporting multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary research and research co-operation,

including the use of existing contacts and networks with research institutions and societies/programmes within and outside the region;

- Ensuring that the WIOJMS and other scientific outputs are of the highest standard, and that WIOJMS enters the major abstracting systems and citation indices;
- Supporting standardisation and intercalibration of research methods;
- Supporting cross-disciplinary learning of approaches and methods as a basis for research collaboration, e.g. between natural and social sciences.
- Maintaining a roster of experts who can be used as mentors for research grants;
- Establishing specialist groups to lead particular fields of science/endeavour as sub-networks in WIOMSA (cf. the various Specialist Groups under IUCN);
- Improving the review and communication channels for the MASMA and other grants;
- Encouraging research in the WIO Region through:
 - publicising the scientific importance of the region through publication,
 - attracting and inviting the participation of international scientists in regional technical working groups, networks and selected research programmes
- Facilitating partnering between scientists and research institutes in the region with renowned international institutes and agencies for joint scientific outputs including patenting;
- Attracting, hosting and organising of regional and international events;
- Setting research codes of conduct.

7.1.3 Supporting the development of a critical mass of excellent scientists in all key disciplines

While WIOMSA is not an educational institute, it is able to play a role in supporting the development of a body of expertise in the region. This can be done in a manner consistent with its aim and purpose. The most significant options include encouraging international research activities, with local stays and teaching activities; and exploring twinning agreements with sister organisations, and learning exchanges. Identifying mentors and linking them with young scientists in the region

In addition, WIOMSA could facilitate a regional process to identify gaps and priorities in tertiary science education, perhaps linked to and following on from its facilitation of the discussion on a regional research agenda.

Criteria for identifying which disciplines to support could include:

- Relevance to the region (related to research agenda);
- Output from that activity should be short-medium term;
- Relative national dependency on marine resources;
- Low number of researchers in a particular discipline; and
- Amount of resources available in that discipline.

Implementation activities identified would address gaps, and WIOMSA may be called upon to play a role in supporting such implementation.

7.2 Developing expertise for effective management

Strategic objective:

“To implement activities that strengthen the capacity of coastal and marine scientists as well as practitioners for effective assessment and management of coastal and marine resources in the WIO Region”

WIOMSA already operates a capacity building programme, which aims at supporting effective management and sustainable development in the WIO Region, and assists WIO countries in meeting international commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals.

In further support of this objective, WIOMSA can make a significant contribution by:

- Identifying (in consultation with other relevant actors) the priority areas for capacity building in the region;
- Developing and organising more short courses for managers and practitioners, in partnership with (and accredited by) existing tertiary institutions;
- Promoting exchange programmes for research and management staff from regional, national and local programmes;
- Supporting the development and delivery of relevant courses by tertiary institutions in the region; and
- Linking up and co-ordinating with capacity building programmes of relevant development projects.

7.3 Raising awareness and enhancing access to knowledge and information

Strategic objective:

“To provide a forum for communication and exchange of information on coastal and marine issues amongst different stakeholders within and beyond the region.”

This theme includes collecting and disseminating scientific, technological and other relevant information on marine sciences; producing a newsletter, journal, bulletin, information brochures, radio and television programmes and other reports on a regular basis; and organising scientific meetings, seminars and workshops for the presentation and sharing of information, findings and experiences on subjects related to all aspects of marine science.

WIOMSA’s already strong track record in this regard could be further strengthened by:

- Producing material in an accessible manner and in appropriate languages (including French, Portuguese and Swahili) for interested parties;
- Strengthening communication and co-ordination between WIOMSA secretariat and country co-ordinators to improve the dissemination of information;
- Developing and publicising relevant research and analysis, targeting intergovernmental forums and key government institutions; and
- Publicising more widely the information that is available through WIOMSA, particularly to user organisations (both research and management) and to members.

7.4 Promoting networking, cooperation and exchange

Strategic objective:

“To provide a forum and develop mechanisms for networking and exchange of knowledge and information on coastal and marine issues amongst scientists, managers, and local communities.”

