

Office of Astronomy for Development

International Astronomical Union

South African Astronomical Observatory, Cape Town, SA

W: www.astro4dev.org T: [+27 \(0\) 21 460 6297](tel:+270214606297) Twitter: [@astro4dev](https://twitter.com/astro4dev)

2014 Call for Proposals – evaluations underway!

The OAD's 2014 call for proposals attracted **131 proposals**, a significant reduction from the previous years (191 in 2012 and 230 in 2013). The drop in number was not unexpected as the focus was very much placed on quality and innovation rather than quantity. Anecdotally it seems that the quality of the proposals has indeed increased but this is still to be confirmed after the evaluations. The processing of proposals went smoothly with the online system performing well and translations only required in Spanish, Portuguese and French. All applications were consolidated and submitted to the evaluation teams within a week of the **31 August 2014** deadline. Recommendations from the evaluators are due by the end of **October 2014**. Those recommendations will then be approved by the IAU's Extended Development Oversight Committee (EDOC) and the proposers will be notified towards the end of **November 2014**. Next call for proposals: **30th June 2015!**

News & Updates from the OAD

Annual Call for Proposals 2013

Current projects are reaching completion with updates regularly posted on the OAD website. One of the recommended projects was cancelled due to intellectual property issues and another postponed due to the Ebola outbreak. An MOU was signed with [Fiat Physica](#) in this quarter to raise funds for those projects not funded in the previous call. The new "wish list" (which will in the future be referred to as the "OAD recommended list") will be released towards the end of 2014.



Astronomy for a better world!

The [International Astronomical Union](#) (IAU) adopted a [strategic plan](#) in 2009 that aims to realize the global developmental benefits of astronomy.

In order to implement this plan, the IAU established the [Office of Astronomy for Development](#) (OAD) in partnership with the South African National Research Foundation. The OAD is hosted at the [South African Astronomical Observatory](#) (SAAO) in Cape Town.

The OAD is a global coordinating centre for "astronomy-for-development" activities. The three focus areas are: Task Force 1 [Astronomy for Universities and Research](#); Task Force 2 [Astronomy for Children and Schools](#); and Task Force 3 [Astronomy for the Public](#).

Featured Project: Astroproject

Astroproject is an initiative to develop a documentary series on Astronomy and Astrophysics related research in India. The major objectives of the documentary series are to increase awareness about astronomy and astrophysics research institutes in India, research conducted by scientists in India, and eradicate superstitions associated with celestial events through communication with the masses.

On completion of the documentary series, several popularization events shall be conducted across the country in collaboration with stakeholders throughout India. Astroproject's hope is to create awareness among the masses and specifically the young scientific minds of India. By the end of 2015, the project aims to have motivated several students to opt for Astronomy, Astrophysics or Space Science as a research field.

The team has currently documented 6 observatories. These include one of the oldest solar observatories in the world at Kodiakanal, as well as the world's second highest altitude observatory (15,000 ft) at Hanle, Ladak the Indian Astronomical Observatory. In the coming months, the team plans to cover all the observatories and research institutions and develop a series of documentary films on Astronomy. The project updates can be found on www.astroproject.in and a short trailer can be viewed on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).



Project Leader: Rakesh Rao

Born and raised in Goa, Rakesh Rao is a science enthusiast and filmmaker who specialises in making scientific documentaries.

He has been involved in many projects; the latest one involved spending 14 months over a span of 3 years in Antarctica to film the construction of the third Indian Scientific Station 'BHARATI' at Larsemann Hill. He has also filmed for numerous other organisations and his photography has been featured at several exhibitions.

Rakesh is involved with the amateur astronomer organisation the "Association of friends of Astronomy" and has been promoting astronomy in schools and colleges across the country. His work is specifically directed towards creating images and videos that help educate the masses about science, environment and technology.

