

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) has addressed capacity building primarily through the establishment of the ISA Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area, which was set up by consensus by the Assembly in its resolution of 16 August 2006 (ISBA/12/A/11).

The Endowment Fund promotes and encourages the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole, by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in international, cooperative marine scientific research programmes, which allow them to develop their capacity through training and technical assistance.

In accordance with the resolution of the Assembly, the capital of the Endowment Fund is derived from application fees paid under resolution II of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea by the seven former registered pioneer investors that have entered into contract with the Authority. Additional contributions to the Fund may be made by the Authority, members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and private persons.

The initial Fund capital amounted to \$2,631,803. Since its establishment, additional contributions have been made by the Governments of Germany (\$250,000), Mexico (\$2,500), Norway (\$250,000), Spain (\$25,514) and the United Kingdom (\$29,800). By December 2009, the capital of the Fund stood at \$3,202,440, with a total accumulated interest of \$360,136. To date, \$254,312 has been disbursed by the Fund through six awards for activities that promote capacity building.

In 2007, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, adopted detailed rules and procedures for the administration and utilization of the Endowment Fund. These rules and procedures provide comprehensive guidance on making applications for assistance from the Fund, the information that must be submitted, the type of activities that are eligible for funding, and the dissemination and reporting of the outcomes of marine scientific research programmes and scientific cooperation programmes. Applications for assistance from the Fund may be made by any developing country or by any other country if the purpose of the grant is to benefit scientists from developing countries.

The Fund is administered by the secretariat of the Authority, which is required to endeavour to make arrangements with universities, scientific institutions, contractors and other entities for opportunities for scientists from developing countries to participate in marine scientific research activities. Such arrangements may include the reduction or waiver of fees for training.

An advisory panel was appointed by the Secretary-General in March 2008 to evaluate applications for assistance from the Fund. It is composed of permanent representatives to the Authority, representatives of educational institutions or international organisations and individuals closely associated with the work of the Authority. The members of the Panel were appointed with due regard to equitable geographic representation. The names of the Advisory Panel are available upon request or through the Endowment Fund website page (<http://www.isa.org/jm/en/efund/fund>). The Panel is convened as necessary, and has met six times to date.

Since February 2008, the secretariat has carried out a number of activities designed to draw the attention of the international donor community to the opportunities offered by the Fund and to encourage additional contributions, including:

- Issuing press releases and promotional materials.
- Launching a specially designed Endowment Fund page on the ISA website.
- Establishing a network of cooperating institutions that may be interested in offering places on courses, or research opportunities.
- Staging roundtable events at United Nations meetings.

Members of the network of cooperating institutions include: the National Oceanography Centre (United Kingdom); the National Institute of Ocean Technology (India); the French Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER); the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Germany); the National Institute of Oceanography (India); the Natural History Museum (United Kingdom); Duke University (USA); and InterRidge, an international, non-profit programme promoting interdisciplinary studies of oceanic spreading centres.

Since the Fund was launched, eight applications for assistance have been received and evaluated, including proposals from InterRidge, the National Oceanography Centre (United Kingdom), the Rhodes Academy of Oceans Law and Policy, the National Institute of Oceanography (India), the State Oceanic Administration of China, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and an individual scientist from Papua New Guinea. Each of these proposals has been reviewed by the Advisory Panel, which in some cases has requested further information or clarification from the proposers. A total of 16 scientists from developing countries have been recipients of financial support, with the names and nationalities of a further seven to be finalised. The recipients are from Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. They have participated in international training programmes or have been involved in research projects, which would not have been possible without the assistance of the Endowment Fund.

The first project to receive funding allowed InterRidge to offer an additional two fellowships each year between 2009 and 2011, which will build the capacity of the recipients and in turn benefit their home countries when they apply their new skills. So far, one applicant has received support in 2009, and suitable candidates for the remaining fellowships are encouraged to find out more information from the InterRidge website (<http://www.interridge.org/fellowship>).

The Endowment Fund has also supported the participation of two Indian scientists in a multi-disciplinary investigation aimed at expanding current knowledge of the geology of the Shag Rock Passage in the North Scotia Ridge. The programme of scientific research will create a network, across two continents, of co-operating scientists that share the same scientific goals. In addition, the project will facilitate the transfer of analytical geochemical skills to scientists from a developing country. The linking of these scientists will build capacity by enabling them to share and develop the skills, knowledge and expertise they have gained within their chosen fields of marine scientific research, which they will be able to pass on to other scientists in their home country.



Another collaboration allowed the National Institute of Oceanography in India (NIO) to train scientists from developing countries. Funding was initially provided to enable three scientists to gain new skills and carry out a research project at NIO. During training, the participants were acquainted with topics related to the exploration of deep seabed minerals and their environment, and given hands-on experience in relevant techniques. It is hoped that as a result of this training, research programmes between the trainees, their institutions and NIO will be developed that enable additional capacity building.

In March 2009, an award was made to the Rhodes Academy of Oceans Law and Policy to fund a number of student fellowships for individuals from developing countries, and to expand the Academy's training programme to cover issues relating to marine science. The Rhodes Academy was founded in 1995 and entails an intensive, three-week course of study, with lectures by leading jurists, practitioners and international law faculty from around the world. A total of nine participants benefited from the support of the Endowment Fund, and they are now better equipped to build the capacity of their home countries in the areas of the law of the sea and marine science.

An international cooperative study on the seafloor hydrothermal system in the Indian Ocean will be carried out during 2010, involving financial support from the Endowment Fund and investigation cruises organized by China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA), which is also one of the contractors with the Authority. The study will focus on the geology and geochemistry of the Southwest Indian Ridge. As part of this programme, two scientists from developing countries will participate in the research cruise to obtain training, and a capacity building workshop will be held. It is expected that this collaboration will result in a future international cooperative project between COMRA and the Authority, which would involve a large component of capacity building.

An award from the Endowment Fund is enabling a researcher from Papua New Guinea to perform research at Duke University to develop conservation strategies for Seafloor Massive Sulfide ecosystems. The study will focus on the genetic diversity of selected marine invertebrate taxa from the Manus Basin in the Bismark Archipelago near Papua New Guinea, and will cover the population structure and classification of species. It is hoped that information generated by this study will help develop the knowledge and understanding of these ecosystems and increase the capacity of Papua New Guinea to employ appropriate marine conservation strategies.

In 2010 and beyond, the Authority plans to continue to take steps to generate interest in the Fund on the part of potential donors and institutional partners. The Secretary-General encourages other governments and institutions to participate in the Authority's network and also invites members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and private persons to contribute to the Fund.