

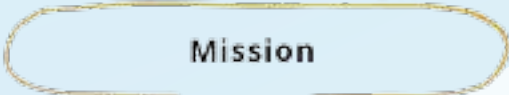
OUR OCEAN PEOPLE



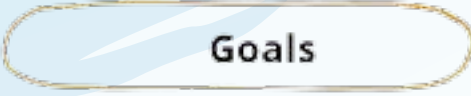
COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Sustainable marine and coastal environments support thriving communities and cities in the WIO region.



To build resilient coastal communities and environments in the WIO region supporting livelihoods and marine conservation.



- Improved governance and management of coastal and marine resources in coastal communities and cities.
- Conservation of coastal and marine resources is supported.
- Enhanced and diversified sustainable livelihoods and access to finance.

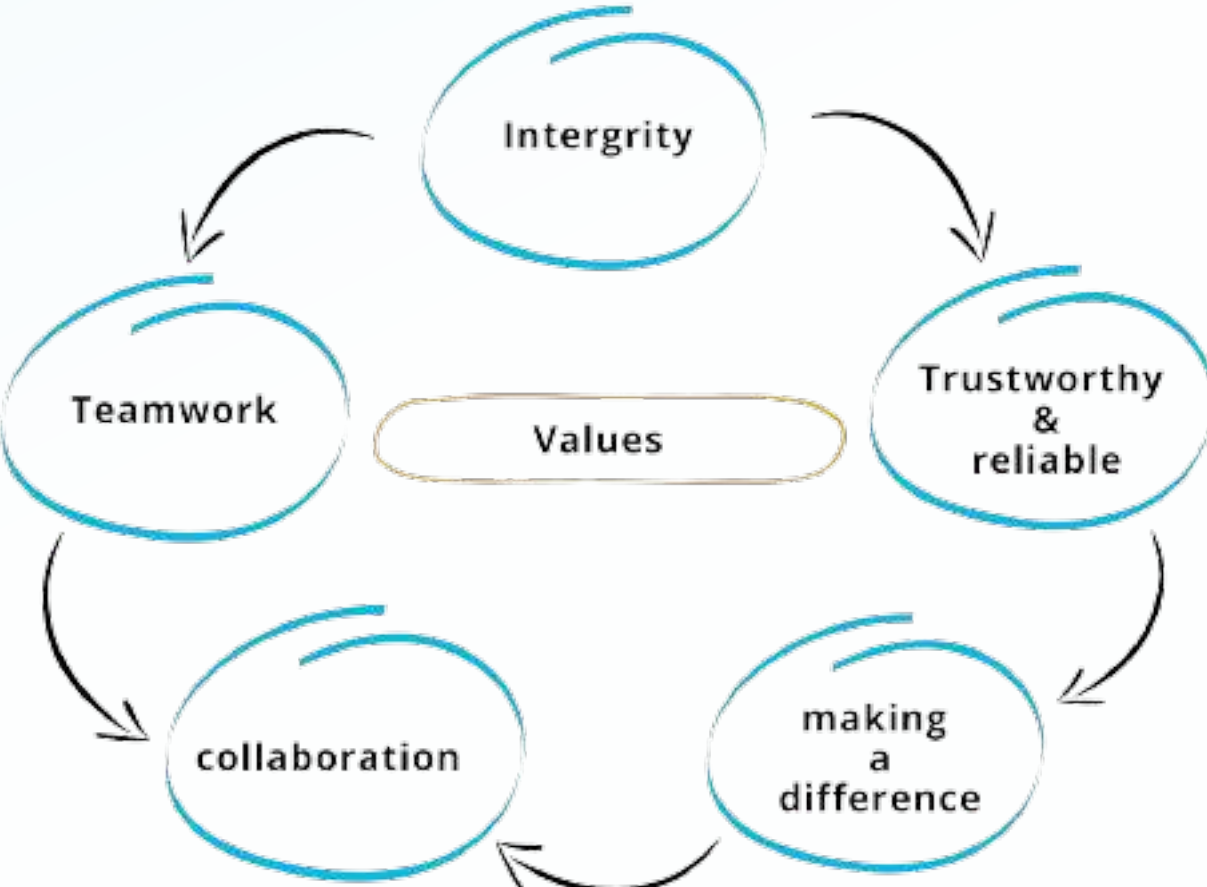


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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ahoy, fellow stewards of the seas!

