

# WWF COASTAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

## IMPACT REPORT 2020-2023

Scaling Toward a Healthy Ocean  
and Resilient Coastal Communities





# FOREWORD



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We write this foreword with a sense of urgency that resonates in the heartbeats of the countless coastal communities, Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers who have long been the custodians of these remarkable coastal ecosystems. They are the unsung heroes of marine conservation, the stewards of coastal habitats teeming with biodiversity, and the keepers of time-honoured traditions. Theirs is a profound connection to the natural world, a connection that is now under siege from the relentless forces of change.

The Coastal Communities Initiative, presented within these pages, is more than a strategy; it is a clarion call to action. It arises from a profound understanding that to safeguard our coastal ecosystems and chart a course toward a sustainable future, we must do more than just advocate for change. We must become architects of transformation – driving a global movement that bends the curve on biodiversity loss and catalyzes a new era of community-led conservation.

The need for such a movement is as clear as the waters that lap at our shores. Coastal communities, often marginalized and underrepresented, bear witness to the consequences of environmental degradation on a daily basis. Rising sea levels, depleted fisheries, and the loss of vital habitats threaten their very existence. Yet, in the face of adversity, these communities embody resilience and resourcefulness that inspire us all.

To catalyze this movement, we must embrace innovation and collaboration on an unprecedented scale. We must scale out, amplifying and replicating successful community-led conservation solutions. We must scale up, embedding these solutions into national and regional actions, policies, and legislations. We must scale deep, working alongside coastal communities to strengthen local leadership and capacity, and fostering the adoption of solutions through shared learning.

The Coastal Communities Initiative is not merely an abstract idea; it is a commitment to transform coastal communities into champions of their own destiny. It recognizes the inherent rights and knowledge of these communities and integrates them into the fabric of marine conservation efforts. It is a testament to the power of collaboration, where local communities, civil society organizations, and institutions unite to protect and restore our coastal ecosystems.

In the pages that follow, we embark on a journey of exploration and discovery. We uncover stories of resilience, tenacity, and hope from coastal communities around the world. We learn from their wisdom, their traditions, and their intimate understanding of the marine world. Together, we forge a path forward – one that honours the past, embraces the present, and safeguards the future.

The urgency of this endeavour cannot be overstated. The time to act is now, and the scale of our ambition must match the magnitude of the challenges we face. It is our hope that the Coastal Communities Initiative serves as a catalyst for this global movement – a movement that celebrates the vital role of coastal communities in preserving our natural heritage and reshaping our relationship with the oceans

In unity and determination,

**Maria Honig**

**Pepe Clarke**



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**Acknowledgements:**

This Impact Report is dedicated to the memory of our beloved colleague, [Lara Muaves](#), who inspired so many of us through the dedication and love she shared for the coastal people of Mozambique. This publication is a tribute to Lara and to the many practitioners who, like her, work hand in hand with communities, sharing hardship and successes, and standing up for their rights.

We thank all the Indigenous Peoples, local communities and small-scale fisher groups who trust WWF and lead this global movement. We thank our many partners for their collaboration and support.

We're grateful to the WWF teams who created this Initiative and continue to make it a vibrant, collective endeavour.

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Front cover photo: Fisher woman from the community of Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique, celebrating the re-opening of the periodic closure of octopus fishing, a sustainable fishing practice of the region.

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Small-scale fishers with a net aboard, Turkey © Emirhan Karamuk / WWF

## CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
<b>SECTION 1 FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY</b>	<b>8</b>
OUR RESPONSE: SCALING COASTAL COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION	11
5-POINT PLAN	12
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE	14
EVALUATING OUR IMPACT	16
<b>SECTION 2 HITTING THE WATER</b>	<b>18</b>
SCALING UP - INFLUENCING POLICY AND GOVERNANCE	22
SCALING OUT - REPLICATING LOCAL SUCCESSSES	28
SCALING DEEP - BUILDING CAPACITY AT SCALE	32
<b>SECTION 3 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN</b>	<b>36</b>
A TIMELY INITIATIVE - DELIVERING ON GLOBAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS	38





Angelo Hernandez, a fisherman from Favignana, a small island west of Sicily, Italy © Carlo Gianferro / WWF Mediterranean / FISHMPABLUÉ

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>CCI</b>	Coastal Communities Initiative
<b>CNPE</b>	National Coalition for Environmental Advocacy
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>ECMPO</b>	Espacio Costero Marino Pueblos Originarios
<b>ESSF</b>	Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FORKANI</b>	Forum Kahedupa Toudani
<b>FOSCAMC</b>	Forum of Civil Society Organizations for the Marine and Coastal Area
<b>GFCM</b>	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
<b>HRBA</b>	Human-rights-based approach
<b>ICCA</b>	Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories
<b>IMPAC5</b>	5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress
<b>IOTC</b>	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
<b>IPCA</b>	Inuit Protected and Conserved Area

<b>LMMA</b>	Locally managed marine area
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual
<b>MARRS</b>	Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
<b>MMAF</b>	Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries
<b>MOSC</b>	Maison des organisations de la société civile
<b>MPA</b>	Marine protected area
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PNG</b>	Papua New Guinea
<b>RPOA-SSF</b>	Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea
<b>SSF</b>	Small-scale fisheries
<b>SSF Guidelines</b>	FAO Voluntary guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
<b>SWIO</b>	South West Indian Ocean
<b>SWIOTUNA</b>	South West Indian Ocean Tuna Forum
<b>TNC</b>	The Nature Conservancy
<b>WIOMSA</b>	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association



# SECTION 1

## FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

### A COMPELLING CASE

Coastal communities – Indigenous Peoples, local communities and small-scale fishers – have historically been custodians of the coastal ecosystems on which they depend for sustenance, livelihoods and cultural identity.

But as the global ocean economy accelerates, they face mounting threats from a range of industrial sectors beyond their control, compounded by the effects of climate change,

and bear the worst of the impacts as they grapple with the degradation of their surroundings.

Not only are the impacts from these industries connected with poverty, reduced well-being and loss of cultural traditions, but they directly threaten the viability of the sectors most likely to deliver food security, nutrition and livelihood benefits to coastal communities in the future: small-scale fisheries, coastal aquaculture, seaweed farming and ecotourism.



Pedro Alfonso Lopez Gonzalez, president of Sociedad Cooperativa de Produccion Pesquera en General y Acuicola Ostricamichin, shows their oyster farming operation near Boca de Camichin, Nayarit, Mexico. © Jason Houston / WWF-US

## WWF'S INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION VISION STATEMENT

WWF's vision is to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. We believe that inclusive conservation approaches are critical to deliver wellbeing and equitable outcomes for people as well as restore and regenerate nature. The crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and inequality require systemic responses, and they challenge us to confront the structures and power dynamics that perpetuate inequalities inhibiting conservation.

Inclusive conservation consists of a variety of approaches that embrace diverse values and visions for how nature should be conserved while providing benefits for both people and nature. WWF strives to holistically understand the contexts in which we work and the dynamics between diverse actors and rights-holders. WWF recognizes and promotes the agency and leadership of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and other groups experiencing marginalization. In addition to rights-holders, WWF engages government, civil society, and private sector actors for collective action that contributes to systems transformation at multiple levels.

WWF embraces a human-rights-based approach mandated across all our work by our core standards – the [Statements of Principles on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Indigenous Peoples and the Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework](#). The [Inclusive Conservation Guidance](#) supports this work across the network, offering pathways of change to realize our vision.

January 2024

Coastal communities usually have little influence over the planning, management and enforcement of activities taking place in the marine territories where they reside. They're frequently subjected to human rights violations, and they're often ignored in decision-making processes. Women, youth and minorities are particularly marginalized. This must change – but despite investments in building agency in communities, progress has been slow, and systemic barriers leave vulnerable communities underserved and underrepresented.

Inclusive conservation is central to the work that's needed. Addressing historical power imbalances, promoting community self-empowerment, and advocating for more inclusive and equitable practices in marine habitat and species conservation, fisheries management, restoration,

local economic development and climate adaptation is key to bringing about lasting change on the ground. For decades that's what WWF has been doing, collaborating with coastal communities and their extensive networks across 29 countries to strengthen local governance, amplify community voices, enhance resource access, support sustainable management and conservation, build capacity, and integrate local solutions into local, national and regional policies.

But despite significant successes working at the local level, progress has been incremental, one community at a time. And that's why we've brought our grassroots projects together, to scale and accelerate them through the Coastal Communities Initiative (CCI).



# OUR RESPONSE: SCALING COASTAL COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION

We do this by applying an ‘inclusive conservation’ approach, which is not just about supporting conservation by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, but also recognizing and supporting their rights to decide how to manage their territories.



Coral underwater in Tayrona National Park in Colombia © Day's Edge Productions

## OUR VISION



Community mangrove restoration, Lamu County, Kenya © Kent Andreasen / WWF-Germany

**Empowered and resilient coastal communities rebuilding ocean health through the acceleration and scaling of locally led solutions.**

## OUR GOAL



Freshly caught hake, Valparaiso, Chile © Meredith Kohut / WWF-US

**By 2030, the Coastal Communities Initiative will secure and conserve at least 4 million km<sup>2</sup> of critical coastal ecosystems vital to the food security and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable people.**



# 5-POINT PLAN

## WWF's HOLISTIC CONSERVATION APPROACH

For coastal community-led conservation to thrive, it should promote socio-ecological resilience while fostering inclusivity and equity. Local initiatives must encompass key facets of marine conservation, including locally appropriate policy, governance, management, ecosystem protection, and community resilience. WWF collaborates closely with local communities to advance progress in these five interconnected domains, encapsulated in a comprehensive 5-point plan. Importantly, this plan offers a strong framework for implementing a human-rights-based approach (HBRA) to marine conservation.



