

**INFORMATION NETWORKS IN AFRICA: A COLLABORATIVE (FAO/SAIAB)
PROJECT INVESTIGATING MECHANISMS OF DOCUMENT EXCHANGE
AND THE PRESERVATION OF GREY LITERATURE**

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The lack of access to information and documentation has long been recognized as a constraint to research and development in fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. At the same time, most institutions are publishing valuable information in the form of internal reports and working documents i.e. the category of grey literature. There is very little dissemination of this information within the region. The South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) library is a leading African document and book reference collection on all aspects of fish, fisheries and aquaculture. NISC SA compiles the FISHLIT bibliographic database in association with the South African Institute for Biodiversity. The resources of these two organisations can make a significant contribution towards improved access to information for the fisheries and aquaculture community in Africa.

With this in mind FAO Fisheries Department has initiated a pilot project with SAIAB. The aim of this project is to facilitate mechanisms whereby institutions in the region can exchange information, have access to a broad collection of fisheries and aquaculture journals and ensure that the grey literature published in Africa is disseminated and preserved for future generations. This is being accomplished through the development of mechanisms for the exchange and supply of fisheries and Aquaculture information and documents between selected institutions in Africa. The desired outcomes of this project are to provide an overview of the document exchange options available and to propose mechanisms for the capture, dissemination and preservation of fisheries and aquaculture grey literature published in Africa.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Information Networking in Africa

One of the major constraints to fisheries and aquaculture research in Africa is the lack of timely access to current and relevant information.

A further issue is that the research published by these institutions, their published and unpublished grey literature is often not disseminated widely or preserved effectively.

A collaborative pilot project addressing and assessing these needs is underway. The aims of this project are:

- To evaluate the existing mechanisms by which African fisheries and aquaculture research institutions currently access information.
- To initiate document exchange between institutions in Africa.
- To assess the current status of information-resource sharing and evaluate the necessity, potential and requirements for the generation of a wider information network.
- To record the grey literature and other publications produced by African fisheries and aquaculture institutions.
- To assess the mechanisms by which such literature may be preserved and disseminated effectively.

An underlying philosophy of this project has been capacity building within African fisheries and aquaculture institutions.

The initial group of institutions participating in this initiative:

- **Burundi. Département des Eaux, Pêche et Pisciculture**
- **Eritrea. University of Asmara.**
- **Ghana. Water Research Institute (WRI)**
- **Guinea. Centre National des Sciences Halieutiques de Boussoura (CNSHB)**
- **Mauritania. Institut Mauritanien de Recherches Océanographiques et des Pêches (IMROP)**
- **Nigeria. National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR)**
- **Senegal. Direction de l'Océanographie et des Pêches Maritimes (DOPM)**
- **Uganda. Fisheries Resources Research Institute (FIRRI)**

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