



PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

CONSERVING AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY (ABES)



THIRD YEAR REPORT

OCTOBER, 2023 – OCTOBER, 2024

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The Director
African Union - Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
Kenindia Business Park
Museum Hill, Westlands Road
P.O. Box 30786
00100, Nairobi, KENYA
e-mail to: ibar.office@au-ibar.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	iv
1. CONTEXT	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Overall Objective of the Project	3
2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW (OCTOBER 2023 –OCTOBER 2024)	5
2.1 Summary: October 2023- October 2024	5
3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER RESULT AREAS	6
SO1. Ratify and/or align relevant international/regional instruments related to Africa’s Blue Economy Strategic Areas (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity).	6
SO2: Optimizing conservation and sustainable biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among users of Blue Economy Resources.	17
SO3. Strengthening measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining, and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and the environment.	33
SO4:Strengthening Gender Inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management	41
4. PROGRESS ON INDICATORS	47
4.1 LOGFRAME	47
5. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY	55
6. TECHNICAL PROJECT STAFF:	60
7. PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES:	60
8. CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES	61
9. DISCUSSIONS	62
10. RECOMMENDATIONS	63
11. PROJECT REPORTS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS	64

ACRONYMS

ABES	Africa Blue Economy Strategy
AU-MSs	African Union Member States
AU-IBAR	African Union - Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources
ACS	Abidjan Convention Secretariat
ABNJ	Convention on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
EBM	Ecosystem–Based Management
BRS	Basel Rotterdam Stockholm Convention
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CC	Climate Change
CoEs	Centers of Excellence
COP	Conference of Parties
COREP	Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea
CREMA	Community Resource Management Area
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zones
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IOC/UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing
KMFRI	Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute
MARPOL	The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MCS	Monitoring Control and Surveillance
MCSCC	MCS Coordination Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
LMEs	Large Marine Ecosystems Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RFBs	Regional Fisheries Bodies

SADC	Southern Africa Development Corporation
SoME	State of Transboundary Marine Environment
TBCA	Transboundary Marine Conservation Area
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFA	United Nations Fish Stock Agreement
WIOMSA	Western India Ocean Marine Science Association

I. CONTEXT

1.1 Background

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) was endorsed by the Summit of African Heads of States and Governments in February 2020, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The ABES envisioned an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth. The continental strategy identified environmental sustainability and biodiversity protection as a key strategic goal for healthy ecosystems and sustainable Blue Economy development. The project is therefore supporting the implementation of the ABES in African Union Member States (AU-MSs) as well as regional institutions (mainly through transboundary interventions). The ABES also underlined regional cooperation and coordination on issues of Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and as well as the implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as key strategic activities to ensure the effective conservation of aquatic biodiversity. MSP builds upon the key approaches of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and incorporates the key principles of the Ecosystem Approach or Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM).

Of high importance is the fact that regulatory measures to conserve aquatic biodiversity should include awareness enhancement and political buy-in. This can be accomplished through educational programs, enhancing awareness and effective participation in related Global Fora as well as production of knowledge products on key issues relevant to aquatic biodiversity conservation, and incentive programs. To support the implementation of ABES, the African Union - Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), with funding support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is therefore implementing a project on "Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy" for a period of three years (October 2021 – October 2024); with a total budget is approximately USD 5.5 million. The overall goal of this project is to "Enhance the institutional capacity of AU-MS and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the utilization, conservation, and protection of aquatic biodiversity in the context of the ABES."

The African continent is adjacent to some of the most highly productive marine ecosystems that include the seven African Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs): Agulhas Current LME, Benguela Current LME, Guinea Current LME, Canary Current LME, Mediterranean

Sea LME, Red Sea LME, and Somali Current LME. The continent is also endowed with networks of rivers and lakes. The seas, oceans, lakes, and rivers support a significant number of biodiversity and ecosystems, which provide sources of livelihoods, food security, and wealth. These African aquatic ecosystems inhabit living and non-living resources; however, the unsustainable exploitation of these resources is threatening biodiversity, resources, and environmental sustainability.

Aquatic biodiversity is the total assemblage of living resources in aquatic ecosystems, including fish species, shellfish, plants, micro-organisms, and more. Aquatic biodiversity encompasses freshwater systems, marine (sea and oceanic) environments, floodplains, aquaculture ponds, and wetlands. Several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in Africa's aquatic ecosystems. These include overexploitation of living species, pollution from several sources (land-based municipal, oil, gas, and agricultural activities), uncontrolled introduction of exotic species in aquaculture systems, and effluents from mining activities. Consequently, important aquatic resources are becoming increasingly susceptible to both natural and artificial environmental changes. Thus, conservation strategies to protect and conserve aquatic life are necessary to maintain the balance of nature and support the availability of resources for future generations.

Some of the issues identified in the project that are crucial to aquatic biodiversity conservation in the context of the African Blue Economy include the following:

- a) Effective role and Abhorrence to global initiatives and best practices on issues relating to aquatic biodiversity conservation.
- b) Increasing maritime safety, security, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- c) Resilience, climate change, environmental sustainability, and biodiversity protection.
- d) Gender inclusivity.
- e) Partnerships and transboundary considerations.

The project intervention areas are closely entwined with aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental protection in the five thematic areas of the ABES, indicated below:

- i. Fisheries, aquaculture, conservation, and sustainable aquatic ecosystems.
- ii. Shipping/transportation, trade, ports, maritime security, safety and
- iii. Enforcement.
- iv. Coastal and maritime tourism, climate change, resilience, environment,

- v. Infrastructure.
- vi. Sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries.
- vii. Policies, institutional and governance, employment, job creation and poverty
- viii. eradication, and innovative financing.

1.2 Overall Objective of the Project

The overarching objective of the project is to enhance the policy environment, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities of African Union member states (AU-MSs) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to sustainably utilize and conserve aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

1.2.1 Strategic Objectives

- a) Ratify and/or align relevant International/Regional Instruments related to Blue Economy themes (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity).
- b) Optimize conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among Blue Economy sub-themes.
- c) Strengthen measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining, and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and the environment.
- d) Strengthen gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Project activities are being implemented following the approach depicted below:

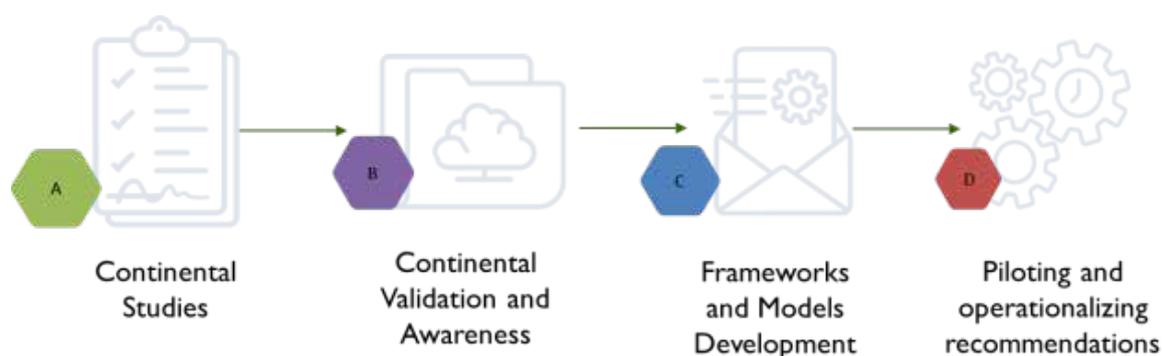


Figure 1: Approach of project implementation

A. Undertaking Regional or Continental studies: These studies are done to provide a baseline assessment of the current situation across the continent to lay the ground for evidence-based intervention by the project. Study reports are generated to convey the findings of the studies.

- B. Regional or Continental consultative validation and awareness-enhancing workshops for stakeholders:** Each study report is validated by the wider African Continental stakeholders. This process aims to enrich the reports, create awareness of the subject matter, facilitate participation by a broader stakeholder base, and promote ownership.
- C. Developing frameworks, models and knowledge products:** Based on the validated study reports, knowledge products such as Policy Briefs, Policy Notes, Information Notes, and Advocacy Notes as well as frameworks and models, are developed to guide the implementation of the study recommendations.
- D. Piloting and operationalizing recommendations:** Collaboration is sought, and support is given to AU-MS, Regional Institutions, and communities (in this case) to roll out activities related to the study recommendations, and subsequently achieve the objectives of the project.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW (OCTOBER 2023 –OCTOBER 2024)

2.1 Summary: October 2023- October 2024

- a) Endorsement of project outcomes by the African Heads of States and Governments for the following project reports:
 - i. A continental strategy for gender mainstreaming in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management; and,
 - ii. A mechanism for effective participation of African stakeholders in Continental and Global Fora on aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.
- b) A Ministerial endorsement (Benin and Togo) of the report on the States of the Marine Environment is a critical stage towards actualizing the establishment of transboundary MSP between the two countries.
- c) Joint hosting of the second MSP forum with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (IOC/ UNESCO) to create awareness on the MSP process and related concepts.
- d) Facilitated the formulation of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) formalizing the joint management of the transboundary conservation area between Kenya and Tanzania and buy-in by respective parliamentarians from Kenya and Tanzania.
- e) Facilitated the development of a gender-sensitive management plan for coastal and environmental management areas for communities in the coastal (Volta) region of Ghana.
- f) Purchase of equipment for the Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) to enhance monitoring, control, and surveillance systems in the six constituent countries (Benin, Togo, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cote D'Ivoire) for effective combat of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), conserving aquatic biodiversity and protection of the environment.
- g) Collaborated with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Nairobi Convention to technically finalize the roadmap and Regional Guidelines for MSP to advance the transboundary MSP process in the Northern Mozambique Channel towards conserving the marine ecosystems and aquatic biodiversity.
- h) In collaboration with the Fisheries Commission for the Gulf of Guinea COREP), the Project supported the Republic of Congo and the Republic of Gabon to enhance effective joint governance systems for transboundary marine protected areas between the two countries for the management of shared marine ecosystems and conservation aquatic

biodiversity.

- i) In collaboration with the Fisheries Commission for the Gulf of Guinea COREP). The Project supported the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo to develop harmonized strategies for transboundary management of shared marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Guinea towards rational management and conservation of aquatic ecosystems.
- j) Supported the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to mainstream gender dimension in the national instruments for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity

3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER RESULT AREAS

SO1. Ratify and/or align relevant international/regional instruments related to Africa's Blue Economy Strategic Areas (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity).

Output 1.1 Mechanisms for active participation of Member States (MSs) in regional and global initiatives related to aquatic biodiversity and environmental regimes - Convention on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Conference of Parties (COP) meeting relating to Climate Change (CC) Basel Rotterdam Stockholm Convention (BRS), etc.) developed.

- I. International Climate Change Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was held in the United Arab Emirates, November – December 2023

The project supported Togo, Kenya, and Zimbabwe to participate in the International Climate Change Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was held in the United Arab Emirates, November – December 2023. This was in line with actions designed by the project to support AU-MSs in participating and playing effective roles in regional and Global biodiversity and environmental-related regimes. At the conference, the selected Countries were supported to contribute to discussions on Africa's common position on climate change and aquatic biodiversity conservation. The AU-IBAR team supported AU-MSs and participated in the following side events at UNFCCC COP 28:

- i. Youth Voices for Climate Action.
- ii. Empowering Youth Climate Leadership Access to Climate Finance, Capacity Building and Technology.
- iii. AUC Climate Finance for Agriculture and Food Security: Implementation of Nairobi Declaration on Climate Finance and Green Growth in Africa.
- iv. ECA Article 6 on Capacity Building.
- v. African Development Bank Group (AfDB) Insurance for Climate Change Adaptation: Advancing partnerships and resource mobilization for the Africa Climate Risk Insurance Facility for Adaptation.
- vi. African Group of Negotiators Briefing on the African Common Position at UNFCCC COP28.



