



Celebrating the legacy of Dr. Paul Onyango: Nurturing fisheries socio-economic development in Tanzania

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Between 2015 and 2022, the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI) and the Department of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology (DASFT) at the University of Dar es Salaam, now known as the School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology (SoAF), were key partners in the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA-funded project on the Projections of Climate Change Effects on Lake Tanganyika (CLEAT). The project aimed to enhance regional understanding of changes in water quality and fisheries in Lake Tanganyika, enabling sustainable fisheries management and ongoing climate change research. Among the project's significant contributors was the late Dr. Paul Onyango, a dedicated co-investigator and mentor.

My memorable journey with Dr. Onyango began in January 2015 when I received a PhD scholarship

through the CLEAT project. His first call to inform me of his appointment as my PhD supervisor marked the start of an unforgettable mentorship. Visiting his office at the University of Dar es Salaam the next day, I was greeted by his warm smile and welcoming demeanor, instantly assuring me of the excellent guidance and support that lay ahead.

Dr. Onyango's commitment to his students went beyond academic supervision. He was a father figure, a mentor, and a trusted confidant. His unique approach involved challenging us with probing questions and providing options, encouraging us to think critically and justify our decisions. This method not only prepared me well for my thesis defense but also instilled confidence and independence in my research journey.

My doctoral thesis, "*Unraveling socio-cultural drivers to fish catch dynamics of Lake Tanganyika,*" greatly



Dr. Bulengela with his *viva* panelists, including his supervisor, Dr. Onyango. ©SoAF



Dr. Bulengela, when defending his PhD thesis. ©SoAF

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benefited from Dr. Onyango's extensive knowledge and anthropological expertise. His guidance was pivotal in developing a research methodology that explored the socio-cultural factors affecting fish catches. Collaborating with my co-supervisor, Prof. Joan Brehm from Illinois State University, I proudly became the first PhD graduate in 2021 from the newly established SoAF at the University of Dar es Salaam. Our work led to the co-authorship of four significant papers from the thesis focusing on local fisheries knowledge, climate-related changes, and fisheries resources management in Lake Tanganyika.

Dr. Onyango's dedication to his students' success extended beyond academic achievements. He treated us as friends, always available for discussions, even on

weekends. His patience and willingness to listen, whether about academic or personal issues, created an environment of trust and encouragement.

The legacy of Dr. Paul Onyango lives on through the many students he taught, mentored and the profound impact he had on fisheries socio-economic development in Tanzania. His contributions to the CLEAT project and the broader scientific community are deeply cherished and will be remembered for generations.

May his soul rest in peace, and may his legacy continue to inspire future generations of researchers and students in Tanzania and beyond ■



Paul briefing the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, Hon. Kassim Majaliwa Majaliwa (MP) and the then Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Hon. Prof. Joyce Lazaro Ndalichako when they visited SoAF exhibition during the Research and Innovation Week at the Main Campus on 21st May 2021 (top left) and Paul and other SoAF staff and students at the same event (bottom left) and Paul with Lydia in the field in Kibiti District. Left top and bottom ©SoAF and right ©Lydia Gaspare