



WIOMSA *Newsbrief*

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Putting people first - how marine research can lessen poverty

From August 29th to September 1st, 250 experts on marine and coastal related issues met at the Fourth biennial Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Scientific Symposium to present and discuss how their research can improve human welfare and alleviate poverty in the Western Indian Ocean region. The event was held in Grand Baie, Mauritius.

The theme of the symposium was "Con- tribution of Research in Improving Human Welfare and Poverty Alleviation". The con-

ference was organized by WIOMSA in col- laboration with the Mauritius Oceanogra- phy Institute (MOI) and the Prime



Minister's Office in Mauritius. It had ses- sions on social dynamics in coastal and marine environments; mariculture; utiliza- tion of marine resources; physical and geological processes; management sys- tems; endangered species; coral reefs; and pollution and ecosystem processes.

Environment and economy hand in hand

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit in Mauritius, Honourable Anil Bachoo, inaugurated the six-day long symposium that began with the National Ocean Science Forum (NOSF). In his speech, he emphasized the importance of integrating environmen- tal concerns with economic development:

- Our environmental policy formu- lation will be centred round our core phi- losophy of "Putting People First", which underpins the new Government Program- me.

The Honourable Bachoo continued explaining the approach of the Mauritian Government:



Dr. Mahfuzuddin Ahmed, Director at the WorldFish Center (left) and Dr. Anjan Datta from UNEP-GPA Coordination Office (right) next to the poster of Ms. Gloria Sikiti (middle). Ms. Sikiti works for Marine and Coastal Management in Cape Town, South Africa.



Prof Nils Kautsky from Sweden, Prof Ian Bryceson from Norway and Dr Fernando Ribeira from Mocambique take the opportunity to exchange opinions during coffee break.

- Likewise, our environmental strategies will be focused on making environmental protection an essential component of our economic development.

Current challenges

Marine specialists from the Western Indian Ocean region, Europe, Asia, North America and West Africa gathered to exchange thoughts and research results linked to the challenges the countries in the Western Indian Ocean region are facing regarding the management of their marine and coastal resources. One of the major challenges is how to balance the need for economic growth against the necessity for conserving the coastal and marine resources. The liberalization of trade shows what difficult choices the countries in the region are facing.

- On one end, a high price and high demand situation has the potential to make fishery a major engine for economic growth and a significant contributor to poverty reduction strategies for the region, Dr. Mahfuzuddin Ahmed, Director at the WorldFish Center and one of the keynote speakers, explained.

But there is also a negative side to the freeing of the market:

- It will expose the fisheries to a higher degree of exploitation making

many fish stocks vulnerable to depletion as the phenomena of increased effort and selective harvesting are likely to grow in the absence of effective management.

Placing the people in focus

The effective management of natural resources is one of the major keystones in the fight against coastal poverty. For any management strategy to succeed, it is important to involve the people. Dr. Nyawira Muthiga, the President of WIOMSA, explained that the theme of the Symposium was chosen very carefully with regards to the fact that much of the coastal people in the region still live in very poor conditions. One of the most important tasks for experts in the region is to focus on research that can contribute to poverty alleviation.

Dr. Muthiga also brought up a few main areas where she saw an urgent need for research: The effects of last year's Tsunami; the effects of the coral bleaching

event in 1997 and 1998; gathering of scientific information to enable the increase in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (number and coverage) as per commitment made by the countries in the region to the Convention of Biodiversity; research on fisheries and alternative livelihoods; and the development of a mechanism to improve the linkage between science and management. She was very hopeful about the future in terms of research and cooperation:

- It is my belief that by working together, we shall succeed in defining the research agenda that contributes to the sustainable management of our coastal and marine resources for the benefit now, and for our children and the generations to come.

Reaching new milestones

Sustainable management demands the knowledge and understanding, not only of biophysical phenomena, but also of social science. This Symposium gathered more social scientists than ever before, a fact that the Executive Secretary of WIOMSA Dr Julius Francis threw light on in his welcoming speech:

- The number of presentations on social-economic issues and governance studies has increased substantially in this year's symposium with two sessions covering these aspects.

