Ocean Country Partnership Programme:

WIO Region Supporting Mozambique, Madagascar, and Maldives participation in WIOMSA training and networking events

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WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

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1. Background

Many of the countries in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region are among the poorest in the world, with GDP figures that reflect profound economic challenges. According to data from Trading Economics, Mozambique and Madagascar stand out with some of the lowest GDPs on the continent—Mozambique at approximately USD 17 billion and Madagascar around USD 15 billion[1]—despite their large populations and extensive coastlines. These figures underscore not only constrained economic growth but also widespread poverty that directly influences the daily survival strategies of coastal communities. In such contexts, dependence on ocean resources is not optional—it is essential. Strengthening the capacity of these nations to manage and protect their coastal and marine environments is therefore not a luxury, but a necessity. It is fundamental to securing livelihoods, sustaining biodiversity, and building resilience to escalating climate and economic pressures.

In response to this pressing need for enhanced marine governance capacity, the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) is working collaboratively with regional and international partners to build long-term, locally grounded solutions. A key mechanism for this is WIOMSA's Marine Conservation Programme (MARCOP), an endorsed UN Ocean Decade Programme[2] that adopts a systems approach to strengthen marine conservation across the region. MARCOP focuses on five strategic areas, including Area 3: *Strengthening the Effectiveness and Equitable Management in Marine Conservation Areas*, which directly supports efforts to enhance capacity among practitioners and institutions managing marine and coastal resources. Within this framework, WIOMSA has partnered with the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) under the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) to support Mozambique and Madagascar in targeted professional development initiatives. These include participation in WIOMPAN's regional training workshops, exchanges, and the WIO-COMPAS certification programme. By equipping practitioners with the competencies, networks, and recognition needed to manage marine areas effectively, the project contributes directly to building resilient and inclusive conservation systems in two of the region's most economically vulnerable countries.

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[1] Trading Economics. *GDP by Country: Africa*. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp?continent=africa

[2] United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. *Western Indian Ocean Marine Conservation Program (MARCOP)*. Retrieved from https://oceandecade.org/actions/western-indian-ocean-marine-conservation-program-marcop/ (accessed April 21, 2025).

2. Key activities

The key activities under the project entitled, *Ocean Country Partnership Programme: WIO Region Supporting Mozambique, Madagascar, and Maldives participation in WIOMSA training and networking events*, are:

- **Support the participation of Madagascar and Mozambique candidates at the 2024 Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) Forum**, hosted in Madagascar.
- **Pilot the LMMA competency tool** in 5 Madagascar and 5 Mozambique LMMA sites.
- **Train Madagascar and Mozambique LMMA practitioners** (a total of 6) as assessors using the LMMA Competency Tool.
- **Support the attendance of the Madagascar and Mozambique WIOMPAN country chapter leader** at the WIOMPAN Regional Capacity Strategy Workshop and WIOMPAN General meeting.
- **Translate WIO-COMPAS materials** from English to Portuguese.
- **Support the training of four Portuguese WIO-COMPAS assessors.**
- **Support the first WIO-COMPAS Portuguese event**.

3. The Western Indian Ocean Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) Forum

Held from **26–29 September 2024** in Majunga, Madagascar, the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) LMMA Forum[3] convened more than **300 LMMA members and other stakeholders**, including His Excellency Paubert Mahatante, Madagascar's Minister for Fisheries and the Blue Economy. With support from the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) and JNCC, the project enabled the active participation of LMMA representatives from Mozambique and Madagascar—ensuring their voices were included in key regional processes aimed at strengthening locally led conservation. The forum provided the opportunity for peer learning, exchange of practical solutions, and dialogue on the role of LMMAs in delivering both biodiversity and community wellbeing outcomes.

[3] WIOMSA, 2024. *Regional collaboration strengthens locally managed marine conservation efforts in the Western Indian Ocean*. [online] WIOMSA. Available at: https://wiomsa.org/wiompan/2024/12/16/regional-collaboration-strengthens-locally-managed-marine-conservation-efforts-in-the-western-indian-ocean/ [Accessed 7 May 2025].

The JNCC funding also supported MIHARI's National LMMA Forum[4], which took place prior to the regional forum, from **22 – 26 September 2025**. Over the course of five days, the forum gathered **470 participants** from **14 coastal regions**. This was the largest national LMMA gathering in the history of Madagascar, and the main theme of the event focused on raising awareness about climate change, with the key message being "LMMA leaders resilient in the face of climate change." Government authorities, including representatives from the Ministries of Fisheries, Environment, and Territorial Planning, acknowledged the critical role of LMMAs in sustainable marine governance and emphasized integrating them into national development plans.

