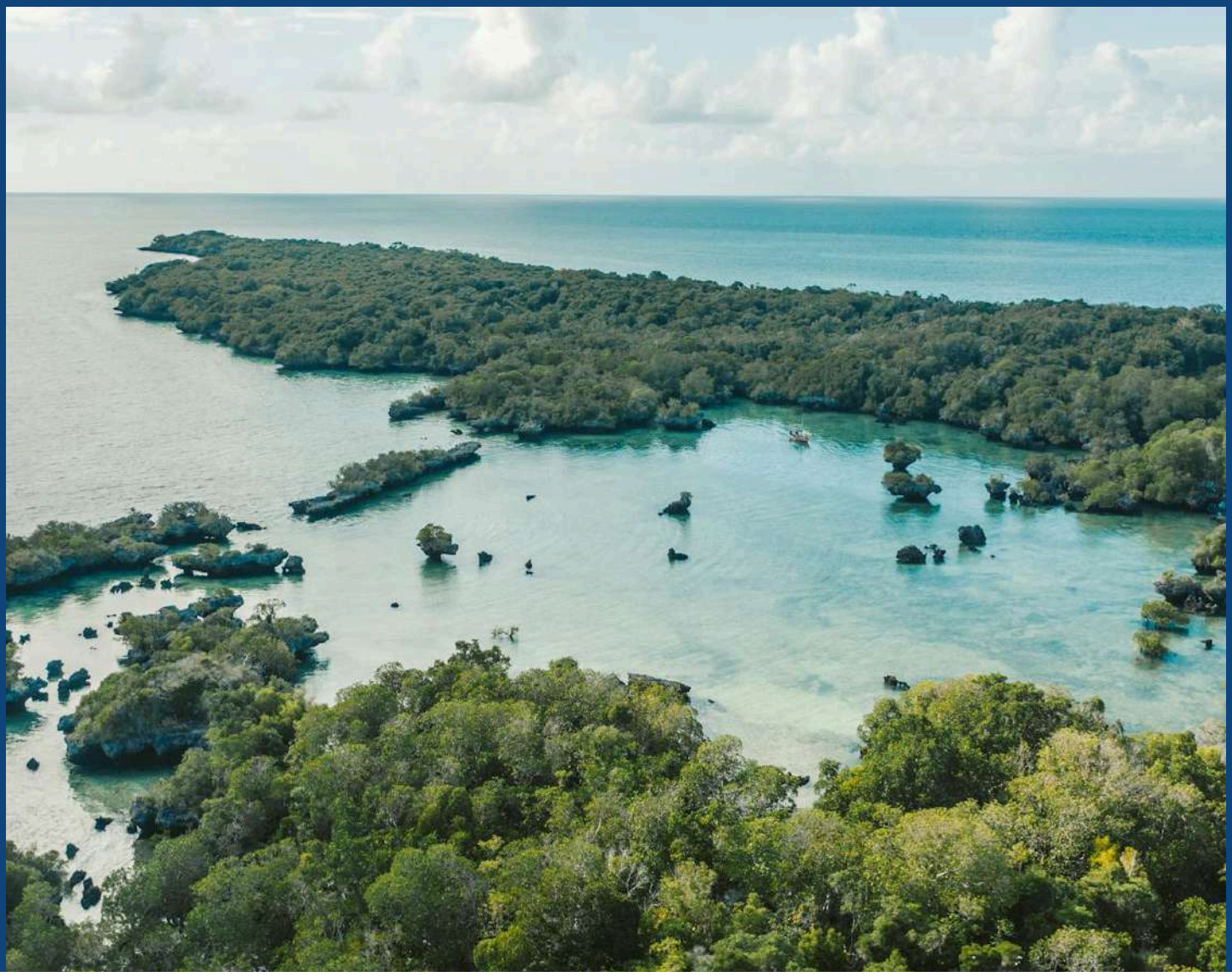
THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN LMMA BOOKLET



ReSea

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mission inclusion

IUCN GBW Great Blue Wall

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FOREWORD

It is a real honor to write this foreword for this booklet, which captures not only the history of the LMMA movement in our region, but also the spirit of collaboration, leadership, and community stewardship that defines it.

My own journey with the LMMA movement began when I was recruited to coordinate MIHARI, Madagascar's LMMA network. Through this experience, I witnessed firsthand the incredible potential of locally managed marine areas to support the leadership of coastal communities. I saw how communities, when empowered, become the true custodians of their marine resources and futures.

What has inspired me most is the strength of peer-to-peer learning among communities. The exchange of experiences, challenges, and solutions between fishers and community leaders creates a powerful sense of solidarity and innovation. Beyond this, bringing communities together within a network strengthens their collective voice and ability to advocate for their shared vision.

It has been truly amazing to witness the replication and growth of the LMMA movement from Madagascar across the Western Indian Ocean, leading to the birth of the WIO LMMA Alliance. This represents an important milestone for our region and demonstrates how a locally rooted movement can inspire regional collaboration and action.

