



Action For Ocean

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030





Letter From Executive Director



Dear Partners, Friends, and Ocean Champions,
It is with immense pride and unwavering hope that I present to you Action for Ocean's (AFO) Strategic Plan for 2026-20230.

From our humble beginnings in 2016, founded by a group of passionate young scientists with a shared dream, we have grown into a vibrant, youth-led force for ocean conservation and community empowerment across Western Indian Ocean's coastline. Our journey has been grounded in the belief that people and the planet are not in competition, but are inextricably linked. The health of our marine ecosystems determines the health and prosperity of our coastal communities. And it is only by investing in both that we can build a future that is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable.

This strategy marks a bold new chapter in AFO's evolution. With it, we sharpen our focus on impact, scaling our reach across four priority seascapes, strengthening 11 existing Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs) and one to be established, and deepening partnerships with two Marine Protected Area. We will restore degraded coral reefs and seagrass meadows, train a new generation of Tanzanian divers and ocean innovators, and build thriving local enterprises through our Coastal Livelihood Entrepreneurship for Adaptation and Resilience (CLEAR) Model. Our goal is not just to protect marine ecosystems, but to ensure that conservation delivers real, tangible benefits to those who depend on the ocean every day.

At the heart of our work is a simple but powerful conviction: conservation must be community-led, scientifically informed, and economically viable. This strategy reflects that belief. It lays out our roadmap to restore 20 km² of marine habitats, support 1,000 groups, and pilot innovative blue finance models that reward local stewardship.

We know the challenges ahead are complex, from climate change and illegal fishing to shifting donor priorities and systemic inequality. But we also know that we are not alone. AFO is part of a growing movement of coastal leaders, scientists, fishers, youth and allies who are reimagining what is possible for Africa's blue future.

As we launch this strategy, I invite you, our partners, funders, supporters, and peers, to join us on this journey. Invest in bold ideas, champion local leadership, hold us accountable. Together, we can shape a future where healthy oceans sustain thriving communities, and where every Tanzanian child grows up knowing that the ocean is not only beautiful, but bountiful and protected.

On behalf of the entire AFO team, thank you for believing in our vision. Let's make waves together.

With deep gratitude and determination,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Geoffrey Mang'ena". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Jerry Geoffrey Mang'ena
Executive Director & Co-Founder

Action for Ocean (AFO)



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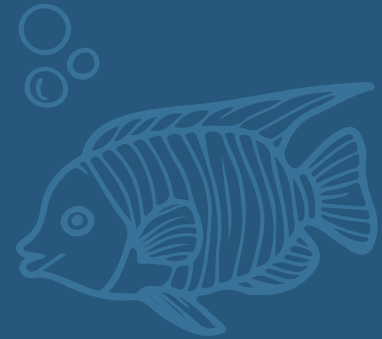
Executive Summary

Action for Ocean (AFO), formerly Aqua-Farms Organization, is youth-led and community-rooted, working to protect Tanzania's oceans while improving the lives of coastal communities. Since 2016, we have grown from a group of young scientists into a national force for marine conservation and blue economy innovation. This five-year Strategic Plan (2026–2030) charts our course to restore degraded ecosystems, strengthen community stewardship, expand sustainable livelihoods, and build AFO into a leading voice for ocean conservation in Africa.

Over the next five years, we will restore 20 km² of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass, train 150 divers and 25 ocean innovators, and protect at least five endangered species. We will strengthen 13 Marine Managed Areas by empowering Community Fisheries Management Areas, creating legally recognized replenishment zones, and reducing illegal fishing, while securing financing systems that sustain conservation. We will support 1,000 community groups with savings, capital, and eco-enterprises, scaling aquaculture, seaweed farming, ecotourism, and value-added products to deliver lasting benefits. At the same time, we will triple our revenue base, launch a fellowship and mentorship program, and invest in systems that ensure transparency, accountability, and measurable impact.

Our work builds on a track record of tangible results: women's incomes from seaweed farming increased by 167% in three years, over 40,000 mangroves have been restored, coral survival rates in community-led restoration exceeded 90%, and 5,000 people across 50 communities have engaged in conservation-friendly livelihoods. We have also trained Tanzanian divers, reached thousands of students through ocean education, and influenced national fisheries and blue economy policy.

By 2030, AFO envisions coastal communities leading a resilient blue future, restoring ecosystems, sustaining fisheries, and thriving through conservation-friendly enterprises. With strong partnerships and bold innovation, we are ready to protect Tanzania's oceans and ensure they sustain both people and nature for generations to come.



Over the next five years, we will restore 20km² of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass





List of Acronyms

AFO	Action For Ocean
AFSSF	Africa Fair Seaweed Finance Facility
AREP	Aquatic Resources Education Program
BMU	Beach Management Unit
CFMA	Collaborative Fisheries Management Area
CLEAR	Coastal Livelihood Entrepreneurship for Adaptation and Resilience
eCDT	Electronic Catch Documentation and Traceability
FRZ	Fisheries Replenishment Zone
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (Fishing)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MMA	Marine Managed Area
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MBREMP	Mnazi Bay – Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PHE	Population, Health, and Environment
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
ToC	Theory of Change
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
VNRC	Village Natural Resource Committee



About AFO

Action for Ocean (AFO) is a Tanzania-based non-profit dedicated to advancing marine conservation while enhancing the livelihoods of coastal communities. We recognize the interconnectedness of conservation and socio-economic well-being and work to ensure that aquatic resources are protected, sustainably utilized, and benefit the people who depend on them. Since our inception in 2016 and official registration in 2017, we have been at the forefront of ecosystem restoration, fisheries co-management, financial inclusion, climate-smart livelihoods and blue economy initiatives, implementing innovative solutions that balance conservation with sustainable development.

AFO was founded by 13 passionate university graduates who recognized both the urgent need for marine conservation and the limited opportunities for young scientists to contribute to this field. The aim was to create a platform that enables young professionals to engage in meaningful conservation work while empowering coastal communities to become active stewards of their environment. Over the years, we have strengthened our partnerships with local stakeholders, government agencies, and international organizations to drive impactful people-centred conservation and livelihood initiatives.

To date we have operated in key coastal regions, including Lindi, Tanga, Pwani, Dar es Salaam, Mtwara, and Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba), with one central and three seascape offices. We collaborate with coastal communities, local government authorities and conservationists to implement strategic interventions.