3.1. Key outcomes

3.1.1. Regional LMMA Declaration and Call to Action

LMMA practitioners from across the region convened to collectively assess the challenges and opportunities facing locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) in the WIO. The forum culminated in the adoption of a Regional LMMA Declaration – a unified "Call to Action" – which outlines the commitments and priorities of LMMA stakeholders and appeals to governments, development partners, NGOs, academia, and the private sector for greater support.

Key Challenges Identified

Forum participants identified systemic barriers that hinder the effectiveness and scalability of LMMAs across the WIO region:

- **Limited financial support** for LMMA expansion and operations;
- **Inadequate capacity development** at local levels;
- **Weak governance frameworks** and legal recognition;
- **Environmental threats** including habitat destruction, pollution, and unsustainable fishing;
- **Conflicts over marine space** and competing resource uses;
- **Limited market access** for LMMA-linked sustainable enterprises.

These challenges threaten the ability of LMMAs to meet their conservation and sustainable development objectives and contribute meaningfully to global targets such as the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 3.

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[4] WIOMSA, 2024. *MIHARI's National LMMA Forum*. [online] WIOMSA. Available at: https://wiomsa.org/wiompan/2024/12/16/miharis-national-lmma-forum/ [Accessed 7 May 2025].

Declaration Highlights

In response, the LMMA community endorsed a regional declaration centered on the following key messages:

1. **Affirmation of LMMAs as critical solutions** for marine biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, food security, job creation, and resilient coastal livelihoods.
2. **Recognition of national and regional commitments** under the GBF Target 3 and Nairobi Convention Decision CP.11/5, which call for area-based conservation that includes locally governed models such as LMMAs.
3. **Call for formal legal recognition** of LMMAs in national legislation and marine spatial planning frameworks to secure long-term governance and funding.
4. **Appeal for increased investment** in LMMA initiatives, including support for blue carbon markets, sustainable finance mechanisms, and local revenue-generation models.
5. **Promotion of inclusive governance**, specifically calling on governments to mainstream gender equality and elevate the leadership of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in marine resource governance.
6. **Tasking IUCN** with facilitating the establishment of a multi-stakeholder regional working group, comprising representatives from local and national governments, LMMA communities, NGOs, academia, and the private sector. This group would lead efforts to:
    - Advance legal recognition and equitable governance of LMMAs;
    - Promote knowledge exchange and regional collaboration;
    - Support the expansion of LMMAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs);
    - Build regional platforms for monitoring, learning, and adaptive management.
7. **Appeal to partners and donors** to support the development and harmonization of national and regional legal frameworks that enable co-management and recognize community-led conservation as a formal pillar of national conservation strategies.

3.1.2. Enhancing LMMA inclusivity

The WIO LMMA Forum underscored the urgent need to advance inclusivity within LMMA governance structures, with a particular focus on addressing persistent **gender-based barriers**. While women play vital roles in coastal economies and community life, their effective participation in marine resource governance remains constrained across much of the region. Key gender-related barriers identified across the WIO countries include:

- **Socio-cultural norms** and traditional gender roles that discourage or restrict women's participation in public decision-making spaces;
- **Limited access to education, training, and capacity-building** opportunities tailored to women and girls in coastal communities;
- **Economic constraints**, including unpaid care responsibilities and lack of independent income, that limit the time and resources women can invest in leadership roles;
- **Underrepresentation in policy and governance frameworks**, where few mechanisms exist to ensure women's meaningful engagement;
- **Lack of visible role models** and leadership pathways for women within LMMA networks and related conservation bodies.

To address these challenges, a dedicated working session on gender and social inclusion was held during the forum. Participants—comprising LMMA practitioners, community representatives, NGOs, and government stakeholders—identified concrete actions to strengthen the leadership, voice, and agency of women and other marginalized groups within LMMAs.

Key discussion points included:

- Designing **gender-sensitive policies and institutional reforms** that promote equitable participation in LMMA governance;
- Supporting **targeted capacity-building and mentorship programs** for women in coastal leadership;
- Investing in **inclusive monitoring and reporting systems** to track progress on gender equity and ensure accountability;
- Facilitating **cross-country learning exchanges** to share successful models and build solidarity among women leaders in coastal conservation.

The outcomes of these discussions will form the basis of a forthcoming regional Gender Roadmap for LMMAs, which aims to guide policy, programming, and donor engagement. Although the roadmap is still under development, its prioritization by forum participants signals a clear commitment to embedding gender equity at the core of LMMA expansion and sustainability.

By supporting gender-responsive approaches, donors can help unlock the full potential of community-led marine conservation efforts, ensuring they are not only ecologically effective but also socially just and resilient.

3.1.3. Advancing a Regional Roadmap for LMMAs in the Western Indian Ocean

A key outcome of the WIO LMMA Forum was the co-development of a draft outline for a Regional Roadmap to guide the recognition, strengthening, and expansion of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) as a major contribution to the achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 3 (30 by 30) in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). This strategic planning session brought together over 20 participants representing national governments, NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, community leaders, and donor institutions.