IAU-OAD special projects

Some highlights of projects outside the usual Call for Proposals:

- (i) The OAD began a project with the Institute of Monitoring and Evaluation to establish a framework for the long term impact assessment of the OAD's work. This is not to be confused with the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which was put in place in 2013 – impact assessment is a more complex arena dealing with long term change. The aim is to complete the project before the next IAU General Assembly in 2015;
- (ii) The OAD's AstroVarsity project (led by OAD intern Laure Catala) has evolved into a larger activity involving Task Force on Universities and Research and various OAD-funded projects. The objective is a consolidation of university level resources and workshops into a package that will be piloted at the University of Zululand ideally before the end of 2014. Collaborators on this project currently include individuals from SAAO, the South African Astro-informatics Alliance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Zululand, University of Cape Town; University of North West and the AstroLab project (based in Belgium and France);
- (iii) OAD intern Rajin Ramphul has been working on consolidating the data from OAD-funded projects which will inform a summary infographic to be included in the next OAD brochure;
- (iv) A new intern at the OAD, Rajeev Manick, has been working on an online version of the Young Astronomer Events which will be released prior to the General Assembly in order to allow the activity to take place online between meetings;
- (v) Several discussions have been held with interested individuals following the launch of the OAD Visiting Fellowship programme. We envisage a few "fellows" coming to the OAD in the next quarter or early in 2015 – watch this space;
- (vi) This quarter saw the launch of the OAD-IUCAA visiting fellowships for African individuals. Closing date was 20th September and selections will be made in the next quarter;

Upcoming Events

November 4-6

2014 World Innovation Summit for Education in Qatar

November 11

IAU EDOC telecon to discuss outcome of call for proposals and regional node applications

December 1 to 5

AstroVarsity pilot implementation at the University of Zululand, South Africa

Past events

July 14 to 18

Oxford X: Astronomy, Indigenous Knowledge and Interpretation, Cape Town, South Africa

August 8

Launch of Southern African Regional OAD, Zambia

August 18 to 22

12th Asia Pacific Regional IAU Meeting, Korea

September 1 to 6

3rd Middle East and Africa Regional IAU Meeting, Lebanon

September 22 to 24

UNOOSA meeting in Graz, Austria

- (vii) The GalileoMobile project (which the OAD partly supported) took place this quarter where the team visited several countries in the Amazon region of South America;
- (viii) During this quarter the OAD was informed of a successful proposal (EU Space Awareness) to the EU Horizon 2020 programme. In this proposal the OAD is part of a consortium that seeks to address education and awareness in several countries with the role of the OAD to expand the activity globally.

Highlights of meetings/conferences

There was only one international trip by OAD Director to Zambia for the signing of an agreement to launch the Southern African Regional Office of Astronomy for Development. Other relevant events that took place are listed here:

- (i) The OAD was represented at the Fourth East African Astronomy Meeting in Rwanda by Task Force 1 Chair Ed Guinan;
- (ii) Interviews were conducted with three shortlisted candidates for the position of OAD Project Officer – unanimous agreement was reached and an offer was made to the successful candidate who is expected to start in November 2014 – watch this space!
- (iii) OAD Director presented an invited talk at the “Oxford X: Astronomy, Indigenous Knowledge and Interpretation” conference in Cape Town;
- (iv) The OAD’s activities, with a focus on the “AstroSense” project, were presented at an exhibition for the Science and Technology Budget Vote in Parliament;
- (v) OAD Director participated in a [Google Hangout on the OAD](#) that was hosted by CosmoQuest (this was an hour-long interview broadcast on the web - the video is then available on YouTube – links also on the OAD website);
- (vi) Another Google Hangout involving the OAD was hosted by “Astronomers without Borders” and featured several high profile personalities talking about “[Astronomy In the Development of STEM Education](#)” (links also on the OAD website);

The IAU XXIX General Assembly 2015: Call for Abstracts

Registration is open for the IAU General Assembly 2015 which takes place in Hawaii from 2 -14 August 2015. The OAD will be hosting a Focus Meeting entitled "Astronomy for Development" and we would be keen to see abstract submissions that align with the following topics of the focus meeting:

- The IAU Strategic Plan and the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development
- Synergies between the OAD and IAU Divisions
- Regional Nodes and Language Expertise Centres
- OAD Call for proposals and funded projects
- Global projects relating to Astronomy for Development, including citizen science
- Monitoring and evaluation across all activities
- Long term goals for the IAU’s Astronomy for Development activities
- Fundraising and implementation of special projects
- Volunteers and volunteer opportunities for IAU members
- Technological capacity building, astronomical instrumentation and IT

For more information, registration and abstract submission, please visit www.astronomy2015.org

