



**DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN NODE OF EARLY CAREER OCEAN  
PROFESSIONALS (ECOP AFRICA)**

**Quarterly Report for the Period: December 2021 to March 2022**



Gabriel Akoko Juma

Early Career Ocean Professionals, African Regional Node (ECOP-Africa)

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## **Background Information**

The African continent has a wider distribution and diversity of ECOPs given its size. Additionally, it has the youngest population globally with 70% being under the age of 30 years. African Node of ECOPs (ECOP Africa) was therefore established to enhance awareness and participation of the young ocean actors in addressing the Ocean Decade agenda as well as identify their potential and lessons for replication in other regions.

### ECOP Africa: Vision and Mission

The vision of ECOP Africa is to empower its members with important professional and networking opportunities to engage in discussions and actions which will culminate to a sustainable ocean during and beyond the decade.

The node intends to achieve this by serving as the mainstream organization enhancing ECOPs' engagement in Africa during this UN Decade of Ocean Science. Given the diversity in sub-regional capacities, and challenges, development of this regional node is also crucial in identifying ECOPs' perspectives and mobilizing resources to address capacity gaps. Moreover, enhancing awareness and encouraging participation of its members in the Ocean Decade agenda presents a great opportunity for multidisciplinary and intergenerational ocean management in the region and the globe at large.

### Goals and Objectives

Our goal is to foster ocean sustainability by creating capacities for ECOPs in Africa to network and actively engage in the ocean conservation agenda during and beyond the Decade.

The objectives of ECOP Africa related to the task of the consultancy during this period included:

- Conduct an inventory of the existing ECOPs and their initiatives in Africa as well as other networks that support ECOPs' activities, for further consultations towards development of the regional node.

- Establish linkages with strategic partners and institutions such as regional organizations, research institutions, businesses, governments sectors and National Decade Strategic Committees.
- Identify ECOP specific needs and priorities, including knowledge gap for capacity development in Africa and the sub-regions.
- Mobilize resources and coordinate implementation of capacity development related activities for its members such as on-line short courses, in-person trainings, ship-board trainings, implementing business ideas and other conservation projects
- Develop capacities for sub-regional and local ECOP networks to foster more responsible early career ocean citizenry, sound corporate practices, and local conservation initiatives specific to their thematic topics or spatial areas or concerns
- Work in collaboration with ECOPs in other regions and Task Teams for the general success of the ECOP Global Program.

## **Tasks undertaken and Achievements**

### **1. Inventory of the existing ECOPs and their initiatives in Africa**

Between the months of January and March, a web survey and e-meeting discussions were carried out to enhance awareness about the ECOP Programme and to conduct an inventory of ECOPs and their networks in the region. The survey consisted of both closed and open-ended questions in a google form, sent to ECOPs in Africa through the ECOP Africa mail list, other organizational mail lists, websites, newsletters and social networks. From the survey and the meetings held, a total of 192 members who were interested in the program were identified [Link](#). The nationality of members is widely distributed across the continent with Ghana leading at 22.9% (Fig.1). The data was also added to the ECOP [Global registry list](#) for easy coordination with other nodes.

