



## SoAF at Kunduchi Campus: Embracing the origins

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**T**he School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology (SoAF) of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) has such a long and complex history that I hardly know where to begin. The preceding articles offer insights into its origins, which can be traced back to the 1960s. I will start my account by focusing on what transpired in the recent past.

### From a Department to a School

In 2015, the Department of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries (DASF) that was formed through the merging of two departments that belonged to the Faculty of Aquatic Sciences and Technology (FAST) and included in the establishment of the College of Natural and Applied Sciences (CoNAS), was subsequently relocated from CoNAS and served as a foundation for the establishment of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Fisheries Technology (CoAF). The new college was housed in the CoAF building, which was formerly known as FAST building. While in CoAF, all staff that belonged to DASF were placed in one department, which was renamed, the Department of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology (DASFT). It is this department that was later upgraded to become the SoAF.

### Staff scattered within and outside the Campus

It would be remiss of me if I did not say anything about the amazing FAST building located at UDSM Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Mlimani Campus. The FAST was established in 2002 and at that time, did not have its own building. As a result, staff were housed in various buildings of the university including the Department of Zoology and Wildlife Conservation, UDSM (Old) Library, Dar es Salaam University Press (DUP) building, and near the DARUSO offices at Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Mlimani Campus. In addition, a few other staff members, were located at Kunduchi Campus. This situation gave rise to the need for a single building that would house offices for staff, laboratories and lecturer rooms, and possibly enhance a sense of togetherness among the faculty staff. The opportunity presented itself during the World Bank (WB) funded project under the Science, Technology and Higher Education Project (STHEP), which provided different types of support to the Faculty including the construction of the faculty building and scientific equipment. The construction of the FAST building started in 2012. However, shortly before construction was completed, CoAF was established, and since DASFT was part of this new bigger unit, the name of the building was changed from FAST building to CoAF building. If you were to ask me whether the



The building that hosted DAFST. ©CoAF



The building that hosted the Marine Biology Section, FAST and DASF. ©Rashidi Bilali

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initial goal of having a building to bring all staff together and foster a sense of togetherness was achieved, I would definitely say yes. This is because the building housed not only members of the then FAST, but also several other departments under CoAF. Additionally, until today its lecture rooms continue to be used by students from various programmes at the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Mlimani Campus.

### Kunduchi Campus: Why now?

The need to re-establish a unit similar to the FAST that was envisioned in 2002 still remained. This was necessary in taking care of all the ambitions that the government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism had, and which, in turn, led to the transfer of the Kunduchi Marine Fisheries Research and Training Institute (KMFRTI) to the UDSM. Therefore, the process of establishing an academic unit bigger than a Department started in late 2019 and on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, the SoAF was established through the upgrading of DASFT, with its headquarters at Kunduchi Campus. If you believe in fate, then it is obvious that this event was a blessing in disguise because it would not have occurred at that particular moment, if a series of other events did not take place.

In his article, Prof. Yunus D. Mgaya provides a detailed account of the integration of the KMFRTI into the UDSM in 2002. However, sometimes in 2019, there was a strong move to return part of the Kunduchi Campus (that belonged to KMFRTI) to the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. This led to a protracted dispute between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on behalf of the UDSM, and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, which had to be mediated by the Prime Minister's Office. In the end the Prime Minister Hon. Kassim Majaliwa Majaliwa (MP) got personally involved and, after being appraised with all facts, he directed that the Campus should continue to be under the UDSM.

To this end, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the UDSM Management, particularly the Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic, Prof. Bonaventure S. Rutinwa, who had to relocate and set up an office at Kunduchi Campus, Prof. Yunus D. Mgaya, who accompanied us in all negotiation meetings in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, and former Chairperson of the UDSM Council, Hon. Judge Damian Z. Lubuva (Retired), who attended in person during the Prime Minister's meeting, held at Kunduchi Campus. Their efforts finally paid off by ensuring that, the Kunduchi Campus remains under the custodianship of the UDSM.



Visit by the Prime Minister, Hon. Kassim Majaliwa Majaliwa (second from the left), at Kunduchi. Others in the front line, from left, are former Minister of Livestock and Fisheries, Hon. Luhaga Mpina (MP), former Chairperson of the University of Dar es Salaam Council, Rtd Judge Damian Lubuva, Vice Chancellor of UDSM Prof. William A.L. Anangisyse, and Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic at UDSM Prof. Bonaventure Rutinwa. ©SoAF

### The shift to Kunduchi Campus

As SoAF staff, we were happy and excited about the new achievement (that is, the establishment of SoAF), but the immediate move from the main campus and preparations to operate from the Kunduchi Campus was not an easy one. This is because we had to move from our newly constructed building (CoAF) to a new Campus where the buildings were not only dilapidated and insufficient to accommodate all staff, but also inadequate to support undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research activities. In order to offer our degree programmes efficiently, the School has to operate from both the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Mlimani Campus and Kunduchi Campus. On the positive side, we saw the move to the Kunduchi Campus as an opportunity for growth, in terms of infrastructure, programmes and research, as well as in the pursuit of new collaborations with other institutions within and outside the country. As of now, the condition of the buildings has improved considerably, thanks to major refurbishment work that is currently ongoing at the Campus. However, the buildings and spaces remain the same, necessitating the delivery of our programmes from both Campuses, a situation which is not only inconvenient to staff and challenging in time-tabling, but also costly.

