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NEWS BRIEF



Genetic tools for conservation- Workshop participants collecting tissue samples from various fish and shellfish species, gaining hands-on experience in sample collection, DNA extraction and rapid testing methods in the laboratory

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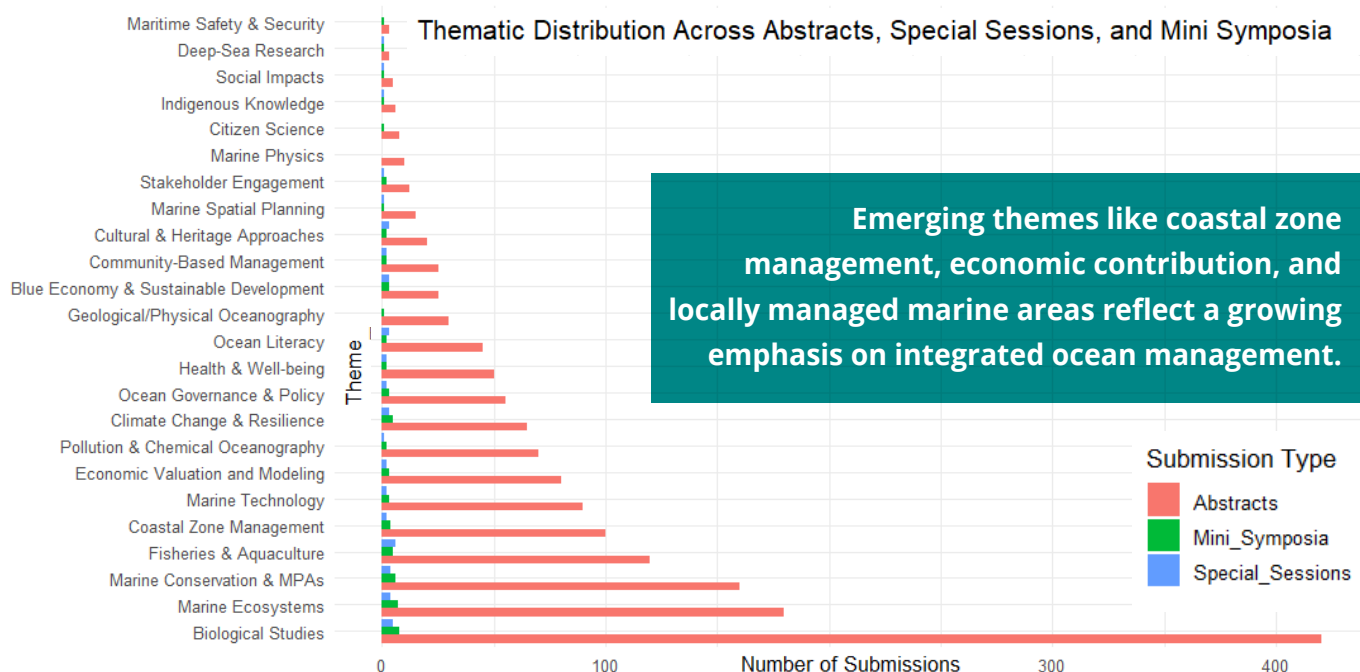
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A SURGE IN MARINE SCIENCE: WIOMSA'S 13TH SYMPOSIUM SETS NEW RECORDS



The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is surging with scientific momentum as WIOMSA prepares to host its 13th Scientific Symposium in Mombasa, Kenya, from 28 September to 3 October 2025. With a record-breaking 1,190 abstracts, 55 special sessions, and 32 mini-symposia submitted, the event is set to be WIOMSA's most dynamic and inclusive yet.

A closer look at the thematic distribution reveals the heartbeat of marine science in the region. **Biological Studies lead the way with more than 400 submissions**, underscoring the foundational role of biodiversity research in conservation and ecosystem understanding.

Following closely are Marine Ecosystems and Marine Conservation & MPAs, reflecting **a strong focus on ecosystem dynamics and area-based conservation** – clearly influenced by global targets like 30x30 and growing regional commitments to biodiversity protection.

Fisheries & Aquaculture also attracted significant attention, highlighting the sector's socio-economic importance and the urgency of sustainable management. Similarly, robust engagement in Coastal Zone Management points to the region's increasing interest in integrated approaches that connect land, sea, and community resilience.

Emerging and cross-cutting themes such as **Marine Technology, Economic Valuation, Pollution & Chemical Oceanography, Climate Change & Resilience, and Ocean Governance & Policy** received moderate but meaningful representation. These areas reveal a shift toward science-policy linkages and innovative tools for sustainable ocean use.

However, some critical areas remain underrepresented. Topics like Maritime Safety & Security, Deep-Sea Research, Social Impacts, Indigenous Knowledge, Citizen Science, and Marine Physics saw relatively low submission numbers. This suggests a need for more capacity-building, investment, and collaboration to elevate these fields within the regional research agenda.

As the WIO community prepares to gather in Mombasa, the 13th Symposium promises not only scientific exchange but a collective opportunity to shape a more integrated, inclusive, and impactful marine science landscape for the region.

WIOMSA BOARD OF TRUSTEES CONVENE FOR 47TH MEETING



WIOMSA is currently holding its 47th Board of Trustees Meeting in Mombasa, Kenya. The two-day gathering, from July 3rd to 4th, 2025, provides a crucial platform for WIOMSA's leadership to review ongoing programmes, discuss governance issues, and strategize for upcoming initiatives that will shape the organization's future direction.

The meeting aligns with the start of the new financial year, which officially began on July 1st, 2025, underscoring the Board's commitment to aligning activities with its strategic priorities.

On the first day, governance took center stage as discussions focused on preparations for the upcoming WIOMSA General Assembly. **The Board is actively finalizing election procedures for new members and refining the agenda for this important members' event.** Additionally, progress on key programmes was reviewed, including the second year of the SCALABLE and MASMA initiatives. Presentations highlighted key findings and strategic recommendations for the final year of these projects. The Board also approved the certification of Marine Protected Area (MPA) practitioners through the WIO-COMPAS programme, reaffirming WIOMSA's commitment to enhancing regional capacity. Further discussions centered on the performance and investment strategies

of the WIOMSA Trust Fund, with a focus on ensuring sustainable financial growth.

On day two, the Board is engaging with the regional Steering Committee for the upcoming 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium, a flagship event endorsed by the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. **Expected to attract approximately 1,000 participants from across the region and beyond, the symposium serves as a vital platform for scientific collaboration, policy dialogue, and knowledge exchange.** The meeting includes strategic discussions with key partners such as the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, and IOC-Africa. These collaborations are essential for enriching the symposium's programme and broadening its outreach, ensuring that the event addresses regional priorities and fosters meaningful engagement.

GENETIC TOOLS HELP COMBAT ILLEGAL FISHING IN INDIAN OCEAN

The workshop equipped participants with genetic tools to better detect and prevent IUU fishing practices, thus protecting marine biodiversity and local livelihoods.

Scientists, enforcement officers and conservationists from across the Western Indian Ocean gathered for a specialized training workshop to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing



A five-day regional workshop in Dar es Salaam in May brought together scientists, enforcement officers and conservationists from the Western Indian Ocean to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Organized by WIOMSA, the School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology at the University of Dar es Salaam, and funded by the Blue Nature Alliance, the event equipped participants with genetic tools to better detect and prevent IUU fishing practices, thus protecting marine biodiversity and local livelihoods.

Illegal fishing threatens the region's valuable marine species, which are often traded in forms that are difficult to identify visually. To address this challenge, experts demonstrated innovative technologies, including DNA barcoding, environmental DNA and portable genetic testing devices. These tools allow authorities to accurately identify fish and marine species from small tissue samples or environmental materials, even in complex trade situations.

A highlight of the workshop was a practical field trip to Magogoni Fish Market where participants collected tissue samples from different fish and shellfish species. They gained hands-on experience

in sample collection and DNA extraction, then returned to the laboratory to practice simple DNA extraction methods and conduct rapid tests using portable devices to identify tuna species. This practical approach demonstrated how tools work in real-world enforcement scenarios.