In total, the Symposium brought together more than 250 participants from well over 20 countries, which was especially gratifying as it was the first time in the history of WIOMSA that the Symposium was held in one of the member Island States. Furthermore, this Symposium attracted more participants from Mauritius, Reunion and South Africa compared to previous ones.

Cost sharing

It was also the first time that the par-

"It was an excellent conference. I learned a lot, as well as received a lot of interest in my work. The possibility of collaboration between Cape Town and Mauritius is very exciting!"

Juliet Hermes, South Africa

ticipants were charged registration fees. Dr Francis, explained why:

- Without the registration fee, we would not have been able to support as many participants as we have done this time.

In addition, the cost sharing turned out to be successful in the way that most participants were able to secure supplementary funding to the partial support that WIOMSA provided.

New initiatives

Apart from the presentations of papers and posters, the symposium offered the opportunity for side events – an additional vehicle for exchange of ideas and establishment of new cooperative schemes and networks. The Informal Western Indian Ocean International Waters Forum, held on August 31st, was one of the side events. WIOMSA, the Nairobi Convention and UNEP-GEF WIO-LaB Project hosted the Forum. The participants were informed about ongoing (UNEP-GEF WIO-LaB Project)

and planned (UNDP-GEF Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystem, ASLCME and WB-GEF South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project, SWIOFP) GEF-funded projects.

Many other groups also made use of the venue to meet and discuss future activities. The Forum of Heads of Academic and Research Institutions (FARI) was formally launched. The Mariculture Network in the WIO region and the WIO Marine Environmental Education and Science Communication Network were initiated.

Next Symposium

The conclusion of one symposium means the beginning of the preparation of the next. Two institutions in South Africa have offered to host the Fifth Symposium. More offers are welcomed. The WIOMSA Board of Trustees will meet in February 2006 to decide where the Symposium will be held in 2007.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORTED THE SYMPOSIUM

Sida/SAREC

The Government of Mauritius through the Prime Minister's Office and the Mauritius Oceanography Institute

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO

WWF Eastern Africa Marine Ecoregion

Coastal Management Research Centre (COMREC)

Coral Reef Degradation in Indian Ocean (CORDIO)

Sida/SAREC Bilateral Programme

Indian Ocean Commission (COI)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

GEF-UNEP WIO-LaB project

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT



Dr Arjoon Suddhoo, Executive Director of the Mauritius Research Council.

National Forum feeds into Regional Symposium

The Mauritius Oceanography Institute organized its third annual National Ocean Science Forum (NOSF) on the 29th of August 2005 at the Grand Baie Conference Centre. The aim of the forum was to provide marine scientists in various Mauritian institutions the opportunity to present and share results of their research activities.

This forum also provided a platform to disseminate information to the public and to make them better acquainted with marine environment. Papers were presented by scientists from Albion Fisheries Research Centre of the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Environment, the Maritime Air Squadron of the National Coast Guard, the University of Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) and from various NGOs such as Shoals Rodrigues,

the Biodiversity and Environment Institute and the Marine Conservation Management Consortium. In all, the participants had the opportunity to listen to 17 different presentations about ecology, marine conservation and management, marine chemistry, fisheries biology and management and disaster management and surveillance.

Joint opening

For the first time, NOSF was held back

to back with a major regional event – the Fourth Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Scientific Symposium and therefore also benefited from the attendance of more than 160 experts from outside Mauritius. NOSF and the WIOMSA Symposium were jointly opened by Honourable Anil Kumar Bachoo, Minister of Environment and the National Development Unit (NDU). Seven ministers, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of regional and international organizations based in Mauritius attended the Opening Ceremony.

Dr Patricio Bernal, Assistant Director General of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Executive Secretary of Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO,

gave some opening remarks around the importance of institutions in the management of coastal and marine resources.

Dr Nyawira Muthiga, President of WIOMSA, also welcomed the participants and urged them to use NOSF and the WIOMSA symposium not only as exclusive platforms for mutual learning, but also to enjoy meeting old friends and making new acquaintances from 20 different countries with a broad spectrum of experience and ideas.

Importance of national fora

In addition to Mauritius, Mozambique and South Africa also hold regular national scientific meetings. Dr Julius Francis, Executive Secretary of WIOMSA, says such national fora are central mechanisms for exchange of information and ideas on a national level, and for influencing policy making.

- Countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and Madagascar with several research and academic institutions should also explore the possibilities of initiating national scientific meetings, he concludes.

New map launched

During NOSF, MOI launched its publication entitled: “Mapping of the Marine Habitats of the South-Eastern Coast of Mauritius”, a product from a project funded by the European Union through the Indian Ocean Commission (COI).

The award ceremony for the winners of the website competition organized by MOI on “Importance of the Ocean for Small Developing Island States” was also held in conjunction with the forum.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2005

WIOMSA members made their voices heard

The 3rd General Assembly of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) was held in Mauritius on the 2nd of September 2005. 115 WIOMSA members and other invited guests were present.

The General Assembly (GA) of WIOMSA is the supreme organ of the association designed to guide its operations, particularly in determining the short and long-term future direction. The assembly takes place every third year and gives the members the opportunity to make their voices heard, as well as the Secre-

teriat and Board of Trustees to report to the membership on the achievements made and challenges encountered during the inter-sessional period. It is also the occasion when the board of WIOMSA is elected.

New Board

After a long expectant waiting during the counting of the votes for the new board, the results were announced to the General Assembly. The WIOMSA secretariat had received a total of 338 votes of which 291 were valid. The new board consists of Dr. Magnus Ngoile (representing the host country), Dr. Salomao Bandeira, and Dr. Nyawira Muthiga (representing the mainland countries) Dr. Mitrasen Bhikajee and Dr. Nirmal Shah (representing the Island states) and Prof. Ron Johnstone (representing the Associate membership).

Major achievements

During the Assembly, Dr. Francis, the

Executive Secretary of WIOMSA, presented the Inter-sessional Secretariat Report, which covered activities undertaken by the Secretariat during the period 2001-2005. Some of the major attainments during this period of time were the establishment of the Western Indian Ocean Journal of Marine Science, the development and completion of the WIOMSA Strategic Plan and the initiation of a regional competitive research grant programme (Marine Science for Management – MASMA).

Reports from Country Coordinators

For the first time, the Country Coordinators were invited to report back to the Assembly what they have done in their respective countries during the inter-sessional period. Six Country Coordinators reported from Tanzania, Seychelles, Reunion, Kenya, Mauritius and Mozambique. In most countries, the number of members had increased con-



Ms. Kerstin Henri, Country Coordinator from Seychelles, informed the General Assembly about WIOMSA-related activities in her island country.

siderably and varying WIOMSA activities had been promoted. The Country Coordinator for Reunion, Dr. Matthieu le Corre, informed the audience that he arranges weekly scientific meetings to discuss different aspects of marine science, something that other Country Coordinators picked up as a good idea to implement in their own countries.

Strategy and fund raising

In line with the WIOMSA Strategic Plan, the main focus of the association in the near future will be on the resource mobilization to support the priority activities identified in the Plan. Efforts will also be made to lay a foundation for financial sustainability of WIOMSA. In this respect, WIOMSA has secured funding from The Wilson Foundation through the World Conservation Society (WCS). The funds will be used for hiring of new staff that will be responsible for fund raising activities.

Amended constitution

Dr. Francis presented WIOMSA's Constitution with some proposed amendments to the General Assembly. The amendments were discussed and approved after some modifications. Most of the proposed amendments originated from the Strategic Plan that redefined the aim and purpose of the Association as well as its objectives. Other alterations included the introduction of a Vice President post, a definition of the Board members' tenure and the establishment of the post of a Patron of WIOMSA and his/her functions.



Dr. Nyawira Muthiga, President of WIOMSA during 2002-2005, was re-elected as a member of the WIOMSA Board of Trustees, representing the mainland countries.