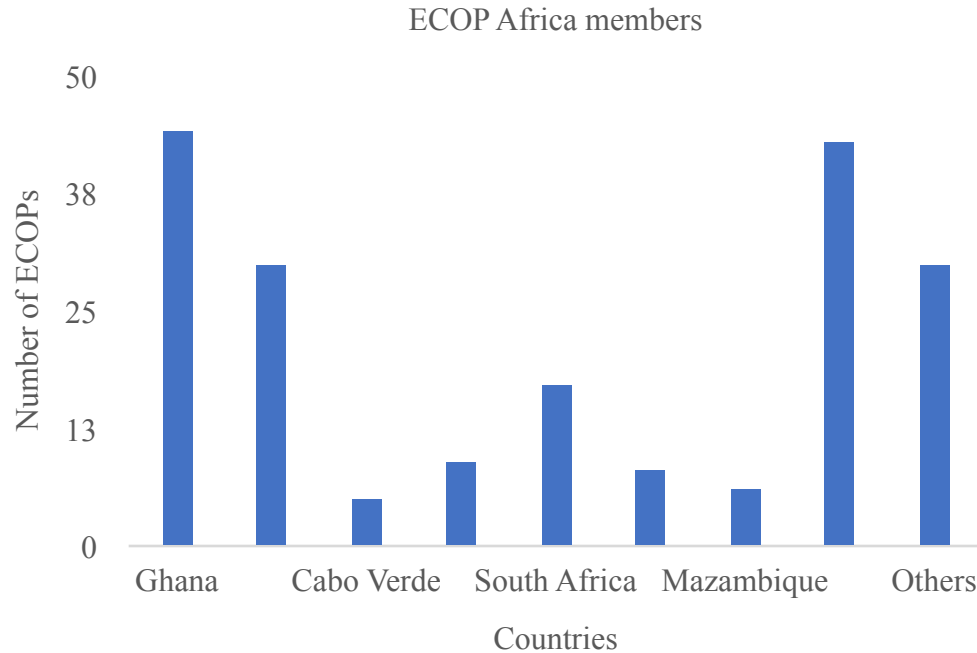


Figure 1: Graph showing ECOP Africa members by country of origin. “Others” represent countries with members less than 5 ECOPs. These included Congo (3), Egypt (3), Ivory Coast (2), Senegal (1), Sychelles (1), Zimbabwe (1), Liberia (1), Madagascar (3), Mauritius (2), Morocco (1), Namibia (2), Sierra Leone (1) Somalia (2), Tunisia (4), Sudan (1) and Togo (1).

From the survey, 54.8% of the informants were males while 45.2% were females. Additionally, majority of the respondents (76%) indicated having at least attained a post graduate degree, while others have attained bachelors, diploma and O-level of education. A comprehensive report of the survey is being developed and will be shared with IOC UNESCO.

## 2. Establishment of linkages with strategic partners and institutions

During the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the node established linkages with different organizations that operate in Africa. With these linkages, we aim to strengthen capacity for ECOPs and provide opportunities through which different ECOP networks can thrive. The information on the organizations, with which partnerships have been established, their focus and how ECOPs will benefit is summarized in Table 1 below. Other [networks](#) that support ECOPs in various regions of Africa were also identified for future collaborations.

Table 1: Organizations partnering to support ECOP Africa activities

<b>Organization/Institution</b>	<b>Area of operation</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Benefits from partnership</b>
IOC Africa	Whole of Africa	Cooperation for ocean management and development of sustainable Blue Economy in Africa	Supports ECOPs engagement with different national governments and institutions
Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)	Western Indian Ocean region	Educational and scientific technological development of marine science in WIO region	Supports ECOPs in the WIO region as well as ECOP Ocean Literacy Task Team in cases of sub-contracting.
Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA)	Global	Web based training platform supporting the IOC capacity development strategy	Will provide a platform for training and posting training materials under BriGEA initiative
Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center (NPEC)	Japan, Asia	Marine environmental protection i.e management of coastal basins	Will support the BriGEA initiative under ECOP Africa by leading the Ocean Colour R.S Training
NF-POGO Alumni Network for the Ocean (NANO)	Global	Committed to, ocean science, and by communicating the results of their work to the general public, for application and society benefit	Will support the BriGEA initiative by offering a training on GIS and Ocean Data View Course to Portuguese speaking ECOPs in Africa
Western Indian Ocean Early Career Scientist Network (WIOECSN)	W I O region	Supports programmes geared towards developing skills and knowledge for future generations of interdisciplinary marine scientists in the WIO region.	we are currently developing a booklet on the Ocean Decade Challenges with insights and lessons from Africa.

