

# Office of Astronomy for Development

International Astronomical Union

South African Astronomical Observatory, Cape Town, SA

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## *Astronomy for a better world!*

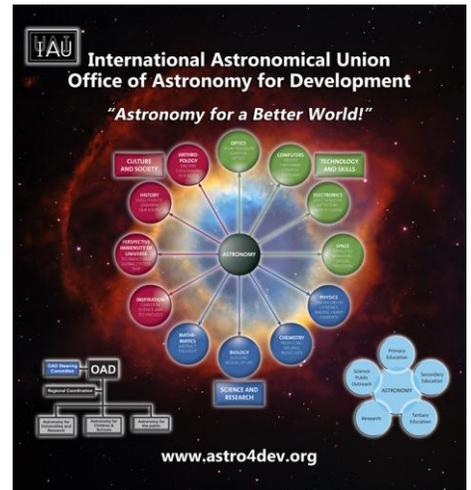
The [International Astronomical Union](http://www.iau.org) (IAU) adopted a [strategic plan](#) in 2009 that aims to realize the global developmental benefits of astronomy. In order to implement this plan, the IAU set out to establish the Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD). In July 2010, following a wide international call for potential host institutions, the IAU entered into a 5 year agreement with the [National Research Foundation](http://www.nrf.ac.za) (NRF) to host the OAD at the [South African Astronomical Observatory](http://www.sao.ac.za) (SAAO) in Cape Town, South Africa.

The OAD now exists as a global coordinating centre for “astronomy-for-development” activities, tasked with establishing and strategically coordinating Regional Nodes and Language Expertise Centers across the world. In 2012, the OAD launched three Task Forces consisting of international experts in their respective fields of specialization. These Task Forces 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*. The bulk of the implementation of projects is to be carried out by volunteers, coordinated by the members of the Task Forces with the support of the OAD, who will source the necessary funding and resources.

## News & Updates from the OAD

### Funded Projects for 2013

During this quarter (January to March 2013) the OAD developed grant agreements and completed grant payments of most of the 18 projects funded within the 2012 Call for Proposals process. The OAD received from the IAU a total amount of €90 000 to be disbursed globally. The projects are to be managed from the



## Important Announcement

Dr. Jean-Christophe Mauduit (JC for short) started work at the OAD on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013 as Project Officer. In this position he also deputizes the Director where necessary.

He holds a PhD in Astrophysics from the Paris Observatory and participated in ESA & NASA satellite missions as a postdoctoral researcher at the Observatoire de la Côte d'Azur and the California Institute of Technology.

He has been involved in many international education and outreach programs (Hands on Universe, UNawe, Caltech & Spitzer outreach) as well as various science development projects around the world.

OAD and individual project reports and updates are being regularly posted onto the [OAD website](#).

The OAD is pleased to announce that the first of the IAU funded projects for 2013 has recently reached completion. [Sudeep Neupane](#) led the Task Force 2 (Astronomy for Children and Schools) project titled "[Galileo Teacher Training Program](#)". The workshop took place on February 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at the Hermann Gminer Higher Secondary School in Pokhara, Nepal. In total, 43 teachers and science communicators from different regions participated in the event. The participants attended 3 lectures and 4 workshops on different astronomical and space science topics given by professional and amateur astronomers. They also had an opportunity to learn more about astronomy through observations. The objectives of the event were to introduce simple, hands-on activities to bring astronomy to the classroom and to create networking opportunities for educators and science communicators. Read the full report [here](#).



Sudeep Neupane

After successfully leading his TF2 project to completion, Sudeep has recently moved to Santiago de Chile where he just started an Astronomy PhD program at the [Universidad de Chile](#).



## **The OAD and the OAO (Office of Astronomy Outreach)**

The OAD hosted Sarah Reed, the International Outreach Coordinator at the IAU [Office for Astronomy Outreach](#) (OAO), for 2 weeks in Cape Town in December 2012. The OAO is a project of the IAU based at the [National Astronomical Observatory of Japan](#) (NAOJ). The objective is mainly to sustain and build on the global public outreach networks created during the [International Year of Astronomy 2009](#). As such the OAO and OAD work closely together (this relationship was built into the agreement to establish the OAO). Sarah's visit to the OAD for this period was extremely useful in building synergies and developing plans for collaboration.



Sarah Reed (IAU-OAO)

## **ROADs/LOADs (Regional Nodes and Language Expertise Centres)**

The OAD's continued efforts to establish regional nodes and language expertise centres across the world saw three more full proposals being developed during this quarter. These proposals will be evaluated by the IAU's Extended Development Oversight Committee (EDOC) in April 2013. The EDOC (see insert on page 5) consists of the OAD Steering Committee, the IAU President, IAU General Secretary and President of the IAU's Division C (Education, Outreach and Heritage). Currently there are two Regional Nodes in place and one Language Expertise Centre (more detail on the OAD website).

