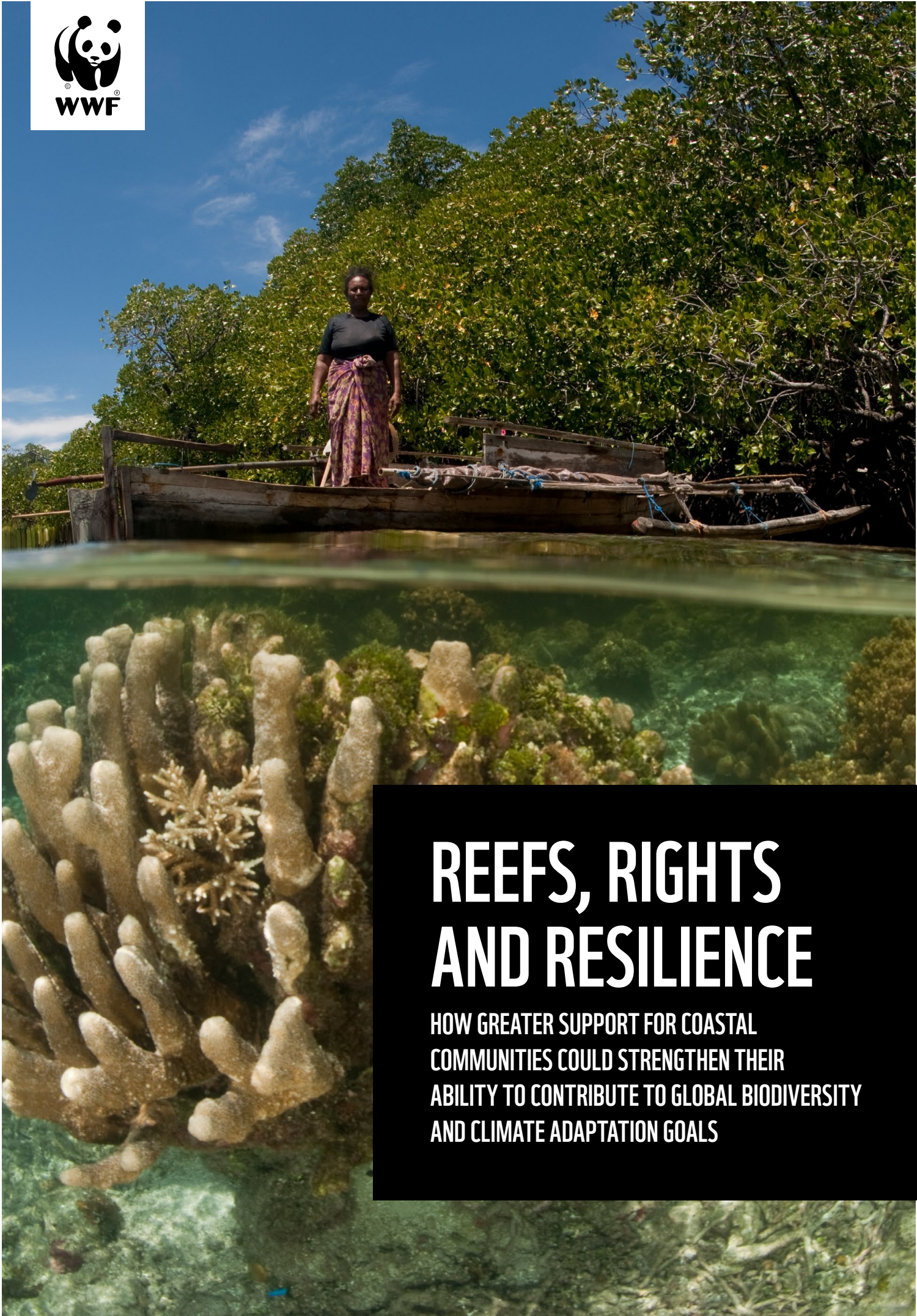
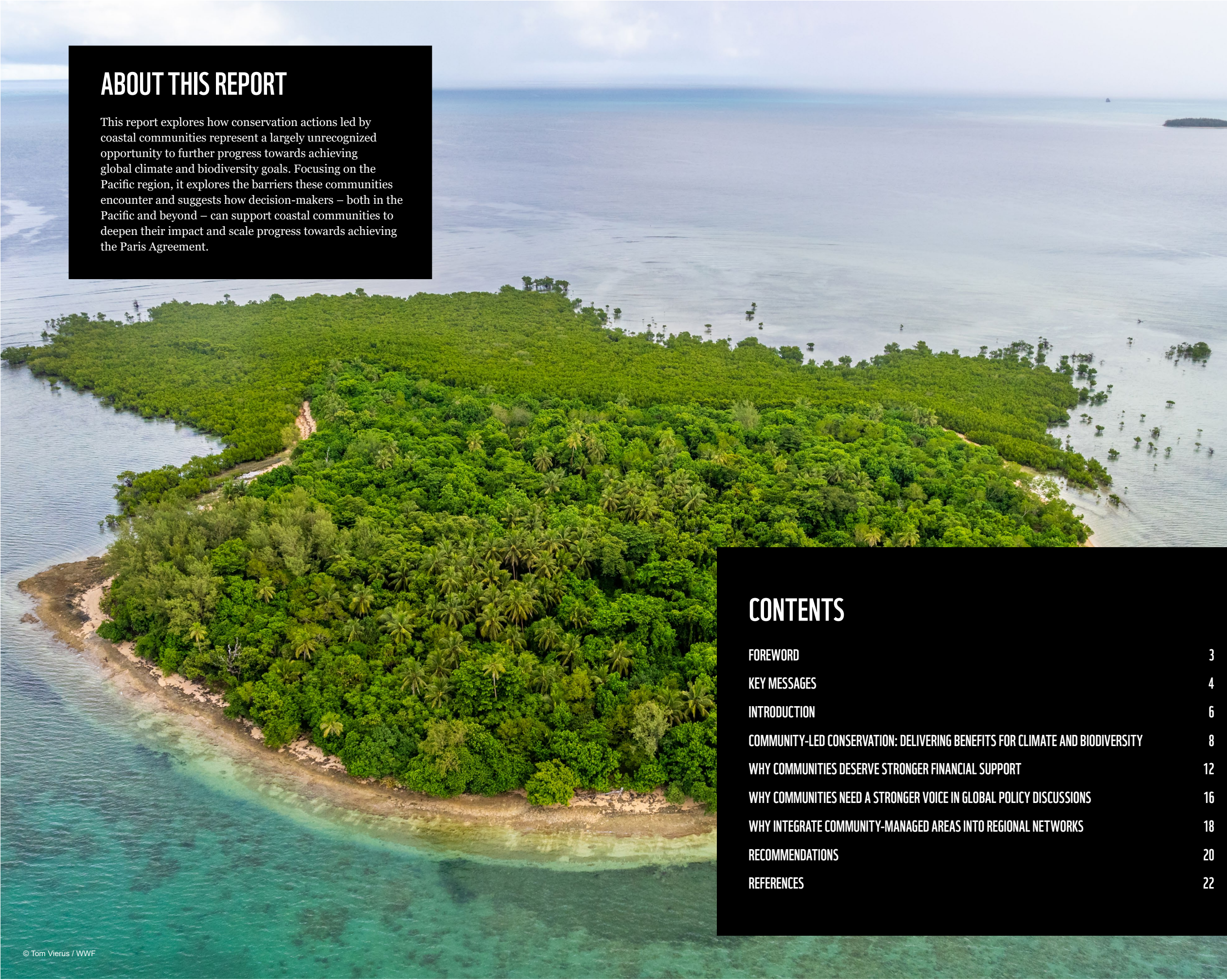


