

## **Global Astronomy Survey : Gabon**

First Submission: Patrice Okouma [see human resources section] 2008

SPoC Approved : Yes

### **1. Professional (Research) Astronomy:**

(i) Number of universities offering Astronomy (and their names)

Astronomy course, "Special Relativity" currently offered as part of Physics course at the University of Science & Techniques at Masuku (USTM), the only Science university in Gabon.

(ii) Number of universities offering Physics (and their names)

One :

University of Science & Techniques at Masuku (USTM), the only Science university in Gabon.

(iii) Number of academics who have been trained in Astronomy (ideally with their names and levels of qualification)

Two

1) Dr Samuel IKOGOU. Ph.D – Physics

2) Patrice OKOUMA, M.Sc in Astrophysics and Space Science, UCT (South Africa) ; BSc/Hon. Mathematics; (ongoing) PhD in Applied Mathematics (Cosmology)

(iv) Number of astronomical facilities (observatories, telescopes, etc) and as much detail about each as possible (websites/contact details)

No Observatories,

A couple of private small telescopes,

A Ground station rented by the European Space Agency for following Ariane launches from French Guyana

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Professional Astronomy?

"Phase 3"

Please include any other relevant information to motivate your choice.)

Astronomy teaching in Gabon is not coordinated and is taught as part of other subjects

## **2. Public Understanding of Astronomy:**

(i) What governmental astronomy/science outreach programmes for the public take place (co-ordinated either by government departments or national facilities)

None, except the presence of basics Solar Science in the syllabus at specific levels in primary and secondary schools

(ii) What non-governmental astronomy/science outreach programmes for the public take place (NGO activities or international programmes that your country is involved in)

1. NOMMO ASTRONOMIA, the only Association for Amateur Astronomy has been active in participating to a couple of basic exhibitions on Astronomy and Space Science.

2. Astronomy introduced by occasional big events like the first summit on Science and New Technologies and the aborted plan to have the headquarters of the summit in Libreville

(iii) Comment on the presence of astronomy in the media (TV, radio, newspapers). Is it very prominent? Are there specific programmes on astronomy? Is the media generally willing to publish news on astronomy?

- No specific programs on TV or radio
- Astronomy events are often covered by the Media from foreign news prompts
- Specific local events are highlighted when given the information

(iv) Comment on the presence of astronomy/science in the general culture of the people. Are there any specific challenges or setbacks? Is astronomy a welcome subject of conversation?

- The public is very interested in astronomy and show enthusiasm when eclipses and other major events occur.
- A popular and diffuse belief exists in connecting astronomy and astrology.
- Indeed indigenous knowledge systems show some keen interest and original approaches to astronomical questions : A wealth we are planning to tap on.

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Public Understanding of Astronomy? Please include any other relevant information to motivate your choice.)

“Phase 2”

There is a great potential of harnessing public interest in astronomy to promote and increase science knowledge in the general population, particularly among the youth.

### **3. Astronomy in Schools:**

(i) What governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place (co-ordinated either by government departments or national facilities)

None

(ii) What non-governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place (NGO activities or international programmes that your country is involved in)

Occasional talks and exhibitions in the main cultural centre of Libreville, the capital of Gabon

(iii) Comment on the presence of astronomy in the school curriculum. Is it part of the school curriculum? Is it very prominent? What age groups?

1). The earth as part of solar system taught in Natural Sciences class in relation to Earth's Geology in secondary schools syllabus.

2). A solar system chapter in the third year secondary school physics syllabus.

(iv) Comment on the status of astronomy/science in schools. Are there any specific challenges or setbacks?

Sufficient number of students studying maths and science? General interest in maths/science/astronomy in schools?

- Lack of teachers with training in astronomy, even if the pool of Physics and Maths teachers has a decent background in Physics

- Lack of equipment especially computers, posters, telescopes

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Astronomy in Schools? Please include any other relevant information to motivate your choice.)

“Phase 3”

- To improve science teaching in schools it is necessary to sustain teacher interest in Astronomy to exploit the natural curiosity of students. In this regard, the institution in charge of teacher training should be targeted.

- The Galileo Teacher Training program can go a long way towards achieving this sustainability.

**Any other general comments or information that you feel would be useful for this survey?**

Website: <http://ama09gabon.weebly.com/>

- In Gabon we also need the support of the government to recognize the importance of Astronomy in basic science teaching and learning
- But we also need the support of the international Astronomy community to support that effort with concrete educational collaboration and materials (telescopes, CDs/DVDs / books, mobile planetariums, teaching materials etc.)
- We need at least 100 telescopes (Galileoscope project type) that can be distributed mainly in the capital as a central node for the progressive diffusion in the country: The capital could be a good site for a starting pilot project.
- A research level observatory also needs to be established and a proposal is to be made. There is a huge potential of doing radio astronomy thanks to the presence of an important ground station in the surroundings of Libreville.
- A long term plan was realized to build a Centre for the Sciences of the Universe at Libreville (The feasibility study does exist)

This will most be valuable in developing Astronomy in each of our countries and particularly in Gabon.