

The importance of oceanography and hydrography in Kenya

Magori Charles

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Mombasa, Kenya

E-mail: cmagori@yahoo.com

Kenya is one of the countries participating in the Global Sea Level Observing System (GLOSS), a programme developed by IOC of UNESCO to address the growing concern about the rise in mean sea level around the globe. There are two GLOSS tide gauges managed by KMFRI located at Mombasa and Lamu along the Kenyan coastline. Both stations are recording and transmitting hourly sea level data in real time to international sea level data centres. The two stations are also dedicated components of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS). Data from the two stations (and others like them in the region) can be used to either confirm or cancel a tsunami warning throughout the region.

Kenya is actively participating in a regional initiative for the Western Indian Ocean aimed at enhancing regional collaboration between the ocean and climate experts in order to prepare seasonal ocean state forecasts to assist in improving regional climate forecasts.

Kenya has recently acquired an oceanographic Research Vessel RV Mtafiti. KMFRI is now in the process of putting in place a comprehensive programme to operationalize RV Mtafiti in Kenya's EEZ to conduct oceanographic and hydrographic surveys. In doing so, we are also reaching out to and engaging potential users and partners (at national, regional and international levels).

The National Disaster Operation Centre (NDOC), in collaboration with the Kenya Meteorological Services (KMS), KMFRI and other state agencies have developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Tsunami Warning and Emergency Response in Kenya. It aims to assist vulnerable coastal communities in Kenya to be prepared to respond appropriately and in a timely manner upon recognizing that a potential destructive tsunami may be approaching.

Kenya is hosting the Kenya National Oceanographic Data Centre (KeNODC) at KMFRI in Mombasa. This programme is part of the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) supported by IOC of UNESCO. It includes on-line journals, information portals, and bibliographic database. Kenya submitted a bid to IOC-UNESCO to be considered as a Regional Training Centre (RTC) for the Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA) at KMFRI, Mombasa and won. Kenya has also submitted another request to be considered as a Regional OBIS Node (RON).

Kenya is actively participating in Capacity Building programmes for the Data Buoy Cooperation Panel (DBCP) in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. Kenya also hosted the 3rd DBCP workshop in Mombasa.

Kenya is actively participating in the UN Regular Process that aims to assess both the state of the environment and the impacts of key human interactions with ocean ecosystem including socio-economics. KMFRI has spearheaded the preparation of the State of Marine Environment (SME) Report for Kenya. KMFRI is also involved in the preparation of the State of the Coast Report for the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region.