2023 was truly a significant year for COMRED. We hit a major milestone, charting a new course and launching our 2023-2027 strategic plan. We are excited to share this visionary compass with you as we set sail with determination, towards sustainable marine and coastal environments, supporting thriving communities and cities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region.

Our Strategic Goals:

1. Improved governance and management of coastal and marine resources in coastal communities and cities.
2. Conservation of coastal and marine resources is supported.
3. Enhanced and diversified sustainable livelihoods and access to finance.

To achieve these strategic goals, we are committed to collaborate with partners who share our passion, vision and values. Together, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of coastal communities and the sustainability of the region's marine habitats.

In this report, we highlight the notable impact we made in 2023, amongst coastal communities and the natural marine environment, spanning from: Disbursing over KES 3,000,000 as a climate finance linked fund directly benefiting over 900 individuals, supporting conservation initiatives, including collecting 10 tonnes of waste and planting over 300,000 mangrove seedlings covering about 10 hectares, with an average survival rate of 70%; training fishermen in sea safety to safeguard them from risks at sea; and empowering 37 community-based fish and socio-economic data collectors, 14 patrol scouts, and 8 underwater survey monitors.

These initiatives have created ripples of positive impact, improved lives and protecting the environment. The strides we have made are the result of a strong partnership between COMRED, the coastal communities we serve, our generous donors, and dedicated stakeholders. With our strategic plan as our guiding north star, the future looks incredibly promising.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. We look forward to working closely with you in implementing our strategic plan and achieving our shared objectives.

Fill the wind in your sails and join us on this exhilarating voyage towards a brighter, more sustainable future!

COMRED DIRECTORS





300,000+

**Mangroves planted on
10Ha with 70%
survival rate recorded**

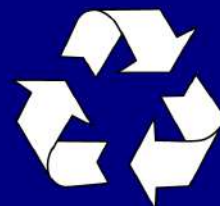


150+

**Leaders from 15 BMUs trained on
leadership skills, record keeping
& financial management**

8

**Metric tonnes of
waste collected
from beaches**



13

**Community members & COMRED
staff trained to conduct
ecological reef monitoring**

18

**Community-based fish
catch data collectors
trained on fish catch
data management**



3,000,000+

**Given to communities
as a climate finance
fund**



103

**Fishermen in Kwale
trained on Sea safety**



MUNJE COMMUNITY REAPS REWARDS FROM OCTOPUS FISHERY CLOSURES



In 2014, Munje Beach Management Unit (BMU), located on Kenya's South Coast, piloted an ambitious octopus closure in anticipation of promoting environmental conservation, income from octopus gleaning, and the overall replenishment of fish stocks within the closure and surrounding fishing grounds. However, the closure collapsed due to a lack of community support, poor leadership, financial management, and patrol of the closure area.

Slightly over a decade later, this coastal community, through resilience and reinvention, has become a beacon of hope and a learning spectacle for neighboring communities for running a 4-month successful octopus closure, contributing towards addressing biodiversity loss and climate change while also protecting fisherfolk livelihoods and marine environments such as sea grasses and coral reefs.

Today's preparations for tomorrow's success

The revival of the octopus closure in 2021 marked the beginning of a new journey. The success of the octopus closure was occasioned by community sensitization meetings on the octopus closure, leadership training and mentorship of the BMU leaders, and the training of 15 (13 men and 2 women) closure patrol team members on Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) and ecological reef monitoring training for 5 COMRED staff and 8 Munje BMU reef monitoring team.

Munje Octopus closure opening

The first closure [opening](#) event was held between October 30 and November 1, 2023, after four months of closure. This event was attended by more than 300 people from neighboring BMUs, government institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

During the 3 days of harvesting, 14 fishermen who were using pointed sticks took part in gleaning for 3 hours each day as per the Munje BMU closure guidelines. A total of 649.324 kg of octopus were harvested.