Figure 2: The AU-IBAR team engaged with the Director of AUDA-NEPAD, Ms. Estherine, and consulted on a variety of issues related to thematic areas for negotiations on climate change and how to strengthen common positions for AU-Member States.



Figure 3: Dr. Patrick Karani (Background) at the Group session at the youth and women event.

II. Committee administering the Mechanism for Promoting Implementation and Compliance of the Basel Convention –28th June 2024- 3rd July 2024 Geneva, Switzerland

Secondly, the project initiated a request for collaboration between AU-IBAR and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. This in turn culminated in AU-IBAR being granted observer status to BRS Convention. AU-IBAR was invited to the Sixteenth meeting of the Committee administering the Mechanism for Promoting Implementation and Compliance of the Basel Convention –Towards Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity and Ecosystems on 28th June 2024- 3rd July 2024 Geneva, Switzerland,

Specifically, AU-IBAR conducted the following tasks during the meeting:

- a. Initiated mechanisms for collaboration between the Basel Secretariat and AU-IBAR on supporting the African Continent in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems and environment management;
- b. Highlighted the challenges that are facing the African aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems concerning pollution of the aquatic spaces;
- c. Sensitized the Basel Convention Secretariat and the Basel Compliance Committee and enhanced awareness, willingness, and request of AU-IBAR on the importance of collaboration with Basel Convention Secretariat in the crucial work of “Conserving aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems restoration in African Blue Economy and environment management; and,
- d. Highlighted the interest and the urgent need to rally all the stakeholders to initiate collaboration in reversing the negative impacts being caused by pollution and efforts in restoring degraded ecosystems.

This mission attained tremendous achievements in highlighting challenges and collaborative arrangements and solutions towards efforts aimed at the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems on the African Continent.

The AU-IBAR team extensively interacted with the two African representatives i.e., (i) the Democratic Republic of Congo; and (ii) the Republic of Uganda at the Compliance Committee meeting, sensitizing and guiding them on the need to bring into the Basel Convention deliberations the impact of pollution (particularly highlighting plastic pollution) on Africa’s aquatic ecosystems and its aquatic biodiversity resources, including fisheries.



Figure 4: Family photo taken at the International Environment House (II), Geneva, Switzerland, during the meeting that took place 1st – 2nd July 2024



Figure 5: The Chairperson Jason Dunn giving opening remarks to the compliance committee



Figure 6: The delegate from Uganda Ms. Jenifer Kajjuka Kutesakwe making reactions to ongoing deliberations

- iii. Commemoration of the Africa Day for Seas and Oceans between 23rd – 25th July 2024

In addition, the project participated in the African Blue Economy Week and the commemoration of the Africa Day for Seas and Oceans between 23rd – 25th July 2024 at the African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Specifically, the Meeting aimed to:

- i. Raise awareness on the critical role played by Africa's Oceans and Seas in contributing towards the attainment of the Aspirations of Agenda 2063, Sustainable Development Goals, and the objectives of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy;
- ii. Navigating the Future Reflecting on a Decade of African Seas and Oceans (2015-2025);
- iii. Advancing Partnerships for Sustainable Blue Economy and Financing Blue Economy Initiatives: Opportunities and Challenges;
- iv. Exploring the Potential for Regional Value Chains in the AfCFTA context as a Means for Blue Economy Transformation for African Islands and Coastal Countries; and,
- v. Empowering Youth for Blue Economy Leadership & Innovation and the African Day of Seas and Oceans Celebrations.

Role played by AU-IBAR

AU-IBAR provided support and sensitized Non-Governmental Organizations especially the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) and youth groups on the blue economy concept, governance mechanism and opportunities during the commemoration of the Africa Day for Oceans and Seas and also, positively contributed to the deliberations throughout the meeting.



Figure 7: Family photo at the opening session Commissioner ARBE together with Development Partners, and Regional Economic Communities



Figure 8: The African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) representative and chairperson of the (AWFISHNET) Uganda Chapter, Ms. Lovin Kobusingye giving her presentation on the progress and achievements of the organization

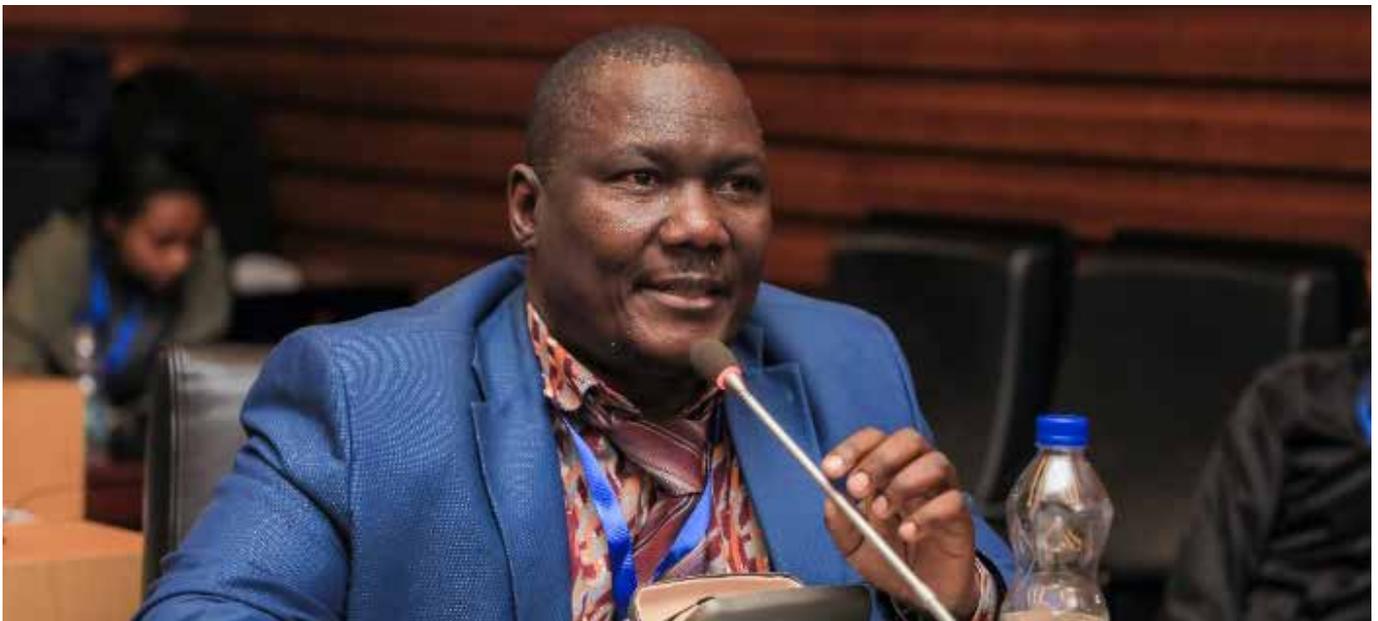


Figure 9: Mr. Nadipe Eric contributing to the discussion about the roles of the “Blue Economy Reference Group” (BERG) committee that was established.

Second MSP Forum in Africa, Dar ES Salaam, November 2023

The Project supported DR Congo and Kenya at the second MSP forum in Tanzania for the articulation of Africa’s interest and awareness creation on MSP processes.



Figure 10: MSP forum session: Mr. Joel Mokenye (Aquatic Biodiversity Specialist and the delegate from DR Congo).



Figure 11: Representatives of Co-Organizers: UNESCO, AU-IBAR, AUC-SEBE, UNEP (Nairobi and Abidjan Convention).

Achievements:

- Awareness on African stakeholders enhanced on MSP process and information disseminated on the status of MSP initiatives in the continent.
- The second forum created a platform for different players in MSP to profile their contribution and aspirations towards MSP.
- African delegates at the conference updated on the status of Africa Blue Economy Strategy implementation in the continent;
- African delegates supported to get insight and give perspectives on transboundary MSP processes and issues.

The 8th Session of Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) of Ministers responsible for Oceans, inland waters and fisheries, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 9-11th September, 2024

AU-IBAR participated at the 8th Session of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Ministers responsible for Oceans, inland waters and fisheries, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 9-11th September, 2024



Figure 12: A Family Photo of the Participants

Relevance of the meeting in realizing the objectives of the AUC in general and DARBE in particular.

The Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Ministers responsible for Oceans, inland waters and fisheries meeting is organized biannually and supports the Member States from the (OACPS) regions to manage their fisheries, Aquaculture and Blue Economy sustainably, for contribution to reducing hunger, poverty alleviation and wealth creation.



Figure 13: The Director AU-IBAR giving a presentation on Strengthening the enabling environment to realize sustainable, inclusive and better-governed fisheries “Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) and African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM)” African Blue Economy Strategy



Figure 14: AU-IBAR technical staff with the Director

On the African Common position and participation of AU-MS in Global Fora, AU-IBAR urged AU-MS to ratify, domesticate and implement the UN Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). In addition, AU-IBAR established contact with and had a fruitful discussion with the representative of CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species); the discussions initiated collaborative arrangements to support AU members on issues of Aquatic biodiversity conservation.



Figure 15: Mr. Eric Nadiope , Legal and Institutional Officer of the AU-IBAR aquatic biodiversity project; making intervention to encourage AU-MS to ratify, domesticate and implement the new UN Treaty on Global Convention on Biodiversity in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty

Achievements of the mission

- The delegates were informed on the activities of AU-IBAR with regards fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic conservation on the African continent and recommendations on mechanism of enhancing collaboration with the Secretariat of OACPS on issues of fisheries, aquaculture and blue economy. The Director of AU-IBAR participated in high level panels on strengthening policy environment, regional collaboration and partnerships.
- The meeting also shared Knowledge and increased common understanding of the challenges and opportunities that are presented to AU Member States within the frameworks of the OACPS on issues of fisheries, aquaculture, blue economy, including aquatic biodiversity conservation

Output 1.2. Ratification and implementation of Conventions and Agreements related to conservation of biodiversity in AU MSs and RECs supported.

During the period under review, the project supported three African Union Member States; the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Djibouti, and the Republic of Uganda to align their National Policies with Continental and Global Frameworks, that are related to aquatic biodiversity conservation, ecosystems and environmental management. The studies commissioned by the project prioritized several relevant global instruments considered key to the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems on the continent. The project is currently supporting AU Member States to align these instruments with national policies, domesticate them, and implement them. These instruments include the following:

- i. International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships MARPOL 1973;
- ii. Bamako Convention;
- iii. Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions;
- iv. Revised African Convention on Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (African Convention);
- v. Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD);
- vi. Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972;
- vii. United Nations Convention of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS);
- viii. UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA);
- ix. Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, 2016;
- x. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biodiversity;
- xi. Nagoya Protocol;
- xii. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- xiii. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Support to African Union member states for domestication of continental and global instruments:

The Project supported Djibouti, Tunisia, Uganda and Ghana to review and align their national policies and regulatory frameworks with the identified priority continental and global instruments related to aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.



Figure 16: Family Photo of Delegates at the Tunisia meeting



Figure 17: Family Photo of Delegates at the Djibouti meeting.