Participants practiced molecular techniques like PCR and sequencing through hands-on lab exercises, learning to interpret genetic data.

Demonstrations of portable sequencing platforms showed how rapid, on-site analysis can transform enforcement capabilities.



A highlight of the workshop was a practical field trip to Magogoni Fish Market where participants collected tissue samples from different fish and shellfish species.

The workshop was co-facilitated by experts from the University of Dar es Salaam's School of Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Technology and Stanford University's Doerr School of Sustainability. This collaboration enabled regional participants to share experiences and learn from international expertise. It identified key challenges in combating IUU fishing, explored ways to strengthen scientific cooperation, and developed plans for a regional IUU Task Force

to coordinate research, build shared marine species databases, and provide ongoing training for enforcement agencies.

Feedback from participants was very positive and many emphasized the practical value of the training. Participants also showed interest in future training on advanced topics such as marine forensics, bioinformatics and the use of environmental DNA.

WORLD FISH BECOMES CGIAR'S NEW AI HUB FOR ASIA | *By Alex Tilley and Pascal Thoya*



The ADHubTeam members at the official launch of the CGIAR ADHub at WorldFish headquarters in Penang, Malaysia

In a significant move towards revolutionizing data-driven aquatic food systems, WorldFish inaugurated the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Asia Digital Hub which is hosted at Worldfish headquarters in Penang, Malaysia.

The ADHub will deploy artificial intelligence (AI), data science and digital tools to reshape food, land and water systems across Asia and the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. As part of CGIAR's Digital Transformation Accelerator network, the hub was launched by CGIAR Chief Scientist Dr Sandra Milach, WorldFish Director General Dr Essam Yassin Mohammed, and WorldFish Digital and Data Science Lead Dr Alex Tilley.

The ADHub will serve as a collaborative platform connecting AI expertise across food system domains and CGIAR centres, including the United Arab Emirates' Advanced Technology Research Council and AI71 lab. Initially focusing on standardized aquatic food system datasets, the hub will leverage existing tools such as Peskas (a near real-time, high-resolution monitoring system for small-scale fisheries) by integrating AI algorithms and learning systems to support decision-makers and stakeholders.

Why the Asia Digital Hub matters for the WIO region

Recent findings from the Dar es Salaam WIO Regional Data Harmonization Workshop, revealed that inconsistent data collection methods and fragmented digital platforms are undermining sustainable fisheries management across the region. The Asia Digital launch offers potential solutions for these longstanding challenges in the WIO region.

- **The ADHub** allows for the continued value enhancement of open-source tools like Peskas, now being integrated into national data collection systems such as Zanzibar's SamakIS system, to deliver real-time information on fishing effort, catch composition and vessel activity functions.
- **By enabling participatory and evidence-based decision-making**, these technologies empower small-scale fishers, enhance openness and help meet country and regional data reporting and marine resource management needs.
- **The ADHub is aligned with the WIO's push for a common digital platform** and can enable the harmonization of fisheries data collection and analysis across borders.

Driving digital innovation in the WIO region

Innovation in the WIO region is more than just the application of novel technology. Digital tools must be co-designed and contextualized with the communities that will use them and contribute to them, to ensure they empower people and institutions. Digital solutions can only respond to the imperatives of those dependent on aquatic food systems through this inclusive process.

WorldFish is currently involved in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique to support communities in fisheries management. Through participatory processes, digital tools are being developed to improve data collection and decision-making, ultimately benefiting the long-term sustainability of small-scale fisheries.

The CGIAR Asia Digital Hub also plays a role in triggering South-South collaboration, linking digital innovation activity between Asia and the WIO region, and among countries in the WIO region.

Dr. Pascal Thoya, Post-Doctoral Fellow and member of the ADHub team, demonstrates digital innovations to visitors during the official launch of the CGIAR Asia Digital Hub at WorldFish headquarters in Penang, Malaysia.



HIFADHI BLU TRAINING PROGRAMMES STRENGTHEN OCEAN CONSERVATION EFFORTS



The Hifadhi Blu Programme held its first Collaborative Design Workshops from 23 April to 3 May.

Management teams from Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Comoros worked together to refine marine protected area (MPA) management strategies. Using systems thinking and stakeholder-led design, each site created tailored approaches for lasting conservation impact.

Facilitated by Advanced Conservation Strategies and supported by WIOMSA, the workshops enabled grantees to **create clear project visions, identify high-leverage interventions, establish monitoring frameworks, and develop site-level capacity needs plans.**

In Mombasa, the Kenya Wildlife Service implemented an inclusive, phased MPA planning process using Kenya's Protected Areas Planning Framework while addressing information gaps and integrating financial sustainability.

The Seychelles Parks and Gardens team used systems tools to improve enforcement and monitoring, emphasizing integrated data use and regional learning. WILDTRUST and partners worked to strengthen the co-management model at Mitsamiouli-Ndroudé MPA in Comoros, highlighting the vital role of community engagement in governance. At South Africa's Addo MPA, South African National Parks developed an integrated strategy against illegal resource use, combining enforcement technology, SCUBA-based ecological monitoring, ranger training and community outreach.

The lessons learned from this first set of workshops will inform future phases, ensuring that every intervention is locally grounded, systems-informed and focused on measurable improvements in MPA effectiveness.

STRENGTHENING OCEAN ACIDIFICATION RESPONSE IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN



Regional Teamwork in Action: Ocean Acidification Writing Group

Ocean acidification (OA), driven by rising atmospheric CO₂ emissions, poses a serious threat to marine ecosystems and coastal communities across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). Given the region's reliance on fisheries for food security and economic resilience, building scientific and institutional capacity to understand and address OA is a top priority.

Regional and national initiatives are gaining momentum. These include establishing **OA monitoring programs, fostering research partnerships, and promoting science-policy engagement to mitigate impacts and support sustainable marine resource management.** In Tanzania, progress is notable through collaborations involving WIOMSA, IUCN's Bahari Mali project, and the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI). Efforts focus on equipping TAFIRI laboratories with advanced technology, strengthening ties with world-class research centers like Sweden's Kristineberg Marine Station, and embedding innovative methodologies in the WIO context.



George Rushingisha (TAFIRI) with Sam Dupont at the Kristineberg Marine Station

Exchange programs are providing practical training, supporting joint research, and enabling postgraduate studies on OA impacts – particularly on reef fisheries and mariculture. These initiatives help define regional research priorities, generate policy-relevant data, and promote community-based adaptation strategies.

A key milestone was the regional workshop held in Zanzibar from June 30 to July 4, 2025. Co-organized by WIOMSA, IUCN, TAFIRI, and ZAFIRI, it has brought together scientists and stakeholders from Tanzania, Mozambique, and Sweden. Participants developed a framework linking science, policy, and community action on OA, resulting in a draft reporting structure, capacity-building roadmaps, and outreach strategies targeting mariculture practitioners and local communities.

Support for Tanzania's OA efforts also comes from the Bahari Mali project, led by IUCN and funded by the Irish Embassy. Operating in the Tanga-Pemba Seascape, it aims to promote sustainable blue economy opportunities while conserving coastal biodiversity, following the IUCN Blue Resilience Framework.

In Mozambique, OA monitoring led by Eduardo Mondlane University complements the regional efforts and aligns with SDG 14.3 to address ocean acidification through enhanced scientific cooperation.

These coordinated initiatives across the WIO region demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding marine ecosystems and livelihoods. By integrating science, policy, and community knowledge, countries are laying a resilient foundation for the future.

A WIO-COMPAS MILESTONE: FIRST PORTUGUESE CERTIFICATION EVENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS) Programme celebrated a historic milestone with its first Portuguese language certification event in Maputo, Mozambique, from 14 to 18 April 2025.

Funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, this event built marine conservation capacity and strengthened collaboration among Portuguese-speaking conservation professionals in the region.

The week began with a workshop for 20 participants, including Eugenio Manhica, Director of Conservation at the National Administration for Conservation Areas and Biofund representatives. The session introduced the WIO-COMPAS programme to Mozambican partners, co-management agencies, marine protected area (MPA) professionals and stakeholders and also presented the certification process to potential candidates. Participants discussed certification barriers and interests, providing input to guide future Portuguese language WIO-COMPAS activities.

Three WIO-COMPAS candidates presented workplace case studies, sharing practical insights from their field experience. The certification assessment comprehensively evaluated each candidate through portfolio presentations of their MPA management work, written tests, interviews and peer discussions.



Some of the participants at the first WIO-COMPAS Portuguese language certification event in Maputo, Mozambique

During the week, participants visited Inhaca Island and Maputo National Park on field trips. These visits gave them practical experience with local marine ecosystems and conservation practices, adding valuable real-world learning to the workshop.

The event successfully certified two candidates as WIO-COMPAS MPA professionals – Karen Allen from Nautilus South Africa and Vanessa Muianga from Parque

Nacional de Maputo. This brings the total number of certified MPA professionals in the WIO region to 151.

This inaugural Portuguese language certification event builds regional capacity and demonstrates the value of language-specific training for marine conservation in the WIO. It establishes a foundation for future collaborations and continued development of local expertise essential for sustainable marine resource management.

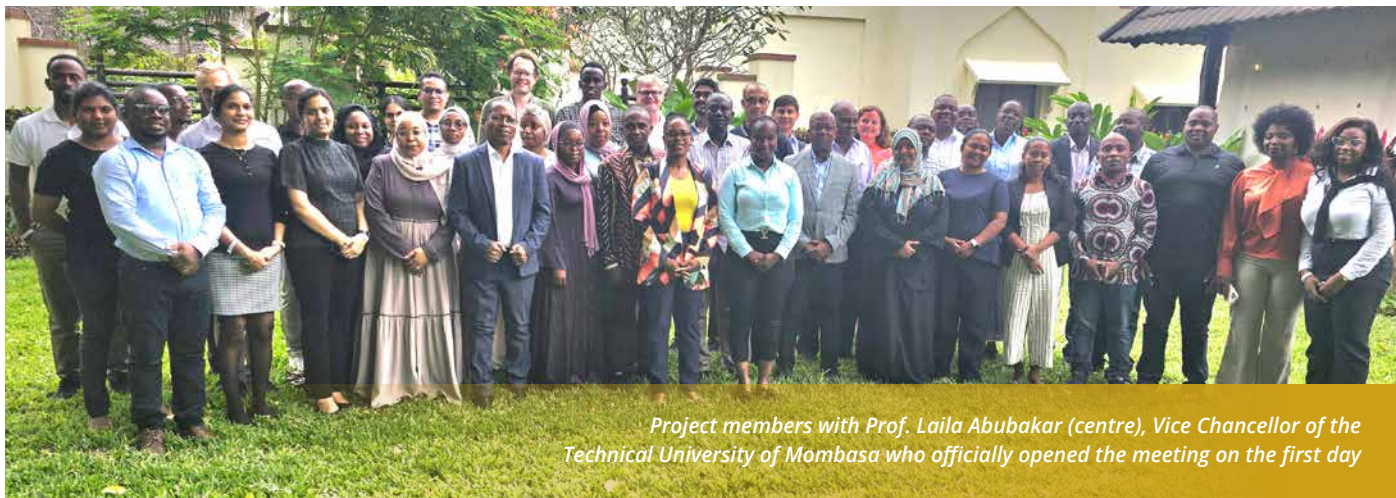


Participants visited Inhaca Island on field trips



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE FUTURE

| By the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management



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

A regional workshop in Zanzibar from 24 May to 6 June 2025, brought together 40 key stakeholders from seven Western Indian Ocean (WIO) countries as part of the year-long Sida-funded International Training Programme (ITP) on marine spatial planning (MSP).

The Planning for a sustainable blue future in the Western Indian Ocean: Institutional strengthening for marine spatial planning workshop aimed to strengthen institutional capacity and share knowledge to advance national MSP activities across the region.

The workshop was arranged in cooperation with the Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries in Zanzibar.

The programme is implemented by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management in collaboration with WIOMSA, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, and Swedish partners NIRAS and the Geological Survey of Sweden.

Over two weeks, participants explored a wide range of topics related to MSP, including the development of the Blue Economy in Zanzibar and Tanzania; the MSP processes in Seychelles and South Africa; MSP legislation; the ecosystem-based approach; the integration of Strategic Environmental Assessment; marine data collection and planning scales; stakeholder engagement; and transboundary cooperation.

The workshop combined presentations and discussions with practical sessions in which participants developed “change projects” to address specific organizational challenges. Two field visits to the coastal community of Paje and institutions in Stone Town, allowed participants to engage with local stakeholders and apply their learning in practice.

As the programme nears completion, participants will finalize their change projects and organize national MSP seminars. This second round of the MSP ITP will end in September 2025 when the management team, including national facilitators from each of the participating countries, will meet in Nairobi to reflect on lessons learned and prepare for the upcoming third round.

The next cohort will include new participants from the same seven countries but with a refreshed focus on MSP development. Their first workshop is planned for late 2025 in Madagascar.



A practical session in which participants developed “change projects” to address specific organizational challenges

CSIR PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE FISHING AT MARCOSIO WORKSHOP



The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) recently participated in the Marine and Coastal Observations for Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (MarCOSIO) Fisheries Exchange Workshop, bringing together stakeholders from across southern Africa and the Indian Ocean to advance sustainable fishing practices through technology.

Held from 26 to 30 May 2025, the workshop showcased the ways in which cutting-edge Earth observation services can support traditional fishing communities. The MarCOSIO programme, part of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security initiative, focuses on building local capabilities and providing technical resources for sustainable development.

“A key takeaway was the importance of integrating local knowledge with cutting-edge data and technology,” said Jonathan Killow, CSIR project coordinator. **“Hearing firsthand accounts from fishers about their experiences with mobile applications designed to improve safety and access to markets was inspiring and enlightening.”**

Collaborative solutions

The workshop brought together fisheries managers, scientists and artisanal fishers from eight countries: Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar and Mauritius. Partners, including

Abalobi, Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute, Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean and Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, demonstrated mobile applications co-developed with fishing communities to enhance safety at sea, improve catch efficiency and expand market access.

Prof Riziki Shemdoe, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries in Tanzania, officially opened the event, emphasizing the importance of collaborative approaches to fisheries management.

Looking forward

MarCOSIO's fisheries services aim to equip fishers and regulators with tools to optimize fishing efforts, improve safety, access real-time environmental data, and monitor illegal fishing activities. The workshop's participatory approach ensures that technological solutions address genuine community needs while promoting sustainable harvesting practices across the region.

PIONEERING EARTH OBSERVATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY IN AFRICA



Group picture of delegates from GMES and Africa, and MarCOSIO consortia attending the two-day workshop

Earth observation has traditionally followed a predictable pattern: satellites capture images from space, transmit them to ground stations during available communication windows, and only then can processing begin to extract insights.

This workflow creates inherent delays between observation and action, thus the role of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Marine and Coastal Operations for Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (MarCOSIO) in Africa is key.

From 25 to 27 June 2025, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) co-hosted the GMES and Africa and MarCOSIO regional stakeholder workshop with the Benguela Current Convention (BCC) at Roof of Africa convention centre, Windhoek in Namibia. The BCC is the lead partner of the Knowledge Management and Cross-fertilisation work package and co-leads with WIOMSA on Policy and Institutional Framework work package.

Robust discussions were held under the theme: 'Harnessing Earth Observation technologies in Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem for sustainable marine management', the workshop showcased the innovative Earth Observation (EO) technologies developed under the project and the alignment with the ocean governance strategies of the

BCLME region, the BCC's Strategic Action Programme, Blue Economy, climate change and the Parties' National Action Plans.