Revamp Rave Network	Nigeria	Focus on environmental education and capacity development of early career professionals	Collaborating in “Revamp Rave Network Climate College Hub,” under the theme, “Rethinking Climate Education for the Next Generation of Climate Champions,” ECOP Africa has identified two experts in biodiversity conservation to train in the virtual climate collage.
Sustainable Ocean Alliance (S.O.A)	Global	Supporting youth related activities geared towards capacity development and ocean conservation.	ECOP Africa is collaborating with SOA to establish other sub-regional chapters in the Gulf of Guinea region of West Africa.

### 3. Identification of ECOPs’ specific needs, priorities and challenges

Through the online survey and a series of meetings with ECOP Africa members during the last quarter, we identified needs, priorities and challenges faced by ECOPs as they carry out research and ocean conservation related activities. Some of the needs identified include:

- i. Funding for research projects (purchase of equipment, software, cruise time).
- ii. Funding for travel, accommodation, registration fees to participate in in-person events (conferences, trainings, workshops).
- iii. Scholarships for studies (tuition fees for Bachelor’s, Master’s degrees, PhD, short-term capacity development courses).
- iv. Funding to support ocean literacy, science communication, citizen science activities, community outreach activities, and relevant public awareness campaigns.
- v. Funding for registration to participate in online events.

Regarding the training, the following were cited by ECOPs in Africa as priority topics:

- i. Training on scientific ocean observation, data management and monitoring.

- ii. Training on ocean policy, governance, law, and community engagement.
- iii. Ocean literacy, science communication.
- iv. On-board scientific cruise training.
- v. Training on ocean conservation concepts such as management of MPAs.

Moreover, the ECOPs we identified various challenges faced by ECOPs as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

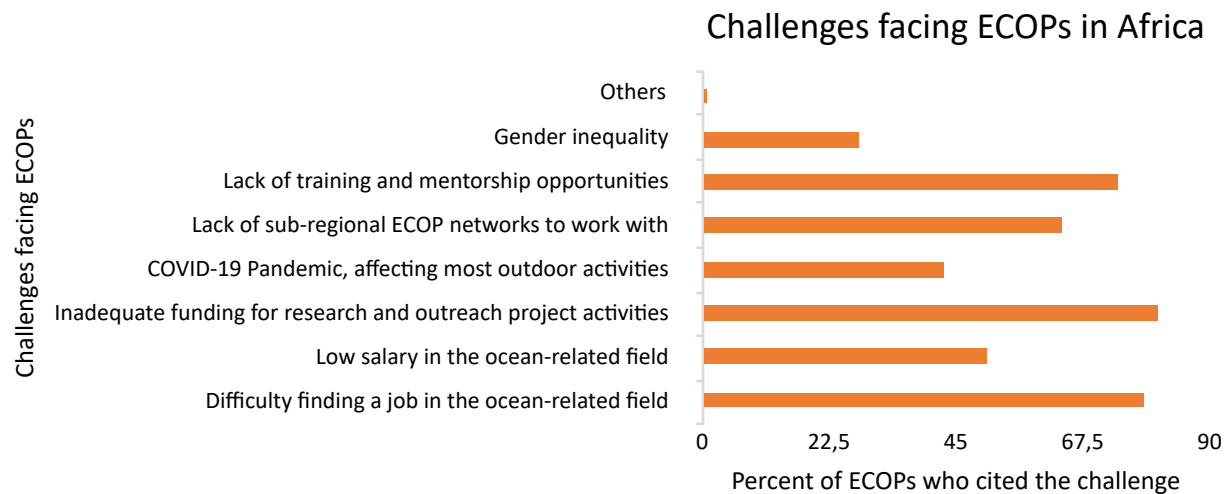


Figure 2: Graph showing challenges cited to be affecting their conservation and research related activities in Africa.

