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NEWS BRIEF



"Participants of the OceanX and OceanQuest "Around Africa Expedition".
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WIO-C REIGNITES REGIONAL MOMENTUM AT LANDMARK MEETING



The Western Indian Ocean Consortium (WIO-C) convened a landmark meeting from 11–12 March 2025 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, marking a pivotal moment in the regional collaboration for coastal and marine conservation.



Hosted at the Ramada Hotel, the gathering brought together over 20 organizations, representing a vibrant cross-section of civil society, intergovernmental agencies and conservation networks across the region. The energy was palpable, and the outcomes spoke volumes.

Reinvigorating WIO-C for regional impact

Dr Jared Bosire of the Nairobi Convention opened the meeting by reflecting on WIO-C's legacy and its evolving mandate. **He underscored the importance of unifying voices to demonstrate impact, particularly in global policy spaces** such as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) process, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and the United Nations Decades for Ocean Science and Ecosystem Restoration.

Dr Arthur Tuda of WIOMSA, which continues to serve as the Secretariat, emphasized WIO-C's role in empowering civil society and catalysing regional action through resilient partnerships, collaborative ecosystem management and knowledge sharing. The meeting adopted a structure to support these goals with participants sharing real-time lessons, data and

experiences on implementing decisions from the Eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) of the Nairobi Convention.

A turning point: new structure, new leadership

Key decisions were made to elevate WIO-C's governance and operational capacity, including:

- WIOMSA will continue as the permanent Secretariat, ending the rotating model for consistency and neutrality.
- A new Steering Committee will guide the consortium's work, comprising the President, Vice President, Secretariat and Working Group Chairs.
- A more responsive decision-making process was introduced, along with flexibility in forming specialized working groups to respond to emerging issues.

Setting the agenda: six priority themes and cross-cutting goals

Six priority themes were established to shape WIO-C's work over the next two years:

- 1. Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction** – led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature
- 2. Small-scale fisheries (SSF)** – led by Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean
- 3. Blue/sustainable finance** – led by the WWF
- 4. Seagrass conservation** – led by WIOMSA and supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts
- 5. Plastics pollution** – co-led by Wetlands International and East African Wild Life Society
- 6. Other effective area-based conservation measures** – led by the Wildlife Conservation Society

Each theme will be developed through a working group, supported by concept notes, collaboration offers and progress monitoring on the WIO-C website. Cross-cutting issues like policy, research, innovation, and mentorship will be integrated into all themes.

Driving impact through data, dialogue, and design

WIO-C also improved collective impact reporting by consolidating member outcomes into the Executive Director's Report for the Nairobi Convention. A workshop on small-scale fisheries data led to plans for a regional SSF data hub, standardized data collection guidelines, and collaborative stock assessment tools.

Emphasis was placed on improving knowledge exchange, refining membership criteria to include national actors, and crafting a centralized communication strategy that includes newsletters, position papers and regular updates on progress.

Looking forward: a bold vision for the future

The meeting ended with a shared goal: transforming WIO-C from a network of individual efforts into a unified force for regional influence. Participants emphasized the need for stronger coordination, clearer communication, inclusive participation across themes, and a more focused strategy aligned with a shared vision and measurable goals.

With renewed leadership, a clearer structure and a cohesive roadmap ahead, WIO-C left the meeting feeling refreshed, refocused and ready to scale its impact. As Dr. Tuda aptly stated in his closing remarks, "WIO-C is alive and kicking" and heading into 2025 with greater unity and purpose than ever before."



For more updates, upcoming events and opportunities to collaborate, visit the [WIO-C website](#) or the [Nairobi Convention Clearinghouse Mechanism](#).

THE REGIONAL SEAGRASS STORY UNFOLDS



Showcasing LaSMMI field training sessions in the WIO region

As countries across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region work together to shape the WIO Seagrass Status Report, a new chapter is being written in seagrass conservation.

The report, which is crucial for understanding the health and role of seagrass ecosystems in coastal resilience, is being developed with support from the Western Indian Ocean Coastal and Ocean Resilience (WIOCOR) project, launched by the International Union for Conservation of Nature under the Great Blue Wall Initiative.

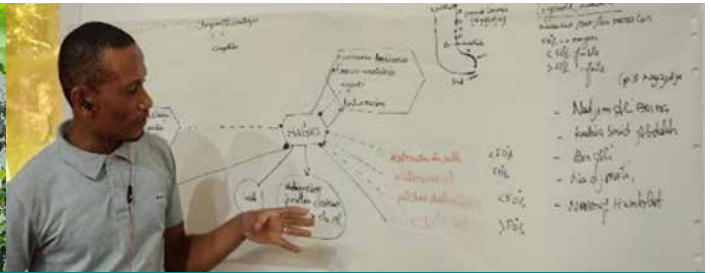
The Comoros, Tanzania and Mozambique have hosted the first country-led meetings in which experts and stakeholders discussed the current state of seagrass ecosystems, identified challenges and explored opportunities for conservation. The workshops also provided an opportunity to identify priority areas that require greater attention, shaping the content of the country chapters within the broader WIO Seagrass Status Report.

Key insights from the national workshop in the Comoros



Participants at the workshop in Moroni on 17 and 18 February

Moheli National Park, in collaboration with WIOMSA and the WIOCOR project, organized a two-day national workshop in Moroni on 17 and 18 February 2025. The workshop brought together 24 participants from various organizations, including the National Parks of Grande Comoros, Moheli and Anjouan, as well as non-governmental organizations and the University of Comoros. Experts from diverse fields such as seagrass mapping, scientific research, education, conservation, management and policy convened to gather and exchange information for the Comoros Seagrass Status Report.



Key highlights included:

- **Developing a national strategy and policy:** Establishing a formal conservation and management framework for Comorian seagrass meadows by creating a national seagrass network officially recognized by the Comorian government.
- **Assessing existing knowledge:** Compiling and analysing all available bibliographic documentation on seagrass studies in the Comoros to serve as a foundation for drafting a comprehensive national report on Comorian seagrass meadows.
- **Contributing to the Red List of Ecosystems (RLE):** Supporting the development of a classification document for the Red List of Seagrass Ecosystems in the Comoros.
- **Strengthening ecological monitoring:** Establishing a standardized ecological monitoring protocol for seagrass meadows and developing a centralized database for effective data processing and analysis.

The Comorian vision for seagrass conservation focuses on integrating national strategies and policies that align with local, regional (WIO) and international conservation and management priorities.

Regional alignment and data-driven strategies in Tanzania



Tanzania held its national workshop in Zanzibar on 11 and 12 March 2025, bringing together 12 experts. The workshop-initiated discussions on aligning national priorities with the regional Seagrass Strategy for the WIO. Attendees agreed to collaborate on refining their findings and report sections to ensure effective communication of key information for future conservation efforts. A significant outcome of the meeting was a proposal to establish a comprehensive database to support ecosystem assessments and inform feasibility studies for the Seagrass RLE process in Tanzania.

Key Threats and Conservation Priorities for Seagrass in Mozambique

On March 13th and 14th, 2025, the first workshop was held at the Lugar do Mar Hotel in Macaneta, with the aim of exploring and identifying the pressures and threats affecting seagrass ecosystems in Mozambique, exploring their ecology and distribution, and identifying possible gaps in published studies on the subject of this ecosystem at a national level.



The workshop also served as an opportunity to identify the most important/priority points that should deserve greater attention in the chapter on seagrasses in Mozambique. The event was attended by nine participants (Co-authors), representing academia (UEM) and government and research institutions (InOM). The workshop was held within the scope of the State of Art (SoAS) project, which aims to document the conservation status of seagrasses in some WIO countries.

In addition, the newly launched LaSMMI (Large-scale Seagrass Mapping and Management Initiative- www.lasmmi.org) collaboratively led by the University of Southampton, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)—is adding another layer of support for seagrass conservation efforts. As part of this initiative, a series of field training sessions were organized, providing country teams in Mozambique, Madagascar, Kenya, the Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar (led by UEM, IHSM, KMFRI, UDSM and SUZA respectively) with hands-on experience in field data collection methodologies as well as an introduction to the mapping techniques to be used. These training sessions have enhanced the capacity for data collection and analysis, ensuring that seagrass conservation efforts are based on robust scientific evidence. Look out for further updates of the extensive field effort conducted by regional research teams over the coming year.



LaSMMI
Large-Scale Seagrass Mapping
and Management Initiative

LaSMMI also supports a broader community of practice for seagrass science in the WIO. This commitment is emphasised by a workshop for 30 members of Madagascar National Parks staff, delivered in partnership with the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP). The workshop focused on land and in-water training for seagrass mapping, long term monitoring, conservation and management, as well as providing opportunities to deepen the seagrass dialogue.

WIOMSA coordinates these initiatives and plays a key role in shaping the future of seagrass management and conservation in the WIO.

SEAGRASS EXPERT TALKS CONSERVATION EFFORTS DURING AWARENESS MONTH

In honor of Seagrass Awareness Month, Dr. Damboia Cossa, the marine and coastal ecosystem program coordinator at WIOMSA shares her insights on the newly launched Large-Scale Seagrass Mapping and Management Initiative (LaSMMI).