On the last day of the workshop, a technical training on Ship Traffic Monitoring took place. The technology, developed by the CSIR, monitors the system, as the technical lead of the MarCOSIO consortia.

The overarching key takeaways of the workshop was to create a multi-country working group under the SADC Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre and for the BCC to coordinate EO activities, share data and align national as well as regional marine monitoring efforts, with the aim of enhancing and strengthening the development of regional marine EO strategy for the BCC Large Marine Ecosystem programme (BCCLME).

The goal remains to enhance the interoperability between tAngola, Namibia and South Africa's EO data platforms and establish protocols for secure, open-access data sharing among stakeholders.

LEVERAGING SCIENCE FOR AFRICA'S BLUE ECONOMY | Edwin Mwashinga



Participants attending the IOCAFRICA VIII session

The Eighth United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) session convened in Mombasa, Kenya from 7 to 9 May 2025, bringing together Member State representatives, international partners and intergovernmental organizations. Participants reviewed the 2024–2025 workplan implementation, developed the 2026–2027 workplan and elected new IOCAFRICA officers.

Delegates from 13 Member States and global partners participated in the productive meeting.

UNESCO-IOC Executive Secretary Mr Vidar Helgesen addressed the session, emphasizing robust financial frameworks for global challenges and reaffirming commitment to transformative ocean science. He highlighted priorities in ocean observation, data and information management, conservation, sustainable development and the Blue Economy, stressing the importance of effective partnerships in achieving the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

A key outcome was electing IOCAFRICA's first female Chair. Ambassador Hellen Gichuhi of Kenya, alongside Vice-Chairs Mr. Jean Bope Bope (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Dr. Gilbert Siko (South Africa) and Dr Massata Ndao (Senegal) were elected Vice-Chairs for Groups A, B and C, respectively. The new officers emphasized unity, collaboration and attracting

partnerships, while strengthening the Secretariat and improving Member State activity documentation.

The session was preceded by the First African Scientific Conference on Advancing the Blue Economy in Africa, co-organized by IOCAFRICA and Kenya's Marine and Fisheries Research Institute.

The conference provided a platform for African stakeholders to explore ocean science and sustainable blue economy development.

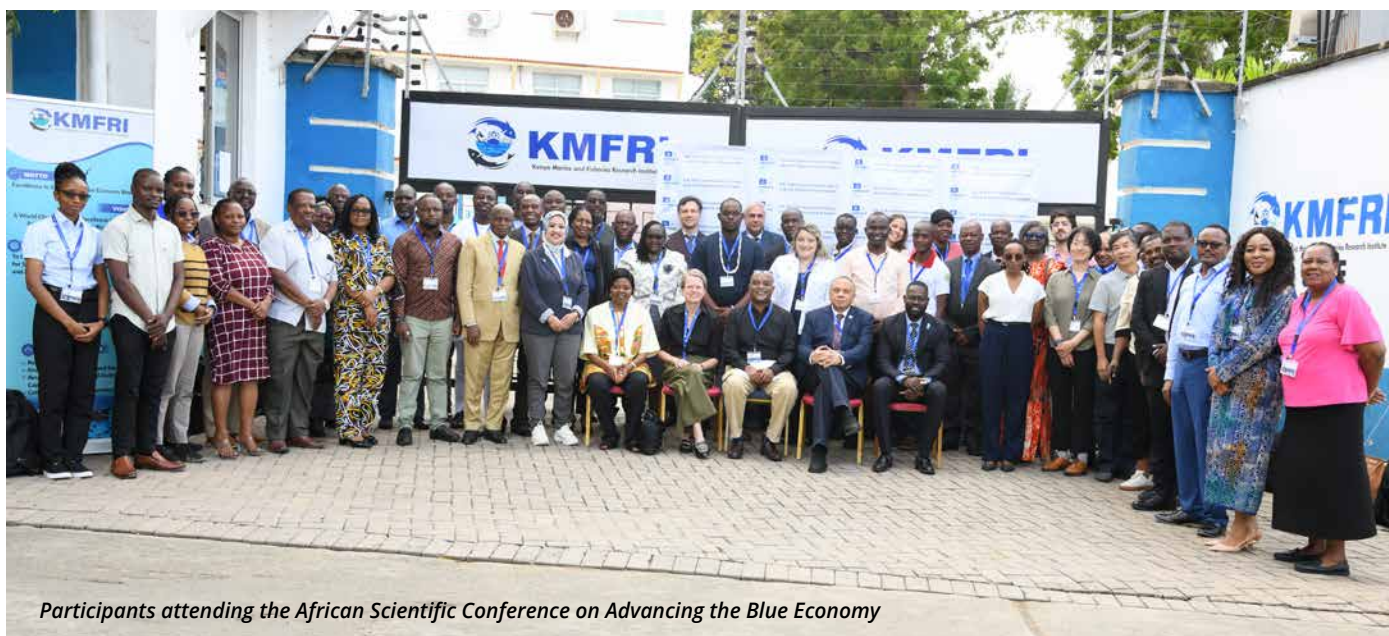
UNESCO Regional Director for Eastern Africa Ms Louise Haxthausen emphasized the Blue Economy's potential to create jobs, enhance food security and drive innovation while addressing overfishing and pollution. Panelists noted that rapid Blue Economy expansion often outpaces scientific knowledge. Discussions focused on science-based policymaking, inclusive participation of youth and women and overcoming implementation challenges.

Incoming and outgoing IOCAFRICA officers



Dr Arthur Tuda, Executive Secretary of WIOMSA stressed the urgent need to systematically track Blue Economy initiatives prevent fragmentation and duplication. He noted that while many initiatives exist, limited visibility and coordination hinder effective knowledge-sharing.

Ibukun Adewumi, Head of the IOCAFRICA Secretariat, thanked all partners for their contributions to the conference's success and reaffirmed IOCAFRICA's commitment to fostering regional ocean science and convening stakeholders for sustainable Blue Economy development.



Participants attending the African Scientific Conference on Advancing the Blue Economy

WIO COUNTRIES UNITED FOR CONSERVATION OF BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS | *By SeyCCAT*



Marine experts and government officials from Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles at a three-day workshop on protecting the region's critical mangrove and seagrass ecosystems

Representatives from Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles collaborated on strategies to safeguard these vital “blue carbon” habitats that serve as natural climate buffers while supporting coastal communities across the region.

The “Conserving blue carbon mangrove and seagrass ecosystems across the Western Indian Ocean” workshop was jointly organized by the Government of Seychelles, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), and The Pew Charitable Trusts, with support from the Nairobi Convention and WIOMSA.

Dr Jared Bosire, Head of the Nairobi Convention, emphasized the importance of coordinated regional action and science-based policy in addressing climate and conservation challenges. A key highlight was the Seychelles case study presented by Ms Marie-May Jeremie, Chief Executive Officer of SeyCCAT.

Her session, “Designing and Implementing 2020/21 NDC commitments to mangrove and seagrasses,” highlighted Seychelles’ pioneering work in integrating blue carbon ecosystems into national climate commitments and the innovative strategies applied to implement them.

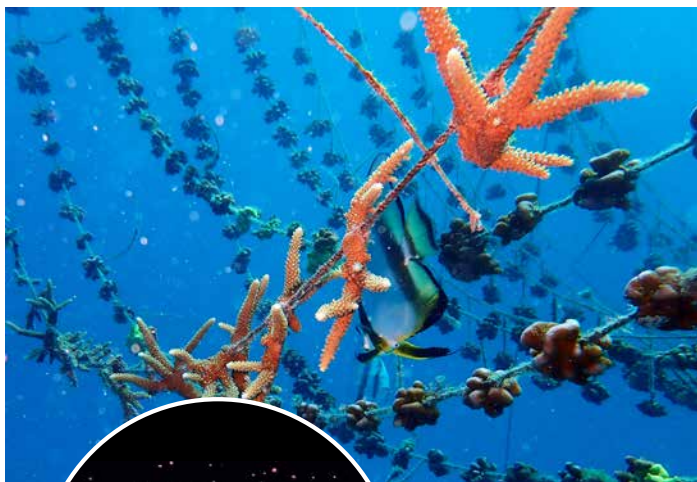
Each day of the three-day workshop focused on a specific theme, including country perspectives on coastal wetland governance, priority research agendas for coastal wetlands, and developing regional strategies.