18: Family Photo of Delegates at the Kampala meeting.



Figure 19: Family Photo of Delegates at the Accra Ghana meeting.



Figure 20: Her excellence Ophelia M. Hayford—the Hon. Minister for Ministry of Environment, Science Technology and Innovation – Government of the Republic of Ghana during the Opening session

The methodology of support entailed review of national instruments and national consultative processes that I aimed at mainstreaming prioritized Global Instruments related and relevant to the conservation of aquatic biodiversity, ecosystems, and environmental management. The participants were mostly focal points from Ministries, Departments, and Agencies that are within the Blue Economy sector in these countries closely related to the ABES clustered thematic areas; therefore, representatives from the national consultative process are usually drawn from the following sectors:

- a) Fisheries and Aquaculture
- b) Water and Environment
- c) Coastal and marine tourism
- d) Deep Sea Mining, Oil and Gas
- e) Offshore Energy and hydrothermal energy sector
- f) Water transportation
- g) Gender Ministry
- h) Private sector



Figure 21: Group discussions by Participants during the workshop sessions in Accra - Ghana

Key achievements:

- i. Each of the three countries identified existing policies and regulatory frameworks at national levels that are related to aquatic biodiversity conservation.
- ii. Gaps identified in the national instruments with regards to the provisions prioritized in the continental and global instruments relevant to effective conservation of aquatic biodiversity.
- iii. Priority actions identified to mainstream or domesticate the provisions in the continental and global instruments, identified as gaps, into the national instruments, for improved conservation of aquatic biodiversity.

SO2: Optimizing conservation and sustainable biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among users of Blue Economy Resources.

Output 2.1: Enforceable regulatory frameworks for effective and sustainable regional MCS systems developed.

Key achievements:

i. Support to operationalizing SADC Regional Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Coordination Centre (MCSCC):

The project conducted an assessment of the status of Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) systems for the conservation and protection of aquatic biodiversity in shared African aquatic ecosystems in the East and Southern (ESA) regions of Africa. The study developed a mechanism to strengthen MCS by identifying capacity strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the project identified an ongoing initiative in the SADC region to establish a Regional MCS Coordination Centre (MCSCC) in Mozambique. The centre is envisaged to further assist in promoting regional cooperation, information sharing, and cost-effective sharing of assets in the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Based on the study report for the Eastern and Southern regions of Africa, the project initiated discussions with the SADC Secretariat towards strengthening the MCSCC. The project completed a study on establishing a cost-effective financing mechanism for a sustainable regional Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) system in the South-Eastern Region of Africa.

In collaboration with SADC, the project supported to operationalize the SADC Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Center (MCSCC) in Maputo. The newly appointed Board of Directors of the center were inaugurated in a colorful meeting attended by the Mozambique Minister for Sea, Inland waters and Fisheries (Dr. Lidia Cardoso).



Figure 22: Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance – Coordination Center (MCSCC) Logo.



Figure 23: Representatives from the Government of Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Seychelles viewing the site where the MCSCC will be constructed at Katembe, Republic of Mozambique (Source: Stanley Ndara).

Some of the key achievements of the project during this inaugural meeting include;

- i. Board of Directors (BoD) of the SADC MCSCC Inaugurated;
- ii. Orientation for MCSCC BoD Members conducted in this 1st meeting by the regional legal expert;
- iii. Board members supported to visit the site in Ka-Tembe in Maputo where the MCS Center is under construction;



Figure 24: MCSCC Board of Directors and other Participants during the inaugural session



Figure 25: Dr. Motseki Hlatshwayo giving introductory remarks during the SADC BOD meeting in Maputo, 19/06/2024; Center - The Minister for Sea, Inland waters and Fisheries, Dr Lidia Cardoso and right – Mr Stanley Ndara, incoming chairman of the BOD of Directors

AU-IBAR in collaboration with SADC secretariat supported the 1st official meeting of the SADC MCSCC Board of Directors (BoD) meeting, held in Sandton in Johannesburg-South Africa. The regional MCSCC (Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre), that was recently established is being popularized for its pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU). The BoD worked to endeavor integration of an annual workplan for the center’s operations and enhanced efficiency, foster innovation, and streamline efforts across different regions.



Figure 26: The 1st SADC MCSCC Board Meeting Participants Group Photo.

Key Highlights of the Consolidated Work Plan approved by the Board of Directors:

1. **Innovation and Technology:** Emphasis was placed on leveraging cutting-edge technologies to address pressing challenges around IUU in the region.
2. **Enhanced Regional Collaboration:** The work plan demonstrated enhanced collaboration frameworks between member state countries in the region, aiming to share best practices and foster collective growth and greater impact.
3. **Capacity Building:** Focus on strengthening capacities through training programs, workshops, and knowledge exchange platforms.
4. **Resource Mobilization:** Strategies for effective resource mobilization, including partnerships with private sector entities, international organizations, and local governments.
5. **Improved Communications for Awareness Raising:** A comprehensive communications strategy to raise awareness of the MCSCC’s mission and activities across the region. This includes leveraging social media, local, regional and international outreach programs, and partnerships with local media to ensure that the council’s efforts and achievements are widely recognized and supported.



Figure 27: SADC MCSCC Board Members following the meeting proceedings, Johannesburg, SA.

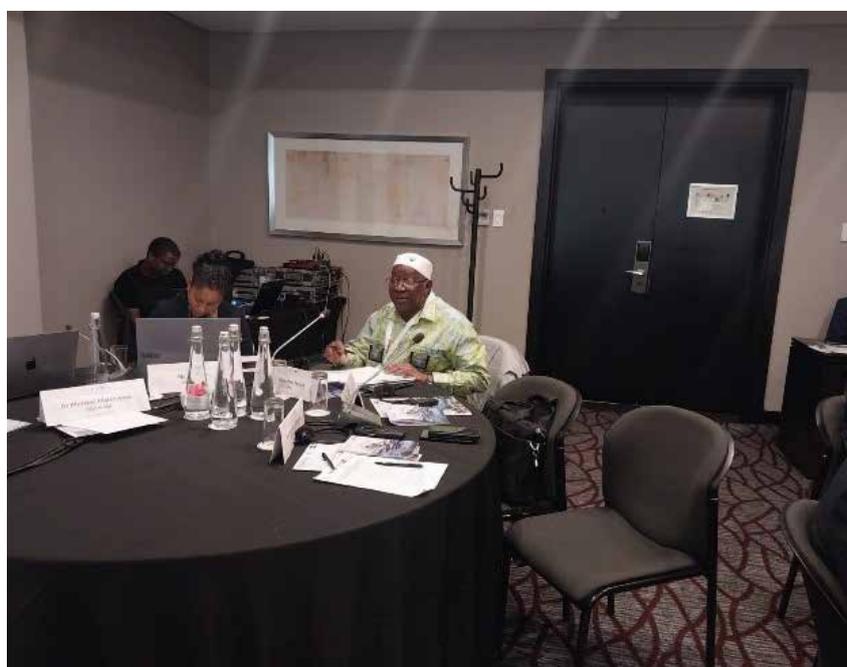


Figure 28: Dr. Mohamed Seisay delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Director of AU-IBAR.

Key outcomes of the Board's meeting:

- A unified and strategic work plan, that sets a clear path forward, ensuring that all member state countries in the region are aligned and working towards common goals following the same best practices was developed;
- a platform for directors and stakeholders to provide feedback and contribute to the refinement of the MCSCC annual work plan, and or including other operational policy documents;
- A platform for partners to share information on resource mobilization for the MCSCC, to enhance the operations of the newly established MCS centre reinforcing its role as a leader in regional cooperation and development around IUU Fishing.
- Forged partnerships for synergies in the work of MCS in the SADC region.

ii. Development of framework for sustainable financing of regional MCS centres for the South and eastern regions of Africa.

The study indicated that a successful MCS framework at a sub-regional or regional level requires adequate funding, which may not be readily available to all East and Southern African states. Therefore, a few options, or a combination of options, for financial arrangements may be considered:

- National governments fund MCS activities in the region through regular contributions from their budgets;
- Contributions from the local or foreign fishing industry;
- Foreign licensing fees or contributions from Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs);
- Payments from users of MCS services, such as fishing vessels for the use of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS);
- Host East and Southern African states cover the cost of MCS activities held within their jurisdiction; and
- Overseas aid and sponsor or donor organizations.

i. Support to establishing a framework for sustainable financing mechanism for the Regional MCS initiatives in East-Southern Africa.

In the case of the SADC regional MCS initiative, a Financial Sustainability Plan and Finance Model was developed for the proposed SADC Regional Fisheries Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Coordination Centre. The study proposed that a substantial amount of the funds required to establish and operationalize the regional MCS system could come from access agreements with distant nations’ fishing vessels operating in the EEZ of AU Member States (AU-MSs) under trade agreements.

*Table 1: Current Fisheries EU-Africa Fisheries partnership agreements
Source: Study report (AU-IBAR, 2023)*

Country	Expiry date	Type	Total EU contribution per year	Sectorial support per year
Cabo Verde	19.5.2024	Tuna	€750 000	€ 350,000
Comoros	Protocol expired on 31.12.2016. Agreement denounced			
Côte d’Ivoire	31.7.2024	Tuna	€ 682,000	€352,000 (2yrs) - €407,000
Gabon	28.06.2026	Tuna	€ 2,600,000	€ 1,000,000
Greenland	21.04.2025	Mixed	€ 13,590,754	€ 2,931,000

Guinea-Bissau	14.6.2024	Mixed	€ 15,600,000	€ 4,000,000
Madagascar	30.06.2027	Tuna	€ 1,800,000	€ 1,100,000
Mauritania	15.11.2026	Mixed	€57,500,000 (access only)	€3,300,000 (for the entire period)
Mauritius	20.12.2026	Tuna	€ 725,000	€ 275,000
Mozambique	Protocol expired on 31.1.2015			
São Tomé and Príncipe	18.12.2024	Tuna	€ 840,000	€ 440,000
Senegal	17.11.2024	Tuna + hake	€ 1,700,000	€ 900,000
Seychelles	23.2.2026	Tuna	€ 5,300,000	€ 2,800,000
The Gambia	30.7.2025	Tuna + hake	€ 550,000	€ 275,000

ii. Purchase of MCS equipment for the Fisheries Committee for West-Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) to strengthen Regional MCS coordinating center

Meanwhile, between 21 – 22 August 2024, the project supported FCWC member countries by receiving, verifying, and handing over MCS Equipment that was procured as part of the collaborative MCS initiatives between FCWC and AU-IBAR, under the project’s major activity titled “Strengthening Regional MCS Systems for Conservation and Protection of Aquatic Biodiversity and Environmental Management in the African Region”. The MCS equipment procured includes; HF and VHF radio sets for the FCWC’s Regional MCS Centre, mobile digital tablets, GPS devices, and digital cameras for three selected FCWC Member States (Benin, Liberia, and Nigeria).

The equipment was handed over to FCWC in a colorful ceremony attended by two IBAR technical staff, the Hon. Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Benin (Hon. Gaston Dossouhoui), and FCWC secretariat led by the Secretary-General, Mr. Gaston Antoine. In a short verification and handing over ceremony at the FCWC’s Regional MCS Centre, Hon. Dossouhoui received the items on behalf of the FCWC Member States from Dr. Mohamed Seisay (Fisheries Management & Blue Economy Expert at AU-IBAR) who was the head of the mission to Accra Ghana.



