

A photograph of two young men working on a large tree. One man, wearing a yellow high-visibility vest and a white glove, holds a clipboard and a black bag. The other man, wearing a blue shirt, reaches up towards the tree's canopy. They are outdoors under a clear blue sky.

Annual Report 2025 Highlights

Who We Are

Coastal and Marine Resources Development (COMRED) is a Kenyan-led, coastal-based non-profit organization founded in 2006, rooted in Mombasa but working across Kenya's coast and the broader Western Indian Ocean region.



Why Our Work Matters

For thousands of coastal households, the ocean is more than just a view; it's their livelihood. But coastal ecosystems face growing threats: overfishing, habitat degradation, weak governance, poverty, and climate change. Without sustainable solutions, communities and marine life both suffer.

Our Vision

Sustainable marine and coastal environments support thriving communities and cities across the Western Indian Ocean region.

Our Mission

To build resilient coastal communities and healthy marine ecosystems by supporting livelihoods and conservation, using inclusive, impactful, and science-informed solutions.

Foreword

Message from the directors

Our Dear Donors, Partners and Communities,

We hope that while you read this message, you and your loved ones are well. 2025 was another eventful year. A year marked by funding uncertainties snowballing from global dynamics such as the USAID winding-up. Luckily, we were not victims. However, we too experienced downscaling of some existing funding sources as well as the end of a significant three-year project that substantially supported our work. Overcoming these dynamics to deliver sterling results is testament to our resilience.

We reflect on these great milestones collectively achieved with our Donors, Partners and the Communities we work with. We express our heartfelt appreciation for your great support that enabled us to navigate through an overly challenging year. Great strides and impact in community livelihoods and conservation of coastal and marine resources were achieved. Some key highlights: Average Eco-credit loans increased to US\$ 207 from US\$ 20 in 2022; community groups collectively saved US\$ 33,935; beehives in the apiculture project rose to 340 from 74 in 2023; we explored new coastal livelihood streams such as crab fattening, fish value addition and trade; the process of establishing the Mayungu-Wesa Joint Co-management Area was initiated.

We have great plans this year. Our desire is to strengthen and upscale our work to other communities along the Kenyan coast and beyond. To achieve this, we require an approximate budget of US\$ 1,100,000. Luckily, we have commitments for half of the amount already from our new and existing donors. We welcome support to fill the funding gap. Let us walk together into another incredible year of defying the odds and overcoming challenges together as we achieve more for communities.

Dr. Joseph G. Tunje - Chair, Board of Directors.

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At COMRED, we take pride in the tremendous progress we've made both as an organization and together with the communities we serve. As we grow, change is inevitable, and there comes a time when our decisions must realign with our purpose. We must therefore remain anchored in our values, as individuals and as an organization, to continue building resilient coasts and thriving communities.

Dr. Joseph G. Tunje, Chair, Board of Directors COMRED

99



2025 in Numbers

Here are some of our results:

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When we restore our ocean, we secure our future. The benefits are visible, and they belong to all of us.

— Sadik Tondwe, former chair Mkunguni BMU

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20

BMU groups (13 in Kwale, 7 in Kilifi), consisting of 328 leaders and community members, trained in leadership, life skills, fisheries management, and financial management.

950+

community members benefited from Eco-credit loans. The expansion of groups from 26 in 2024 to 36 in 2025 has broadened financial inclusion across coastal communities.

30-70%

increase in hive colonization, producing 300+ kg of honey worth KES 225,000 (\$1,750). Coastal bee farmers gained new income streams, empowering households while promoting sustainable beekeeping practices.

54

fish traders supported with cooler boxes to improve fish handling, hygiene, and product value, earning more income from their catch.

79%

growth in revolving funds for members of the eco-credit schemes. This momentum has raised cumulative savings to KES 5,409,525 (USD 41,600), with an average loan size of KES 9,240 (USD 71).

17 Ha

of mangroves restored with an average survival rate of 60%. Restoration efforts continue to strengthen coastal protection, support fisheries, and enhance community-led climate resilience.

10%

improvement in BMU leadership capacity and a 6% increase in compliance with fisheries regulations. Enhanced leadership, transparency, and enforcement have led to more effective community stewardship of marine resources.



This Year At a Glance

2025 was a year of impact and resilience for the COMRED team and the coastal communities we serve. Together with our partners, we advanced conservation, strengthened governance, and expanded livelihood opportunities that link healthy oceans to thriving people.