At times, LMMA approaches have been misunderstood because we use different terminologies and acronyms across countries and organizations. Yet despite these differences, we all share the same vision and face many of the same challenges: supporting coastal communities who remain at the frontline of marine conservation and sustainable resource management. The term "LMMA," widely recognized internationally, was embraced by the WIO LMMA Alliance Steering Committee itself as a way to connect with and learn more from this broader global movement.

I am incredibly proud to see the emergence of the WIO LMMA Alliance and hopeful for its continued growth beyond the region. I also hope this booklet will help raise awareness about the history of the LMMA movement, its impact, and the remarkable work being carried out by communities across the Western Indian Ocean.
Above all, this booklet is a celebration of the communities whose leadership, resilience, and commitment continue to inspire us all.



Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy
Regional Coastal and Ocean Governance Manager
IPLC Champion
IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO)

WELCOME MESSAGE

I come from a Kenyan fisher folk family, and this upbringing shaped a deep respect for the ocean and its resources. Through many years of working alongside fellow coastal communities and serving within a Beach Management Unit (BMU) network in Kenya, I have witnessed first-hand the vital role that local people play in safeguarding our marine resources. Across the Western Indian Ocean, communities have long been at the forefront of managing coastal ecosystems, sustaining livelihoods, and passing on knowledge from one generation to the next.

It is therefore a great honor to welcome you to this booklet and to the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) LMMA Alliance. The establishment of this Alliance marks an important milestone for our region, bringing together communities, practitioners, national and regional networks, and partners around a shared vision for locally led marine conservation.

This achievement is the result of the dedication, collaboration, and perseverance of many individuals and organizations across the Western Indian Ocean. I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to this journey and helped transform a shared aspiration into a regional movement.

The WIO LMMA Alliance provides a platform for learning, collaboration, and collective action. It strengthens our ability to share experiences, amplify community voices, and supports effective stewardship of our marine and coastal resources. At a time when our oceans face growing pressures, the need for strong local leadership and regional solidarity has never been greater.

As we look to the future, I am encouraged by the commitment, knowledge, and passion that exists across our region. Together, we can build resilient communities, healthy ecosystems, and a stronger network of locally managed marine areas for generations to come.

I invite you to join us on this journey.



Charles Janji Nyale
Chair, WIO LMMA Alliance

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Image by Guy Célestin Rakotovao / MIHARI Network



REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is a globally significant marine and coastal socio-ecological region with rich coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses, and high biodiversity that directly underpins fisheries, tourism, and local livelihoods. These ecosystems are central to economic growth and human well-being, with more than 60 million people in the region relying on coastal and marine resources for food security, income, and cultural identity. Fisheries in particular contribute substantially to national economies, especially through foreign exchange revenues. However, the WIO faces pressing environmental and social challenges that threaten both biodiversity and livelihood security. Overfishing, habitat degradation, pollution, unsustainable coastal development, and persistent poverty continue to drive ecosystem decline and reduce the availability of resources vital for livelihoods and food security. Climate change adds further stress through sea-level rise, ocean warming and acidification, coral bleaching, and more extreme weather events. Low-lying islands and coastal zones are especially vulnerable, particularly where natural protective ecosystems such as reefs and mangroves have been degraded. Together, these interacting pressures undermine effective conservation and natural resource management efforts and intensify risks for coastal communities .

As pressures on the region's coastal and marine resources intensify, there is an urgent need to expand initiatives that promote both environmental sustainability and resilient livelihoods. Community-led marine resource management is central to this effort, empowering local people to shape decisions about the resources they depend on, while drawing on local knowledge and reflecting community priorities and needs. While Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) continue to play a central role in conservation, locally led area-based management like Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) are proving to be an important integrated approach that aligns sustainable livelihoods with effective natural resource stewardship and coastal resilience.

However, progress in the establishment, recognition, and scaling of LMMAs has been uneven in the region. Definitions and standards differ across countries and organizations, limiting recognition and coordination. Some countries have scaled LMMAs more successfully, while others remain at early stages due to gaps in technical, financial, and institutional support. In addition, communities managing LMMAs (LMMA communities) are often underrepresented in broader Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) and Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) platforms, constraining their ability to influence policy and access resources. These challenges underscore the need for a regional platform, to strengthen, coordinate, and scale LMMAs, ensuring that community-led marine management can effectively support both sustainable livelihoods and the long-term health of coastal and marine ecosystems across WIO.

LMMAS ACROSS THE WIO

Coastal communities across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) have long practiced customary marine tenure and community-based management of marine resources. However, the LMMA movement inspired by Pacific approaches began in Madagascar in 2004, when a Vezo community in the fishing village of Andavadoaka in southwest Madagascar piloted an octopus fishery closure in response to declining marine resources.