Our Work

OUR VISION

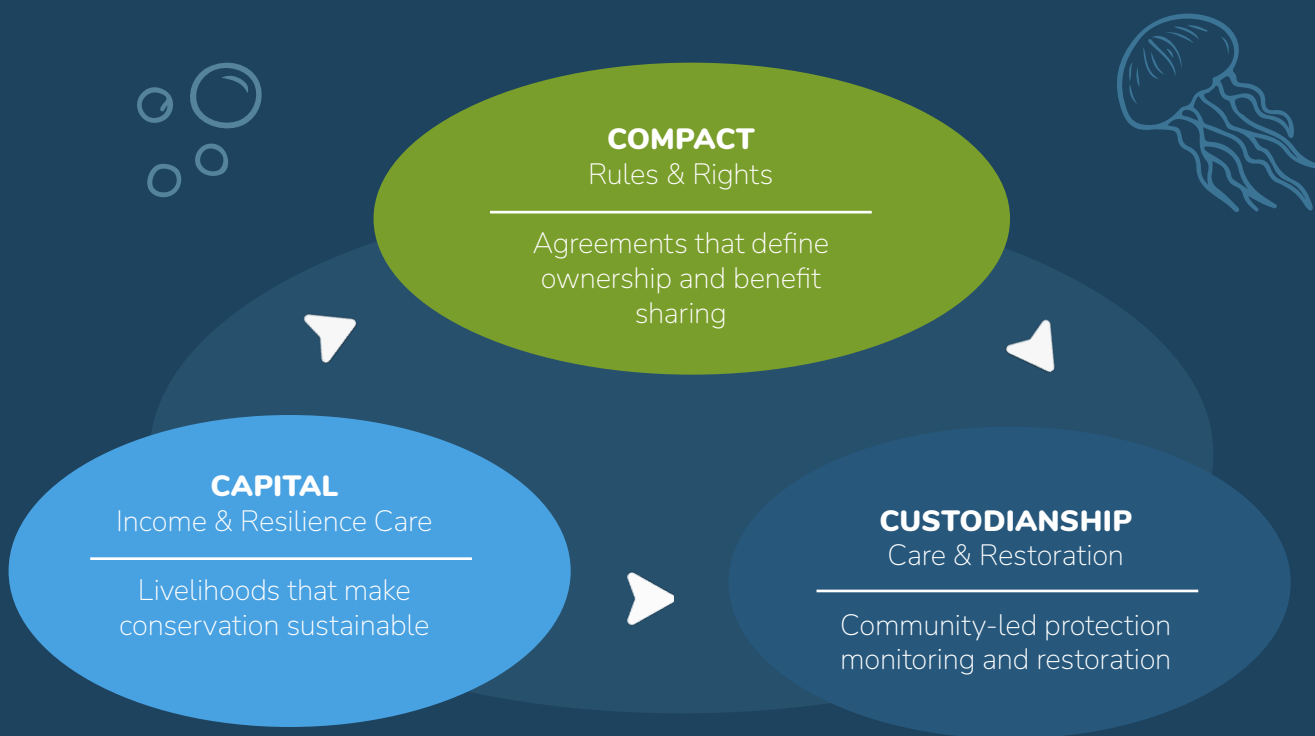
A healthy and resilient marine ecosystem that supports both people and nature.

OUR MISSION

To protect Tanzania's marine resources by empowering communities, fostering resilient ecosystems, financing sustainable solutions, and improving coastal livelihoods.

OUR APPROACH

AFO 3C Model a community-led seascape governance that is the backbone of our theory of change





WHAT OUR MODEL DELIVERS

Stronger Governance	Healthier Oceans	Stronger Livelihoods
Clear rules Strong compliance Local ownership	More biodiversity Higher biomass Restored blue habitats	Higher incomes Inclusion of women & youths More resilient households

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

Nature Metrics (3Bs)			Livelihood Metrics (3Ls)		
Biodiversity recovery	Biomass growth	Blue-Habitat restoration	Income growth	Inclusion & participation	Income resilience



Achievements

Empowering Women in Seaweed Farming

Between 2021 and 2023, a total of 300 women in Tanzania's mainland and Zanzibar increased their monthly incomes by 167% (from \$30 to \$80) through our support in seaweed farming, processing, and marketing.

Mangrove Reforestation and Coastal Conservation

Forty thousand mangrove seedlings were planted across six hectares, restoring coastal ecosystems. We protected an additional 200 hectares of coastal areas to ensure long-term ecological resilience.

Empowered 50+ Tanzanians Through Ocean Access

Through our ocean access initiative, we have supported diving training for 43 individuals, including marine scientists, storytellers, conservation practitioners and community members. This enhanced their ability to engage in marine research, conservation, and documentation. After completing the program 80% of the trainees secured employment or advanced professional opportunities.

Coral Reef Restoration

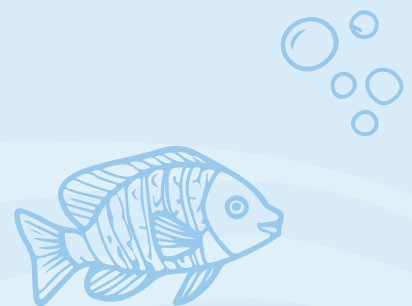
In 2024, a total of 1,093 coral fragments were successfully planted across a 400m² area within the PEPUKIBUKWA Collaborative Fisheries Management Area (CFMA) in Dar es Salaam. Despite being exposed to the year's intense bleaching event and the impact of Cyclone Hidaya, the restored reef achieved an impressive 80% survival rate.

Community Engagement in Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods

Our conservation and livelihood initiatives have directly impacted 5,000 people across 50 coastal communities, equipping them with the knowledge, tools, and opportunities to engage in sustainable resource management and eco-friendly economic activities. Through targeted training and support, these communities are now better positioned to protect their marine environments while improving their livelihoods.

Aquatic Resources Education Program (AREP)

Through our Aquatic Resources Education Program, 3,000 students in 20 secondary schools developed practical skills and increased awareness in ocean conservation, empowering them to actively contribute to protecting marine ecosystems and inspiring future careers in marine conservation.





Development of the Kilwa District Octopus Fishery eCDT Strategy

In 2023, we developed the Kilwa District Octopus Fishery Comprehensive Electronic Catch Documentation and Traceability (eCDT) Strategy, which enables the digital tracking of octopus catches. This strategy enhances transparency and accountability in fisheries management, promotes sustainable harvesting, improves market access for local fishers, and strengthens regional fisheries governance.

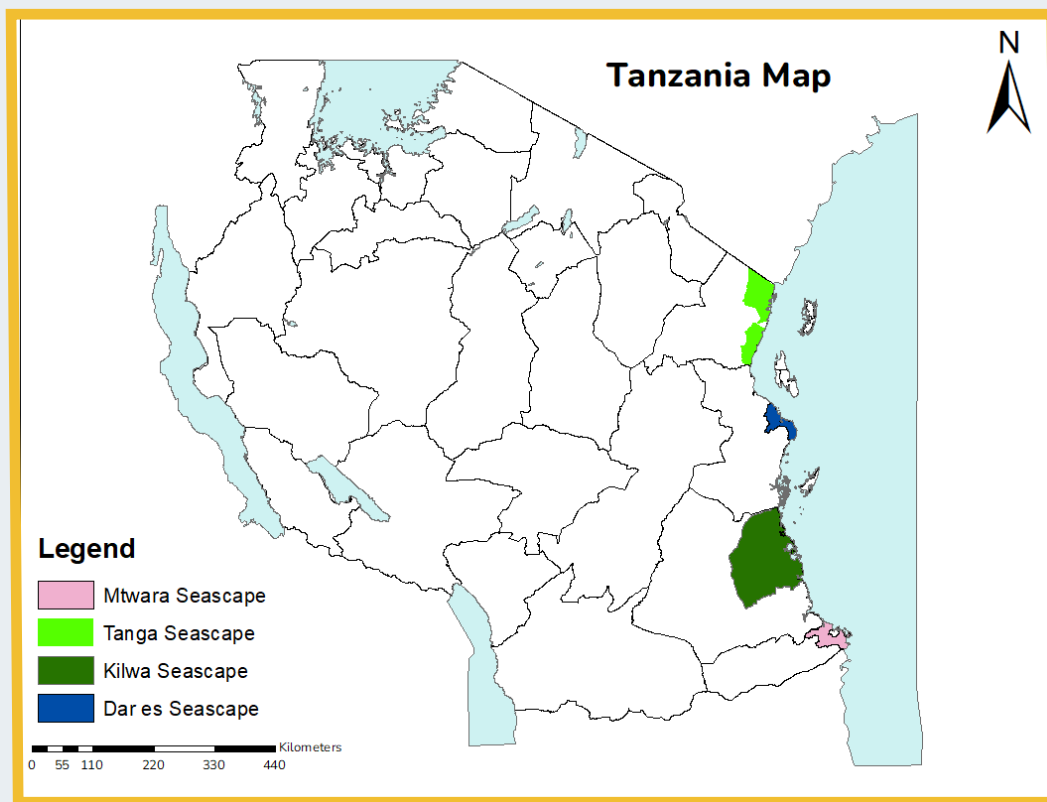
Formation and Registration of Community Conservation Groups

We have facilitated the formation of 27 community groups, 17 in Tanga, six in Dar es Salaam, and five in Kilwa, which advocate for marine resource conservation and livelihood improvement. These groups serve as local champions of sustainable practices, empowering communities to take ownership of conservation efforts while expanding their access to economic opportunities and strengthening grassroots leadership in marine stewardship.