## **Fundraising efforts**

During this quarter the OAD partnered with the [Universe Awareness](#) Programme and several other institutions to submit a lengthy proposal to the [Africa-Caribbean-Pacific call for funding](#). This is funded through the European Union and the proposal involved South Africa, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Rwanda and

## **The IAU Office of Astronomy Outreach**

[www.universedowntoearth.org](http://www.universedowntoearth.org)



The IAU Office of Astronomy Outreach is a hub for coordinating public outreach activities around the world. The aim is to make it easier for the public to access information about our Universe and local and global astronomy events, while building networks to support and disseminate information to the amateur astronomy and public outreach communities.

Ghana. The OAD will play the role of looking at the long-term sustainability of the activities, which are generally focussed on using astronomy to inspire young children. The OAD will also be responsible for spreading the impact further than the partner countries.

### **Important meetings**

In January 2013 the OAD hosted its Steering Committee in Cape Town for their 4<sup>th</sup> face-to-face meeting. Also in attendance was the IAU General Secretary [Thierry Montmerle](#) as well as the SAAO Director [Ted Williams](#). This meeting was useful in planning the way forward in terms of OAD strategies for fundraising and general implementation of the IAU strategic plan.

The OAD Project Officer travelled to the ESO headquarters in Garching, Germany, to attend the “IAU, ESO, UNAWA & ESA Workshop on Public Outreach Information Management in Astronomy” (March 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>) to study synergies between the various organizations. [Lars Lindberg Christensen](#) ([ESO](#) Head of Education and Public Outreach Department), [Piero Benvenuti](#) ([IAU](#) Assistant General Secretary), [Sarah Reed](#) ([IAU](#) International Outreach Coordinator) and [Pedro Russo](#) ([EU-Universe Awareness](#) International Project Manager) were among the attendees. A subsequent visit to the [IAU](#) Paris headquarters at the [Institut d’Astrophysique de Paris](#) was arranged.

### **Communication**

The Director of the OAD was invited to give a TEDx talk at a local event ([TEDxAIMS](#), African Institute for Mathematical Sciences) on the topic of “Astronomy for Humankind”. The talk was very well received. Although it was more about the bigger picture of astronomy impacting on society, it did specifically mention the OAD and the IAU’s strategic plan. Such events are a significant

## **Upcoming Events**

### **April 16th**

Parliamentary visit to the SAAO, organized by OAD

### **May 7th – 10th**

IAU Executive Committee, Tokyo, Japan

### **June 10th – 14th**

George Miley conference, Leiden, Netherlands

## **Past events**

### **January 20th**

TEDx talk at AIMS, Cape Town, SA

### **January 24th – 25th**

Steering Committee meeting, Cape Town, SA

### **February 20th – 21th**

SALT observatory visit

### **March 5th – 9th**

Brussels EU lobbying meeting, Belgium

### **March 12th – 15th**

SciFest Africa, Grahamstown

### **March 27th – 28th**

ESO/IAU web development workshop, Garching, Germany

### **April 3rd – 5th**

IAU headquarters visit, Paris, France

opportunity to promote the OAD activities. The talk remains [available online](#).

The present newsletter will be issued quarterly and report on current OAD activities. The [OAD website](#) has been updated and is now featuring details on each funded projects with links to specific project websites. Blogs & pictures are also being uploaded regularly, especially for teams without a website.

### **International & Domestic travel**

There were two international trips during this quarter. One was to Brussels by the OAD Director to attend an event titled "[EU Global Challenges, Global Collaboration](#)". At this event the OAD through [George Miley](#) hosted a parallel session at the EU parliament and conducted several side meetings with various Members of the European Parliament. A very productive (and unpredicted) outcome was that there were two "parliamentary questions" that were put forward as a result of our meetings. Appreciation must be noted for the South Africa [Department of Science & Technology](#) (DST) role in arranging this event, specifically [Daan du Toit](#) who is based in Brussels. The other international trip was to Germany (ESO Headquarters) by the OAD Project Officer, to attend a workshop with various IAU stakeholders to discuss the possibility of a common web platform that could serve all IAU projects (see the [Meetings](#) section).

Domestic travel included attendance of [SciFest Africa](#) in Grahamstown which sees the annual coming together of education and outreach professionals from around the sub-continent and a trip to Pretoria for several meetings including a DST event on the EU-South Africa partnerships in Science and Technology. The Project Officer also travelled to two key sites in South Africa (i) the SAAO in Sutherland, home to the [Southern African Large Telescope](#) (SALT), where he met the Sutherland team of the [SALT Collateral Benefits Program](#), and (ii) the

## Oversight of the OAD

The Extended Development Oversight Committee (**EDOC**) is the IAU structure responsible for oversight of all IAU education and development activities. It consists of the OAD steering committee, the IAU President, IAU General-Secretary and IAU Division C President.