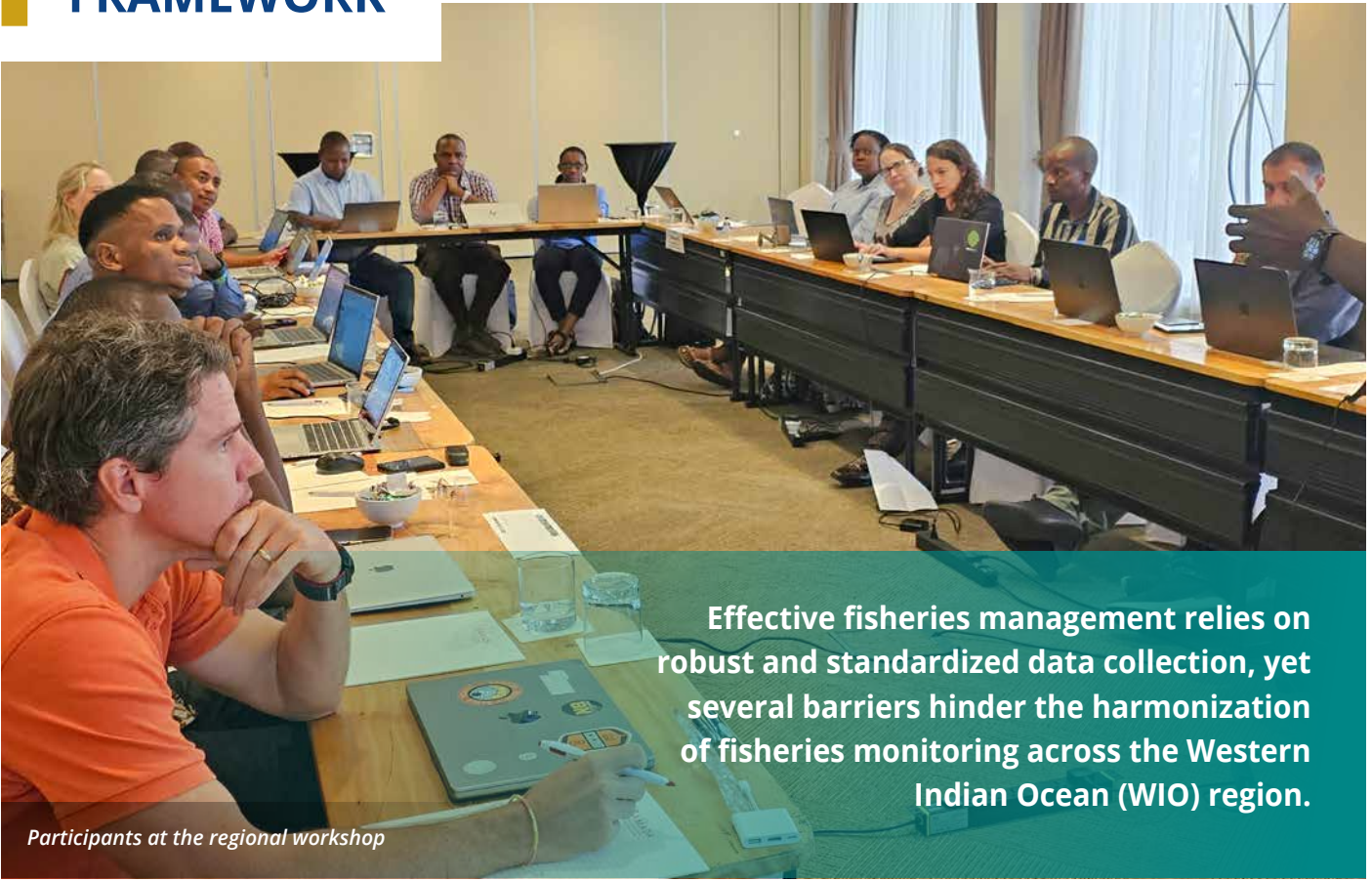


This groundbreaking project, supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the University of Southampton, aims to develop the first field-verified seagrass map across Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, and Madagascar. Dr. Cossa highlights the indispensable role of seagrass in supporting marine biodiversity, providing nursery habitats for various species, and offering coastal protection against erosion and storm surges. Additionally, seagrass meadows are vital for climate change mitigation, as they sequester significant amounts of carbon.

Despite their ecological importance, seagrass ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean remain largely unexplored, with only about 20% of seagrass areas worldwide fully mapped. **The LaSMMI initiative focuses on filling these data gaps, which are critical for informed conservation policies and effective management strategies.** Dr. Cossa points out that by providing accurate seagrass distribution data, the initiative will facilitate better marine spatial planning and enhance the resilience of coastal communities who rely on these ecosystems. Ultimately, the project aims to raise awareness and ensure the sustainable management of seagrass meadows, contributing to regional and global efforts to protect our oceans and combat climate change.

Read the full interview available [here](#).

TOWARDS A UNIFIED FISHERIES DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK



Participants at the regional workshop

Effective fisheries management relies on robust and standardized data collection, yet several barriers hinder the harmonization of fisheries monitoring across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region.

The absence of standardized methodologies and definitions has led to inconsistencies in how different stakeholders – government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions – collect, interpret and share data.

In response, a concerted effort led by WorldFish in collaboration with key fisheries stakeholders, is underway. Recent efforts to harmonize fisheries data collection included:

- **The National Fisheries Data Harmonization meeting** in Zanzibar on 7 March 2024.
- **The WIO Regional Data Harmonization workshop** in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 10 March 2025.

These meetings brought together government agencies, research institutions, regional organizations and NGOs to tackle fragmented data collection practices and pave the way for a standardized, technology-driven fisheries data management system.

Addressing local data gaps

Key issues identified at the Zanzibar Fisheries Data Harmonization meeting were:

- **Fragmented data collection methods** among multiple stakeholders, making it difficult to compare and share data.
- **The need for a harmonized data collection framework** to improve fisheries monitoring and conservation initiatives.
- **Transitioning from paper-based** data collection to digital tools for better efficiency, transparency and accuracy.
- **Capacity-building initiatives**, including training in fish species identification and the adoption of digital tools for data management.

Participants from the Institute of Marine Science, World Conservation Society, Mwambao Coastal Community Network, Zanzibar Fisheries and Marine Resources Research Institute and Blue Alliance agreed to collaborate on creating a centralized data-sharing platform. The Government of Zanzibar reaffirmed its commitment to supporting data harmonization, with Dr Salum, Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, emphasizing the importance of coordinated fisheries data collection for evidence-based policy and resource sustainability.

The two events represent a significant milestone in efforts to improve fisheries data collection and governance in the WIO. By harmonizing data collection methodologies, integrating digital tools and fostering regional collaboration, these initiatives set the foundation for evidence-based fisheries management.

Scaling up to a regional framework

The WIO Regional Data Harmonization workshop in Dar es Salaam expanded discussions from Zanzibar to a regional scale. Key discussions included:

- **Mapping existing fisheries data collection practices** across WIO countries and identifying inconsistencies.
- **Addressing barriers to data standardization**, including differences in data formats, collection methodologies and species classification.
- **Developing a roadmap for digital transformation**, advocating for the regional adoption of mobile-based data collection systems, geographic information system mapping, and artificial intelligence-driven analytics.
- **Strengthening governance and institutional support for fisheries data standardization through policy** frameworks and regulatory mechanisms.



STRENGTHENING LOCALLY MANAGED MARINE AREAS

The LMMA competency Framework workshop

In a concerted effort to enhance the management and recognition of locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), WIOMSA organized two significant workshops.



The first, organized during “Regenerative Ocean Week”, focused on the legal and institutional recognition of LMMAs. It brought together key stakeholders to discuss policy gaps and integrate LMMA frameworks into national conservation strategies. Following this, the LMMA Competency Framework workshop took place in Antananarivo, Madagascar, training participants from Madagascar, Mozambique and Kenya to strengthen local marine conservation efforts.

LMMA workshop at the Regenerative Ocean Week

The stakeholder workshop on Legal and Institutional Recognition of LMMAs was organized by WIOMSA and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), supported by the Blue Nature Alliance. It brought together representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities to present preliminary findings from a study assessing legal and policy frameworks in Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, the Comoros and Mozambique. The workshop highlighted issues such as differing legal definitions of LMMAs, overlapping agency mandates and policy gaps limiting integration into national conservation strategies. Participants discussed validating these findings and aligning national policies with international frameworks like the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the IUCN’s other effective area-based conservation measures.

Throughout the session, attendees developed recommendations for policy reforms, a roadmap for enhanced institutional coordination, and priority areas for further advocacy. The workshop ultimately served as a platform to advance LMMA governance and support sustainable coastal management in the WIO region.

LMMA Competency Framework workshop

From 5 to 7 March 2025, WIOMSA, with support from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee under the Ocean Country Partnership Programme, hosted the LMMA Competency Framework workshop in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The workshop brought together participants from Madagascar, Mozambique and Kenya to strengthen local marine conservation efforts through the LMMA initiative.

