



## NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM TO DRIVE EARLY CAREER SCIENTISTS NETWORK

We are pleased to announce that following the recent general election of the Western Indian Ocean Early Career Scientists Network (WIO-ECSN) in February and March 2021, the following team members were elected to office:



**Frank Mirobo** –  
*secretary general*

Frank is a marine scientist who specializes in endangered marine megafauna (sea turtles, dolphins and sharks), their

ecology and conservation. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Biology, majoring in marine biology, from the University of Dodoma, Tanzania, and is a master's student at the African Center of Excellence for Water Management at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia where he is studying aquatic ecosystem management.

During his leadership term, Frank hopes to be a voice and not an echo for early career scientists. He looks forward to encouraging more young scientists to join the network and work together with different organizations to make sure that the voice of early career scientists is heard in the WIO region.



**Riaan Cedras** – *chair*

Riaan is a lecturer at the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa.

His research interest is understanding plankton assemblages, structure at the micro, meso- and macro-scales of space, primarily in the Western Indian Ocean region and in the South Atlantic Ocean. He is also involved as a task team member of the United Nations informal group on Monitoring the Ocean Decade's Impact which assesses the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030. To him, the WIO-ECSN is an “eastern African voice”, promoting and supporting the research of early career scientists in the WIO region through partnership with relevant stakeholders.

**Nancy Iraba** – *communications officer*

Nancy is a researcher, science communicator, and co-founder of Aqua-Farms organization as well as a founder of Ocean Literacy Initiative, both non-governmental organizations that champion conservation and sustainability of Tanzania's oceans.



Nancy holds a Master's degree in Marine Sciences from the Institute of Marine Sciences in Zanzibar and a Bachelor in Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries from the University of Dar-es-Salaam. She is looking forward to creating conversations and dialogues to stimulate regional collaboration among early career scientists, all for the sake of creating the ocean we need for the future we want, and making waves of change globally throughout the period of the Ocean Decade.



**Alessia Dinoi** –  
*co-opted board member*

**Alessia is a marine biologist researcher at the Integrative Marine Ecology Department, Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn in Italy. She holds a**

**Master’s degree in Marine and Coastal Biology and Ecology from the University of Salento, Italy.**

Alessia is pursuing a PhD in marine biology at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. She considers WIO-ECSN to be an organization in which scientists can build a solid network within the WIO region and improve local capacities. During her leadership, Alessia hopes to contribute actively towards the development of capacity building projects, finding solutions for each region to preserve the coastal and marine environment. She plans to create exchange experiences for marine scientists from the WIO region and abroad.



**Abdulrahman Mohamud Dirie** –  
*country coordinator, Somalia*

**Abdulrahman holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Science and Environment from**

**Hodeidah University, Yemen and a Master’s degree in Water Policy from the Pan African University’s Institute of Water and Energy Sciences at Tlemcen University in Algeria.**

Abdulrahman is passionate about the marine environment, climate change and water. As the Somali country coordinator, he wishes to gain knowledge from members of the network and recruit more students from Somalia to WIO-ECSN and WIOMSA.



**Soondur Mouneshwar**  
*– vice chair*

**Soondur is currently pursuing a PhD in the field of Biological Oceanography at the University of Mauritius**

**and is a scholar at the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research’s POGO Centre of Excellence for Observational Oceanography, in Germany and a fellow under the UNESCO/ KEIZO OBUCHI Japan Young Researcher initiative.**

He believes that sharing knowledge, helping others and sensitizing the new generation will lead to a better future. He looks forward to honouring the position of vice chair and working closely with the newly elected team of WIO-ECSN.



**Ailars David** –  
*country coordinator, Tanzania*

**Ailars is a marine scientist specialized in aquatic science and aquaculture from the University of Dodoma in Tanzania.**

He is interested on ensuring the sustainability of the ocean. He works on the circular economy using polymer sand technology to combat marine litter and other ocean problems. Ailars is enthusiastic and interested to research the sustainability of the marine ecosystems. He believes in youth power in marine science and in creating a sustainable blue planet for generations to come. He is ready to sail with early career scientists in Tanzania in creating huge blue action waves across the Indian Ocean!



**Aina Le Don Nomenisoa** –  
country coordinator,  
Madagascar

Aina is preparing his PhD in coral reef resilience at *Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines* in Madagascar.

He specializes in remote sensing and marine ecology. He aims to bring more young marine scientists into the network and will advocate for data sharing, co-authoring of papers, and sharing expertise.