Strengthening Community Governance for Healthier Fisheries

Across Kenya's coastline, effective fisheries governance is central to sustaining both livelihoods and marine ecosystems. This year, we deepened our work with Beach Management Units (BMUs) in Kwale and Kilifi, strengthening their capacity to govern, monitor, and protect the fisheries they depend on.

We worked with **20** BMUs to enhance leadership structures, improve regulatory compliance, and increase community participation in local decision-making. In Kilifi, **eight** BMUs received targeted support to review and update their by-laws, an important step in aligning community governance with national fisheries standards.

Community-led monitoring systems also grew stronger, with **32** (67% youth) trained data collectors in **17** BMUs submitting weekly monitoring data, and **118** patrol members supporting enforcement of community rules. As roles became clearer and governance more inclusive, BMUs reported greater cohesion, accountability, and confidence in managing their fisheries.

We further supported the implementation of Joint Co-Management Area (JCMA) Plans across Malindi-Magarini, Mwandamu-Funzi, and Shimoni-Vanga, while facilitating the development of the new Mayungu-Wesa JCMA Plan. These plans continue to provide a shared framework for communities, government agencies, and partners to jointly steward marine resources.

More than **1,600** community members were reached through sensitization forums and community engagements, strengthening understanding of fisheries regulations, conservation practices, and sustainable use. This improved awareness combined with stronger BMU governance contributed to a **6%** increase in compliance, reflected in fewer illegal gears reported, more fishers adhering to closed seasons and size limits, and greater willingness to follow community-agreed rules.

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If we don't protect our octopus, our children might only see it in photos even if they live along the coast.

— Hadija Dosa, Chairlady, Mkwiro BMU

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Building Financial Resilience Through Eco-credit

Across coastal Kenya, livelihood diversification remains a key driver of community resilience. This year, we expanded the Eco-credit model from 26 to 36 groups, extending affordable financing to more households. Kilifi was prioritized due to strong community demand, limited access to formal financial services, and growing interest in nature-based enterprises. This expansion enabled more families to strengthen small businesses, improve incomes, and reduce pressure on marine resources.

Six community groups in Kilifi received **KES 500,000** (\$3,858) seed grant to grow nature-based enterprises such as beekeeping, waste-to-value initiatives, and fish value addition. In total, **91** community members (45 women, 30 men, and 16 people living with disabilities) benefited from this support, ensuring that opportunities remained inclusive and equitable.

Recognising the unique challenges faced by small-scale fish traders, we piloted and adapted the Eco-credit model, resulting in two trader-focused groups with **34** traders, each receiving a subsidised cooler box, and contributing **40%** of the cost back into their revolving fund. The cooler boxes will help improve fish preservation for long-distance traders, enabling them to earn more from their catch, and strengthen a sustainable, community-owned financing system.

To expand blue enterprises, we supported the deployment of 40 crab cages benefiting 30 community members in Bodo. These cages allow communities to farm crabs sustainably, providing a reliable income source without increasing pressure on wild crab populations or damaging nearshore habitats. In Kibuyuni, we co-designed and delivered 80 aluminium boiling jerrycans to sardine ("dagaa") processors, replacing harmful plastic containers and improving safety, hygiene, and product quality. We also installed solar lighting in the processing unit, creating a safer working environment for women and reducing post-harvest losses through timely night-time processing.

The Eco-credit model continues to demonstrate that when communities have access to financial tools, they can build enterprises that sustain households, empower women and youth, and contribute to healthier marine ecosystems.

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Eco-credit has allowed me to explore multiple income streams as a businesswoman, enabling me to support my household.

- Mwanatumu Makopo, CBT Mwaembe BMU



Community-Led Conservation Driving Ecosystem Recovery

In 2025, **four** BMUs- **three** in Kwale and **one** in Kilifi - were supported to begin establishing community closures, giving key marine areas time to rest and replenish. These closures are already fostering stronger community ownership and setting the foundation for long-term ecological recovery.

Community groups also advanced mangrove restoration efforts, with **17 hectares** replanted helping stabilise coastlines and rebuild critical fish habitats.

