OFFICE OF ASTRONOMY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Dear friends and colleagues,

We've seen a lot of major activities and developments at the OAD in the past few months. A crazy 2014 year ended with proposal evaluations and grant agreements for 2015 projects. In January the OAD hosted its annual Steering Committee meeting as well as the first workshop of the Regional Office coordinators. In February we hosted an international review panel who conducted the first major external review of OAD activities (the results will be published soon). We also officially welcomed our Project Officer Eli Grant to the team. Unfortunately all the running has delayed the issuing of our regular newsletter. However, we are pleased to now have on board Tiboay Sankalong Nave, an OAD Visiting Fellow, who will be driving our new communications strategy – this new format for the newsletter being a key part of that. In addition, the OAD is hosting two other Visiting Fellows this year: Ramasamy Venugopal and Silvia Vendolin, who will be supporting the OAD in various ways, including Task Force 1 projects and evaluation.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, in the next few months we will be working on a new look for all OAD communications, so keep an eye out!

Warm greetings from Cape Town,

Kevin Governder, on behalf of the OAD Team

NEWS

OAD Review 2015

An external review of the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development took place in February 2015. The review looked at the first three years of the OAD's existence. Several stakeholders were interviewed during the intensive review week, both in person as well as remotely via teleconference. We expect the final report of the OAD Review to be made public in the second half of May 2015, along with a management response.

Regional Offices First Meeting

The first face-to-face meeting of regional coordinators took place in January 2015. Six offices were represented: East Asia, South East Asia, East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa and Andean region of South America. This served as an important event to develop synergies between all regional nodes and align activities with the strategic plan. Participants also visited the South African Astronomical Observatory in Sutherland.

Introducing Project Officer Eli Grant

Eli specialises in social innovation project design and evaluation and has spent over ten years working on the design, evaluation and delivery of interventions in the fields of development, forced migration, criminal justice, education, among other things. She is a fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy and about to complete a PhD at the Centre for Evidence Based Intervention at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. You can contact Eli about anything related to projects and evaluation at eg@astronomy.org.

OAD Visiting Fellows

The OAD welcomed three Fellows in the first half of this year as part of the Visiting Fellowship Programme. From left to right, the Fellows for this year are: Tiboay Sankalong Nave (from Aruba), Ramasamy Venugopal (from India) and Silvia Vendolin (from Italy).

PROJECT UPDATES

2015 Funded Projects

We have published the list of OAD projects that were granted funds to be implemented in 2015. Of the 131 proposals received, we were able to fund 27 projects: 11 for TF1, Universities and Research, 7 for TF2: Children and Schools and 9 for TF3: Public Outreach. Some of these projects are highlighted in this newsletter

Latin American School of Observational Astronomy 2015

The short course is dedicated to undergraduate-level students from Latin America. The School aims to help Latin American students interested in astronomy learn the basics, to permit them to either continue their studies in astronomy or to share the knowledge gained with other students. The course finished at the end of January; the students were able to observe every night and the event was a great success overall.

GalileoMobile Constellation

GalileoMobile is a non-profit education initiative that brings astronomy to young people in areas with limited access to outreach programmes. Constellation aims to establish a South American network of schools committed to the longterm organisation of astronomical outreach activities amongst their pupils and local communities, and to provide the teachers of those schools with the material, training and support required to do so. Visit the Constellation website for more info.

Other project updates:

- **Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics** (CfA): The CfA has issued a Call for Applications for the TF1 OAD project "Summer Visiting Programme for Astronomers Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics". More information here.
- **Astronomy for Africa: Student Support for Astronomy Modules via Distance**

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at University of South Africa (Unisa), South Africa's distance learning University. More information here.