**Deepeeka Kaullysing** –  
country coordinator,  
Mauritius

Deepeeka is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Science, University of Mauritius. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Marine Science and Technology, and a Master's degree for which she was awarded the Commonwealth Scholarship/Fellowship Plan Scheme (2011/2012).

Deepeeka is currently pursuing a PhD in Marine Malacology at the University of Mauritius under the Mauritius Research Council Postgraduate Award. Deepeeka plans to attract and encourage the involvement of more early career scientists from Mauritius in the field of marine science. She considers the WIO-ECSN as a platform where young scientists can gain visibility and share their research and experience.



**Annie Vidot** –  
country coordinator,  
Seychelles

Annie works as a fisheries scientist at the Seychelles Fishing Authority. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Science at the University of Seychelles and specializes in marine research.

Annie believes that her position of country coordinator is a perfect opportunity to support and showcase the work being done by early career scientists in Seychelles.



**Ceiça Alfredo Chioze** –  
country coordinator,  
Mozambique

Ceiça holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Aquatic and Coastal Biology and a Master's degree in Managing and Conservation of Biodiversity, both from Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. She is currently undertaking a Master of Science in Biological Oceanography at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa.

Ceiça is a researcher at the National Institute of Fisheries Research in Mozambique. Her vision for WIO-ECSN is to increase the number of Mozambican members in the network and to promote greater networking among early career scientists so that there is more sharing of experiences, research and knowledge of marine sciences in general. Her advice for young scientists is to believe in their dreams and exploit their skills to the maximum.



**Derrick Omollo –  
country coordinator,  
Kenya**

**Derrick is currently finishing his MSc degree in Biology of Conservation at the University of Nairobi, Kenya.**

As a research associate at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Derrick works in the Oceanography and Hydrography department and has a special interest in carbon accounting and biodiversity assessment of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems. Recently he was awarded a WIOMSA Marine Research Grant to assess carbon stocks in deep subtidal seagrass meadows in Kenya. He is excited to promote WIO-ECSN programmes in Kenya by encouraging youth involvement in marine science and blue economy innovation.



**Salima Hamada –  
country coordinator,  
Comoros**

**Salima is a specialist in environment and climate change at the Directorate of Environment and Forests in Climate Change Services.**

Her expertise is in the field of climate change, including greenhouse gas inventory, vulnerability studies and the national contribution to climate change. She graduated with a Master's Degree in Environment Sciences, Ecology and Littoral Dynamics from the *Université de La Rochelle* in France. During her tenure as country coordinator, Salima plans to promote marine sciences in Comoros by demonstrating that there is a well-established network with strong relationships and many opportunities to promote skills and develop capacities.



## RESEARCHERS WITHOUT BORDERS. *By Riaan Cedras*

Perhaps the African Marine Science week should form part of the Western Indian Ocean-Early Career Scientists Network’s (WIO-ECSN’s) annual calendar. WIO-ECSN certainly used this platform effectively to formally debut its outreach and ocean literacy campaign for early career scientists in the WIO region.

Doing what we do best: Madagascan ocean explorer. © Aina le Don



“Africa has the capacity, and I am challenging the youth of Africa to build capacity across borders,” said Justin.

A [WIO-ECSN video](#) was featured during the opening of the first day of African Marine Science week, a four-day online event hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), under the Africa Group, and sponsored by the African Union from 25 to 28 May 2021. A key message in the video was the need for better connection and collaborations between neighboring countries. WIO-ECSN voices expressed their views on the challenges facing early career scientists –perhaps the African Marine Science week was an event where these drowned out voices could be heard? It certainly was a platform to showcase regional talent and give visibility to the youth through reports, videos and photos and storytelling.

**On the last day of the African Marine Science week, a local organizer, Justin Ahanhanzo from**

**UNESCO gave WIO-ECSN a special session as part of the closing ceremony.** This was a remarkably successful online event which featured prominent scientists from African states and from across the globe collaborating to energize the African youth.

The WIO-ECSN has started actively mobilizing early career researchers in the region, and it is a platform where the comfort zones of all early career researchers may be tested. Could we develop concepts and projects by the youth for the region? An early career scientist programme is starting to take hold; a stimulating idea is to develop skills in publishing, necessary to communicate findings, understand a changing environment and become informed scientists in the world.