The roadmap development process underscored the urgent need for a WIO-wide LMMA database to track the number, distribution, legal status, and associated ecological and social outcomes of LMMAs—an essential tool for evidence-based planning, donor reporting, and monitoring progress toward the 30 by 30 target. Stakeholders highlighted persistent challenges to LMMA expansion, including weak governance, limited legal recognition, inadequate financing, climate change impacts, enforcement gaps, and socio-economic pressures. Despite these barriers, the region holds significant opportunities to accelerate progress through legal and policy reform, integration of LMMAs as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), climate resilience planning, and the adoption of nature-based solutions. Regional learning, pilot initiatives, and cross-sector collaboration were emphasized as key levers for advancing inclusive and scalable locally led marine conservation. Participants also proposed a regionally guided risk assessment and adaptive management framework to address emerging threats such as climate change, economic shocks, and governance instability, with flexibility and resilience identified as essential principles.

The roadmap will be further refined through stakeholder engagement in 2025 and aligned with national and regional planning processes. A short-term action plan (2024–2026) will prioritize pilot projects, legal frameworks, inclusive governance mechanisms, and initial data consolidation to establish a strong foundation for regional LMMA recognition and expansion. Partnerships and collaboration are central to the roadmap's success. It emphasizes the need to engage international partners such as the Blue Nature Alliance, IUCN, and WIOMSA; mobilize support from government ministries, NGOs, research institutions, and local

associations; and foster cross-sector collaboration with fisheries, climate, and tourism stakeholders to create synergies and drive coordinated action across scales.

Objectives of the Roadmap

The proposed goal of the roadmap is the *recognition and expansion of LMMAs towards reaching 30% area-based marine conservation coverage by 2030* in the WIO. Suggested priority objectives include:

- Strengthening national LMMA networks and community-led initiatives;
- Increasing the management effectiveness of existing LMMAs;
- Enabling multistakeholder governance at the sub-national level;
- Accelerating the development of a regionally connected LMMA network.
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Defining LMMAs

Participants agreed on the need for a shared regional understanding of the term "LMMA," noting the variety of terminology used across countries (e.g., Tengefu in Kenya, Community Conservation Areas in Tanzania, Biocultural Heritage Sites in Madagascar). It was proposed that the roadmap adopt a broad, internationally recognized definition such as that used by IPBES in the Pacific:

A Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) is an area of nearshore waters and its associated coastal and marine 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.

Strategic Priorities

Eight thematic priority areas were proposed for the roadmap:

1. **Capacity Building and Community Sensitisation** – Empowering local actors through tailored training, community education, and peer exchange.
2. **Strengthening Data, Monitoring, and Evaluation** – Promoting citizen science and building digital tools for participatory tracking.
3. **Improving Governance and Enforcement** – Including co-management structures, local by-laws, and conflict resolution mechanisms.
4. **Ensuring Gender Equality and Social Inclusion** – Promoting representation, resourcing, and voice of women, youth, and marginalized groups in LMMA leadership and benefit-sharing.

5. **Developing Sustainable Finance Mechanisms** – Including blue basket funds, community enterprise models, and longer-term NGO programme support.
6. **Legal and Policy Reform** – Advocating for formal national recognition of LMMAs and their registration as OECMs under global targets.
7. **Establishing a WIO LMMA Working Group or Network** – To coordinate technical dialogue, amplify community voice, and track progress.
8. **Supporting Science-Practice Collaboration** – Ensuring LMMA strategies are informed by evidence and co-designed with decision-makers, communities, and practitioners.

Implementation Phases

- **Phase 1 (2024–2026):** Strengthen existing LMMAs and national networks, support legal recognition, and pilot scalable approaches;
- **Phase 2 (2027–2030):** Expand area coverage, increase funding, and formalize LMMA contributions to GBF 30 by 30;
- **Phase 3 (2030 and beyond):** Build a fully integrated regional LMMA network with sustained financing, private sector linkages, and knowledge exchange.

*Figure 1: Regional Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Forum, **26–29 September 2024**, Majunga, Madagascar.*

3.1.4. Other Key outcomes of the LMMA Forum

In addition to the regional roadmap and strategy discussions, several other critical outcomes emerged from the LMMA Forum that will shape future efforts to support and expand locally led marine conservation in the WIO region.

1. Improving Community Access to Funding

A session led by Blue Ventures and WWF focused on the persistent challenges LMMAs face in securing direct access to funding. Stakeholders co-developed a multi-actor strategy recommending that donors simplify application processes, provide technical support, and work with NGOs to adapt funding criteria to better suit community-based organizations (CBOs). Proposals included phased funding, partnerships with regranting organizations, and strengthening financial literacy and accountability structures within communities. Governments were encouraged to establish co-funding mechanisms, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and build trust through transparent collaboration. The resulting roadmap for enabling community access to finance is detailed in Appendix 7.