Small-scale seaweed farmers from the Mahafaly plateau, Madagascar © WWF Madagascar / Tony Rakoto

### AREA BASED CONSERVATION



## THE 5-POINT PLAN AND SCALING STRATEGY IN ACTION - A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN ASAI INDIGENOUS TERRITORY



WWF-Indonesia's Marine Spatial Planning Senior Officers conducting a Coastal and Marine Resource Use Mapping session with local villagers and fishermen in South-Western Maluku, Indonesia © WWF-Indonesia

- 01 Through a participatory mapping exercise in collaboration with WWF, the community of Asai (Yapen, Papua Province, Indonesia) was able to register their traditional home as an Indigenous territory with the Ancestral Domain Registration Agency, the Indonesian partner of the ICCA Consortium. The Asai Indigenous territory is now integrated in Papua Province's Marine Spatial Plan.
- 02 The community of Asai has co-developed a management plan for its marine and coastal area, including a Village Regulation to protect its natural resources, and an Action Plan to guide operations. The plan is implemented by village-based area management groups, established with the support of the Fisheries Service, the Village Community Empowerment Agency, and WWF and formalized by a decree from the Head of Asai.
- 03 After technical training, the community began monitoring its fishery with a village-based team of 10 young men patrolling the area to deter poachers. Papua Province's Fisheries and Marine Agency has committed to support these efforts through the establishment of a *Pokmaswas* (community-based monitoring group), which is a government provision that enshrines community participation and empowerment in local institutions.
- 04 Through peer-to-peer exchange, Asai community members learned how people in another location, Menarbu, were using their local wisdom and traditions to address overfishing and biodiversity degradation. They had created a Sasi, a traditional community-sanctioned fishing temporal closure, similar to the concept of a periodic no-take zone – which the Asai villagers decided to replicate. The first Asai Sasi was closed in 2022, covering an area of 284 hectares. **After one year, monitoring analyzed by the local university showed considerable improvements in the health of the coastal and marine ecosystems.**
- 05 Through an exchange with Menarbu and WWF, local people (both women and men) decided to create two community-based business groups to improve the value chain of their fish products. Both groups are now producing processed fish with the help of funding from the Village Community Empowerment Agency of Yapen District, and promoting their products to the tourist sector.

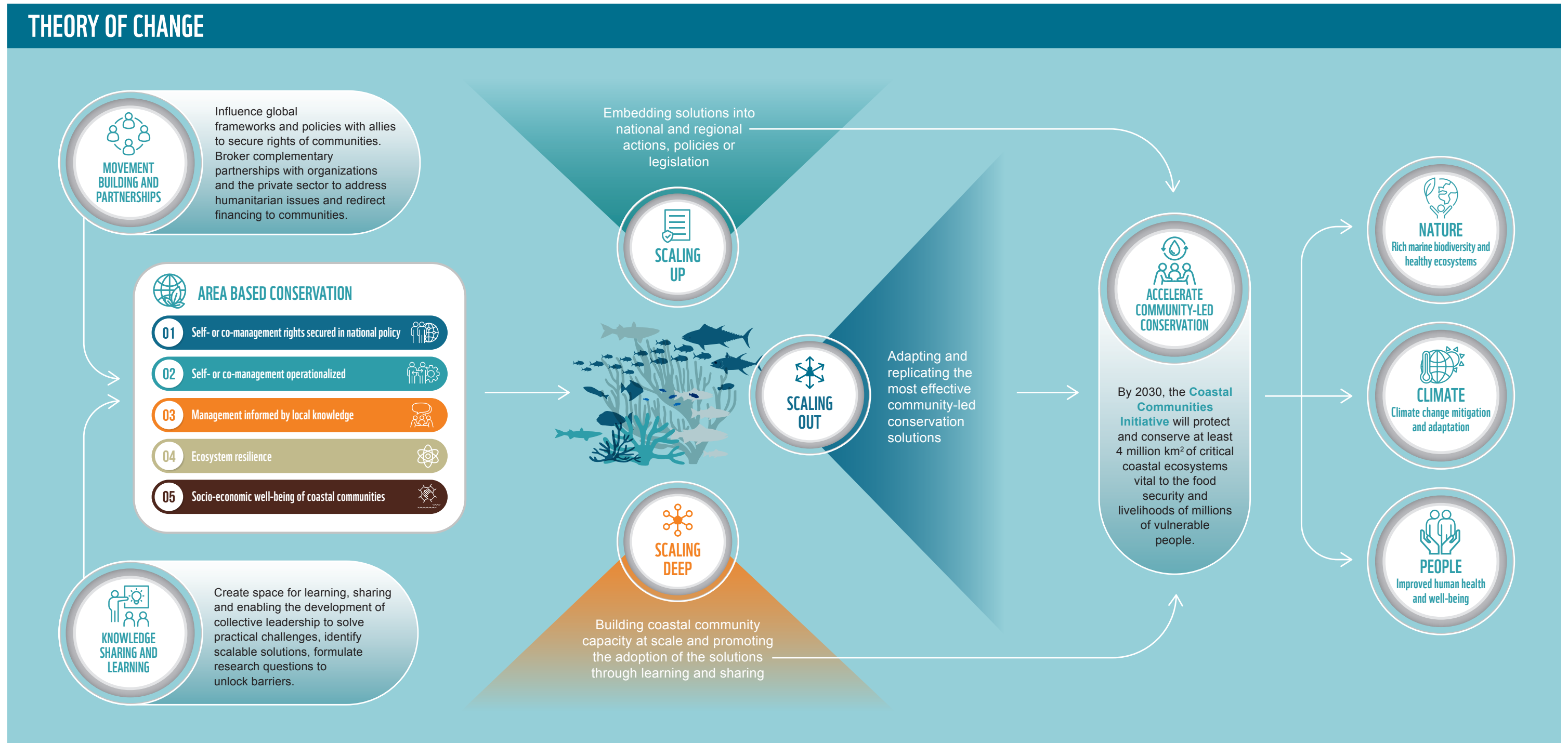
[LINK TO IMPACT STORY](#)

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The CCI is driven by a twofold Theory of Change. Our work on the ground follows a 5-point plan to support sustainable and inclusive natural resource management. Our scaling model directs how to accelerate the implementation of successful approaches across six marine regions. The CCI goal contributes to WWF’s Oceans Practice vision of productive and resilient ocean ecosystems, sustaining people and nature.

## ASSESSING OUR IMPACT

We track progress, impact and scaling across all local sites, countries and regional seascapes using a bespoke [online mapping, monitoring and evaluation platform](#) geared to our Theory of Change.





# EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

We commissioned a third-party evaluation of the first phase of our Coastal Communities Initiative, which ran from July 2020 to December 2022.<sup>3</sup> The aim was to track the value, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of our work at local, national, regional and global levels; to explore the challenges encountered and how best to address them; and to consider how we can operate more effectively in future. We present the most important findings of this evaluation in this report, extracted as Learning Spotlights.

## LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

**Advancing inclusive conservation:** the evaluation found that the CCI’s 5-point plan is a user-friendly framework for ensuring projects encapsulate and deliver inclusive conservation. It has achieved the following outcomes:

- Improved rights protection via co-management and better local governance capacity; legal recognition of local fisher and conservation groups enabling community-led data collection and use; and assisting communities to document local traditions is an important step in future-proofing and local sharing of techniques – especially in oral cultures.
- Enhanced engagement of marginalized communities was achieved by prioritizing small-scale fishers. The implementation of the Social and Environmental Safeguards Framework (ESSF) and the comprehensive 5-point plan aids WWF staff in recognizing marginalized groups that might otherwise be overlooked.
- Improved accountability:
  - National authorities being accountable to partnered communities.
  - Individual users of marine resources being accountable for adhering to community resource management plans.
  - WWF being accountable to its donors, partnered communities and the public.

3. Mid-term Evaluation Summary Report WWF Accelerating Coastal Community-Led Conservation Initiative. 31 March 2023. Independent Evaluation completed by K4Dev – Knowledge for Development. See the full report here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9hmqpcz> or a summary version here: <http://tinyurl.com/bdnhmct>

### Inclusiveness<sup>4</sup>

- In the sites assessed, there are 3,080 women, 5,200 men and 3,100 youth in **decision-making positions** as a result of WWF’s work
- 5,000 women benefit from **livelihood enterprises** and **access to finance**, along with 3,400 men and 700 young people
- Teams are also engaging with other **vulnerable groups** including the widowed, single mothers, LGBTQIA+, the elderly, people living with disabilities, stateless people, and Indigenous and tribal peoples.



Clockwise from top left: 1. © Mazidi Abd Ghani / WWF-Malaysia 2. © WWF Turkey 3. © Brent Stirton / Getty Images. 4. © Simon Rawles / WWF

4. Assessing the inclusiveness of CCI work involves considering a range of indicators. So far, roughly half of the sites taking part in the Initiative have integrated these indicators into their MEL frameworks. We prioritized gender considerations by disaggregating data on the distribution of decision-making power and economic empowerment. In addition, vulnerable groups engaged in WWF fieldwork have been mapped.

## Climate Sheroes kickstart mangrove restoration



The coastal communities of Pakistan are both blessed and burdened by their geographical location. While this region boasts rich biodiversity, providing livelihoods and sustenance to its inhabitants, it is simultaneously exposed to countless climate vulnerabilities. Climate change disproportionately affects marginalized groups, especially coastal women. WWF-Pakistan works with 3,000 households in 38 coastal villages and takes a gender-sensitive approach to restore the coastal ecosystem by initiating the Climate Sheroes network. Despite women’s crucial contribution to nature, they are often neglected: coastal women have fewer opportunities than men in terms of access to financial services, technology, and market information.