WIOMSA already provides significant opportunities for networking between researchers in the region. Identifying priority topics for debate, convening national, subregional and regional meetings focussing on them, can further enhance this role. Such meetings can include issue-based forums, symposia, workshops and “retreats”(get-togethers) for members, and could be convened in association with specific institutes having expertise in that field. Discussion topics on these issues could also be set up using electronic media/mail and focus/action groups.

WIOMSA can broaden its networks and foster support for marine management on the part of government and communities, facilitating mutually supportive relations between scientists and managers through:

- Promoting networking among researchers;
- Fostering co-operation and exchange of knowledge and information between researchers, managers and local communities;
- Promoting and fostering inter-institutional linkages within and outside the region;
- Organising scientific meetings, seminars and workshops for the presentation of information, findings and experiences on subjects related to marine sciences.
- Encouraging and support exchange and visits between project teams including representatives of managers, communities, and researchers;
- ensuring that feedback on research results is provided to communities and managers.

7.5 Promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practices

Strategic objective:

“To identify and raise urgent and critical issues and to suggest and advocate appropriate measures and policy responses as well as alternatives.”

WIOMSA has shown that it has considerable potential to influence policy and practice in the region, both through promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practice, and through highlighting and opposing unsustainable policies and practices

Influence can be exerted through overt methods of advocacy (eg direct lobbying, submitting policy recommendations to planning processes and bodies, raising issues in the media, becoming the accredited regional and national scientific advisory body for marine policy making processes, setting targets for marine/coastal conservation and management etc.), and through less direct methods of influence, such as information dissemination (including interpretation of science results that have regional application), publishing popular science articles, supporting targeted research on relevant topics, promoting awareness among policy-makers by inter alia inviting policy-makers to symposia on key topics, organising study tours, publishing research findings widely and in accessible format, and providing assistance and expertise to governments and regional programmes etc.

There are a number of areas where WIOMSA could focus its advocacy activities. These include:

- Showing how government concerns for economic development and poverty reduction can be reconciled with sustainable use of natural resources;
- Promoting a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to the implementation and monitoring of ICM and MPAs;
- Providing expertise to countries who are making a claim to the UN commission for extended continental shelf before November 2009; and
- Using research outputs to influence practice, particularly through:
 - Taking research findings back to relevant stakeholders, packaged in a form and language that is digestible and useful;
 - Publishing and disseminating significant outcomes from the research studies and projects, in accessible ways; and
 - Using research results to define conservation targets and propose management measures.

7.6 Institutional strengthening of WIOMSA

Strategic objective:

“To implement activities that support institutional strengthening of the Association in order to successfully deliver on the other Strategic Themes.”

In order to deliver on the Strategic Themes, WIOMSA will need to be significantly strengthened. There are several areas where this needs to happen. These include:

- Enhancing participation by members especially at country level;
- Broadening the membership base, particularly to include more social scientists; and
- Raising the profile of WIOMSA in the region and internationally.

7.6.1 Enhancing Participation by Members

Currently WIOMSA has over 900 members from the WIO Region and abroad. Members participate in symposia, access research grants, and benefit from the information disseminated by WIOMSA. Enhancing the active participation of members in WIOMSA activities will strengthen the organisation and its impact.

Probably one of the most effective ways of doing this would be to strengthen country participation in WIOMSA. This could include:

- Supporting Country Co-ordinators to play an enhanced role; this would include Country Co-ordinators facilitating country inputs to regional discussions and general assembly meetings; co-ordinating research grant recipients in that country, and increasing their responsibilities for communication with country members including reporting-back to members from Board meetings;
- Establishing country-based regional WIOMSA Specialist Working Groups;
- Ensuring that countries are offered the opportunity of hosting WIOMSA symposia, capacity building courses and workshops;
- Exploring the possibility of employing an individual in each country (located within an institution for resource support) to support the Country Co-ordinators in stimulating members’ active involvement and scope of activities, and thereby mobilising voluntary effort by members in each country;
- Asking members to contribute in kind, time or other ways to support country-based activities, to make them feel more part of WIOMSA: and
- Members could also contribute to the newsletter and other WIOMSA material.