A composite image showing a woman standing on a wooden boat in a mangrove forest. The image is split horizontally: the top half shows the woman and the lush green mangrove trees under a blue sky, while the bottom half shows an underwater view of a coral reef with various types of coral. A black text box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

REEFS, RIGHTS AND RESILIENCE

HOW GREATER SUPPORT FOR COASTAL
COMMUNITIES COULD STRENGTHEN THEIR
ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY
AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION GOALS



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores how conservation actions led by coastal communities represent a largely unrecognized opportunity to further progress towards achieving global climate and biodiversity goals. Focusing on the Pacific region, it explores the barriers these communities encounter and suggests how decision-makers – both in the Pacific and beyond – can support coastal communities to deepen their impact and scale progress towards achieving the Paris Agreement.

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FOREWORD

I come from the District of Nacula in the Yasawa Islands of Fiji, where the ocean is part of who we are. It provides food, supports our families, connects us to our culture and has been cared for by our people for generations.



LAVENIA NAIVALU
FIRST WOMAN *MATA NI TIKINA*
(DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE) FOR THE
NACULA DISTRICT IN FIJI AND OCEANIA
FIRST VOICES REPRESENTATIVE

Across the Pacific, communities are already protecting reefs, mangroves, fisheries and marine life using traditional knowledge, cultural values, customary practices and local leadership. This work supports livelihoods, strengthens food security, helps restore and recover nature, and builds resilience to climate change. Communities are not simply beneficiaries of conservation but are also leaders in protecting the natural systems that sustain life.

Too often, decisions about our ocean and our future are made without us. Community leaders, women and young

people still lack meaningful opportunities to shape national and international policies, while many communities struggle to access the long-term funding and support needed to care for our oceans and islands.

This must change. Communities must be recognized as leaders and equal partners. Our rights, knowledge, values, practices and decision-making systems must be respected. Funding must respond to community priorities, and conservation solutions must be locally led, locally relevant, locally owned and culturally appropriate. Governments and partners must listen to community voices when developing climate, biodiversity and ocean policies.

Our local conservation areas are part of a much larger ocean. Whales, turtles, sharks, tuna and other marine species move across many waters, including those we protect. By connecting community-managed areas with wider marine conservation networks and blue corridors, we can better protect the ocean and the life within it.

This report carries a simple message: when communities are trusted, supported and included from the beginning, we can achieve stronger and more lasting results for people, nature and climate.

As a representative of Oceania First Voices, I call on governments, funders, conservation organizations and development partners to work alongside our communities, listen to our voices, respect our rights and knowledge, support women and young people to lead, and provide funding that communities can access and manage.

The future of the Pacific Ocean is connected to the future of our communities. By working together, we can restore and protect our reefs, strengthen livelihoods, recover ocean health, and pass on a thriving natural heritage to our children and future generations.



KEY MESSAGES

Coastal communities are indispensable partners in delivering climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable ocean management.

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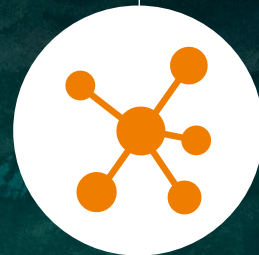
Community-led conservation strengthens ecosystems, livelihoods and food security, while helping coastal communities adapt to climate change.

Greater recognition, inclusion and financing are needed to enable communities to sustain and scale their stewardship efforts.

3



4



5



Connecting community-led conservation into larger regional networks can simultaneously help deliver more resilient ecosystems; support implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's Target 3 (the 30x30 target) and the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (High Seas Treaty); and advance climate and biodiversity goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The global community can support coastal communities in their stewardship role in the following ways:

- 1. Advance implementation of community-led 30x30 as a solution to deliver both climate adaptation and biodiversity goals.** This includes recognizing locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) that meet other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) criteria as formal OECMs, where communities provide free, prior and informed consent for this.
- 2. Scale up finance for community-led conservation.** Coastal communities play a pivotal role in securing climate resilience, protecting biodiversity and building sustainable blue economies.
- 3. Ensure connectivity is a key principle in implementing the 30x30 target** to connect what is working into one vast, functioning system.

INTRODUCTION



The year 2026 will likely be remembered as the year of the “Super El Niño”, with the naturally occurring El Niño weather pattern driven to new extremes by record-breaking ocean surface temperatures¹ alongside already-warming seas across the Pacific.

For the 14 million coastal residents² who depend on Pacific coral reefs and other marine ecosystems for food, coastal protection and livelihoods, climate change is already reshaping daily life.

Such coastal communities – which include Indigenous Peoples and local resource rights holders – are the de facto stewards of coastal ecosystems, leaders in nature-based approaches that strengthen local ecosystems while supporting climate resilience and biodiversity outcomes.³ Yet these communities often remain under-resourced and insufficiently recognized in decision-making processes at the national, regional and global levels. This lack of support is undermining efforts to ensure that the benefits of ocean conservation, sustainable fisheries and blue economy development are shared equitably among those who depend most directly on ocean-related resources.