IAU President  
[Norio Kaifu](#)

IAU General-Secretary  
[Thierry Montmerle](#)

IAU Division C President  
[Mary Kay Hemenway](#)

The **OAD Steering Committee** exercises general oversight of the activities of the OAD and its staff.

It comprises 3 members nominated by the International Astronomical Union and 3 members nominated by the National Research Foundation.

Nominated by the IAU:

[Megan Donahue](#)

[George Miley](#)

[Kaz Sekiguchi](#)

Nominated by the NRF:

[Claude Carignan](#)

[Patricia Whitelock](#)

[Khotso Mokhele \(Chair\)](#)

[MeerKAT](#) construction site in the Karoo, which will be home to the first phase of [Square Kilometre Array](#) (SKA).

### **Current highlights from OAD interns**

The OAD is currently hosting three interns: [Laure Catala](#) is working on an evaluation of the impact of astronomy on the community in Sutherland, [Eli Kasai](#) is working on an offline electronic resource using videos from the Khan Academy combined with inspirational astronomy material to impact on Maths and Science learning (pilot project to be conducted in Sutherland) and [Maya Barlev](#) is working on astronomy presentations that can be freely distributed to teachers and astronomy outreach staff globally.

### **Open letter to the OAD from Maya Barlev**

After having spent a few months with us, [Maya Barlev](#) will sadly shortly be leaving the OAD & South Africa. Here is her open letter to the OAD relating her experience at the office:

*“I began working at the OAD in early January 2013, after meeting Kevin and seeing the office for the first time in late December. Over the course of my three months with the office, the OAD guided me not just practically, but also mentored me on a much deeper level. As someone who is working to apply my passions in astronomy to making a positive impact on the world, I have been so grateful for the time and assistance the OAD has dedicated to my personal development.*

*I’m currently traveling to multiple countries to learn how children think about and are learning astronomy both in academic and non-academic contexts, as funded by the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship in the United States. While the OAD doesn’t work directly with children, their network provided me with contacts and support to make my project realizable and their mission statement and philosophy supplied me with inspiration and ideas to make my project meaningful.*

*With the help of the SAAO Education and Outreach team, the OAD facilitated my research on a practical level around Cape Town. I joined the SAAO on several local school visits, and also had the opportunity*

## Interns at the OAD

**Eli Kasai**



**Laure Catala**



**Maya Barlev**



to visit the Cape Town Science Centre and the Cape Town Planetarium. Each of these experiences enriched my project greatly and taught me how children from a plurality of backgrounds were engaging with astronomy.

When not working with kids directly, the OAD gave me structure to make my time here productive. In addition to providing me with a desk space and computer at the office, we brainstormed a project that would both be both helpful to my work and to the OAD. In this project, I compiled a resource packet of astronomy materials that allows any educator to access information on astronomy without the internet. While this packet will hopefully be useful for the OAD in the future, compiling this information was also incredibly informative to me, as I learned how to effectively communicate major concepts of astronomy.

The OAD also helped me plan a trip around South Africa to multiple places that could enrich my knowledge of astronomy education. With their advice and assistance, I visited Sutherland for 4 days, learning how SALT and the SAAO were impacting science education in the community. The OAD then assisted me in planning a trip to visit other observatories, science centres and planetariums across South Africa to learn how science is being communicated with children in a multitude of ways. Finally, the OAD, partnered with the SAAO, helped to arrange my participation in SciFest Africa 2013, where I engaged with large and diverse groups of children as well as science educators from around the country.

These experiences around South Africa have pushed me to become a more critical and knowledgeable astronomy communicator. With every experience, I gained new perspective and insight. Behind every interaction, the OAD was there to support me, introduce me to new resources and help me think through the things I learned.

Beyond the practical aspects of support, the OAD helped me to articulate the fundamentals of why we do science, why we do outreach, and how science can and should have an impact on the world. While I had thought about these big questions before, working with the OAD brought these concepts to the forefront of my work and research. As I move forward and continue to travel and work with learners and educators from around the globe, I will carry the philosophy, optimism and warmth of the OAD with me. Many thanks to the OAD team for making my time in South Africa so meaningful and enriching. I hope we can continue to be in touch as I travel in the months ahead and beyond!"

Maya Barlev - March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## Meet the OAD Team

Director: [Kevin Govender](#)



Project Officer: [JC Mauduit](#)



Admin: [Nuhaah Solomon](#)

