Developing an Oceanographic Data and Information Network: the Experiences of ODINAFRICA.

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The utilization of available data and information for management of marine resources and environment has been one of the major challenges facing the coastal states of Africa. The development of the 'Ocean Data and Information Network for Africa' (ODINAFRICA) aims at enabling these countries to get access to data and information available in other data centres, develop skills for manipulation of data and preparation of data and information products, and develop infrastructure for archival, analysis and dissemination of data and information products. IOC, in collaboration with twenty Member States from Africa (Benin, Cameroon, Comores, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia), are developing the network with funding from the Government of Flanders-Belgium.

Activities implemented include: (i) identification and official designation of National Oceanographic Data and Information Centres, (ii) provision of computer equipment and software, (iii) organization of data and information management training courses (iv) provision of operational support including access to the Internet; and (v) development of the ODINAFRICA website. The institutions designated as the NODCs/DNAs by the participating member states have now commenced the development of national meta databases and data archives.

The success of the various NODCs differs greatly from country to country, and depends on the support of the host institution, linkages with other stakeholders, and the qualification and personal initiative of personnel.