Guest Editorial

We are excited to bring you the first-ever special edition of the Communicating Astronomy with the Public Journal on ''Astronomy for Development''. For this 27th issue, the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) collaborated with the CAPjournal to explore the contributions of astronomy outreach and communication to sustainable development.

While ''Astronomy for Development'' is a relatively recent term, coined and popularised in the last decade, the principles behind it have always had a close connection with astronomy communication. Astronomers, communicators and outreach professionals have engaged millions, potentially billions, of people in science and the scientific method, promoting education and the value of critical thinking. Many of these activities target audiences in disadvantaged areas, aiming to level the playing field in terms of opportunities available, skills development, and exposure to scientific astronomical knowledge.

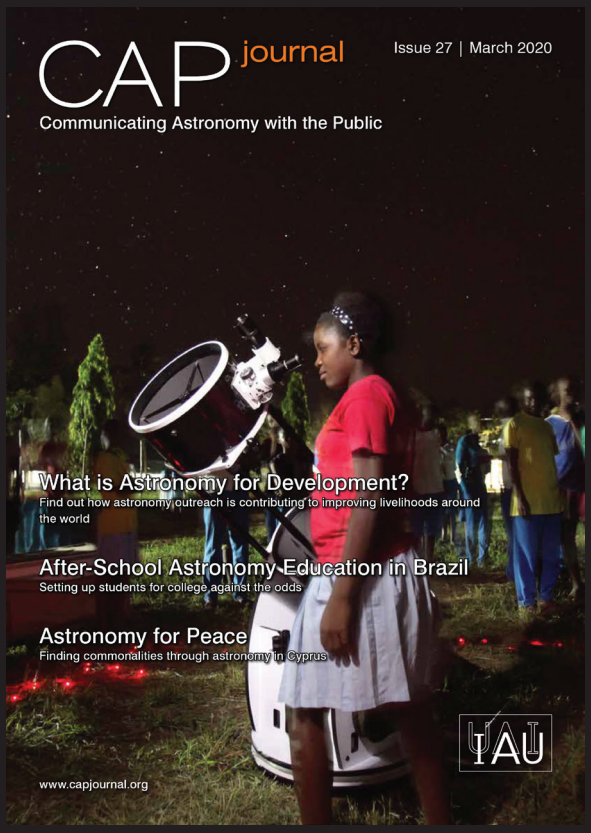
The OAD, a joint partnership between the IAU and the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, has been coordinating development activities since 2011, by funding projects and working with regional offices, partners and collaborators. But we believe the Astronomy-for-Development community is much bigger than the OAD and considerably overlaps with the CAP community. We have gathered for this issue some of the creative and effective outreach projects and strategies employed by this global community to stimulate development. These include interventions which use astronomy to improve inclusion and gender equality, stimulate economies with astrotourism, reduce light pollution, promote education and tolerance, and more.

This issue also presents posters on OAD's new Flagship projects, which are large-scale development programs built on the successes and lessons of past OAD projects. Flagship 1 aims to use new and existing astronomical facility to stimulate socio-economic benefits (the article on AstroStays in "Explained in 60 Seconds" provides a great introduction) while Flagship 2 pulls from the inspirational grandeur of astronomy to stimulate a sense of tolerance and common humanity (read this excerpt from Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot on The Planetary Society website here: https://bit.ly/2TaGfsw).

We realise there are many more projects making an impact than we can cover in one or two or even ten editions of the CAPjournal. If you are running an Astronomy-for-Development project that is benefiting your community, we encourage you to contact us so we may share it with the larger community and the rest of the world. In the end, it is you, the community of practitioners, who are effecting change and we are extremely grateful to you for your continued efforts to make the world a better place.

Ramasamy Venugopal, on behalf of The IAU Office of Astronomy for Development team
Invited Guest Editors for CAPjournal #27

Cover: Observing with the Travelling Telescope at Chumani Secondary School, Kilifi, Kenya, 18 May 2015. Credit: IAU/the Travelling Telescope



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