The Sheroes network provides a strong foundation to strengthen the role of women by involving them in the restoration of nature along with several livelihood interventions. Climate Sheroes are mainly involved in the plantation of mangroves, small-scale aquaculture, establishing plant nurseries, kitchen gardening, fodder crop cultivation, and enterprise development while building their skills in sewing, handicrafts making, and livestock farming.

Starting from 12 women in 2020 the network grows to more than to 500 women to date. In the coastal belt of Sindh, 4,500ha of mangrove forest that stands guard against rising seas and the threat of tsunamis is restored by coastal women. So far Climate Sheroes established 8 mangrove nurseries having a stock of 0.2 million mangrove saplings, cultivated 35ha of fodder crop, and established 12 crab fattening ponds. 100 women are involved in kitchen gardening, 200 women are earning income through selling handicrafts, and 20 women established grocery shops.

**+ 1,500 HA OF MANGROVES REPLANTED**

In 2023 alone, the Climate Sheroes successfully planted over 1,500 ha of mangroves, generating income for 90 women who were involved in the plantation. This Sheroes network is a clear win-win solution for women and nature that provides knowledge of rights, while restoring the ecosystem, fostering independence, and building much-needed climate resilience for future generations.

## Wafo Wapi targets traditional territory

The coastline of Guafo Island, off northern Patagonia in Chile, is famously rich in biodiversity, and its surrounding waters are internationally recognized for their ecological value. The island is also central to the life, culture and spirituality of Chile’s Indigenous Mapuche Huilliche communities.

WWF-Chile had been developing a proposal to create a marine protected area around Guafo since 2009. As the WWF team engaged with artisanal fishers and others, they learned that these local stakeholders were equally determined to protect the resources of their remarkable home. The groups realized that more could be achieved by working together.

Chile has a unique law – Ley Lafkenche – that provides a framework for Indigenous communities to become legal guardians of the coastlines they inhabit. Under an initiative called Wafo Wapi, 10 Indigenous communities and 11 local fishing unions have petitioned the government to administer Guafo as an ECMPO (Espacio Costero Marino para Pueblos Originarios).

**225,000 HA PROTECTED**

An ECMPO puts coastal areas under Indigenous management based on recognition of “customary use”. Wafo Wapi hopes to create an ECMPO covering 225,000 ha, one of the largest ever. “It’s an example of how First Nations can continue working to protect nature and do our part,” says local resident Lonko Chiguay, “because a healthy sea means healthy people.”

**WATCH VIDEO HERE**

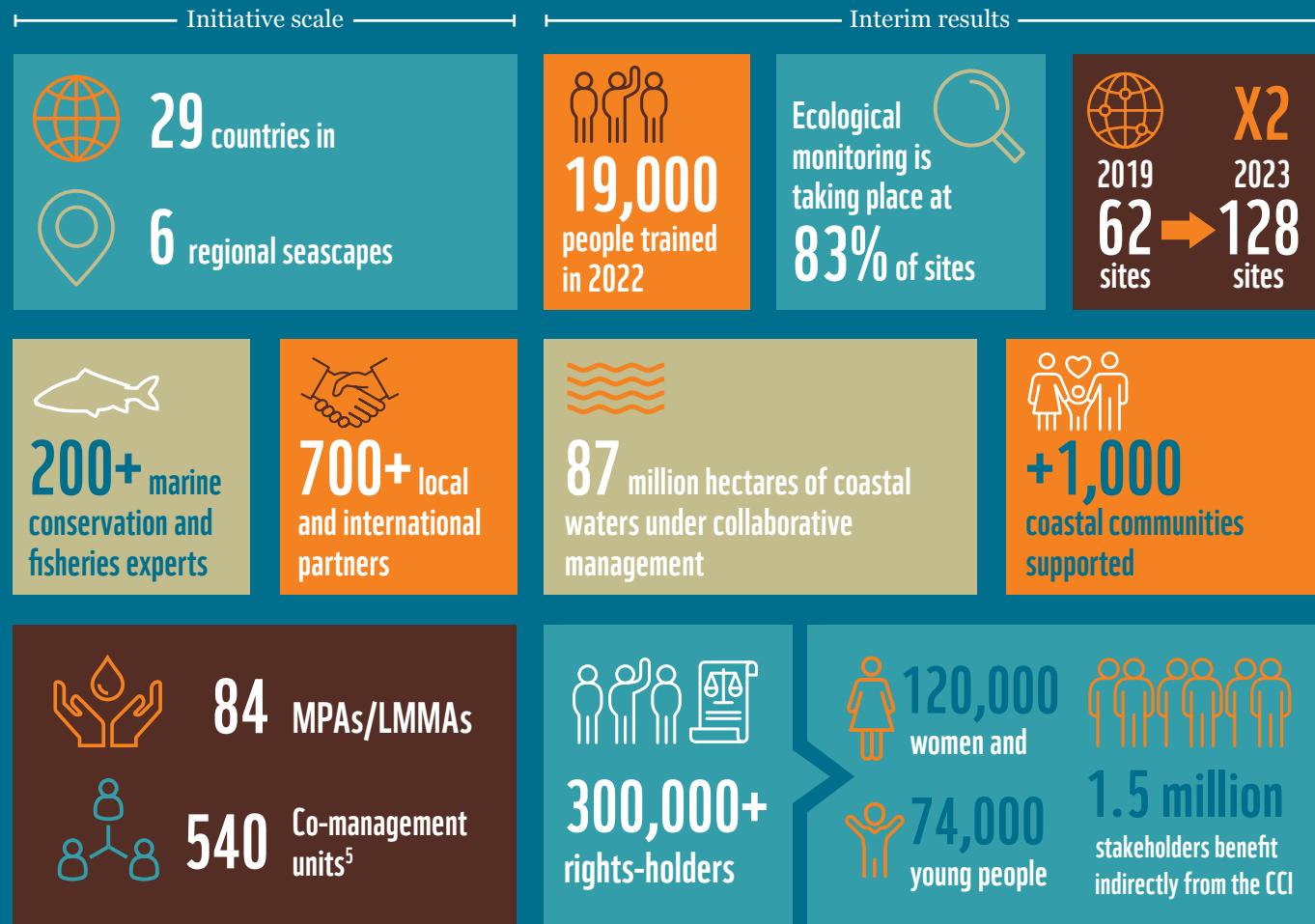


Indigenous Communities organize the Wafo-Wapi Initiative to Protect Chile’s Guafo Island © Meredith Kohut/WWF-US



# SECTION 2 HITTING THE WATER

## COASTAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE COLLECTIVE IMPACT: 2020-2023 IN NUMBERS



5. Self/community governance or co-management: collaborative process of governance and a locally-led approach to the management and conservation of natural resources. This governance approach has different names in different countries, including LMMAs, co-management, Beach Management Units, Collaborative Management Areas, etc.

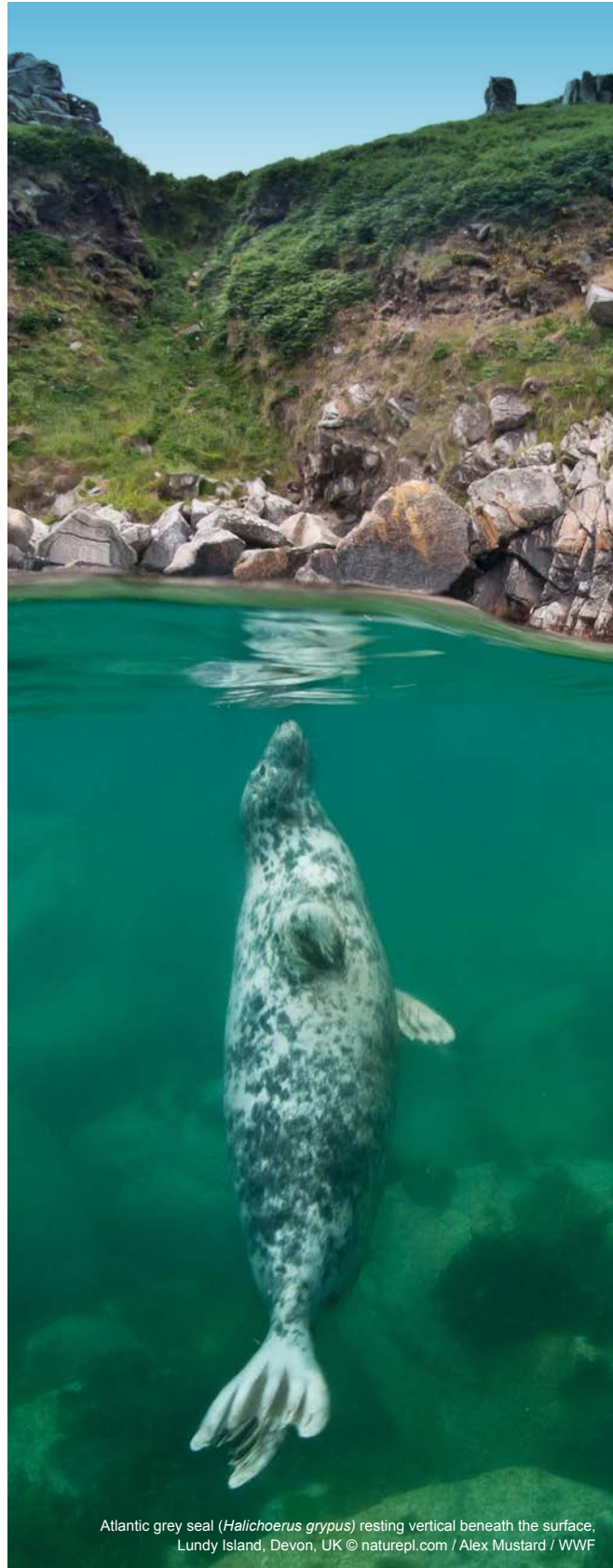
# THE COASTAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE WORKS IN 6 REGIONS ACROSS 29 COUNTRIES AND 128 SITES



Clockwise from top left: 1. © Carlo Gianferro / WWF Mediterranean / FISHMPABLUE, 2. © Troy Enekvist / WWF-Sweden, 3. © James Morgan / WWF, 4. © Meridith Kohut / WWF-US, 5. © Brent Stirton / Getty Images / WWF-UK, 6. © WWF-Malaysia / Eric Madej



## BUILDING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FROM THE GROUND UP



Atlantic grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) resting vertical beneath the surface, Lundy Island, Devon, UK © naturepl.com / Alex Mustard / WWF

To catalyze acceleration at the global level, WWF partners with coalitions, alliances, and institutions to create a strong enabling policy environment for ensuring that the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are recognized and secured.