Figure 29: Participants' group photo outside the FCWC Regional MCS Center in Ghana, Photo by FCWC



Figure 30: Left: Dr. Mohamed Seisay (AU-IBAR) handing over MCS equipment to Hon Gaston Dossouhoui (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries – Benin) checking the MCS Equipment, Photo by FCWC

The equipment handed over included the following communication and navigation equipment:

Single-sideband modulation (SSB) for long-distance communication

Handheld VHF Radios

GPSs

Mobile Phones

Tablets



Figure 31: Some of the equipment supplied on display

Output 2.2.A framework for establishing National, Regional, and Transboundary cooperation on Africa Blue Economy Strategy Thematic Areas.

2.2.1. Establish regional cooperation on transboundary issues in shared aquatic ecosystems - towards formulating harmonized regional frameworks on aquatic biodiversity conservation. Support to Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo to develop harmonized strategies for management of transboundary marine ecosystems

In collaboration with the Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP), a regional fisheries body based in Libreville, Gabon, the project supported the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop harmonized strategies for the management of transboundary marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Guinea.



Figure 32: Shared marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Guinea between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic Congo

The national strategies were based on the regional framework for harmonized management of transboundary marine ecosystems that have been developed under the Project.



Figure 33: The high table during the opening ceremony of the meeting in Kinshasa to support DR (Democratic Republic) Congo and Congo for harmonized management of transboundary marine ecosystem



Figure 34: Participants from DR Congo and Republic of Congo participating in joint management plans for transboundary management of shared marine ecosystems.

2.2.2. Formulate mechanisms to institutionalize Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) at national and regional levels.

i. Collaboration with the Abidjan Convention to advance the MSP process in the shared marine ecosystems between Benin and Togo

The Benin-Togo cross-border marine and coastal zone is very rich in biodiversity and provides numerous ecosystem services to the local population.

In collaboration with the Abidjan Convention, the project supported the Republics of Benin and Togo in finalizing and validating the report on the State of the Marine Environment in the shared marine ecosystems between the two countries. The validation of the report, conducted at a high policy level, represents a significant achievement towards establishing transboundary Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) between the two countries.



Figure 36: Participants' family photo – High Policy level validation workshop for the State of Marine Environment (SoME) report at Grandpopo in Benin



Figure 37: Participants during the High Policy level validation workshop for the State of Marine Environment (SoME) report at Grandpopo in Benin

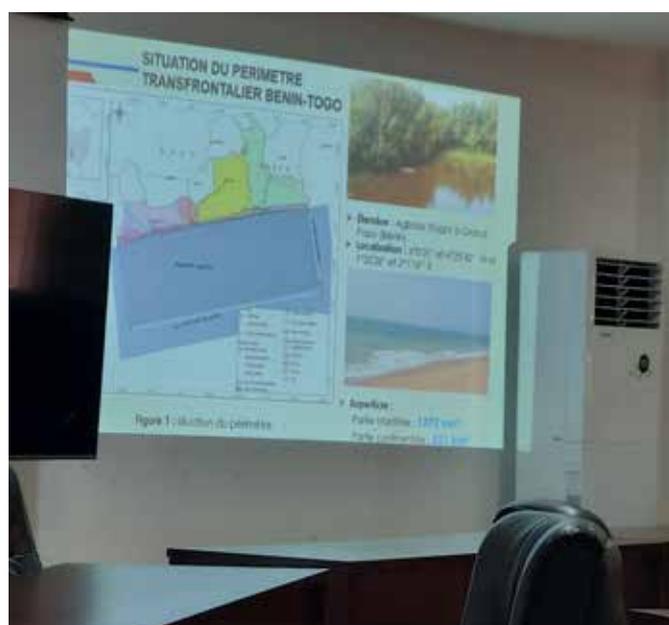


Figure 38: Map of the shared transboundary marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Guinea between Republic of Benin and Republic of Togo



Figure 39: Signed preface of the Joint Report on the State of marine environment in the marine ecosystems shared between the Republic of Benin and Republic of Togo

ii. Collaboration with WWF and Nairobi Convention to advance marine spatial planning process in the Northern Mozambique Channel

The project has also initiated discussions for collaboration with WWF and the Nairobi Convention to establish transboundary Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Northern Mozambique Channel, involving Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros, and Tanzania.

Under this collaboration, the project supported a Regional stakeholders consultative meeting to finalize the regional vision and roadmap as well as to develop a technical guideline that supports the implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) in Dare Salaam, Tanzania; 13 – 14th August 2024.

The NMC – a recognized ecologically or biologically area of significant importance – has long been a haven for marine and coastal biodiversity.



Figure 40: Group Photo - Workshop Participants



Figure 41: Northern Mozambique Channel shared by Mozambique, Tanzania, Comoros and Madagascar

The overall objective of the workshop was to draft a common MSP vision and goal (roadmap) for the NMC region, and the outcomes of the two-day workshop included;

- i. Awareness of the need for MSP in the Northern Mozambique channel created;
- ii. MSP Vision and roadmap for the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) developed/ finalized/validated;
- iii. The NMC Member states committed to national consultations on finalizing the MSP technical guidelines for the region;
- iv. Workshop proposed that the Natural capital assessments for NMC to be conducted in 2025;
- v. National MSP roadmaps to be initiated backed by the regional MSP roadmap



Figure 42: Dr. Mohamed Seisay (AU-IBAR) delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Director of AU-IBAR during the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) MSP Workshop; Participants keenly following the opening remarks.

Main outcomes of the consultative meeting:

The project collaborated with WWF and the Nairobi Convention to advance the MSP process in the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) in India by ocean-shared Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania, and Comoros.

- i. The meeting received feedback from stakeholders and validated on common NMC MSP vision and roadmap.
- ii. Discussed and ascertained boundaries of the NMC region; identified regional authorities and technical WGs for the MSP process.
- iii. Reviewed and expert validation of the technical regional guidelines for the MSP in the NMC.
- iv. AU-IBAR shared the continental guidelines on MSP.

Output 2.3. Capacities for restoring and conserving threatened aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened.

- i. Strengthening bilateral cooperation for joint management of transboundary marine conservation area (TBCA) between Kenya and Tanzania***

The project developed mechanisms for collaborating with the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and supported ongoing processes on the transboundary Marine Protected Area (MPA) initiative in the East-Southern Africa Region. This support

resulted in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kenya and Tanzania for the joint management of the transboundary marine conservation area between the two countries. The ultimate objective of intervention by the Project was to formulate an MOU to formalize joint management activities between the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Marine Parks and Reserves Unit (MPRU) within the proposed Transboundary Marine Conservation Area (TBCA). It is anticipated that this formalization would enhance transboundary cooperation between Kenya and Tanzania for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental protection.



Figure 43: Family Photo: Consultative meeting to develop a memorandum of understanding for joint management of Kenya-Tanzania transboundary conservation area (TBCA).

Key Achievement: The draft MOU was later reviewed at the Political level where Members of Parliament from both Kenya and Tanzania met and charted a way forward to operationalize this MOU. The Members of parliament were sensitized to the challenges affecting the transboundary resources and the need to find ways of reversing the negative situation.



Figure 44: A Family Photo of the Participants that included the Hon. Members of Parliament from Kenya and Tanzania



Figure 45: Above Dr. Tuda giving his presentation to Hon. Members of Parliament on the status of the transboundary aquatic resources



Figure 46: Mr. James Wingard, JD – Co-founder and Legal Director of the Legal Atlas giving a presentation on the Legal gaps that exist between the Republic of Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania.

ii. Collaboration with the Regional Fisheries Commission for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP) to operationalize and strengthen governance mechanisms in the transboundary marine Protected Areas between the Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Gabon

In collaboration with the Regional Fisheries Commission for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP), the project supported Expert/Stakeholders Consultative Meeting to Operationalize and Develop a Roadmap for Enhanced Governance of The Transboundary MPA (TMPA) Between Republics of Congo and Gabon; between 23 – 24th July 2024. This workshop was a key step towards supporting the republics of Congo and Gabon to realize cooperation in the governance of the transboundary Marine Protected Area (TMPA).

The overall objective of the regional experts/stakeholders consultative meeting was to operationalize and develop a governance mechanism for the transboundary marine protected area (TMPA) between the republics of Congo and Gabon. The outcomes of the workshop included;

- i. Awareness of the importance and need for a transboundary MPA created;
- ii. Issues/challenges related to the management and governance of MPAs in the transboundary area identified;
- iii. Priority actions for the challenges identified;
- iv. Key governance mechanisms including a structure for implementing the established TMPA identified;



Figure 47: Group Photo – Participants of the TMPA Workshop



Figure 48: Rep. of the Director of AU-IBAR, Mr. Philippe Ouedraogo delivering the opening remarks during the opening ceremony of the workshop.



Figure 49: The Cabinet Director in the Min. of Agric, Livestock and Fisheries, Mr. Robin Ongoka delivering his official opening remarks during the opening ceremony.



Figure 50: Congo working Group discussing the TMPA issues for consideration in the roadmap

2.3.2 Establish Continental Centres of Excellence for capacity building on aquatic biodiversity

The project has engaged experts to conduct assessments for the identification of suitable institutions as the African Union Centres of Excellence in Aquatic Biodiversity and Ecosystems Management. Verification missions were carried out by experts to physically verify or ascertain information in the dossiers submitted to AU-IBAR in response to the Calls for Expression of Interest. The following three institutions have been short-listed:

- i. University of Ghana, Ghana
- ii. University of Nairobi, Kenya
- iii. Pwani University, Kenya



Figure 51: The lead expert, Mr. Etienne at Nairobi University, Kenya conducting a physical inspection, and on the right is a staff of the University.



Figure 52: The Evaluating Facilities at PWANI University, Kenya



Figure 53: University of Ghana



Figure 54: University of Nairobi

The preparation of the report for the assessment by the experts is currently being developed.

SO3. Strengthening measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining, and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and the environment.

Output 3.1 Measures for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity and the environment strengthened and implemented.

3.1.1.3 Support efforts to strengthen conservation and climate change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on ecosystem restoration (mangroves, seagrass, etc.) to mitigate the impact of climate change (increasing carbon sinks).

- a) Collaboration with Kenya Marine and Fisheries Institute - KMFRI strengthens the capacity of communities on nature-based solutions for ecosystem restoration for restoration of aquatic biodiversity.

Ground-Truthing Exercise – Mangroves, Kenya

In collaboration with the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Institute (KMFRI), the project identified and mapped degraded mangrove areas in Gazi Bay along the Indian Ocean coastline, in Kenya.



Figure 55: Some of the photos taken during the field validation/ground truthing exercise in Gazi Bay, Kenya.

Best Practices in Mangrove Nature-Based Enterprises

In collaboration with KMFRI, the project organized a study tour for the Gazi Bay community to undertake a field visit to Kilifi County for learning/training on best practices in nature-based solutions to climate change mitigation practices, ecosystem restoration, and aquatic biodiversity conservation.

This activity was intended to inspire and motivate community members actively engaged in nature-based enterprises towards addressing the negative impacts of climate change on aquatic biodiversity conservation measures.



Figure 56: Photo of Mr. Joel Mokenye (Aquatic Biodiversity Specialist -AU IBAR) giving an overview of AU- IBAR

Through this exchange study visit, AU-IBAR in collaboration with KMFRI ensured that members of the Gazi Bay community gained skills and knowledge on the following which are key to the fight against the negative impacts of climate change.