2. Toward a WIO LMMA Community of Practice

Discussions led by Fauna & Flora International and IUCN emphasized the need for a dedicated regional platform for LMMA practitioners. While participants rejected the term "coalition," there was broad support for forming a Community of Practice to elevate local voices, facilitate knowledge exchange, and co-develop tools for LMMA recognition and management. The group could explore adapted OECM frameworks, develop people-centered effectiveness assessments, and integrate with WIOMPAN in a complementary structure. Emphasis was placed on ensuring representation from national LMMA networks, CSO platforms, and Indigenous Peoples, and on using existing tools—such as WIO-COMPAS and national competency frameworks—to build leadership and institutional recognition.

3. Government Engagement and Recommendations for LMMA Expansion

A closed session with government representatives from all WIO countries yielded a set of policy-oriented recommendations to facilitate LMMA recognition and scale. These included the need for:

- Ministerial decrees to establish OECM assessment bodies (e.g., in Comoros);
- Stronger collaboration between communities and government in disseminating LMMA policies;

- Co-funding of local initiatives by governments to ensure sustainability;
- Legal harmonization across ministries and agencies;
- Enhanced security and enforcement for coastal communities;
- Institutional support for community capacity building.

In parallel, CORDIO presented **a rapid expansion strategy** emphasizing the role of community buy-in, inclusive governance, and readiness for OECM recognition. Stakeholders also recommended policy alignment across countries and called for alternative livelihoods (e.g., eco-tourism, aquaculture) to reduce pressure on marine resources. Existing local structures such as BMUs, CCPs, and co-management platforms were recognized as foundational to LMMA integration into national conservation frameworks.

4. Legal Recognition of LMMAs: Regional Perspectives and Pathways

A panel hosted by RECOS brought together legal experts, government officials, community representatives, and NGOs to examine the current status of LMMA recognition across the WIO. Discussions highlighted the uneven legal landscape, with models such as Madagascar's DINA system and South Africa's co-management policies offering transferable lessons. Participants emphasized the importance of inclusive governance, and recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in meeting international biodiversity commitments. The panel identified seven **key themes**: *current legal status, governance, challenges, benefits, recognition pathways, success factors, and regional collaboration*.

Recommendations included *government-led operational frameworks, technical and legal support for communities, increased financial resources, and the development of a regional platform for legal harmonization and knowledge sharing*.

*Figure 2: LMMA community members, Regional LMMA Forum, **26–29 September 2024**, Majunga, Madagascar.*

*Figure 3: LMMA site, Regional LMMA Forum, **26–29 September 2024**, Majunga, Madagascar.*

4. The LMMA Competency Framework

As part of its support to strengthen locally led ocean conservation, WIOMSA, developed and piloted a comprehensive **LMMA Competency Framework** designed to assess and improve the capacity of community institutions managing Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean.

4.1. Key Activities

The initiative focused on three interlinked components:

1. **Validation of the Framework**: During a regional training and networking workshop held in Antananarivo, Madagascar (5–7 March 2025), the LMMA Competency Framework was reviewed and validated by assessors from Madagascar, Mozambique, and Kenya. Seven core competencies were confirmed as appropriate for the WIO context, with recommendations to improve inclusivity and relevance across diverse legal and governance settings.
2. **Assessor Training**: Six LMMA practitioners (three from Mozambique and three from Madagascar) were trained to conduct field assessments using the framework. These practitioners collectively support over 400 LMMA sites across the region. The training emphasized practical scoring techniques, unbiased evaluation, and the development of community-level competence profiles.
3. **Pilot Assessments**: The competency tool was piloted in 12 sites (seven in Madagascar and five in Mozambique) between April and June 2025. Sites were selected to reflect diverse governance models and maturity levels. Assessments evaluated collective competence among LMMA management committees using both paper-based tools and an innovative digital platform.

4.2. Online Assessment Tool

A critical output of the project was the development of a **mobile-first online assessment tool**, built on the EpiCollect platform. This tool enables assessors to:

- Collect data offline in remote locations;
- Capture structured evidence for each competency;
- Access built-in guidance and scoring aids;
- Aggregate results automatically for analysis and reporting.

This digital innovation was widely welcomed for its ability to simplify data collection, standardize assessment methods across countries, and enhance transparency in LMMA governance.

Figure 4: LMMA Competency Framework Assessor training, Antananarivo, Madagascar, 5 – 7 March 2025.

4.3. Key outputs:

1. The LMMA Competency Framework Assessor Training and Validation Workshop Report.
2. The LMMA Competency Framework Pilot Report, Mozambique.
3. The LMMA Competency Framework Pilot Report, Madagascar
4. The Mobile Online Assessment Tool, overview of the tool.

