

Office of Astronomy for Development

International Astronomical Union

South African Astronomical Observatory, Cape Town, SA

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2014 Call for Proposals is live!

30 June 2014 saw the launch of the third annual call for proposals from the OAD. The call seeks innovative projects from around the world which aim to use astronomy to stimulate education and development in three target areas: universities and research, children and schools, and public outreach. For more information visit www.astro4dev.org/cfp.

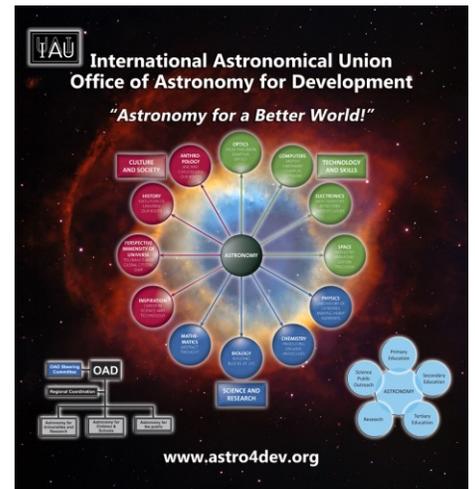
The OAD launched its first open call for proposals in 2012. The response was overwhelming with 191 applications received that year. In 2013 the demand increased by 20% with 230 applications received. Although the funds provided by the IAU are modest (satisfying only about 10% of the demand), projects that are evaluated to be feasible are placed on a “recommended list” for which the OAD continues to seek support.

This year the OAD Call for Proposals does not seek to increase the number, but rather the quality, of the proposals received. Innovation will be an important criterion for success. Spread the word and remember the strict automatic deadline: **midnight UTC on 31 August 2014!**

News & Updates from the OAD

Annual Call for Proposals

During the last quarter (April to June 2014) the OAD concluded all but two remaining grant agreements for projects scheduled for implementation in 2014 – a total number of 21 out of 23 grants. Final reports from projects implemented in 2013 are still being consolidated. Summaries of completed projects can be found on the OAD website



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 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](#).

(www.astro4dev.org). OAD Task Forces are kept informed of project progress through a Google spreadsheet which is updated as the OAD receives input from project leaders. On 30th June 2014, after consultation with its Task Forces and oversight bodies, the OAD achieved the significant milestone of releasing its 3rd Annual Call for Proposals, which is for projects to be implemented in 2015.

Featured Project: Proyecto Miradas

An update in June 2014 from the coordinators Sofía Méndez and Daniel Ekdesman: "We're a little tired because recently we completed the phase of work in schools, but also very happy because all of them were wonderful experiences, with great enthusiastic participation by children and teachers; and the main objective of disseminating astronomy attractively, in populations without access to it, was fulfilled.

We also had minor difficulties, as we had to adapt some activities because we found the level of children's knowledge very low; and we could not work in a school in Honduras (we tried by all means for months, but it was impossible).

We have also had very good media coverage, as well as the institutional support of UNESCO in each country and the respective groups of local astronomers.

Now we are systematizing the information to perform final assessments and ending the video-cards about each school."



Proyecto Miradas (The UNAWE-UNESCO-Mobil I for Central America)

This project aims to inspire young disadvantaged children and stimulate their interest in science, technology, culture and global citizenship through astronomy. The goal of this project is to bring [UNAWE](http://www.unawe.org) to five Central American countries still lacking the programme (El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panamá) and reinforce the UNAWE activities in Guatemala.

Activities have a duration of one week per school (two schools per country), and are centered on direct activities with the children, teacher trainings (with the assistance of the UNESCO-national coordinators), and public events.



IAU-OAD special projects

Some highlights of projects outside the usual Call for Proposals:

(i) A publication in collaboration with the Institute for Monitoring and Evaluation at the University of Cape Town regarding the framework developed for OAD-funded projects was submitted to the South African Journal of Science and is currently under review.

(ii) During this quarter OAD visitor and astronomer Wanda Diaz worked on several activities relating to engaging visually impaired people with astronomy – the whole project is now referred to as AstroSense. During her time at the OAD Wanda made several school visits trying out resources at schools for the visually impaired; engaged with the then Deputy Minister of Science and Technology Michael Masutha on several occasions; delivered an incredible talk at TEDx Westerford (view her full talk at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbtLICA1Qd4>); appeared on live and recorded radio programmes; acquired and assembled a Radio Jove radio astronomy kit for the OAD; and made use of the 3D printer at the OAD to develop materials for the visually impaired. Read more on the [OAD blog](#). Below is an image of Wanda in action.