Success at last

- The first octopus closure [opening](#) accrued income of KES198,049 to the fishermen and the BMU through octopus catch sales, which acted as an incentive for conservation. This revenue generated from the closure is used to support enforcement, BMU office administration, and community welfare.
- Positive [attitude](#) and behaviour change among Munje community members as well as neighbouring communities towards the implementation of fisheries management measures such as temporary closures.
- Improved BMU leadership because of training and continuous mentorship on leadership and governance
- Increased compliance among the BMU members with fisheries laws and regulations due to regular patrols and awareness sessions. As a result, only a few cases of poaching were reported.
- 33 new community members joined the BMU, and 104 BMU members renewed their membership and fishing licenses.
- Community involvement during the establishment of the octopus closure led to community acceptance and support for closure management.
- As a result of the bumper harvest and income from octopus closure, there was tremendous support from Munje community members to close the area for the second phase, which is underway and awaiting opening in April 2024.



Lessons learnt

- Creating awareness among community members is key to the success of an octopus closure. This ensures that the community has accurate information regarding the initiative and provides a forum for their views and grievances to be addressed, thus promoting community acceptance, ownership, and support.
- Building the capacity of BMU leaders improves the leadership and governance of the BMU, leading to better fisheries management. This also enhances networking and collaboration between the BMU and other stakeholders.
- Government policies and frameworks, such as, co-management plans, are important considerations when setting up community projects. Before setting up a fishery octopus closure.

"The octopus closure has improved our BMU's profile. More people now know about us; Not just in Kwale but the news of our successful closure has spread to Mombasa, Lamu and Kilifi."

Munje BMU chairperson, Bakari Chimete

USING DATA TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY-LED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Fish catch data plays a pivotal role in informing the management and conservation of fisheries resources.

Our focus is to build the capacity of BMUs in Kenya's coastal strip to tap into collecting accurate and reliable fish catch data, managing and interpreting the data for evidence-based management decision-making, and implementing fisheries management measures that will ensure improved income, food security, and resilience in coastal communities and environments.

One step at a time

Building the capacity of BMUs in fisheries data management is a process that requires continuous training and mentorship of community-based data collectors to conduct fish catch data collection, data validation, and analysis to ensure optimum quality, accuracy, and reliability.

Catching up with technology

In April 2023, with the support of Blue Ventures, we transitioned from paper-based fish catch data collection to mobile data collection using the Kobo Collect App. The transition was driven by the need for fast and effective data collection for timely feedback and reporting for the BMUs.

Refreshing knowledge

In September 2023, we conducted refresher training on fish identification for 9 BMUs in Kwale. The training played a huge role in sharpening data collector skills and knowledge in fish identification, contributing to improved data quality and accuracy.



Key achievements

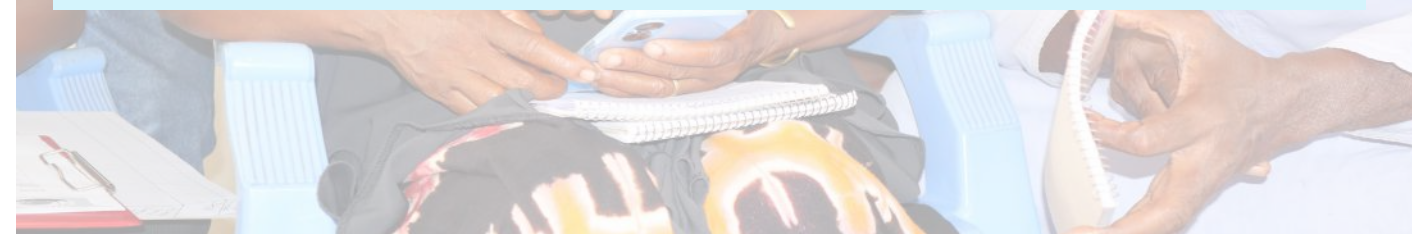
- 36 BMU members from 9 BMUs (7 BMUs in Shimoni-Vanga and 2 BMUs in Msambweni) were trained on fish catch data collection using the KoboCollect app.
- 18 data collectors from the 9 BMUs were issued a smartphone for digital data collection.
- 54 BMU members were trained on the identification of 42 common fish families and species.
- Harmonization of local fish names in 9 BMUs, thus minimizing fish naming errors.
- Development and production of a fish identification guide for 9 BMUs.
- 3 quarterly BMU fish catch data feedback meetings were conducted in 2023, whereby the collected data was presented and validated by BMU members. This helps them understand the status of fisheries resources and make data-driven management decisions.
- 153 BMU members, including fishermen and fish dealers, from 9 BMUs were reached through the data feedback.