Outcomes and Learning

- **Increased Capacity**: All assessors expressed confidence in using the tool, and demonstrated a solid grasp of the framework and scoring system.
- **Improved Harmonization**: Country-specific scoring guidance and framing questions were introduced to reduce bias and support consistent application.
- **Framework Utility**: The tool enabled the creation of community competence profiles to identify strengths and guide targeted capacity development.
- **Toward Certification**: Discussions began on certification tiers (e.g., Gold/Silver LMMA), although further work is needed on applicability across different site types.

The framework is now being scaled through national and regional platforms. In Madagascar, partners such as the MIHARI Network and FAPBM have signaled strong interest in institutionalizing the tool, while in Mozambique, the Likhulu Foundation is integrating it into broader LMMA support strategies.

The pilot phase has provided a robust foundation for the **professionalization of community-led ocean conservation** in the region, contributing directly to MARCOP's Area 3 objectives: strengthening the effectiveness and equitable management of marine conservation areas. Future work will focus on refining the framework based on pilot feedback, expanding the pool of trained assessors, and embedding the tool within national and regional monitoring systems.

5. WIOMPAN Regional Capacity Strategy Workshop

In October 2024, WIOMPAN convened a Regional Capacity Development Strategy Workshop in Cape Town, South Africa, bringing together MPA and LMMA representatives from across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) to chart a path toward effective and equitable marine area management. This workshop enabled WIOMPAN's contribution to the global "Scaling MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30" initiative, which aims to enhance the scale, pace, and effectiveness of area-based conservation worldwide. JNCC funded the participation of the Mozambique and Madagascar participants, ensuring equal representation from across the region.

Recognizing that traditional, project-based approaches to capacity building are insufficient to meet the region's biodiversity and climate targets, the workshop applied a systems-informed methodology to uncover root causes of persistent capacity constraints and identify high-leverage opportunities for intervention. The group used global marine management system maps—including those hosted on the Kumu platform Scaling MPA Capacity for 30x30—to frame regional priorities within a broader systems context. Participants collectively interrogated how governance structures, funding models, institutional norms, and knowledge flows shape management effectiveness, and where transformative change is most possible.
The workshop brought together over 15 WIOMPAN chapter leaders and MPA professionals representing all 10 countries in the network. Participants included heads of national MPA agencies, regional coordination bodies, and local conservation leaders. This diverse and experienced group reflected on their shared challenges—such as staff shortages, weak

institutional incentives, and fragmented learning networks—and laid the foundation for a strategic regional Theory of Change.

5.1. Workshop Objectives and Process

The primary objective of the WIOMPAN Regional Capacity Development Strategy Workshop was to co-develop a systems-informed regional strategy that supports the scaling of marine conservation capacity in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). This effort aligns with the global "Scaling MPA Capacity to Reach 30x30" initiative, aiming to ensure that marine protected and conserved areas are not only expanded but effectively and equitably managed.

The workshop focused on three core goals:

1. **Diagnose regional system conditions** affecting capacity development across WIO MPAs and LMMAs.
2. **Identify leverage points** where targeted interventions could unlock systemic change.
3. **Draft a regional Theory of Change** to guide future capacity-building investments and programming.

5.2. Key Outputs and Insights: Systems Diagnoses and Strategic Leverage

The workshop enabled a shared understanding of persistent challenges facing marine conservation capacity in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and provided a platform for co-designing systemic solutions. The participants used systems mapping, scenario design, and prototyping methods to identify leverage points and develop strategic prototypes that directly respond to those points. These form the foundations of WIOMPAN's emerging regional Theory of Change for scaling capacity toward 30x30.

5.1.1. Diagnosed Leverage Points

Three core leverage areas emerged:

a) Upending the Concentration of Power and Decision-Making

- Challenge: Centralized and opaque governance structures reduce trust and implementation efficiency.
- *WIOMPAN's role*: Foster decentralization through community engagement, local capacity-building, and transparent communication.

b) Strengthening Political and Technical Influence

- *Challenge*: MPA and LMMA professionals often operate with limited influence in national policy or international forums.
- *WIOMPAN's role*: Amplify political voice, secure regional recognition (e.g. Nairobi Convention), and drive policy-relevant learning.

c) Unlocking the Full Power of Networks

- *Challenge:* Fragmentation, knowledge loss, and duplication limit conservation effectiveness.
- *WIOMPAN's role*: Create spaces for learning, collaboration, and resourcing across borders and disciplines.

