

**Review of the International Astronomical Union Office of Astronomy for Development
Management Response to the Panel Report March 2021
Version 2.2 | 26th March 2021 | Contact: Kevin Govender (kg@astro4dev.org)**

In short, we are extremely grateful, impressed and humbled by the extensive efforts of the distinguished Review Panel to acquire an in-depth understanding of all aspects of the OAD, which has led to this comprehensive review report. **We therefore, and without reservation, accept all the recommendations made in the Review Panel's Report.** The comments below are thus simply to place on record our reactions to, or emphasize, a few of the key points in the report:

1. The issue of staff work permits does remain a major concern. Venugopal will soon embark on the lengthy process of visa renewal/application. We sincerely hope that the process will be smoother than prior experience, because losing him would be a significant blow to OAD operations.
2. We agree with the positive comments about the OAD team. They are certainly most deserving of abundant praise. We agree that stability and security are essential to maintain this excellent team.
3. We are grateful for the clarifications in the 2020-2030 IAU Strategic plan, in terms of the difference between "astronomy for development" and "the development of astronomy". We also understand and appreciate that there are some inevitable areas of overlap.
4. The regional and language offices are indeed an essential part of the OAD story, and we are grateful for their contributions. They are certainly, as the report finds, in need of funding and we look forward to working with the IAU and the OAD Steering Committee to support them.
5. We agree about the invaluable oversight provided by the OAD Steering Committee and are deeply grateful for the leadership and guidance we have received from both current and past members. We also note the unwavering and critical support by the IAU, NRF/SAAO and DSI.
6. While we do accept that some of our project leaders are indeed "*inexperienced but passionate*" we would like to also recognize the many highly skilled and experienced project leaders who have even helped educate us at the OAD about what is most effective in their particular environments.
7. We were very impressed with the large number of stakeholders that the panel has managed to interact with, and are both relieved and proud of the "*unanimous praise*" for the OAD.
8. We believe that the funding target of around 1M€ p.a. is both appropriate for the OAD's goals, and achievable. We look forward to working closely with the IAU and its fundraiser to achieve this.
9. We agree on the need for development expertise and will follow the proposed approach of exploring closer relationships with local universities. Our development economics fellow Tawanda Chingozha continues to be invaluable in fulfilling this need in the meantime.
10. We appreciate the comment about "*burdensome*" documentation but we do also understand the need, both due to our principals' policies and to ensure a detailed record of all OAD activities.
11. We agree that the OAD "*should concentrate on a limited number of attainable, high value added projects*" and prioritise projects with "*longer term development benefit*". We also note that in addition to the two flagships mentioned in the report, the OAD is exploring a third - "Astronomy Knowledge and Skills" - due to a funding opportunity that arose in 2020.
12. We are supportive of the idea of a more specialised study on the impact of OAD projects in the longer term, as well as an assessment of the "*impact of the OAD itself in the broader context of 'science for development'*" – we are eager and willing to collaborate with other fields through ISC.

This report comes as the OAD turns 10 years old. We are pleased that after this first decade of activity, the OAD seems, from this review, to be on the right track towards achieving significant societal impact and fulfilling the ambitious goals envisaged by its founders. We have been privileged to work with an incredible global network of stakeholders and we must record our most sincere gratitude towards the many individuals, both in Cape Town and around the world, who have really made the OAD what it is.