As a successful pilot, the Andavadoaka octopus closure in Madagascar led to rapid and visible increases in fish catches and household incomes. Its success prompted adoption by neighboring villages and catalyzed the wider spread of the LMMA approach across the country. Now Madagascar has more than 280 LMMAs. The LMMA movement has also expanded across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), where it is shaped by diverse ecological, political, cultural, and governance contexts.

It is estimated that The WIO region hosts more than 400 LMMAs, with strong concentrations in Madagascar, Mozambique, Kenya, and Tanzania.

> *"When people see the sea as theirs again, rather than the government's or an NGO's, everything changes. Hence, looking after the sea becomes an investment, not just a contribution or management responsibility.*
>
> *Communities learn best from other communities. When one community shares what has worked for them, others are more likely to believe it and take action than when the same message comes from an NGO."*
>
> **Alifereti Tawake,** Executive Director and Co-founder,
> LMMA Network International Trust

WHAT IS AN LMMA?

A Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) is commonly defined as "An area of nearshore waters and coastal resources that is largely or wholly managed at a local level by the coastal communities, land-owning groups, partner organizations, and/or collaborative government representatives who reside or are based in the immediate area."[1]

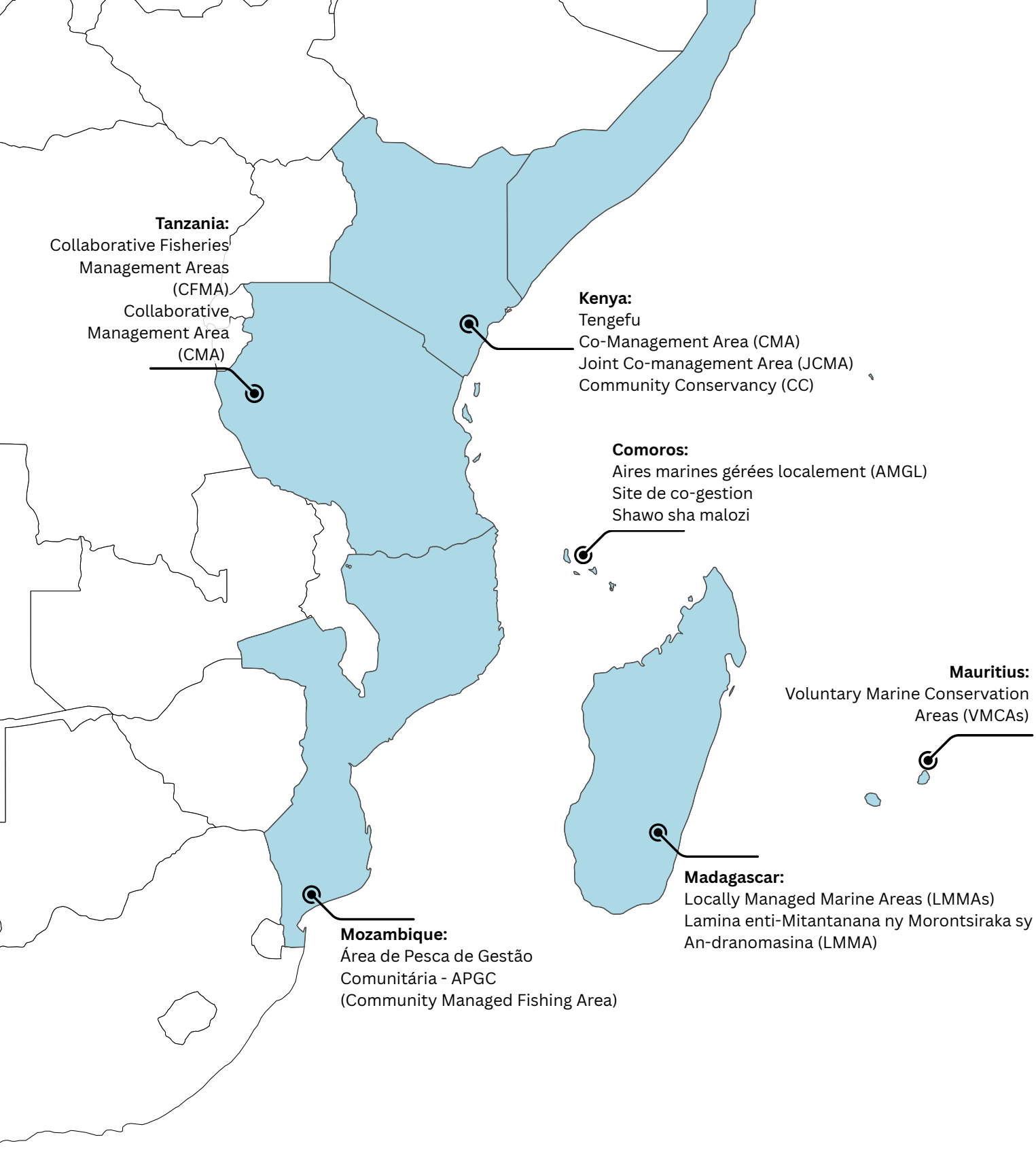
In the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, an LMMA can be simply described as a coastal or nearshore marine area where local communities play a leading role in management, often in partnership with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

LMMAs employ a range of management approaches, including no-take zones, periodic closures, and gear restrictions, all aimed at sustaining fisheries, supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities, and protecting critical habitats. Communities are placed at the forefront of decision-making, with an approach rooted in local knowledge, customary practices, and collective stewardship.



