

DR ABRAHAM IYAMBO

The University is sad to confirm the death of Dr Abraham Iyambo. Abraham was a former undergraduate and PhD student, who passed away suddenly and tragically on 2 February 2013 whilst on an official visit to London as Minister of Education for Namibia.

Abraham, who was born in Namibia on 2nd February 1961, had a remarkable life. He ran away at the age of twelve from his home in Namibia, then under apartheid South African rule, so that he could get a decent education. After several years in refugee camps including in Angola and studies in Cuba and Germany where he learnt Portuguese, Spanish and German, Abraham completed an Access course in Science at South London College. In 1986, I accepted Abraham as the University of Surrey's first 'Access' student on the BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Science degree course. His classmates at Surrey used to say that their problems paled into insignificance when they heard his stories! Abraham worked very hard, enjoyed football and obtained a good upper second class Honours degree. His graduation was well-timed with Namibia's independence in 1990. Abraham returned home for the first time since he was twelve and amazingly, found his mother and family.

Abraham turned down a lucrative post in Namibia and returned to the University of Surrey in 1991 to fulfil his ambition to study further. He undertook PhD studies on "The structure and physicochemical properties of frozen Atlantic cod (*Gadus Morhua*) and Namibian hake (*Merluccius capensis*)" under my supervision. He was singled out for funding for both the undergraduate and postgraduate degrees by the Africa Educational Trust.

After successfully graduating with a PhD in 1994, Abraham returned to Namibia and was appointed Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (1995-1997) and Minister of Fisheries (1997-2010). His outstanding work was honoured by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation in 2009 when he was personally awarded the Margarita Lizarraga Medal for "his national, regional and international leadership with distinction in the application of the Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries through science, policies and management". He contributed to the negotiations leading to the Reykjavik Declaration; setting up of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Project; the Benguela-Environment-Fisheries-Interaction and Training Programme as well as the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation. (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/ccrf/8/en>). Notably, he has been the only individual medal recipient, previous winners were organisations. The FAO medal was followed by a second award made by the Swedish Kungsfenan Seafood Organisation in 2010.

Dr Abraham Iyambo was appointed Minister of Education in 2010 and was very dedicated to improve the quality and provision of education. President Pohamba of Namibia announced Abraham's untimely death as the loss of "one of the brightest, committed and hardworking senior ministers" (The Namibian, 5th February 2013).

I remember Abraham as a very bright, cheerful, friendly, hard-working, highly motivated, charismatic and outstanding person who wanted to make a difference and had the qualities to make it to the top! Abraham had fond memories of the University

of Surrey; in 2009 he suddenly turned up at the University to give me 'a surprise'. I shall miss seeing him when I go to Namibia this year for my EU funded SECUREFISH project meeting at the University of Namibia, a mission that combines both our passion for sustainable fisheries and education.

Abraham was a man of the world and a really lovely person. He was a credit to the University of Surrey and to Namibia. Our condolences go to his family and friends in Namibia and we pray that his soul rests in eternal peace.

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