

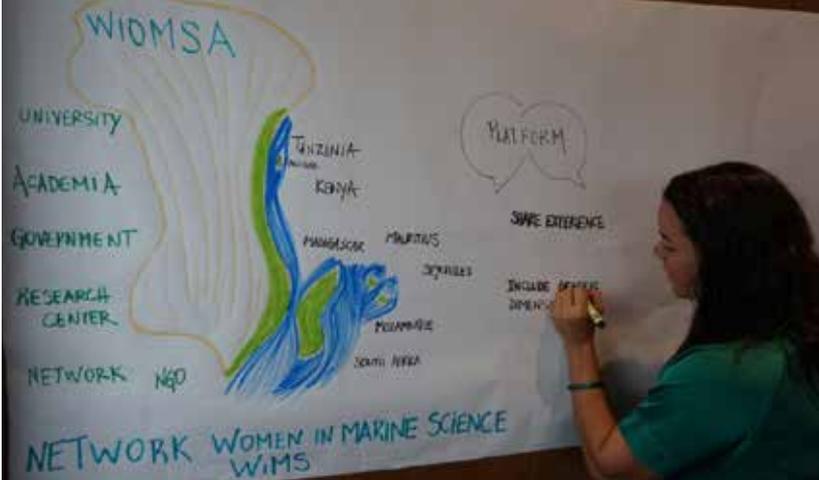
WiMS ACTIVITIES DURING THE 11TH WIOMSA SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM



The network of **Women in Marine Science (WiMS)** organised several different activities during the 11th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium in Mauritius.

A. Women and Ocean Workshop

WiMS started off the symposium week on the 30th of June with a pre-symposium workshop on "Women and Ocean Workshop: Implementation of the SSF Guidelines and their gender dimension" this workshop was organized by WiMS in collaboration with *Mundus maris*. An article on the workshop featured in the Second Edition of the WIOMSA Symposium Newsletter which you can read [here](#)



B. Speed Networking lunch

WiMS hosted a speed networking lunch on the 3rd of July 2019. The lunch which was open to all symposium participants was attended by 115 people, including one baby!



The event kicked off with a short introduction to WiMS before a few of the participants were invited to share a good experience from their careers to set a positive and encouraging tone for the rest of the event. Participants were then divided into groups and tasked with discussing some questions and presenting the outcome of these discussions in plenary. **From the discussions, we learned a few key things:**

- Open discussions between men and women are key for creating gender awareness and equity in Africa.
- WiMS offers a much-needed platform to empower women marine sciences in Africa.
- Women and men share skills that make them equally well-suited for work in the field of marine science and gender stereotypes no longer fit the bill.

WiMS extends a big thank you to everyone who took their time to attend this event and hope you will continue to play an active part in WiMS.

C. Special Session by WIO-ECSN

WiMS chairperson, Veronica Bristol, attended and delivered a presentation on WiMS at the special session organized by the Western Indian Ocean Early Career Scientist Network (WIO-ECSN).

D. Lessons Learned from Job Shadowing Dr. Jacqueline Uku By Nelly Isigi Kadagi

During the symposium, WiMS offered upcoming scientists the opportunity to shadow one of our leading women marine scientists. Nelly Isigi Kadagi took the opportunity head on and got to shadow the WIOMSA President Dr Jacqueline Uku during the symposium week.

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be the president of the largest regional membership organization that promotes science and technology in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO)? You are not alone as that was me for the longest time that I have known Dr. Jacqueline Uku as the president of Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA). But there was more to this. The pre-symposium workshop on 'Women and Ocean' just before the 11th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium highlighted some of the ways that we could support the next generation of women leaders in the region. Job shadowing was one example. Hence, the symposium presented a great space and potential to gain insight into Dr. Uku's role. "Dr. Uku, can I job-shadow you this week? I asked.

I must admit that I was ecstatic about this opportunity. I was looking forward to learning, though quite intimidated that I would have to follow Dr. Uku around. Shadowing meant that I would meet and talk with people that I may not have otherwise reached out to in the usual conference settings. It also meant that I would have to be present in Dr. Uku's space, ask questions and enjoy the experience. I had to force myself out of my comfort zone, and I learned a great deal. So, what were my take-home lessons from these five days shadowing Dr. Uku?

Leadership is about occupying the space

You never really know that you want to do something until you allow yourself to be present in that moment. Being present provides an opportunity to learn. I had the privilege of joining Dr. Uku and Dr. Nyawira Muthiga (past WIOMSA president) at their lunch table during the symposium. Listening to them speak about the advances in the quality of marine science over the years gave a better viewpoint about WIOMSA's progress. Given that this was my first-ever WIOMSA Symposium, I wondered what their experiences have been in the last ten WIOMSA symposiums.

Create the space to listen effectively



As a leader, you have a unique potential to connect with your team and other partners through listening. Listening is a gateway to a diversity of ideas. You can gain and expand perspective to address potential issues which enhance credibility and builds strong partnerships. I sat next to Dr. Uku during a one-on-one meeting where I got to hear about some of the future work related to marine research and conservation. What was more intriguing was that much of Dr. Uku's time was spent paying attention to what this person had to say.

Give the right feedback

As a leader, there is a correlation between your ability to give feedback and the performance of your team and colleagues. The right, specific and timely feedback provides an observer's perspective regarding the progress and addressing issues. I

got an opportunity to listen to Dr. Uku's feedback session with Meaghen McCord (WIOMSA -Women in Marine Science (WiMS) vice president) about the outcomes of the pre-symposium workshop on 'Women and Ocean'. Interestingly, Dr. Uku had prepared a visual presentation of the inputs and outcomes of the meeting on a piece of paper. The sketch as a representation of Dr. Uku's feedback fostered better discussions and alternative strategies for the next WiMS meeting.

Compliment and thank people

Complimenting your team improves their sense of well-being and boosts their self-esteem. One is more likely to push beyond limits when working with a grateful leader. A genuine thank you brings people together in pursuit of a more excellent vision. The five days with Dr. Uku allowed me to work with her on several projects. The tasks ranged from providing positive criticism to one of her important PowerPoint presentations to writing a session summary report as a contribution to the WIO governance strategy. As an early career scientist, these tasks empowered me to engage in science advocacy and communication in a way that I wouldn't have planned. But what was more encouraging was Dr. Uku's specific appreciation of my contributions.

At a person level, spending time in the shadow of Dr. Uku allowed me to connect with my inner self. I am more aware of the areas that I need to work on in the process of becoming a leader. Job shadowing is two-way traffic – and both parties can make it worthwhile. We dedicated some time to discuss our expectations and scheduled activities for the day. It was rewarding to debrief and reflect on the experiences at the end of the day.

In a Scientific Symposium that brought over 650 participants from 32 countries, my primary agenda was to network and listen to the talks. But I gained more than I could have hoped for through job shadowing. I would absolutely encourage everyone to consider it.