The training focused on preparing five LMMAs in Madagascar and Mozambique for site-level certification, ensuring they met the necessary standards for effective management.

During the workshop, participants trained in applying the competency framework at the site level and exchanged insights on LMMAs in Madagascar and Mozambique. They explored the framework’s structure, regional standards and country-specific requirements. Hands-on training validated the LMMA competency tools and provided guidance on piloting them to improve marine resource management. The workshop fostered collaboration and practical learning by clarifying the framework, reviewing standards and redefining the scoring system.

STRENGTHENING AFRICA'S CLIMATE ACTION



A groundbreaking workshop on marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in February, to develop a comprehensive roadmap for mCDR research, development and implementation in Africa. The event brought together experts, government representatives and stakeholders from across Africa and beyond.

It was co-organized by several organizations, including Ocean Visions, the Carbon to Sea Initiative and the Green Africa Youth Organization, along with the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Cape Coast, the Technical University of Mombasa, Stellenbosch University and Ocean-Climate Innovation Hubs from Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania.

mCDR has gained recognition as a promising solution to mitigate climate change while fostering a sustainable blue economy. However, the integration of mCDR in Africa requires thoughtful planning, investment and policy development tailored to the continent's unique needs and circumstances. The workshop addressed these requirements by discussing governance, policy alignment, financing mechanisms, technology development and cross-sector collaboration needed to drive mCDR solutions across the continent.

Key takeaways from the workshop included:

- **The importance of developing robust monitoring systems** and improving regional collaboration on data collection and modelling to ensure the success of mCDR projects.
- **The workshop emphasized the need for more accessible financial mechanisms** to support mCDR initiatives, especially for entrepreneurs and local communities.
- **A strong call was made for establishing an African mCDR partnership** to coordinate efforts, scale solutions and ensure effectiveness across the continent.
- **Participants stressed the need to strengthen governance frameworks** to better integrate mCDR into national and regional policies.

The outcomes of this workshop will provide a vital foundation for the continued growth of mCDR initiatives in Africa, ensuring that solutions are sustainable, equitable and aligned with the continent's long-term environmental and economic goals.

NATURE-POSITIVE SHIPPING AT OCEAN INNOVATION AFRICA 2025 | *By Jonathan Killow and Obakeng Molelu*



The Africa Marine and Coastal Operations for Southern Africa (MarCOSIO) team participated in the Ocean Innovation Africa 2025 event from 24 to 28 February 2025, alongside partners from WIOMSA, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute and ABALOBI (a South African-based, global NPO and social enterprise organisation elevating small-scale fisheries through technology). The workshop focused on nature-positive shipping, emphasizing the balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Economic and environmental balance

Ambassador Nancy Karigithu emphasized the need to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility, highlighting the blue economy as a key opportunity for sustainable development. The adoption of restorative economy concepts was recommended to conserve and manage natural resources while promoting economic growth.

Innovative strategies and policies are crucial for supporting environmental conservation alongside economic initiatives. The workshop underscored the role

of technology and innovation in creating sustainable products and solutions in the shipping industry. Ambassador Karigithu called for the adoption of cleaner production methods and renewable energy sources.

Collaborative approaches

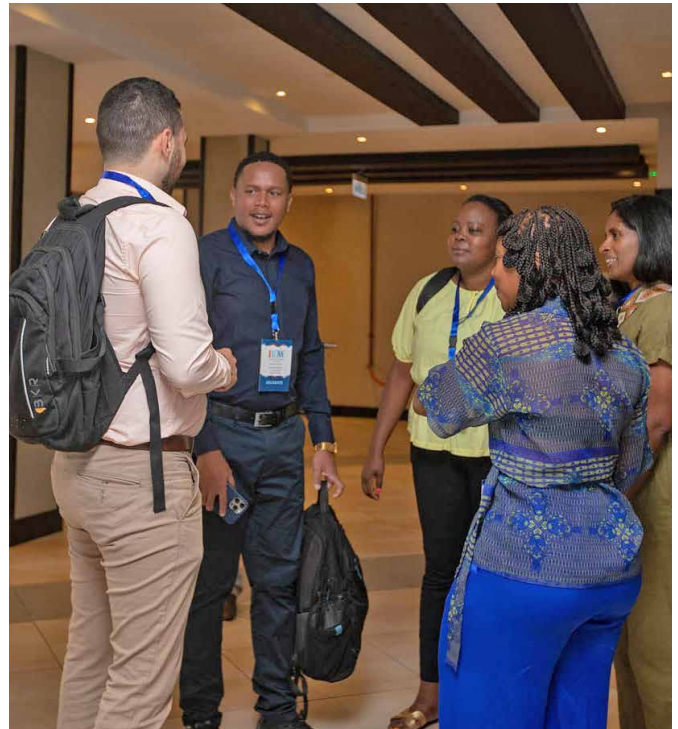
Workshop speakers emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts among governments, shipping companies and environmental groups to promote sustainable practices. Engaging port communities in sustainable solutions and integrating them into operations was identified as a key strategy.

Mr Raymond Molapo presented the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa MarCOSIO decision support system for vessel surveillance in southern African and the WIO, focusing on continuous tracking, improving coordination, managing resources and addressing illegal activities in African oceans. Supporting this, Mr David Willima highlighted the multifaceted nature of maritime security, covering safe communication, transport, trade and environmental protection. He emphasized enhancing the Automatic Identification System to improve tracking, monitoring and response capabilities, while also noting the impact of changing geopolitics on international maritime security and efforts to reduce shipping's environmental footprint

Future directions in the shipping industry

Commander Tsietsi Mokhele presented an overview of the shipping industry's evolution, highlighting its transformation through digital technology and the ongoing challenges of decarbonization, digitalization, globalization and de-globalization. **He emphasized the need for sustainable shipping practices and carbon-neutral approaches.**

Ms Eliyusta Filikunjombe Haule provided a youth perspective by highlighting the vital role of youth in shaping nature-positive shipping practices. The call for African nations to develop unique, context-specific solutions highlighted the importance of global cooperation while maintaining local relevance.



The workshop ended with a vision for a future where African oceans thrive and economies flourish through youth engagement and sustainable practices. The balance between present economic needs and future sustainability goals remains a central theme for a nature positive shipping industry.

NEXUS PROJECT INTENSIFIES STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS | *By Obed Ogega and Kennedy Osuka*

The Nexus Project, one of four projects funded by WIOMSA under the SCALABLE¹ project, hosted a three-day stakeholder consultation workshop in Durban, South Africa, from 6 to 8 February 2025. The event brought together policymakers, thought leaders, scholars and selected marine protected area (MPA) representatives.



The workshop focused on the impacts of climate change on fisheries and discussed advances, lessons learned, challenges, needs and opportunities for enhancing science-policy-practice outcomes for sustainable fisheries in the WIO region. Participants assessed the effectiveness of current policies and governance systems in addressing critical challenges facing fisheries in Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar and South Africa.

The Nexus Project, hosted at Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean East Africa and funded by WIOMSA, strengthens fisheries management in the WIO region. It focuses on MPAs in Kisite Mpunguti (Kenya), Bazaruto (Mozambique), iSimangaliso (South Africa) and Nosy Hara (Madagascar). Through a multicountry, multidisciplinary working group, the project will analyse existing policies and practices, engaging stakeholders to co-create innovative solutions for sustainable fisheries in the WIO region.

Information from the meeting will be shared with relevant stakeholders to enhance fisheries management in the region.



¹“Sustainable Blue Future in the Western Indian Ocean – Institutional Strengthening through Science, Capacity, and Assimilation for a Sustainable Blue Future – 2023-2026” project (SCALABLE)

ESTUARIZE 2.0 KICKS OFF IN MOMBASA



Project members with Prof. Laila Abubakar (centre), Vice Chancellor of the Technical University of Mombasa who officially opened the meeting on the first day

Estuarize 2.0 launched with a planning meeting in Mombasa from 11 to 13 February 2025, led by the Technical University of Mombasa (TUM), Kenya. Partner institutions include the Oceanographic Research Institute of South Africa, Eduardo Mondlane University of Mozambique, the Institute of Marine Sciences of the University of Dar es Salaam, the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute and the Arctic University of Norway.

Estuarize 2.0, a regional project funded by WIOMSA's SCALABLE initiative, builds on the findings of Estuarize-WIO (2016–2019), which revealed that human activities – both within estuaries and upstream – impact estuarine function and livelihoods more than physical differences between estuaries. Action-driven, Estuarize 2.0 leverages past data and decades of research to unite stakeholders in developing practical co-management strategies. The project focuses on four estuaries across the WIO region: Tana (Kenya), Ruwu (Tanzania), Bons Sinais (Mozambique), and uMgeni (South Africa), representing diverse socioecological systems.

The event provided a platform for regional project members to connect, align on the project concept and co-develop key workplan activities. Country representatives defined project roles and responsibilities at national and regional levels, including data collation, summarizing existing policies, a governance and management assessment, and the establishment of stakeholder estuary working groups (EWGs).