- (vii) The OAD was represented at the 12th Asia-Pacific Regional IAU Meeting in Korea by the East Asian and South East Asian regional nodes. A special session was held on Astronomy for Development where several OAD collaborators and funded projects presented their work. Wayne Orchiston from the South East Asian Regional node made a presentation on behalf of the OAD. The OAD also shared an exhibition space with the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO) who hosted a lunch with "Astronomy for Development" as one of the topics. Kaz Sekiguchi from the OAD Steering Committee was also in attendance;
- (viii) A presentation was made to colleagues in the Astronomy group at the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) to update them on the work of the OAD and discuss what would be required for ongoing DST support. Since the OAD is about to undergo a 3-year review, the outcome of that review will inform the way forward;
- (ix) The OAD was represented at the 3rd Middle East and Africa Regional IAU Meeting in Lebanon. TFI Chair Ed Guinan presented on behalf of the OAD. Claude Carignan from the OAD Steering Committee was also in attendance;
- (x) The OAD was represented by George Miley at the United Nations/Austria Symposium on "Space Science and the United Nations" in Graz, Austria

Special visitors to the OAD:

Stefan Dreizler and a group of students from the University of Goettingen in Germany visited the OAD in September. This was the second visit to the OAD where the students learned about the work of the OAD and discussed opportunities for volunteering.



OAD Staff News



OAD Admin Officer: Nuhaah Solomon

This quarter saw the return of Nuhaah Solomon from maternity leave and the departure of Ruth Loubser from this temporary assignment. The handover has been relatively smooth given that administrative systems are already in place. Importantly, we resumed normal operations on the administration side of the OAD during this quarter. We are grateful to Ruth for her contributions and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Interns during this quarter included Rajin Ramphul, Laure Catala, Rajeev Manick and Eli Kasai, all working on specific projects to assist with both OAD operations and special projects.

Watch this space for more information on the incoming OAD Project Officer expected to start in the coming months.

Meet the OAD team (staff and interns):
www.astro4dev.org/oadteam/

Regional Nodes & Language Expertise Centres

This quarter saw the launch of the fourth regional node of the OAD (in Zambia for Southern Africa). The launch took place at the host institution (Copperbelt University - CBU) in Kitwe, Zambia with the IAU Assistant General Secretary, Piero Benvenuti, joining by video and OAD Director attending in person. This quarter also saw the finalisation of an updated proposal for the Andean region (including several strong letters of support from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela). Several exchanges took place regarding potential proposals for a Brazilian node, an Eastern European node, a Middle East/North African node and a West African node. There were also discussions with interested parties to collaborate on the establishment of a Portuguese Language Expertise Centre. We expect that these proposals will be complete in time for the meeting of the IAU Extended Development Oversight Committee (EDOC – the body that approves these regional nodes) in November 2014. During this quarter the East African Regional node appointed Kelali Tekle as the Coordinator. The first quarterly telecon with the four coordinators of the OAD regional offices was held in September 2014 – this will now be a point of regular information sharing and collaboration between regional nodes themselves and the OAD. As usual we welcome input and advice from those interested in these regions, especially if you would like to collaborate with the proposers.



Southern African Regional OAD signing. From left: Prof Frank Tailoka (Dean of School of Mathematical and Natural Science, CBU), Kevin Govender (Director, OAD), Piero Benvenuti (Assistant General Secretary, IAU), Prof Naison Ngoma (Vice Chancellor of CBU) and Allan Ilunga (Registrar of CBU)

Looking to the future...

The OAD has developed a funding framework which defines various fundraising routes, including crowdfunding, to support projects that could not be funded by the amount provided by the IAU.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, applied to 2014 projects, will be expanded into an impact assessment design for the 2015 to 2020 half-decade.

Each Task Force has chosen flagship projects which the OAD is helping to drive.

The OAD will continue to work to finalise agreements for more regional nodes and language expertise centres before the next IAU General Assembly.

At that General Assembly the OAD will organise Focus Meeting 20: Astronomy for Development, which plans to include a panel discussion with representatives of all IAU Divisions. We also plan to have an exhibition area jointly with the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach from where we will help coordinate Young Astronomer Events (see side panel on Page 4 of this newsletter)

The OAD is currently undergoing a review of the first 3 years of its existence. The review will culminate in February 2015 in time to have the results presented to the next IAU Executive Committee Meeting and the General Assembly in 2015. This review will help to determine the way forward for the OAD.

Your input into the OAD's future is welcome through the [OAD Open Review](#) – see side panel on Page 8 of this newsletter

Updates (in brief) from Regional Offices

East Asia/Chinese language:

- There are 15 partners in South West China (including YNAO) - already a good network of outreach and education.
- Summer school in Mongolia: 3 days, ~40 international students; conference: 5 days, 75 international participants -- both indeed very successful (see <http://mongolia.csp.escience.cn>) – conference photo below.



