



complex Benguela Upwelling system.

The nine projects were advertised internationally, in *New Scientist* magazine, and nationally within the Angolan, Namibian and South African press, in May. Terms of reference for all nine projects were simultaneously posted to the BCLME website (www.bclme.org).

The advertising of the nine projects is seen as a significant step forward for the BCLME Programme, which has been putting structures in place to effectively carry out the objectives of the Programme since the implementation phase began in March 2002. Over the past year, a Chief Technical Advisor, Dr Michael O'Toole, was appointed to head the BCLME Programme, a Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) was established in Windhoek, Namibia, and three Activity Centres were set up – one in each of the participating countries.

The Activity Centres are one of the main mechanisms for the implementation of the BCLME Programme. They function as the "headquarters" of the Advisory Groups and, with the support of the PCU, the Activity Centres organise working groups, conduct training, and present recommendations to the Programme Steering Committee through the PCU. The Centres also provide capacity strengthening and networking for their respective activities.

The Activity Centre for Environmental Variability is located within the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's Marine and Coastal Management offices, and is headed by Director, Lesley Staegemann. Dr Hashali Hamakuaya is the Director of the Activity Centre for Living Marine Resources, which is located in Swakopmund, Namibia, within the National Marine Information and Research Centre (NatMIRC). The Activity Centre for Biodiversity, Ecosystem Health and Marine Pollution is located in Luanda, Angola, within the *Instituto de Investigação Marinha* (IIM). This Activity Centre is directed by Maria de Lourdes Sardinha.

The establishment of the three Activity Centres paved the way for the appointment of Advisory Groups for each of the three focus areas of the BCLME Programme: Environmental Variability, Marine Living Resources and Ecosystem Health and Marine Pollution.

The Advisory Groups are tasked with examining the problems and issues that were

identified in the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), assessing the existing projects and activities that are undertaken by the national Governments, BENEFIT, bilateral aid programs and private enterprises, and identifying gaps or elements missing from existing programs in order that the cross boundary elements are properly addressed by the BCLME Programme. Each of the Advisory Groups comprises two members from Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

Eventually, six Advisory Groups will be established by the BCLME Programme, including: Living Marine Resources; Environmental Variability; Biodiversity, Ecosystem Health and Pollution; Legal and Maritime Affairs; Training and Capacity Building; and Information and Data Exchange.

The Environmental Variability Advisory Group was established in July 2002, and regional experts identified four priority areas for the Advisory Group, including: harmful algal blooms (HABs), low oxygen water, large scale (physical) environmental variability, and productivity, variability and retention. The Living Marine Resources Advisory Group was established in September 2002 and five priority areas were identified, including: commercial fisheries, artisanal fisheries, mariculture, socio-economics and non-consumptive resources. The Biodiversity, Ecosystem Health and Pollution Advisory Group was established in November 2002, and three main themes were prioritised, including: oil and mining exploration, biodiversity and water quality.

Each of the Advisory Groups set up specialist task groups to focus on the priority areas and develop research, monitoring and management proposals for projects that would address transboundary management issues or national issues that have transboundary implications that are not being addressed by the national institutions in the three countries, or by regional programmes such as BENEFIT.

Larger consultative fora were also formed to provide as wide a spectrum of knowledge as possible to each Advisory Group. Their tasks were to develop pre-proposals for funding through the specialist task groups. The task groups subsequently developed the project proposals and forwarded them to the Advisory Group in each Activity Centre, for their consideration. If the project proposals

The BCLME Programme's First Projects

After a period of intense discussion and preparation, the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) Programme has advertised the first nine out of an anticipated 80 projects that will help South Africa, Namibia and Angola to better understand, monitor and manage the



were supported at the Advisory Group level, they were submitted to the Programme Steering Committee (PSC) for final approval, with a recommendation for the projects to be advertised on an open tender basis, to be directed to a sole supplier, or to be routed via the BENEFIT Programme, the primary scientific and technical arm of the BCLME Programme.

It has already been decided that BENEFIT will act as a lead agency in fields where it is competent. However, in the new fields of biodiversity, pollution, coastal development and offshore mining, new initiatives need to be established. This is why the BCLME Programme has taken the first step of putting out to tender, nine of the projects that were formulated by the Environmental Variability Advisory Group.

The nine projects were approved by the PSC in April. They cover a variety of study areas, such as a proposed investigation into the diversity and distribution of cysts of Harmful Algal Blooms within the BCLME and a critical review of the biophysical processes and variability that characterise the low oxygen water in the BCLME.

It is expected that the PSC will soon consider a number of project proposals that have been developed by the Marine Living Resources Advisory Group and that some of these projects will be advertised shortly. Project proposals that have been generated by the Biodiversity, Ecosystem Health and Pollution Advisory Group will also be assessed by the PSC in the next few months.

The process of assessing tenders and awarding contracts for the first nine projects is likely to take some time. However, once this process is complete, the work of the BCLME Programme can begin in earnest.

Michael O'Toole, Chief Technical Advisor for the Programme, are pictured with an exhibit about the BCLME which is on permanent display at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town.



Lesley Staegemann is the director of the Environmental Variability Activity Centre, which is based at the offices of Marine and Coastal Management in Cape Town.



Dr Larry Hutchings, South African co-ordinator of the BCLME Programme and Dr