Seagrass meadows and mangrove forests are crucial in carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and biodiversity. The workshop highlighted the importance of constructive collaboration among countries and institutions to enhance conservation effectiveness and emphasized opportunities to access sustainable financing for long-term regional efforts.



TEAMING UP TO REGENERATE CORAL REEFS | *By Liz Mwambui*

Healthy coral reefs are crucial for tourism, fisheries, coastal protection and biodiversity in Seychelles – and this partnership supports a more sustainable future for the islands



“Partnership establishes groundbreaking and first of its kind coral breeding lab in the Western Indian Ocean, using imaging technology to boost reef resilience against climate change.”

Canon EMEA is partnering with Nature Seychelles, a leading non-profit organization in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), and the Coral Spawning Lab (CSL) to lead a first-of-its-kind project designed to safeguard the Seychelles’ vital marine ecosystems.

The project aims to restore and protect coral reefs against climate change by embracing a new method of coral regeneration in the region.

Canon will provide funding to Nature Seychelles for the construction and operation of a coral breeding facility and imaging equipment to enhance observation and documentation of coral spawning. **This first-of-its kind project in the region will enhance Nature Seychelles’ new Assisted Recovery of Corals facility,** a land-based coral aquaculture facility aimed at boosting coral restoration efforts to save reefs from the impacts of climate change.

With support from Canon and CSL, Nature Seychelles will develop a deeper understanding of coral reproductive timing, post-settlement growth and survival. The technology provided will also facilitate photomicrography, photogrammetry, and

the production of high-quality imagery and videos for researchers.

The new coral breeding facility will create a genetic bank of resilient coral and document the process. It will be built by CSL which will also provide training to operate the facility in Seychelles.

Coral reef restoration in the Seychelles has traditionally relied on the **“coral gardening” technique where coral fragments are selected from existing reefs and grown in nurseries**, before being transplanted back into degraded areas. This process results in a reef populated by genetically identical corals, but the technique falls short of creating corals that can routinely withstand the events that degrade them; for example, coral bleaching. The lack of genetic diversity within gardened reefs is a critical weakness, rendering the technique only a temporary fix rather than a long-term solution for improving reef health and resiliency in the region.

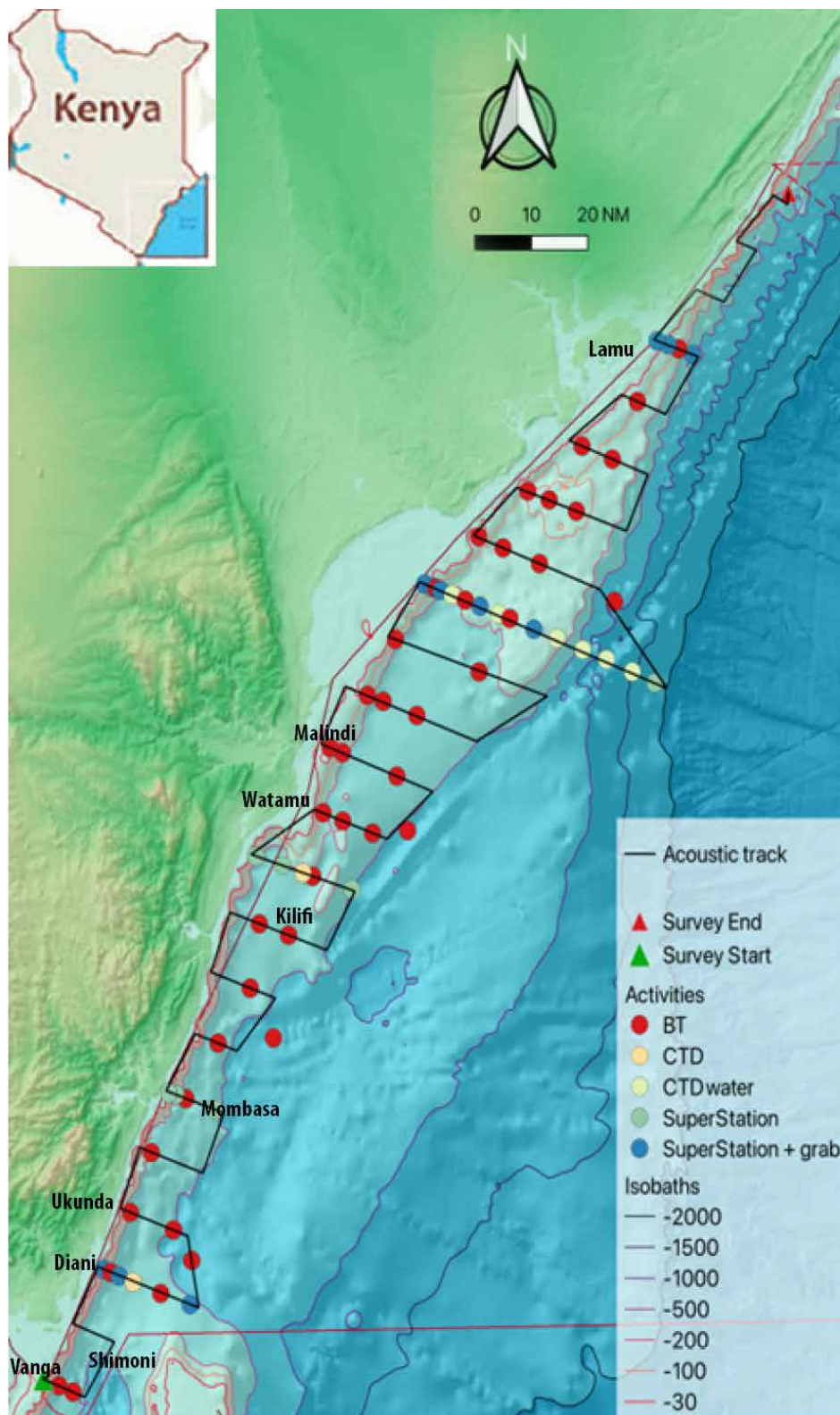
Healthy coral reefs are crucial for tourism, fisheries, coastal protection and biodiversity in Seychelles – and this partnership supports a more sustainable future for the islands.

KENYAN AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTISTS' MARINE RESEARCH EXPEDITION | *By Melckzedek K. Osore*

Scientists from the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) and experts from across Africa and Europe launched a scientific expedition aboard the Norwegian research vessel *R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* on 24 April 2025. The ten-day research cruise departed from Mombasa to survey Kenya's coastal waters and exclusive economic zone.

The primary mission was to assess fish biomass, examine oceanographic conditions and evaluate overall ecosystem health, all critical elements for the sustainable management of marine resources and fisheries. Scientists collected new data on the Kenyan segment of the Indian Ocean by analysing key oceanographic parameters such as sea surface temperature, salinity, depth profiles and biological productivity, including phytoplankton, zooplankton and fish larvae diversity, distribution and biomass.

The data contributes to regional resource assessments led by the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission. Survey locations, transects, bathymetry and planned activities are shown in Figure 1.



The marine zones, depth contours, planned survey locations, major coastal towns and key to research activities

Source: Sailing Orders, R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, Leg 1.4, modified by author.



The expedition also presented a valuable opportunity for capacity building and international collaboration. Many of the researchers on board were early-career oceanographers from universities and institutions in Europe and Africa.