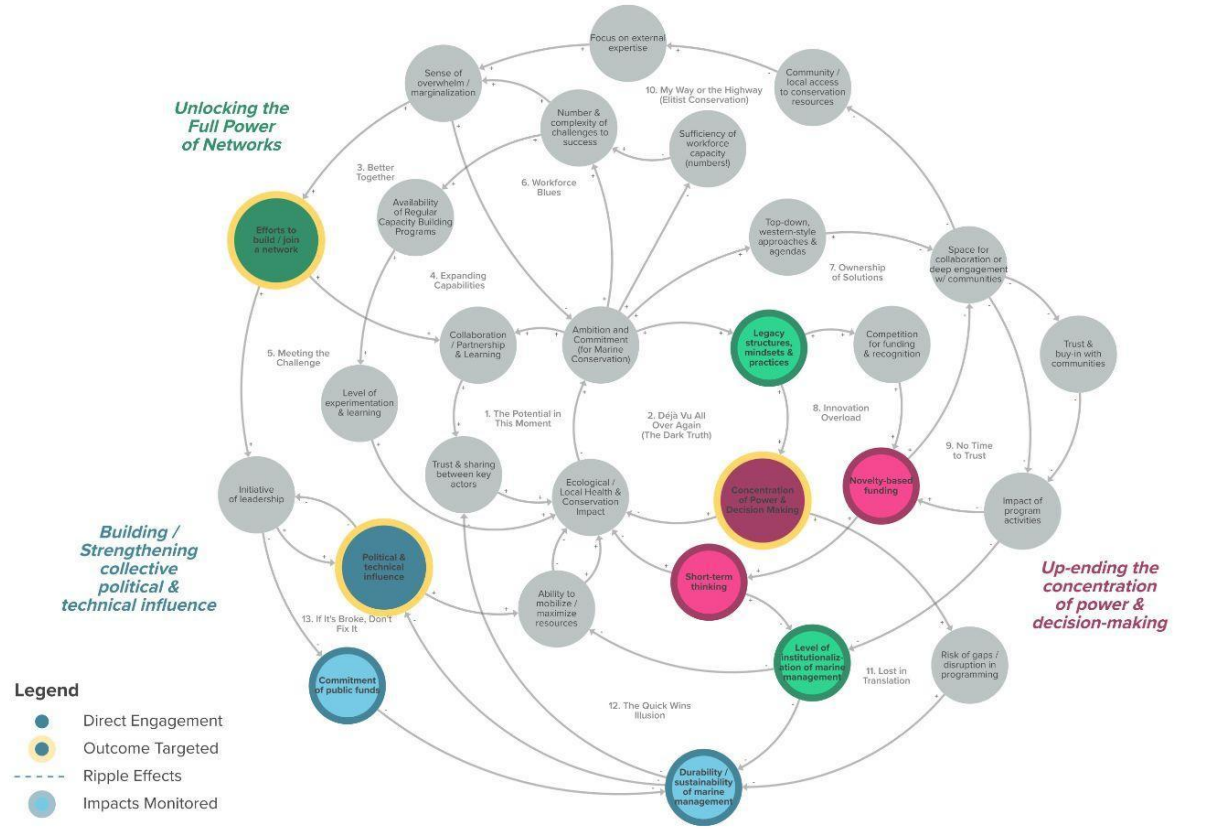
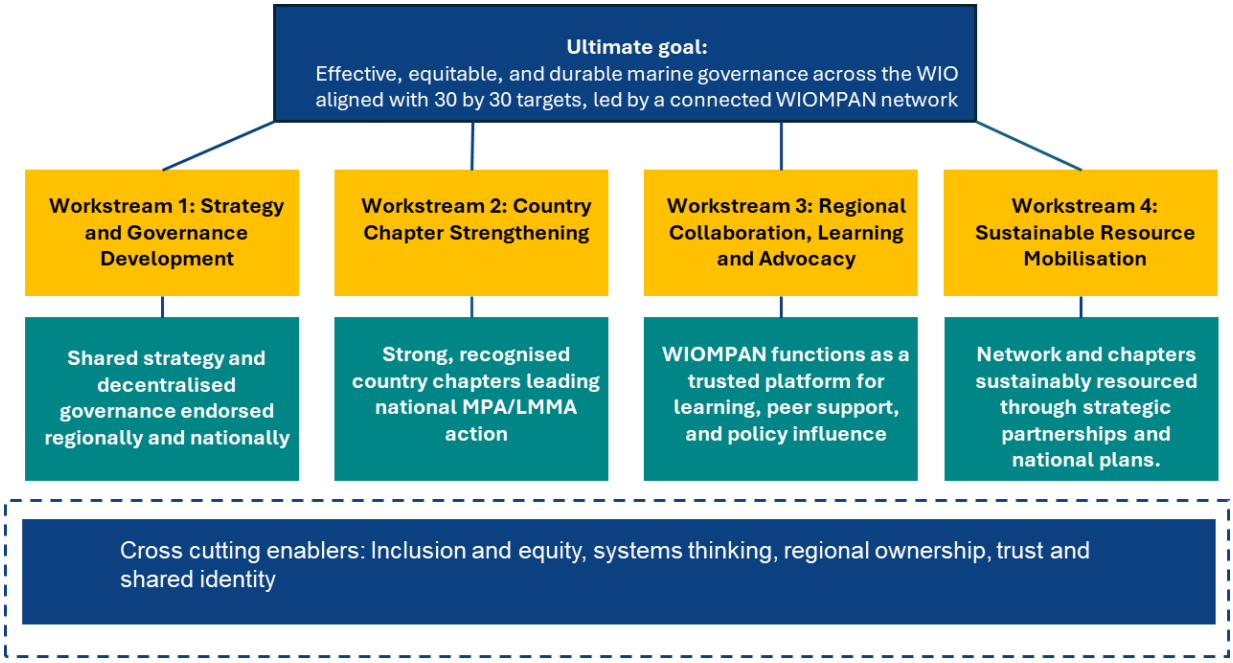


