



#OceanAction15467



# ENHANCING THE ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEEP-SEA RESEARCH

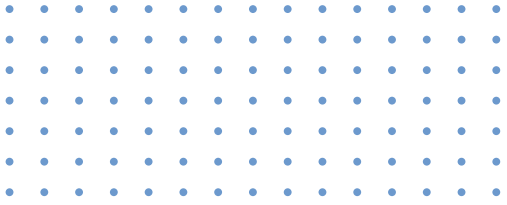
Today, women who wish to engage in deep-sea research (DSR) face real barriers that are specific to their gender. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) has a vision of a world in which women scientists from developing States, and particularly those from the least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS), play a central role in DSR, with impacts reaching far beyond the sphere of ocean science. To enable this vision, ISA is committed to addressing the critical challenges faced by women scientists from developing States including by increasing opportunities for career growth and leadership roles in DSR. A critical avenue to achieve this lies in the design and implementation of dedicated capacity-building and development initiatives.

## ISA capacity-building and development programmes and current participation of women

A key responsibility of ISA is to promote and encourage marine scientific research (MSR) in the "Area", the deep seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (UNCLOS, art.143). States parties to UNCLOS are bound to promote international cooperation in MSR in the Area through ISA for the benefit of developing States and technologically less developed States. Accordingly, cooperation programmes should aim to:

- Strengthen research capacities of those States
- Train their personnel and ISA personnel in the techniques and application of MSR
- Foster the employment of their qualified personnel in MSR in the Area.

Several initiatives have been implemented since the establishment of ISA in 1994 to achieve this, namely: the ISA Endowment Fund for MSR (EFMSR), the Contractor Training Programme, the Internship Programme, the Africa Deep Seabed Resources (ADSR) project, the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth project and the Secretary General Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research. As of February 2021, 328 individuals, including **145 women**, had benefited from these initiatives.

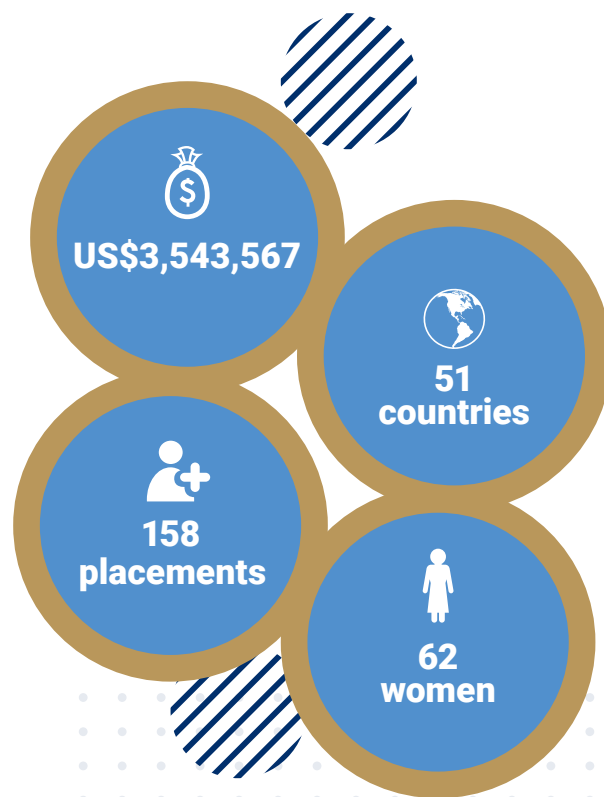


## The Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research

The EFMSR was established in 2006 (ISBA/13/A/6, annex) to enable ISA to promote the conduct of MSR in the Area by supporting the participation of scientists and technical personnel from developing States in relevant programmes and activities.

Any philanthropic organization, institution or private person may contribute to the EFMSR. As at 31 January 2021, the capital of the EFMSR stood at US\$3,543,567. The most recent contributions were made by France and Mexico in January 2021 in the amount of US\$10,000 each. As at 31 December 2020, a total of 158 scientists or government officials from 51 countries had benefited from the EFMSR, including **62 women**.

The rules and procedures of the EFMSR are currently being revised in line with the key findings of the review commissioned by the Secretariat on the capacity-building programmes and initiatives implemented by ISA since 1994, as well as the outcomes of the workshop on “Capacity development, resources and needs assessment” held in Kingston in February 2020. Consequently, all activities under the EFMSR have been suspended since June 2020 pending the conclusion of the review.

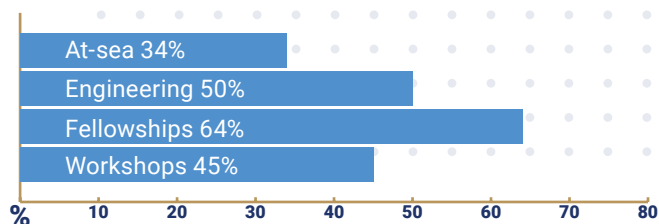


## The Contractor Training Programme

The CTP is generally formulated following negotiations between ISA and any Contractor being granted the right to carry exploration activities in the Area. Contractors are required to provide and fund training opportunities designed and carried out for the benefit of trainees from developing States members of ISA and for ISA personnel.

Since 2013, a total of 136<sup>1</sup> training placements were provided by 21 contractors, including at-sea training, engineering, fellowships for master’s and PhD programmes, internships, seminars and workshops. **59 women** have benefitted from these opportunities.