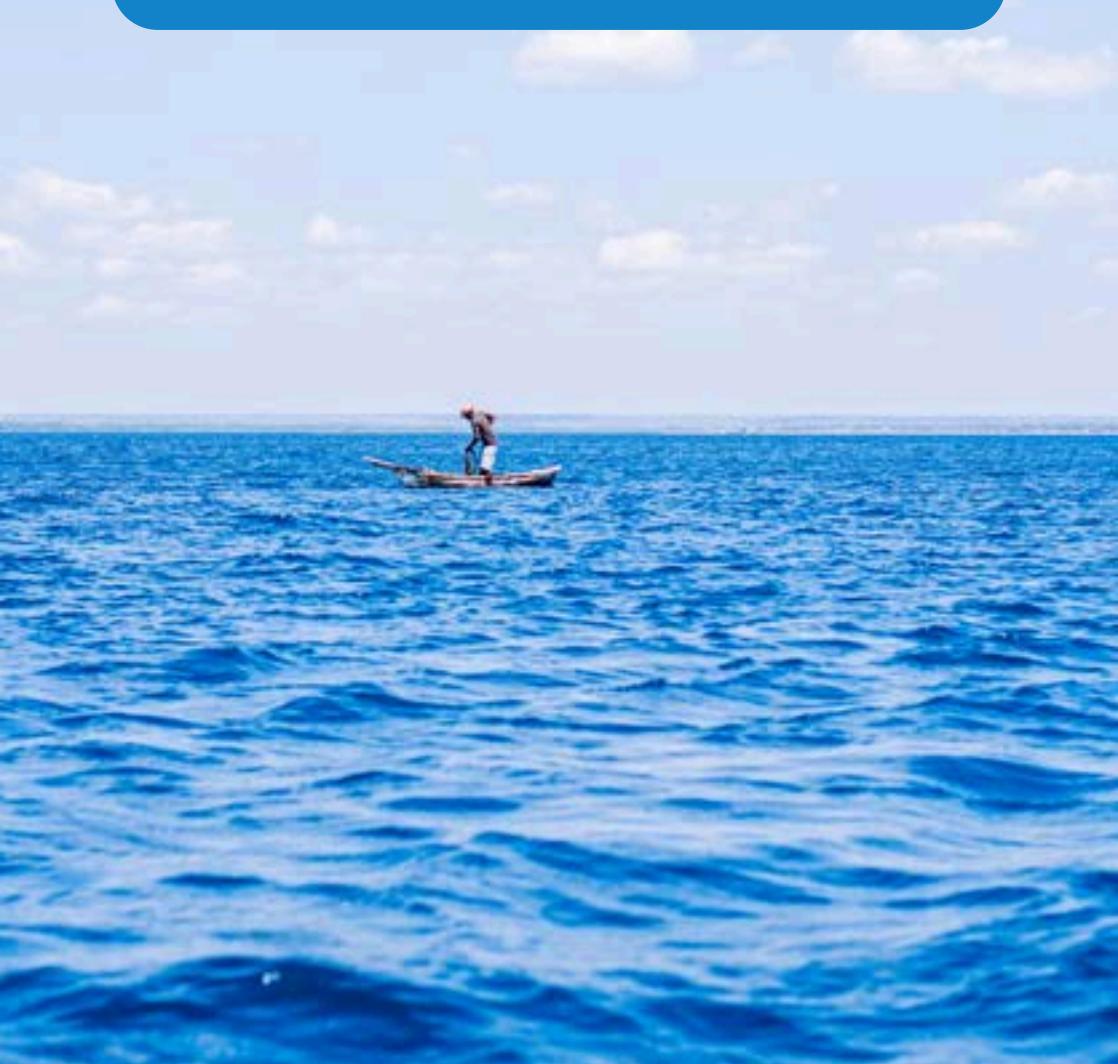
Improved governance and enhanced monitoring contributed to increased compliance with fisheries regulations, showing a positive shift in how communities manage shared resources.

Across the region, conservation is becoming a locally led movement one driven by knowledge, accountability, and a growing commitment to protect the ecosystems that sustain coastal livelihoods.



News and Stories

Beyond our core programmes, 2025 was a year of connection, learning, and storytelling. From Fatuma, a beekeeper from Majoren, to hosting community members from Madagascar on an exchange visit, we highlighted how people are shaping conservation and livelihoods. Our team also shared knowledge through posters and oral presentations at the WIOMSA Scientific Symposium, while two colleagues represented us at the #IUCNCongress, amplifying the voices of coastal communities on both regional and global platforms.



The Ocean Was Just the Ocean, Until I Knew Better



I was raised on Mkiro Island, surrounded by the ocean. As a child, the sea was just... the sea. A vast, beautiful place where our fathers sailed out in *dau* and returned with bountiful catches of all kinds. This was the norm. We watched, we learned, and we helped carry the fish home. We could collect corals and play with them, never aware of their value. Back then, leaving the island was rare. Boats were few, and movement was slow. But things evolved and so did our understanding of what the ocean meant.