- Joint stand with the Institute of Physics (UK) – at the first-ever China Science Festival; 250,000+ visitors passed by during the 2-week festival.
- EA-LOAD is discussing with a company to produce Universe in a Box resource in China and translate the related manuals into Chinese.
- The student volunteers in YNAO have translated the program 'Physics In Primary Schools (PIPS)' into Chinese.

South East Asia:

- “NARIT – OAD Modern Astronomy: Science and Technology Transfer within the S.E. Asian Region” (23 – 26 October, 2014). The goals of this regional seminar are to broaden students' vocational horizons and to motivate them to consider their own future participation and roles in the region's development, by demonstrating how astronomy and its supporting engineering technologies can be used to enhance the socio-economic development within the region.
- “The 36th International School for Young Astronomers” (ISYA2014) (24 November – 12 December, 2014). The goal is to bringing together young students of Astronomy, Astrophysics and related sciences, and providing them with a unique learning experience. Observations and tutorials will take place at the site of the Thai National Observatory on Doi Inthanon, where they have an opportunity to observe the sky with the 2.4-m Thai National Telescope and the PROMPT robotic telescopes for five nights in total.
- “SEAAN Meeting 2014” (Date: 16-17 December 2014). SEAAN (Southeast Asia Astronomical Network) meeting 2014 will be hosted by PAGASA, Philippines. The venue of the SEAAN meeting will be at the Rizal Technological University (RTU), Mandaluyong City, co-host of the event.

OAD Partner Opportunities

The OAD has established several partnerships with organisations sharing common interests.

These partnerships range from visiting scientists programmes, to workshops, scholarships, and the provision of staff time.

Current partnerships (through Memoranda/Letters of Understanding) include: the (i) International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy; (ii) Royal Astronomical Society in UK; (iii) Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research; (iv) University of Central Lancashire in UK; (v) Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in India; (vi) Haus der Astronomie in Germany; (vii) Fiat Physica in the US (viii) Associated Universities Incorporated in the US and Sterrewacht, Leiden University in the Netherlands (3-way partnership)

A key partner and other project of the IAU is the Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO) based at the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan.

The OAD remains open to explore partnerships with other organizations wishing to be proactive in the area of science for development.



East Africa:

- Entoto Observatory and Research Center (EORC) and Space Technology and Science Group (STSG) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to design and develop satellites for Ethiopia. There has been keen interest expressed to work with East African Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (ROAD) and praise was given for the collective decisions made by IAU and Ethiopian government in establishing the regional office which certainly would work for realization of Africa's integration in astronomy and space programs.
- On 9 October 2014 the East African ROAD director held a discussion with African Union Commission Human Resources, Science and Technology Directorate (AUC-HRST) director Dr. Mahama and his colleagues on the implementation of the IAU strategic plan (2010-2020) especially on curriculum development, universities twinning, public outreach and school programmes. On the same day a similar discussion was held with interim Deputy Rector Pan-African University Education Division Professor Belay Kassa. Both have expressed their support and willingness to integrate their programme activities with that of the regional office and vowed to work towards sound curriculum development for space sciences
- On African Space Policy, a continental conference will be organized in December in Congo, Brazzaville, to technically discuss and endorse the policy by experts represented from member countries. The East African-ROAD will be invited to participate.
- As part of its outreach program the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Technology, IAU's East African-ROAD, and several other organisations based in Ethiopia jointly celebrated World Space Week on 18th of October.

Southern Africa:

- This was the most recently established office and is in the process of setting up the necessary structures
- Dr Moola Mutondo has been appointed as the ROAD coordinator
- Website has been set up at <http://southernafrica.astro4dev.org>
- Budget has been submitted to central administration for support
- Short courses in astronomy will be introduced
- In the process of establishing the steering committee
- Also preparing the physical office with input from university
- Meetings held with Permanent Secretary for Science and Technology and meetings with Ministry officials scheduled for November.

OAD Open Review – please help us do better!

In the last newsletter we announced the OAD open review. We use this opportunity to invite you again to send us feedback on your experiences with the OAD and what you think we could do better.

We're not just looking for feedback. The OAD Open Review is an open call for people to reflect on their experiences with the OAD and provide input into our operations and future planning. We encourage everyone who has interacted with us, or even just heard about the OAD, to turn a critical eye our way and send through their thoughts:

www.astro4dev.org/oad-open-review/

or

info@astro4dev.org