

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR OCEANS (GPO)
BLUE RIBBON PANEL

MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES



David Obura
CORDIO East Africa (Kenya)

Dr. David Obura is a Founding Director of CORDIO East Africa, supporting activities in mainland Africa and Indian Ocean island states, including research, monitoring and capacity building of coral reefs and coastal ecosystems. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Miami in 1995 on coral bleaching and life history strategies, forming the basis of my primary research interest in coral bleaching and resilience of coral reefs of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). In the last five years, his main research has shifted to a hypothesis on the origins of a high biodiversity hotspot in the northern Mozambique Channel, and on the evolutionary history of corals and other shallow tropical species in the WIO.

Validating this hypothesis, applying it to understand to what extent coral reefs may adapt to climate change and widespread anthropogenic threats, and communicating it to motivate large scale conservation planning in the WIO, form the core of his research and publishing interests at present.

CORDIO is a non-profit platform for research and monitoring in the countries of the Indian Ocean, promoting the use of science in management and conservation of coral reefs, with a vision of sustaining marine ecosystems and the services they provide to people dependent on them. Thus a major focus of CORDIO's research is on fisheries and socio-economic dependence on marine resources, and understanding the dynamics between people and ecosystem services provided by coral reefs. Communicating new knowledge in appropriate ways is a critical challenge, providing the motivation for CORDIO's education programme that caters to schools and teacher education, and to adult education through a participatory model supported by ICTs.

David plays a number of roles regionally and now globally with IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), first in the Climate Change and Coral Reefs (CCCR, 2006-11) working group focused on understanding reef ecological resilience, then in establishing the Coral Specialist Group in 2009, with a global mandate to reduce threats to corals and coral reefs. In 2007 he was included as the youngest member of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association's first set of Honorary Fellows. David has also worked on the team laying the foundations for the Phoenix Islands Protected Area in the Republic of Kiribati, now the largest marine World Heritage site in the world, and is working with countries, the IUCN and the World Heritage Centre to explore the potential for large transboundary marine World Heritage sites in the Western Indian Ocean and in the High Seas.