“Community data feedbacks never happen. We are excited for this new phase in fisheries management, where we are given fish catch data feedback to help us understand our fisheries and come up with management measures to improve and protect our resources.”

Mwashee Hassan, Fish catch data collector, Munje BMU

Lessons learnt

- Paper-based data collection is lengthy and complex and creates room for more errors; thus, a simple digital data collection method such as the Kobo Collect App is recommended for efficient, faster, and timely collection and feedback.
- Regular on-site fish catch data validation and mentorship is crucial to improving the capacity of the data collectors to collect accurate and reliable data.
- Bringing BMUs together in fish identification training helps in the harmonization of the fish names and promotes peer learning.
- Indigenous and local knowledge is a great complement to scientific knowledge; hence, it should be incorporated in fisheries management and conservation.
- The presentation of data results in simple illustrated diagrams and visuals enhances community understanding and interpretation of the data.
- Upskilling communities on fisheries management through training, mentorship, and follow-ups with BMU leaders, fish catch data collectors, and fishermen is important as it builds their skills to draw management measures from data.
- Community involvement in collecting, interpreting, and managing fish catch data creates a sense of ownership, thus promoting fisheries monitoring at a community level.



LEARNING AND PATNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE COASTAL CITIES

As we bid farewell to another year of dedicated efforts toward sustainable cities and environmental conservation, we are delighted to share a glimpse of the impactful activities that have shaped our journey in 2023.

AfriGEO Symposium Representation in Namibia

COMRED left its mark at the 7th AfriGEO Symposium that was held in Swakopmund, Namibia, from 18th to 23rd September 2023. Dr. Obakeng Molelu, was honored to participate in this significant event themed “Earth Observation for Africa’s Prosperity.” The symposium provided a platform to build collaborations, share ongoing activities, and address development challenges using earth observation.

Mombasa Marine Protected Area (MPA) Engagement: Marine Protection in the context of an urban environment

The Mombasa Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a treasure trove of marine life nestled in the bustling port city of Mombasa. This peculiar location is excellent in improving the city’s tourism appeal but also exposes the park to the effects of mega development projects, like new roads, human encroachment and pollution. These concerns threaten the ecological integrity of the Mombasa Marine Park and in response, COMRED has actively engaged in addressing these issues, advocating for adaptive ecological monitoring, improved legislation, and sustainable resource utilization in Mombasa City.

By bridging the gap between urban development and conservation initiatives, we aim to promote sustainable and resilient urban landscapes and seascapes within it.

In 2023, we took part in several initiatives aimed at improving marine conservation in Mombasa, including the release of 108 turtle hatchlings into the Indian Ocean at Serena Beach, Shanzu, as part of a collaboration between the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Mtwapa Maweni turtle conservation group, and Mombasa Continental Resort.

Marine Connectivity and Conservation

Mr. Titus Jefwa, represented COMRED in a “Marine Connectivity and conservation” workshop held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from the 1st to the 4th of November 2023.

Co-hosted by the Marine Parks and Reserve Unit of Tanzania, the workshop aimed to explore marine connectivity challenges, identify management capacity building needs, share experiences across marine protected areas, and promote the implementation of the Great Blue Wall, an Africa-led effort toward a nature-positive world.

Scholarship Achievement

A heartfelt congratulations to Jackline Mutisya and Maimuna Mbwana, COMRED’s project assistants - sustainable cities program, who secured scholarships to pursue Masters in Marine and Lacustrine Science and Management in Belgium. We are proud to support them in their academic pursuits and look forward to their future contributions to marine science.

Blue economy research

Our dedicated Ms. Maimuna Mbwana, Research Assistant at COMRED, who is pursuing her master’s in marine and Lacustrine Science and Management, recently conducted her fieldwork in Kenya’s Kwale County.

Focusing on translating the blue economy concept into actionable solutions, her research involved engaging local communities in Shimoni, Wasini, and Mkwiro Beach Management Units (BMUs).