Shaping national fisheries and ocean governance

We contributed to shaping national fisheries and ocean governance by co-designing, reviewing, and drafting key policies and guidelines, such as the Tanzania Fisheries Masterplan 2022–2032, Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, Aquaculture Policy, Blue Economy Strategy, and the Blue Economy Valuation Toolkit while integrating the views and priorities of coastal communities. These efforts are helping to ensure sustainable resource management that reflects local needs and advances the blue economy in Tanzania.

Geographic Focus and Site Engagement Strategy



Our Seascope Priorities

To maximize ecological impact, ensure operational efficiency and foster meaningful community ownership, we will concentrate our marine conservation and livelihood work within four priority seascapes in Tanzania:

- 1. Tanga Seascope** – Approximately 1,100 km² of coastal waters
- 2. Kilwa Seascope** – Approximately 1,700 km², including mangroves, coral reefs, and the Mafia Island Marine Park buffer
- 3. Mtwara Seascope** – Approximately 1,200 km², including the Mnazi Bay–Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP)
- 4. Dar es Salaam Seascope** – Approx. 800 km², including peri-urban and island reef ecosystems (e.g., Bongoyo, Mbudya)

These regions represent some of Tanzania's most biodiverse and climate-vulnerable marine areas,

while also offering active community governance structures, ongoing restoration efforts, and opportunities to scale co-management models that integrate conservation with sustainable livelihoods.

Our Operational Focus (2026–2030)

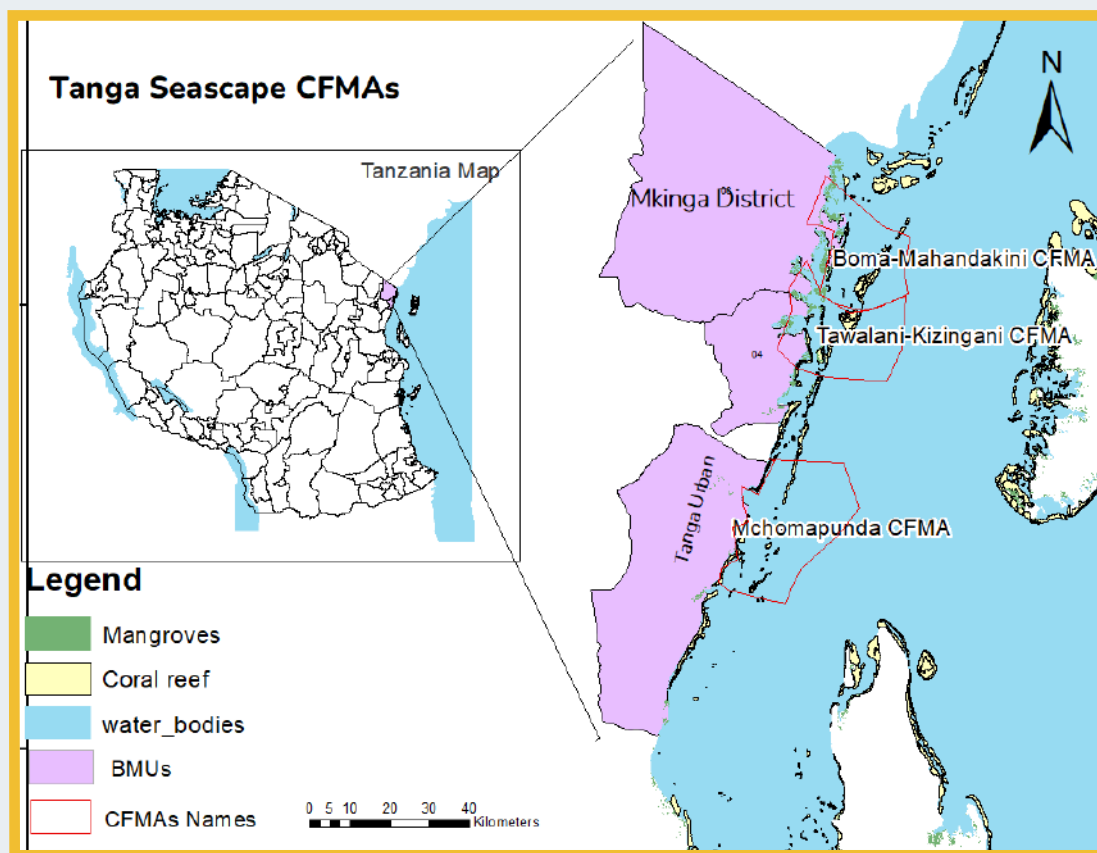
Over the next five years, we will implement our integrated conservation and livelihood programs across:

12 Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs)

Two Marine Protected Area (MPA): Mnazi Bay – Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP) and Dar es Salaam Marine Reserve System (DMRS)

We will also continue our work with four existing CFMAs in the following areas:

Tanga Seascape



1. **Boma – Mahandakini CFMA**
2. **Tawalani – Kizingani CFMA**
3. **Mchomapunda CFMA (Plan to expand into)**

These sites are located near the Tanga Coelacanth Marine Park region, renowned for its rich coral reef systems and community-managed reef closures. They thus offer strong opportunities to integrate deep reef restoration, seaweed-based livelihoods, and collaboration between CFMA-MPAs.