# EARLY CAREER SCIENTISTS NETWORK'S OUTREACH EVENT. *By Frank Mirobo*



19 March 2021

WIO-ECSN reached out to a group of early career scientists at the event held at the **Institute of Marine Sciences (IMS) of the University of Dar es Salaam, in Zanzibar.**

**The aim of the WIO-ECSN outreach programme was to strengthen the capacity of early career scientists in the WIO region and to reach out to early career scientists for networking purposes.**

The event introduced participants to **WIOMSA and its different networks, including WIO-ECSN.** Participants discussed the benefits of becoming a WIO-ECSN member, the opportunities in networking, the challenges faced by early career scientists in the WIO region, and potential ways to address these challenges. Existing WIO-ECSN members also shared testimonies of how the network has impacted their growth as early career scientists.

The event was attended by **54 participants from IMS Zanzibar, six WIO-ECSN members and special guests** including Batuli Yahya, WIMS Country Representative for Zanzibar, Narriman Jiddawi, the Vice chair of the WIMS Country Chapter in Zanzibar and the director of IMS, Margareth

Kywalyanga who was the chief guest. In line with the WIO-ECSN vision of “bringing together early career marine scientists for the development of marine sciences in the western Indian Ocean”, Dr Kywalyanga’s presentation, which focused on the importance of network members connecting and working together to solve existing challenges in the region, was well received. She shared her life experiences and the benefits accrued from being involved in different networks in the WIO region.

The key take home message from the day was that **WIO-ECSN should stand out as the voice and the engagement platform for early career scientists in the WIO region.** The WIO-ECSN Executive Committee intends to hold similar outreach events for other members in future.

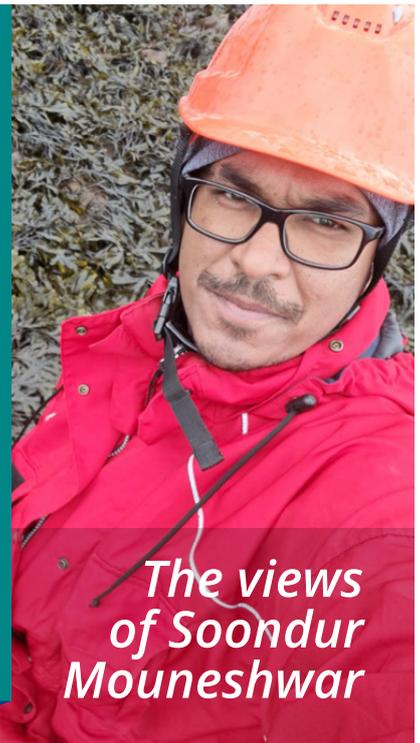
## MESSAGES FROM THE FIELD:

### WIO-ECSN members awarded Nippon Foundation scholarships



Soondur Mouneshwar, vice-chair of WIO-ECSN, and Hellen Kizenga, a member of the network, have both been in Helgoland in Germany since the beginning of 2021 under the Nippon Foundation-POGO Centre of Excellence (NF-POGO CoE) scholarship programme which provides world-class education and training courses in the field of observational oceanography. Both scholars are based at the Alfred Wegener Institute, Germany's foremost polar and marine research institution.

*“ My journey started by moving from the tropical country of Mauritius, with temperature above 33 °C to Helgoland, Germany where the temperature regularly drops below 0°C. It was difficult to adapt and travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic was a struggle, but the experience is absolutely worth it. Every week we have different courses which are all related to observational oceanography. We have practical classes which make these experiences unique in this island of Helgoland with pristine biodiversity. As a biological oceanographer, I had not been exposed much to other fields of science but here we are digging in all the different fields related to marine science, from mathematical biology and fish ecology to remote sensing. These experiences will enhance my career in a multidisciplinary direction. After this course, I will certainly share whatever I have learnt with my fellow WIO-ECSN colleagues and friends.”*



*The views of Soondur Mouneshwar*



*The views of Hellen Kizenga*

*“ I consider myself very fortunate to be able to attend this course at a renowned institute with the best facilities and oceanography experts in the world. As early career scientists from a developing region we need opportunities like this to build our capacity and broaden our expertise in this field. This programme trains and gives us the best experience to work in multidisciplinary oceanographic research, including physical, biological and chemical oceanography.*

*I urge more early career scientists, especially those in the WIO-ECSN, to search and apply for opportunities like these to build their capacities, so that 10 years from now we will have an even more competent generation of marine scientists. Our region's future depends on how much knowledge and expertise we can utilize in making sure that we have concrete information to protect and develop our ocean. The future of our ocean is in our hands.”*