Figure 5: Map created by the Scaling Global MPA Capacity to Reach 30 x 30 Initiative: A Systems Approach. Presented by Karen Grattan from Engaging Enquiry, supported by Lihla Noori from Blue Nature Alliance at the WIOMPAN Regional Meeting to Co-develop a Systems-led Regional Capacity Development Strategy for the Western Indian Ocean. The map demonstrates the key leverage areas in the Western Indian Ocean to create sustainable change in the marine conservation system.

5.3. Regional theory of change



5.4. Developing a WIOMPAN strategy

First Phase			
Key steps	**Action**	**Goal**	**Output**
Synthesize Prototypes into a Strategic Foundation	Review and consolidate all prototype templates developed during the workshop	Develop a full list of ***actionable initiatives***, ***principles***, and proposed ***interventions***	Inclusive summary of system shifts and ideas to inform strategy formulation
Conduct a Prioritization Exercise	Extract and organize core objectives, values, and proposed outcomes.	Develop a first draft WIOMPAN Strategic Plan using a balanced scorecard format	Draft strategic framework that integrates mission/vision and implementation tracks
Facilitate Regional Consultation on the Strategy	Circulate the draft framework to WIOMPAN country chapters	Gather broad input from members to ensure inclusivity and reflect national contexts	Co-designed, consensus-driven version of the strategic plan
Launch Country-Level Dialogues	Provide chapters with a facilitation guide to host their own planning sessions.	Enable countries to localize the WIOMPAN strategy and define national priorities.	Clearer national actions aligned with a shared regional vision.
Conduct Needs Assessments Across Chapters	Identify gaps in capacity, structure,	Develop a support package tailored to each	Strengthened country chapters with defined

	representation, and influence.	chapter's current stage and context.	areas for investment and support.
Engage Non-Represented Countries	Initiate strategic outreach to WIO countries not currently active in WIOMPAN.	Understand barriers to participation and identify ways to be more inclusive.	A flexible, responsive approach to expanding the network equitably.
Map Stakeholders and Relationships	Identify key actors, mandates, and engagement gaps at national and regional levels.	Build a stakeholder database and an outreach plan for upcoming phases.	Improved visibility into partnership and influence networks
Build Capacity Among Members	Targeted support to increase the diversity, depth, and sustainability of country chapters.	Equip members with relevant technical, governance, and communication skills.	A more capable and cohesive WIOMPAN network
Increase Chapter Visibility	Host inclusive workshops with LMMA and MPA actors; develop outreach campaigns.	Promote WIOMPAN's work and chapter activities to increase membership and legitimacy.	Raised awareness and stronger stakeholder buy-in across countries.
Second Phase			
Key steps	**Action**	**Goal**	**Output**
Develop New Country Chapters	Support countries currently not represented in WIOMPAN to form chapters	Establish a truly regional network with inclusive representation	New national chapters with formalized leadership and terms of reference.
Design the WIOMPAN Governance Structure	Define decentralised governance mechanisms and levels of engagement.	Clarify how power and decision-making are shared within WIOMPAN.	Prototype governance model for validation and refinement.
Strengthen Chapter Legitimacy at National Level	Ensure recognition of WIOMPAN chapters by government institutions	Allow chapters to actively participate in LMMA/MPA policy development.	Formal partnerships and national-level policy influence.
Develop WIOMPAN's	Co-create messaging for internal and external stakeholders.	Position WIOMPAN as a credible, professional, and strategic actor.	Communication strategy for partner engagement and visibility.