The Initiative is also brokering global partnerships with complementary organizations and the private sector to address humanitarian and socioeconomic issues – common root causes of local vulnerabilities – and unlock and redirect financing to community-led conservation.

The Initiative seeks to strengthen communities and organizations by increasing their independence and self-determination – it’s an approach called localization. This includes direct technical, organizational and financial support tailored to local circumstances, along with indirect support through the creation of improved framework conditions for sustainable development.

### LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

**Catalyzing a global movement by contributing to existing regional coalitions taps into wider resources and influence than WWF can achieve alone.**

The independent evaluation found that the CCI has achieved success in fostering a **global movement through advocacy and coalition-building**. Notably, it stands out for its advocacy in securing communities’ rights to manage coastal resources, capitalizing on WWF’s ability to bridge community projects and voices with global frameworks<sup>6</sup> and policymakers. An essential strength lies in amplifying community perspectives at international events, bolstering the CCI’s awareness-raising and advocacy strategy.

Furthermore, the Initiative has played a pivotal role in forming stronger national and regional coalitions, elevating community governance on government agendas, and extending this influence globally. The online scaling monitoring and evaluation platform facilitates the measurement, articulation, and global analysis of WWF’s experiences: see [www.coastalcommunityledconservation.org](http://www.coastalcommunityledconservation.org)

6. Such global policy frameworks include the Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN FAO Committee on Fisheries and the Voluntary guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

## SCALING NETWORKS ACROSS THE SWIO



Late Lara Muaves with local fishing communities working on marine and coastal biodiversity protection and climate adaptation in the Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique © Matateu Ubisse / WWF Mozambique

The [WWF South West Indian Ocean \(SWIO\) Regional Programme](#) has embedded the 5-point plan and adopted the scaling strategy to deliver on its objectives. By joining forces with 163 local partners and 128 international partners, the SWIO Programme seeks to ensure that communities effectively and sustainably manage their immediate natural resources. Furthermore, WWF works with communities and local partners to strengthen management and governance capacity in 166 locally managed marine areas (LMMAs), beach management units or similar co-management governance structures, and with more than 100 community-based organizations across the region.

### 166 LOCALLY MANAGED MARINE AREAS (LMMAS)

Specifically, this work seeks to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) directly and through CSO networks at both the regional and national level. Collectively, the eight CSO network partners – South West Indian Ocean Tuna Forum (SWIOTUNA, regional), Tuna Fisheries Alliance of Kenya, Tuna Alliance of Tanzania, Forum of Civil Society Organizations for the Marine and Coastal Area (FOSCAMC, Mozambique), National Coalition for Environmental Advocacy (CNPE) and the MIHARI network of LMMAs (Madagascar), Maison des organisations de la société civile (MOSC) and Dahari (the Comoros) – represent 126 CSOs, 341 community-based organizations and three private sector partners. WWF supports these networks via targeted capacity-building workshops on topics such as the sustainable blue economy, financial management, environmental and social safeguards frameworks, and human-rights-based approaches.

These community actors are now making credible contributions to regional policy discussions while advocating for their needs to be considered in governance decisions, including on inclusive and sustainable financing and economies, integrated ocean governance, and sustainable fisheries management. With WWF’s support, SWIOTUNA was awarded observer status at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in late 2021, enabling civil society to contribute to the debate at IOTC meetings and advocate for SWIO’s coastal nations to have more control over their regional marine resources. In 2022, SWIOTUNA organized a session at the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Summit calling on SWIO governments to support the SSF sector.

Looking forward, the [SWIO Venture Builder](#) is a venture builder for small to medium businesses designed to support the regional transition to a sustainable blue economy. Working with SWIOTUNA, WWF and Finance Earth are co-leading its development. The programme aims to equip communities with capacity and resources to activate sustainable enterprise models that reduce negative impacts on the marine environment and build their social and economic resilience. The Venture Builder – bringing together practitioners from about 30 organizations – was officially launched at the WIOMSA Symposium (South Africa, October 2022) as part of the [Our Blue Future Initiative](#), a multi-stakeholder initiative promoting an inclusive and sustainable blue economy in the Western Indian Ocean region. To help practitioners support community conservation enterprises, WWF’s first [e-learning course](#) is now live.



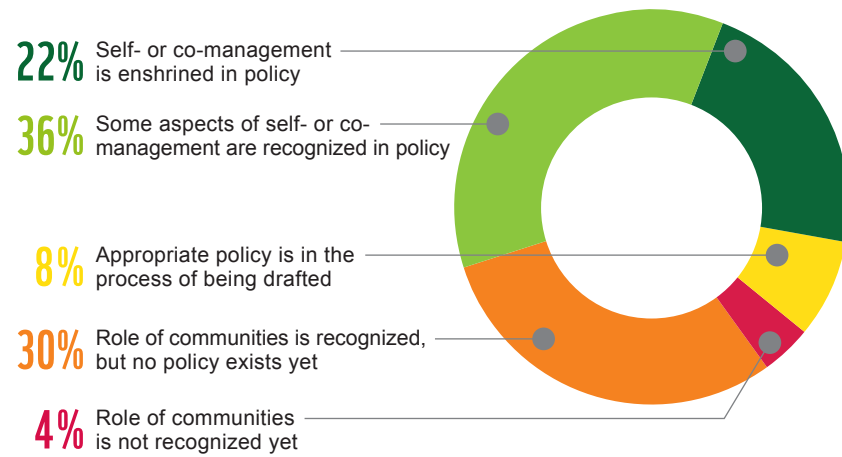
# SCALING UP

## INFLUENCING POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

### RESULTS

The first indicator of the 5-point plan aims at assessing the level of progress of integrating self- or co-management and access rights into national policy frameworks. Securing access, rights, and capacity for communities to manage their natural resources requires effective policy frameworks at local, national, and regional levels.

The graph on the right shows the relative proportions (%) of sites (128 sites) at the different levels of progress of integration of communities' rights into policy frameworks.



To scale national to regional level policy impact, the CCI facilitates the engagement of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' representatives on the international stage, connecting community and civil society voices to global policymakers' ears to ensure their rights are recognized and protected, including tenure rights, access to resources and to a healthy environment.

We work directly with regional networks as well as international multi-stakeholder coalitions, such as the Aquatic/Blue Food Coalition, Rise Up for the Ocean and an informal alliance of international NGOs and local CSOs supporting coastal communities, to bring hundreds of Indigenous leaders and community representatives to put SSF and their policy asks on the agenda of policymakers in high-level fora such as the FAO Committee on Fisheries, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Marine Protected Areas Congress, the UN Ocean Conference, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Food Systems Summit.

In 2022, officially labelled the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, the International Planning Committee Working Group on Fisheries, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, WWF and other members of the Small-Scale Fisheries Hub co-organized a first-of-its-kind Summit on Small-Scale Fisheries. This created a unique opportunity to promote dialogue

and share experience among 140 participants from 40 countries representing small-scale fishers and fish workers, environmental NGOs and decision-makers. The ultimate goal was to [advance human rights in small-scale fisheries](#) and support governments in implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) – this instrument provides guiding principles and a framework to enhance sustainable, participatory and responsible small-scale fisheries governance and development.

In 2023, we partnered with [Movilizadorio](#), a pioneering Latin America-based organization which applies innovative approaches to support social change and enhance citizen mobilization. Together, “Movi” and WWF have supported Indigenous Peoples' representatives from tribes including Ngāti Hako, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngāi te Rangī, Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāti Raukawa (New Zealand), the Taloyoak community in Nunavut (Canada) and Wafo Wapi community (Chile), as well as representatives from community networks MIHARI (Madagascar), AwFishnet (Kenya, Tanzania) and Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (Hawaii) to increase the visibility of their leadership in marine conservation at IMPAC5, the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress in Vancouver, Canada. Through several events including a joint session entitled “Indigenous And Coastal Communities' Leadership: Embedding Centuries

Of Traditional Knowledge Into Practice To Accelerate Community-Led Conservation”, we shared evidence of best practices, and created opportunities to connect the Indigenous leaders and youth representatives with key global stakeholders (donors, NGOs, policymakers) to position their demands and negotiate joint action at different scales. Through an inclusive

co-design process, which started several months before the event, we built each other's understanding on aspirations, needs and best practices in locally-led marine conservation, created a common vision to support an inclusive, just and equitable target on protecting 30 percent of oceans by 2030, and united our voices to elevate these asks at IMPAC5.





