

NEWS FROM THE WIO-EARLY CAREER SCIENTISTS' NETWORK

WIOECSN AT THE AFRICAN YOUTH SUMMIT 2021

The African Youth summit was aimed at fostering ownership and stewardship of the global Marine Protected Areas agenda among African youth.



The summit targeted all groups of youth in both urban and traditional sectors to collaborate so that no one is left behind. With the theme **“Our Africa, Our Ocean, Our future”**, our network was strengthened by its capacity to reach out to numerous early career scientists who were willing to bring changes and to make a difference across the African continent. **Our youth network hosted a talk on “Building your career with the environment” with the western Indian Ocean Early Career Scientists Network (WIOECSN).** The network presented different activities and opportunities that are offered to early career scientists in making them custodians of the ocean in the WIO region. Our members across the region facilitated different sessions in the summit and made a [video](#) which inspired the youth to connect in making a difference.

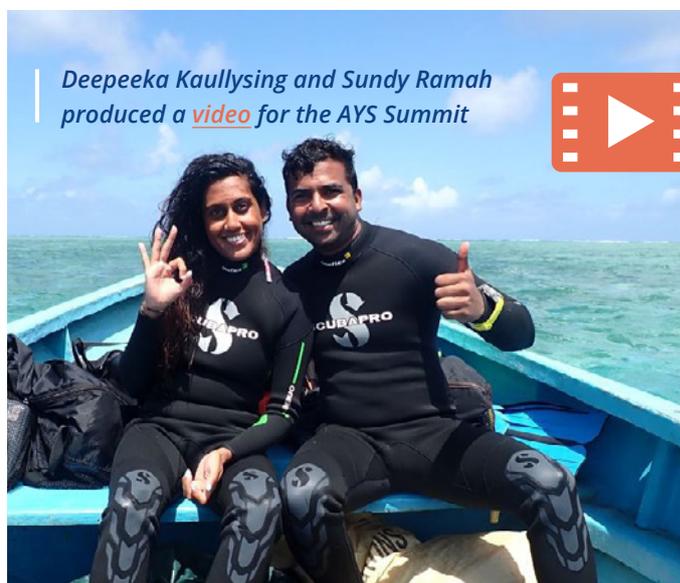
The summit managed to build capacity among youth in Africa and share knowledge on how different youth have been doing in conserving and protecting our mother ocean. **It mobilized African youth and allowed them to fully take ownership of the global 30x30 agenda and unpack this initiative from an African perspective.** It also provided a platform where youth engaged with various stakeholders, asked questions and held discussions.

As African youth, we came together to raise our voices for the ocean, to bring changes, share knowledge and build a better tomorrow through marine protected areas in the Africa continent. **We are young and powerful, we can do this together. Let us connect!**

Climate is changing.

Marine pollution is reaching unprecedented levels. Overexploitation of marine resources and illegal fishing are on the rise. Urgent action is needed to conserve the oceans, and it starts with us. We need the oceans, and the oceans need us.

Deeppeka Kaullysing and Sundy Ramah produced a [video](#) for the AYS Summit





MEET RACHEL THOMS, OUR CO-OPTED MEMBER FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

and an early career researcher in the ocean sciences. She works

as a data scientist in the World Resources Institute in Washington, DC, **holds a Bachelor of Science and is specialized in data science for marine conservation.** She is interested in “data revolution” and bridging the data divide for ocean science for sustainable development.

In March 2022, Rachel will begin a nine-month Fulbright Fellowship in Mozambique where she will partner with the Marine Megafauna Foundation and WIOECSN in Mozambique. Rachel will work with the research team to collect baseline fishery data in Praia da Tofo where local communities have expressed concern over biodiversity deterioration and threats to food security.

During her leadership role in WIO-ECSN she would like to collaborate with peers studying marine science in the western Indian Ocean to better understand the data environment in the area, improve data dissemination, and promote data literacy to ensure scientists, NGOs, and policymakers in WIO nations take advantage of the “data revolution” to manage marine ecosystems. The WIOECSN leadership team heartily welcomes her onboard.

CONNECT WITH HER ONLINE VIA

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NEWS FROM THE FIELD:

WIO-ECSN MEMBER DAMARIS KINYUA DISCUSSES HER PHD FELLOWSHIP AND GRANT AWARD

I am passionate about interdisciplinary research that aims to advance community livelihoods. Specifically, **I focus on building**

equal opportunity education and designing conservation projects that enhance faculty and student development. I am currently a doctoral candidate in

fisheries science, at the School of Pure and Applied Sciences at Pwani University, Kenya. My doctoral work is funded by a WIOMSA MASMA grant through the regional BILLFISH-WIO project, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Russell E Train Education for Nature Fellowship. The support from WIOMSA and WWF has brought me one step closer to achieving my career ambitions. Working at the interface of conservation research and policy is a dream come true for me. I can contribute to the development of environmental capacity among emerging professionals, local communities and other stakeholders. By exploring local technologies and ecological knowledge, I will also be able to strengthen national and international research collaboration.

My doctoral research on “Characterizing billfish utilization, socio-economic pathways, and governance along the Kenyan coast” covers three key areas: a)

evaluating the socio-economic contribution, b) assessing the value chain framework, and c) defining perceptions on the management of billfish fisheries to enhance their sustainable use. Billfishes are highly migratory species that are exploited by multiple resource users, either as a direct catch or as bycatch. Despite their socio-economic importance, there is a paucity of information on their economic contribution to livelihood in Kenya and the wider WIO region. My doctoral research seeks to fill this information gap by examining the billfish fishery socio-economic pathways and management/governance strategies. Therefore, my work will provide new information on the socio-economic profiles of billfish fisheries given the growing interest by many developing

NETWORKS: WIO-ECSN, WIMS

WIOECSN appoints a co-opted board member; Damaris Kinyua discusses her PhD fellowship and grant award _____ *...continued*

countries to benefit from “blue economy” and the need to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on food (SDG 2), economic security (SDG 8) and conserve and sustainably use marine resources (SDG 14). In addition, my findings will be

significant for tapping into existing local ecological knowledge which is relevant in providing long-term guidance to grassroots initiatives to conserve billfish species through community education, stakeholder involvement and alternative sources of income.