A key priority for the WIO region is repatriating data and information and information to country hubs and developing an action plan to compile literature on the

selected estuaries – one of the project's first key outputs. The meeting also explored governance and management frameworks and emphasized the development of tools to track socioecological changes and model different scenario outcomes.

Four Regional Working Group meetings are planned to coordinate Estuarize 2.0 activities and strengthen stakeholder EWGs. The project's goal is to establish EWGs as long-term platforms for managing sustainable estuarine socioecological systems, with the potential for expansion beyond the initial estuaries after project completion.



The planning meeting in progress in Mombasa

CULTIVATING COLLABORATION AND PROJECT EFFICIENCY



WIOMSA staff and the WorldFish project team held a strategic retreat in Zanzibar on 17 and 18 February 2025, providing a unique opportunity for participants to step away from their daily routines and engage in structured discussions and activities to improve teamwork and operational effectiveness.

The retreat aimed to foster cross-functional collaboration, optimize project execution and build resilience for future challenges.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the valuable knowledge gained, particularly about project management and cross-team collaboration. The retreat not only strengthened relationships between the two organizations but also set a solid foundation for future collaborative efforts aimed at driving impactful marine science initiatives in the Western Indian Ocean region.



STRENGTHENING MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



WIOMSA staff and the WorldFish project team held a strategic retreat in Zanzibar on 17 and 18 February 2025, providing a unique opportunity for participants to step away from their daily routines and engage in structured discussions and activities to improve teamwork and operational effectiveness.

Moderated by Executive Director Arthur Tuda, the meeting focused on reviewing the WIOMSA Constitution, clarifying the responsibilities of Country Coordinators, and developing an action plan to mobilize member engagement. Key discussions emphasized the importance of reporting individual country activities and fostering knowledge sharing, vital for enhancing collaboration and collective

impact. Additionally, strategies to boost participation – including polls and focus group discussions – were explored in preparation for the upcoming 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium and 8th General Assembly.

The meeting ended in a collaborative effort to map out an action plan for 2025 and 2026, setting the stage for effective engagement and impactful initiatives in WIOMSA Country Chapters.

WIOMSA HOSTS ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING WITH SIDA



The WIOMSA Secretariat hosted Anders Alm and Anna Tjavar from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency on 3 March 2025, for an annual review meeting.

The discussion covered the substantial progress on the SCALABLE and Marine and Coastal Science for Management programmes, updates from Sida, the upcoming WIOMSA Symposium, strategic governance, financial planning, partnership strengthening and aligning regional projects with global priorities.

A NEW ERA FOR OCEAN GOVERNANCE IN TANZANIA | *By Ritha Said*



Tanzania's 1 400 km coastline supports rich marine biodiversity and millions of livelihoods, from small-scale fishers to tourism. However, illegal fishing, pollution and climate change threaten this balance. To address these challenges, stakeholders convened in Dar es Salaam on 18 and 19 February 2025, for the Ocean Governance Forum (Tanzania Chapter), marking a pivotal shift in the country's approach to ocean management.

A bold vision for ocean governance

More than a policy discussion, the forum was a transformative gathering; uniting government ministries, conservation organizations, academia, private sector leaders and coastal communities. Organized by the National Environment Management Council, with support from WIOMSA and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the event attracted over 130 participants. A key message was that the future of Tanzania's ocean depends on a collaborative, science-driven and community-centred approach.

Experts emphasized aligning national policies with global commitments such as Agenda 2063 of the African Union and Sustainable Development Goal 14 (life below water).

Tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing emerged as a priority, with solutions including stronger enforcement, advanced monitoring technologies and deeper engagement with local fishers. Discussions also explored marine spatial planning, real-time data tracking and community-based conservation to balance economic growth and marine protection.

Coastal communities played a crucial role, sharing their experiences and advocating for inclusive decision-making. Fishers, women's cooperatives and tourism operators stressed that conservation efforts will only succeed if local stakeholders actively participate and benefit.

Turning vision into action

The forum resulted in concrete commitments:

- **Establishing the Tanzania Ocean Governance Forum** as a permanent multistakeholder platform for policy development, collaboration and accountability.
- **An official launch on World Ocean Day** (8 June 2025), featuring nationwide activities like coastal cleanups, policy dialogues and educational campaigns.
- **Developing a charter and work plan** outlining short- and medium-term ocean governance priorities.
- **Creating a dedicated website** and branding materials, including a logo, to establish the forum's identity.
- **Inviting key institutions** from various sectors to serve as founding members and ensure diverse representation.

A unifying message emerged:

“Bahari Yetu, Urithi Wetu” (Our Ocean, Our Heritage), reinforcing the shared responsibility of all Tanzanians to safeguard marine resources.



PROTECTING WIO'S CORALS: REEF FUTURES 2024

| *By Joshua Wambugu, Luca Saponari, Ewout Knoester, Nadeem Nazurally and Gildas Todinanahary*



The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region was well-represented at the recent **REEF FUTURES 2024** symposium, the fourth global gathering dedicated to advancing the science and practice of coral reef restoration.



Organized by the [Coral Restoration Consortium](#) the symposium was held from 9 to 13 December 2024 near Cancún, Mexico. The event drew over 800 leading coral reef practitioners, managers, researchers, scientists and entrepreneurs from 66 countries to share their latest scientific findings, techniques and innovative approaches to coral reef restoration.

Participants from Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles, Mauritius, Mozambique and Madagascar represented the WIO region.

Against a backdrop of increasing threats to coral reef ecosystems worldwide due to human pressures and climate change, a strong call to action resonated throughout the symposium.



REEF
FUTURES

Coral
Restoration
Consortium

The week was filled with interactive and engaging sessions, including plenary talks, poster presentations, technology and tool exhibitions, region-based practitioner lunch meetings and valuable networking forums. **From the outset, the symposium emphasized the critical importance of including local communities in coral reef restoration.**





WIO region lunch meeting with representatives from Coral Restoration Consortium

Scientists and other experts offered a hopeful outlook, while dissecting the criticisms surrounding reef restoration and its future.

Acknowledging that coral reef restoration inventions are at different stages, with some transitioning from trials to steady growth, a key question was how to avoid measuring success based on “Instagramification” – focusing on superficial visual metrics like newly constructed structures and a few outplanted corals.

The wealth of existing scientific evidence and the value of critical dialogue for scalability were highlighted as critical resources.



The symposium culminated in a powerful performance by the REEF FUTURES Choir with their signature song, 'One REEF More'

Key insights and a call to action for advancing coral reef conservation and restoration were summarized into eight overarching themes:

- Genuine and inclusive engagement of local communities and stakeholders.
- Capacity development on new knowledge and ocean literacy.
- Scalable strategy and management for good governance.
- Knowledge-sharing among practitioners across different levels.
- Robust research and monitoring to inform effective coral reef restoration.
- Adoption of efficient and innovative technologies.
- Securing sustainable funding across different restoration phases.
- Reflection and deliberation on diverse challenges and finding sustainable solutions.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

| By Katie Jewett and Obakeng Molelu



Representatives from across the Indian Ocean attended the Cultural Resources and Sustainability Conference in California, co-hosted by the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability and Graduate School of Business.

The event, held from 17 to 19 March 2025, brought together researchers, community groups, government officials and practitioners to discuss integrating cultural heritage into marine spatial planning, with a focus on island communities in the Indian Ocean.

The two-day workshop provided a broad overview of cultural attributes, including tangible, intangible and biocultural heritage in the Indian Ocean.

Josheena Naggea, a co-organizer of the conference and the Blue Food Futures Programme Manager, emphasized the tools required for transformation, including participatory research and inclusive methodologies. He emphasized that for real transformative change, we need to shift from a mindset of domination to one of care.

Panelists, Obakeng Molelu, Xavier Basurto and Nicole Franz from Stanford University spoke about the role of culture and breaking cultural norms in small-scale fisheries; the challenges and opportunities for including culture in marine spatial planning; blue economy strategies and policy; and the inclusion of fishing communities in coastal area management.

Conference attendees also visited Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station to meet with researchers and tour the facilities, engaging in conceptual discussions on how to safeguard the region's cultural heritage for global communities.

Krish Seetah, co-organizer of the conference and a Stanford professor of environmental social sciences, of oceans, and of anthropology said: ***"We want to make cultural heritage central to how we provide a sustainable future for islanders and protect the Indian Ocean region"***. He proposed the integration of as many experts as possible from across the globe.



LES JOURNALISTES AU CŒUR DE L'ÉCONOMIE BLEUE ET CIRCULAIRE | Par Karina Zarazafy

Rompre avec le récit d'une Afrique victime et en faire une source de solutions durables. Tel est le rôle fièrement endossé par les journalistes africains participant à l'atelier sur l'économie bleue et circulaire organisé par Africa 21 à Zanzibar du 10 au 14 mars.