On top of this, ocean governance remains fragmented, while ecosystems are connected. At the global level, this fragmentation takes the form of institutional division between climate action and biodiversity action. At the regional level, it takes the form of conservation, finance and governance being organized around individual projects or jurisdictions. As a result, local stewardship of our world’s marine ecosystems tends to rely on short-term grant funding rather than sustained, predictable investment.⁴ What is needed is governance that crosses boundaries, reflecting the same ocean currents that connect species, ecosystems and climate impacts.

Closing these gaps requires recognizing, resourcing and strengthening the leadership roles coastal communities already play in ocean stewardship. This means acknowledging and supporting the contribution that community-led ocean conservation and sustainable ocean management can make towards achieving both the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) objectives, including Target 3 (the 30x30 target), and the adaptation, resilience and mitigation goals of the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It also means scaling successful initiatives into connected networks that reflect ecological realities and strengthen collective resilience.

The challenge is no longer identifying what works. It is creating the enabling policy, financing and governance conditions needed to deliver these solutions at the scale, speed and permanence needed to address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

STATUS UPDATE: OUR OCEANS IN 2026

The ocean has already absorbed about 90% of the excess heat generated by global warming⁵ and more than a quarter of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities.⁶ Its capacity to regulate our climate is coming under increasing strain. As warming intensifies, so too does the risk of crossing critical climate tipping points that could trigger cascading, potentially irreversible impacts across ecosystems, economies and societies.

Coral reefs have the unfortunate distinction of being the first major Earth system confirmed to have passed a global climate threshold beyond which widespread degradation can no longer be fully avoided. Yet the latest science also offers reason for hope. Research has identified climate-resilient reefs that are more likely to persist and recover under future

warming scenarios. Prioritizing the protection of these reefs offers one of the best opportunities to sustain reef ecosystems into the future.

Protecting these climate refuge reefs is critical not only for coral conservation but also for the many fish species that depend on reef ecosystems for spawning, feeding and nursery habitats. By providing these fish species with crucial habitat at various life stages, corals support global food security and the livelihoods of millions of people. However, only 28% of the climate-resilient reefs identified worldwide are currently located within marine protected and conserved areas (MPCAs), and many of these are failing to deliver the level of protection needed. More needs to be done to scale up their protection and conservation.⁷

JOIN THE CLIMATE-RESILIENT CORAL REEFS COMMITMENT

Climate-resilient coral reefs are better able to survive, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of climate change – especially rising ocean temperatures and marine heatwaves. These reefs often show lower levels of bleaching and mortality during extreme weather events, recover more quickly afterwards, or are located in areas where conditions naturally protect them from the worst impacts of climate change.

We encourage governments with coral reef ecosystems to join the **Climate-Resilient Coral Reefs Commitment**, a global pledge to protect these coral reefs. As of August 2026, 20 governments – including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – have signed the Commitment, pledging to include climate-resilient reefs in their national biodiversity and climate plans. Within the Pacific region, Fiji has taken concrete steps towards upholding its commitment by developing a draft National Action Plan for Coral Reef Conservation through a collaborative process.

The **Climate-Resilient Coral Reefs Commitment** aims to get 31 governments, representing more than 80% of the world’s reefs, to sign up by the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Find out more at coralcommitment.com/protect-the-reef

The Climate-Resilient Coral Reefs Commitment and Our Reefs, Our Future campaign (ourreefsourfuture.org) bring together the Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF, The Nature Conservancy, governments, communities, scientists, funders and conservation partners to drive urgent action for resilient coral reefs.

COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION: DELIVERING BENEFITS FOR CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY

Healthy oceans are essential for climate stability. Protecting and restoring them are inseparable from delivering the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Ocean-based actions can only succeed alongside rapid, deep and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reductions within a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, consistent with the outcomes of the first global stocktake. Within this broader transition, ocean-based mitigation actions that can contribute to emissions reductions include:

- Reducing emissions from shipping and other maritime sectors
- Accelerating the transition to socio-environmentally responsible offshore renewable energy
- Protecting and restoring blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, sea grasses and salt marshes.

When accompanied by resilience and adaptation actions such as strengthening the conservation of climate-resilient coral reefs and supporting sustainable fisheries and blue food systems, these measures can collectively deliver climate, biodiversity and sustainable development benefits while enhancing the resilience of coastal communities and marine ecosystems.

THE BENEFITS OF MARINE PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

At sea, as on land, actions that deliver climate benefits often also generate positive outcomes for ocean biodiversity.⁸ Likewise, measures that protect and restore marine biodiversity frequently contribute to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. MPCAs – which encompass both marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) (see “Key definitions”) – are an example of a measure that delivers multiple benefits for both climate and biodiversity. Healthy, well-managed MPCAs support productive fisheries,⁹ protect coastlines from increasingly extreme weather events¹⁰ and strengthen the resilience of ecosystems that coastal communities depend on for food security,¹¹ livelihoods and economic opportunities.

These benefits are not limited to MPCAs and can spill over, extending beyond the boundaries of the area that is protected or conserved.¹² In some cases, mangroves, sea grasses and other blue carbon ecosystems can provide important climate mitigation benefits. However, for many coastal communities, the most immediate value of marine conservation lies in its contributions to resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change.

Despite these interrelated benefits, climate and ocean biodiversity remain

institutionally divided in the policy space. Although 78% of Nationally Determined Contributions reference the ocean, marine conservation is still largely treated as a biodiversity issue rather than being recognized as a core climate solution – a divide that is also reflected in climate finance.

In the Pacific, national ambitions are helping to challenge this disconnect, demonstrating a more integrated understanding of the links between oceans, climate and biodiversity. Indeed, through their Nationally Determined Contributions, Pacific nations have committed to the management, restoration, conservation and large-scale protection of marine ecosystems, with quantifiable targets covering more than 3.2 million square kilometres of ocean. This momentum is encouraging, but greater investment and implementation support are needed to turn ambition into action at scale.



