

Global Astronomy Survey: Kenya

First submission: Paul Baki [see human resources section] [21 April 2009]

SPoC Approved : Yes

1. Professional (Research) Astronomy

- (i) Number of Universities offering Astronomy : - 1 - University of Nairobi
- (ii) Number of universities Offering Physics: - 10. These are:
 - (a) University of Nairobi
 - (b) Moi University
 - (c) Kenyatta University
 - (d) Egerton University
 - (e) Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
 - (f) Maseno University
 - (g) Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
 - (h) Catholic University of Eastern Africa
 - (i) Kabarak University
 - (j) Daystar University
- (iii) Number of Academic trained in Astronomy: 6. These are
 - (a) Paul Baki, Ph.D
 - (b) John Buers Awuor, Ph.D
 - (c) Bob Osano, Ph.D
 - (d) Anne –Marie Nzioki (MSc), Currently on NASSP at the UCT, Cape Town, South Africa
 - (e) Geoffrey Okengo (BSc)- currently on NASSP at the UCT, Cape Town , South Africa
 - (f) Susan Murabana (BA) - Global Hands –On Universe.
- (iv) Number of Astronomical Facilities: Currently we have 2 telescopes at the University of Nairobi: 8” Konusky -200 motor Telescope and 5” Orion Telescope. We are currently doing some site identification for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) and we hope to complete this by end of 2009.
- (v) Self Evaluation: Phase 3, We have only begun offering a bachelor’s Degree course in Astronomy & Astrophysics, and it will take another 4 years before this first lot graduates. So we are just beginners.

2. Public Understanding of astronomy

- (i) Public sky-viewing at the University of Nairobi organized by the Department of Physics.
- (ii) Global Hands-On Universe in some schools and Children orphanages in Nairobi

(iii) Astronomy appears in the media once in a while whenever the science writers contact the department of physics to clarify issues to do with Astrology or when there are spectacular events such as eclipses or the recent “conjunction” involving Venus, Jupiter and the Moon. The people got concerned that perhaps the World was coming to an end and the media called the Department of physics to seek an explanation. The media are always excited about articles on Astronomy. We occasionally write articles for them.

(iv) Astronomy is part of the cultural practice of our ethnic communities. They use the sky knowledge in socio-economic activities such as weather forecasting for planting and harvesting, administration of some herbal medicines and performance of some cultural rites. Astronomy is very much discussed amongst the people.

(v) Phase 3.

3.000 Astronomy in Schools

(i) Public outreach conducted by Government departments in Kenya is only conducted by the University of Nairobi.

(ii) Our country is currently involved in IYA2009 celebrations

(iii) There is limited Astronomy in the Physics syllabus of secondary schools. This is in the age groups 13 – 17 years.

(iv) The status of science in schools is such that mathematics is compulsory but unfortunately physics is optional at the secondary school level. However enrolment in Physics in Universities is very good. General interest in mathematics/science/astronomy is generally good. But astronomy is very much exciting despite its limited presence in the curriculum.

(v) Phase 3. We are still only rolling out outreach activities during IYA2009 celebrations.

Compiled by Dr. Paul Baki, SPoC, Kenya.