

Celebrating the life of our colleague, Dr. Paul Ochie'ng Onyango



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We were hit hard by his demise. We expressed profound sorrow for his loss. This is an appropriate moment to commemorate his life! Dr. Paul Ochie'ng Onyango, whom many used to call him Paul! who referred to himself as “the Original Onyango,” differentiating himself from the famous Kenyan TV personality, was a cherished member of SoAF at the University of Dar es Salaam. Joining the University of Dar es Salaam as an Assistant Lecturer in 2007, he rose to Lecturer in 2011 and became a Senior Lecturer in 2016, the position he held until his untimely passing. To us, he was not only a colleague, but also a friend, a role model, and a mentor.

A journey of academic excellence

Born in Rorya, Mara, on 6th December 1970, Dr. Paul's academic journey began at Kagunga High School (1984 – 1989), followed by a Bachelor's degree in Arts at Nairobi University, Kenya (1990 - 1993). He earned an MSc in International Fisheries Management from the University of Tromso, Norway, in 2004 and later a PhD in Fisheries Socioeconomics at the same university in 2011. Dr. Onyango's expertise and dedication took him to numerous national, regional, and international meetings and conferences, earning him the playful nickname of a *frequent traveller*. He represented SoAF in several countries, including Uganda, Mauritius, Kenya, Sweden, Netherlands, Australia, Thailand, Norway, Canada, Germany, Bangladesh, and Chile.

He also served as a member of the Board of the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET), a professional organization for experts on marine resource economics and trade issues, the Fisheries Governance Working Group program at the African Union – Interafrican Bureau for Animal



Paul holding seaweed in Zanzibar.
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Resources (AU-IBAR), specialized technical office of the AU focusing on the improved utilization of animals (livestock, fisheries, and wildlife) as a resource for human wellbeing, and regional coordinator of the Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) research network for Africa, which addressed the marginalization of small scale fisheries in national and international policies.

A Dedicated Educator and Mentor

Dr. Onyango's teaching portfolio spanned undergraduate and postgraduate courses in socioeconomics and business within fisheries, both at the University of Dar es Salaam and beyond. He supervised around 25 undergraduate students, nine MSc students, and ten PhD students. His scholarly contributions include 19 journal articles, 11 book chapters, and 7 conference papers, demonstrating his prowess in fisheries economics and social sciences. Most of his publications were in collaboration with his students or with scientists from within and outside that he worked with. One of the notable PhD research he supervised was that of the then PhD student, Lilian Ibengwe, which yielded some interesting results with policy implications. The study addressed insufficient information about the magnitude of the informal cross border fish trade (ICBFT), which leads to underestimating the fisheries sector's importance to the national economy. The study proposed a methodological approach that integrates the insights of the grounded theory and social network analysis to form 'a Networked Grounded methodological approach'.

He also provided consultancy services in fisheries economics and social sciences and served on several academic and advisory bodies. At SoAF, Dr. Onyango served as the Planning and Consultancy Coordinator and Seminar Coordinator, roles he performed with skills and fairness. His lectures and seminars were marked by insightful critiques, constructive advice, fairness, and infectious smile or laughter. His absence leaves a void, but his legacy continues to inspire.

Grants and awards

Dr. Onyango was instrumental in preparing several impactful research projects focused on improving the livelihoods of the small-scale fishers along Lake Victoria, Tanzania. His efforts attracted significant funding to SoAF from notable funders such as the Department for International Development (DFID), Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In recognition of his contributions, he received the second-place award in the 'Collaborative Projects' category during the University of Dar es Salaam's 2021 Research and Innovation Week. This accolade not only honoured him but also brought prestige to SoAF.

His iconic contributions

We would be remiss if we did not mention two icons that SoAF is proud of and whose existence is both a testament to his dedication, expertise, and vision. The first is the HEET Building at Kunduchi Campus. Dr. Onyango from CoAF by then, participated in the development of the proposal for the Higher Education for Economic Transformation (HEET) Project, which has led to the ongoing construction of a building that will host new classrooms at the Kunduchi Campus. The second is the construction of the National Mariculture Resources Centre at Kunduchi Campus, a significant initiative supported by the Government through the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. This centre, also under construction, will serve as a hub for mariculture research, fostering the development of the mariculture sector in the country. Although he did not live to witness these, the results are visible, and his contribution will live on. Nationwide, Dr. Onyango is remembered for his substantial role in drafting the 'Agriculture and Fisheries Development Programme (AFDP)' project, funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). Paul also led or participated in several initiatives relevant to developing the fisheries sector in the country and Africa as a whole. Some of these included the Blue Print for Africa's Blue Economy Strategy. He also participated in the research project 'Developing a self sustaining management and conservation mechanism for Lake Tanganyika' and the consultancies on the 'Assessment and developing an inland fisheries co management plan and a simple monitoring system in the Bengo, Kwanza Norte, and Luanda Provinces'; 'Assessment of the performance of Beach Management Units (BMUs) along the coast of Tanzania', that was funded by SMARTFish of the Indian Ocean Commission; and Kigoma Municipality Fisheries Cluster Value Chain Analysis in Lake Tanganyika.

A Trusted Facilitator and Master of Ceremony

Dr. Onyango was a respected academic, adept facilitator, and Master of Ceremony at various events within our school and on national and international platforms. His competence in this role was frequently recognized and sought after by colleagues from the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, where he often facilitated national conferences. A notable example of his expertise was in March 2021, when he facilitated the Tanzania National Fisheries Conference at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre in Dar es Salaam.

A Friend to Many

Dr. Onyango's infectious smile, love for jokes, and compassionate nature made him a friend to many. He interacted seamlessly with staff and students at all

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levels, always exhibiting happiness through his constant smile and iconic laughter. Known for his love of jokes, he was compassionate and approachable, making him a go-to person for advice. Hence, many staff, students, and people outside academia approached him for advice! These qualities led him to be appointed as one of the school's counseling committee members.

Conclusion

Dr. Paul Onyango departed prematurely and suddenly, leaving behind a legacy filled with many unfinished projects. *He radiated a light so bright to the world that*

even after he is gone, the light remains. It is our task not to let them fade away and cherish the memory of our dear friend Paul. Dr. Paul Onyango's contributions to his department, SoAF, the University of Dar es Salaam, and the community at large will never be forgotten. We will continue to cherish and live by the good teachings and legacy he left behind.

Rest in peace, our beloved brother, friend, and colleague, Dr. Paul Ochie'ng Onyango, the Original Onyango! ■



Paul and Lydia in a dhow in Rufiji Delta.
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Dr. Onyango in Rufiji Delta.
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