## MANAGING FISHERIES TOGETHER, THE MEDITERRANEAN WAY

Woman fishing blue crab with traps in Ghar el Melh Lagoon in Tunisia  
© Marion Payr/WWF-Austria



Most small-scale fishers work outside organized structures, so they've had little support in dealing with the growing challenges they've faced in recent years, from disappearing fish stocks and new invasive species, to COVID-19 and the fuel crisis. This is the focus of the [WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative](#), which is working in nine Mediterranean countries (Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Tunisia and Algeria) to transform small-scale fisheries management and governance, putting the fishers themselves at the heart of the structure to play an active role in decision-making, from locally-tailored collaboration to advocacy at national and international level.

Despite being almost unheard of 20 years ago, today the co-management concept – promoted through the [General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean's Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries](#) (GFCM RPOA-SSF), launched in 2018 and supported by WWF – is spreading across Mediterranean fisheries. Recent figures show that half of all Mediterranean countries now have some co-management or similar participatory systems in place,<sup>7</sup> and this number is sure to rise as its benefits become ever more apparent.

There's no one-size-fits-all co-management model – different sites have different needs and characteristics, and require a different balance of representatives. The jurisdictional context varies too – some committee structures are codified by law, while others

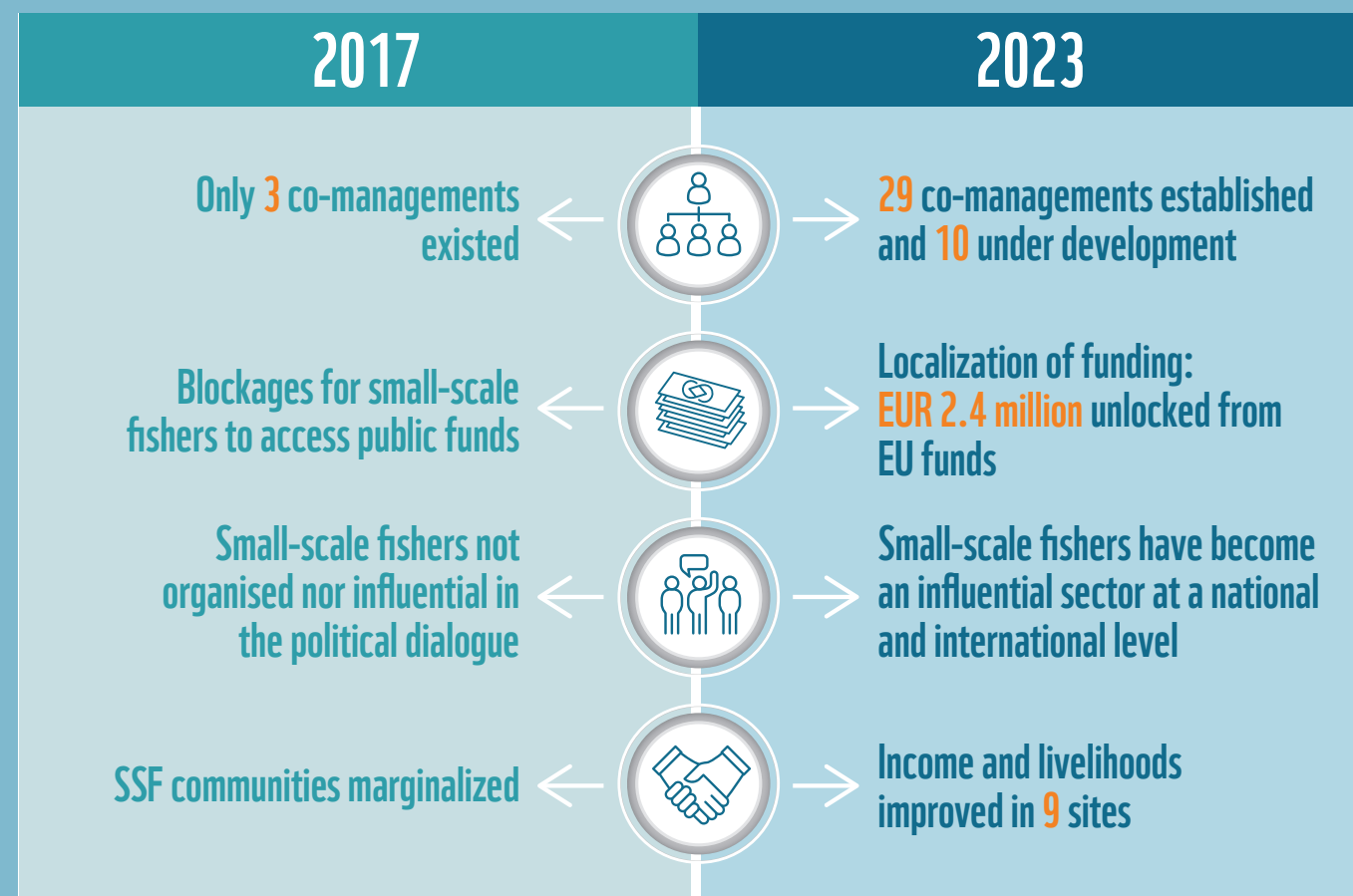
are more informal, with collective decisions agreed over a beer. But small-scale fishers all over the Mediterranean are seeing the possibilities co-management can offer, and getting more interested in the idea – encouraged and supported by WWF.

We're already seeing the results, in the fishing communities themselves and in terms of broader sector visibility. Twenty-nine co-management units have been established, and 10 more are under development. A [regional platform](#) has been established to bring small-scale fishers and fish workers together to exchange their experiences and share best practices. The sector is being taken more seriously by managers and politicians, too: increasing amounts of SSF data are now being gathered and analyzed, and socioeconomic data is being monitored for the first time. Increasing amounts of funding are being unlocked. Now a [procedure](#) is underway at EU level aiming to integrate co-management in future fisheries legislation across Europe.

"We always used to complain about things down at the harbour, but we never got anywhere," says Gianni Colelli, a fisher from Porto Cesareo, Italy. "Now we can talk about these issues with people who can lend us a hand to solve them. It brings institutions together." Indeed, finding solutions together is what co-management is all about – and the same principle drives the work of the CCI.

7. FAO. 2022. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2022. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3370en>

### SPECIFIC RESULTS:



### Where we are now

- National platform representation for SSF (Croatia includes 100% of SSF, Italy 80%, Turkey 95%). An international platform, Friends of SSF, includes the 8 key Mediterranean stakeholders.
- Data related to SSF are available and analyzed, and socioeconomic data are monitored.
- The GFCM and EU now include SSF in their management plans to improve the status of SSF.
- Through the SSF Forum, WWF also helped to set up a long-term regional learning hub where small-scale fishers and fish workers from the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions come together, share good practices and learn from one another through online and in-person workshops.





Carmen Diaz, who plays a leading role in Chile's National Corporation of Women in Artisanal Fisheries © Meridith Kohut / WWF-US

## Chile's Mujeres del Mar make sure of their rights



Carola Barría Leviguen talks with fishermen Gabriel Alamiro Oyarso and José Octavio Seron at the docks in Dalcahue. Empowering Chilean Women in the Sustainable Fishing Industry © Meridith Kohut / WWF-US

**“In 2021, Chile issued a national law that added gender equity to fishing policy”**

Carola Barría is the granddaughter, daughter, and sister of fishers. Like many women, the 41-year-old helped support her family by collecting shellfish and seaweed from the shore. But at the same time, she was secretly studying – learning what she needed to know to rise through the ranks to become the secretary of both the local and regional fishing syndicates. More recently, she helped establish the National Corporation of Women in Artisanal Fisheries.

“When someone closes their eyes and thinks about fishing, they always visualize a man,” Barría says. “That’s why we have this movement now. It’s so that women know they have rights too.”

Barría played a key role in pushing through a 2021 national law that added gender equity to fishing policy. The law creates gender quotas in regulatory bodies and seeks to formalize formerly unrecognized (and traditionally female) roles like smoking seafood products and baiting nets. Together, these changes let female workers appear on work registers and apply for grants to improve their businesses.

“Now,” Barría says, “women are absolutely empowered.”

WWF welcomes this law and supports leaders like Barría, as we see gender equity as a fundamental element of sustainable development and effective conservation.

### LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

**By strengthening national and regional coalitions, WWF is putting community co-management of marine resources on the agenda of governments – a trend the CCI is leveraging to influence the global agenda.**

WWF has advanced the promotion of co-management of marine resources between communities and governments. This includes forging partnerships with local organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies to promote community-owned or co-managed marine protected areas (MPAs) and fishery co-management, facilitating the formal registration of fisher and conservation groups, and lobbying for policy changes. It has also bolstered the monitoring capacity of small-scale fishers, enabling informed stock management decisions.

**Helping existing groups gain formal registration and governance capacity helps them access new opportunities and legitimacy.**

Gaining legal recognition of MPAs/LMMAs or community fisher and conservation groups is an important step in securing their co-management rights (5-point plan #1) and helping to enact good governance procedures (5-point plan #2). This is a common form of support for WWF to provide to coastal communities, adapted according to the local context.



# SCALING OUT

## REPLICATING LOCAL SUCCESSES

### RESULTS

#### Management solutions

- 129 spatial fishery closures for local fish stock recovery in 64 sites protect a total of **17,235 km²**.
- **Mobile phone technology** is used by 3,066 community members to support participatory monitoring of resources in 66 sites.
- 59 sites are consciously managed to **adapt to climate change**.

#### Impact indicators<sup>8</sup>

##### Human well-being

- In 97% of sites, trends related to **community well-being** (income/assets/food) are improving or stable (56 sites).
- Trends in communities' **perception of the value of community-based natural resource management** are improving or stable (23 sites).