Measures that protect and restore marine biodiversity frequently contribute to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Marine protected area (MPA)

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) defines an MPA as “a clearly defined geographical space recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.¹³

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines an OECM as “a geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values”. The OECM framework recognizes the contribution that areas outside traditional MPAs make to delivering biodiversity conservation and, in so doing, contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework’s 30x30 target.¹⁴

Locally managed marine areas (LMMA)

An LMMA is “an area of nearshore waters and coastal resources that is largely or wholly managed at a local level by the coastal communities, land-owning groups, partner organizations, and/or collaborative government representatives who reside or are based in the immediate area”.¹⁵ LMMAs go by many names, including beach management units, community conservation areas and voluntary marine conservation areas.

WHAT COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION HAS ACHIEVED IN THE PACIFIC

Coastal communities across the Pacific are taking the lead in conservation efforts that contribute meaningfully to broader biodiversity and climate goals. In some cases, these efforts are undertaken within formally designated MPAs, enabling these areas to achieve stronger conservation outcomes. The Qoliqoli Cokovata RAMSAR site in Fiji’s Macuata province is one such MPA. Formally declared an MPA in 2018, the day-to-day management of this important site is led by local leaders and their communities, who have implemented controlled fishing zones within the *qoliqoli* (community-run fishing area) to sustain fish populations and strengthen food security. Qoliqoli Cokovata is one of 33 *qoliqoli* located across Fiji’s Great Sea Reef.¹⁶

In other cases, communities establish locally managed marine areas (LMMAs), where activities such as fishing and harvesting food from intertidal zones are restricted, either permanently or temporarily,

to allow ecosystems to recover and thereby support resilience. Fiji’s Namena Marine Reserve and Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park are examples of successful LMMAs (see “Coastal Communities: Powering Ocean Resilience”).

Where they meet the relevant criteria, LMMAs may be formally recognized as OECMs under the GBF. Such recognition, where communities choose it, can acknowledge community stewardship and contribute to national 30x30 commitments.



COASTAL COMMUNITIES: CONSERVING OCEAN RESILIENCE

Namena Marine Reserve and Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park are two marine conservation areas in Fiji that demonstrate the significant benefits that can be achieved when communities take the lead in conservation.

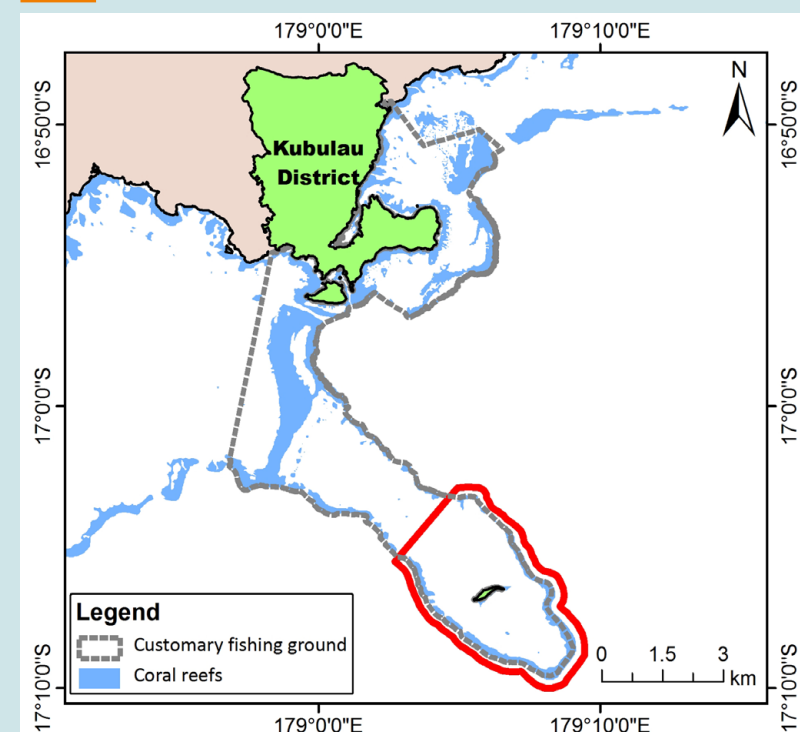
Namena Marine Reserve is an 88-square-kilometre (km²) oceanic area surrounding the uninhabited island of Namena in Fiji (see Map 1). In 1997, traditional leaders from 10 villages in the Kubulau district, 14 kilometres (km) to the north of the reserve, drew on customary governance processes to declare a *tabu* – a decree placing a permanent ban on fishing – around Namena Island to address overfishing.

They were supported in this by local tourism operators and two non-government organizations (NGOs), the Wildlife Conservation Society and Coral Reef Alliance, who pledged to provide financial and practical support for patrolling, monitoring and management activities. The ecotourism operator based on Namena at the time was a particularly dedicated protector of seabirds and turtle nesting sites on the island. In return for their contributions, this and other tourism operators received permission to dive on the reefs – and were

rewarded by healthy ecosystems that attracted ecotourists to the area.

Off Viti Levu, Fiji's largest island, is Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park. Covering 110 km² of ocean, this park encompasses Vatu-i-Ra, a small, uninhabited, reef-encircled island that is internationally recognized as an important bird and biodiversity area (see Map 2). In 2012, 28 villages in Nakorotubu district declared the marine park a *tabu* area. With the Wildlife Conservation Society's support, a management plan was then co-developed with coastal communities, tourism operators, provincial authorities and NGOs, and a funding model was adopted that sees visitors to the park make voluntary contributions to a trust to support the park's day-to-day management and to pay for tertiary education for members of Nakorotubu's Naqiloqilo clan, which has traditional ownership over Vatu-i-Ra Island.