Une quinzaine de journalistes scientifiques et environnementaux des pays de l'océan indien occidental (OIO) sont actuellement réunis à Zanzibar pour approfondir leurs connaissances sur l'économie circulaire et l'économie bleue. Le but étant de les outiller pour mieux analyser, rapporter et sensibiliser le public sur les enjeux de ces deux domaines de l'économie.

Former pour informer

« Passer de l'image de l'Afrique victime à celle de l'Afrique comme source de solutions ». C'est en ces mots que Barkha Mossaë, Regenerative Blue Economy Manager au sein de l'[Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature \(UICN\)](#), a déterminé l'objectif de cet atelier de Zanzibar, à destination des journalistes. Initié par l'association [Africa 21](#) et soutenu par des acteurs tels que la [Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association \(WIOMSA\)](#), l'[Ambassade de la Suisse en Tanzanie](#), le programme [SMEP](#) ou Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution, ou encore

la [Conférence des Nations unies sur le commerce et le développement \(UNCTAD\)](#), cet atelier de 5 jours fera intervenir de nombreux experts. Ce, afin de sensibiliser les journalistes et communicateurs aux défis et opportunités de l'économie circulaire et bleue à Zanzibar et dans l'océan Indien. Ce programme s'inscrit dans une dynamique de transition vers un modèle plus durable, en mettant en avant les aspects environnementaux, socio-économiques et de gouvernance. « Toutes nos activités de 2025 seront consacrées à sensibiliser et à aider les journalistes à développer une expertise de base ainsi qu'à accéder à des experts afin de mieux couvrir les enjeux de l'économie circulaire et de l'économie bleue » a soutenu Julien Chambolle, Secrétaire général d'Africa 21, durant son discours.

Un levier économique

Les pays et îles de l'Océan indien occidental dépendent en effet de ce grand espace maritime qui les unit. A titre d'exemple, en Zanzibar, pays hôte de cet atelier, l'économie dépend en grande partie du tourisme et

de la pêche. Selon Captain Hamad Bakar, Secrétaire permanent du ministère zanzibarien de l'économie bleue et de la pêche, « le tourisme et la pêche constituent la colonne vertébrale d'un développement socio-économique qui assure la subsistance d'environ 2/3 de la population ». Toujours d'après ses explications, la part de la pêche dans le Produit Intérieur Brut (PIB) du Zanzibar « est de 4 à 8% » tandis que celle du tourisme est « à plus de 29% ». Il a également souligné le fait que « 99% du commerce international de Zanzibar se fait par voie maritime ». Illustrant ainsi la place prépondérante occupée par ces domaines dans la vie du pays et de sa population.

Réinventer le récit

« Nous devons absolument changer le système et les journalistes ont un important rôle à jouer dans ce processus » a insisté Barkha Mossaë lors de son intervention. Cet atelier de Zanzibar entend en effet aider les journalistes à comprendre les enjeux du changement climatique et du développement durable dans les pays de la région, tout en leur permettant d'explorer les principes de l'économie bleue et circulaire ainsi que leurs applications concrètes. Les activités durant la semaine iront ainsi de la cartographie de la gouvernance internationale et des processus de négociation en la matière, à des visites de terrain afin d'observer les initiatives locales. Cet événement fournit en effet un programme approfondi afin d'appuyer les journalistes africains dans ce processus de « changement de système » souligné par la Regenerative Blue Economy Manager de l'UICN.

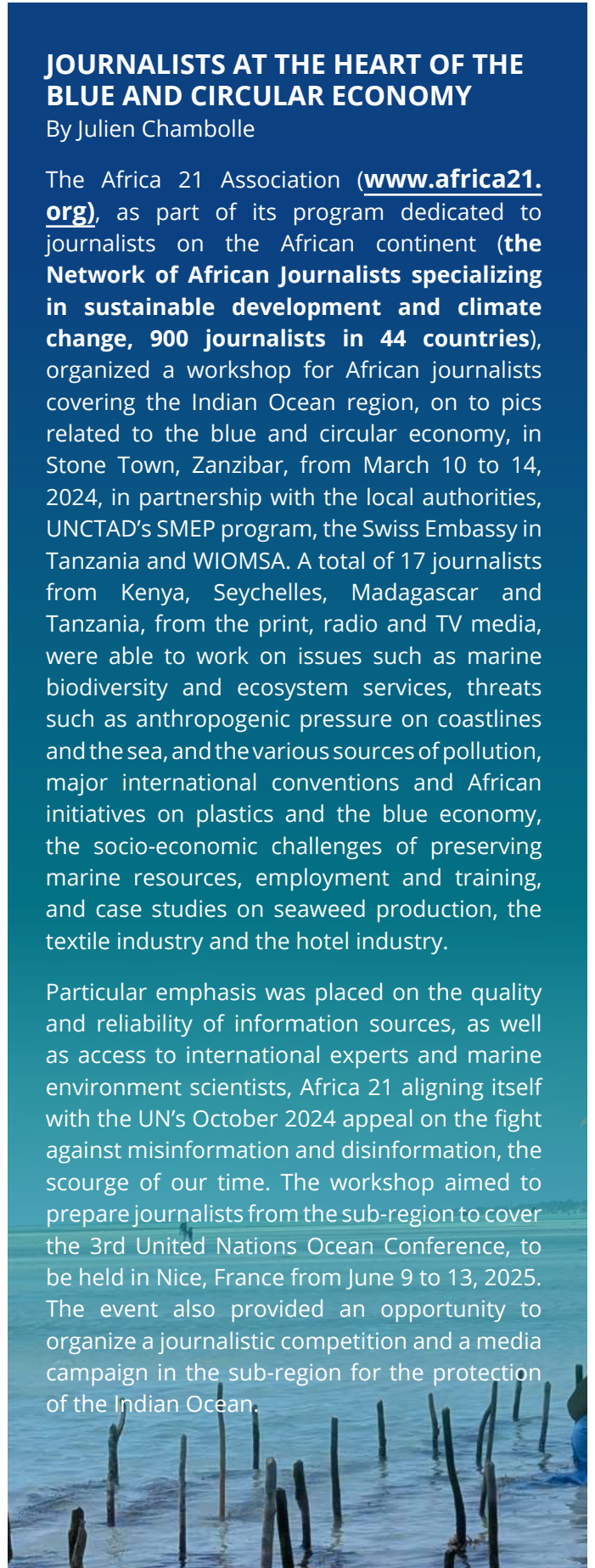
« En fin de compte, tout se résume à la narration et au récit que nous faisons de nous-mêmes et de notre situation dans le monde » a-t-elle soulevé. Selon cette experte de l'UICN, les médias auraient tendance à dépeindre l'Afrique et les pays du Sud en général, comme des victimes. Ainsi, incomberait-il aux journalistes africains de « rompre cette tendance » et de parler du continent comme « une région hautement investissable, qui produit réellement de la richesse et des solutions ». Notamment car ces récits et narrations ont un énorme impact sur « la capacité de la région à accéder aux divers mécanismes de financement climatique », les pays y étant jugés « à risque ».

JOURNALISTS AT THE HEART OF THE BLUE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

By Julien Chambolle

The Africa 21 Association (www.africa21.org), as part of its program dedicated to journalists on the African continent (**the Network of African Journalists specializing in sustainable development and climate change, 900 journalists in 44 countries**), organized a workshop for African journalists covering the Indian Ocean region, on topics related to the blue and circular economy, in Stone Town, Zanzibar, from March 10 to 14, 2024, in partnership with the local authorities, UNCTAD's SMEP program, the Swiss Embassy in Tanzania and WIOMSA. A total of 17 journalists from Kenya, Seychelles, Madagascar and Tanzania, from the print, radio and TV media, were able to work on issues such as marine biodiversity and ecosystem services, threats such as anthropogenic pressure on coastlines and the sea, and the various sources of pollution, major international conventions and African initiatives on plastics and the blue economy, the socio-economic challenges of preserving marine resources, employment and training, and case studies on seaweed production, the textile industry and the hotel industry.

Particular emphasis was placed on the quality and reliability of information sources, as well as access to international experts and marine environment scientists, Africa 21 aligning itself with the UN's October 2024 appeal on the fight against misinformation and disinformation, the scourge of our time. The workshop aimed to prepare journalists from the sub-region to cover the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference, to be held in Nice, France from June 9 to 13, 2025. The event also provided an opportunity to organize a journalistic competition and a media campaign in the sub-region for the protection of the Indian Ocean.



SCIENCE CAFÉ: WOMEN AND THE OCEAN

| By *Jemima Mawia Musyoki, Susana Kihia, Sarah Ater, and Jacqueline Uku*



Photo Credit: Peter Thuo

Science Cafés, a collaboration between the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) and Alliance Française (AF) Mombasa, have been bridging the gap between ocean scientists and the community in Mombasa, making complex scientific ideas accessible.

Unlike formal lectures, these cafés encourage dialogue, allowing participants to ask questions and express opinions in a relaxed setting. On March 27, 2025, the theme was “Women and the Ocean,” extending the celebration of International Women’s Day, which focused on “Accelerate Action.” Discussions centered around gender, poverty, and marine spatial planning, as well as trends in women’s involvement in fishing.