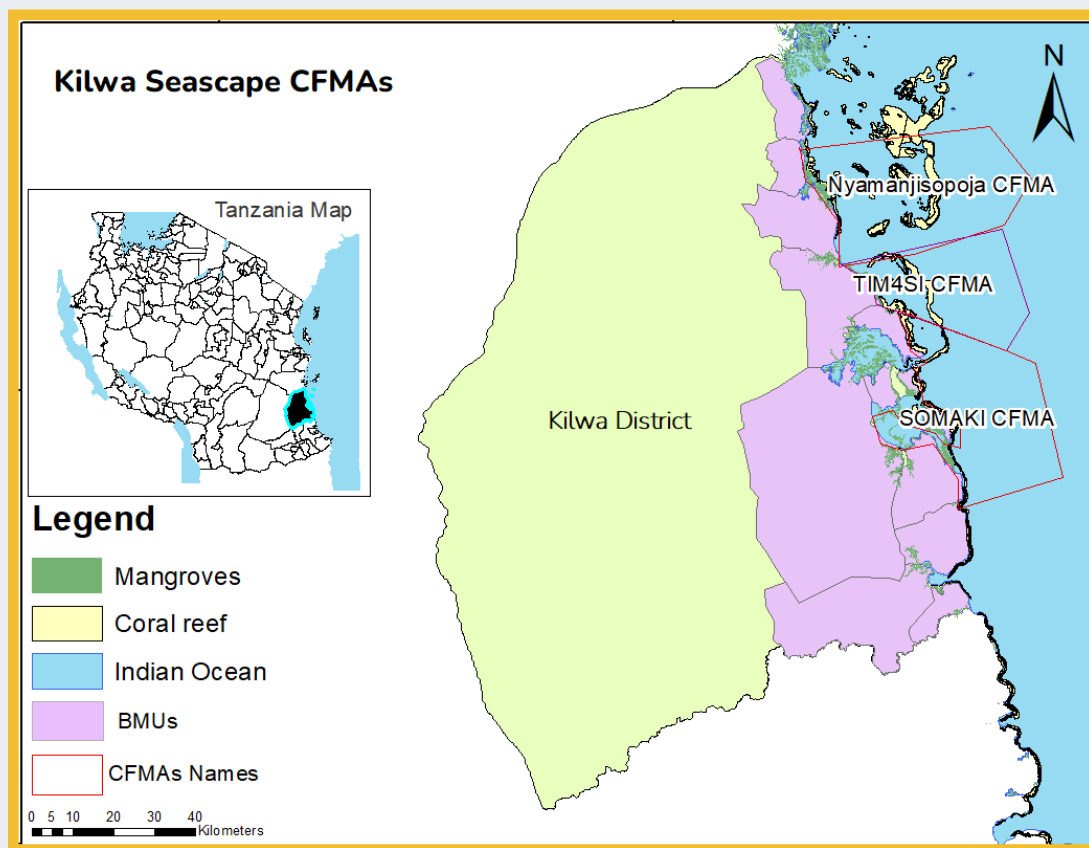
• **Conservation Value**

Tanga is home to ecologically significant coral reefs, seagrass beds, and coastal forests, making it one of Tanzania's richest biodiversity zones. It was one of the first regions to pilot community closures for fisheries, demonstrating strong social and ecological returns. The region also supports the migratory corridor of the endangered coelacanth fish species.

• **Economic Viability**

The Tanga coastline presents strong potential for artisanal fisheries, community-based seaweed farming, and nature-based tourism. Proximity to Tanga city enhances value chain integration and market access, including transport infrastructure for fish and aquaculture products.

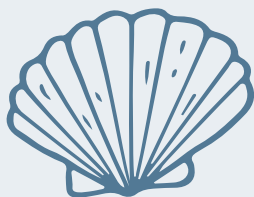
Kilwa Seascape



1. **SOMAKI CFMA (Already working on)**
2. **NYAMANJISOPOJA CFMA (Already working on)**
3. **TIM4SI CFMA (Plan to expand into)**

Located in an area that overlaps seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and active blue carbon pilot zones, these CFMAs are crucial for habitat restoration, carbon sequestration, and the recovery of sustainable fisheries.

- **Conservation Value**

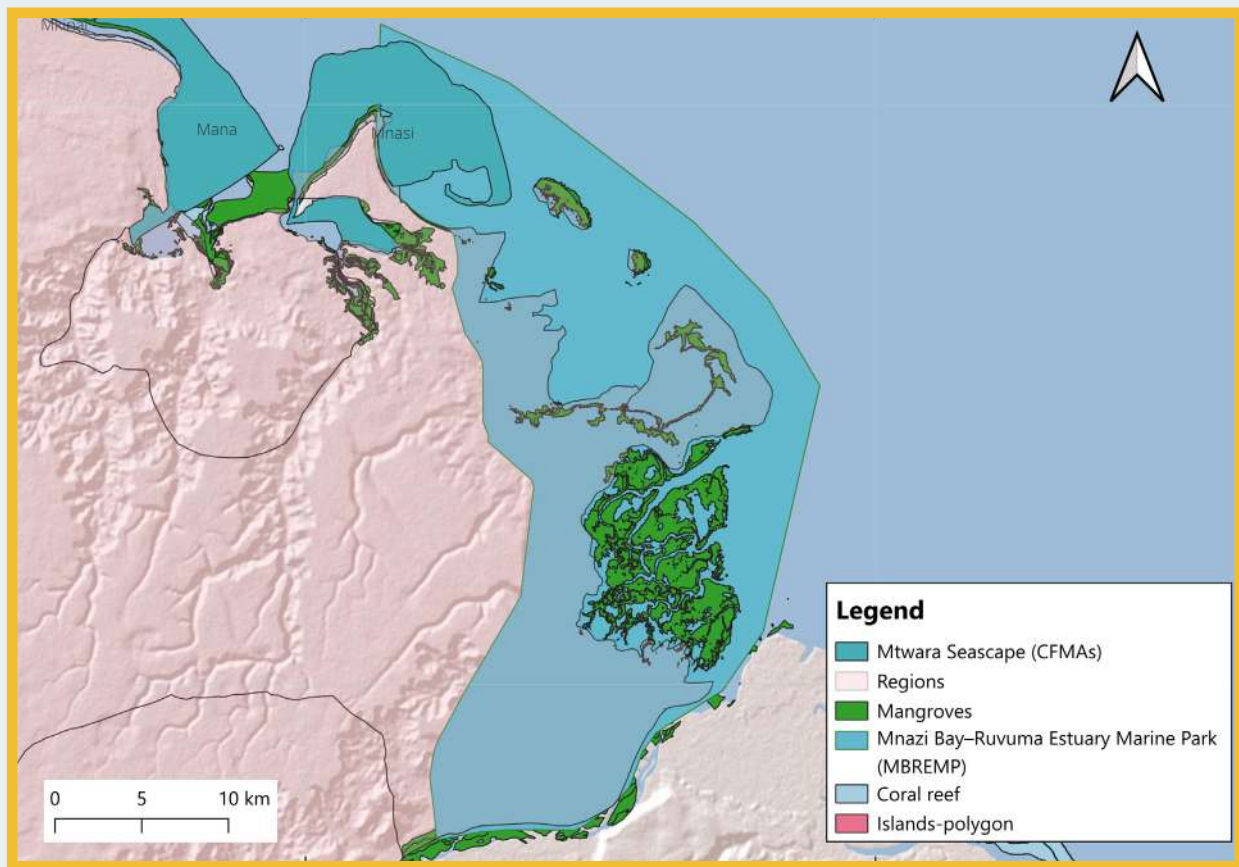


This seascape contains some of the most intact blue carbon ecosystems in East Africa, including expansive mangrove forests and seagrass meadows. These ecosystems serve as critical breeding grounds for marine species and carbon sinks for climate mitigation. Mafia Island and the Songosongo archipelago are priority areas for coral reef protection and sea turtle nesting.

- **Economic Viability**

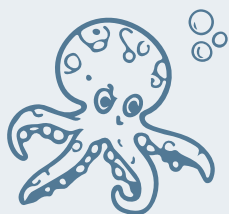
Kilwa – Mafia is already home to emerging seaweed and octopus fisheries, artisanal fish processing sites, and cultural tourism (linked to Kilwa Ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage site). With proper support, these sectors can scale sustainably, offering strong returns on conservation-compatible investments.

Mtwara Seascape



Mnazi Bay – Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP) (Already working on)

This is Tanzania's oldest marine park, spanning over 650 km². Co-management approaches with adjacent communities have shown mixed results due to governance and resource constraints. AFO will work to complement government efforts by building local capacity, aligning CFMA efforts near the park boundary, and enhancing cross-boundary ecosystem recovery.