MAP 1: NAMENA MARINE RESERVE

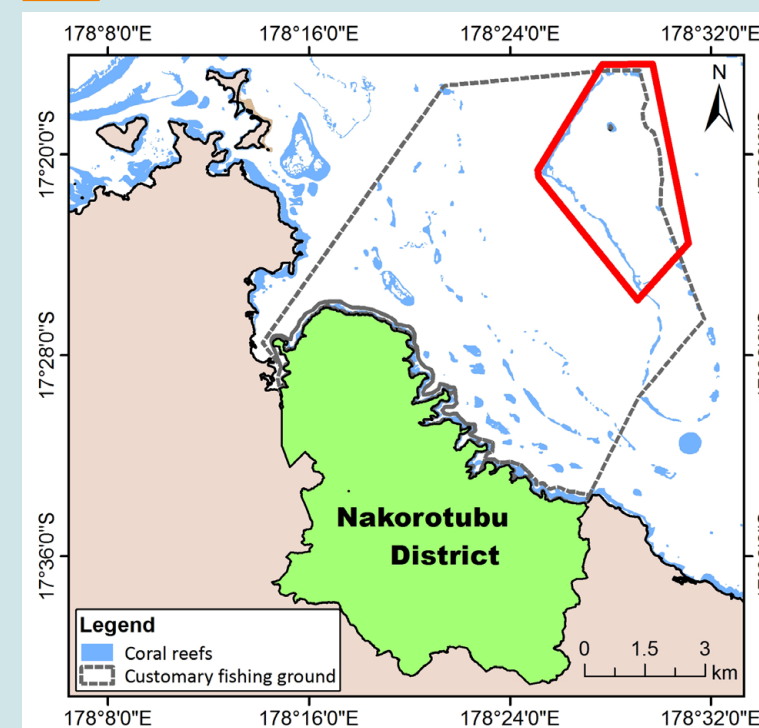


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The high ecological integrity of the ecosystems in Namena Marine Reserve and Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park allowed them to better recover from the cyclone shock.

LEFT: Namena Marine Reserve (outlined in red) is located 14 km south of Kabalu district and covers 88 km² around the uninhabited Namena Island.

MAP 2: VATU-I-RA CONSERVATION PARK



© WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

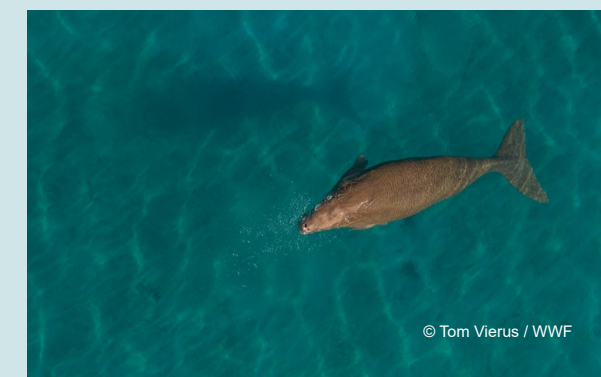
For several years, the locally led governance structures, financial models and monitoring systems of these two locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) were successful in protecting the ocean against various threats, including unsustainable and unauthorized fishing practices. Ecosystems within the *tabu* areas flourished, with positive spillover effects for fisheries beyond the parks' borders.

Then, in February 2016, Cyclone Winston struck. It would go on to become the most intense cyclone on record in Fiji, with sustained winds of up to 300 kilometres per hour. Namena Marine Reserve and Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park were not spared, with 4-metre waves tearing up coral reefs and crashing down on the small islands' coastlines. Vatu-i-Ra was especially hard hit. Over the course of two days, about 63% of hard coral cover was lost across both areas. Storm damage forced the tour operator on Namena Island to close its doors.

Cyclone Winston also decimated fish biomass. Data from 2016 found that Cyclone Winston negatively affected all groups of fish, with coral-eating fish in the Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park – now deprived of their primary food source – being the most impacted, showing a 95% decline in biomass against a 2014 baseline.

No amount of marine management could have prevented the region from being severely damaged by a cyclone with the magnitude of Winston.

LEFT: Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park (outlined in red) is located 15 km northeast of Fiji's Nakorotubu district.



© Tom Vierus / WWF

But healthier, well-managed ecosystems can be better placed to recover from such shocks. By 2020, hard coral cover – though still less than pre-cyclone levels – had increased by between 2% and 6.5% year on year, and the composition of coral communities had returned to pre-cyclone levels. The biomass of most fish groups had also recovered by 2018.

The experience of Namena and Vatu-i-Ra shows how community-led marine conservation can help conserve biodiversity and strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change. While management was not one of the biggest drivers of outcomes, these LMMAs protect and conserve high-integrity reefs that were able to recover well from extreme weather. By putting communities at the centre of conservation, these models offer a practical pathway for delivering the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's 30x30 ambitions.

WHY COMMUNITIES DESERVE STRONGER FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Coastal communities face an increasingly uncertain future. Despite playing a critical stewardship role in managing, restoring and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems, and delivering a range of benefits for both climate resilience and biodiversity conservation, they receive only a fraction of the funding needed to sustain and scale their efforts.

Across the Pacific, communities are already making substantial contributions to conservation and sustainable resource management. Yet they face escalating pressures from climate change, biodiversity loss and other challenges such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the emerging threat of deep-sea mining. In some areas, limited community livelihood opportunities can increase pressure on natural resources, undermining both community resilience and ecosystem health. Together, these challenges create significant environmental,

social and economic risks for Pacific island nations and their communities.

These challenges are compounded by global conservation finance gaps, creating significant barriers for coastal communities seeking to access affordable finance to support more sustainable and resilient livelihood options. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) – especially those led by women and Indigenous Peoples – often struggle to access affordable debt because of their higher risk profile, lower- or longer-return profiles, and a mismatch between

the size of the loans they require and what financiers are willing to provide.¹⁷ Sustainable blue MSMEs are doubly disadvantaged because they operate in a relatively new sector with uncertain revenue profiles and a broad lack of policies and enabling conditions to support financing and funding solutions.

To help communities undertake their own sustainable development transition and fulfil globally important stewardship roles, finance from all sources, including climate and biodiversity finance, needs to be scaled up and distributed more equitably.



KEY FINANCING AND FUNDING SOLUTIONS FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

In terms of immediate financing needs, accessible and affordable microfinance plays a crucial role for coastal communities. While local banks are potential sources of microfinance, they may require some capacity-building to encourage them to finance lesser-known sustainable blue economy options. At the LMMA level, village loan schemes are well established across the Pacific region, including in the Solomon Islands where WWF supported their introduction. If governed well, such schemes offer excellent means for communities to support their own needs.

Over the long term, coastal communities should be supported to transition towards more resilient and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Business incubators and blue venture

builders can play a role in this, helping to bridge the finance gap by offering tailored business training to coastal communities in order to develop a strong pipeline of investible enterprises that are also sustainable, inclusive and more attractive to private sector financiers. Such initiatives can also provide matchmaking support to link community enterprises with appropriate forms of finance and establish special-purpose vehicles that aggregate products from, and services to, community enterprises. From a conservation perspective, by supporting alternative livelihoods, these financing mechanisms can reduce fishing pressure and support improved biodiversity outcomes.

