

# New Funding Opportunity for Marine Conservation Management – *Hifadhi Blu*

## Call for Concept Notes

Submission Deadline: **31st January 2025**

### 1. Introduction

The **Hifadhi Blu** Programme—a collaborative initiative by **WIOMSA**, **Advanced Conservation Strategies (ACS)**, **WIOMPAN**, and the **Minderoo Foundation**—announces a new funding opportunity through a call for concept notes. This initiative aims to enhance marine conservation management and improve the effectiveness of Marine Conservation Area (MCA) management in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region.

The **Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Area Outlook** has identified several challenges affecting the effectiveness of marine conservation management:

1. Insufficient organizational capacity, technical expertise, and financial resources.
2. Fragmented site management approaches lacking clear goals, leading to unmet conservation objectives.
3. Limited access to critical resources such as monitoring tools, vessels, and essential supplies.
4. Shortages of skilled personnel and inadequate training opportunities.
5. Challenges in aligning enforcement, monitoring, and community needs.
6. Conflicting priorities between partners and local communities.
7. Limited collaboration platforms and a lack of shared stakeholder vision.
8. Outdated management plans, weak implementation of plans, and lack of legal recognition for some conservation areas.

The **Hifadhi Blu** Programme invites marine conservation organizations to submit concept notes that address these challenges and improve MCA management in the WIO region. Eligible applicants are detailed in **Section 3**. Eligible MCAs include:

- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- Co-Managed Areas (CMAs)
- Community Managed Areas (CMAs)

### 2. Thematic Focus

This call for concept notes focuses on improving the management of Marine Conservation Areas (MCAs) in the WIO region. Eligible MCAs include:

1. **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** Clearly defined geographical spaces, legally or otherwise managed, dedicated to long-term nature conservation with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. MPAs may be managed by government bodies or private organizations.
2. **Co-Managed Areas (CMAs):** Conservation sites where management responsibilities are shared between stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, local communities, NGOs, or private organizations) to achieve effective conservation outcomes.
3. **Community Managed Areas (CMAs):** Areas primarily managed by local communities based on traditional or customary practices, aiming for conservation and/or sustainable resource use.

#### **Focus Areas for Projects**

Projects submitted under the **Hifadhi Blu** Programme should enhance marine conservation management by implementing effective measures that promote **biodiversity conservation** and **sustainable resource use**.

Projects must demonstrate a clear connection between challenges, proposed solutions, and expected outcomes while promoting long-term sustainability and community participation.

### 3. Key Considerations

#### *Eligibility Criteria*

Eligible applicants must be marine conservation organizations or entities operating in WIO countries, including:

- Local and national non-profits.
- Local community conservation groups.
- Government agencies managing marine conservation sites.
- Private entities managing marine conservation sites.
- Research organizations managing marine conservation sites.

Applicants must clearly specify their role in managing marine conservation sites and identify the source of their mandate (e.g., legal recognition, governmental authority, community agreements, or organizational charters).

#### *Not Eligible:*

- Big International Non-Governmental Organizations (BINGOs). However, BINGOs may participate as co-funding partners if their role is clearly defined.

#### *Eligible Sites*

- **Location:** Sites must be located in WIO countries: Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius, or Réunion (France).
- **Operational Duration:** Sites must have been operational for at least three years and be recognized by national law or equivalent means.
- **Limit:** Each site may submit only one concept note.

### 4. Evaluation Criteria for Concept Notes

#### *Viability (30%)*

Projects must demonstrate their feasibility, organizational capacity, and ability to manage risks effectively.

- **Feasibility:** The proposed project must be realistic, achievable within the stated timeline, and supported by a detailed and practical implementation plan.

- **Organizational Competence:** Applicants should exhibit technical expertise, a proven track record, and the capacity to deliver the proposed outcomes. This includes relevant experience in marine conservation and project management.
- **Risk Mitigation:** The project should identify potential challenges and outline clear strategies to address and minimize these risks to ensure smooth implementation.

#### *Innovation and Social Inclusion (25%)*

Projects should introduce creative solutions and promote inclusivity.