The findings highlighted the community’s understanding of the blue economy, major initiatives, and areas of support for sustainable development.

“Despite Wasini being a major tourist destination in the Kenyan South Coast, it’s still underdeveloped and receives less support compared to neighbouring Beach Management Units in matters related to blue economy,”

Wasini resident.

Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan for Mombasa

COMRED actively participated in development of the climate change adaptation action plan for Mombasa County, contributing to the vision of a prosperous and climate-resilient port city.

The Mombasa County Climate Change Action plan, developed by the Department of Water Natural Resources & Climate Change Resilience, sets the roadmap for implementing adaptation and mitigation actions within the county and a benchmark for other coastal cities within the region with interest to develop climate adaptation plans.

Technovation Week in Mombasa

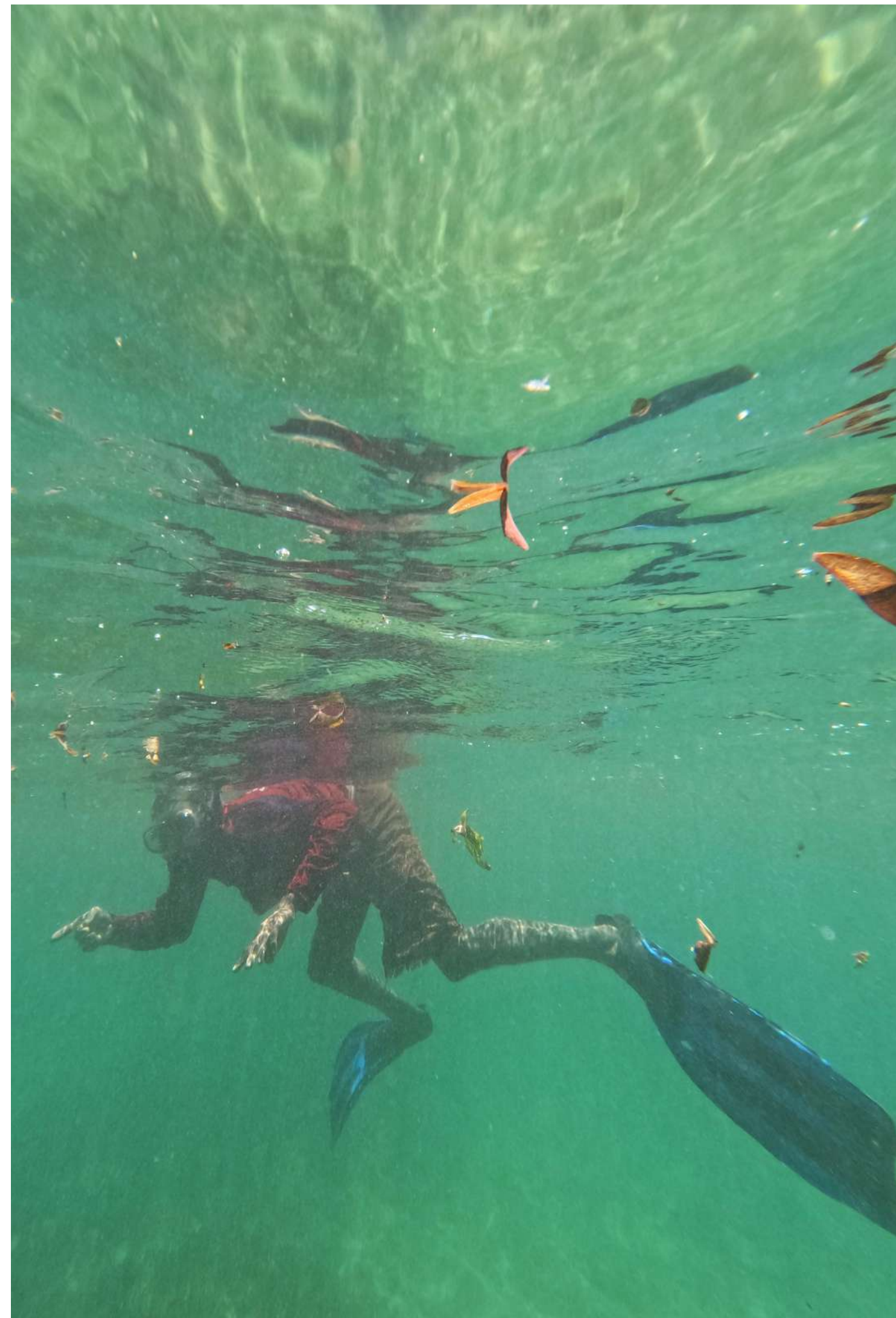
COMRED joined the vibrant Mombasa Technovation Week, showcasing innovative startups, cutting-edge technology, and entrepreneurial ventures.