(iii) The OAD has been engaged with several “historically black universities” in South Africa with the intention of using astronomy as a means to enhance the teaching of Physics. During this quarter the

Upcoming Events

July 30

Cosmo Quest Hangout with the OAD

August 18 to 22

12th Asia Pacific Regional IAU Meeting, Korea

August 31

Deadline: 2014 OAD Annual Call for Proposals

September 1 to 6

3rd Middle East and Africa Regional IAU Meeting, Lebanon

Past events

April 29th – May 1st

IAU Executive meeting, Australia

June 9 to 13

Regional School on Astrophysical Data Reduction, Nepal

June 30 – July 4

4th East African Astronomy Workshop, Rwanda

June 30 – July 6

JEDI Workshop, Namibia

July 14 to 18

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

University of Zululand (where the OAD previously delivered a workshop on using a small telescope for Physics tutorials) concluded a process of acquiring a telescope of their own. The project has taken the name AstroVarsity and has involved OAD visitor Julio Morales from Mexico, who contributed towards the development of a basic curriculum package for universities wishing to introduce astronomy into their curriculum.

(iv) This quarter also saw the launch of the OAD Visiting Fellowships programme and the OAD Ideas List (see inserts on the right of Pages 4 and 6). The OAD invites exceptional volunteers to visit the OAD and work on particular projects and ideas.

(vi) The OAD partnered with the [GalileoMobile](#) project to send [Galileoscopes](#) (small telescopes) to the Latin American countries that will be visited by the GalileoMobile team in the next quarter.

Highlights of meetings/conferences

There were no international trips by OAD staff during this quarter. Some relevant events that took place are listed here:

(i) TEDx Westerford in Cape Town took place on 10th April and featured OAD visitor Wanda Diaz;

(ii) OAD director joined Wanda Diaz and Deputy Minister of Science and Technology during a visit to the Pioneer School for the Blind in Worcester, South Africa;

(iii) OAD Task Force 1 vice-chair Katrien Kolenberg presented the OAD activities at Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics in the US;

(iv) the IAU Executive Committee meeting took place in Canberra, Australia from 29 April to 1 May. OAD director joined the meeting by video to present an update on the work of the OAD. Steering Committee members Patricia Whitelock and George Miley attended in person.

(v) The South African Astronomy Town Meeting took place on 25th June, with the OAD director presenting as chair of one of seven

OAD Visiting Fellowships Launched!

The principle: OAD Visiting Fellowships are awarded in special cases where a person's contributions to the OAD are evaluated to be at an exceptional level. They are awarded to volunteers who work with us on any project which we believe will contribute to the vision of the OAD. A limited number of these fellowships will be awarded each year. OAD Visiting Fellows will spend their time in Cape Town working on, and ideally completing, their projects.

The process: Interested individuals should get in touch and brainstorm about a project of their choice. Based on their initial contributions to the project from the person's home base, they could then be awarded an OAD Visiting Fellowship to spend time in Cape Town to complete or even expand that project. Selection will be based on the individual's contributions, skills, motivation and potential to complete the project during their time at the OAD.

The deal: Flights to Cape Town, accommodation near the OAD and a modest daily subsistence allowance for a negotiated period (typically in the range of a few weeks to a few months). All this in exchange for your skills and contribution to the OAD Vision!

More information:
<http://www.astro4dev.org/oad-visiting-fellowships/>

strategic planning panels. Focus was on the development of a long term strategy for astronomy in South Africa, a matter of obvious interest for the OAD which ideally would form part of such a strategy.