Image by Guy Célestin Rakotovao / MIHARI Network

[1] Govan, H., Aalbersberg, W., Tawake, A., and Parks, J. (2008). Locally-Managed Marine Areas: A guide for practitioners. The Locally-Managed Marine Area Network.



Different LMMA terminologies are used across the WIO region. While LMMA approaches vary in form and implementation, they are underpinned by common principles and foundations. Governance structures for managing these areas also differ across the region, and within countries. Examples of community-based governance structures include Communautés de Base (COBA) in Madagascar, Beach Management Units (BMUs) in Kenya and mainland Tanzania, Conselho Comunitário de Pesca (Community Fisheries Council) in Mozambique and Shehia Fisheries Committees (SFCs) in Zanzibar.

The core principles behind successful LMMAs across the WIO [2]

1. **Community leadership:** Communities are decision-makers, not beneficiaries
2. **Local legitimacy:** Rules work because people recognize them as fair and familiar
3. **Inclusion:** Women, youth, and marginalized groups must participate meaningfully
4. **Learning by doing:** Communities observe, reflect, and adapt
5. **Peer learning:** Communities learn best from other communities
6. **Tangible benefits:** People stay engaged when they see real improvements in livelihoods and ecosystems

[2] IUCN. (2026). Western Indian Ocean LMMA Toolkit

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION IN LMMAS [3]

True conservation is not just about protecting nature, it is about empowering the people within it

Marine resource governance and use in the Western Indian Ocean are shaped by complex gender and social dynamics. Women, men, youth, vulnerable and persons with disabilities play distinct yet interconnected roles across fisheries, aquaculture, coastal enterprises, conservation and household management. However, these contributions are often not reflected in decision-making structures, resulting in unequal influence over the management and benefits of marine resources.

Recent gender and social inclusion analyses conducted under the ReSea Project reveal significant representation gaps within Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs). Women occupy less than 15% of governance positions across the region, while youth and persons with disabilities remain largely underrepresented in decision-making processes despite their active contributions to conservation, restoration, aquaculture, fisheries value chains and blue economy enterprises. These disparities are often reinforced by structural barriers, including restrictive social norms, unequal access to information and resources, unpaid care, limited leadership opportunities, and inaccessible governance processes.

Addressing these barriers is critical to achieving both social justice and effective marine resource management. Inclusive LMMAs create opportunities for diverse community members to meaningfully participate, influence decisions and equitably benefit from marine and coastal resources. Evidence increasingly demonstrates that when governance systems incorporate diverse knowledge, experiences, and priorities, conservation outcomes are strengthened, community ownership is enhanced and resilience to environmental and socio-economic shocks is improved.

By adopting gender-transformative and socially inclusive approaches, LMMAs can move beyond participation toward shared leadership, equitable benefit distribution and accountability. Such approaches help challenge discriminatory norms, strengthen local stewardship and ensure that marine conservation efforts deliver lasting benefits for all members of the community while safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of those most often excluded.



[3] ReSea. (2026). A Gender Strategy for Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean

The Call for Action

Inclusive governance

- Establish transparent and equitable representation mechanisms for women, youth and persons with disabilities within LMMA governance structures.
- Strengthen leadership pathways, mentorship opportunities, and capacity development for underrepresented groups.
- Adopt inclusive meeting practices, including accessible venues, appropriate timing, local language communication and participatory decision-making approaches.
- Monitor not only representation but also the influence and leadership roles of marginalized groups in governance processes.

Inclusive livelihoods and blue economy development

- Promote and invest in women- youth-, and disability-inclusive blue economy enterprises.
- Strengthen equitable access to finance, productive assets, markets, technology and business development services.
- Address barriers such as unpaid care work and mobility constraints through targeted care and social support interventions.
- Support economic empowerment initiatives that enhance decision-making power and control over resources.

Conservation, safeguarding, and social accountability

- Integrate gender equality, safeguarding, and social inclusion principles into all conservation planning and implementation processes.
- Establish accessible and survivor-centered referral pathways for gender-based violence and other protection concerns.
- Design culturally appropriate social and behavior change interventions that challenge discriminatory norms and promote positive gender relations.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure that conservation benefits, risks and responsibilities are shared equitably across all community groups.

THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN LMMAS

<3%

of global climate finance reaches community-level conservation actor

A recent study by the Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) [4] estimates that the natural assets protected and managed by Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in four countries in the WIO generate a total annual ecosystem service value of approximately $21.2 billion (International Dollars/year).

Based on its ecosystem services valuation of LMMA sites in the WIO, CSF also estimated that an investment in LMMA management could unlock a staggering return on investment (ROI) of 300:1.

Despite this performance, LMMAs remain chronically underfunded, receiving less than 3% of global climate finance. CSF's analysis also highlights a structural imbalance in how the benefits and costs of WIO ecosystems are distributed. While local benefits include food security, storm protection, and tourism-based livelihoods global benefits include carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation that support climate stability and global ecological resilience. However, local communities bear a disproportionate share of the costs, including management expenses and opportunity costs linked to restricted resource use. Individual fishers can face annual income losses of USD 150–300 due to conservation measures, even as their stewardship generates thousands of dollars in global value per hectare.

[4] Read the research at www.conservation-strategy.org/LMMAs

Every dollar invested in WIO's LMMAs strengthens water, food, climate, and economic resilience for decades to come.

Across the Western Indian Ocean, coastal communities are the frontline stewards of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows, ecosystems that underpin their food security and livelihoods. Their knowledge of these ecosystems is unmatched. Their commitment to managing them sustainably is demonstrated daily. And yet the global finance systems designed to support conservation almost entirely bypass them.

Sustainable resource management requires communities to think in years and decades. But when a household's next meal depends on what can be caught today, long-term thinking is a luxury that short-term poverty cannot afford. This is the fundamental tension at the heart of marine conservation in the WIO: communities are being asked to make decisions for the future while living without the financial security to do so.

"The biggest challenge is that funding frameworks are often predefined by donors, forcing IPLCs and local organizations to align with externally set agendas rather than their own priorities. This top-down approach results in interventions that do not reflect community needs, knowledge systems, or socio-cultural contexts. Genuine access would require participatory design, flexibility, and recognition of local governance and customary practices. These elements typically absent from current funding structures."

Doreen Simiyu, Regional Coordinator, SWIOTUNA



Why Finance Doesn't Reach Communities

International donors and climate funds operate within fiduciary frameworks built for institutional accountability — legal registration, audited accounts, formal reporting and competitive grant applications. These are reasonable requirements for managing large pools of public capital. But most community-level LMMAs cannot meet them. Their governance is customary, not corporate. Their accounting is cash-based. Their management responds to tides and seasons, not annual work plans. The result: grant funding flows primarily to international and national NGOs, with only a fraction ever reaching the communities doing the actual work.

The gap is not a lack of willing donors.

It is a structural mismatch between how finance systems work and how communities work.

Investments of just USD 20–50 per hectare per year in LMMA management can unlock ecosystem benefits valued at over USD 15,000 per hectare per year — a return on investment of 300:1.

The Call to Action

Local communities in the Western Indian Ocean are already delivering global public goods, often at personal and economic cost. The evidence is clear: investing in their stewardship is one of the most cost-effective climate and nature investments available.

1. Redirect Climate Finance

Incorporate ecosystem service values into national accounting. Channel international climate and nature finance to the community level, where it can do the most good.

2. Recognize & Expand LMMAs

Integrate LMMA frameworks into national Blue Economy strategies. Use economic valuation to identify high-value zones for expansion and protection.

3. Establish the CTF

Support the establishment of a regional WIO LMMA Conservation Trust Fund, [5] with community governance, Country Windows, and VSLA*-linked disbursement.

*VSLA: Village Savings and Loans Associations.



"When funding is led by IPLCs, communities shift from insecurity to collective enterprise—moving beyond individual survival toward collective strength. I have seen this transformation revive traditional products like fish floss, secure formal business licenses, and increase women's participation in marine spatial planning. With control comes agency: IPLCs become powerful stewards of their resources, moving from exclusion to recognized leadership."

Maurice Ssebisubi,
Technical Director, AWFISHNET

[5] A Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) is an independent, legally constituted institution that mobilizes capital from multiple sources and channels it — predictably, year after year — to conservation actors.

THE JOURNEY TOWARDS THE WIO LMMA ALLIANCE



"LMMAs and IPLCs are critical for an ethical and people-centered conservation approach, and to safeguard the renewable blue economy that supports millions of coastal people "

Nico Willemse,
Regional Lead for Africa,
Blue Nature Alliance

Building on Madagascar's MIHARI Network, momentum has grown across the WIO to strengthen and connect LMMA networks. In 2024, IUCN-led national consultations in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Comoros assessed LMMA progress and needs, laying the foundation for regional collaboration that culminated in the September 2024 WIO LMMA Forum in Madagascar, bringing together over 300 participants from nine countries and marking a key step toward a regional alliance. This process continued through 2025 via multiple regional and international exchanges and consultations, further shaping the structure, governance, and priorities of the emerging WIO LMMA Alliance.