The event brought together inspiring exhibitors, fostering collaboration and highlighting the potential for technological solutions in addressing urban challenges.

International Coastal Cleanup with Partners

In September, COMRED, alongside partners such as Kenya Wildlife Service (WCK), Bamburi Lafarge ecosystems, HnH, and MWM, actively participated in the International Coastal Cleanup.

This global initiative, organized by Ocean Conservancy and Kenya Wildlife Service (Marine Protected Area), brought together volunteers to clean up coastal waters and beaches, emphasizing the importance of environmental stewardship for the people and nature.



BLUE LOANS FOR LIVELIHOODS & NATURE



Coastal communities face various challenges affecting their environment and livelihoods, such as climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss and degradation.

These challenges create an imbalance between competing human and conservation needs. Providing access to finance enables communities to diversify their income sources, reducing their exposure to climate change impacts and pressure on marine resources.

The Eco-credit scheme

The eco-credit scheme is an innovative solution to climate change and a way of linking conservation with livelihoods.

Eco-credit provides a platform where low-income, unbanked and under-banked coastal communities get access to credit on the condition that they engage in conservation activities such as beach clean-ups, mangrove restoration, and adherence to fisheries laws such as the use of legal and sustainable fishing gear.



Achievements

- After one year of successfully piloting the Eco credit scheme on the south coast of Kenya, we extended our reach to Kilifi County. 14 new groups were formed in July 2023, reaching 26 Eco credit groups: 24 in Kwale County and 2 in Kilifi County. In addition, we scaled up the existing 10 groups formed in 2022 by providing additional seed grants, increasing the group fund from KES 80,000 to over KES 145,000.
- Increased Eco-credit members from 300 to 814 (307 male and 507 female).
- Conducted the first ever peer-to-peer learning between eco-credit groups. Five leaders from each of the 12 eco-credit groups were involved in this exercise. This helped in sharing their experiences and challenges, the exchange of ideas, and helping each other solve common challenges.
- We conducted a mangrove restoration success assessment in collaboration with the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) and the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), whereby approximately 70% of mangrove seedling survival rate were reported.
- 19 CBTs have been trained on the use of digital data collection using the Kobo Collect app and group leaders' roles and responsibilities.
- An exchange learning visit to Zanzibar to learn and share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned from the pioneers of the eco-credit model (MKUBA)

Lessons learnt

- The eco-credit model is adaptable and replicable in different contexts. As a result, it has the potential to grow and to continue contributing towards marine conservation and livelihood enhancement.
- Managing community members' expectations through various stages of the model is important because communities would expect certain benefits, and if this is not met, then they will pull out of the groups. It is also important to highlight that eco-credit is not just about loans; there are a lot of activities involved in the group. Thorough screening and vetting of the members before joining the groups is also important.
- Business and entrepreneurship training is important. This can be done in the early stages of group formation before issuing the seed grant or after cash handover, depending on the availability of time and resources. This provides the eco-credit members with the knowledge and skills to ensure that they make smart investment decisions so that they can benefit from their loans.

"Eco-credit has made a difference in my life. it has given me an employment opportunity, improved my knowledge of marine resources and how to take care of them. I have used the loans I borrowed to enroll in a college and I have graduated with a diploma in Community Leadership,"

Swaleh Kondo, Bodo eco-credit group Community Based Trainer (CBT)

INCEPTION



2022



Eco-credit launched in Kwale county



300 Direct beneficiaries
10 eco-credit groups established



10 eco-credit Community Based Trainers (CBTs) employed



Kes 800,000 seed grant disbursed

UPSCALLING



2023



2 New Eco-credit established in Kwale county

Additional Kes 935,000 seed grant disbursed to existing eco-credit groups
Seed grant growth approximately 50%.