#### 4. Mobilization of resources and coordination of capacity development related activities

One of the priority needs that was highlighted by ECOP Africa is training opportunities in ocean related topics for knowledge development in Africa. With funds received from the Norwegian government, the ECOP Global Programme, conducted two online trainings including;

- i. Exploring Pathways to a Vibrant Ocean Economy for Africa by the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute



The course therefore explored approaches to harnessing the ocean and its resources as an integral tool for advancing economic growth and development across the continent, through the development of a sustainable and equitable ocean economy. It aimed at equipping selected participants with first-hand knowledge about the blue economy.

- ii. International Ocean Institute (IOI) Training Workshop on Basic Concepts of Ocean Governance for Early Career Ocean Practitioners, with a focus on the African Seas

The training took place between 29<sup>th</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022. It aimed at providing a basic interdisciplinary introduction to the concepts of Ocean governance, targeted to ECOPs hailing from countries bordering the seas of the African continent. It offered the opportunity to individuals from a diverse range of Ocean related backgrounds to acquire basic knowledge of Ocean governance through a series of topical lectures.

#### Bridging the Gap for ECOPs in Africa (BriGEA) Initiative

Further to the sponsored training, the node has established an initiative that aims mobilize resources towards meeting the growing demand for short course training. This also followed the findings of the survey in which inadequate scientific training on modern methodologies of ocean observation, data management and sharing were identified as one of the challenges ECOPs face. Through this initiative, ECOPs who are experts in various ocean related discipline volunteer to train other ECOPs thereby enhancing sustainable scientific and professional development in the region. The node is currently partnering with Ocean Teacher Global Academy, whereby OTGA provides the training platform for students' teacher engagements. Through this initiative, the Ocean Colour Remote Sensing and Data Analysis Course for ECOPs in Africa has been organized to take place in the month of June 2022. The course concept and program can be found [here](#).

#### **5. Capacities for sub-regional and local ECOP networks to foster more responsible early career ocean citizenry**

There are ongoing discussions to start sub-regional chapters through which various ECOPs can organize various activities that foster ocean conservation. We are currently collaborating with

Sustainable Ocean Alliance and Gulf of Guinea Marine Institute to establish the Gulf of Guinea ECOP Chapter.

**6. Work as regional ECOP focal point and cooperating with other ECOP nodes and Task Teams for the general success of the ECOP Global Program.**

As the coordinator, biweekly information digest is sent to members to update them about ongoing activities, opportunities or areas that their input is required. Similarly, it is ensured that the website page for ECOP Africa is updated with the relevant information. Prompt communication has also been carried out, including replies to inquiries, working on requests of ECOPs as well as reaching out to partners.

In collaboration with the ECOPs' Ocean Literacy Task Team, the African node conducted a regional art contest between December 2021 and January 2022 to promote awareness on ocean conservation under the theme, "Ocean Connectedness and My Identity," addressing Ocean Challenge 10. Only four submissions were received, despite a wider spread of the information. However, 15 entries were made for the Global category under the theme, "Ocean Livelihoods," while 21 submissions were received from the South Pacific regions. The entries varied from drawings, photographs, poems, videos and paintings (Fig 3).