The session commenced with Dr. Jacqueline Uku’s presentation on poverty, gender, and marine livelihoods. She revealed that nearshore fishing generates more income for women than mariculture, underscoring the importance of empowering women in marine economic activities and preserving the nearshore areas they occupy through effective marine spatial planning (MSP).

Fridah Munyi, a socio-economics expert from KMFRI, addressed gender equality in the marine sector, challenging the notion that it is merely a women’s issue. Using visual aids, she illustrated discrepancies between perceived and actual equality, urging participants to examine women’s roles in marine spaces.

Mr. Edward Waiyaki from KMFRI discussed emerging trends in women’s participation in fishing, noting their increasing leadership roles in Beach Management Unit (BMU) elections and ownership of fishing boats. He highlighted success stories of women achieving financial independence through fishing, further emphasizing the need for education and capacity development.

The interactive panel session prompted thought-provoking questions. Attendees discussed the rising presence of youth and women in leadership, citing examples from Matondoni, where women actively participate in KMFRI projects. The panel acknowledged the ongoing challenge of relegating women in leadership to secretarial roles but emphasized that progress is being made.

Participants shared the importance of scientists collaborating with communities to understand positive cultural influences and highlighted the power of storytelling in driving change. WIOMSA’s Executive Director, Dr. Arthur Tuda, emphasized the need for inclusive gender equality that acknowledges the strengths of existing cultural structures.

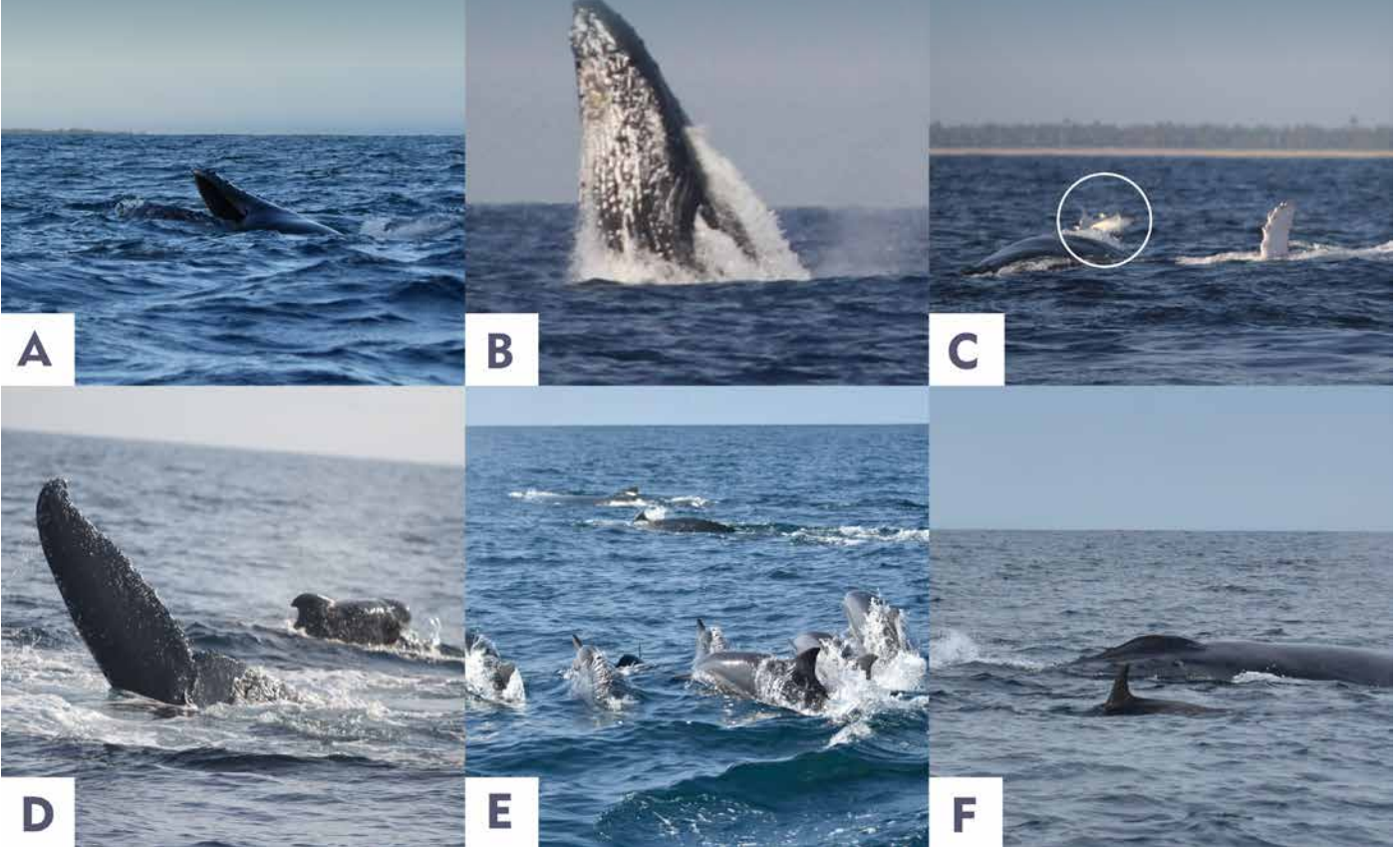
Some participants noted the natural role women play in child-rearing and the challenges they face in returning to careers post-motherhood. Dr. Uku stressed the importance of policies that support women re-entering the workforce, while participants appreciated men’s contributions to creating supportive work environments.

This hybrid edition of the Science Café offered a platform for meaningful conversations about gender in marine science, highlighting both challenges and progress. Continued empowerment and responsive policy frameworks are essential for enhancing women’s contributions to the marine sector.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RECENTLY PUBLISHED PAPERS

NEW EVIDENCE ON HUMPBACK WHALES | *By Alex Wowra*

Humpback whales during feeding events documented in Mtwara in August 2023, demonstrating motion characteristic for (A) lateral and (B) vertical lunge feeding; (C) yellowfin tuna leaping out of the water in the proximity to humpback whales; interspecies interaction – (D) short-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), (E) Spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) and (F) Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) near potentially feeding humpback whales.



A recent study published in *Ethology Ecology & Evolution* presents the first recorded instance of humpback whales feeding in their East African breeding grounds. Conducted by researchers from the Tanzania Cetacean Programme, the Bazaruto Centre for Scientific Studies (BCSS), the Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MPRU), and the DMAD-Marine Mammals Research Association, the study provides new insights into whale behaviour in the region.

The study was conducted by Ekaterina Kalashnikova (Tanzania Cetacean Programme and BCSS), Davis Godfrey Orio (MPRU) and scientific supervisor Aylin Akkaya (DMAD-Marine Mammals Research Association).

Humpback whales typically migrate between warm tropical breeding grounds and high-latitude feeding areas. However, recent research suggests they may also feed outside their main foraging zones. While this behaviour has been observed in other Southern Hemisphere populations, it has now been scientifically documented in Tanzania for the first time.

During boat-based surveys in August 2023 and 2024 at MPRU, researchers observed at least two humpback whales engaging in vertical and lateral lunge feeding, a high-energy foraging strategy. The presence of toothed whales, schools of tuna and seabird aggregations further supports evidence of active feeding.

These findings highlight the oceanographic productivity of Mnazi Bay and similar areas in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). Feeding whales play a key role as ecosystem engineers, contributing to nutrient cycling and biodiversity. Their behavioural flexibility may also indicate an adaptive response to environmental changes

and shifting prey availability, critical for humpback whale population recovery in the WIO.

The researchers' observations provide an important baseline, but further research is necessary to understand the drivers and frequency of supplementary feeding in WIO waters. Expanding surveys, using acoustic monitoring for feeding calls, and analysing prey abundance will help clarify its extent and ecological implications.

BCSS, located along the humpback whales' migratory corridor in the Bazaruto Archipelago, remains a vital research hub for studying marine megafauna. Collaboration from researchers, conservationists and institutions to further explore the role of East African waters in the ecology of migrating humpback whales is welcome.



READ THE FULL PAPER:
[Available here](#)

FISHERIES SUSTAINABILITY THREATENED BY IMBALANCED CATCH IN CORAL REEF SEASCAPES

By Timothy McClanahan, Jesse Kosgei and Austin Humphries

Sustaining fisheries is a critical global challenge, particularly in tropical regions where reliable stock and yield data are scarce. Most assessments rely on landed fish weights and body lengths, but these metrics may not accurately reflect stock health. Fisheries-independent methods, though more precise, are often costly and underutilized.

As a result, inconsistencies between catch-based and stock-based sustainability assessments persist, complicating efforts to regulate fishing effort and mortality.



The studied fisheries ecosystem is a shallow marine lagoon located within a coral reef island environment in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. This unique lagoon is approximately 30 km wide and 200 km long, spanning Dar es Salaam in the south to Shimoni-Vanga in Kenya. It is intersected by the deep Pemba Channel (~750 m) and lies leeward of the larger inhabited islands of Zanzibar and Pemba.

