

Advancing Earth Observation in Africa: Mid-term achievements of the WG Africa Copernicus Training of trainers program in three languages

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The WG Africa project is a collaborative initiative involving 12 national institutions from 8 European countries. Its aim is to support and enhance the utilization of Copernicus Data and services in Africa through a “training of trainers” program, which is funded by the European Commission and implemented in three languages: French, Portuguese, and English. The primary goal is to assist African academic or private trainers in integrating Copernicus-based modules into their training programs or curricula. This initiative complements other capacity-building efforts in the sector of Earth Observation from space in Africa, such as GMES & Africa. The project has started in October 2022 and has completed its initial phase. During 2023, 30 future trainers originated from 18 African countries were selected and an extensive 10 weeks long training program on the use of Copernicus data and services was developed and delivered to them on line. Thematic training sessions on different topics such as agriculture, forests, disasters management, hydrology, health, mangrove monitoring were also organized and delivered by experts from different European institutions and research entities. The project has now entered its second phase in which each African Trainer has been developing and implementing his/her own local training sessions with the support of European partners. In 2024, 15 local training sessions addressing different thematics such as hydrology, land use land cover management were implemented by the African Trainers in 12 countries. In total, more than 1000 students, practitioners and decision makers were introduced and trained to the use of Copernicus data and services to the benefit of scientific studies, policy making or enforcement, and private initiatives in favor of Copernicus applications within the targeted countries. With a relative small budget, this action has already proven to be effective thanks to the cooperation scheme and sharing of training contents among the European partners and also to the co-development approach with the African partners that has enabled a leveraging effect and multiplying factor in reaching out to new Copernicus users. A digital learning platform hosting training contents, lectures recordings, exercises and various training resources has also been developed to support the training activities and is a valuable asset showcasing Copernicus use cases in Africa. It has been opened to the GMES & Africa community. In addition to these activities that are related to training, the WG Africa is also organizing webinars all along the project to raise awareness and promote the use of Copernicus data and services to a wider audience in Africa. New local training sessions will take place in 2025 and the project will end in October. As continuity of activities and collaboration is essential to build sustainable Copernicus User Uptake in Africa, it is the author’s intention to maintain the WG Africa network beyond the project and to apply to be part of the Copernicus Ambassadors network in Africa.