- i. Best practices and opportunities in mangrove Nature-Based Enterprises (NBEs) were identified;
- ii. Barriers to mangroves nature-based enterprises and ways to overcome them were identified;
- iii. Members of the Gazi Bay community were self-motivated and inspired by NBEs actions;
- iv. New skills in project management, conflict resolution, and marketing were learned by members of the Gazi Bay community.

In June 2024, AU-IBAR/KMFRI conducted a workshop on restoration of degraded mangrove sites, which was held concurrently with a training workshop to educate 50 community members regarding the blue carbon ecosystem restoration initiative in Gazi Bay, Kenya.

Objectives of the Workshop and Mangrove Restoration Initiative

The training sought to impart knowledge to participants on how to plan and execute a successful mangrove restoration plan. Specifically, the workshop achieved the following objectives:

- i. 50 Community members in the Gazi Bay educated and trained on community-based ecological restoration of mangrove forests mainly;
 - Seed collection, transportation, and sorting.
 - Procedures for establishment and maintenance of mangrove nurseries.
 - Site preparations, including hydrological restoration.
 - Monitoring and reporting of mangrove restoration projects.
- ii. Degraded mangrove areas in Gazi Bay restored and the pressure on mangroves reduced.
- iii. A report of the activities, highlighting challenges, providing feasible recommendations, and outputs for further support developed.



Figure 57: Photo of Ms Stephanie Achieng (Gender Expert -AU IBAR) and Mr Josphat Nguu (KMFRI) conducting the training workshop.



Figure 58: Photo of the community participating in ecological restoration efforts

In September 2024, AU-IBAR/KMFRI will support the establishment of community orchards/ woodlots, planting of seedlings as well as fencing/ land preparation. AU-IBAR has purchased fencing materials and seedlings for the Kenya Gazi Bay community for ecosystem restoration and protection of aquatic biodiversity based on which community training would be conducted.

- b) A Scoping Assessment to identify key regional/ local stakeholders and NGOs involved in Seaweed Farming, Zanzibar.

A scoping exercise was conducted to identify key regional/local stakeholders and NGOs/institutions involved in Seaweed Farming for collaboration on Blue ecosystem restoration and conservation efforts (24th – 25th April 2024). The scoping exercise also aimed to determine potential areas of collaboration and stakeholders involved in seaweed farming, harvesting, and processing in Zanzibar, including farmers, harvesters, and processors, as well as middlemen. A potential collaboration with the Zanzibar Seaweed Cluster Initiative is underway

Key Achievements of the mission:

Identified potential project entry points for collaboration and support by the AU-IBAR's Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation Project.

Identified Local and National Government Ministries and Departments involved in Seaweed Farming.

Conducted an initial assessment of Regional Blue Value chains including Benefits and Resource Sharing on Seaweed Harvesting and Processing.

Identified key Non- governmental organizations (NGOs) promoting Blue Ecosystem restoration and conservation efforts by applying Nature-Based solutions.

Community Field Visits



Figure 59: Community Seaweed Processing Plant – Zanzibar.



Figure 60: Dr. Narimann Jiddawi (WIOMSA) and Ms. Stephanie Achieng – AU-IBAR (Informational interview).

In July 2024, AU-IBAR in collaboration with the Zanzibar Seaweed Cluster initiative (ZaSCI) organized and supported a field study to strengthen conservation and climate change mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on nature-based solutions through promoting environmental conservation strategies among Seaweed Farming communities in Zanzibar. The Field Study covered both Unguja and Pemba islands of the Zanzibar archipelago. A total of 20 villages involved in seaweed farming were involved in the study. Furthermore, AU-IBAR supported the Zanzibar National Seaweed Day from 22nd- 23rd July 2024 to sensitize local farming communities on Seaweed Farming in Zanzibar.

Objectives of the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen conservation and climate change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on nature-based solutions through the restoration of the functionality of blue carbon ecosystems for community development, climate change mitigation, and overall environmental sustainability.

The specific objectives of the field study were to:

- i. Identify Seaweed Farms and sensitize local communities/ farmers on climate change mitigation.
- ii. Field surveys to identify Seaweed Farms and tree species mostly used as pegs in in Unguja and Pemba.
- iii. Identifying practices that contribute to coastal pollution and environmental degradation in seaweed farming areas.



Figure 6 I: Field surveys to identify Seaweed Farms



Figure 62: National Seaweed Day (July 23rd 2023) in Unguja, Zanzibar – Golden Tulip Hotel. Ms. Stephanie received a certificate on behalf of AU-IBAR from the Minister of Blue Economy and Fisheries, Zanzibar. Ms. Stephanie Achieng and Dr. Peter Limbu making interview presentation.



Figure 63: Field Visits; Focus group discussion and key informant interviews in Zanzibar

In November 2024, AU-IBAR in collaboration with ZaSCI will organize a second phase of the field study in Zanzibar to strengthen conservation and climate change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on nature-based solutions through restoration of the functionality of blue carbon ecosystems for community development, climate change mitigation and overall environmental sustainability.

Establishment of community orchards/ woodlots, planting of seedlings fencing community training on climate change mitigation efforts towards aquatic biodiversity conservation and restoration of degraded ecosystems in Gazi Bay, Mombasa

In September 2024, AU-IBAR/KMFRI supported the establishment of community orchards/ woodlots, planting of seedlings as well as fencing/ land preparation. AU-IBAR purchased fencing materials and seedlings for the Kenya Gazi Bay community for ecosystem restoration and protection of aquatic biodiversity based on which community training would be conducted. This initiative was implemented in collaboration with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) under the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya and the Kenya Forest Services.



Figure 64: Family Photo of community participants in Gazi Bay, Kenya



Figure 65: Mr Eric Nadiopé, AU-IBAR, watering a planted fruit tree in Gazi Bay



Figure 66: Community pupils participating in the orchard / woodlot planting ceremony



Figure 67: KALRO and AU-IBAR officials assessing progress of the community fencing/ planting initiative



Figure 68: Gender Expert, Ms Achieng, addressing the local community and school pupils regarding the woodlot fencing/ orchard planting initiative.



Figure 69: Mounting of community signpost in Gazi Bay.

OUTPUT 3.2. Strategies for an integrated strategic framework for Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism and Mining developed.

- i. Support to the Islamic Republic of Egypt to develop masterplans and strengthen regulatory frameworks for Sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining activities for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environment protection:*

The Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Angola were supported in drafting National Masterplans for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining activities towards the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental protection. A national stakeholders' consultative workshop was organized in each country to identify priority measures for the development of a draft Masterplan to strengthen regulatory frameworks for sustainable coastal and marine tourism, and mining activities towards aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.



Figure 70: Group of participants from Egypt

National stakeholders at the Cairo meeting to develop a Masterplan for best practices on coastal, marine tourism, mining, oil and gas exploration to ensure aquatic ecosystems health, aquatic biodiversity conservation, and environmental sustainability. The National stakeholders' consultation developed Master plans and Policy measures.

- ii. Support to the Republic of Angola to develop masterplans and strengthen regulatory frameworks for Sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining activities for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environment protection:*

The project supported the Republic of Angola to hold a National Stakeholder Consultative Meeting to Develop a Master Plan and Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks for Environmental Sustainability and Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation - To Mitigate the Impact of Marine and Coastal Tourism, Oil and Gas Exploration. The workshop was held between 09 – 11th May 2024. Relevant national Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the Republic of Angola were invited to deliberate on issues and actions necessary for the coastal and marine tourism, oil and gas, and mining activities and the impacts they pose on the environment.

The key achievements of the project under this support include;

- i. Priority issues and actions were identified towards the development of or strengthening national regulatory frameworks (policies, regulations) for sustainable coastal, marine tourism, and mining activities toward aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems
- ii. A draft master plan on sustainable coastal, marine tourism, and mining activities towards aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems was developed;
- iii. A workshop report and a communique on the proceedings;
- iv. Recommendations for the next course of action.



Figure 71: Participants of the National Consultative workshop to develop a masterplan for CMT in Angola



Figure 72: A small Working Group Session on the identification of priority issues and actions for CMT in Angola.

SO4. Strengthening Gender Inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management

Output 4.1 Continental Strategy for gender inclusivity in Aquatic Biodiversity and Environmental Management developed.

This activity was completed in the 2nd year of the project implementation (1st December 2022). To roll out the Continental Strategy on Gender mainstreaming in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management, the project supported 2 AU-MS (Ethiopia

and Malawi) to develop all-inclusive and deliberate strategies for mainstreaming gender in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Support to the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire to mainstream gender dimensions on national policies and strategies for aquatic biodiversity conservation

The 3rd AU-MS was identified (Cote D'Ivoire) for support, and a national consultative workshop was held to develop an all-inclusive and deliberate strategy for mainstreaming gender in aquatic biodiversity conservation and integrated environmental management in Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire from 22nd – 24th May 2024, in collaboration with the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries. A report of the workshop as well as a communique were developed by a technical expert.



Figure 73: Family Photo of participants of the workshop



Figure 74: Deliberations during the national consultative workshop Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire from 22nd – 24th May 2024

Main achievements:

- i. Identified national instruments relevant to aquatic biodiversity conservation
 - ii. Gaps identified in national instruments with regard to African continental strategy for mainstreaming gender in aquatic biodiversity conservation
 - iii. National instruments relevant to aquatic biodiversity reviewed and aligned with the African continental strategy for gender mainstreaming
-
- i. *Mapping of ongoing environmental-based NGOs focusing on conserving biodiversity and environment protection would be conducted, and technical support provided by the project to develop or strengthen gender-sensitive work plans to enhance the role of women and youth in biodiversity protection and environmental governance (NGOs include Non-State Actors, CSOs, Private sector involved in environmental management).*

In 2024, two ongoing initiatives were selected for support under the project to develop gender-sensitive work plans to enhance the role of women and youth in biodiversity protection and environmental governance.

The AU-IBAR continued its collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to support the NGO on aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management. In collaboration with IUCN, a stakeholder consultative workshop was organized to draft a management plan with gender-disaggregated roles for the Dusornu CREMA. The management plan has been finalized.

Key achievements included:

Sensitizing the Dusornu Community Resource Management Area on the best practices for the management of aquatic resources and on how to protect critical fragile aquatic ecosystems;

Elaborating the role of gender, especially women and youth, in the management of fragile aquatic ecosystems was elaborated; and,

Developing a draft management plan for the Dusornu Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) (2023-2028) with clear gender-disaggregated roles in the Volta Region, Ghana.

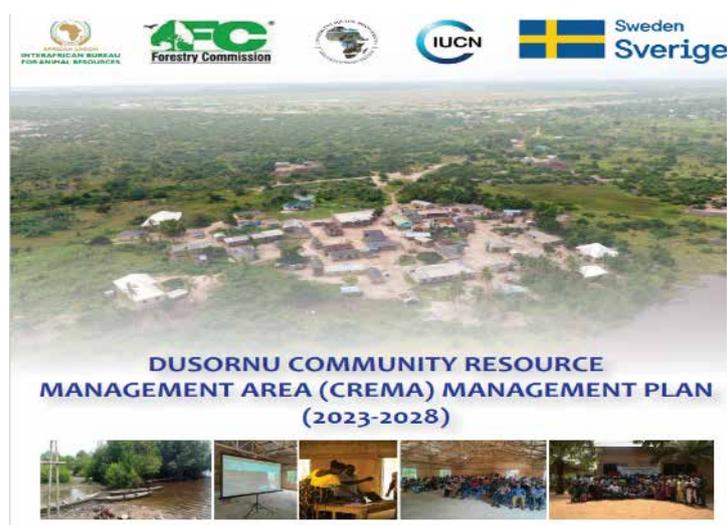


Figure 75: The Final Dusornu CREMA Management Plan (2023 – 2028).