- **Novelty:** The project should propose original and innovative approaches to address marine conservation challenges, showcasing new ideas or methodologies.
- **Strategic Integration:** Ensure that the project's goals align with its proposed activities and intended outcomes, creating a coherent and strategic approach to conservation.
- **Social Inclusion:** Proposals should actively engage diverse and underrepresented stakeholders, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities. Gender equity and inclusivity should be integrated throughout the project's design, implementation, and benefit-sharing.
- **Scalability:** The project should demonstrate potential for expansion, adaptation, or replication in other marine conservation sites to maximize long-term impact and sustainability.

#### *Relevance (25%)*

Projects must align with program goals and address specific conservation needs.

- **Program Alignment:** The project should align with the Hifadhi Blu Programme's objectives of enhancing ecological resilience, promoting social sustainability, and strengthening marine conservation management.
- **Conservation Priorities:** Ensure the project supports local, national, regional, and global conservation targets, including SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- **Contextual Fit:** The proposal should be responsive to the specific conservation challenges and needs of the target site, reflecting an understanding of local conditions and dynamics.

## Financial Justification (20%)

Projects must provide a well-justified budget and demonstrate efficient resource use.

- **Clear Need:** The proposal should clearly justify the need for funding, supported by a transparent, detailed, and realistic budget.
- **Strategic Resource Allocation:** The budget should prioritize activities with the highest potential for conservation impact, demonstrating efficient use of resources.
- **Co-Financing:** Proposals should provide evidence of securing at least 20% of project costs through cash contributions and/or in-kind support. Co-financing enhances project sustainability and shows a commitment to resource mobilization.

## 5. Funding

- The *Hifadhi Blu* Programme will provide funding to support a total of **16 marine conservation sites** over a period of **four years**. The grant size for each project will start at **USD 50,000** and may reach up to **USD 200,000 per site** over a three-year period. Continued funding beyond the first year is contingent on the successful implementation of Year 1 deliverables and milestones.
- Funding will follow a **cohort model**, where **four sites** are selected each year. These sites may receive iterative support over three cycles, allowing for continued project development and adaptation based on performance and results.
- Applicants must present their budget in USD, with project durations ranging between a minimum of **12 months** and a maximum of **36 months**. The proposed budget should clearly outline costs and ensure that the project timeline aligns with the planned activities and deliverables.

## 6. Monitoring and Reporting

Grantees are required to participate in several key activities to ensure effective project implementation and continuous improvement. Prior to receiving grant awards, grantees must complete a **systems thinking training** session. This training will provide essential tools and methodologies to support adaptive management and holistic approaches to conservation challenges.

Throughout the project period, grantees are expected to **submit quarterly progress reports** detailing project activities, outcomes, and challenges, along

with corresponding **financial reports** to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of funds.

Additionally, grantees must actively **engage in annual reviews** to assess progress toward milestones, address any issues, and refine project strategies. They are also required to participate in **learning exchanges** with other grantees, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the dissemination of best practices across the network of funded projects.

## 7. Submission of Concept Notes

Concept notes can be prepared in **English, French, or Portuguese**. All submissions should be made through **WIOMSA Proposal Central**. Applicants are required to register their organizations on the Proposal Central platform. The registration process may take up to one week for validation, so it is recommended to register as early as possible. To register, please visit the following link: [Proposal Central Registration](#).

Once registration is complete, applicants can submit their concept notes through this link: [Submit Concept Note](#). The submission deadline is **11:59 PM EAT on 31st January 2025**.

An [introductory webinar](#) will be held on 17th January 2025 to answer any questions from applicants. You can sign up for the webinar using this [link](#).

For any queries regarding the submission process, applicants can contact the program team via email at [secretary@wiomsa.org](mailto:secretary@wiomsa.org) and [deidre@wiomsa.org](mailto:deidre@wiomsa.org). Please use the subject line "Hifadhi Blu" in all correspondence.

## 8. Timeline

The **deadline for submitting concept notes** is **11:59 PM EAT on 31st January 2025**. Concept notes must be submitted through the Proposal Central platform, and early submission is encouraged to avoid last-minute issues.

Applicants whose concept notes are shortlisted will be invited to submit a **full proposal** by **31st March 2025**. Detailed guidance will be provided to support the preparation of full proposals.

Interviews with applicants whose full proposals are potential candidates for funding will be conducted in **April 2025**.

The final selection and grant award announcements will be made in **May 2025**, with projects expected to commence on **1st July 2025**.