Several sectors across the Pacific region hold promise for sustainable

blue enterprise pipeline development and product/service aggregation. Sea grape production and value addition into beauty products, for example, are viable sustainable economic activities already being undertaken by women-led community enterprises in the Solomon Islands. In addition, communities in Fiji are sustainably harvesting *bêche de mer* (sea cucumbers), a high-value product with a strong market in Asia. The Global Fund for Coral Reefs – a global blended finance vehicle that aims to support reef-positive enterprises with technical assistance, market linkages and improved access to finance for MSMEs that depend on and protect healthy reefs – is expected to play a key role in supporting the future development of such blue enterprises across the Pacific.



GENERATING CONSERVATION FUNDING

Ocean funds and conservation trust funds are potential funding mechanisms for community-led 30x30 actions. The Pacific Resilience Facility¹⁸ is one such fund. The first Pacific-led, -owned and -managed grant-financing vehicle for community climate and disaster resilience, the Pacific Resilience Facility will provide rapid, debt-free grants for local adaptation, disaster preparedness and clean energy projects. With US\$172 million out of a targeted US\$500 million in funds already secured, this vehicle is operational and held its first council meeting in June 2026.



The Pacific Resilience Facility will provide rapid, debt-free grants for local adaptation, disaster preparedness and clean energy projects.



RISK FINANCING

Managing climate and environmental risks requires a combination of financing instruments. Upfront investment is needed to build ecosystem resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate-related impacts and extreme weather events. Risk-transfer mechanisms, including insurance solutions, can complement these investments by helping communities, governments and investors recover more quickly from extreme events and by increasing confidence in investments that depend on healthy marine ecosystems (see “Parametric Insurance for Coral Reefs”).

There is no silver bullet to closing the finance gap for coastal communities. However, stronger, more accessible and more equitable financial support is essential if they are to sustain their stewardship of marine ecosystems and continue contributing to global climate and biodiversity goals, including the 30x30 ambition.

DEEP DIVE

PARAMETRIC INSURANCE FOR CORAL REEFS

In 2025, coral reefs became the first major Earth system confirmed to have crossed a climate tipping point.¹⁹ Widespread coral reef loss is now considered inevitable. However, there is hope: small refuges of climate-resilient coral may still survive. Fiji’s Great Sea Reef, home to more than 75% of the world’s coral species,²⁰ has been identified as one such “climate refuge reef”. Protecting this reef and others like it is essential (see our call to join the Climate-Resilient Coral Reefs Commitment on page 7).

But what can countries do when disaster strikes and causes extensive damage, despite their best efforts to improve resilience?

When this happens, parametric insurance can avoid the lengthy loss assessments associated with indemnity insurance by providing rapid, predefined payments after extremely damaging weather-related events. It is automatically triggered by a pre-agreed, measurable event parameter, such as wind speed or sea surface temperature, using objective and independently verifiable data. As such, parametric insurance has several important benefits, including providing transparency and predictability for all stakeholders and a much-needed source of income after an extreme weather event.

Parametric insurance is most appropriate for large-scale natural hazards that are low in frequency, high in impact, and where a quick response can help coral reefs to recover more effectively. For example, after a cyclone, corals can break off and continue damaging the remaining reef unless rubble is swiftly removed and action is taken to restore the reefs. This requires a clear post-event plan of action, the success of which depends on suitable equipment, resources and local capacities being readily in place to undertake restoration activities. Parametric insurance can cover the costs associated with these post-event activities.

An insurance policy should clearly state the parameters for triggering a payout and who will receive the funds. Its structuring should also reduce the possibility of the claim being less or more than the actual costs of repairing damage (basis risk). Most importantly, a risk owner or policyholder who will take out the policy and pay the premium should be identified. This party could be a government department, a member of the private sector, a community, a non-government organization or a collaboration of these parties. The insurance provider will calculate the premium based on the probability, frequency and severity of the hazard, and the level of certainty that the hazard can cause quantifiable loss to an insured asset or service. The policyholder must be able to afford these premiums in the long term.

Parametric insurance should be seen as only part of the solution to disaster risk management, complemented by actions, taken in partnership with community governance structures, to manage vulnerability, build resilience and ensure that a costed pre-event response and recovery protocol is in place.



Parametric insurance has several important benefits, including providing transparency and predictability for all stakeholders and a much-needed source of income after an extreme weather event.

WHY COMMUNITIES NEED A STRONGER VOICE IN GLOBAL POLICY DISCUSSIONS

Climate change is already reshaping daily life for coastal communities, yet decisions that shape their future are too often made far from their shores.

Rising seas are forcing some coastal communities to relocate, coral bleaching is affecting fisheries, changing ocean currents are altering the distribution of marine species, and communities are witnessing the degradation of mangroves, reefs and culturally important ecosystems. These impacts are already being felt across the Pacific, home to some 14 million coastal residents.²¹ However, such communities are often excluded from important decision-making processes.

Now, these communities are drawing on traditional governance practices

to make their voices heard. Earlier this year, a coalition of civil society organizations across the Pacific engaged their governments through an inclusive, participatory and transparent *talanoa* (a dialogue-based process rooted in Pacific cultural traditions) known as the Wansolwara Dialogue to develop the Pacific Ocean-Wide Ambition (POWA), which advances Pacific priorities on ocean-climate matters at key regional and international climate meetings.

This kind of active citizenry is typical of the region, which is also home to

the well-established Oceania First Voices (see “Amplifying Oceania Communities’ Concerns through Oceania First Voices”). The *talanoa* approach to inclusive conservation continues to influence how decisions are made across the region and is a central tenet of WWF’s Pacific Pathway 2030 Strategy. Supporting the participation and leadership of coastal communities in global policy discussions is essential to advance climate and biodiversity solutions that are equitable, effective and grounded in local knowledge and experience.



IMPACT STORY

AMPLIFYING OCEANIA COMMUNITIES’ CONCERNS THROUGH OCEANIA FIRST VOICES

Oceania First Voices (OFV) – a collective of Indigenous and community leaders from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia and Aotearoa – has systematically advanced local and Indigenous perspectives in national, regional and global debates on climate, biodiversity and the ocean, insisting that frontline communities must be heard.

WWF started working with OFV in 2021, creating space for Indigenous and local community leaders to come together to dialogue and build stronger partnerships and leadership through advocacy training. OFV’s participation was also supported in national, regional and international forums.

