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Bridging Science and Management in the Western Indian Ocean

Since 1989 Sida/SAREC has been in the forefront in supporting capacity building in marine sciences in the Western Indian Ocean region. When the Sida/SAREC *Bilateral Marine Science Programme* between Sweden and Tanzania and the Sida/SAREC East Africa *Regional Marine Science Programmes* started, there were very few marine scientists in the region, with the majority being fisheries biologists. Now, the number of marine scientists with MSc and PhD degrees has increased significantly and, more importantly, a cadre of competent local scientists of international repute has been established. These programs have also been very effective in strengthening multidisciplinary approaches and regional cooperation and networking. Furthermore, they have had a significant impact in promoting a dialogue between policy makers, the scientific community, stakeholders and NGOs as well as public awareness of marine science and coastal resource management.

For the continued success of the Sida/SAREC *Bilateral Marine Science Programme* and the *Marine Science for Management Programme* (MASMA) (which replaced the Regional Marine Science Programme) and to sustain research development in the region, it is of vast importance that results and ideas are communicated to an international audience. Researchers and postgraduate students involved in the projects are producing material with high scientific standards, but due to the local situation, few reach out to the broader scientific community. Accessible scientific information of a high standard is also a necessity to successfully manage the coastal and marine environment. It is for these reasons, our programs recognize the importance of investing time and resources in publishing results in a top-level journal such as Ambio.

This issue presents results of original research undertaken in the Western Indian Ocean region as well as reviews on a number of subjects. The articles included cover a broad range of scientific subject areas ranging from management-oriented, e.g. marine protected areas, fishery, and aquaculture to biotope-focused sciences, e.g. coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. In addition, a number of papers consider subjects such as the effects of human disturbance on the coastal environment in the region, as well as the contribution of donor funding to sustainable utilization of resources.

This special issue of Ambio is the result of collaboration between the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and the Sida/SAREC Bilateral Marine Science Programme between Sweden and Tanzania. The material has been developed based mainly on papers presented during the *Second Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Scientific Symposium* held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in October 2002. The symposium was organized under the theme: *Advances in Marine Sciences in East Africa: Setting the Research Agenda*. This symposium was aimed at providing a forum for scientists and other stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experiences on issues of concern to coastal communities, to revisit the ideas and understanding on different aspects of current practices and to review and evaluate these in order to define the future research agenda.

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Guest Editors

Marcus C. Öhman and Mats Björk
Sida/SAREC Bilateral Marine Science Programme

Julius Francis
WIOMSA

Elisabeth Kessler
Editor-in-Chief

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