



Kunduchi: A stepping stone towards development of my career

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The period from 1985 to 1987 was very special to my academic and professional life as it set the foundation for who I am today. It was in this period when I joined a training programme at the Kunduchi Marine Fisheries Research and Training Institute (KMFRTI), which resulted in the award of a Diploma in Fisheries Sciences. This programme was a stepping stone towards the development of my career and indeed of what I am proud of today. I developed my career as a Marine Biologist after completing a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. Gen.) in 1994 majoring in Marine Biology and Applied Microbiology, following a strong background in related sciences that I received at KMFRTI.

As a student at KMFRTI and UDSM

Though fisheries was quite a new field of study to me, I found it interesting and was able to easily follow the Diploma Curriculum. As a KMFRTI graduate, I can still recall the training methods, as well as the theoretical and practical classes, which were quite comprehensive. When I joined the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) for my B.Sc. programme, I found that most of the courses taught, though advanced, were related to those taught in KMFRTI Diploma Programme, which allowed me to easily follow my B.Sc. programme. Such courses included Fisheries Biology, Limnology, Ichthyology, Phycology and Swimming, to mention a few. For example, during my studies at KMFRTI, swimming was a compulsory course, when I joined my B.Sc. programme at UDSM, I found that the same course was compulsory for students majoring in marine biology. As a result, it was easier for me to pursue a career as a marine biologist because I had already acquired basic knowledge on many courses before joining UDSM.

As a staff at KMFRTI and UDSM

With the same enthusiasm, I returned to my job as an instructor at KMFRTI after completing my B.Sc. programme. I was allocated to the Fisheries Biology Department, where I was assigned to teach Limnology, Ichthyology, Phycology and Basic Aquaculture to Diploma students. I served in that position for two years (from 1995 to 1997), before receiving a scholarship to pursue an M.Sc. in Ecological Marine Management (ECOMAMA) at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) in Belgium. This was a two-year programme, which I successfully completed in October 1999. Immediately after the completion of my Master's degree, I returned to my previous working place as a Tutor, until 2002, when the KMFRTI was merged with UDSM. Again, I

had an opportunity to join UDSM as a technical staff, where I served for the rest of my public service until retirement in 2020.

At UDSM, I was selected to join a project titled Peri-urban Mangrove Forests as Filters and Phytoremediators of Domestic Sewage in East Africa (PUMPSEA) based on my performance and hands-on experience gained from KMFRTI and developed in a number of other courses I took. I am grateful to the PUMPSEA Project because it was through it I managed to get my Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Aquatic Science in 2017.

Importance of KMFRTI in fisheries science training

Although formal training in fisheries science had not received much attention compared to other sectors such as agriculture and forestry, graduates from KMFRTI were known to be the best in almost all aspects related to fisheries and aquatic sciences, ranging from harvesting of the fisheries resources, processing, marketing and conservation of the aquatic environment. KMFRTI, played a significant role in the fisheries sector by producing managers, desk officers and patrol officers, although it is not well documented.

Fisheries training at KMFRTI started in 1967 after completion of the Institute's buildings, and by then KMFRTI was the only institute in Eastern and Southern Africa providing training in fisheries. I recall that among the students enrolled at KMFRTI at the time included those who came from Malawi and Zambia. Among the KMFRTI graduates who have made significant contributions to the development of the fisheries sector by either working directly in the sector, either directly or through training of other students, include Prof. Amelia Kajumulo Kivaisi, the late Prof. John Machiwa, Dr. Rashid A. Tamatamah, Dr. Willian Kudoja and the late Dr. Boniface Mwaiseje.

The training at KMFRTI was provided by diligent tutors, who were practical oriented and serious about the profession, yet humble and easy to associate with. I can still remember the fieldworks and practical training courses where we had to accompany the local fishermen in their canoes and dhows to gain hands-on experiences and endurance on working at sea, fishing gear settings, and night fishing experience. Indeed, it goes without saying that Kunduchi was a stepping stone towards the development of my career and the person I am today ■