

The Hifadhi Blu Programme

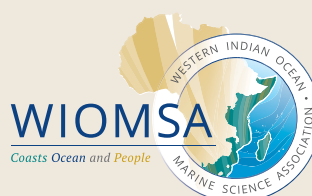
Gender Action Plan

For Ocean Conservation Areas in the
Western Indian Ocean 2025–2029

Despite growing recognition of the importance of inclusive ocean governance, women and marginalised groups remain significantly underrepresented in the planning, decision-making and management of Ocean Conservation Areas across the Western Indian Ocean region. Systemic barriers, including entrenched gender norms, unequal access to marine resources, exclusion from leadership roles, and limited capacity-building opportunities, continue to impede their meaningful participation. These gendered inequalities perpetuate social injustice and diminish the overall resilience and effectiveness of marine conservation efforts in the region.

The Gender Action Plan for the Hifadhi Blu Programme (2025–2029) presents a strategic framework to improve gender equity and social inclusion across Ocean Conservation Areas in the Western Indian Ocean region. Informed by the Gender Analysis Study and grounded in WIOMSA's Gender Policy (2021) and strategic frameworks, the Gender Action Plan adopts a Human Rights-Based Approach that centres the rights, voices, and leadership of marginalised groups, particularly women, gender-diverse persons, and other underrepresented communities in marine conservation efforts.

The Gender Action Plan supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 14 (Life Below Water), as well as Targets 22 and 23 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by embedding gender-responsive, inclusive and community rooted practices that contribute to more just and sustainable ocean governance.



The Gender Action Plan has three core objectives:

1. To provide WIOMSA and its grantees, including Hifadhi Blu grantees and other stakeholders in the Western Indian Ocean region, with clear guidance to advance gender equality and inclusion within Ocean Conservation Areas
2. To serve as a practical tool for WIOMSA and its grantees in mainstreaming gender across the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of conservation initiatives
3. To support Ocean Conservation Area sites in integrating gender and human-rights considerations into their marine conservation projects, ensuring inclusive and equitable participation.

The Gender Action Plan's results framework is operationalised through eight key focus areas:

1. Addressing gender-blind institutions
2. Developing gender-specific policies
3. Building capacity for advocacy and training
4. Improving women's representation
5. Challenging socio-cultural barriers
6. Integrating TEK
7. Promoting gender-responsive financing
8. Strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems.



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more information.

Photo credit: Borchee via Getty Images.

Cover: Sada Abu, a KICOWA ranger, radio operator and dedicated turtle guardians, assisting a juvenile turtle at Mongo Shariff, Kenya. Photo credit: Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

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