- **OAD Resources**: OAD intern Eti Kasai led the effort to consolidate resources produced by all OAD funded projects. These are openly available on the OAD website for the public and for future funded projects to be able to build on the work of their predecessors. Click bpm for the OAD resources.
- **OAD-IUCAA Fellowship**: Geoffrey Okiang'o was selected during this quarter for the OAD-IUCAA visiting fellowships for African individuals. He travelled from Kenya to India in February 2015 where his time was spent on a combination of research and outreach experiential learning and exchange.
- **ITL 2015 Calliescope**: The Calliescope programme for the 2015 International Year of Light (ITL) is now in full swing, with new inventory available for delivery worldwide and thousands of K-12 teachers and students in the United States poised to receive free telescope kits thanks to a generous donation to support science education.
- **Cosmic Light EDU**: Cosmic Light EDU all invites teachers, educators and scientists around the world to get involved in local community to teach the science of light under the framework of the International Year of Light. The project team will provide support to organise these workshops, and organisers will also receive a packet of resources. Interested parties, please apply here.
- **OAD Regional Offices:** The next OAD newsletter will also include a section on news and updates from the OAD Regional Offices.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IAU General Assembly, August 3 - 14 2015, Honolulu, Hawaii
The 29th General Assembly (GA) of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) is coming up this August in Honolulu, Hawaii.

At the GA important policy decisions are made, covering everything from establishing coordinate systems to naming celestial objects. Discussions are held on key topics that enable astronomy to move forward. The OAD will host a Focus Meeting on Astronomy for Development during this General Assembly.

GA Focus Meeting: Astronomy for Development

13 - 14 August Focus Meeting: Astronomy for Development. This Focus Meeting is about the global developmental impact that all aspects related to astronomy can deliver. It focuses on impact of university and research level, children and school level, and public outreach level. The interdisciplinary nature of this meeting makes it relevant to all IAU Divisions and the professional astronomy community in general.

Annual Call for Proposals

Every year the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development opens a call for proposals for astronomy for development projects to be implemented in the following calendar year. The call for 2016 projects will open in June 2015.

UNAWE International Workshop 2015

Universe Awareness is hosting their 2015 International Workshop from 5 - 9 October in Leiden the Netherlands. The workshop is organised in close collaboration with the European Space Agency. For the workshop programme and to register, click here.

Other upcoming events:

- **Global Hands-On Universe Conference** (GHOU 2015) will take place in Honolulu, Hawaii from 4 to 5 August 2015. The conference will cover wide range of topics such as: International Year of Light, real research in classrooms, evaluation of impact, trends in science education and more. The conference is organised by the US-HOU, with the support of Institute for Astronomy – University of Hawaii. To register and to submit your abstract, please visit their website.
- **The Galileo Teacher Training Program** (GTTP) international workshop will be held as a part of GHOU 2015 conference, in Honolulu, Hawaii from 8 to 9 August 2015. The two-day workshop will include wide range of topics from: enquiry based learning, asteroid search campaigns, big ideas of science in the classroom, using astronomy software in the classroom, and more. Teachers and educators are invited to register here.

MEETINGS AND VISITORS

- **AstroSense**: Dr. Wanda Diaz from the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics visited the OAD in March. She gave a lecture at Sotkiet Africa and also ran a workshop at the AfrOne school for the blind in Cape Town. Read Wanda's blog post on her work with us last year.
- **AUASS**: The OAD participated in a meeting of the Arab Union for Astronomy and Space Sciences in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, regarding the development of a regional office for the North Africa/Middle East region.
- **Ultrascope Africa**: A team from Ultrascope Africa arrived at the OAD in May to build a prototype 3D-printed, open source, low cost, robotic telescope. Read more.
- **South African Astronomy**: The OAD hosted a meeting of key players in South African astronomy education and outreach to discuss strategic synergies that can be developed nationally.
- **Sotkiet Africa**: A team from the OAD attended Sotkiet Africa, the annual science festival in Grahamstown, South Africa. Read the blog post by OAD Visiting Fellow Ramasamy Venugopal.
- **EU Space Awareness**: The OAD participated in the kick off meeting for Leader of EU Space Awareness, a project building on the shoulders of UNAWE and funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020.
- **SKA Africa**: The OAD presented its activities to a high level meeting of the SKA Africa partner countries and several connections were made especially regarding the Southern African Regional Office of Astronomy for Development.
- **WISE Summit**: In November 2014, Prof. George Miley represented the OAD at the 2014 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha, Qatar.
- **IAU Executive Committee**: In April the OAD presented its work at the annual meeting of the IAU Executive Committee, where the OAD review was also discussed. As with previous occasions the presentation was well received. Watch out for official announcements regarding the OAD at the next IAU General Assembly.

Suggestions or comments on the new OAD newsletter? Please send us an email and let us know!

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NRF National Research Foundation | SAAO South African Astronomical Observatory

IAU International Astronomical Union

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