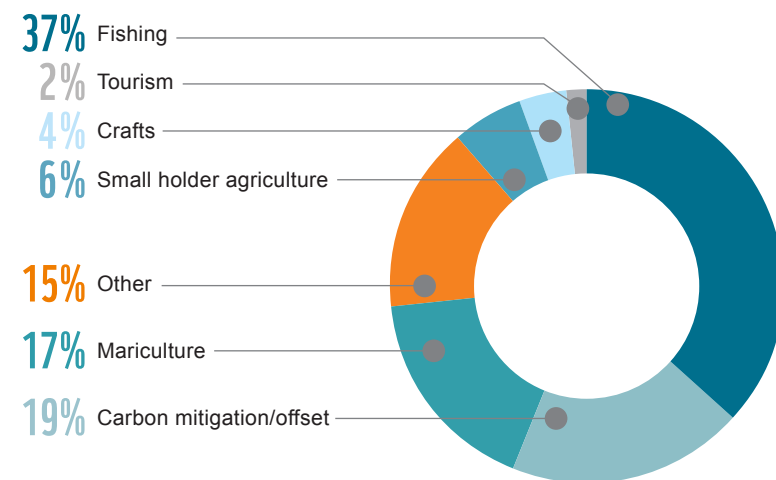
##### Environment

- In 74% of the sites, the **status of umbrella species** is either stable or increasing (98 sites).

##### Socioeconomic resilience

- **1,079 village banks or microfinance schemes** have been developed in 47 sites.
- **86 sites supported the creation of 901 community-based enterprises.** In 61% of sites, these enterprises are starting to provide a positive income or making a steady profit (56 sites).

#### Type of enterprises developed



In 29 countries, WWF works directly with hundreds of communities and community-based organizations to co-design and implement marine conservation interventions by first addressing the needs of rights-holders and vulnerable groups who are dependent on marine resources. Securing rights and tenure, promoting financial inclusion and empowerment, supporting community-led enterprise development, and enhancing SSF markets and livelihoods through improved catch monitoring, market access and value chains are all effective strategies for scaling marine conservation. From the existing portfolio of prototypes, the CCI catalyzes scaling of best practices through replication, by embedding local successes into policy, and by unlocking common barriers and building capacity at scale.

New projects and coastal community-led initiatives are encouraged to leverage existing prototypes.

We also deliver impact at scale by embedding strategic partnerships into our work, typically working with like-minded partners who bring complementary know-how and expertise, and demonstrate a track record of success and ability to scale. These include social enterprises like ABALOBI and Movilizadorio, and social development organizations such as Technoserve, CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. We pilot specific localized community-led solutions with individual partners, and we build broader networks, coalitions and multi-stakeholder partnerships to share knowledge, tools and best practices, to accelerate the uptake of effective and scalable solutions.

8. Ecological monitoring – 83% of the sites are performing fishery monitoring or have access to such data and 24% are monitoring MPA management effectiveness using METT or similar tools. Environmental data trends refers to umbrella species, including flagship species, habitat, or resource population acting as an umbrella indicator for marine biodiversity. Socioeconomic monitoring – 50% of sites (63 sites) are conducting surveys every 2-3 years, or did in the past. Indicators used for household or fisher surveys include level of satisfaction related to income/wealth, household asset index, or months of adequate household food provisioning, level of debt/savings, small-scale fishery socioeconomic surveys.

## NUSATUVA COMMUNITY LEADS MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF REEF RESOURCES



Nusatuva monitoring © Andrew Boura / WWF-Pacific

In Nusatuva, a community in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands, a group of community rangers were surprised and concerned to discover that in the transects they surveyed for their reef health baseline monitoring, they only saw juvenile striped surgeonfish (*Acanthurus lineatus*). This raised alarms because striped surgeonfish play a vital role in maintaining the health of the reef ecosystem by consuming algae that other fish tend to avoid. Moreover, the species holds a significant place in the community's fisheries management plan.

"The rangers then reported this result back to the management committee and community during a meeting after the church programme. They have management rules in their management plan to protect striped surgeonfish and they thought maybe there had been poaching of the species, so the rangers needed to increase surveillance of the reef as a result," says Steve Sibiti, Community Outreach Officer with WWF-Solomon Islands. These discussions led to a collective decision to intensify surveillance efforts on the reef to protect this vital species, as surgeonfish are particularly vulnerable to night-time spearfishing activities.

This monitoring activity and resulting management discussion is part of WWF-Solomon Islands' work to support communities to set up systematic data collection for both sea grapes and reef health. Community rangers and facilitators have been trained in and undertook new reef baseline surveys in 10 communities to support design, monitoring and implementation of their community-based fisheries management plan. For seagrape coverage and species, WWF conducted baselines

in four communities and six-month monitoring surveys in three communities in Western Province.

The aim is to ensure that communities have scientific data which they can combine with their local and traditional knowledge to make the best decisions for the sustainable management of their resources.

"Eighty percent of people in Solomon Islands live in rural areas and rely on local resources for their livelihoods, so community-led conservation is essential. Land and sea are owned by the people, not the government. Empowering communities in conservation aligns with their intrinsic connection to their resources," says Salome Topo, WWF Field Coordinator for Western Province.

### 145 COMMUNITY CONSERVATION ENTERPRISES

Livelihood components are also integrated into conservation activities, creating opportunities to develop alternative income streams which don't rely on damaging or overexploiting marine resources. Through mechanisms such as women's savings clubs, communities have been able to set up 145 community conservation enterprises which include enterprises such as piggery projects, eco-tourism and selling baked goods at the market to pay for children's school fees and cover other priority family needs.

As these communities work toward a vision of a healthy reef, increasing fish stocks, and thriving sea grape resources, their ultimate goal is to ensure that future generations can benefit from these resources – which is also the ultimate goal of the CCI.



**WWF and ABALOBI community-led data collection**



ABALOBI is a social enterprise that aims to develop thriving, equitable, resilient and sustainable SSF communities globally, driven by community-led data collection. By using ABALOBI technology to monitor their fish catch, implement traceability measures and improve their marketing, SSF communities can get fair market access, and contribute to transparent, accountable supply chains and broader food security.

**23 SSF COOPERATIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE USING THE APP**

ABALOBI and WWF have partnered for a decade to establish and then formally pilot some of ABALOBI's mobile-based apps with 23 SSF cooperatives in South Africa to date. The partnership with WWF has expanded and ABALOBI tools have been deployed and tested in 9 fishing communities across four Mediterranean countries (Italy, Albania, Greece and Croatia). The ABALOBI FISHER app, a catch-logging and expense management tool designed specifically for small-scale fishers, has been translated into Albanian, Greek, Croatian, and Italian for use in the respective countries. Over the course of the project, 23 fishers registered on the ABALOBI FISHER app, and collectively logged 980.83 kg of seafood across 96 trips.

*"The idea of ABALOBI was not about increasing fishing and selling more fish. The idea was rather to find a way to avoid having to sell solely to the fishmongers. If we manage to sell 90% of our fish online rather than through the old 'mandatory' channels, we can earn 50% more from what we catch."* Giuseppe Nania, local fisher, Italy.

**WATCH VIDEO HERE**

**Reaching for the stars to restore coral reefs**

The need to restore coral reefs is crystal clear, both for marine life and for coastal communities. But coral reef destruction leaves behind countless coral fragments, and these could act as a key to coral restoration.

In 2022, the EU-funded Ocean Governance Project united government agencies, CSOs, NGOs and tourism operators for a coral restoration project in Tun Mustapha Park, Malaysia. Coral fragments were carefully processed with a first-in-Malaysia approach named Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System (MARRS), which entails growing coral fragments on large frames coated in coral sand. Over time, they develop into larger reef structures. The frame, which assembles a hexagonal structure, is aptly named Reef Star.

**Approximately 2,052m<sup>2</sup> of degraded reef area were revitalized with 1,600 Reef Stars, restoring 22,200 coral fragments from more than 30 species.**

**9.9% INCREASE IN CORAL COVER**  
**20X INCREASE IN TOTAL FISH BIOMASS**

**Thanks to the Reef Stars, fish populations are rebounding. After six months in one of four coral restoration sites, there was a remarkable 9.9% increase in coral cover and 20x increase in total fish biomass.**

*"Coral restoration is not an easy job and it cannot be done by one person. I am very grateful to see many people coming together to put Reef Stars in my village's water. We will be working tirelessly to monitor and maintain these groups of coral frames for years to come."* Junaidi Awang Bulat, local guesthouse owner.



**Octopus, solar and ice**



Many coastal communities in the SWIO region are implementing temporary octopus closures to regulate fishing pressure on near-shore reef fisheries and improve community well-being. WWF is working with local organizations to provide technical, financial, and material assistance to communities in locations including Madagascar, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania and in the Coral Triangle, to establish octopus closures as a way to enhance household income, food security – and, ultimately, improve the protection and management of natural resources under the communities' watch.

In parallel, WWF is supporting the introduction of more efficient cooling systems, powered by solar energy, to help reduce post-harvest losses and improve the quality of the catch. This increases revenues for fishing communities and lessens negative environmental impacts.

Songosongo village in Tanzania is a champion and among the pioneers of the octopus closure scheme, and today serves as a demonstration site. In October 2023 when the reef was opened for octopus fishing, some 1,706 fishers and 95 fishing vessels were registered and permitted to participate for three consecutive days. More than 41 tonnes of octopus were harvested, representing a 60% increase from 2021's harvest.

**41 TONNES OF OCTOPUS, A 60% INCREASE FROM 2021**

*"The octopus was fresh despite holding them for three days before marketing. Availability of ice from the ice plant constructed by WWF has been very useful. In the past harvests, tonnes of octopus used to spoil and therefore we used to be under pressure to sell them at low prices to avoid much higher post-harvest loss."* Shamsia Mjenge, fisherwoman, Songosongo village, Tanzania.

**LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS**

**For scaling out locally-led conservation, community-to-community is a highly effective approach.**

Encouraging and equipping partnered communities to share with other communities successful coastal conservation and livelihood practices is an effective strategy for scaling community-led conservation. Community representatives in CCI sites in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Indonesia spoke of neighbouring communities replicating their conservation work, and of proactively visiting neighbouring villages to tell them about the changes they have been experiencing as a result of the conservation collaborations. They also described how, in the Solomon Islands and PNG, WWF projects have trained facilitators from the partnered communities to mobilize, train and accompany other members of the community, and to outreach to new communities.

**Tangible livelihood improvements are central to motivating coastal community members to engage in marine conservation.**

Interest from fishers and others was much higher once they felt there is a positive benefit to their own livelihoods (see #5, 5-point plan). Often it took several years before these benefits became apparent. One example is the eventual realization that periodic closure of fishing areas in Solomon Islands had led to more and bigger fish, and more quantity and diversity of saleable, edible seaweeds. Another is fishers in Croatia gaining the same level of income for reduced effort due to collective marketing to wholesale buyers.

**Community-owned data collection is motivating and practical to coastal communities.**

Helping communities to collect and use their own local fisheries data is the intent of #3 of the CCI's 5-point plan. An effective intervention cited in all regions was WWF staff teaching local fishers how to monitor the size, volume and type of fish they are catching, and how to make use of the data. Having a simple app for logging the data is useful, time-saving and intuitive – the CCI has worked on this with partners ABALOBI in the Mediterranean and James Cook University for the Pacific. Community representatives noted that monitoring this data helped them make informed decisions about how to optimize the reproduction and harvest size of marine resources – improving both conservation and income generation.



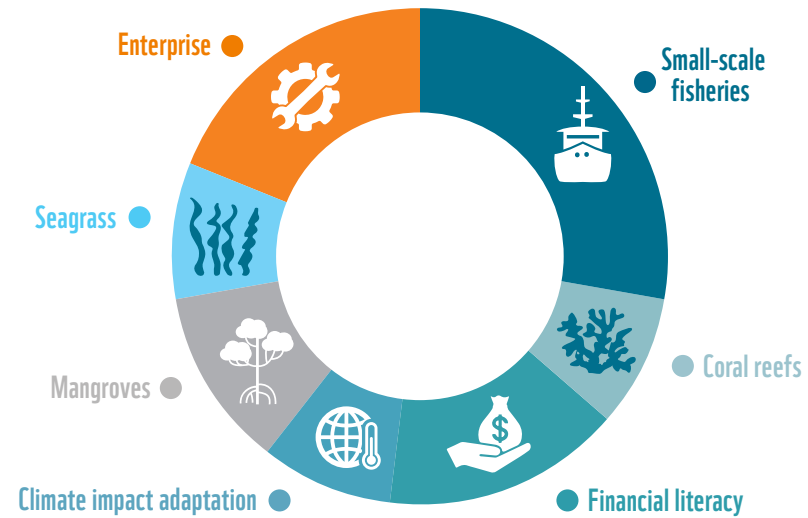
# SCALING DEEP

## BUILDING CAPACITY AT SCALE

### RESULTS

- 19,200 people have been involved in training across 100 sites, including **5,800 women** and **7,200 young people**.
- **90 learning hubs** - offering a variety of training and knowledge resources - have been established with communities and partners.

#### Thematic trainings conducted in 2022



Artisanal fishers attend a workshop on making products from fish leather, Peru © Renato G / WWF-Peru

A **community of practice** of some 200 WWF practitioners brings together field and community livelihoods officers, capacity development specialists, policy advocates, community enterprise facilitators, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and communications officers who are committed to facilitate communities' self-empowerment through capacity building, peer-to-peer exchanges, and knowledge sharing. The CCI Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy articulates the key topics and learning strategies to be applied to support the CCI, by working with partners in the knowledge space, unlocking common knowledge barriers, supporting the unfolding of learning, and assessing the effectiveness and impact of the Initiative.

One of the key strategies for developing capacity at scale is to establish or support local or regional **learning hubs**. These are virtual and/or physical facilities that provide opportunities for learners – community groups and networks, fisheries managers, local leaders and authorities, community facilitators, NGO practitioners – to share knowledge and experiences and build capacity through facilitated workshops, training or focused learning exchanges.

### WAKATOBI AND FORKANI

A diversity of corals grow on a healthy coral reef in Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia © Jason LSL / Shutterstock



Established in 1996, the Wakatobi National Park is the third-largest marine park in Indonesia, encompassing 1.4 million hectares and providing a habitat for 942 fish species and 750 types of corals. It includes the largest barrier reef in Indonesia, was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2012, and holds sacred areas for Indigenous communities.

In 2002, WWF and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) set up a joint programme to support the government in strengthening the management effectiveness of Wakatobi National Park. The programme also focused on alternative sources of income by implementing seaweed farming development projects and launching marine ecotourism activities, while also developing a conservation capacity building programme for local communities. This involved training, learning exchanges, coaching and mentoring supported by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF), which also helped to establish a marine conservation school on Wangi-Wangi island in Wakatobi.

One of many partners which has played an important role in capacity building at scale is Forum Kahedupa Toudani (FORKANI), an organization from Kaledupa Island that was set up in 2002 with a goal of supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities in managing natural resources sustainably, in harmony with their traditional beliefs. Together with WWF and TNC, FORKANI leveraged a wealth of local experience to design activities and interventions that were responsive to communities' needs in Wakatobi. As **Nusi Mursiati**, the programme manager at FORKANI, explains: "We put the Indigenous Peoples on the frontline of fisheries management." She and her team supported local wisdom with in-depth fisheries data, engaging villagers in participatory fisheries monitoring activities and decision-making processes, building stewardship and accountability for the sustainable management of resources and allowing local knowledge to drive development.

The movement doesn't stop there. FORKANI is one of the four Islands Forums (KOMANANGI in Wangi-Wangi, FORKANI in Kaledupa, KOMUNTO in Tomia, and FONEB in Binongko) that became platforms for information exchange, communication, and collaborative efforts across the archipelago, and serve as channels for community involvement, playing active roles in educating and assisting their coastal communities. They focus on enhancing organizational capabilities, methodological skills, and management expertise in various community development activities. The Island Forums catalyzed a social movement highlighting the importance of sustainable resource use, eco-friendly fishing practices, fisheries monitoring, conflict resolution, and village planning coordination.

WWF is scaling its positive influence in Wakatobi with a new Marine Centre of Excellence and a Community Learning & Innovation Hub, which are currently being developed in partnership with local community-based organizations. From planning through to implementation and co-management, local leadership has been instrumental to success in the Wakatobi MPA, along with the government's willingness to acknowledge and collaborate with these communities. Positive developments have been guided by the wisdom and experience of the Bajau people, a group whose connection to the sea offers hope for its future and a blueprint for collaborative marine conservation.

#### CREATION OF THE WAKATOBI CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

**Wakatobi MPA Centre of Excellence** has been supported by the Ministry for Marine Affairs, and has already been replicated in the Alor MPA in East Nusa Tenggara Province. There is a willingness to further scale this model out, and develop more coastal community-based learning centres throughout Indonesia and beyond.





## Giving new life to ghost gear



Weaving with ghost gears on handcrafted lap loom © Shirin Kaur / WWF-India

Abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear – “ghost gear” – is an increasingly serious threat to marine ecosystems. It’s a very harmful form of marine pollution, entangling, injuring and killing a wide variety of sea creatures – including fish and larger predators like sea turtles, sharks and marine mammals – and damaging fragile habitats. What’s more, ghost gear can last for centuries: the plastics in the nets and the ropes are non-degradable, and while they break down into smaller and smaller microplastic particles these can nevertheless persist in the environment for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Solving the problem globally will take concerted international action – but in the meantime WWF-India, supported by Plum Goodness, has been working creatively to address it on a local level for a positive social and environmental impact, engaging with communities to upcycle ghost nets and make products using skilled handicraft techniques.

### 75 WOMEN ABLE TO WEAVE WITH GHOST GEARS

Three 15-day workshops – focusing on lap-loom weaving for repurposing the ghost gear – were held in Lakshadweep, Rameshwaram and Poombuhar, India, involving more than 75 women. They honed skills in design principles and planning, weaving techniques, and brand and product development, to create items for sale including wall hangings, table mats and coasters.

Now the participants are inspired and motivated to pass on the skills they’ve developed to other women in their communities, establishing their new craft as a viable alternative livelihood. WWF is also encouraging the return of ghost gear by fishers in initiatives spread along the coast and islands, including Lakshadweep, Goa, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

## LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

**National and regional learning hubs accelerate change via the credibility of peer-to-peer learning exchanges, while elevating Indigenous and traditional conservation practices.**

Significant progress has been achieved through learning hubs, resulting in greater solidarity, trust, improved livelihoods, community-owned data for resource management, enhanced women’s participation, and the emergence of sustainable business ventures.

**In regions and countries with diverse actors in marine conservation, engaging as a contributor to multi-partner learning networks is essential.**

In locations with few marine conservation actors, WWF may be the only entity with the knowledge and ability to mobilize centres of learning. In Indonesia, WWF convened community conservation group managers as well as local learning institutions and provincial fisheries and national parks authorities to form a localized learning hub. In PNG and Solomon Islands community facilitators in all coastal communities have been brought together into a form of learning hub, where they gather monthly for input from WWF and peer-to-peer cross-learning.