814 (307M, 507F) Direct beneficiaries

Environmental impacts of eco-credit



146,386 Mangrove seedling (nursery) established

117,160 Mangrove transplanted with 70% survival rate



13

Beach clean-ups conducted

8T

Waste collected



20

Environmental conservation awareness meetings conducted by eco-credit group members

GENDER



EXPANSION



2023



Eco-credit expanded to Kilifi county

14 New eco-credit groups established

19 eco-credit Community Based Trainers (CBTs) employed



Eco-credit group savings Kes 1.3 million

ENHANCING **BMUs** CAPACITY FOR IMPROVED **OCEAN STEWARDSHIP**



Building and retaining BMU leadership skills and Knowledge

Building the capacity of BMU leaders in governance and fisheries management helps the BMU sustainably manage ocean resources, which they depend on for their livelihoods. This is in line with the COMRED goal, “improved governance and management of coastal and marine resources in coastal communities and cities.”

In 2023, we trained 255 BMU leaders from 15 BMU (13 in Kwale 2 and Kilifi counties) on leadership and governance, financial management, and bookkeeping. The impact of capacity building has been gradual improvement in understanding and implementation of roles by leaders, accountability and transparency in financial management, improved record-keeping, and teamwork in the implementation of the BMU workplan.

Addressing BMU leaders’ needs through mentorship

Our mentorship program is tailor-made to fit BMU’s needs. Quarterly follow-up meetings reaching 55 BMU leader from 15 BMUs to assess their progress in the implementation of roles and responsibilities was conducted. Frequent follow-ups ensure that the knowledge and skills gained during the training are effectively implemented.

BMU compliance assessment

In June 2023, we conducted a compliance assessment that targeted over 50 BMU members (fishers, dealers, mangrove conservation groups, and small-scale fish processors) to assess BMU members compliance with fisheries laws and regulations, to identify ways of improving compliance.

Gaps drawn from this assessment included poor uptake of fishing licenses, use of illegal fishing gear, and resistance by some fishers to submitting fish catch data.

To improve compliance, COMRED, the Kwale BMU network, and fisheries officers conducted awareness campaigns that reached out to 805 (440 males and 365 females), primarily fishers, small-scale processors, and dealers from 13 BMUs in Kwale and 2 in Kilifi counties. This provided the team with a platform to discuss the impact of destructive fishing gear, the importance of acquiring licenses, and conserving fishery resources.

Upskilling the COMRED project team on fisheries co-management

In 2023, the COMRED fisheries team, consisting of four staff members, participated in the KEMSFED training on fisheries management and governance organized by the Kenya Fisheries Service (KFS). The training focused on training methods, BMU structure and functioning, fisheries management and MCS, fish handling and hygiene, and financial management.

COMRED looks forward to continuing to support BMU leaders in building capacity in fisheries management and governance to address challenges in resource management.

Lessons learnt

- Mentorship is more meaningful when it focuses on addressing needs within the mentees context. Mentorship should be tailor-made specifically to fit the leadership needs.
- Governance capacity-building outcomes take time to translate to fisheries management outcomes; therefore, regular and sufficient financial and technical support from key agencies is critical.
- Governance capacity building should be integrated with fisheries management initiatives rather than stand alone.

NEWS & **STORIES**



PRIORITIZING FISHERS SAFETY AT SEA

According to statistics, up to 400,000 people drown annually, with fishermen being at the greatest risk. In Kenya’s coastal region, an average of ten fishermen dies each year. This grim scenario was bound to worsen in 2023 with the onset of forecasted #ElNino rains, which were expected to peak in October 2023 and last until January 2024. Considering this, we conducted sea safety training for fishermen in Kwale County as well as COMRED staff.

The training was a collaboration between COMRED, Blue Ventures and the Kenya Coast Guard Service. A total of 95 fishermen and 9 COMRED staff were trained on responding to emergencies such as fire, boat capsizing, drowning, and rescue at sea. In addition, each fisher was given a life jacket, which is an important safety equipment at sea.



OUR **DONORS & PARTNERS**