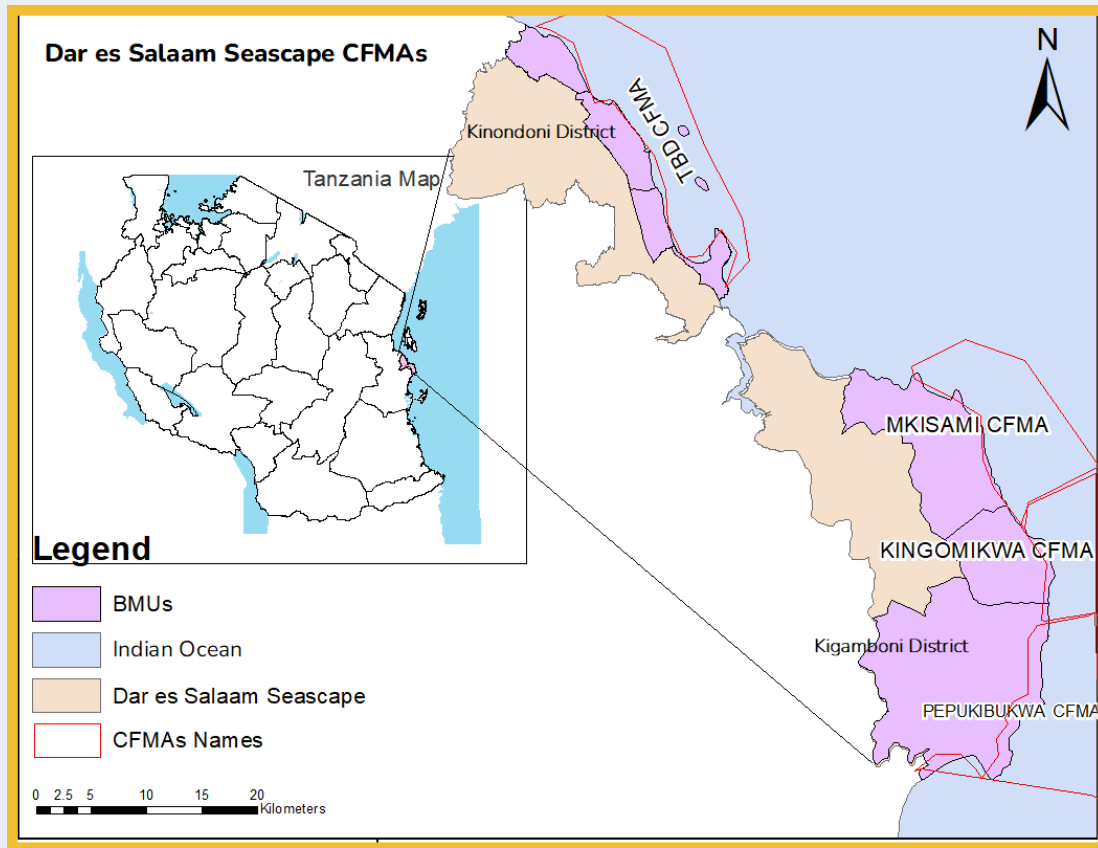
• Conservation Value

Anchored by the Mnazi Bay – Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park, this seascape includes mangrove-rich estuarine systems and high-value coral reef networks. It is a habitat for dugongs, dolphins, and crucial pelagic fish species. This area plays a key role in regional marine biodiversity corridors connecting Tanzania to Mozambique.

• Economic Viability

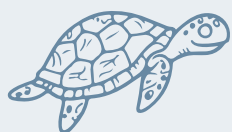
With an existing marine park infrastructure, community fisheries, and increasing interest in blue carbon and ecotourism, Mtwara holds untapped economic potential. It also serves as a gateway for regional marine trade and can act as a model for transboundary marine governance.

Dar-es-Salaam Seascope



1. **PEPUKIBUKWA CFMA (Already working on)**
2. **MJIMWOGEMAFE (Plan to expand into)**
3. **KINGOMIKWA CFMA (Plan to expand into)**
4. **MKISAMI CFMA (Plan to expand into)**
5. **KINONDONI MUNICIPAL CFMA (To be established)**

We will identify new CFMA partnerships in the peri-urban and island settings surrounding Dar es Salaam, including Kigamboni and Mbudya Island, where urbanization pressure meets critical marine habitats. This area offers unique opportunities for youth engagement, marine tourism enterprises, and the restoration of urban reefs and mangroves.



• Conservation Value

Despite intense urban pressure, Dar's nearshore reefs (e.g. Mbudya and Bongoyo islands), fringing mangroves, and estuarine wetlands remain critical to regional biodiversity. These ecosystems are vital for buffering urban communities against climate shocks and for sustaining small-scale fisheries.

• Economic Viability

Dar's urban-adjacent marine sites offer strong opportunities for youth-driven ecotourism, digital traceability pilots, sustainable reef restoration, and blue economy innovation hubs. The seascope's accessibility to government agencies, academic institutions, and private sector actors creates an enabling environment for scaling marine innovation.

Site Expansion Strategy

To ensure strategic growth, AFO has identified and selected the above areas based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Rationale
Ecological importance	Overlap with coral, seagrass, or mangrove habitats; presence of endangered species
Community readiness and governance interest	Existing BMU or village-level interest in co-management or conservation zoning
Potential for scalable livelihoods	Seaweed, fisheries, tourism, or blue carbon, etc., potential that aligns with AFO models
Legal status and alignment potential	CFMA is legally recognized or under formulation, with room to adopt approaches that AFO's promote
Connectivity to the marine park or MPA buffer zones	Opportunity to link CFMA actions with national marine park objectives



Situational Analysis



Strengths

Community-Centered and Locally Informed Approach

We value community input and local knowledge, and we co-design interventions, to ensure they are relevant, culturally appropriate, and sustainable. With deep roots in the region, we understand the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the communities and ecosystems we serve, enabling us to implement practical and impactful conservation efforts.

Strong on the ground presence

We have established a strong on-the-ground presence across key coastal regions in Tanzania, with active operations in the Tanga, Kilwa-Mafia, and Dar es Salaam Seascapes, and plans are underway to open a new office in Mtwara. This strategic geographic spread allows for tailored, community-specific interventions that address local conservation and livelihood challenges. Our commitment to employing over 80% local staff in these areas ensures that our work is deeply rooted in local knowledge, culture, and leadership.

Effective Livelihood Model

Our livelihood model is grounded in local realities and informed by the lived experiences, needs, and knowledge of coastal communities. The model is well-piloted and refined through practical lessons learned, ensuring that each intervention is contextually relevant and community-driven. By combining quick, tangible benefits, such as income generation and access to capital, with long-term sustainability strategies, the model effectively builds trust and early momentum for conservation-aligned livelihoods. It is an adaptive and scalable approach that allows us to replicate success across different coastal regions while maintaining flexibility to respond to emerging community priorities.

Strong Leadership and Open-Door Policy

Our strong and dynamic leadership provides clear direction and vision, creating a supportive and inclusive environment. An open-door policy encourages collaboration, open dialogue, and continuous feedback with staff, partners, and communities. This transparent and inclusive approach builds trust, empowers stakeholders, and ensures diverse perspectives drive success in marine conservation and community development.

Committed, Passionate & Growing Team

Our organization's strength lies in its highly committed and passionate team, dedicated to environmental conservation and community development. Our deep sense of purpose and resilience ensures consistent effort, quality outcomes, and lasting impact in all interventions. We are committed to continuous growth and learning. By fostering a culture of internal capacity building, we ensure that all team members have the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver impactful results.