In addition to the above, participation in WIOMSA by French and Portuguese speaking members needs to be supported, and information flows need to be encouraged. This can take place through a number of additional mechanisms:

- Providing key documents and website information in French, Portuguese and Swahili;
- Allowing for submission of research grant proposals in French and Portuguese;
- Providing interpretation at meetings and symposia (where possible); and
- Translating important/relevant documents from French and Portuguese to English

and vice versa.

7.6.2 Broadening the membership base

To support its efforts in contributing to the WIO Region Vision, membership of WIOMSA should be broadened. Country coordinators should have a strong role in this. This would be achieved by:

- Actively soliciting membership from research institutions and other marine-related institutions in the region, and involving their leadership in WIOMSA;
- Establishing a “Friends of the Coast” membership for a wider audience among the public who are concerned about marine and coastal issues (lawyers, journalists, schoolteachers, children/youth, fishers, villagers, etc);
- Identifying and ‘capturing’ new members who are outstanding experts in their fields, including people from the region who are working elsewhere; and
- Actively recruiting younger scientists from graduate programmes at universities.

In particular, WIOMSA needs to attract more social scientists to its ranks. Suggestions for increasing the participation of social scientists include:

- Making sure that social science faculties and departments of universities obtain information about WIOMSA including its activities, funding opportunities, and contact persons, and ensuring that this information makes it clear that WIOMSA welcomes social scientists;
- Promoting interdisciplinary research involving natural and social scientists who collaborate on fair and equal terms;
- Holding workshops and seminars specifically related to social scientists (with natural scientists) with the aim of stimulating their interest in and knowledge about coastal/marine environment issues and processes, and about WIOMSA;
- Facilitating links with anthropologists, economists, geographers, historians and sociologists working with marine and coastal issues in WIOR and other regions;
- Impressing on higher education institutions with programmes that target coastal and marine environment to include the social sciences in their programmes; and
- Ensuring that capacity building programmes of WIOMSA include social as well as natural science issues, and preferably in an integrated way.

7.6.3 Raising the profile of WIOMSA

WIOMSA is currently seen as an independent regional association supporting excellence in marine and coastal science in the WIO Region and enhancing management of marine and coastal resources. It has developed effective partnerships with many national, regional and international organisations and agencies and is likely to be offered responsibility to serve as node for global scientific programmes.

A good reputation, goodwill and effective leadership are all attributes of the Association. Its influence over policy will increase as its reputation and awareness of its expertise become more widespread. This is also likely to lead to fundraising becoming easier. To capitalise on this, WIOMSA needs to develop a strategy to publicise itself and its activities more widely in the WIO Region countries and internationally, identifying target audiences.

This strategy should include establishing/strengthening links and collaboration with organisations and programmes which have common goals for mutual support and benefit, whether these be international scientific associations, global/regional coastal and marine initiatives and programmes, regional development forums, or international NGOs and organisations.

Suggested organisations and initiatives include IOGOOS, ICRI, IOC (UNESCO), Global Marine Assessment; Regional Seas Conventions, UNDP, UNEP, IMF, World Bank, SADC, COMESA, NEPAD, ACEP (African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme), UNDP: Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems, South West Indian Ocean Programme Fisheries, CRC and CZMC, EAME, organisations in the larger IO region, Canadian High Commission development counsellors, IUCN, WWF, WCS, Indian Ocean Commission, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. WIOMSA already has links or co-operation ongoing with some of these.

It is also important for WIOMSA to continue to strengthen links with governments and local civil societies in the region, which will facilitate its work at local level and create greater trust in WIOMSA and its policy advice, and provide a two-way access to information held by both WIOMSA and government agencies.