When I was growing up, women mostly fished for octopus. That was our space, shallow waters, near the shore. We never went beyond. Never even in our imagination. But today, I see young women becoming divers, fearlessly exploring the ocean and inspiring others to follow. The tide is turning. Women in my village are taking up space, not just at sea, but in leadership too.

From Eco-credit to Confidence

The introduction of eco-credit groups changed everything. Suddenly, protecting marine resources came with benefits the financial support, recognition, and a sense of purpose. Being in a group made more women get involved in conservation. The awareness worked. The community began to understand that the ocean isn't just for fishing, it's for safeguarding, sustaining, and building futures.

I Never Saw It, Until I Saw Her

I started out as a BMU member, then became vice-secretary, then a data collector. Becoming chairlady was never my agenda not because I didn't believe in myself, but because I had never seen a woman lead.

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Then I started interacting with a neighbouring BMU, and that's when it clicked in me - I could too if I wanted and with encouragement from my family, my community, and local leaders, I vied as a BMU chairlady and got elected. They trusted me, and I rose to the task.



Leadership Isn't Always Easy, But It's Worth It

Being a chairlady comes with its challenges, like any leadership role. But I'm proud of myself for not giving up. I'm proud that my presence has inspired other women to step forward. That alone makes it worth it. My perspective of the Ocean has since changed. It's not just a body of water. It's a source of life.

Yes, it gives us fish. But it also gives us, tourism, income, education and endless opportunities hidden in its depth and diversity. Through the BMU, our community no longer just uses the ocean, we protect it.

Just as I was inspired by another woman, I hope to inspire others too, especially the young girls in my village. I may be the first woman chairlady in my BMU, but I know I won't be the last. We all have a place in the ocean's story. Sometimes, we just need someone to remind us, the tide is changing.

Khadija M. Dosa, Chairlady, Mkiro BMU

Strengthening Regional Collaboration: Kenya-Madagascar Exchange Visit

We hosted a delegation from Madagascar through the RECOS Project under the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) for a peer learning exchange visit. The visit showcased our work in community-led conservation, governance, and livelihoods, while strengthening collaboration between Kenya and Madagascar.

Participants from Blue Ventures, Wildlife Conservation Society, Velondriake LMMA, and Natiora Defenders joined field visits and shared experiences on marine management, conservation financing, and livelihood diversification.

Key opportunities for collaboration emerged in LMMA management, beekeeping, mangrove conservation and carbon credits, and sardine "daga" processing areas that continue to build cross-country learning and strengthen resilience among coastal communities.



Local and Regional Exchange Visit

We also facilitated additional exchanges that strengthened peer-to-peer learning across the region:

-  A peer-to-peer learning exchange between Kilifi and Kwale BMUs on fisheries management. **Nineteen** leaders from Kilifi BMUs visited **two** BMUs in Kwale to learn best practices in co-management, conservation, and sustainable fisheries governance.
-  A Community Learning Exchange on the Fisheries Value Chain and BMU Governance, bringing together BMU leaders and fisher associations from Zanzibar, Tanga, and Mkuranga, alongside NORAD project partners; Blue Ventures, Sea Sense and Mwambao. The exchange focused on sharing experiences, addressing common challenges, and identifying best practices in governance and sustainable value chain development.

Across all these engagements, key opportunities for collaboration emerged in LMMA management, beekeeping, mangrove conservation and carbon credits, and dagaa processing; areas that continue to strengthen learning networks and resilience among coastal communities in the Western Indian Ocean.

Showcasing Community Voices at **#WIOMSA2025**

We were proud to participate in the 13th WIOMSA Scientific Symposium held in Mombasa under the theme "One Ocean, One Future." The symposium the largest open scientific conference in the Western Indian Ocean, brought together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to exchange knowledge and inspire action for a healthy, resilient ocean.

Our team showcased our community-centered approaches to marine governance, conservation, and livelihoods through oral and poster presentations, highlighting how coastal communities are driving locally led conservation.

The event offered valuable opportunities to learn, connect, and amplify community voices at the heart of ocean stewardship.

"Science has the most impact when it reflects the voices of the people who interact with the ocean every day."

— **Nyaga Kanyange, Director COMRED, #WIOMSA2025**



Buzzing Towards Change: Creating Real Opportunities for People



There's a quiet kind of strength that sits in Fatuma Saidi's eyes, the kind you only earn from years of doing what needs to be done, whether or not the sun feels too hot or the day too long.