The KMFRI team included Dr Gladys Okemwa, co-cruise leader and fisheries expert; Dr Amon Kimeli, physical oceanography; Mr Alexander Fullanda, plankton studies; Mr Oliver Ochola, chemical oceanography; Dr Esther Fondo, fisheries; Ms Josephine Marigu, fisheries; Ms Mary Mkonu, plankton studies; and Mr Jibril Olunga, fisheries taxonomy.

The Kenyan team were joined by scientists from Norway, France, Portugal, Spain, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and South Africa.

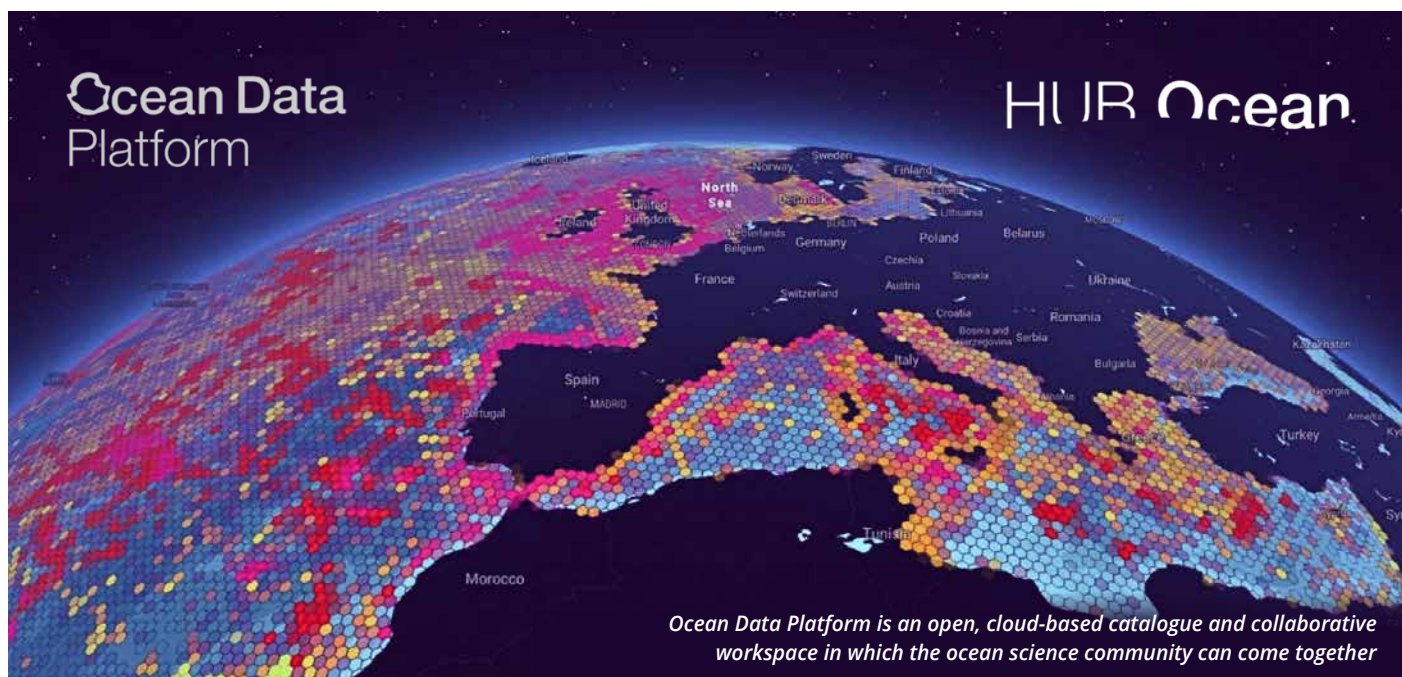
Operated under the EAF-Nansen Programme, a collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the **R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen is equipped with state-of-the-art instruments to conduct marine ecosystem research and support capacity development in partner countries.**

This latest expedition is part of a broader effort to better understand marine ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean. The insights gained will inform national and regional marine policies, support conservation initiatives and drive sustainable Blue Economy development in Kenya.

INTRODUCING THE OCEAN DATA PLATFORM

| by HUB Ocean

Ocean Data Platform is an open, cloud-based catalogue and collaborative workspace in which the ocean science community can come together



Data-driven collaboration is critical to understanding and protecting our oceans. That's why HUB Ocean, an independent nonprofit organization in Norway, has created the Ocean Data Platform (ODP) to unlock the power of data, technology and collaboration.

ODP offers an open marine geospatial data catalogue with a cloud-powered workspace, completely free through its open tier.

What you can do on ODP

Discover rich data: Tap into a selection of public ocean data, community shared dataset and private sector datasets newly opened to scientists. And, there is more on the horizon – when our sister organization [REV Ocean](#) launches its state-of-the-art research vessel, the ship's high-resolution survey data will be accessible through the catalogue.

Share and store your own: Upload, host and control access to your data so your colleagues can build on your work.

Scale your analyses: Run big data workflows on our cloud-based computer infrastructure.

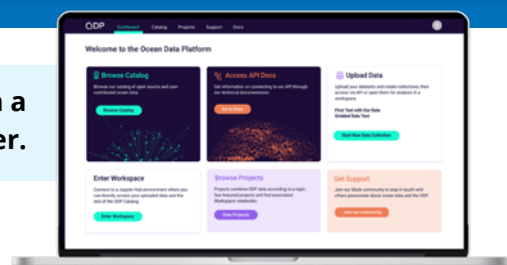
Collaborate in real time: Spin up JupyterHub workspaces, share notebooks and co-edit with teammates anywhere in the world.

Automate via API: Integrate ODP data seamlessly into your scripts and apps.

Browse with ease: Search our open catalogue for datasets by keyword, region or theme, with new features such as an artificial intelligence-powered search in metadata and data.

Get started in three quick steps:

1. Browse the public [Ocean Data Catalogue](#).
2. [Create your free account](#) to access, analyse and contribute data.
3. Stay up to date and [subscribe to our release notes](#) for new features and datasets.



INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES CAN AID MARINE CONSERVATION

By Ruth Keah, Jemima Musyoki, Sarah Ater, Susana Kihia, and Jacqueline Uku



Participants at the Science Café
© Mapicha Antony



The 2025 Mombasa Ocean Festival highlighted the critical need to integrate indigenous knowledge into marine science and conservation efforts.

Held in May, the festival brought together scientists, policymakers, community members and over 250 students to explore how traditional coastal knowledge can strengthen ocean protection.

The festival included lectures, movies, fun quizzes, local shows and a Science Café. The hybrid Science café, held on Alliance Francaise grounds and hosted virtually by WIOMSA, provided a platform for different researchers to share their work. **One of the signature events of the festival was the opportunity for student engagement at different levels, with the student event at the cinema bringing together more than 250 students from nine schools.**

Dr Mouna Chambon of [Institute of Research for Development](#) highlighted the need for scientists to immerse themselves in the communities in which they worked, enabling them to access indigenous information better and with improved accuracy. This

was underscored by Dr Victor Mwakha, of the [Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute](#), who said there was a need to engage the communities as well as address myths that communities have. The panel included Marvelous Neema from the Kilifi County Beach Management Unit Network, Joey Ngunu of Local Ocean Conservation and Queen Elizabeth from the Kenya UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Youth Forum.



MADAGASCAR ASSEMBLY BOOSTS REEF CONSERVATION EFFORTS | *By Gildas Todinanahary*



The Madagascar Coral Reef Network (MCRN) convened its 2025 General Assembly at Aux Éclats Verts Antananarivo from 10 to 12 June 2025, bringing together representatives from government, research, non-governmental organizations and local communities to strengthen coral reef conservation efforts across the country.

Supported by WIOMSA and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the three-day event focused on reviewing achievements, refining strategies and planning future actions for reef protection. It also marked a significant milestone with the election of a new coordination team led by Prof Gildas Todinanahary as Coordinator, alongside members responsible for technical and administrative roles.