115 WIOMSA members and invited guests attended the General Assembly

OUTCOME OF THE 2005 BOARD MEMBERS ELECTION

Category	Name	Vote
Host Country	Narriman Jiddawi	96
	Charles Lugomela	13
	Yunus Mgaya	59
	Godfrey Kamukala	6
	Alfred Muzuka	15
	Magnus Ngoile	104*
Mainland Countries	Salomao Bandeira (Mozambique)	117*
	Johnson Kazungu (Kenya)	68
	Abidrahman Kulmiye (Somalia)	52
	Rob Leslie (South Africa)	31
	Nyawira Muthiga (Kenya)	103*
	David Obura (Kenya)	65
	Helida Oyieke (Kenya)	26
	Renison Ruwa (Kenya)	24
	Michael Schleyer (South Africa)	82
Enock Wakwabi (Kenya)	17	
Island States	Fatouma Abdallah (Comoros)	86
	Hachime Abdareman (Comoros)	38
	Mitrasen Bhikajee (Mauritius)	111*
	Henri Grizel (Reunion)	46
	Rolph A Payet (Seychelles)	70
	Soobhashini Devi Nunkoo	19
	Remi Ratsimbazafy (Madagascar)	98
	Nirmal Shah (Seychelles)	101*
Terence Marc Vel (Seychelles)	17	
Outside the Region	Per Berggren (Sweden)	18
	Mats Bjork (Sweden)	42
	Ron Johnstone (Australia)	74*
	Olof Linden (Sweden)	50
	Marcus Ohman (Sweden)	20
	Jose Paula (Portugal)	23
	Sundram Ravikumar (India)	15
	Ricky Stanley (Canada)	31
Alan Whittick (Canada)	21	

Board members awarded

- *Without dedicated Board Members, WIOMSA would never have reached this far, Julius Francis, the Executive Secretary of WIOMSA said during the award ceremony in Mauritius in August 2005.*

During the 4th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium in Mauritius, the outgoing and previous WIOMSA Board Members were given awards for their dedicated service

to the Association. Dr. Bengt Calles, the Guest of Honour and the representative from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), distrib-

uted the certificates framed in Zanzibari handmade wooden frames.



Dr. Mitrasen Bhikajee (left), from Mauritius Oceanography Institute, Mauritius, receiving his award from Dr. Bengt Calles from Sida (right).



Prof. Adelaide Semesi from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was posthumously awarded. Her daughter, Ms. Sware Semesi (right) collecting the award.



Prof. Ron Johnstone (right), from the University of Queensland, Australia.



Dr. Narriman Jiddawi (right) from the Institute of Marine Science, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



Dr. Magnus Ngoile, from the National Environment Council, Tanzania, Dr. Nyawira Muthiga from the Wildlife Conservation Society, Kenya and Dr. Julius Francis, WIOMSA.



Prof. Chantal Conand from the University of Reunion, Reunion.



In conjunction with the award ceremony, some of the founding members of WIOMSA were acknowledged and invited to say a few words. Holding the microphone is Prof. Olof Linden from the World Maritime University, Sweden.



After the award ceremony, the participants of the WIOMSA Scientific Symposium were invited to a cocktail party hosted by WIOMSA at the La Veranda Hotel.

FARI: improved scientific co-ordination through new network

To create a mechanism for linking up research and academic institutions with decision-makers in the Western Indian Ocean region. To share and exchange information amongst regional academic and research institutions. To have adequate involvement of regional institutions in regional initiatives. These are a few of the goals for the new network 'Forum of Heads of Academic Research Institutions' (FARI), which was formally launched the 29th of August 2005 in Mauritius.

The decision on establishing FARI was taken during the Fourth Meeting of the contracting parties to the Nairobi Convention in Madagascar in July 2004. The decision directed the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention to facilitate FARI's establishment in collaboration with WIOMSA. It is envisaged that FARI will provide a framework for:

- Facilitating sharing of information between institutions and the Nairobi Convention, other regional processes and amongst themselves
- Offer scientific and technical advice on priorities for management,

assessment/research and information dissemination to the regional initiatives.

- Serving as pressure group for enforcing sustainable utilization of coastal and marine resources.

Dr Bhikajee first Chair

The Chair of FARI will come from the country hosting the WIOMSA Scientific Symposium and the Vice-Chair from the country that is elected to host the next Symposium. Accordingly, Dr Mitrasen Bhikajee was appointed Chair of FARI. The Vice-Chair is still to be designated, depending on which country that will host the Symposium 2007.

All the information gathered within the forum will be published at WIOMSA's website: www.wiomsa.org



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