The Alliance Timeline

August – September 2024
National consultations in Comoros, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania

26 – 29 September 2024
Regional LMMA forum in Mahajanga, Madagascar

December 2024 – September 2025
Dialogues at regional and global events

2 October 2025
Special session on the Alliance at the 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium in Mombasa, Kenya

September–December 2025
Multistakeholder consultations to guide the Alliance's establishment

2-3 February 2026
Inaugural meeting of the Temporary Steering Committee in Nairobi, Kenya

16 June 2026
Launch of the WIO LMMA Alliance during the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, Kenya



Image by Guy Célestin Rakotovao / MIHARI Network

THE WIO LMMA ALLIANCE

The WIO LMMA Alliance is a community-based regional platform dedicated to strengthening and expanding LMMAs and other effective community-based marine resource management approaches across the WIO region. It connects local community groups and networks across the region to amplify their voices, leadership, knowledge, and priorities. In doing so, it builds a stronger, more coordinated, and more influential community presence in regional dialogue, decision-making, and action.

It is not just a network serving communities. It is a regional platform that coastal communities and community-based organizations get to shape and lead.

"The regional alliance would significantly amplify the voice of local communities in decision-making processes related to marine resource management. It would create opportunities for communities to influence strategies and policies at a higher level, ensuring that their priorities are considered. This would empower communities by placing them in a position of leadership rather than passive beneficiaries"

Comités de Gestão de Recursos Naturais (CGRN), Nhangau, Mozambique



Image by Gaby Barathieu / Ocean Image Bank

Why a WIO LMMA Alliance?

The Western Indian Ocean region has many different governance systems, practices, and legal frameworks that shape how LMMAs are created, strengthened, and sustained. At the same time, the region shares many of the same challenges, including limited legal recognition of LMMAs, fragmented policies, unclear institutional roles, unfair benefit-sharing, and limited representation of women, youth and local communities in decision-making.

Many LMMA communities also struggle with technical capacity, financing, climate resilience, and access to long-term support. Opportunities to collaborate, learn from one another, and scale up what works, are lost, when communication and coordination between stakeholders break down,

Shared challenges require collective action and locally grounded solutions

The added value of the WIO LMMA Alliance

The WIO region benefits from a range of conservation, research, and NGO networks. They bring technical expertise, policy engagement, and regional coordination. But the WIO LMMA Alliance fills a distinct and complementary role. Rooted in community leadership and locally led marine resource management, it is designed to place coastal communities at the heart of regional exchange, collaboration, and collective action.

Its added value lies in strengthening connections among communities across countries and raising their collective voice at the regional level.

It gives a direct channel through which local needs, concerns, experiences, knowledge, and priorities can shape regional dialogue and decision-making without intermediaries. By bridging the gap between local action and regional processes, it can help ensure that policies, investments, partnerships, and conservation initiatives reflect the realities and aspirations of those who depend on and care for marine resources.



"For the MIHARI Network, the WIO LMMA Alliance represents a strategic opportunity to elevate the visibility of Madagascar's LMMAs, foster peer-to-peer learning, and unlock new avenues for partnerships, financing, and advocacy at both regional and global levels."

Guy Célestin Rakotovao,
Executive Secretary, MIHARI Network

THE VISION

A thriving Western Indian Ocean where coastal communities lead the sustainable management of marine resources, ensuring healthy ecosystems and equitable livelihoods for all.

THE MISSION

To strengthen a regional alliance that unites Western Indian Ocean coastal communities into a collective voice, amplifying their capacity to lead ocean governance, safeguards their rights, securing both ecological health and community resilience.



The impact pathway

WHAT WOULD LONG-TERM SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR THE WIO LMMA ALLIANCE?

For the Alliance, long-term success would show up as five impacts:

1.LMMA communities across the Western Indian Ocean are united as a strong and influential collective voice, shaping decisions that affect coastal livelihoods, marine ecosystems, and their futures.

2.Coastal communities are supported by policies and governance systems that recognize their rights, knowledge, and role in marine resource stewardship.

3.Community-based structures have the capacity and support to manage marine resources.

4.Greater opportunities are created for women, youth, and marginalized groups to influence marine resource governance and decision-making

5.Coastal communities gain fair and sustainable socio-economic benefits from community-based resource management, including LMMAs.



"Structures must prioritize building the capacity of local communities to lead and own implementation, with NGOs playing a supportive role—providing mentorship and technical guidance rather than leading directly."

Nuru Salum
Regional Coordinator,
Mwambao Coastal Community Network



The four strategic pillars

1

Community rights and recognition:
Strengthening community rights and supporting the legal recognition of LMMAs

2

Inclusive governance and stewardship:
Supporting strong local governance structures, promoting equity and participation, and strengthening management to ensure LMMAs are effective.