Clear Communication and Strong Visibility

We pride ourselves in effective communication, which keeps stakeholders, from local communities to international partners, well-informed, engaged, and aligned with our mission. By maintaining a strong presence and accessibility, the organization fosters collaboration, transparency, and a more significant impact on marine conservation efforts.

A youth-led organization

With a predominantly youthful and active team aged between 25 and 35 years, we benefit from the energy, innovation, and fresh perspectives that young people bring. Our dynamic workforce is open to adopting new technologies and approaches, driving the organization toward creative and sustainable solutions.

Access to Technical Expertise

Years of engagement have helped establish partnerships and networks that provide access to specialized technical expertise. This allows us to implement complex projects effectively, leverage expert knowledge in decision-making, and ensures that best practices inform interventions.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Our ability to adapt to changing circumstances is a significant strength. Whether responding to shifts in funding landscapes, evolving community needs, or environmental changes, we remain flexible, ensuring it remains relevant and practical.

Weaknesses

Geographic Reach vs. Depth Trade-off

Operating across four seascapes demands significant resources for transportation, monitoring, and community engagement. We are actively reviewing our geographic priorities to ensure that depth of impact is never sacrificed for breadth of coverage and we are investing in local field capacity to reduce our dependence on centralized logistics.

Limited Funding, specifically Unrestricted Funds

While funds tied to specific projects are often available, we struggle to secure unrestricted funds. This limitation hampers our ability to cover essential operational costs, invest in capacity building, or respond flexibly to emerging needs and opportunities.

Scaling Our Team to Match Our Ambition

We are at an organisational inflection point. Our current team reflects our origins as a lean, founder-driven organisation and their commitment has delivered outsized results. As we enter a period of deliberate scale, our Human Capital Expansion Plan commits us to strategic recruitment, structured wellbeing systems, and a Fellowship and Mentorship Programme to build the team our 2026–2030 ambitions require.

Building a World-Class MEL System

Demonstrating impact rigorously is both a partner expectation and a learning imperative. We are actively developing a robust MEL framework that will strengthen our ability to measure outcomes, generate evidence, and adapt our approach in real time. This is not a gap we are managing, it is an investment we are making.

Alignment with National & International Priorities

Tanzania's Development Vision 2050 positions the blue economy as a national priority, creating formal mandates for community institutions as co-implementers of marine strategy. The 2024 National Blue Economy Policy opens pathways to blue carbon certification and gender-inclusive enterprise previously inaccessible to coastal communities. Our work advances SDG 14, SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, and SDG 13 positioning us as credible contributors to Tanzania's commitments.

Internationally, the Kunming-Montreal Framework's 30x30 target recognises community-governed areas. The Nairobi Convention, WIOMSA platforms, and USD 6 million UNDP/GEF coastal initiative reinforce the enabling environment. Growing carbon markets provide durable financing for mangrove conservation.

Opportunities

1. Tanzania's Blue Economy & Policy Moment

Tanzania's national Blue Economy policy, the Development Vision 2050, and growing regional interest in sustainable ocean use create a rare alignment between political will and conservation needs. This policy moment positions us to influence the frameworks that will govern marine resource management for decades and to attract the partnerships and funding that follow enabling policy environments.

2. Community-Led Enterprises & Regenerative Aquaculture

The rise of regenerative aquaculture, blue carbon markets, and community enterprise models presents a generational opportunity to align ecological health with economic resilience. By scaling initiatives like seaweed farming, the CLEAR model, and Jongoo Bahari, we can demonstrate that coastal communities are not just conservation beneficiaries, they are conservation investors.

3. Sustainable & Diversified Financing for Conservation

Emerging models for conservation financing; blended finance, impact investing, blue carbon credits, and conservation trust mechanisms offer us a pathway to long-term financial sustainability. By actively pursuing these instruments alongside traditional partner funding, we can build an unrestricted, diversified revenue base that funds not just our programmes but our institutional strength. Conservation that cannot finance itself cannot last.

4. Community Ownership & Inclusive Conservation

The growing willingness of coastal communities particularly women and youth to participate in and lead conservation efforts is our most durable asset. By deepening community ownership, investing in inclusive governance, and tapping the energy of underrepresented groups, we build the social infrastructure that sustains conservation long after any project cycle ends.

Threats

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Activities

IUU fishing undermines sustainable fisheries management and poses a significant threat to marine biodiversity. It also negatively impacts the livelihoods of communities that depend on legal and sustainable fishing practices, complicating our efforts to promote conservation and economic development.

Population Growth and Climate Challenges

Rapid population growth intensifies pressure on natural resources, driving overfishing, deforestation, and habitat destruction while increasing the demand for food, water, and employment. Coupled with climate calamities such as floods, droughts, and extreme weather events, these challenges further strain our efforts to balance conservation with community needs, requiring adaptive strategies and additional resources to safeguard ecosystems and livelihoods.

Financial Dependence and Donor Constraints

Our reliance on external funding makes us vulnerable to donor withdrawals, financial instability, and restrictive funding conditions that can limit flexibility in project implementation. Meeting prescriptive donor requirements demands significant time and resources, diverting attention from core conservation activities and long-term sustainability.

BINGO Influence

The presence and influence of large international NGOs in the marine conservation space can pose a significant challenge. With greater access to funding, visibility, and institutional networks, BINGOs often dominate donor attention and policy influence, sometimes overshadowing the work of local organizations. This can lead to increased competition for resources, duplication of interventions, and diluted community engagement, making it more difficult to assert our unique, community-rooted value proposition.

Policy Inconsistency and Shifting Government Priorities

Frequent changes in government policies and regulatory frameworks can create uncertainty and disrupt operations, making long-term planning and implementation challenging. Inconsistent enforcement of environmental and fisheries regulations further weakens conservation efforts, allowing harmful practices to persist. Additionally, shifting government priorities often favor short-term economic gains over sustainable ecological practices, leading to reduced support for marine conservation initiatives. This can hinder collaboration, limit funding opportunities, and slow progress toward our long-term goals of ecosystem resilience and community empowerment.



What Guides AFO

Values

People First

We prioritize our people, staff, communities, and partners. Creating a supportive and collaborative environment ensures that everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to our mission.

Own It

We take responsibility for our actions and the results they produce. We are transparent, manage resources efficiently, and hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders, delivering on our promises and measuring our impact.

Stronger Together

We believe in the power of partnerships. By working with diverse stakeholders, we combine our strengths to foster innovation and drive a more significant impact on marine conservation.

Everyone's Voice Matters

We are committed to equity and inclusion, ensuring all voices, especially those from marginalized groups, are heard and represented. This creates more substantial community ownership and more effective, culturally relevant solutions.

Adapt and Innovate

We thrive on learning. By staying flexible and embracing innovation, we continuously improve our strategies to meet new challenges and advance our mission.

Value Proposition

- 1.** We are a community-driven, youth-led, locally rooted organization that puts people at the heart of marine conservation.
- 2.** We empower local leadership, amplify the voices of youth and women, and champion inclusive solutions.
- 3.** We ensure our interventions are impactful and relevant by embracing innovation and using data to guide our work.
- 4.** We combine local knowledge with global expertise through strong partnerships and collaboration to create lasting change, fostering sustainable conservation and resilient communities.

Problem Statement

Tanzania's coastal and marine ecosystems are at a breaking point. The country's extensive coastline encompasses globally significant biodiversity including coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds yet these ecosystems are deteriorating at a rate that outpaces current conservation responses.

