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**The FisherMan project: Capacity building  
for sustainable Fisheries Management in  
the Southwest Indian Ocean**

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# **The FisherMan project: Capacity building for sustainable Fisheries Management in the Southwest Indian Ocean**

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## **Abstract**

The FisherMan project *Capacity building for sustainable Fisheries Management in the Southwest Indian Ocean* (SWIO) is co-financed by the European Commission through the ACP Edulink programme. FisherMan aims at supporting higher education institutions in the SWIO region to create new study programmes in sustainable fisheries management. This paper presents an overview of the project activities and describes

the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the FisherMan Regional Conference celebrated during September 2015 in Madagascar whose main aim was to bring together regional and international fisheries experts, authorities, professionals, academics, policy makers and other involved and interested in the Fishery sector, to exchange ideas and to promote an effective collaboration in the South-Western Indian Ocean and increase fishery management education at higher education level.

## **Résumé**

Le projet FisherMan - *Renforcement des capacités pour la gestion durable des pêcheries dans l'océan Indien du sud-ouest* (SWIO) - est co-financé par la Commission Européenne à travers le programme ACP Edulink. FisherMan vise à soutenir les institutions d'éducation supérieur de la région SWIO dans la création de nouveaux programmes d'étude dans la gestion durable de pêcheries. Ce papier présente une vue d'ensemble des activités du projet et décrit la première édition de la Conférence Régionale FisherMan qui a eu lieu en septembre 2015 au Madagascar avec comme but principal de rassembler des experts régionaux et internationaux en pêcheries, des autorités, professionnels, professeurs, chercheurs, décideurs politiques et autres impliqués et intéressés par le secteur de la pêche, pour échanger des idées et

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promouvoir une collaboration efficace dans l’océan Indien sud-ouest et augmenter l’éducation en gestion de pêcheries au niveau de l’éducation supérieur.

### **Introduction**

**C**urrent coastal and marine resources in South-Western Indian Ocean (SWIO) region are under increasing human and industrial pressure. The continued decline of these resources is due to poorly coordinated and unplanned resources exploitation. At the same time, the importance of marine fisheries to the national economies and food security of Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Comoros Islands and Republic of Seychelles is increasing. Given the present context, effective management of resources to achieve ecological and economic sustainability is becoming crucial and the challenge we are facing now consists in providing a cadre of well-trained and well-equipped practitioners and professionals in sustainable fisheries management.

### **The project**

Having in mind the above-mentioned context, the general objective of the FISHERMAN project is to support the SWIO region universities to prepare a new generation of skilled pro-

professionals for sustainable fisheries management in the region. Five universities from five countries in the region are working together on the project (Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania) with the support of two universities from two European countries (Spain –project coordinator– and Portugal).

The project addresses both institutional capacity building and improvement of academic quality and relevance in the region, leading to:

- Enhanced contribution to national and regional policies on cooperation in higher education on fisheries management studies
- Increased inter-institutional networking between higher education Institution of SWIO and EU, including institutions offering teacher training, degrees and diplomas contributing to regional solutions to teacher shortages
- Upgraded qualifications of academic staff of Higher Education Institution of SWIO
- Improved institutional frameworks to pursue academic programmes and academic excellence in partner universities
- Increased mobility of postgraduate students and teaching staff through the provision of joint programmes

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- Graduates with the skills corresponding to those required in the national and regional labour markets.

The FISHERMAN consortium is composed by 7 main institutions that are: University of Alicante, Spain (project coordinator); University of Algarve, Portugal; University of Seychelles, Seychelles; University of Toliara, Madagascar; University of Comoros, Comoros; University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and University of Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique. In addition with this, we count with the participation of two associate partners: the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

### **Project objectives and expected results**

The main objective of the FisherMan project is to support SWIO region universities to prepare new generation of skilled professionals for a sustainable fisheries management in the region.

This will be achieved by means of developing and delivering a study program (master or specialisation) with a regional dimension, aimed at building competences in sustainable fisheries management at SWIO region universities.

The main beneficiaries of the action will be teaching staff, researchers, students and administrators, all interested or in-



involved in the fisheries subject. They will benefit from specialized training sessions in fisheries and also other transversal topics such as educational quality assurance.

### **Regional conference**

In the framework of the FisherMan project, two Regional Conferences have been foreseen. The first one took place on the 10-11<sup>th</sup> September 2015 in the city of Mahajanga, Madagascar, with the theme *Sustainable Fisheries in the South-Western Indian Ocean: the importance of the Education, Management and Governance*.

With a format of two days composed by presentations, discussions and a final Round Table on the importance of integrating fisheries management in higher education, this conference brought together more than 100 regional and international Marine Resources professionals, fisheries and higher education authorities, academics, policy makers, activists, politicians and others involved and interested in the Fishery sector in the region.

The main objectives of the Regional Conference were to enhance the understanding of sustainable ocean resources governance, its management and use in the region by critically assessing the agenda for reform; to discuss the pres-

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ent situation in the Region about Fisheries Management and Fisheries Education and to present the FisherMan project and its developments.

The conference programme and summary of contributions may be found at <http://www.fisherman-project.eu/content/conference-outputs>

During the days of communication, discussion and exchange of practices, the conference showed the importance of fisheries resources as a source of food and wealth in the SWIO region. Management experiences that ensure the sustainable exploitation of these resources were presented, since, as in the rest of the world, these resources are threatened by overexploitation and use of destructive fishing gear both for resources and habitats. Therefore, it is important to control fishing effort, to eliminate destructive fishing techniques, to advance in co-management, with the creation of marine protected areas. At the same time, this would ensure fairness in the distribution of wealth generated.

For all this, building the capacities of multidisciplinary training of technicians who can develop sustainable fisheries management is crucial. The universities in the region should have a prominent role in the training of these professionals who will join the government, NGOs or the private sector.

In this special number of the *Mediterranea Journal* an extended version of some selected papers presented to the conference is included.

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