### Programmes offered at the School

The SoAF currently offers one three-year undergraduate programme, the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries, which currently has between 50 and 70 students enrolled. The



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School also offers four postgraduate programmes (two each for Master of Science, MSc and Doctor of Philosophy, PhD). The two MSc programmes both running for 24 months, are the MSc in Fisheries and Aquaculture (by Coursework and Dissertation) and the MSc in Aquatic Sciences (by thesis). The two PhD programmes have the same name, that is, PhD in Aquatic Sciences, with differences in the way they are being offered: A three-year PhD in Aquatic Sciences (by thesis), and a four-year PhD in Aquatic Sciences (through Coursework and Dissertation).

We currently have an agreement with Fisheries Education and Training Agency (FETA) to offer a Diploma in Aquaculture pending infrastructure and staff availability.

We are currently reviewing our curricula, with a goal to increasing the number of programmes available to meet the market's demand for various experts, a situation that would further complicate things if the infrastructure remains the same. It is worth noting that, offering all academic programmes from Kunduchi Campus will not only make the Campus vibrant, but also be convenient to staff and students alike. It is expected that through the World Bank funded Higher Education for Economic Transformation (HEET) Project, one block that will host three lecture rooms and one laboratory will be built at Kunduchi Campus. We are optimistic that the construction of more buildings in the Campus to support teaching and research, will remain a priority for the University and the Government as a whole.

#### Where will SoAF be 10, 20 and 50 years from now?

Where would I like to see the SoAF in the next 10, 20 or 50 years? This is an important question, considering our important role in producing professionals in the fields of aquatic sciences, fisheries and aquaculture. Tanzania is blessed with abundant Blue Economy resources from both marine and freshwater environments. The country is now earnestly determined to fully harness its blue economy potential, especially through the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This requires skilled professionals in various areas along the value chain, including increased but sustainable exploitation, enhanced aquaculture production, processing and value addition, marketing, etc. I would like to see the SoAF offering diversified programmes that produce skilled professionals to cater for this need, in our country and beyond. I would like to see the SoAF carrying out solution-based research and bring solutions to numerous challenges currently faced in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and those related to the aquatic environment. While the Kunduchi Campus will continue to serve as the School's base and a hub for marine-related training and

research, the development and establishment of a strategically located Freshwater Research Centre at Chato in Geita Region, along the shores of Lake Victoria is on the horizon and will serve as the School's main training and research hub for freshwater-related fields. It is my conviction that having strong marine and freshwater bases will strengthen the School's training and research capabilities and thus attract more students as well as new and more lucrative collaborations. I can see the SoAF embracing more technological, innovative, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary academic programmes and research projects. In 10 years to come, I can see the SoAF supporting the production, maintenance, and expansion of fisheries and aquaculture in Tanzania and the strategic impact in key specialized areas of aquatic environmental conservation, fisheries, aquaculture and beyond.

#### Who made it possible?

SoAF was established with 29 staff (21 academic, 6 technical and 2 administrative), and within a short period of time its staff has grown to 46 (30 academic, 6 technical and 10 administrative). The history of SoAF would not be complete without remembering two senior academic staff: Prof. John Machiwa and Dr. Paul Onyango who passed in 2022. Their contributions to the discipline of aquatic and fisheries science in Tanzania, and their efforts towards the establishment of SoAF were enormous and will be honoured and cherished forever. It is also worth recognizing the contribution of three retired senior technical staff: Dr. Shadrack Ulomi, Mr. Martin Loth, and Mr. Yukundus Mhonda, who were present during the establishment of SoAF.

I am honoured to write this article, as the founding Dean of this new and prestigious School. I remember being appointed as the Acting Dean of the School, one month after its establishment. It is a great honour for me to have worked alongside Dr. Prosper Mfilinge, who was appointed as the Associate Dean, a few months later. SoAF was established with only two departments, namely, the Department of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology, which carries exactly the same name as the original department that was upgraded to SoAF. This department is led by Dr. Siajali P. Zegge as its first Head. The second is the Department of Aquaculture Technology, which is led by Dr. Samwel M. Limbu.

All of the above mentioned plans will be possible with the strong backing of the University Management working hand in hand with SoAF and partners towards advancing the economic, social and technological development of Tanzania and beyond ■