Mangrove forests on Tanzania's mainland lost 18% of their cover over the 25 years from 1980 to 2005.² Tanzania is among a group of countries estimated to have lost more than 60% of their mangrove forests overall.⁴ Climate-driven bleaching events including the 2024 mass bleaching episode that impacted reefs across the Western Indian Ocean continue to erode the ecological foundations that support coastal food security, storm buffering, and blue carbon storage.

Globally, between 20–35% of mangrove extent has been lost over the last 50 years, with East Africa among the most exposed regions. Fisheries are under acute pressure. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing compounded by destructive gear use and weakly enforced Marine Protected Areas has driven fish stocks to critically low levels across key seascapes.

The Indian Ocean accounts for over 14% of global wild-caught fish, but 30% of assessed stocks in the region are already being fished beyond sustainable limits. In the western Indian Ocean specifically, large numbers of fish stocks carry unknown

status, creating significant challenges for effective management and placing them at acute risk of overexploitation. In the Kilwa Seascape alone, Artisanal Fisheries Pattern Mapping (AFPM) survey conducted across 23 Marine Managed Areas in 2024 found that fishing communities lacked the data infrastructure, governance capacity, and alternative livelihood options needed to transition toward sustainable resource use.

These ecological pressures are inseparable from structural poverty. Approximately 10 million people live in coastal areas of Tanzania and depend on healthy, interlinked marine ecosystems. Studies have found that dependence on marine resources for livelihoods reaches up to 60% at the village level in coastal regions such as Mtwara, with fishing being the most important source of income while most coastal communities remain poor and have high rates of illiteracy. Across the wider Western Indian Ocean, an estimated 30–60 million people in coastal communities depend on the coastal environment for goods, services, livelihoods, and income.


Women, who constitute the majority of seaweed farmers and post-harvest processors, are disproportionately excluded from governance and economic opportunity. AFO's Seaweed Microcredit programme has documented how even modest financial exclusion the inability to access loans of under USD **500**

is sufficient to trap farming households in low-productivity shallow-water methods, despite the demonstrated productivity of deep-water techniques for species such as *Eucheuma cottonii*. The Africa Fair Seaweed Finance Facility (AFSFF) Phase I feasibility study across coastal Tanzania and Kenya further confirmed that literacy gaps, weak market linkages, and the absence of blended finance instruments remain the primary structural barriers to sector transformation.

Governance failures deepen the crisis. While Tanzania's legislative framework including the Fisheries Act and Beach Management Unit regulations provides a foundation for co-management, implementation remains severely under-resourced.

Threats to coastal and marine ecosystems include overfishing and destructive fishing methods, coastal pollution and erosion, and critically inadequate land-use planning and weak institutional capacities for monitoring and enforcement. Local institutions such as Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs) and Beach Management Units (BMUs) often lack the training, equipment, and institutional legitimacy to enforce agreed fisheries management measures.

AFO's 2025 governance assessments across six CFMAs in the Dar es Salaam, Kilwa,

An underwater photograph showing a diver in the center, swimming over a diverse coral reef. The water is clear and blue, with sunlight filtering through from above. The reef is composed of various coral species, including branching and table corals. Several small fish are visible swimming around the reef.

and Mtwara seascapes found that compliance with fisheries regulations increased by 70% where community-led enforcement patrols were actively supported yet such support remains the exception, not the rule. Without trusted, locally embedded institutions, conservation gains remain fragile and easily reversed.

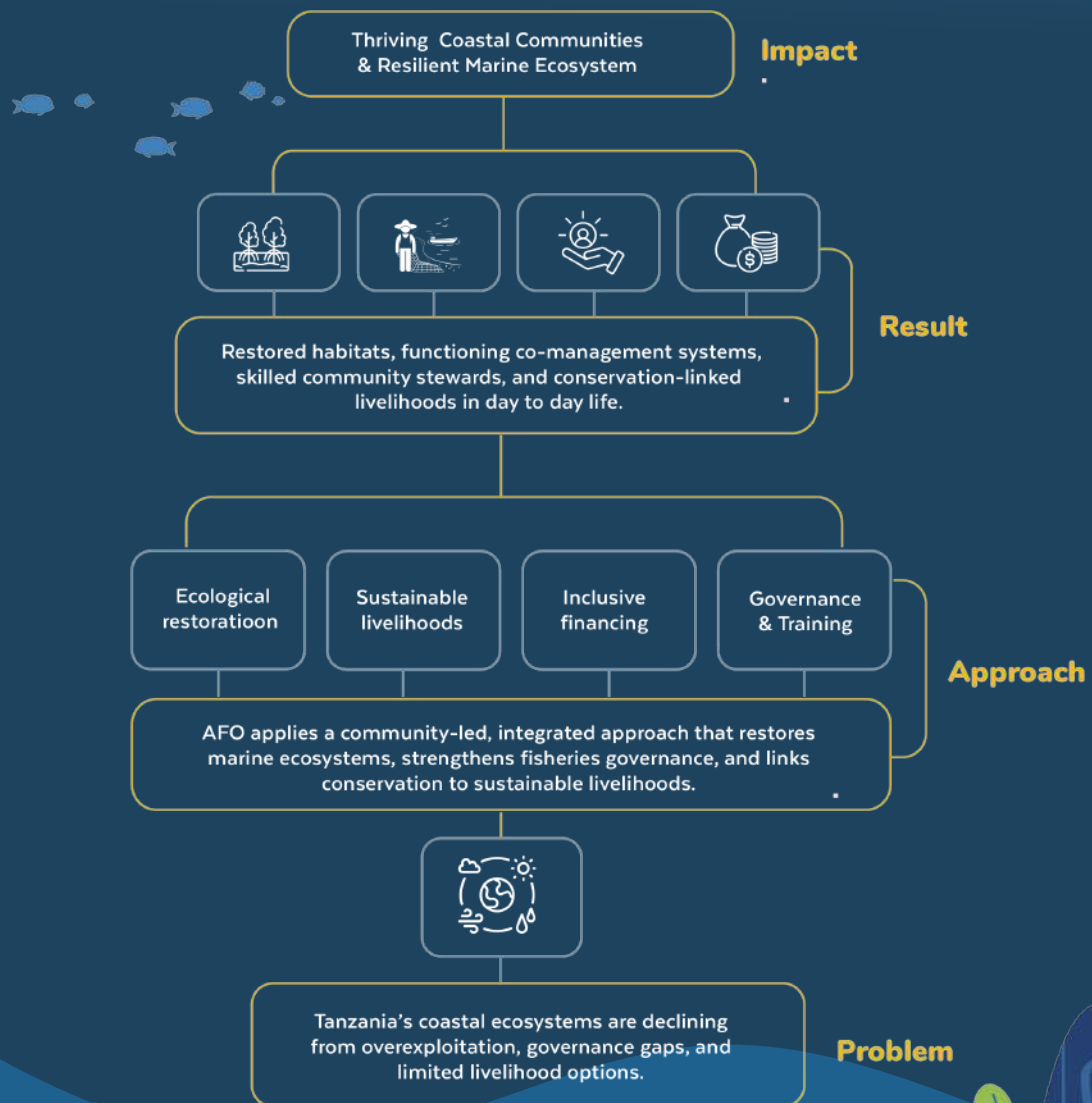
The window for meaningful intervention is narrowing. Reef systems that lose structural complexity cannot recover on ecologically relevant timescales. Mangrove forests, once cleared, take decades to deliver full carbon sequestration and coastal protection functions. The communities who have stewarded these ecosystems for generations face a shrinking window to redirect trajectory but where they have been trusted, resourced, and connected to functioning markets, the results are measurable.