Characterized by low wave energy, cool waters and mild temperature variations, the lagoon experiences minimal acute thermal stress. Its coral and fish assemblages are distinct from those in ocean-exposed, windward environments. East African fisheries, including those in this region, are known for high variability in management effectiveness and are often considered overfished based on ecological and fishery assessments.

The study focused on fish communities within seven fisheries reserves in the lagoon, as well as fish landings recorded at five shoreline sites on the Kenyan side of the international border.

Coral reefs, vital for food security and shoreline protection, are increasingly threatened by unsustainable fishing. This study compared multiple sustainability metrics, including stock biomass, recovery rates, landed catches, gear use and fish length measurements. Using a 45-year dataset from seven fisheries reserves, researchers established a community biomass recovery timeline and evaluated various sustainability indicators.

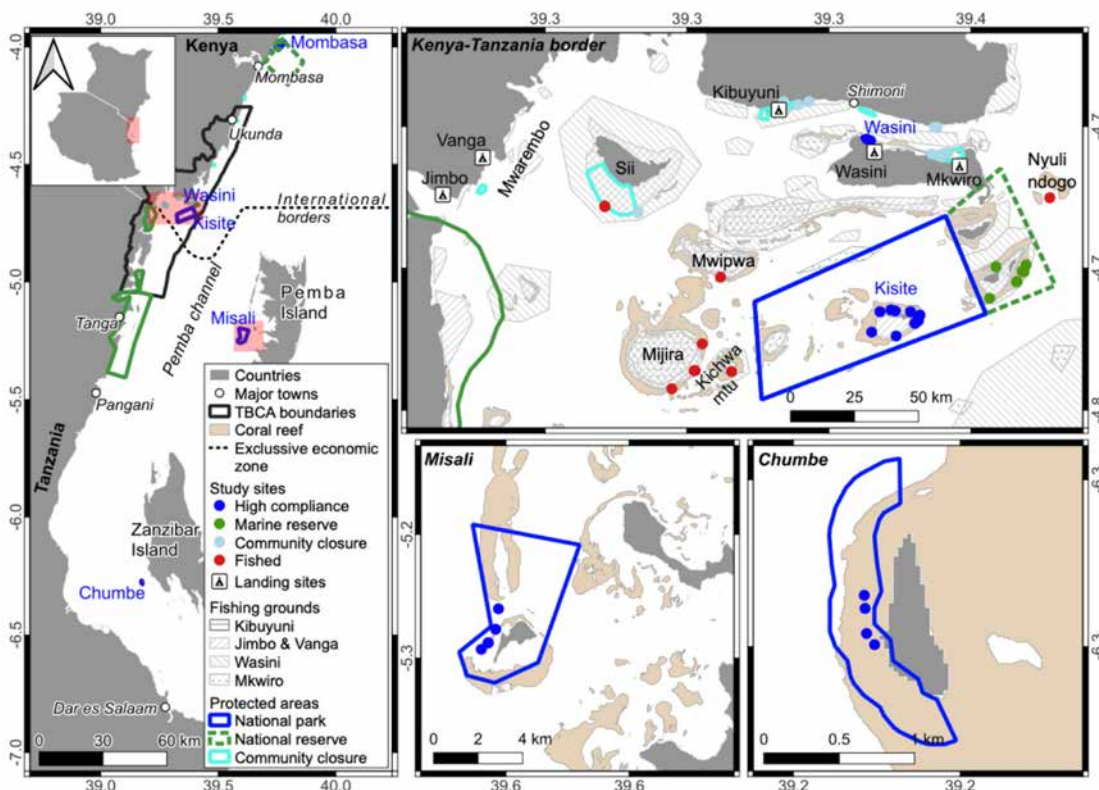
Findings revealed a wide range of potential maximum sustainable yields, with estimates between 1.1 to 3.9 tons/km² per year. However, actual landings were significantly lower, averaging 1.48 tons/km² per year. This discrepancy stemmed from shifts in species composition and an imbalance between production potential and capture rates. High-value species such as snappers, unicorn fish, sweetlips and goatfish declined, while more resilient herbivorous species like rabbitfish and parrotfish increased in catch samples. These findings suggest that certain species require specific habitat protections and reserve characteristics to thrive.

Length-based assessments also proved inadequate, with only a small fraction of species having sufficient sample sizes for meaningful sustainability evaluations. Out of 144 species examined, only seven met length-based sustainability criteria, and just three met spawning potential ratio thresholds.

To enhance sustainability, future research should explore the effects of variability in spillover and species-specific production potential. Management efforts should prioritize the recovery of species abundant in unfished areas but underrepresented in fishery yields. By refining sustainability metrics and adopting ecosystem-based approaches, fisheries management can better align with conservation goals, ensuring long-term productivity and resilience in coral reef ecosystems.



READ THE FULL PAPER:
[Available here](#)



Map showing the location of fishing communities and their landing sites and fishing grounds. Included are locations of fish stocks and production censuses in fisheries reserves. Insets include the larger marine lagoonal region and the location of two studied fisheries reserves, Misali and Chumbe Islands, associated with the Pemba and Zanzibar islands. Data presented were collected in this area between 1995 and 2023

NETWORKS: UPDATES FROM WiMS

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE:

EXPERIENCES IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WIO BLUE ECONOMY

In honor of the International Women's Day 2025, the Network for Women in Marine Science (WiMS), in partnership with the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), hosted an insightful webinar titled *"Equality in the Western Indian Ocean Blue Economy: For ALL Women and Girls."*

Critical focus areas of WiMS

- Capacity Building**
Gain strong technical skills through WIOMSA grants and programmes with partners
- Mentorship**
Build intentional mentoring relationships that impart greater skills
- Leadership**
Build informed, influential decision makers with national and global influence

The session, which was attended by over 150 participants drawn from the WIO region and beyond provided a platform for discussing the critical need and practical actions to bridge the gap between policy and implementation in marine science. Moderated by Dr. Zikhona Tywabi-Ngeva, the present Chair of WiMS, the discussion featured a distinguished panel of women leaders in ocean science as well as marine conservation and management. Stephanie Achieng, Thabisa Sikobi, Tiana Rahagalaga, and Loubna Hamidi each brought their personal and powerful insights from their experiences working in Kenya, South Africa, Madagascar and Comoros. Their presentations shed light on the realities of women in marine conservation and the journey towards gender equality.

A recurring theme that emerged in the conversation was the persistent gap between policy and practice. The speakers highlighted systemic challenges, including limited access to decision-making roles, resource constraints, and the need for targeted policy interventions. They emphasized that while gender equality had been recognized in policy frameworks, effective implementation remained a significant hurdle. Notwithstanding, the panelists presented innovative strategies that have been successfully applied to address those challenges at local, national, and regional levels.

They described capacity-building programs, mentorship initiatives, and community-led conservation efforts that prioritize women's leadership.

During the interactive session between the speakers and participants, it became clear that stronger collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and grassroots organizations to ensure policies translate into meaningful action is critical for gainful progress. Indeed, the webinar was fundamental in defining practical actions that create momentum towards equality.

The first in a series of two webinars in the lead-up to the WIOMSA symposium in September 2025, **the insights gathered have inspired a special session where stakeholders will share more lessons as they explore actionable pathways for empowering women in policy implementation** and advancing gender mainstreaming within the blue economy. Look out for the second webinar in June and the mini symposium at the WIOMSA symposium.

Access the webinar recording.

AN EXCITING RESEARCH EXPEDITION IN MOZAMBIQUE



Ceiça Chioze, the Women in Marine Science (WiMS) country representative for Mozambique, made significant contributions to a prestigious *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* research survey which took place in Mozambican waters in February.

Her participation highlights the vital role women play in advancing marine research and conservation.

From 9 to 25 February 2025, Ceiça was the cruise co-leader for the first leg of a groundbreaking 16-day research expedition focused on the early life stages of marine resources in Mozambique. The survey concentrated on the Sofala Bank, one of the most productive and critical ecosystems in the region and a crucial fishing ground for shrimp resources. Researchers examined spawning grounds, nursery areas, the composition and genetic diversity of the plankton community – including fish and shrimp eggs and larvae – and the environmental factors driving the dynamics of the ecosystem.

Building on this success, Ceiça participated in the second leg of the *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* survey as co-leader of the plankton team from 28 February to 31 March 2025. This phase focused on studying demersal and pelagic resources along the coast of Mozambique. The *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* will continue the research in Tanzanian and Kenyan waters in April 2025.

WiMS is immensely proud to see Ceiça working in key leadership positions on a world renowned research vessel and to witness her dedication and impactful contributions to marine research in Mozambique.

SCIENCE AT THE SEA: EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN

The OceanX and OceanQuest “Around Africa Expedition”, endorsed by the United Nations Ocean Decade (2021–2030), aims to advance ocean science and capacity-building. Together with the Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean, it trained Africa’s early career ocean professionals (ECOPs) in deep-sea science, including oceanography, environmental DNA analysis, acoustic mapping and science communication. The expedition also engaged students through hands-on educational programmes, OceanXplorer tours for local students and interactive XR experiences to promote ocean literacy.

