In December 2006, a very successful workshop was carried out in Cuba as part of the UNESCO – IOC Capacity Development (CD) programme. This workshop focused on leadership skills, but also contained sessions on Marine Action Planning (MAP). The MAP sessions focused on identification of the coastal and marine needs for the region, the scientific inputs which are required to address those needs, and then organizing the representatives into working groups to develop emerging themes. The identified themes in which the science could address the needs of the region were extreme events, fisheries & aquaculture and integrated management.

It was also clear from the participants that there were scientific needs for the region, these were:

- Regional networking.
- Enhancing human resources & capacity building in science.
- Improvement of marine information and data exchange.
- Increasing the level of environmental education

The next stage of the UNESCO – IOC CD programme addresses the regional development needs as well as the scientific needs. This stage involves developing proposals for funding from sponsors, using a participatory approach to capitalize on the expertise of those involved. Successful funding of projects which emerge from this process will have a number of benefits to the involved institutes:

1. The structured process of bid writing developed during the workshop will enhance the bid writing capacity, and networking possibilities, of involved institutes; this could have instant benefit for securing national or other funding streams.

2. The development of the bids over the following months should lead to obtaining funding from relevant sponsoring agencies; this would help address the regional scientific needs of the region (networking, capacity, data exchange and education).

3. The funded projects would help lead to environmental and livelihood improvements to the coastal areas.

The proposed workshop is a vital stage of development of the proposed bids and it is a well structured opportunity for staff to develop personal skills, enhance institutional capacity as well as a chance to address the scientific needs of the region.