8. OPERATIONAL ACTION PLAN

This section presents the Operational Action Plan for WIOMSA, which is based on the Strategic Plan. This Action Plan will guide the implementation Association's priority activities identified in each of the Strategic Theme, in the short and long-term period. Based on proposed activities, the action plan is divided into two main parts:

- a. **Implemented with existing resources.** Activities in this category could easily be incorporated amongst existing activities with no additional resources in terms of funding. They are regarded as an extension of the existing activities rather than new ones.
- b. **Requiring Additional Resources.** Activities under this category will require additional financial resources to implement.

For each of the proposed activities, key relationships, partnerships, processes and timeframe for its implementation and indicators to be used to measure its achievement, will be developed during the elaboration of the Action Plan.

Table 1. Summary of the Operational Action Plan

Strategic Theme	Sub-Theme	Initiatives	Proposed Measurable Indicators	Timeframe
Implemented with Existing Resources				
Improving Research Excellence	Developing and updating of a regional research agenda	Developing and updating of Research Agenda		
	Supporting improvements in research quality	Supporting multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary research and research co-operation		
		WIOJMS and other scientific outputs are of the highest standard, and that WIOJMS enters the major abstracting systems and citation indices		
		Supporting cross-disciplinary learning of approaches and methods		
		Maintaining a roster of experts who can be used as mentors for research grants		
		Establishing specialist groups to lead particular fields of science/endeavour		
		Improving the review and communication channels for the MASMA and other grants		
		Encouraging research in the WIO Region and publicising the scientific importance of the region		
		Facilitating partnering between scientists and research institutes in the region with renowned international institutes and agencies for joint scientific outputs		
		Attracting, hosting and organising of regional and international events		
		Inviting the participation of international scientists in regional technical working groups, networks and selected research programmes		

Raising awareness and enhancing access to knowledge and information		Strengthening communication and coordination between WIOMSA secretariat and country coordinators to improve the dissemination of information		
		Developing and publicising relevant research and analysis, targeting intergovernmental forums and key government institutions		
		Publicising more widely the information that is available through WIOMSA, particularly to user organisations (both research and management) and to members.		
Promoting networking, cooperation and exchange		Encouraging and support exchange and visits between project teams including representatives of managers, communities, and researchers		
		Encouraging and promoting participatory research and monitoring, and ensuring that feedback on research results is provided to communities and managers		
Promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practices		Promoting a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to the implementation and monitoring of ICM and MPAs		
Institutional Strengthening of WIOMSA	Enhancing participation by members especially at country level	Supporting Country Coordinators to play an enhanced role		
		Ensuring that countries are offered the opportunity of hosting WIOMSA symposia, capacity building courses and workshops		
		Asking members to contribute in kind, time or other ways to support country-based activities		
		Members could also contribute to the newsletter and other WIOMSA material		
		Support the participation in WIOMSA by French and Portuguese speaking members		

	Broadening the membership base, particularly to include more social scientists	Actively soliciting membership from research institutions and other marine-related institutions in the region		
		Identifying and 'capturing' new members who are outstanding experts in their fields		
		Attract more social scientists		
	Raising the profile of WIOMSA in the region and internationally	Develop a strategy to publicise itself and its activities more widely in the WIO Region countries and internationally, identifying target audiences.		
	Strengthen links with governments and local civil societies in the region			
Additional Resources Required				
Improving Research Excellence	Supporting improvements in research quality	Forging closer links with industry (user groups)		
		Supporting standardisation and intercalibration of research methods		
		Setting research codes of conduct		
	Supporting the development of a critical mass	International research activities, with local stays and teaching activities		
		Exploring twinning agreements with sister organisations, and learning exchanges		
		Identifying mentors and linking them with young scientists in the region		
		Facilitate a regional process to identify gaps and priorities in tertiary science education/management activities		
Developing expertise for effective management		Identifying (in consultation with other relevant actors) the priority areas for capacity building in the region		
		Developing and organising more short courses for managers and practitioners, in partnership with (and accredited by) existing tertiary institutions		

