

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING OF WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN DELTAS RESILIENCE.

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With support from the Canadian IDRC (International Development Research Center) and the French IRD (Institute of Research for Development) the Western Indian Ocean Deltas Exchange and Research Network (WIoDER) brought together researchers, managers and students from 4 major deltas of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), the Tana delta in Kenya, the Rufiji delta in Tanzania, the Limpopo delta in Mozambique and the Betsiboka delta in Madagascar.

Five thematic schools were conducted in the deltas, covering surface and groundwater hydrology and drone mapping (Limpopo), biodiversity and fisheries (Tana), mangroves and remote sensing (Betsiboka) and one each for livelihoods and migrations (Rufiji). These thematic schools were conceived as methodological exchanges where various experts and students from different disciplines would interact in both the classroom and the field to jointly develop approaches to improved understanding of the delta-specific socio-ecosystems and user strategies that are applicable in all deltas, allowing cross-delta comparisons and exchanges.

By strengthening the knowledge base and the research capacity in these and other WIO deltas the network endeavours to influence policy and decision-making for more sustainable, equitable and climate resilient governance and management of the deltas in view of their rapid changes due to land use change (deforestation, conversion to agricultural land) and increased water abstraction and hydropower dams upstream, local conversion for large-scale irrigation and harbour infrastructure, oil and gas exploration and extraction and the establishment of protected areas.

In this presentation, we analyse the lessons learned from the first two years of the network, both in term of effectiveness of the capacity building exercise and on the methodological content that was discussed in the thematic schools and set out the options for strengthening delta studies in the next phases.