Resilient livelihoods and growth:
Enhancing community well-being through financial resilience, access to funding, blue entrepreneurship, and sustainable alternative livelihoods.

3

Collective power and learning:
Building regional and global partnerships to facilitate knowledge sharing, peer learning, and coordinated action across the WIO.

4

Priorities for the alliance

1

Community rights and recognition

From unrecognised to empowered

The regional challenge
Across the Western Indian Ocean, LMMAs often have weak legal recognition, fragmented governance frameworks, and complex approval processes. This makes it hard for communities to hold secure rights and to manage marine resources.

Priority actions
- Advocacy for legal recognition of LMMAs at community, national, and regional levels
- Facilitate policy dialogue with governments, NGOs, and regional institutions
- Raise awareness on the value and role of community-led marine resource management

2

Governance and stewardship

From fragmented to inclusive

The regional challenge
Across the Western Indian Ocean, many LMMA governance systems face challenges to strengthen local structures, ensuring inclusive participation and to maintain effective management. Differences in capacity and inclusion of key groups can affect how fairly and effectively LMMAs are governed and managed.

Priority actions
- Strengthen community governance and co-management capacities
- Support the engagement of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making and leadership roles in LMMA structures
- Facilitate access to technical support for data collection, monitoring, mapping, enforcement, and management
- Promote and supporte community-led planning and co-creation in marine conservation initiatives
- Encourage adaptive and ecosystem-based management approaches across the region

3



Resilient livelihoods and growth

From vulnerability to resilience

The regional challenge
Many LMMA communities remain economically vulnerable, with limited ways to earn a living, too little access to sustainable finance, and growing pressure on marine resources that undermine long-term resilience.

Priority actions

- Support livelihood diversification and blue entrepreneurship initiatives
- Strengthen sustainable value chains and community skills development
- Mobilize resources and support sustainable financing for LMMA initiatives
- Explore and support conservation trust funds and long-term financing mechanisms

4



Collective power and learning

From isolation to collective power

The regional challenge
Across the WIO, LMMA actors often work in isolation, limiting opportunities for shared learning, coordinated action, collective advocacy, and stronger regional and global influence.

Priority actions

- Strengthen LMMA networks and partnerships across the region
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning, exchanges, and regional forums
- Coordinate LMMA initiatives and communication across the region
- Amplify community voices in regional and global ocean governance processes
- Document, share, and promote lessons, practices, and evidence from across the WIO region

STORY FROM THE GROUND

Community-led action delivering real impact in Mozambique



Growing up in a fishing family in Southern Mozambique, Ilídio Cole witnessed first-hand both the community's dependence on marine resources and the impacts of unsustainable fishing practices on seagrass meadows and marine life.

In the coastal village of Mangalisse, seahorses were once heavily poached for international wildlife trafficking, placing growing pressure on local populations and fragile marine ecosystems.

After co-founding the NGO ParCo (Associação dos Parceiros Comunitários / Community Partners), he began working with fishers to address the illegal seahorse trade, recognizing that lasting solutions would need to come from within the community itself. ParCo helped establish a community-led ecotourism initiative as an alternative to seahorse poaching.

These tours, jointly run by the Community Fisheries Council of Mangalisse and ParCo since 2018, have generated tens of thousands of dollars for fishers who once depended on seahorse collection, and have also supported a community-managed social fund overseen by the Council.





Top photo: Ilidio with members of the Community Fisheries Council of Mangalisse. Bottom photo: Community-led seahorse tour in Mangalisse. Images by ParCo



Meeting with the coorperative of Hadjoho, Anjouan. Image by Mohamed Hassani Mlatamou / National LMMA Network in Comoros

The national LMMA network in Comoros: a movement gaining momentum

The creation of a national Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network in Comoros emerged from a series of national fora held in 2023 and 2024, culminating in its formal establishment in June 2025 in Mbatsé, Mohéli, and its official registration in January 2026.

Although still in its early stages and operating with limited resources, the National Network is making steady progress and gradually strengthening its role in community-based marine governance across the Comoros.

Building on a series of awareness-raising and advocacy meetings, the Network has already brought together 54 associations and cooperatives as members from across the three islands , 13 of which have signed co-management agreements with the government.

"The results observed in certain areas are encouraging. Thanks to awareness-raising efforts and the co-management mechanisms put in place, certain fishing practices that are harmful to marine ecosystems are beginning to decline. The challenge, however, remains to consolidate these gains by developing sustainable economic alternatives for communities that rely heavily on small-scale shore-based fishing for their livelihoods."

Mohamed Hassani Mlatamou,
President of the National LMMA Network in Comoros



Inaugural meeting of the Steering Commitee in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2026

MEET THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE WIO LMMA ALLIANCE

As a key step in establishing the Alliance, a Steering Committee (SC) with a one-year mandate was formed following regional consultations in 2025. It serves as the main decision-making and strategic guidance body during the Alliance's foundational phase. Priority was given to LMMA leaders, representatives of local community-centered organizations working with coastal communities and LMMAs, and representatives from regional networks or organizations with complementary initiatives or strong experience in building and strengthening LMMA networks.