Key outcomes

Key outcomes included the **adoption of an action plan aligned with Madagascar's National Blue Economy Strategy**, emphasizing institutionalization of the network, data harmonization and the development of a participatory National Coral Reef Strategy. Participants also discussed advancing monitoring tools, standardizing assessment methods and preparing for the next General Assembly in June 2027.

The event fostered strong commitments to long-term reef conservation, highlighted by collaborative efforts to update reef mapping, improve monitoring capacities and secure funding. Appreciation was extended to WIOMSA, WWF and the Fishery and Marine Science Institute (Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines) for their invaluable support in making the Assembly a success.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RECENTLY PUBLISHED PAPERS

MARINE CONSERVATION TRUST FUNDS: LESSONS FROM SEYCCAT | *By Angelique Pouponneau*



FINANCING BLUE ECONOMIES

As the world's first debt-for-nature swap for ocean conservation and climate adaptation, SeyCCAT marked a significant milestone in sustainable blue finance.

Coastal and island states struggle to finance sustainable ocean economies despite overseeing vast marine territories. **With Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 severely underfunded SDG's and declining development aid, blended finance mechanisms are gaining traction as viable solutions.**

Blended finance leverages public funds to attract private capital. As countries lose access to grants and affordable finance – despite facing climate vulnerabilities, debt crises and limited economic diversification – debt-for-nature swaps and blue bonds have gained momentum for ocean conservation.



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

In 2015, the Seychelles pioneered innovative approaches to marine conservation financing by establishing the Seychelles' Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT). Created through legislation passed by the Seychelles National Assembly (the Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust of Seychelles Act, 2015), SeyCCAT emerged from a partnership between The Nature Conservancy and the Government of Seychelles.

The Trust has evolved significantly over its first decade, expanding from a singular focus on administering the debt-swap to managing multiple funding streams, including proceeds from the world's first sovereign blue bond.

SeyCCAT operates two main funding mechanisms: the Blue Grants Fund, which provides immediate financing for conservation projects, and the Blue Endowment Fund, which invests for long-term sustainability.

Designing Marine Conservation Trust Funds: Lessons Learned from the Seychelles' Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust examines the evolution between 2016 and 2022, highlighting lessons in legislative design, governance structure, financial sustainability and operational flexibility.

Key findings

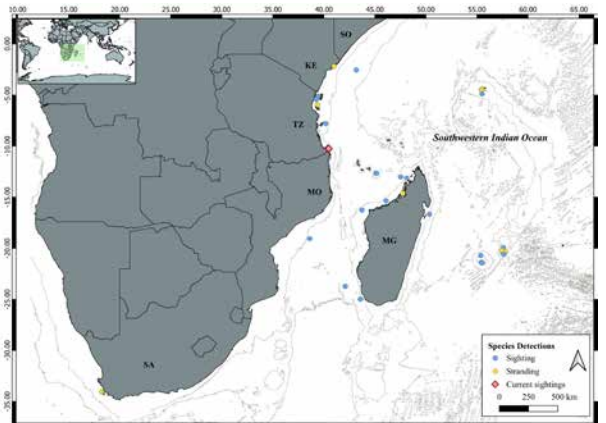
Four essential elements ensure successful marine conservation trust funds. **1) Anticipatory legislative design** allows frameworks to evolve – SeyCCAT's 2022 amendments expanded its scope to include blue economy development. **2) Balanced governance** through multi-stakeholder boards provides political commitment while maintaining independence across government changes. **3) Financial sustainability** requires adequate administrative funding – SeyCCAT's cap increased from 15% to 30% of annual revenue to match expanding responsibilities. **4) Operational flexibility** enables trusts to establish guidelines without parliamentary approval, streamlining decision-making processes.

These lessons offer valuable guidance for other coastal states developing similar mechanisms for conservation finance:

The model has proven adaptable beyond Seychelles, with similar mechanisms now established in Belize, Barbados and other coastal states. For countries implementing marine spatial planning, developing blue economy strategies, or pursuing debt restructuring, conservation trust funds represent a powerful tool for translating international commitments into locally relevant, sustainable conservation outcomes.

MELON-HEADED WHALES SPOTTED FOR FIRST TIME IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA | By Alexandra Wowra

Five separate sightings of melon-headed whales were recorded, alongside the first documented acoustic recordings of the species in Tanzanian waters



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

A groundbreaking new study documenting the first multiple visual and acoustic records of melon-headed whales (*Peponocephala electra*) in southern Tanzania has been published in [Aquatics Mammals](#).

The research, conducted by Ekaterina Kalashnikova of the Bazaruto Centre for Scientific Studies and colleagues, supervised by Dr Aylin Akkaya of the [Marine Mammals Research Association](#) (Deniz Memelileri Araştırma Derneği [DMAD]), provides significant new insights into the distribution and interspecific associations of this rarely documented species in the region.

During dedicated humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) research in Tanzania's Mtwara region between 2021 and 2024, five separate sightings of melon-headed whales were recorded, alongside the first documented acoustic recordings of the species in Tanzanian waters. This study marks only the third reported sighting of the species within the country's territorial waters and the first confirmed interactions with Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*).

"Understanding the presence and habitat use of melon-headed whales in east Africa is crucial, as dedicated cetacean research in continental coastal waters has been limited," said lead author Kalashnikova, who heads the Tanzania Cetacean Programme and is a part of the Bazaruto Centre for Scientific Studies team in Mozambique. Dr Akkaya, instrumental in getting the

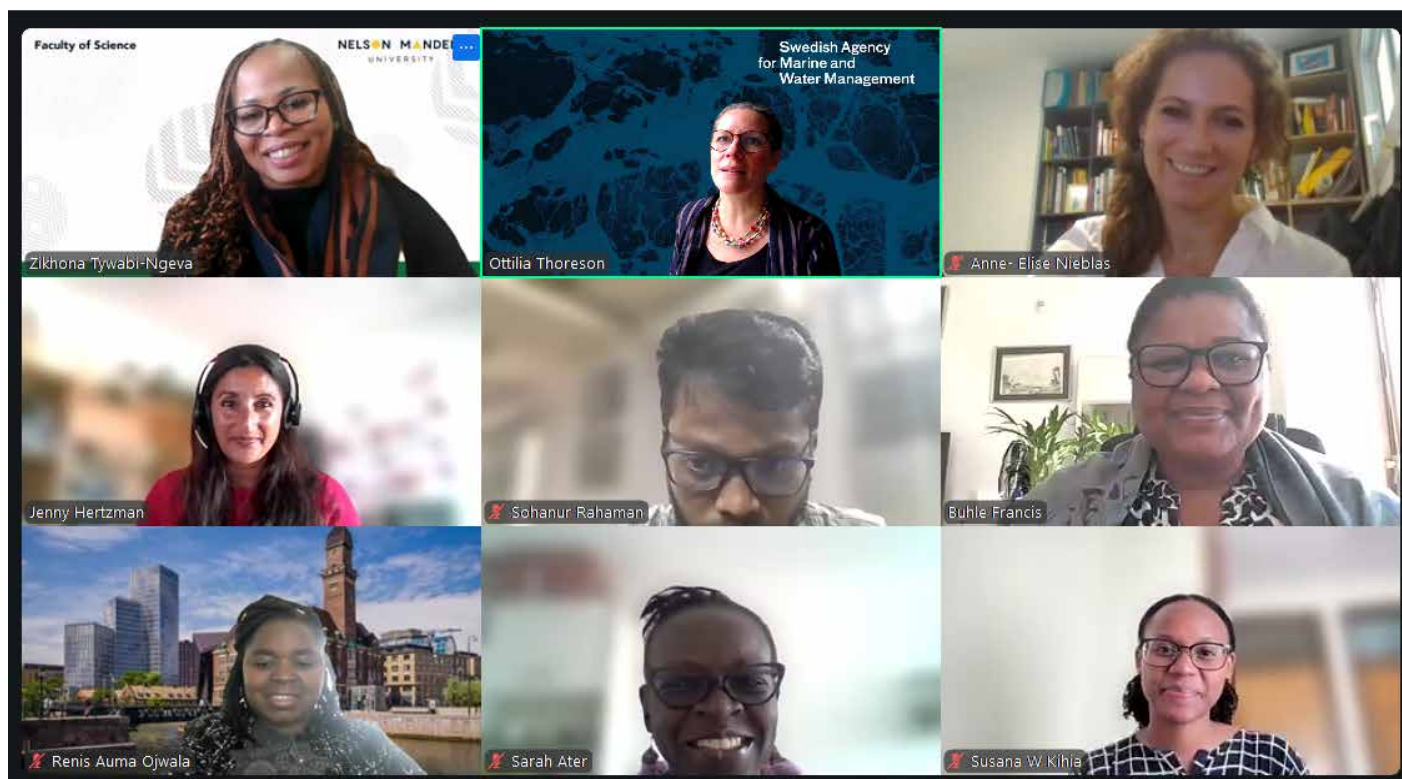
study off the ground, added: "Our findings contribute to baseline knowledge that can inform conservation strategies in a region increasingly affected by offshore industrial activity."

