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Astronomy as a tool for human capacity development: the Namibian example

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Astronomy for development is making great strides in Namibia. As a country renowned for its dark and pristine skies, Namibia offers the perfect landscape for the construction of ground-based observatories. The benefits of developing astrophysics infrastructure are not only limited to solving the mysteries of the Universe, however. Numerous research has shown that astronomy projects around the world lead to many other benefits – societal, cultural, economic, and environmental.

The High Energy Stereoscopic System (H.E.S.S.) is so far the first and only large-scale telescope to arrive in Namibia, in operation since 2002. Plans of building more telescopes in the country, such as the African Millimetre Telescope (AMT) and a part of the African Very Long Baseline Interferometry Network (AVN) of telescopes are currently underway.

The AMT will bring with it many more opportunities for capacity-building, and our multi-disciplinary collaboration is working on a Social Impact Plan to maximise the societal benefits brought about by the future observatory. This Plan takes a multi-disciplinary approach to setting the scene for astronomy and sustainable development in Namibia. Looking at education more closely, we outline plans for the Mobile Planetarium; the materials we will create for schools; teacher training; bringing international astronomy training programmes to Namibia; mentorship, scholarship, and fellowship programmes; and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge. In all, sustainability is our utmost priority and by incorporating these different efforts we hope to inspire a new generation of scientists in Namibia.

Apply to be considered for a student ; award (Yes / No)?

No

Level for award;(Hons, MSc, PhD, N/A)?

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