The expedition consisted of three major legs and stopped at Moroni (Comoros), Walters Shoal (Madagascar), Agulhas Plateau (South Africa), Walvis Bay (Namibia), Gran Canaria (Canary Islands) and Mindelo (Cabo Verde) and Spain. The expedition brought together more than 15 ECOPs from across Africa, fostering collaboration and skills development.

These were some of the comments from young and early-career explorers:



“ This expedition reinforced my commitment to marine science, particularly in mapping and studying Africa’s deep-sea features. As a young woman, engaging with cutting-edge technology and contributing to vital biological surveys was especially empowering. Such experiences are crucial for shaping future ocean leaders and driving meaningful scientific advancements.” Doreen Walter Tanzania

“ Collaborating with diverse professionals showed me the power of teamwork in ocean conservation. Everyone has a role in ensuring sustainability. My time on the OceanXplorer was life-changing, sparking my curiosity and deepening my commitment to marine science and ocean protection.”

Christian Y. Masagati, Tanzania

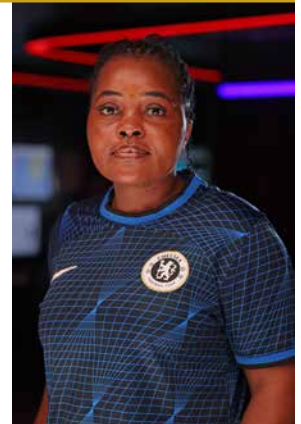


“Through the Ocean Explorer program, I gained hands-on experience with advanced marine research tools, discovering new organisms and connecting with experts. This deepened my passion for marine exploration. Dr Melissa Garren broadened my understanding of key topics, including ocean justice, deep-sea mining, fossil fuels, hydrogen fuel, desalination, pollution, fisheries protection, spatial planning and the blue economy, shaping my perspective on sustainable ocean management.” Burhan Sijali, Tanzania



“This expedition taught me the power of collaboration in marine science, uniting diverse cultures through a shared passion for the ocean. I also realized the crucial role of media in science communication, making environmental issues accessible to all. Young scientists must seize opportunities to grow and support others who lack access. By working together, we can protect our blue planet and ensure a sustainable future for our oceans.” Ratsizafy Michel Rahajanirina, Madagascar

“Aboard OceanX, I built on my experience in marine mammal protection and expanded my PhD focus on blue carbon in kelp forests and mangroves. Training in ocean carbon cycling, CTD profiling, and eDNA sampling strengthened my research on carbon sequestration and ocean stratification. Media training enhanced my science communication skills. This expedition reinforced the power of interdisciplinary research in tackling climate change and promoting ocean justice.” Loide ndilli Amupala, Namibia



“The Africa Expedition was a life-changing experience, allowing me to explore the unknown ocean with advanced tools like eDNA, remotely operated vehicles and submarines. As an ECOP from the WIO region, I see science communication as crucial for shaping policy decisions. The next five years of the UN Ocean Decade must focus on capacity-building and mentorship. We have one ocean connecting us all and collaboration is key to a sustainable future.” Frank Mirobo, Tanzania

“The OceanX Early Career Explorer’s Expedition was a transformative experience that deepened my passion for marine research and conservation. Collaborating with diverse experts highlighted the power of cross-disciplinary teamwork in tackling ocean challenges. Deploying advanced technology and conducting biological studies reinforced the value of integrated research. Inspired by OceanX’s commitment to ocean literacy, I am more determined than ever to advocate for sustainable ocean management and responsible stewardship.”

Sheila Ngang’anyi, Kenya



WIOMSA is dedicated to connecting people with the ocean and strengthening partnerships to enhance the capacity of ECOPs in Africa. This initiative empowers early-career researchers to lead the UN Ocean Decade’s implementation and prepare for the [WIOMSA Symposium](#).



EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION TO LEAD OCEAN CONSERVATION



The [University of Dodoma](#) through its Aquatic Sciences and Aquaculture unit, conducted a unique, intensive fieldwork training programme for more than 300 youth, focusing on ocean conservation.

The programme aimed to bridge classroom learning with real-world experience, exposing students to diverse ecosystems, from freshwater rivers and lakes to the Indian Ocean. Activities included water quality monitoring, biodiversity assessments, estuaries interaction and habitat restoration (coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves) across locations from Mtera in the Iringa region of Tanzania, to Mbegani in the Pwani region of Tanzania.

The hands-on training focused on sustainable practices, teaching students innovative techniques for monitoring aquatic species and assessing human impact. Working

with expert trainers, students gained insights into environmental research, policy development and science communication, empowering them to raise awareness and engage stakeholders in conservation efforts. The experience deepened their understanding of environmental challenges and the need for integrated conservation strategies.

The University of Dodoma is committed to advancing knowledge through regional partnerships and championing training initiatives to develop the next generation of early-career conservationists. The next cohort will begin work in June/July 2025.

A NEW ISSUE OF WIOJMS HAS BEEN PUBLISHED

The latest issue of the Western Indian Ocean Journal of Marine Science (WIOJMS) is now available! [Volume 23, Issue 2](#) brings together a wealth of research contributions that delve into critical marine science topics in the Western Indian Ocean region.

1. [Influence of Covid-19 restrictions on the status of mangrove vegetation in coastal Kenya.](#) Mumini Dzoga, Cosmas Munga, Fathima Azmiya, Kevin Tole, Clarice Kombe and Ali Shee
2. [Seasonal difference in marine litter along the coast of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.](#) Florence Jovinary Peter and Anale Moraes Rocha
3. [Seasonal dynamics of trichodesmium and phytoplankton communities in the eastern Arabian Sea: Winter vs spring inter-monsoon.](#) Anima Tirkey, Hitesh Solanki, Aswathy Vijaya Krishna, Mini Raman, Syed Moosa Ali and Arvind Sahay
4. [Remote sensing of coral reef habitats in Madagascar using Sentinel-2 satellite images.](#) Aina Le Don Nomenisoa, Gildas Todinanahary, Hubert Zafimampiravo Edwin, Toky Razakarisoa, John Bunyan Israel, Saverio Raseta, Henitsoa Jaonalison, Jamal Mahafina and Igor Eeckhaut
5. [Economic viability of seaweed and sea cucumber culture using integrated multitrophic aquaculture systems in Zanzibar, Tanzania.](#) Markus Bernard, Hafzur Rahman, William Mangile, Flower E. Msuya and Andreas Kunzmann
6. [Uncovering the relationship between light intensity and *Tripneustes gratilla* \(collector seurchin\): implications for aquaculture.](#) Shamira Payet, Bas de Vos, Maria Rose, Danilla Adonis, Aubrey Lesperance and Thomas Hecht
7. [Unlocking the therapeutic treasures of seagrasses: Antioxidant and antimicrobial activities of *Halophila stipulacea*, *Halodule uninervis*, and *Thalassodendron ciliatum*.](#) Bhuvaneshwaree Surroop, Nadeem Nazurally, Deena Ramful-Baboolall and Arvind Ruggoo
8. [Metal pollution in mangrove ecosystems in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.](#) Prisca Mziray and Ismael A. Kimirei
9. [New record of the pygmy pipehorse *Cylix* sp. from La Réunion, southwestern Indian Ocean \(*Teleostei: Syngnathidae*\).](#) Ronald Fricke and Christophe Cadet
10. [Participation of women in the blue economy value chain at Kilifi, Kenya.](#) Solomon Njenga
11. [Spatio-temporal variation of macroalgal assemblages in southwestern Madagascar.](#) Claudia Rodine, Henitsoa Jaonalison, Jean Mark Kira, André Rakotoarimanana, Lantoasinoro Nirinarisoa Ranivoarivelo, Cicelin Rakotomahazo, Gildas Boleslas Georges Todinanahary, Gaëtan Tsiresy, Aina Le Don Nomenisoa, Fidèle Rakotonjanahary, Igor Eeckhaut, Mara Edouard Remanevy, Jamie Spencer Obe, Richard Rasolofonirina and Thierry Lavitra



[READ THE LATEST ISSUE HERE](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT

13TH WIOMSA SYMPOSIUM: NEW ABSTRACT SUBMISSION RECORD!

A milestone high of 1195 abstract submissions for #WIOMSA2025!

Science as the Foundation for Decision Making

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Photo Credit: January Ndagala

We are excited to announce A NEW RECORD FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS for the upcoming 13th WIOMSA Symposium! A total of 1,195 abstracts were received, marking the highest number in WIOMSA's history.

This impressive array includes 899 oral presentations and 296 poster presentations, showcasing the extensive depth and breadth of marine science, policy development, and community engagement in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. These contributions are vital for informed decision-making, promoting regional collaboration, and supporting coastal community stewardship.

Stay tuned for feedback on abstract acceptance and updates on registration dates. For more information about the symposium, visit:

<https://symposium.wiomsa.org/>

For more information on the Symposium, visit:

<https://symposium.wiomsa.org/>

Thank you for your engagement and participation!