**Transcript 1 – Introduction to OAD and IAU**

**Vanessa:** I’m Vanessa McBride

**Kevin**: I’m Kevin Govender and we’re from the Office of Astronomy for Development

Vanessa: What is Astronomy for Development? Well, we aim to use the skills of astronomers, the tools, techniques and methods of astronomy to impact on socio-economic development. So we define socio-economic development very broadly, alongside the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These are 17 goals that have been agreed upon by 193 countries and they look at things ranging from climate action to eliminating hunger to reducing inequalities.

**Kevin**: So where did this all start? The International Astronomical Union is the global body of professional astronomers. There are over 12000 members at the moment. Their mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy. Now back in 2009 at their General Assembly, they approved a strategic plan that looked at using the links that astronomy has to various things and see how that impacts on development. These links are things like the link to the world class technologies, to various other disciplines of science, and also astronomy’s link to culture and philosophy. This strategic plan basically looked at how all these links can come together and be used to impact on development. Through this strategic plan there was a call for proposals to host the Office of Astronomy for Development and that’s how this office was established today.

**Vanessa**: So in 2011 this office started as a joint partnership between the International Astronomical Union and South Africa’s National Research Foundation, with strong support from South Africa’s Ministry of Science and Technology. The office was established in Cape Town, South Africa, and hosted by the South African Astronomical Observatory. So while this was the global coordinating office, in addition to this, another 10 regional offices of astronomy for development have been established in other places across the world. The idea is that different regions have different development priorities and also have different ways of implementing things. In addition to the regional offices the Office of Astronomy for Development funds specific project initiatives. Over the last 6 years we’ve funded 122 projects that use astronomy and look at the impact on socio-economic development. In addition to this we coordinate a network of volunteers to fuel these project ideas and to assist with project development.

**Kevin**: So where do we go from here? This network that we’ve developed over the years is something that we can use – it’s a structure that we can use to implement and to roll out project ideas that are shown to work. It’s a way of us engaging globally with the idea of astronomy for development. But one of the most important things that we’ve learned thus far is the importance to work with other fields. After all, at the end of the day, we’re talking about development, we’re not talking about astronomy research, so we need to engage with people that are involved directly in development. So what we’re trying to do at the Office of Astronomy for Development is to create a space for these conversations to take place. Basically we would like to use astronomy and its appeal to bring together people from different fields. Astronomy has the tendency to bring lots of people together, and we would like to use this to incubate ideas at the Office of Astronomy for Development and nurture those ideas together with development partners and collaborators so that we can ultimately have a bigger impact on development.

**Vanessa**: So what is this course about? In the end what we’d like to do is take the lessons learned by many of the project leaders of previously funded projects and make them available to potential new project leaders. We have 4 specific learning outcomes. The first of these is to develop an understanding of what astronomy-for-development is. The second of these is to make course participants comfortable with designing their own astronomy-for-development project. The third is to provide you with access to some of the evidence libraries and resources that may help you with the course. And the last of these is to demonstrate the value of including monitoring and evaluation in your course design.

**Kevin**: So at the end of each section there will be a short quiz. There will also be a space for discussion. We hope that you will engage in the discussion, engage with us, and take as much from this course as possible.

**Vanessa**: We hope you enjoy the course.