With this support, OFV representatives have contributed to climate COP28, COP29 and COP30, and are now part of the UNFCCC’s (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s) Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. Community leaders have participated in side events, ministerial dialogues, negotiations and official government delegations, contributing traditional knowledge, lived experience and community perspectives that would otherwise have been absent from global discussions. Their advocacy has elevated the role of Indigenous knowledge, nature-based solutions, inclusive conservation and climate finance in regional and international policy conversations.

This year, OFV hosted a climate leadership workshop in Canberra to strengthen Indigenous and Pacific climate leadership, align collective COP31 priorities and amplify community-led climate solutions. The event brought together eight Indigenous climate leaders from Australia, Aotearoa, Solomon Islands and Fiji to build relationships and strengthen collective advocacy. A key outcome was a shared set of advocacy priorities and messages focused on Indigenous-led partnerships; equitable, community-centred climate finance; the implementation of international commitments; Indigenous knowledge, rights and languages; and a just transition towards a fossil fuel-free Pacific.

OFV’s impact can be felt at many scales, including the national level, where OFV has strengthened communities’ engagement with governments and increased recognition of Indigenous and local voices in national decision-making processes. In empowering a new generation of leaders, including women and youth, OFV has moved beyond representation towards targeted advocacy in spaces that can elevate Indigenous knowledge-holders and strengthen strategic influence. As Laisani Sepo, Fiji National Youth Council Representative for Macuata, reflected: “OFV gatherings are an opportunity to carry the collective voice of Macuata’s youth into regional climate and biodiversity spaces.”



WHY INTEGRATE COMMUNITY-MANAGED AREAS INTO REGIONAL NETWORKS

LMMAs and other community-managed MPCAs can deliver significant climate, biodiversity and livelihood benefits. However, their impact is often limited by their geographical footprint.

To scale these benefits, community-managed areas should be integrated into emerging regional networks, marine spatial plans, seascape management and “blue corridors” (see “What are Blue Corridors?”) across the Pacific and beyond.

Ecologically coherent and well-connected networks of MPCAs, alongside other management measures that are effective, can help maintain ecosystem function, strengthen climate resilience, and support species that move across ocean spaces. Such networks are particularly important for migratory species, including whales, sea turtles, sharks, rays and tunas, which rely on connected habitats to safely traverse the high seas and move between and within Pacific exclusive economic zones.

Pacific nations are already demonstrating leadership by establishing large-scale MPAs. The Melanesian Ocean Corridor of Reserves, announced at the Melanesian Ocean

Summit 2026, is one way that Pacific governments are demonstrating this approach (see “New Melanesian Ocean Corridor Creates Ambitious Transboundary Marine Area”). At the same time, governments are supporting the scaling of community-led conservation beyond MPA borders.

An integrated, regional approach that connects MPCAs through blue corridors would provide critical connectivity, joining ecosystems and species that move between these areas. The Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (High Seas Treaty), which entered into force in January 2026, is the first global policy framework that allows countries to secure ocean biodiversity beyond their exclusive economic zones – and the GBF’s 30x30 target gives them the mandate to do so. Together, these frameworks present an opportunity for governments, Indigenous Peoples, coastal communities and

other stakeholders to collaborate in developing coherent networks of MPCAs that span coastal waters, exclusive economic zones and the high seas. Importantly, these networks should recognize and build upon existing community-led conservation efforts, including LMMAs.

Coastal communities have an important role to play in identifying, establishing and maintaining such regional networks. Generations of voyaging and marine stewardship have given Pacific communities deep knowledge of the currents, migratory patterns and rhythms of the open ocean, long before this became a subject for international law. For example, fishing communities in Papua New Guinea were among the first to notice when tuna migratory patterns changed. Such knowledge extends well beyond political boundaries and can provide valuable insights for the development of connected, ecosystem-scale approaches to ocean conservation and management.

EXPLAINER

WHAT ARE BLUE CORRIDORS?

Blue corridors are migration (movement) pathways that allow marine megafauna to move across entire ocean basins. Species such as whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles, tuna and rays rely on such interconnected ocean habitats for key life stages, including feeding, mating, giving birth and nursing young. Being able to move through blue corridors enables keystone species to move nutrients and strengthen genetic diversity, so contributing to and sustaining ocean productivity across generations.

MILESTONE

NEW MELANESIAN OCEAN CORRIDOR CREATES AMBITIOUS TRANSBOUNDARY MARINE PROTECTED AREA

The governments of Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have joined hands to officially launch the Melanesian Ocean Corridor of Reserves (MOCOR).

In signing the MOCOR Declaration and Framework 2026–2030 at the inaugural Melanesian Ocean Summit in Port Moresby in May 2026, these governments pledged to create a subregional network of marine protected areas (MPAs) that will be collectively governed and enforced, with marine science shared across national waters. According to officials, the anticipated corridor will be one of the world’s largest transboundary MPAs, spanning at least 6 million square kilometres (km²) of Melanesian waters.²²

Once operational, the corridor will link Vanuatu’s 70,000-km² Torba National MPA with Papua New Guinea’s Western Manus National Marine Sanctuary, a 200,000-km² no-take reserve in the Bismarck Sea and the largest protected area in the country’s history. Fiji has committed to designating 15% of its waters as MPAs by the end of 2026, which will substantially increase the area covered by the corridor.

What makes MOCOR significant is not just the sum of these pledges, but the framework itself, which reflects the Melanesian countries’ shared commitment to strengthening regional cooperation on climate action and marine biodiversity conservation.

However, few concrete details of MOCOR have been disclosed, including its proposed geographic boundaries and governance, management, financing and monitoring arrangements. How these factors are defined will ultimately determine the value that MOCOR will provide for biodiversity, climate and people. It is vital that inclusive, equitable and human rights-based approaches are taken in the implementation of MOCOR.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION

These recommendations aim to ensure greater policy coherence between climate and biodiversity agendas to advance national commitments under National Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, while ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth.

1. ADVANCE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY-LED 30x30 AS A SOLUTION TO DELIVER BOTH CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND BIODIVERSITY GOALS

Coastal communities hold traditional and local knowledge that enables them to manage marine ecosystems in ways that strengthen food security, biodiversity and climate resilience. With appropriate support, their impact could be scaled and amplified, generating far-reaching benefits for people and nature. Such support includes enabling policies that:

- **Recognize community governance** and local and Indigenous knowledge systems. This includes supporting communities' tenure rights and agency to implement effective LMMAs and MPAs.
- **Support recognition of LMMAs** that meet the OECM criteria as formal OECMs, where communities provide free, prior and informed consent for this.
- **Support and amplify Indigenous Peoples and local communities' voices** in national and international policy forums through inclusive, community-led dialogue platforms and representative networks.