		Promoting exchange programmes for research and management staff from regional, national and local programmes		
		Supporting the development and delivery of relevant courses by tertiary institutions in the region		
		Linking up and coordinating with capacity building programmes of relevant development projects		
	Raising awareness and enhancing access to knowledge and information	Producing material in an accessible manner and in appropriate languages (including French, Portuguese and Swahili) for interested parties		
	Promoting networking, cooperation and exchange	Convening national, sub regional and regional meetings focusing on priority topic for debate		
	Promoting and advocating appropriate policies and practices	Showing how government concerns for economic development and poverty reduction can be reconciled with sustainable use of natural resources		
		Providing expertise to countries who are making a claim to the UN commission for extended continental shelf before November 2009		
		Using research outputs to influence practice.		
Institutional Strengthening of WIOMSA	Enhancing participation by members especially at country level	Establishing country-based regional WIOMSA Specialist Working Groups		
	Broadening the membership base, particularly to include more social scientists	Establishing a “Friends of the Coast” membership for a wider audience		
		Actively recruiting younger scientists from graduate programmes at universities		

Strengthen financial sustainability of the Association	Development of a Resource Mobilization Strategy.			
	Development and submission of proposal to funding agencies to support implementation of priority activities.			
	Build the institutional capacity to fund-raise.			

9. FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY

In the immediate future, WIOMSA needs to focus its activities on a resource mobilisation strategy, which is designed to ensure that WIOMSA achieves financial sustainability. The focus of this strategy will be on raising funds to priority issues highlighted in the next section on Action Plan.

The Sida/SAREC has funded most of the activities that have been implemented by WIOMSA. Sida/SAREC support to WIOMSA dates back to 1993, when the Association was established. During the development of the Strategic Plan the Association's reliance on a single donor, namely Sida/SAREC was identified as its main weakness and it was recommended that it should be a priority focus for action in the immediate future. Without a successful fundraising and financial strategy, none of the Strategic Plan's objectives could be achieved.

Furthermore, since its establishment WIOMSA has been providing its services and products to its members free of charge. At present no fee is charged for membership and publications including copies of the Journal are given out free. No donations or voluntary contribution have ever been solicited from anyone to support any of its activity.

In this respect, the priority for the Association in the immediate future is to develop the Resource Mobilization Strategy which would aim at ensuring that in the short-term, WIOMSA has adequate resources to implement the proposed priority activities in the Strategic Plan as well as achieve financial sustainability in the long-term.

However, the capacity of the Association to develop a Resource Mobilization Strategy and raise funds to implement priority activities identified in the Strategic Plan is limited by both the present staff capacity in fund-raising as well as inadequate financial resources owing to lack of any allocation in the current budget to support the develop a Resources Mobilization Strategy.

There are three potential sources of funding for WIOMSA in the future that need to be explored further:

1. Funds arising from successful funding proposals submitted to donors;
2. Unrestricted sources (not tied to specific activities). These could derive from both internal and external sources. Internal sources could be membership fees, sales of products and publications, and external sources could be annual contribution from institutions and governments in the region or outside, regional programmes, or from endowments, legacies, and the use of WIOMSA logo;
3. The Association could also raise fees from acting as an executing agency and/or service provider.

The immediate priorities for WIOMSA are, firstly, to service its current donors more effectively and develop a closer relationship with them; and secondly, to appoint on contract a specialist who will be tasked with developing and implementing a fundraising strategy as a matter of urgency.

Key elements of this fundraising strategy will comprise:

- Raising the profile of WIOMSA in order to attract funding;

- Identifying potential donors and to develop very clear messages to attract them;
- Building on the experience and successes of WIOMSA to date with proposals that take this further by improving or expanding existing programmes eg MASMA; and
- Focussing proposals on sustainable livelihoods and strengthening local institutions as outlined earlier.
- Build capacity at the Secretariat to coordinate fund-raising activities
- Looks at a number of different sources of income in addition to donor funding, is feasible, and is capable of being implemented successfully.