**Accompanying conservation and livelihoods initiatives with financial literacy and savings programmes increases women’s participation, increases the sustainability of business ventures, evens out income disruptions due to periodic harvest closures, and benefits household incomes.**

The evaluation found evidence of projects’ incorporation of financial literacy in the Coral Triangle and Pacific regional seascapes, which included mobilizing collective village savings and loans groups. In these areas, men often go out to sea to catch the fish, but it tends to be the women of their households who sell the fish and manage the resultant funds. These initiatives increased household incomes and created tangible opportunities for women to be active contributors to the projects.

**Supporting existing groups to gain formal registration and governance capacity helps them access new opportunities and legitimacy.**



Gaining legal recognition for MPAs or community fisher and conservation groups is an important step in securing their co-management rights (5-point plan #1) and in assisting them to create good governance procedures (5-point plan #2). This is a common form of support provided by the CCI – although it’s important to note that it must be adapted to suit varying local marine conservation contexts.




# SECTION 3

## 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

The second phase of the CCI is guided by three scaling objectives leading to defined, ambitious and achievable strategic interventions. By 2026, we aim for the CCI to safeguard and conserve at least 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of essential coastal and marine ecosystems vital to the food security and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable individuals.

OBJECTIVE 1	 <b>SCALING UP</b>
<b>Strategic interventions</b>	
<p><b>By 2026, strengthen three global coalitions fostering agency for Indigenous Peoples, local communities and civil society and, at national level, ensure at least five national policies recognize the role and rights of these groups in the management of coastal and marine resources, incorporate a human-rights-based approach, and promote equitable access to resources and finance in priority regions.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen global coalitions like the Small-Scale Fisheries Hub, Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, and Rise Up for the Oceans to promote the representation of coastal communities in relevant policy frameworks, including GBF &amp; 30x30, UNFSS, UNFCCC, and FAO SSF Guidelines.</li> <li>Coordinate advocacy efforts to amplify local voices at major international UN events, such as UNFSS, UNFCCC COP, COFI, SSF Summits, UN Ocean Conference 2025, IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, IUCN World Park Congress 2025, and International Marine Protected Areas Congress 2026.</li> <li>Facilitate community and civil society empowerment and enablement through strengthening networks like SWIOTUNA, ICCA Consortium, RIPAPE, Oceania First Voices, LMMMA Network, and Friends of SSF.</li> <li>Shift national regulations that recognize collaborative governance, including by supporting processes for the identification of OECMs. Examples include one National Decree in EU countries and one fleet-level agreement in non-EU countries in the Mediterranean. In the Coral Triangle, recognize ICCAs sites as OECMs. In SWIO, three national level policy changes to recognize 200 LMMAs as OECMs.</li> <li>Establish at least 10 investment-ready community enterprises focused on nature-based solutions (NbS), with a minimum of 50% ownership by women and youth.</li> <li>Unlock micro-finance for 50,000 people and secure US\$30 million for NbS and localization of finance.</li> </ul>
OBJECTIVE 2	 <b>SCALING OUT</b>
<b>Strategic interventions</b>	
<p><b>By 2026, implement the 5-point plan in a minimum of 40 new sites, introducing novel or replicating and adapting proven community-led conservation solutions...</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish effective self- or co-management governance which includes an operational framework, fair decision-making mechanisms, inclusive benefit-sharing arrangements for marginalized groups, and a mechanism to address human rights violations.</li> </ul>

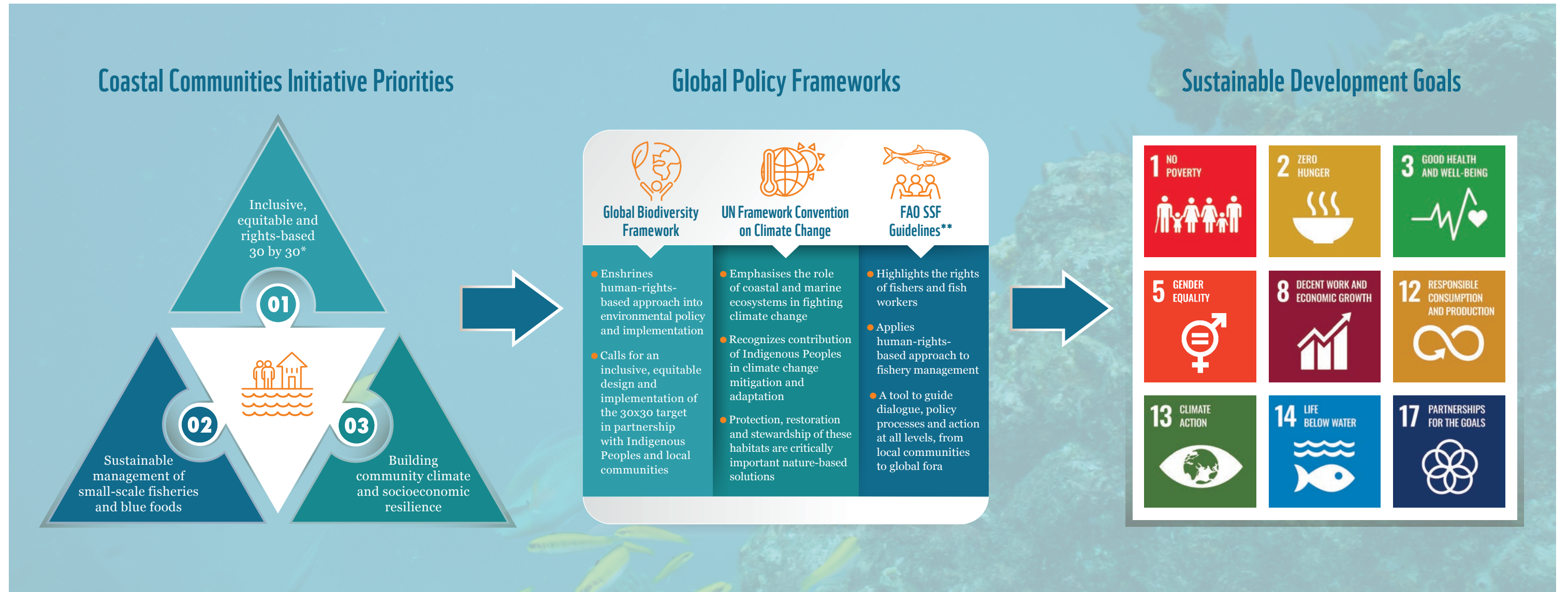
<p><b>...This includes enhancing governance models for equitable decision-making and benefit sharing, sustainable resource management, conservation and restoration, and addressing socioeconomic well-being and resilience to effectively manage and conserve 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of critical coastal habitats (baseline 2019: 62 sites).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operationalize self- or co-management with community-led monitoring, local knowledge application, low-cost data collection, data-based harvest control rules, and the elimination of destructive fishing methods, especially those impacting endangered species.</li> <li>Reduce overexploitation trends in at least 25 commercially valuable small-scale coastal fish stocks in at least 30 sites within priority regions. Reduce the exploitation of endangered species in at least four countries across priority regions.</li> <li>Strengthen global partnerships to collaborate on human rights and socioeconomic development by supporting diversified livelihoods, gender empowerment, business skills development, financial literacy, disaster risk reduction, and access to finance.</li> <li>Operationalization of a human-rights-based approach including capacity building efforts, mechanisms to address human rights violations, and ensuring the protection of ocean defenders.</li> </ul>
OBJECTIVE 3	 <b>SCALING DEEP</b>
<b>Strategic interventions</b>	
<p><b>By 2026, build coastal community capacity at scale and facilitate the widespread adoption of community-led conservation solutions. Achieve this through large-scale learning initiatives, peer-to-peer sharing, and the establishment of nine learning hubs aimed at training a minimum of 150,000 individuals. Simultaneously, enhance the capacity of WWF and its partners in adopting a human-rights-based approach and fostering inclusive conservation practices.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate community self-empowerment through establishment of capacity-building networks and community learning hubs at local, national, regional and international scales.</li> <li>In 29 countries, train coastal communities in sustainable fisheries management, community-based natural resource and species management, habitat protection and restoration, financial literacy, business development, gender empowerment and social inclusion, and to use new technologies, including digital technology for monitoring and compliance.</li> <li>Foster the development of 50+ new community facilitators, strengthening the role of women and youth leaders.</li> <li>Compile evidence on the effectiveness, opportunities and challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and local communities in protecting marine environments, supporting robust advocacy actions at national, regional, and global levels.</li> <li>Facilitate cross-country and cross-regional collaboration and learning through knowledge exchanges.</li> <li>Strengthen or establish accountability and tracking mechanisms for WWF's regional and country-level work with coastal communities through the CCI MEL framework. Build capacity to support improved monitoring of fisheries outcomes, food security, and climate resilience of communities.</li> </ul>

THE FULL 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN IS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE [WWW.COASTALCOMMUNITYLEDCONSERVATION.ORG](http://WWW.COASTALCOMMUNITYLEDCONSERVATION.ORG)



# A TIMELY INITIATIVE – DELIVERING ON GLOBAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS

From the local to the global spheres the CCI aligns with and directly contributes to key international frameworks, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



\*Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework contains the commitment to conserve at least 30% of our ocean by 2030.

\*\*FAO SSF Guidelines - Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication



# JOIN US:

Maximizing the global reach and impact of the Coastal Communities Initiative depends on its continued growth. If you're a coastal community leader, marine conservation practitioner, government official or development funder, then you can play a part in driving community-led conservation forward – and we can help you do it. To find out more, please get in touch.



Over and under the sea near the shore, Huahine island, Pacific ocean, French Polynesia © Shutterstock / Damsea / WWF



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Website <https://coastalcommunityledconservation.org/>  
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