Value Proposition			
Identify the Message and Form of Communication	Engage stakeholders through meaningful messaging formats.	Build clarity and consistency in external and internal communications.	Tailored outreach plan and conflict resolution protocols.
Develop Country-Level Resource Mobilisation Strategies	Map and activate funding opportunities aligned with action plans.	Support implementation of MPA/LMMA activities with sustainable financing.	Country-specific resource mobilization strategies and proposals.
Improve Interpersonal Relationships for Collaboration	Use informal trust-building activities (e.g. MPA Day, ocean festivals).	Establish a culture of collaboration and shared purpose.	Strengthened relationships that support decentralized governance.
Third Phase			
Key steps	**Action**	**Goal**	**Output**
Implement Prototypes Across Sites	Roll out selected strategy prototypes (e.g. capacity hubs, governance tools, peer-learning models) across multiple WIO sites.	Validate, refine, and adapt solutions in real-world contexts	Feedback loops that improve design and generate proof of concept for future scaling
Adapt and Develop Governance Structure	Refine WIOMPAN's decentralized governance based on piloting feedback.	Establish an equitable, effective, and operational regional system.	Functional and legitimate governance model that reflects national diversity and supports regional coordination.
Develop and Localize Mission, Vision, and Strategy	Support country chapters to adapt and promote the regional strategy nationally.	Support country chapters to adapt and promote the regional strategy nationally.	Integrated national plans and clearly articulated local roles in WIOMPAN's agenda.
Ensure Chapter Recognition and Policy Influence	Engage governments to formally recognize chapters as partners in MPA/LMMA governance.	Position WIOMPAN chapters to influence marine policy and practice.	Institutional partnerships and contributions to national conservation goals.

Improve Cross-Actor Trust and Interpersonal Relationships	Promote informal exchanges and celebrations like MPA Day, ocean festivals, or peace-building activities.	Strengthen interpersonal bonds that underpin effective collaboration.	More resilient, trusting coalitions across government, community, and civil society actors.

6. WIOCOMPAS Portuguese Event

With support from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) under the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP), the WIO-COMPAS programme successfully delivered its first Portuguese-language certification initiative in Mozambique between March and April 2025. This event addressed the historic underrepresentation of Lusophone marine professionals in the regional certification framework—prior to this initiative, only one Mozambican practitioner had ever been certified.

The contract supported a package of interlinked activities aimed at embedding the WIO-COMPAS programme in Mozambique: translation of all programme materials into Portuguese, virtual and in-person training of Mozambican assessors, targeted candidate preparation, the delivery of the first in-country Level 2 certification event, and a national stakeholder workshop to raise institutional awareness and buy-in.

Key Outcomes:

Despite operating within a tight timeframe and following a period of national political unrest, the project achieved several critical outcomes:

- A trained **Mozambican assessor** successfully completed the full assessment process under mentorship.
- **Three candidates**—two Mozambican and one South African—participated in the Level 2 certification event, with final decisions pending Certification Board review.
- **Twenty stakeholders** from key institutions attended the national workshop, which generated clear demand for future Portuguese-language WIO-COMPAS activities and led to broad institutional interest in formalising certification as part of national professional development frameworks.

The initiative has laid a strong foundation for scaling professional certification in Mozambique, increasing equitable access for Lusophone countries, and aligning marine management capacity-building efforts with the goals of the OCPP. It also reinforced the flexibility and impact

of WIO-COMPAS in challenging contexts, contributing to long-term systems change in how marine professionals are trained, recognised, and supported.

7. Conclusion and next steps

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) has played an important role in enhancing the capacity and visibility of community-led marine conservation efforts across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). Through targeted support to Mozambique and Madagascar, the programme enabled participation in key regional forums, advanced professional certification through WIO-COMPAS, and piloted innovative tools like the LMMA Competency Framework to strengthen governance and management effectiveness at the local level.

Next steps:

Building on this foundation, WIOMSA and its partners will prioritise the following areas:

1. **Scaling the LMMA Competency Framework**: Based on pilot experiences in Madagascar and Mozambique, efforts will continue to refine the tool, expand the pool of trained assessors, and promote its integration into national monitoring and support systems.
2. **Consolidating WIO-COMPAS in Lusophone Countries**: The first Portuguese-language certification event laid important groundwork for professional recognition in Mozambique. Further assessor training and national engagement will support the sustained embedding of WIO-COMPAS within national capacity development frameworks.
3. **Advancing Strategic Partnerships**: WIOMSA will continue to engage with the Nairobi Convention, IUCN, Blue Nature Alliance, and regional LMMA networks to coordinate and align technical support, knowledge-sharing platforms, and funding mechanisms that strengthen the effectiveness of LMMAs as a core component of marine conservation in the WIO.
4. **Supporting WIOMPAN Capacity Development**: Building on the outcomes of the regional strategy workshop, WIOMSA will advance national consultations, stakeholder mapping, and systems-based strategic planning to enable country chapters to drive capacity strengthening from the ground up.

Together, these actions will help sustain progress toward more inclusive, effective, and resilient marine conservation systems in the region, in support of the Global Biodiversity Framework and national conservation commitments.