- ii. *Collaboration with IUCN to identify alternative livelihoods to minimise the impact on mangroves towards aquatic biodiversity conservation in Ghana coastal communities*

Secondly, AU-IBAR and IUCN also conducted gender-sensitive community livelihoods assessments in the coastal region of Ghana. An initial draft of the report on the community livelihoods assessment has been shared by the technical consultant and is under review.

Key achievements included:

Conducting a community socio-economic livelihood needs assessment for the Dusornu Community Resource Management Area through focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

Identifying prioritized livelihood options by the communities and adopting them.

Facilitating the development of a report detailing the prioritized livelihood options identified during the workshop, capturing inputs, feedback, and recommendations.



Figure 76: Group Photo of Galo community – Dusornu



Figure 77: Ms. Stephanie Achieng (Gender Expert -AU IBAR) highlights the gender-sensitive alternative livelihoods assessment to the Galotse community.

Collaboration with Mabuyi Development Planners to strengthen governance instruments of NGO-based organizations working in small-scale fisheries communities in South Africa

BlueWild Coast NPO (Non-For-Profit Organization), an environmental NGO based in South Africa - with a focus on marine spatial planning through initiatives with local communities, was identified as the 2nd NGO to be supported. A gender consultant was recruited to develop a Gender Plan of Action for the identified environmental-based NGO working at the interface of small-scale fisheries in South Africa.

In September 2024, AU-IBAR organized a gender-sensitive community stakeholders' workshop, to enrich and validate the draft Gender Plan of Action and develop/ strengthen all-inclusive policies that promote gender mainstreaming in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management in East London, South Africa.

The overall objective of the workshop, in turn, was to contribute to the enrichment of a Gender Assessment and the development of a Gender Plan of Action to promote Gender

Equality in the activities of the Non-Governmental Organization(s) working with small-scale fishers and aquaculture producers along the coastline of South Africa.

AU-IBAR supported the local NGO (Blue Wild Coast Non for Profit) to develop Gender-sensitive workplans through:

- An inception report;
- A gender-sensitive MOU;
- A stakeholders' consultation workshop and;
- A gender-sensitive policy/ Plan of Action.

4. PROGRESS ON INDICATORS

4.1 LOGFRAME

LOGFRAME for the “Enhancing Institutional Capacity of African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities on the conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity in the



Figure 78: Family Photo of Participants at the workshop



Figure 79: Gender Expert, Ms Stephanie Achieng giving an overview of gender related work in small scale fisheries



Figure 80: Ms Hellen Guebama, Senior Fisheries Officer, giving an overview of the continental strategy for mainstreaming gender in Aquatic Biodiversity conservation



Figure 81: Local community workshop participants in East London, South Africa

Context of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy” Project is summarized below:

RESULTS CHAIN / DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	BASELINES	TARGETS	Progress / Comments	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Impact: Sustainable conservation and utilization of aquatic biodiversity and marine environments for food and income through improved Policy, Regulatory Frameworks, and institutional capacities.	Change in reported IUU incidences (Used as a proxy for overexploitation of resources)	A study / Survey will be conducted working with RFBs and RECs to establish the current number of incidences reported in each Region	Reduction 30%		AU-IBAR Reports	Political will and cooperation from Regional and National authorities on the development and enforcement of relevant Legal Frameworks
	# of RECs (or specialized Regional Institutions) and MSs whose institutional capacities for conservation and utilization of aquatic biodiversity were enhanced	0	4 RECs/ RFBs 15 MSs	3 RFBs: LVFO, COREP, FCWC	AU-IBAR Reports	
Outcomes						
1. Improved ratification and alignment of relevant Policies and Regulations to key International and / or Regional Instruments related to the protection and conservation of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems	Ratification rates of relevant legal Instruments (Disaggregated by Instrument)	A study is planned to determine the relevant Instruments and their baseline ratification rates	100%	Studies completed	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
2. Improved capacities for sustainable management, utilization, protection, and conservation of living aquatic resources and related ecosystems	# of MSs and RECs (or specialized regional institutions) and specialized institutions) implementing the ecosystems approach to managing marine and coastal ecosystems	A baseline survey will be conducted	15	5 AU member states supported (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, DR Congo and Congo); 4 AU member states supported (Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, and Gabon supported in the transboundary MPA process) in which included ecosystem approach is incorporated in the establishment and governances' approaches In supporting transboundary MPAs, (Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, and Gabon)	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

				6 AU member states on transboundary MSP process that incorporated Ecosystem in advancing MSP processes (Toho, Benin, Tanzania, Comoros, Mozambique, Madagascar) included Total countries supported through overlap in support in some countries, for example, Kenya and Tanzania supported across different activities		
3. Measures for mitigation impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep Sea mining, and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened	# of RECs or specialized institutions or AU Member States (AU MSs) in which the recommendations on mitigating the negative impacts of climate change are piloted	0	2	5 AU MSs supported (Nigeria, Gabon, Kenya, Egypt, and Angola) for coastal and marine tourism and mining Working in collaboration with KEMFRI, Communities in Gazi Bay trained on mitigating the impact of CC on ecosystem restoration.	AU - IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
4. Improved participation and engagement of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management	# of RECs and MSs in which measures to enhance participation of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management are implemented	0	5 MSs (including other organizations)	Supported 3 MSs - Malawi and Ethiopia, Cote D'Ivoire to mainstream women and youth in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management. Collaboration with IUCN to develop gender-sensitive management plans for the community-based resource area committee Collaboration with Mabuyi Development Planners to develop gender policy and action plan for community-based NGO working at the interface of South African small-scale fisheries		
Outputs:						
1.1: Mechanisms for active participation of MSs in Regional and Global initiatives related to aquatic biodiversity and environmental regimes (ABNJ, CITES, COP meeting relating to CC, BRS, etc.) developed	# of mechanisms for enhancing effective participation of Africa in Global negotiations developed/	0	1	2 (two) Mechanisms developed and validated; one mechanism for studies conducted in West, Central, and Northern Regions; another for studies conducted in the South and Eastern Regions.	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	Corporation and willingness to learn by key stakeholders involved since BE transcends different sectors Timely availability of financial, human, and material resources Innovative technologies are used to facilitate implementation in lite of Covid 19 induced restrictions

	# of AU MSs supported to participate in relevant aquatic biodiversity and environmental Fora	0	5	3AU MSs (Kenya, Togo, and Zimbabwe (as resource persons) supported to UNFCC meeting in November-December Abu Dhabi in 2023 1 MS- Seychelles supported participation in UNFSA review conference in New Work in June 2023 2 MS- Kenya and DR Congo supported to MSP Forum in Tanzania, in 2023 1 MS – Tanzania supported to participate in 2024 FAO COFI meeting in ROME	AU - IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
1.2. Ratification and implementation of Conventions and Agreements related to conservation of biodiversity in AU MSs and RECs supported	# of MSs and RECs supported to review and align National Policies and Instruments with relevant Regional and Global Instruments	0	10	9 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Eswatini, South Sudan and Egypt, Tunisia, supported to review domesticate relevant Global Instruments related to aquatic biodiversity and environment.	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
2.1. Enforceable Regulatory Frameworks for Effective and Sustainable Regional MCS Systems developed	A Continental Framework for sustainable financing mechanisms of fisheries and aquaculture resources and related ecosystems developed	0	1	1: Done for South-Eastern Regions.	AU - IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
2.2 A Framework for Establishing National, Regional and Transboundary Cooperation on Africa Blue Economy Strategy Thematic Areas established	# of Regional institutions in which the recommendation and lessons on MSP are implemented	0	2	2 Regional institutions: Collaborated with Abidjan Convention Abidjan Convention on transboundary MSP process between Benin and Togo in the Gulf of Guinea Large marine ecosystems Collaborated with WWF and Nairobi convention on transboundary MSP process in the Northern Mozambique channel in the Indian Ocean	AU - IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
	# of transboundary aquatic ecosystems Frameworks developed for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management	0	2	2 developed: i. framework for harmonized management of transboundary freshwater ecosystems ii. framework for harmonized management of transboundary marine ecosystems i. ii.		
	# of AU MS supported in the development of a harmonized Strategy or Policies for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management	0	5	5 AU MS supported in the development of National Strategy or Policy Instruments for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management: Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, DR Congo, and Rep of Congo		

2.3 Capacities for restoring and conserving threatened aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened	# of shared transboundary ecosystems in which MPA guidelines are piloted	0	2	2 Developed 1. Transboundary MPA guidelines piloted between Tanzania and Kenya; in collaboration with WIOMSA 2. Transboundary MPA Guidelines piloted between Rep of Congo and Rep of Gabon; in Collaboration with FCWC I. P	AU – IBAR Reports	
	# of aquatic Centres of Excellence established and strengthened	0	2	three institutions identified: i. University of Ghana, ii. University of Nairobi and iii. Pwani university		
3.1. Measures for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity and environment strengthened and implemented	A study on the negative impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment conducted	0	1	1 study conducted and completed and disseminated	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
3.2. Strategies for an integrated Strategic Framework for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining developed	# of MSs supported to pilot guidelines on sustainable marine and coastal tourism and mining to ensure biodiversity and environmental conservation	0	5	5 AU MSs: Gabon, Kenya and Nigeria, Egypt, Angola supported to develop masterplans	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
4.1 Continental strategy for gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management developed	# of AU MS supported to implement Regional Strategy for enhancing the role of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity and integrated environmental management	0	5	Malawi, Ethiopia and Cote D'Ivoire	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
	# of environmental-based NGOs supported to implement of gender-sensitive workplans	0	2	2 supported: 1. Collaborating with IUCN to support communities in Ghana; Community Resources area management Committee (CREMA) 2. Collaborated with Mabuyi Development Planners to support community NGO—Blue Bird to mainstream gender dimensions in governance instruments	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

Summary Report on Internal Monitoring and Evaluation for Project ‘Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity and Ecosystems in African Blue Economy’

Introduction

The Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the context of African Blue Economy project is supporting the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy in African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities; for transboundary interventions. As part of its routine project implementation progress monitoring, the AU-IBAR Monitoring and Evaluation Team carried out three Internal Monitoring Exercises of the three-year (October 2021 – October 2024) project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The aim and objectives of the internal monitoring exercise was to assess the implementation processes of the project and the extent to which the project has made progress toward meeting its objectives and targets, as well as taking stock of the achievements and outcomes of the project to date. Specific objectives of the assessment were to among others: (i) take stock of the achievements against key milestones and logframe indicator targets; (ii) assess the extent of the level of achievement of key project outputs, outcomes and the extent to which benefits streams are beginning to flow; (iii) assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes/impact and sustainability of the project; and, (iv) take stock of key lessons learnt and best practices to obtain stakeholder feedback and recommendations on project implementation.

Methodology

The AU-IBAR Monitoring and Evaluation team conducted three separate missions to: (i) Eastern and Southern Africa, visiting three respective countries (Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi); (ii) Western Africa, visiting three respective countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire); and (iii) Northern Africa, visiting three respective countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt). In each of these missions, the team had opportunity to discuss with Ministry Officials participating in the implementation of the AU-IBAR supported initiatives; relevant stakeholders including implementing partners; Women Networks supporting the implementation of the project; and other partners contributing in different to success of the project.