- **Invest in community-led monitoring and participatory data collection** using locally appropriate indicators, enabling communities to better demonstrate the biodiversity, climate and social outcomes they are already delivering. Combining scientific approaches with Indigenous and local knowledge will strengthen the evidence base needed to better recognize community stewardship within national reporting, climate adaptation planning and biodiversity commitments.



Coastal communities hold traditional and local knowledge that enables them to manage marine ecosystems in ways that strengthen food security, biodiversity and climate resilience.



2. SCALE UP FINANCE FOR COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION

Sustainable ocean financing from all sources, including climate and biodiversity finance, needs to be significantly scaled and targeted towards coastal communities, which play a pivotal role in securing climate resilience, protecting biodiversity and building sustainable blue economies. Governments, development partners and financial institutions should provide more accessible, flexible and long-term finance that responds to local priorities and strengthens communities' capacity and decision-making authority. Sustained investment and partnerships should support community-led conservation, knowledge exchange and the full respect of Indigenous Peoples' rights, enabling local stewardship to deliver lasting benefits for people, nature and climate.



3. ENSURE CONNECTIVITY IS A KEY PRINCIPLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE 30x30 TARGET

Policymakers should partner with communities to identify, strengthen and connect networks of MPCAs at the ocean basin scale, linking what already works into functioning ecological systems. Delivering connectivity at scale will take political will, meaningful partnership with communities and the private sector, and financing at the same scale as the ecosystems being protected.

Building connected seascapes will strengthen biodiversity resilience, food security and community livelihoods across the Pacific. Achieving this will require advancing regional ocean governance frameworks and marine spatial planning processes that align national ocean policies, climate commitments and biodiversity targets through shared monitoring, science, Indigenous knowledge

and coordinated management of transboundary marine ecosystems. Such approaches can support effective implementation of 30x30, the High Seas Treaty and sustainable blue economy ambitions.



Building connected seascapes will strengthen biodiversity resilience, food security and community livelihoods across the Pacific.

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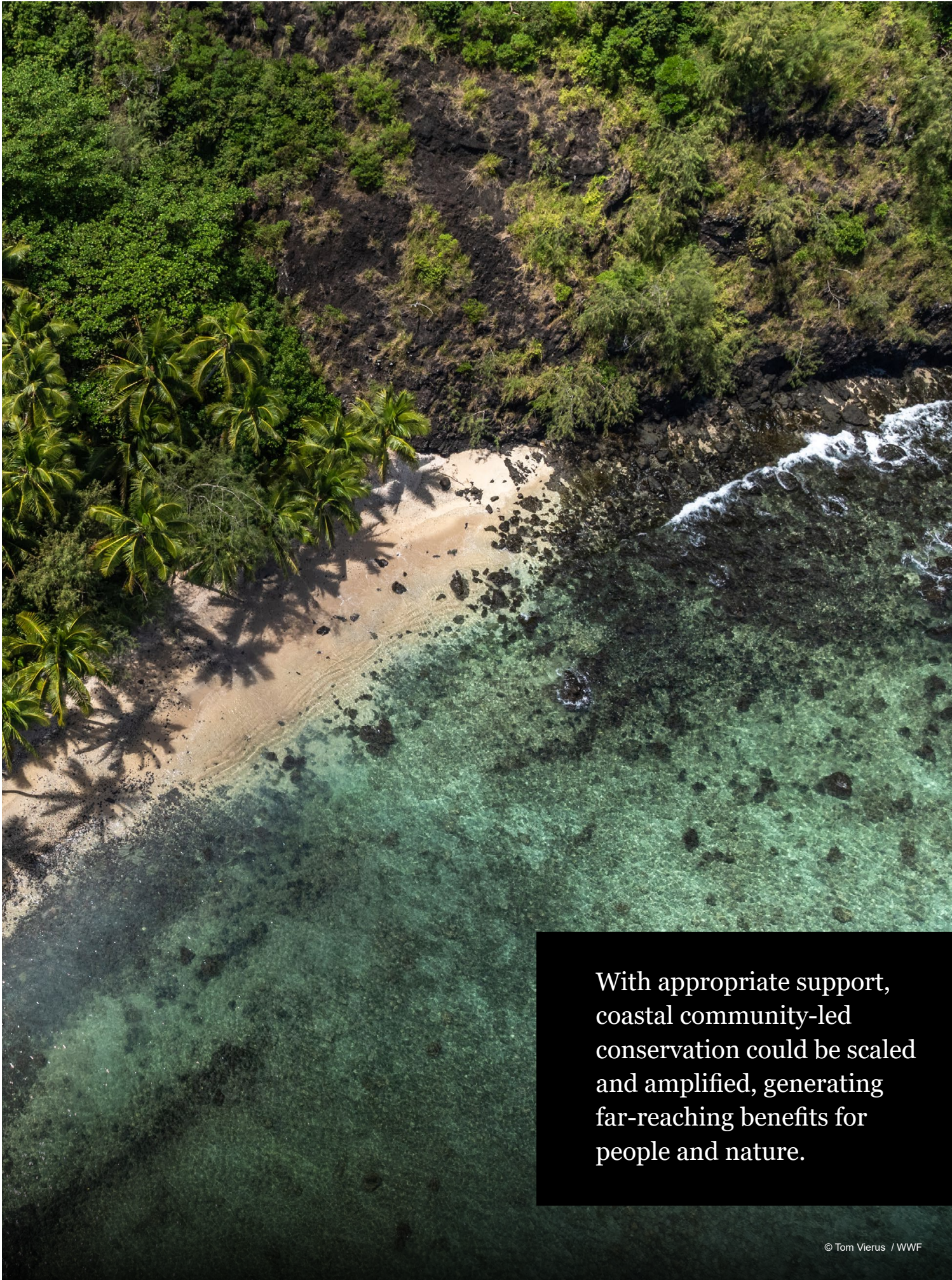
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With appropriate support, coastal community-led conservation could be scaled and amplified, generating far-reaching benefits for people and nature.

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