

Early Career Ocean Professionals from Africa and Caribbean SIDS benefit from the first round of funded trainings through the Ocean Decade's ECOP Programme

Thanks to the generous financial support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and IOC-UNESCO, over 120 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) from African and Caribbean countries benefited from training courses on ocean science, ocean governance and ocean sustainability between March and April 2022.

The infographic features a blue background with circular callouts. On the left, under the heading 'Caribbean', are callouts for 'Marine Spatial Planning in Caribbean SIDS - Dr Erick Ross Salazar, MSc Vera Noon, and MSc Sarah Mahadeo' and 'Thinking Beyond the Tides - SOA Caribbean and EcoVybz Environmental Creatives'. On the right, under the heading 'Africa', are callouts for 'Exploring Pathways to a Vibrant Ocean Economy for Africa - Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute' and 'Basic Concepts of Ocean Governance for Early Career Ocean Professionals - International Ocean Institute'. A central callout states '-Delivered in March/April 2022 reaching 126 ECOPs across 34 countries/SIDS'. At the bottom, it says 'Capacity development trainings for Early Career Ocean Professionals'. Logos for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), UNESCO, and Norad are included, along with the ECOP logo and website www.ecopdecade.org.

23 mai 2022

It was imperative that these training courses specifically target ocean-related issues in Africa or Caribbean SIDS and feature ECOPs based in these regions, with direct relevance to the [Ocean Decade](#) vision, mission and challenges. Whilst all of the trainings adhered to the overarching objectives of the ECOP Programme's funding call launched in November 2021, they also covered more detailed topics pertaining

to each location and facilitating organisation.

Two training courses were held in Africa:

1. The [Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute \(GOGMI\)](#) presented Exploring Pathways to a Vibrant Ocean Economy for Africa. The training is available on the [ECOP Programme Youtube channel](#).
2. The [International Ocean Institute \(IOI\)](#) delivered Basic Concepts of Ocean Governance for Early Career Ocean Professionals - with a focus on the African Seas.

Participants of these courses came from all over Africa, including: Angola, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The online format allowed for a geographically diverse group of ECOPs across the African continent to participate, sparking the creation of a network of individuals who are actively engaged in useful dialogue regarding the prospects and challenges of Africa's seas.

The high value of these sessions was indicated by how many people applied and how well received they were by the participants; proving it is imperative to create more pathways in capacity development. This is so the next generation can engage in trans-disciplinary or cross-practice topics such as ocean governance, maritime security and the blue economy, and enable more Africa based ECOPs to rise into the roles needed to use, protect and monitor ocean resources sustainably for the future.

In the Caribbean SIDS region these two trainings were held:

1. Dr Erick Ross Salazar, and ECOPs Vera Noon (MSc), and Sarah Mahadeo (MSc) conducted a training on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in Caribbean SIDS.
2. [Sustainable Ocean Alliance \(SOA\) Caribbean](#) and [EcoVybz Environmental Creatives](#) provided a special series on Developing Ocean Leadership and Stewardship in the Caribbean, called "Thinking Beyond the Tides" with Khadija Stewart. This youth-led initiative included sessions on: Storytelling for Ocean Action, Marine Degradation in the Caribbean, Marine Opportunities, Idea Implementation and Ocean Leadership.

Within the Caribbean, participants came from: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos.

Again, another success of the training was being able to reach ECOPs from an array of Small Island Developing States, allowing for essential interaction between Islanders interested in MSP and connecting them to new mapping tools such as SeaSketch.

Speakers for the Thinking Beyond the Tides included established and revered ocean advocates such as Fabien Cousteau and Tara Roberts; cultivating and sharing their stories to motivate Caribbean ECOPs to continue on their path and navigate challenges in the field by calling on their Island nation heritage.

The ECOP Programme is designed to support Early Career Ocean Professionals across the globe, with special emphasis on reaching ECOPs who might not have access to training in key ocean sustainability topics. As the outcomes from this call show, there is a diverse community of international ECOPs eager to engage and act on behalf of the ocean, with ECOPs in Africa and Caribbean SIDS already working hard to protect ocean livelihoods, especially ready to be an integral part of the Ocean Decade.

Visit the [ECOP website](#) for more information on these trainings.