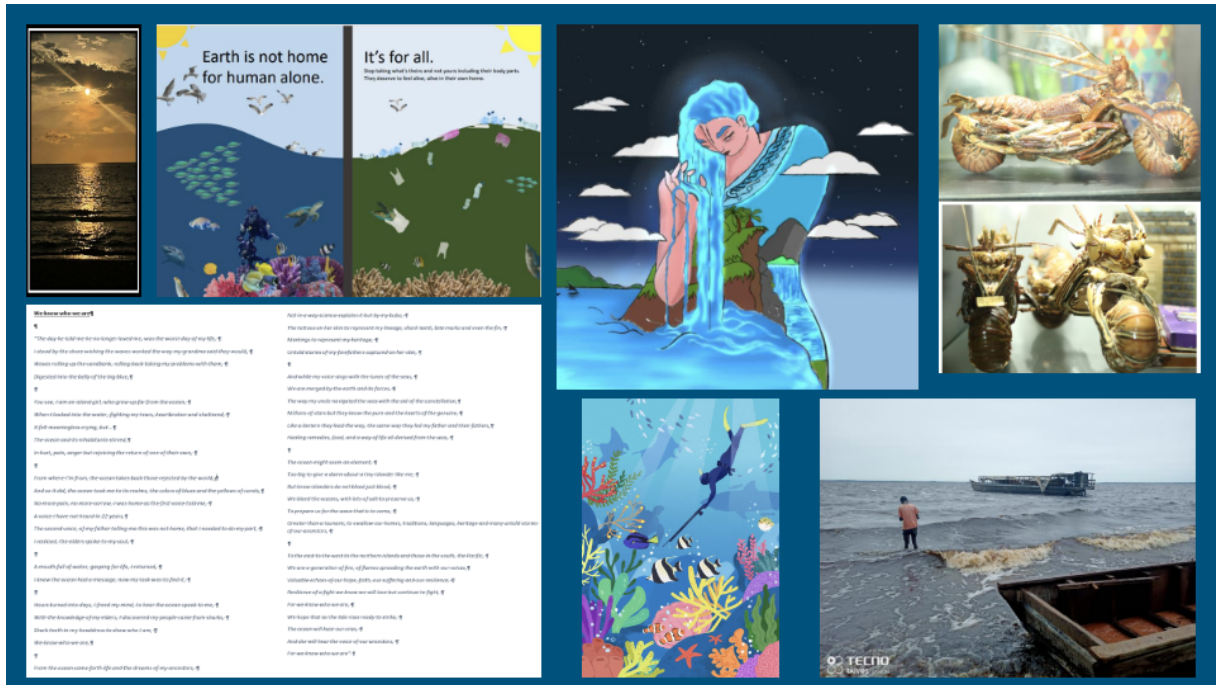


Figure 3: Some of the submissions made for the different categories during the art contest; Credits: Dhipan, Aisyah, Billy, Afriki, Vinzealhar, Qisnatasha and Ebenya

## 7. Other events/activities undertaken

During this quarter, we also took part in various activities that promoted awareness about the Programme. Some of the events include:

### i. DEFRA Webinar

During this one-day workshop, ECOP Africa was represented and a presentation given on activities being undertaken. Additionally, the coordinator highlighted the objectives of the node and how to be part of the node. Through participating in this workshop, a significant number of ECOPs expressed interest in joining the Programme.

### ii. African kick-off Pre-Conference Workshop for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

In this event, the ECOP Africa coordinator gave a presentation on session four, tackling the question, “In view of the young population in Africa, one key area of intervention is to enhance

the engagement and motivation of the youth to appreciate the ocean. In this respect, can you tell us a bit more on the role of ECOPs in the Decade? What is your vision on the future of ocean science in Africa and its contribution to sustainable development?”

- iii. Planning to participate in the African Conference on Priority Setting & Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in May 2022.

During this conference, ECOP Africa will host a side event under the theme, “**Enabling co-production of knowledge by ECOPs and multi-sectoral stakeholders to meaningfully address capacity gaps in Africa.**” It will serve to empower ECOPs with crucial networking and professional development opportunities to engage with each other and with various government sectoral representatives. It will also give a chance for ocean professionals in Africa to take part in a multi-career-stage workshop, to co-design, prioritize initiatives and create synergies with active networks thereby building capacity for African ECOPs in this Decade. The concept note for the side event can be found [here](#).

## **8. Challenges**

During the first quarter, a few challenges were experienced including:

- i. Time difference hence difficulty in planning for some crucial meetings.
- ii. Limited funds making it difficult to adequately support ECOPs through training and travels to attend various events.
- iii. COVID 19 Pandemic leading to postponement of important events such as the African Kick-off conference.