The study highlights that melon-headed whales, typically found in offshore pelagic waters, were observed in depths ranging from 500 m to 700 m near the Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park. The species demonstrated close associations with humpback whales and Fraser's dolphins (*Lagenodelphis hosei*), as well interaction with Risso's dolphins.

Additionally, acoustic recordings from the study reveal a diverse vocal repertoire with variations similar to populations studied in the Pacific and Caribbean. The findings underline the need for continued bioacoustics research in the region to further understand melon-headed whale ecology and their vulnerability to increasing anthropogenic pressures, such as offshore oil and gas exploration.



GENDER-INCLUSIVE OCEAN GOVERNANCE IN PRACTICE



Following the March “Equality in the Western Indian Ocean Blue Economy” webinar and ahead of the 13th WIOMSA Symposium, the Network for Women in Marine Science (WiMS), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM), and WIOMSA hosted “From margins to mainstream: Inclusive structures in ocean governance in the Western Indian Ocean.”

The webinar featured Dr. Renis Ajwala on women's experiences in marine science, Mr. Sohanur Rahman on Bangladesh's climate advocacy, Ms. Anne-Elise Neiblas on WiMS' Womentoring initiative for capacity-building, and Prof. Cornelius Ncube on men's role as allies in advancing gender equality.

A notable feature of the webinar was the inclusion of two male speakers. Mr. Rahman, called for a shift from equity to transformation; moving beyond increasing the number of women to rebuilding systems based in care, cooperation and justice. Prof. Ncube highlighted the need to dismantle patriarchal marine cultures, reform marine education to embrace diverse knowledge systems, and prioritize systemic inclusion.

The structure of the webinar, starting with the current context offering concrete examples and ending with provoking questions, left participants deeply inspired to

advance equity. These reflections were echoed during participant discussions in follow-up conversations.

This second webinar sets the stage for a mini symposium, “Facilitating gender mainstreaming in the Western Indian Ocean” at the WIOMSA symposium in September.

Additionally, a special workshop “Risk and negative side effect assessment in conservation projects” will also be held at the WIOMSA Symposium.

**Access the
webinar
recording.**



RESTORING ROOTS: A COLLABORATIVE MANGROVE CLEANUP

By Dr Nadeem Nazurally, Dishti Dabeedass, Nidhi Yushika Hurry and Tejshwari Khemun

Over 150 participants took part in the cleanup of Ferney Mangrove Forest



We didn't just collect waste; we connected with nature, with each other, and with a cause larger than ourselves."

The Ferney Mangrove Forest, located along the southeastern coast of Mauritius, is a vital ecological zone that protects shorelines, supports biodiversity, and serves as a carbon sink. Yet, it faces increasing threats from pollution, habitat degradation and unsustainable human activity.

To preserve this precious ecosystem, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the University of Mauritius (UoM) in collaboration with the Agricultural Society of the University of Mauritius and the Faculty of Agriculture, organized a large-scale cleanup campaign on 25 June 2025. Over 150 participants, mostly students, lecturers, local people and dignitaries united in an act of environmental stewardship.

The aim of the Ferney cleanup was to reduce solid waste pollution, promote awareness on mangrove conservation, and engage youth in hands-on environmental action. Mangroves play a crucial role in buffering coastal communities from erosion, filtering pollutants, and serving as nurseries for marine life.

Distinguished guests Mr Hambyrajen Narsinghen, Junior Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and Prof Sanjeev Sobhee, Vice-Chancellor, University of Mauritius, also participated.



Over 700 kg of waste was collected in 45 minutes, including plastic debris (bottles, wrappers, bags); discarded fishing gear (nets, ropes); glass, metal cans, and foam products; and household litter.

The event also supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 14: Life Below Water, SDG 15: Life on Land, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

The way forward

Students expressed a desire for regular cleanups, eco-tours, and long-term projects such as mangrove replantation. The Agricultural Society plans to:

- **Organize quarterly environmental events**
- **Introduce a student-led Eco Monitoring Team** for site surveillance
- **Collaborate** with schools and non-governmental organizations for awareness campaigns
- **Publish waste audit reports** to support local environmental policymaking

INTRODUCING THE 2024 TANZANIA SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD GUIDE



Tanzania Sustainable Seafood Guide

Best practice for
tourism operators

2024

The 2024 Tanzania Sustainable Seafood Guide has been published specifically for tourism businesses, hotels, restaurants and operators across Tanzania and Zanzibar. The guide raises awareness about vulnerable marine species and encourages a shift away from over-exploited and at-risk species that are crucial for maintaining marine biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Three printed products have been produced: a comprehensive guide, a pocketbook and posters, all available in English and Swahili. The guide was created by Chumbe Island Coral Park with the support of the USAID Heshimu Bahari (Respect the Ocean) Project.

The launch will take place at the 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium in Mombasa.

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS HERE.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE 13TH WIOMSA SYMPOSIUM!

#WIOMSA2025 registrations are open!

Register by August 20th 2025



Photo credit: Thibaut Bouveroux

One Ocean One Future:

Connecting People, Policy,
and **Science** for a Thriving
Western Indian Ocean



WIOMSA

Coasts Ocean and People



13TH
**SCIENTIFIC
SYMPOSIUM**

Mombasa Kenya
28th Sept - 3rd Oct 2025

Don't miss the opportunity to be part of the premier scientific gathering focused on the coastal and marine environment of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). The WIOMSA Symposium is a vital platform for showcasing innovations, fostering collaboration and identifying research gaps to support sustainable management of our precious marine ecosystems.

[Register here!](#)

**Join us in advancing marine science and conservation in the WIO.
Register today and be part of this impactful event!**

WIOMSA MAGAZINE: CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS



We are thrilled to announce a special edition of the *WIOMSA Magazine* focusing on ocean literacies in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. This special edition will explore the diverse ways communities, researchers, artists, and practitioners understand, relate to, and communicate about the ocean – highlighting the richness and diversity of ocean knowledge systems across the region.

Why ocean literacies?

We deliberately use the plural term “ocean literacies” instead of the singular “literacy” to acknowledge the myriad ways of knowing, being with, and understanding the ocean. Despite the wealth of ocean knowledge in the WIO, many ocean literacy initiatives are still largely shaped by “Global North” narratives. Our goal with this edition is to shed light on local, Indigenous, and arts-based practices, emphasizing how different cultures and communities perceive and engage with the ocean – past, present, and future.

Call for contributions

We invite artists, practitioners, researchers, teachers, policy makers, community groups, and anyone passionate about creative and inclusive ways of sharing ocean knowledge to contribute. Contributions can include photo stories, art, poems, stories, articles, or research summaries.

For full details and submission instructions, please visit the official announcement at [WIOMSA Magazine – Call for Submissions: Ocean Literacy](#)

DEADLINE
for submissions

31 July 2025.

Please email your submissions to secretary@wiomsa.org
Copy in lilian@wiomsa.org