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The worldwide nature of the UN International Year of Crystallography 2014 has provided new opportunities to develop educational activities at all levels in parts of the world where crystallography is as yet a poorly developed science, and to set in motion new initiatives in capacity building and international cooperation. In this regard and to stimulate curriculum development, the IUCr and UNESCO have set up the OpenLab project, a network of operational crystallographic laboratories in selected universities in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, as a practical start in addressing such training requirements. As of today, over 25 OpenLabs have been organized, which provided high-level educational opportunities to over a thousand local students and young professors, taking advantage of the synergic combination of scientific and educational expertise of the IUCr, diplomatic and educational channels of UNESCO, and partnership of crystallographic instrumentation manufacturers. Part of this project is closely connected with the “Crystallography in Africa” initiative of the IUCr, thanks to which crystallographic equipment has been recently installed or is being installed in some sub-Saharan African countries. The project is now evolving towards an extended network of collaborations, which include other scientific bodies, such as IUPAP and ICTP, and it serves as one of the main educational tools within the IUPAP-IUCr LAAAMP project.

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