



Nurturing knowledge and memories: 20 years at Kunduchi

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In the field of scientific research and education, the passage of time often reflects depth of experience, growth and impact. As I reflect on my experience of working and living at Kunduchi, I am reminded of the immense joy and fulfillment that my passion for marine sciences has brought me over the past twenty years. Kunduchi has played a significant role in shaping my professional interests and career aspirations. Over the past twenty years, my life has been greatly influenced by the environment of Kunduchi, the institution which has not only played a key role in my professional direction but also holds many cherished memories in my heart. As I reflect on this incredible journey, I realize that its impact has extended far beyond its walls, leaving a lasting impression on my understanding of ocean science, education, and conservation as a whole.

As a tutor in Fisheries Diploma programme

When I started working at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 2003, I was assigned to Kunduchi as a Tutor for the Fisheries Diploma programme. My responsibilities included teaching second-year students about Food Science and Applied Nutrition, Chemical Oceanography and Swimming. With a diploma in Pharmaceutical Sciences and a Bachelor's degree in General Sciences, majoring in Chemistry and Marine Biology along with well-functioning teaching facilities at Kunduchi, I was well-prepared to educate the next generation of young people in my country and worldwide. I am proud that my former students are now working for the country in various fields, both in the private sector, and government institutions. It is unfortunate that the Diploma programme at Kunduchi has been inactive for a long period of time. Now, it is the perfect time for the university to revive it and give young Tanzanians the opportunity to improve their technical skills, especially as we emphasize practical skills. The topic of food science and applied nutrition is crucial and should continue to be taught at higher levels, given the significant changes in our lifestyle and eating habits. Educating people about the different types of food and nutrition is crucial to avoid health problems caused by poor diet.



Dr. Lydia and Diploma students during a swimming test at sea 2006 . ©Lydia Kanyairita

Personal growth

During my extended stay at Kunduchi, I witnessed significant changes in the institution, including academic, leadership, environmental, and technical developments. These changes have led to top growth on various levels, not only for the institution, but also for its employees. For example, I have personally experienced professional growth and advancement during my time here. Kunduchi has become a hub for developing various professions, with highly competent teachers in the fields of aquatic sciences and fisheries technology. Despite these positive developments, it is important to acknowledge that there have been some challenges. Specifically, it concerns certain infrastructure, such as the ship yard fishing equipment, a small boat for student training, and a kitchen for fish processing, have deteriorated due to a lack of resources for maintenance and development.

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Dr. Lydia, Mr. George Chindandi (in water) and Diploma students embarking on a boat for field trip to Mbudya island. ©Lydia Kanyairita

Despite numerous challenges, Kunduchi Campus has continued to excel as an institution for teaching at all academic levels, from bachelor's to doctoral degrees, as well as for conducting research and community services. As a part of our research efforts, we have addressed a range of issues related to aquatic and fisheries resources, including the development of aquaculture facilities. Personally, I oversaw the first project in Tanzania that focused on the Eel fish (Samaki Mkunga), which is highly valued worldwide, but has not received enough attention in Tanzania's fisheries and environmental conservation sectors. In collaboration with the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI) and the Thünen Institute of Fisheries Ecology, we are using this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG5QM6aQlzY&t=29s>) to educate the community about preserving the eel fish.



Ship yard at Kunduchi 25/08/2023. ©Lydia Kanyairita

The influence of Kunduchi Campus extends beyond the academic world, thanks to its location close to the Kunduchi fish landing and marketing site, fishing communities, tourist hotels, primary and secondary schools and the wider community. This strategic positioning allows staff at Kunduchi Campus to collaborate with these groups through its education and community involvement programmes. By educating and raising awareness about the environment, Kunduchi Campus has become a beacon of environmental responsibility. We have produced a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who understand the importance of balancing coastal ecosystems. With climate change, environmental degradation, and overfishing becoming increasingly problematic, Kunduchi Campus role has expanded to include innovative conservation strategies. These include seagrass restoration projects, advocating for marine protected areas, and campaigns to reduce plastic waste. Through these efforts, Kunduchi Campus has demonstrated its ability to adapt to the changing marine science and conservation landscape.

What is the future of the Kunduchi Campus?

As I reflect on my twenty years at Kunduchi, I am grateful for the experiences, skills and connections I have gained here in Tanzania and abroad. The centre is not just an institution, but a testament to the power of education, research, nature conservation and community involvement. As the country focuses on developing the blue economy, I urge the government to consider Kunduchi Campus with a new perspective. The programmes offered by the School of Aquatic

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Sciences and Fisheries Technology (SoAF) are vital to the well-being of Tanzanian communities and beyond. However, in order for us to continue expanding and growing, we need financial resources to keep with the pace of technological advancements. Looking to the

future, I envision Kunduchi Campus as a centre of excellence in aquatic sciences and fisheries technology in the region, with a positive attitude towards investing in research and education ■



Renovated walkways at Kunduchi Campus. ©Rashidi Bilali