She lives in Majoreni, a small village tucked between fields and the ocean. It's the kind of place where life hums softly with goats bleating, children playing around, and the scent of salt and smoke in the air. Fatuma is a fisher's wife. But these days, she's also something else: a beekeeper.

It started with curiosity. Fatuma had heard about a COMRED beekeeping initiative and decided to sit in and learn, mostly to listen. *"At first, I didn't even know what nyuki (bees) could do for me,"* she says with a laugh. *"I just thought they sting and fly away."* But after attending a few sessions, surrounded by other curious people, something began to shift. The idea of beekeeping, of owning something small yet powerful, began to take root.

Her first harvest changed everything. She remembers the weight of the bucket, the gold of the honey, the disbelief that it was hers. She sold it for KES 12,000, shared some with her husband, saved the rest, and realised she could do more than just get by; she could grow.

Now, Fatuma manages her hives with the same tenderness she once gave her crops. She also assists other farmers as a Trainer of Trainers (ToT) of Majoreni Beekeepers, a role she takes to heart. She talks about bees like family: how they hum, differently on windy days, how they retreat when rain is coming. She has learned their ways, including how to feed

them in the dry season and when to harvest. She has turned honey into business.

"Before, people didn't listen to me," she says. *"Now, even the men seek advice from me."*



Through Eco-credit, Fatuma can access loans easily to expand her ventures. What has truly changed isn't just her income; it's also her sense of worth. *"Bees taught me patience,"* she smiles. *"They taught me courage. You can't rush a hive. You wait for it to give."*

She still dreams of her own thriving business, and of women like her running businesses that blend nature and independence. As we walk through the fields, there is a mix of hope, resilience, and quiet pride. *"When I see bees now, I see opportunity."*



Amplifying Coastal Voices at the #IUCNCongress2025

Two of our colleagues represented us at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, themed "Powering Transformative Conservation." The Congress brought together global conservation leaders, scientists, and grassroots organisations to advance solutions that unite people and nature.

Dr. Patrick Kimani spoke at the Africa Pavilion session "Securing the Base: Land Tenure and Natural Resource Rights," emphasising that small-scale fishers must have secure rights and a voice in ocean governance.

"You can only value what you benefit from, fishers can only steward when their rights are secured." – Patrick Kimani, Director COMRED, #IUCNCongress2025

The discussions echoed our belief that when local fishers have secure rights, strong voices, and fair access, they sustain both their livelihoods and the ocean itself.

"We must protect nature as if our life depends on it because it does." – Dr. Sylvia Earle, Mission Blue

Knowledge and Communication in Action

We marked a major milestone this year with the development of our Communications Strategy, created with support from Maliasili, which strengthens how we communicate our impact and amplify stories of people, science, and solutions across our programmes. We also developed a policy brief for Mombasa County to inform decision-makers on priority actions for sustainable coastal and marine resource management.

"Launching our Communication Strategy is a major milestone. It will streamline how we engage internally and with our partners, marking a new chapter in how we share our work." - Nyaga Kanyange, Director COMRED

In parallel, our colleague Jefwa Charo contributed to the wider research community with a peer-reviewed publication: ***"Recurring Floods in Mombasa, Kenya: A Socio-Economic and Ecological Perspective"*** (Molelu & Jefwa Charo, 2024), highlighting critical insights on the region's flood challenges. [Read it HERE](#)



Looking Ahead

Annual Donor Funding



Highlight of our funding needs in 2026

With your support, we can tackle climate threats, improve livelihoods, and continue to implement our ambitious 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

- Scale to **50** eco-credit groups.
- Support **1,000** youths (80% women) in development of entrepreneurial skills and initiate blue businesses
- Scale up bee keeping farmers from current **63** to **160**, producing about **12.6** tonnes of honey annually
- Initiate at least **3** new livelihoods streams (such as crab fattening, oyster farming, seaweed value addition)
- Strengthen governance & leadership within **20** BMUs.
- Expand to **2** more Locally Marine Managed Areas (LMMA's)
- Support establishment and implementation of **1** JCMA in Kilifi and **2** in Kwale
- Optimize utilization of solar energy in **2** communities in Kwale and Kilifi



Invest In Us

Investing in COMRED means supporting the hands that protect the ocean, and the ocean that sustains us all.



Thank you to our partners





Community-Led Transformation:
Stronger Leaders, Stronger
Incomes, Stronger Oceans.



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