Participation of women in the different kinds of programmes:



Former ISA Trainees with ISA’s Training Coordinator, Ms. Annekah Mason (third from the right)

<sup>1</sup> An additional 48 placements, which were selected by the LTC in 2020, are pending due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## The Internship Programme

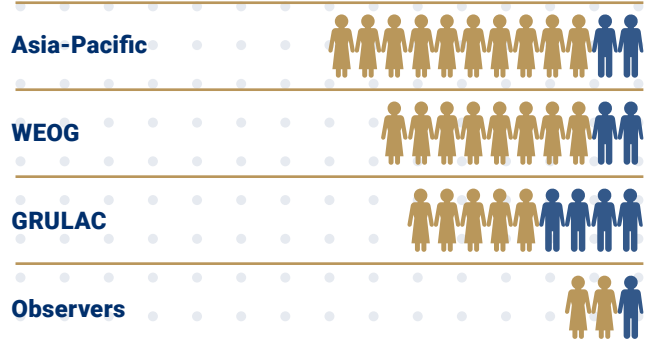
The Internship Programme is open to students, junior researchers and young government officials. Interns acquire in-depth knowledge of the work of the Secretariat and focus on specific legal and technical issues including MSR.

To date, the Secretariat has welcomed 34 interns, of whom **25 were women**.

## Africa's Deep Seabed Resources (ADSR) Project

The overall goal of the ADSR project is to provide the enabling conditions for African countries to fully benefit from sustainable and inclusive ocean economies as envisaged in the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (2019<sup>2</sup>) through the sustainable development of the continent's deep-seabed resources. Under the ADSR project, 10 African national experts, including five women, with expertise in geology and law/policy have been selected to be deployed to the Secretariat of ISA in the course of 2020/2021 in an effort to build on existing capacity-building initiatives and provide them with technical skills related to the deep seabed.

## Geographical representation of women that participated in the ISA internship programme

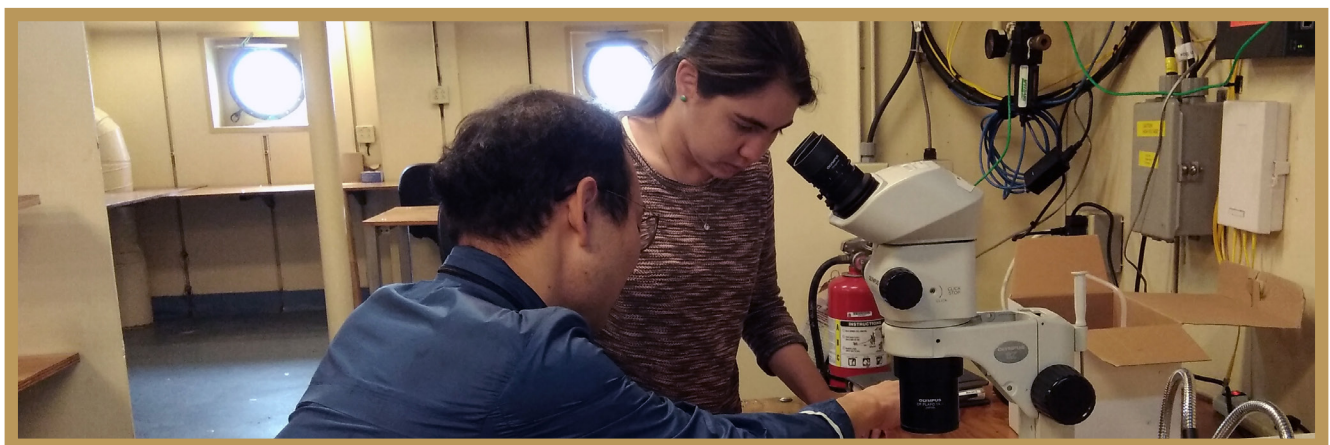


ISA Secretary-General, Mr. Michael W. Lodge, and ADSR experts Ms. Judith Owusu (left) and Ms. Tini Guitoba (right) in 2020.

## Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research

The Award was launched in 2018 and recognizes and encourages the achievements of young researchers from developing countries who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of scientific knowledge of the deep-sea environment or to the development of environmentally sustainable regulatory

frameworks. The Award includes a cash prize, the cost of attendance at the annual Session of the ISA Assembly, participation to a workshop organized by ISA and the cost of publication of an article in a scientific (open access) journal. One of the two awardees so far is a woman: Dr. Diva Amon from Trinidad & Tobago.



Former ISA trainee on board research vessel

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.au-ibar.org/component/jdownloads/finish/77/3530>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.isa.org.jm/training/adsr-experts>



**Where to from here? >>** Despite numerous initiatives being adopted and implemented at global, regional and national levels to create new opportunities for women in non-traditional as well as emerging sectors, women remain underrepresented in DSR, especially in highly technical fields and leadership positions. This is further noticeable in developing countries and in particular in vulnerable countries such as the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The reasons for this are many and complex but turning the tide starts with **raising awareness of the importance of engaging women in these sectors.** >> As part of the implementation of its High-Level Action Plan for 2019 – 2023 and its Action Plan for MSR in support of the UN Ocean Decade 2021-2030, ISA is committed to identify and put in place relevant measures to strengthen the role of women in deep-seabed related activities and, in particular, in DSR. >> Several initiatives with specialized networks are under development. One of particular importance is the partnership established between ISA and the United Nations Office of the High-Level Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS) to implement the “Women in Deep-Sea Research” (WIDSR) project, which aims to promote the empowerment of women scientists, especially those from the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and their access to leadership roles in DSR. >> Ultimately, ISA aims **to stimulate a vigorous general debate to review ways and means to ensure the full and equal access of women from developing States to DSR and to promote their real participation in decision-making and leadership roles.**



Former ISA Intern, Cynthia Nunes



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