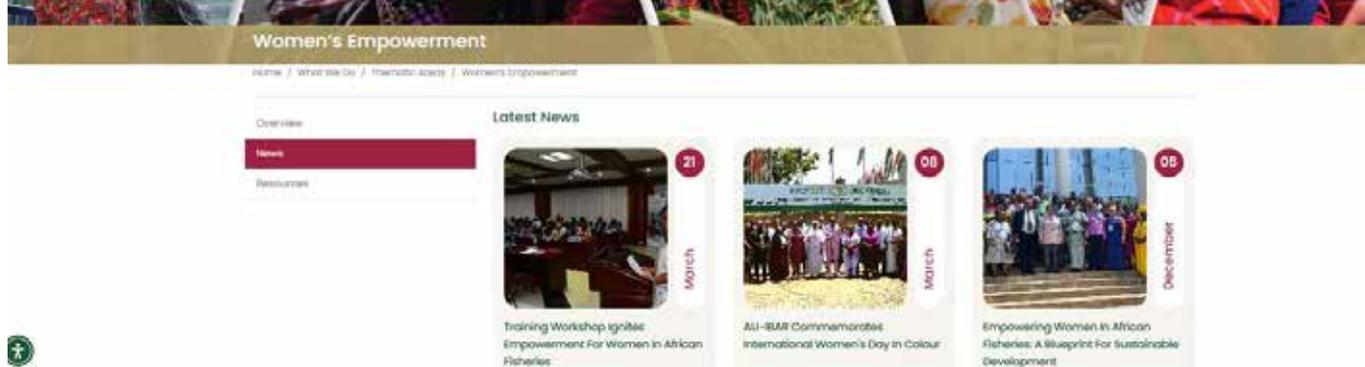
Findings

Overall, the project had done a lot in debunking aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems on the continent. However, stakeholders visited stressed among others, the need for:

- i. Raising awareness and advocacy on the importance of effectively participating in relevant fora where instruments for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity are negotiated, and ratifying them
- ii. Supporting the development of Africa Blue Economy Strategy-aligned National and

Regional Blue Economy Strategies

- iii. Developing and implementing national gender-inclusion strategies in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity, owing to the important role women play in driving sustainable development and utilization of aquatic biodiversity.
- iv. Strengthening AWFISHNET: All MSs visited noted the importance of women in the development of fish enterprises and underscored the importance of developing and implementing national gender-inclusion strategies in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity. They indicated that the formation of AWFISHNET gave women a voice and enhanced their participation in fishery value chains; and need to be strengthened.
- v. Nominating focal persons participating in AU-IBAR meetings right from project inception so as to ensure continuity. Also, stakeholders visited appreciated the exchange of learning and experience sharing through participation in various events planned by AU-IBAR.
- vi. Supporting MSs to gain easy access to data and information for evidence-based decision making on conservation of aquatic biodiversity
- vii. Putting in place mechanisms to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The MSs visited noted that IUUs had the potential of threatening fish stock depletion; affecting the size and quality of the catch. Due to IUUs, countries are risking access to European markets where some have earned yellow cards, hence the need to invest more in combatting the vice.
- viii. Supporting implementation of measures for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change, coastal and marine tourism and mining on biodiversity and environment. Apart from implementing MSP processes and the MCS measures against IUU reported by all countries visited, not much was said on minimizing the negative effects of Climate Change, coastal and marine tourism and mining. There is need to document such initiatives with a view of designing relevant mitigation measures.



Recommendations

- I. AU-IBAR and its technical partners to continue facilitating awareness raising on the impotence of effectively participating in relevant fora, ratification and domestication of international instruments related to conservation of aquatic biodiversity
- II. Support MSs and RECs to develop respective ABES and Gender inclusivity aligned strategies
- III. AU-IBAR to develop a strategy for implementing aquatic biodiversity studies recommendations
- IV. Support the launching of AWFISHNET national chapters and build their capacities through the development of AWFISHNET-aligned strategic plans, facilitation of exchange visits / experience sharing between chapters, sharing calls for project proposals, building of capacities in governance / administration and imparting of technical skills along the fishery value chain
- V. Encourage MSs to use the African Fisheries and Aquaculture Data (AFADATA) tool that was recently developed with the support of AU-IBAR and AUDA-NEPAD.
- VI. Strengthen regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems for purposes of combating IUU fishing and protecting aquatic biodiversity and the environment. Also, there is need to sensitize women to reduce the dependence on fishing and engage in alternative livelihoods and sustainable economic activities such as Aquaculture, making fishing nets and processing; this has potential of building fish stocks
- VII. Further investigate the status of the negative effects of climate change, coastal and marine tourism and mining on aquatic biodiversity, with a view of developing mitigating measures. Also, there is need to continue encouraging MSs to implement nature-based solutions to combatting climate change, including restoration of coastal habitats especially Mangroves and Seagrasses that provide habitat for marine life and protect shorelines from erosion; and, also promote eco-friendly tourism practices that educate tourists and local communities on the importance of preserving marine ecosystems through limiting the use and disposal of wastes and plastics along the coastlines

5. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

a. Content Management

Significant progress has been made in content development to enhance the project's visibility and engagement:

- **Microsite Updates:** The project's microsite has been consistently updated with relevant information, including project milestones, research findings, and upcoming events. This ensures that stakeholders and the public have access to the most current project developments.
- **New AU-IBAR Website Features:**
- The Microsite content is being migrated to the new AU-IBAR website (work is complete awaiting transfer of domain). Improvements to the microsite will promote:
- **Programme Alignment:** The new AU-IBAR website aligns with key AU-IBAR programmes. The Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity content on its microsite now has a programme focus under the Animal Production Unit. In addition, the new website highlights important themes such as gender; thus, integrating gender and women interventions in programmes.
- **Dynamic Updates:** The website features a section for regularly updated content, including project milestones, research findings, and upcoming events, ensuring that the latest

information is always available.

- **Enhanced Navigation:** The site offers user-friendly navigation, allowing visitors to easily access detailed project reports, interactive maps, multimedia resources, and future dashboard integrations.
- **Integration with DSpace:** The website is linked to DSpace, providing seamless access to the project's documents and knowledge products. This integration ensures that users can easily browse, search, and retrieve project materials.

Above: integration of knowledge products on microsite and DSpace repository

- **Engagement Tools:** The website includes features such as event calendars, news feeds, and social media integration to facilitate greater interaction and engagement with stakeholders and the broader community.
- **LinkedIn:** The LinkedIn platform has been used to develop and post content that highlights key achievements, shares updates on the project's progress, and engages with stakeholders in the aquatic biodiversity community. Posts are crafted to foster discussions and connect with professionals in the conservation field.
- **Twitter (X):** On Twitter (now X), concise and impactful tweets have been crafted to promote events, share key findings, and celebrate conservation successes. Hashtags, visuals, and links to documents and videos are used to drive engagement and increase the project's reach. The platform followers have increased by 100% over the past year.

b. E-Repository for Knowledge Products

All project documents and knowledge products are stored and managed using DSpace, an open-source e-repository system. This platform ensures secure and organized storage of reports, research papers, publications, and other project-related materials. DSpace provides easy access, retrieval, and long-term preservation of these knowledge products,

Home / Projects / Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity In The Context of The Africa Blue Economy

Programme Area
Animal Production

Acronym: Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity

Start: 2021

End: 2024

Status: Ongoing

Latest Resources

- Expert consultative meeting to identify priority issues and actions for enhancing the role of women in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management. Published 2023
- Report on the Galo Sota – Galatse crema election of Community Resource Management Committee (CRMC) and Crema Executive Committee (CEC) election. Published 2023
- Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the Context of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES): Synopsis of Project Achievements – December 2021- August 2022. Published 2022
- Building from Fish Seed Production: Best Practices for a Sustainable Aquaculture Development in Africa. Published 2022
- Report on the Proceedings of the Inception Workshop. Published 2021
- Communique: Inception Workshop Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in Africa Blue Economy. Published 2021
- Atelier de validation du cadre d'établissement d'une cellule de coordination régionale de suivi, Contrôle et surveillance des pêches (SCS) dans la zone COREP ainsi que des protocoles y afférents VOL1. Published 2018
- Atelier de validation du cadre d'établissement d'une cellule de coordination régionale de suivi, Contrôle et surveillance des pêches (SCS) dans la zone COREP ainsi que des protocoles y afférents VOL2. Published 2018
- Report of the expert consultative workshop on formulation of continental strategy for rational management of inland fisheries in Africa. Published 2018

Figure 82: Above: Dedicated thematic page on gender on AU-IBAR website

making it a valuable resource for stakeholders and researchers. The new website for the project is seamlessly integrated with DSpace, allowing for real-time access to documents and knowledge products stored in the repository. Users can browse, search, and retrieve project materials directly from the website, enhancing the accessibility and visibility of our resources.

c. Operationalize Knowledge Sharing Platforms

Efforts have continued to populate the knowledge-sharing space for the project, including videos and workshop presentations. Moving forward, AU-IBAR will focus on strengthening engagement with institutional stakeholders to enhance the use of existing knowledge-sharing platforms.

Following recommendations from the COMHAFAT Media Engagement Workshop, it was agreed that AU-IBAR should collaborate with COMHAFAT, INRH, and other partners to support the development and operationalization of knowledge-sharing platforms as part of the Morocco Blue Belt Initiative. This includes:

- African Web TV Project: AU-IBAR will support the dissemination of all aspects of the blue

economy by contributing to a digital platform dedicated to broadcasting documentaries, interviews, reports, and articles on the blue economy. The aim is to raise awareness among decision-makers and the public about blue economy opportunities and the threats facing the oceans.

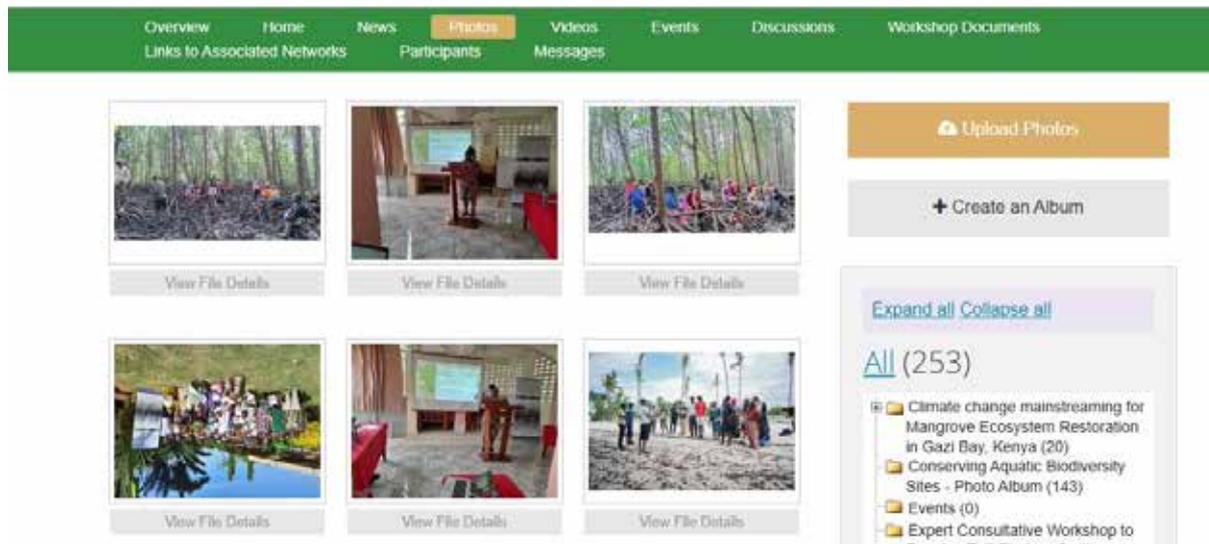
d. Multimedia and Memorabilia

Videos related to the project have been disseminated through various forums, including meetings, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to increase awareness. Work is also about to commence on the development of a second edition of the Conserving Biodiversity Documentary.



Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the Africa Blue Economy: Abridged Version

Above: snippet of documentary on the Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity Project



A photo album of in-action photographs is maintained on the AU-IBAR knowledge-sharing platform. It currently hosts 253 pictures related to conserving aquatic biodiversity.

Above: snapshot of online photo album hosted on knowledge sharing e-platform

e. **Media Engagement**

Media engagement has played a crucial role in the project by either contracting media to cover events. 10 media houses have been contracted in the period under review. The Senior Knowledge Management Officer attended a meeting titled “Communication in Favor of a Sustainable and Inclusive Blue Economy in the COMHAFAT Region.” The meeting was convened by COMHAFAT to strengthen media reporting. A plan was developed to provide opportunities for MOFSA members to report on blue economy issues, including aquatic biodiversity issues.

The presentation, titled “Communication for the Development of a Sustainable Blue Economy in Africa,” presented by AU-IBAR highlighted the importance of communication in promoting sustainability and inclusivity within the blue economy sector. Recommendations from this session included:

- **Capacity Building:** Invest in initiatives to enhance communication skills among stakeholders and media, including training programs and awareness on technical issues.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between media and other stakeholders, such as governments, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector, to promote collective action and knowledge sharing.
- **Community Empowerment:** Engage with and empower local communities through participatory approaches to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed in blue economy policies.
- **Technology Integration:** Utilize innovative communication technologies, such as

databases and online platforms, to improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination and reporting.

- **Translation of Messages:** Adapt communication channels to meet the needs of various stakeholders, including videos, expert interviews, and educational content.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Engage in policy advocacy for evidence-based policies that prioritize sustainability, inclusivity, and social equity, leveraging communication channels to raise awareness and mobilize support.

Recommendations Requiring AU-IBAR Intervention

A committee was established to strengthen reporting among media particularly going into the extension of the project. The committee currently comprises COMHAFAT, AU-IBAR, and MOSFA, but will consider other key institutions over time. Immediate recommendations were made, with work already in process on the following activities:

- i. **Develop a Glossary of Common Terms Related to the Aquatic Biodiversity and Blue Economy:** AU-IBAR is to work with COMHAFAT and other partners to develop a standardized glossary of terms for the blue economy to harmonize communication and enhance understanding among media.
- ii. **Enhance the Centralized Online Platform on the Blue Economy:** AU-IBAR should establish a dedicated online platform to share knowledge, best practices, research findings, and foster collaboration between stakeholders. This would be built from the existing platform on aquatic biodiversity.
- iii. **Establish Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** AU-IBAR should collaborate with MOSFA to set up monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies, approaches, measure the impact of awareness campaigns, and make improvements based on stakeholder feedback.
- iv. **Support Capacity Building and Skills Development:** AU-IBAR should contribute to developing and implementing capacity-building programs focused on aquatic biodiversity and the blue economy, including technical training and knowledge exchange platforms.

6. TECHNICAL PROJECT STAFF:

- a. Dr. Mohamed Seisay – Sustainable Blue Economy Expert and Project Coordinator
- b. Mr. Eric Nadiope - Legal, Policy and institutional Expert
- c. Mr. Joel Mokenye – Aquatic Biodiversity Specialist
- d. Ms. Stephanie Achieng – Gender Policy and Strategy Expert

- e. Mr. Oroko Kennedy – Planning and Monitoring Officer

7. PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES:

In the course of implementation of the project, the project has forged partnerships with various organizers including the following:

- a. Abidjan Convention
- b. Nairobi Convention
- c. WIOMSA
- d. KMFRI
- e. IUCN
- f. RECs
- g. Specialized Regional Fisheries Bodies e.g. LVFO, FCWC, SRFC
- h. WWF

8. CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES

The implementation of the project continues according to the workplan for the third year. However, due to the delays experienced in the first year in recruitment of experts to conduct studies, a few activities spilled over to the third year of project implementation.

The support by the project to AU Member States has generated considerable interest among other AU Member States that have not benefitted. This ongoing support to AU Member States to strengthen their institutional capacity and policy environment for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management has been overwhelmingly welcomed and has engendered political ownership of the outcomes, as evidenced by the presence of high-level personnel in most of the national workshops.

The Project intervention took the form of studies, stakeholder engagements, and piloting the outcomes of the studies in AU member states, communities, and regional institutions. Thus, project implementation has been overwhelmed by incessant requests for support to initiate pertinent and prioritized activities on topics such as Monitoring, Control and

Surveillance (MCS), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), Marine Protected Areas (MPA), Gender, pollution, Climate Change Mitigation and utilization nature-based solutions for ecosystems restoration; enhancing role of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity conservation.

The emerging issues include strengthening institutional capacity for pollution control in aquatic ecosystems to minimize impacts on aquatic biodiversity, sensitizing the continent on nature-based solutions in ecosystem restoration and aquatic biodiversity conservation, regional blue value, study tours, or twinning by communities.

Thus, the implementation of the project would require more time for the comprehensive implementation of activities, for responding to emerging issues, and for consolidating the gains made so far.

9. DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of the project has contributed immensely to creating awareness and capacity building on aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management towards achieving the stated overall goals and strategic objectives.

The Project has successfully organized Project technical and steering committee meetings. The outcomes of these project statutory meetings have been impressive. No doubt the members of these statutory committees have been impressed by the project implementation, areas of focus, and have overwhelmingly recommended 'no-cost' of the project.

The Project has contributed greatly immensely to broadening knowledge on issues of aquatic biodiversity conservation through the production and dissemination of knowledge products such as policy briefs, advocacy notes, and technical guidelines on policy orientation papers. These knowledge products would greatly increase the prospects of implementation or utilization of the Project's outcomes by the stakeholders, including AU member states and RECs.

The project mode of implementation has relied on collaborative approaches to ongoing initiatives. The collaborative mode was adopted to jointly implement activities, notably:

Collaborated with Abidjan Convention on advancing transboundary MSP process between Benin and Togo in the shared marine ecosystems between the two countries

Collaborated with COREP to develop mechanism enhance governance of transboundary MPA between Rep of Congo and the Rep of Congo

Collaborated with WWF and Nairobi Convention to advance the transboundary MSP process in the northern Mozambique channel

Collaborated with IUCN to mainstream gender in the management plans for environmental-based NGOs in the coastal communities in Ghana

Collaboration with WIOMSA to develop MOU between Kenya and Tanzania on transboundary marine conservation area (TBCA) between the two countries

Collaboration with KEMFRI to strengthen capacity of Gazi Bay communities in aquatic ecosystems restoration for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need to continue a follow-up new phase for project on pertinent on conserving aquatic biodiversity conservation such as follows:

Support to AU member states to develop regulatory instruments to domesticate global instruments relevant to aquatic biodiversity conservation and management and adherence to related global best practices

Support to formulation of gender sensitive national policies and strategies on aquatic biodiversity and environmental management

Enhancing regional institutional MCS capacity to combat IUU fishing, protect aquatic biodiversity and environment

support to AU member states and regional institutions towards effort to restore depleted fish stocks, degraded ecosystems and habitats and protections of aquatic biodiversity spots through implementation and effective governance systems for

Marine Protected Areas

Strengthen capacity for pollution control and capacity building on nature-based solutions mitigating climate change impact

Knowledge share fair on outputs for the first phase of the project

11. PROJECT REPORTS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

The following reports have been generated by the project so far:

1. Report on Mechanism for enhancing the effective role and participation in Regional and Global biodiversity and environmental related regimes.
2. Report on the Assessment of the Status of Ratification, Domestication, and Implementation of key Continental and Global Instruments related to aquatic biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental management in the East and Southern African Union Member States.
3. Report on Status of MCS in the West, Central, and North Regions Africa.
4. Report on Lessons and Best practices for implementing MSP and Guidelines for institutionalization at National and Regional levels (transboundary).
5. Report on Transboundary issues in conservation and of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management in fresh and marine ecosystems and Frameworks for Regional Protocol and Strategy.
6. Report on Review of Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Lessons, Best Practices

and Guidelines for their Sustainable Implementation and Governance in Conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity Resources in the East and Southern African Regions

7. Report on Impact of climate change and mitigation measures in Africa;
8. Report on Priority actions for sustainable coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, and mineral exploration.
9. A Continental Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming in conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management.
10. A framework for establishing innovative, cost-effective financial mechanisms (funding systems) for sustainable Monitoring, Control, Surveillance (MCS), and enforcement systems for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental protection in shared African aquatic ecosystems for the East and Southern regions of Africa.
11. Report on the status of MCS in the East and Southern Region of Africa;
12. A report on the Continental Review of Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Document Lessons, Best Practices and Formulate Guidelines for their Sustainable Implementation and Governance in Conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity Resources in the West, Central and North Africa.
13. Dusorno Community Resource Management Area Plan (2023 – 2028)
14. Socio-Economic Livelihood Needs Assessment for Prioritizing Livelihoods in the Dusorno Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) communities in the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site (KLCRS): Implementing the Gender-Sensitive Management Plans for the newly established CREMA
15. Report on July Activities (21st -27nd July 2024): Support to Strengthen Conservation and Climate Change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on Nature-Based Solutions on Seaweed Farming in Zanzibar – Towards conserving Aquatic Biodiversity and Environmental Management
16. Consultancy Report: Support to Strengthen Conservation and Climate Change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on Nature-Based Solutions on Seaweed Farming in Zanzibar – Towards conserving Aquatic Biodiversity and Environmental Management

Knowledge products generated by the project include:

- a. Advocacy Note on Mitigating measures for the impact of climate change in aquatic ecosystems of Africa.
- b. Advocacy Note on Mechanisms for enhancing the effective role and participation of

African Union Member States in Regional, Continental, and Global aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management related fora or regimes (North, West, and Central Africa).

- c. Continental guidelines for institutionalizing MSP in Africa.
- d. Policy Note on Enhancing Ratification, Domestication, and Implementation of Global Instruments for Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, and Environmental Sustainability in Africa.
- e. Policy Note on Sustainable coastal and marine tourism for conservation of aquatic ecosystems and environment.
- f. Policy Note on unlocking the potential for strengthening the role of Women in conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management in Africa.
- g. Video documentary on the project, titled “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in the Context of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy”.
- h. Policy Brief on Aquatic Biodiversity Hotspots in Africa
- i. Policy Note: Nature-based Solutions to strengthen Climate Change Impact Mitigation Efforts that Promote the Conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity Ecosystems - A Case Study of Gazi Bay, Kenya.
- j. Policy Orientation Paper: Mechanism for Mainstreaming Gender in Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Management: A case study of the Dusorno CREMA community in Ghana.



African Union
Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
Kenindia Business Park
Museum Hill, Westlands Road
P.O. Box 30786
00100, Nairobi, KENYA
Telephone: +254 (20) 3674 000 / 201
Fax: +254 (20) 3674 341 / 342
Website: www.au.ibar.org
Email address: ibar.office@au-ibar.org