Special visitors to the OAD:

There were several special guests that the OAD hosted during this quarter: (i) Gianpietro Marchiori, president and CEO of European Industrial Engineering, from Italy, regarding a cost effective and green small telescope option for developing astronomy communities; (ii) The OAD hosted the then Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Michael Masutha, at the SAAO in Cape Town, as well as accompanied him on visits to schools for the visually impaired; (iii) Wanda Diaz from Puerto Rico completed her 2 month visit to the OAD during this quarter, with several activities for the visually impaired mentioned above; (iv) Julio Morales from Mexico visited the OAD for 1 month during this quarter, to work on the AstroVarsity project; we have since begun exploring the possibility of a Central American regional node hosted at his university (v) Two members of the Ghanaian African VLBI Network (AVN) team, Alexander Akoto-Danso and Joseph Nsor, visited the OAD for a day long orientation on astronomy communication and astronomy-for-development, which they could use when they returned to Ghana. (vi) Mark Jackson, founder of the fundraising non-profit organisation, Fiat Physica, visited the OAD on several occasions to develop a collaboration in terms of crowd funding for OAD recommended projects. (vii) Matie Hoffman from the University of the Free State visited the OAD to discuss possible collaborations with their newly established digital planetarium and potential courses related to astronomy-for-development. (viii) DST official Mathoto Thaoge visited the OAD for a discussion on the future of the OAD and the development of a strategy for astronomy education in South Africa. (ix) Beverley Damonse, Group Executive at the NRF in charge of Science Awareness visited the OAD to talk about a long term strategy for astronomy education and awareness in South Africa. (x) Science Communication Masters student from Aruba, Tibisay Sankatsing Nava, spent time at the OAD (one day per week) assisting with the writing of

OAD Staff News



Ruth Loubser-Maart joined the OAD on 1st February 2014 as a temporary Administration Officer to serve in place of Nuhaah Solomon who was away on maternity leave.

Ruth is skilled in office management and set up, as well as in project management, legal compliance and administration.

She is also a business and life coach, focusing on young entrepreneurs. We are sad to be saying goodbye to Ruth in August 2014 when we welcome Nuhaah back to the OAD.

Unfortunately, Jean-Christophe (JC) Mauduit, our former Project Officer, is no longer with the OAD. We remain grateful to JC for all his contributions during his time as OAD Project Officer (the launch of this very newsletter being one such contribution) and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

The search is currently on for someone to fill this position and we hope to be ready to announce the new OAD team member by the time of the next newsletter.

Meet the full OAD team (staff and interns):

www.astro4dev.org/oadteam/

blogs and media releases while she worked with SAAO on the UNAWA programme – she continues her contributions to the OAD, for which we remain immensely grateful. (xi) Nigerian astronomer Romanus Eze visited the OAD as part of a collaboration between the OAD and the University of Cape Town to enhance research collaborations between South Africa and Nigeria and build partnerships that would enhance the coordination of astronomy development activities in West Africa.

Regional Nodes & Language Expertise Centres

Preparations have begun to launch a fourth regional node of the OAD, which will also be the second on the African continent. This node will be hosted at the Copperbelt University in Zambia and will focus on the Southern African region as well as African partner countries of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA). If all goes to plan a formal signing event will take place during the next quarter. No other agreements have been concluded but several exchanges took place regarding the Andean node in Colombia, a Brazilian node and an Eastern European node. The West African proposal from Nigeria has been modified to incorporate francophone countries and collaboration is being sought from more countries in the region. This serves as a call to anyone interested in any of these regions to get in touch if they wish to support the potential development of nodes.

Calling for your input: OAD Open Review

One of the guiding principles upon which the OAD is built is that of humility. This means we are constantly exploring ways in which we can improve our activities and learn from the many people we interact with. We are therefore pleased to announce the latest innovation in this spirit: the [OAD Open Review](#) - an open opportunity 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/

IAU-OAD Ideas List

This quarter saw the launch of the OAD Ideas List – a virtual “to do list” shared with the world and calling for skills. The principle is that good ideas should not be hidden away and if there’s anyone out there willing to throw in some time and energy, they could really make big things happen.

We are not always just looking for “free labour” from volunteers though (as welcome as that may be). Both the OAD internships and OAD Visiting Fellowship programmes offer opportunities for personal growth, experiential training, contributing to making the world a better place, and, for those who make it to the OAD in Cape Town, an awesome environment in so many respects.

Some ideas that we would really like to make fly are listed here briefly – some require hacking, some conceptualizing, some writing and promoting:

website overhaul;
online volunteer system;
popular project funding platform;
online project management;
open access journal for projects;
recommended projects platform;
young astronomers matching;
translations;
guest blogs;
crowd-sourced proof reading;
simple system for proceedings;
AstroPack;
surveys of projects;
crowd sourcing the full cycle;
etc...

Of course this is not an exhaustive list and we always welcome more ideas and input.

www.astro4dev.org/oad-ideas-list/