Comoros country representatives



Mohamed Hassani Mlatamou
President, National LMMA Network in Comoros



Rakcha Mohamed Chakir
Vice-President, National LMMA Network in Comoros



Bouchourane Aoussidine
Vice-President, National LMMA Network in Comoros

Kenya country representatives



Charles Janji Nyale
Chairperson, Kilifi BMU Network



Steven Musyoka
Project officer, COMRED

Madagascar country representatives



Guy Célestin Rakotovao
Executive Secretary, MIHARI Network



Gamal Ahmed Mouktar Hamad
President of Nosy Faly LMMA, Diana region, Madagascar

Mozambique country representatives



Ilidio Cole
Coordinator, ParCo



Eugídio Nuno Gobo
General Coordinator, Associação do Sistema de Monitoria Orientada para Gestão (ASMOG)

Tanzania country representatives



Sheikhan Amani Sheikhan
Chair, Shehia Fisheries Committee (SFC), Pemba



Nuru Salum
Regional Coordinator, Mwambao Coastal Community Network



Mohammed Muhdin
Chairman, Tuna Alliance of Tanzania (TUNA)

Regional representatives



Doreen Simiyu
Regional Coordinator, South West Indian Ocean Tuna Forum (SWIOTUNA)



Maurice Ssebisubi
Technical Coordinator, African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET)



Rodgers Lubilo
Chairperson, Community Leaders Network (CLN)



Malidadi Langa
Chairman, The Alliance for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Conservation in Africa (AICA)



Nelly Otieno
East Africa Regional Director, Blue Ventures



Patrick Fortuno
Secretary General, La Fédération des Pêcheurs Artisans de l'Océan Indien (FPAOI)

HOW TO SUPPORT THE WIO LMMA ALLIANCE



Image by Fabiola Monty

You can join the Alliance as community groups and networks committed to advancing locally led marine resource management across the WIO region

Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy
Regional Coastal and Ocean Governance Manager
IPLC Champion
IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO)
Email: vatosoa.rakotondrazafy@iucn.org

You can support the Alliance by:

- **Investing in the Alliance**, its priority actions, and the proposed Conservation Trust for LMMAs to strengthen long-term community stewardship and resilience
- **Partnering** to strengthen regional collaboration, coordination, and knowledge exchange across the Western Indian Ocean
- **Learning from and sharing experiences**, tools, and best practices that support effective community-led marine management
- **Advocating** for enabling policies and formal recognition of community stewardship in marine resource governance

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Photography

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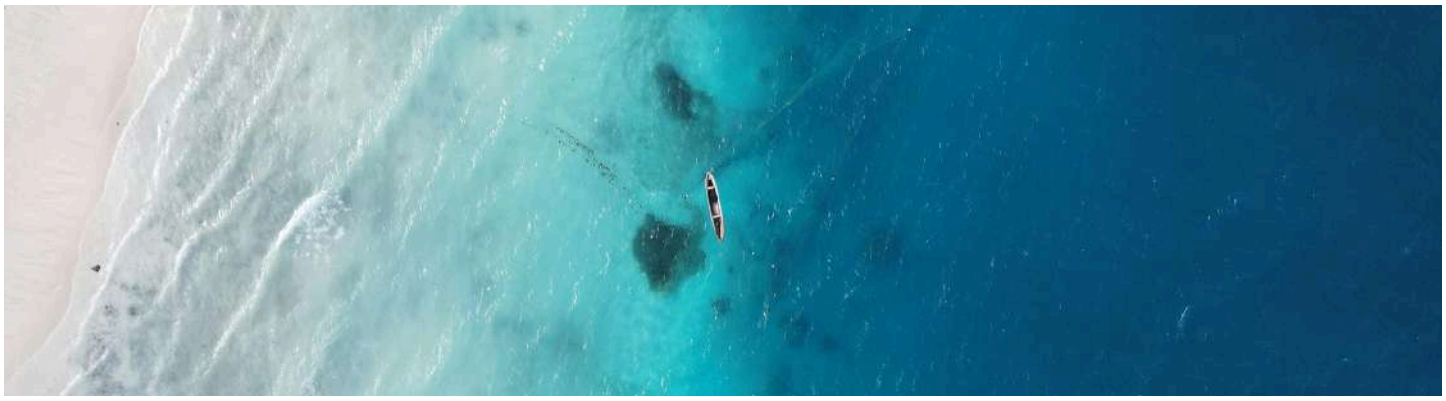
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The Western Indian Ocean LMMA Booklet

Together, we can support thriving coastal communities and healthy marine ecosystems across the Western Indian Ocean.



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