In 2025, four community-managed reef closures in the Kilwa Seascape generated USD 106,711 in octopus revenues a 45% increase over pre-closure income demonstrating that conservation, when community-led and economically viable, is both possible and transformative.

This Strategic Plan responds to that moment with the urgency, focus, and institutional commitment it demands.

Climate change and fishing pressures are accelerating the vulnerability of both marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Theory of Change



Theory of Change

Tanzania's coastal ecosystems are declining from overexploitation, governance gaps, and limited livelihood options. Reef systems, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds are deteriorating faster than current conservation responses can match while the coastal communities who depend on them face deepening poverty and narrowing options. Without urgent, community-centred action, ecosystems will be lost that cannot be restored and livelihoods destroyed that communities cannot afford to live without.

We believe change requires simultaneously addressing all three root causes. Without secure rights, communities cannot protect what they do not own. Without active stewardship, ecosystems cannot recover. Without economic benefit, conservation cannot sustain itself.

AFO applies a community-led, integrated approach that restores marine ecosystems, strengthens fisheries governance, and links conservation to sustainable livelihoods. Through ecological restoration, sustainable livelihoods, inclusive financing, and governance and training working in concert, we build the conditions for communities to transition from passive victims of degradation to active leaders of resilience.

Each pillar reinforces the others. Governance enables stewardship. Stewardship generates ecological recovery. Recovery creates the economic conditions that strengthen governance. This self-reinforcing cycle is what makes conservation

lasting rather than fragile.

When these conditions hold, the result is restored habitats, functioning co-management systems, skilled community stewards, and conservation-linked livelihoods embedded in daily life.

The long-term impact is thriving coastal communities and resilient marine ecosystems where communities renew their own governance compacts, finance a growing share of marine management locally, and pass stewardship to the next generation without external prompting. Our role evolves from implementer to facilitator as communities take full ownership of the model demonstrating that community-led conservation is not only possible, but replicable across coastal East Africa.

Assumptions

1. Community Adoption of Sustainable Practices

Communities sustain practices if viable incomes, local enforcement, inclusive governance, and visible benefits exist

2. Livelihoods Reducing Resource Pressure

Livelihoods reduce pressure if they outperform extractive incomes and are supported by accessible, inclusive financing systems.

3. Ecosystem Recovery Capacity

Ecosystems recover if restoration combines protection, stewardship,

monitoring, climate adaptation, and operates at sufficient ecological scale.

4. Research-to-Policy Uptake

Research influences policy if co-produced, aligned with government priorities, and communicated through trusted, credible platforms.

5. Youth Engagement in Marine Careers

Youth enter marine careers if clear pathways link training, certification, mentorship, and real employment opportunities.



Goals And Objectives

GOAL 01

Degraded marine ecosystems restored and biodiversity strengthened for long-term resilience



We are committed to restoring Tanzania's marine ecosystems through scalable, inclusive, and community-driven efforts that strengthen biodiversity and ecological resilience. While numerous marine restoration efforts exist, most are costly, donor-driven, and fail to empower local communities. They often lack mechanisms for long-term sustainability, local incentives, or the practical involvement of those most affected by marine degradation.

AFO will address these gaps by restoring critical marine habitats, protecting vulnerable species, and building a skilled, community-led workforce for ocean conservation. Restoration will not only heal ecosystems, it will build stewardship, secure food systems, and prepare Tanzanian communities to lead the future of marine protection.

What success looks like:

By 2030, Tanzania's coastal communities will have restored 20 km² of marine habitats, protected at least five endangered species, and built a national pipeline of 150 trained divers and 25 ocean innovators delivering an improvement in ecosystem health through inclusive, cost-effective, and community-led conservation.

Objective 1: Restore Critical Marine Habitats and Protect the Species that Depend on Them

Tanzania's coastal ecosystems, mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass beds, are rapidly degrading due to climate change, pollution, and unsustainable use. Critically endangered species including sea turtles and dugongs are also in decline, as restoration efforts remain small-scale and lack community ownership. Without urgent action, ecosystem collapse will threaten biodiversity, fisheries, and coastal protection. We will lead a community-driven restoration program that integrates habitat and species conservation. By restoring degraded areas, training local stewards, and developing protection strategies for key species, we will build a model that links ecological recovery with community engagement and long-term resilience.

Targets

1. Map and prioritize degraded marine habitats and overlapping endangered species zones in mainland Tanzania.
2. Engage and support 25 communities to facilitate communication and participation in restoration activities.
3. Restore and monitor 1,000,000 mangroves, 4 km² of coral reef, and 4 km² of seagrass in the next five years.
4. Collaborate with MPAs, CFMAs, and local authorities to protect key species through community monitoring and locally agreed-upon enforcement zones.

Objective 2: Build Local Ocean Access and Marine Conservation Capacity to Drive Ecosystem Restoration and Resilience

Restoring Tanzania's marine ecosystems requires skilled local professionals who can lead conservation efforts and develop solutions rooted in community needs. However, most marine conservation remains nearshore and externally driven, limiting youth and community participation in deeper water restoration. We will build a local talent pipeline of divers, ocean innovators, and conservation storytellers. By expanding ocean access and equipping communities with restoration and monitoring skills, we will ensure Tanzanians lead efforts to protect biodiversity and build ecological resilience.


Targets

1. Train 150 divers in marine conservation by 2030. Among these, 100 are Open Water and Advanced Open Water divers, 40 are Divemasters, and 10 are Dive Instructors.
2. Enable 25 non-marine professionals to design tools or solutions for ocean conservation enhancing innovation, restoration and protection efforts.
3. By 2030 train 15 free diving instructors through a "Training of Trainers" program, who will subsequently train 1,500 community-based free divers in marine conservation skills such as underwater monitoring, habitat restoration and species protection.

Goals And Objectives

GOAL 02

Governance and community stewardship of Marine Managed Areas strengthened



Equipping local communities with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to oversee and protect marine ecosystems sustainably will enhance community capacity for effective MMA management. This includes providing training on monitoring, enforcement, and adaptive management practices to ensure communities actively participate in conservation efforts. By fostering co-management approaches, we will empower fishers and coastal residents to take ownership of marine resources, promoting long-term sustainability. Additionally, the organization will support the establishment of governance structures and strengthen community-led decision-making processes to improve compliance with conservation regulations.

What success looks like:

By 2030, 14 Marine Managed Areas (including 12 CFMAs and 1 Marine Protected Areas and 1 Marine Reserve System) will demonstrate inclusive

governance, active Fisheries Replenishment Zones with at least 15% increase of the fish biomass in kg per ha, and sustainable financing systems covering at least 30% of annual management costs, proving a scalable model for community-led marine conservation in Tanzania.

Objective 1: Build Inclusive, Knowledgeable, and Accountable Community Institutions for MMA Co-Management

We will strengthen the leadership and coordination capacity of Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs) to govern and co-manage MMAs effectively. This includes training on governance, adaptive management, and enforcement, supporting school and community-based awareness programs and establishing trusted compliance mechanisms. By integrating education, local leadership, and social accountability, this objective anchors community ownership of conservation efforts.

Targets

1. Train 12 CFMAs on participatory governance, inclusive leadership, and conflict resolution.
2. Review or co-develop five MMA management plans, including benefit sharing schemes, business plans and support their implementation.
3. Establish a mentoring and coordinating support system for 12 CFMAs.
4. Conduct annual management effectiveness assessments in all targeted MMAs using a community-validated scorecard.
5. Support the 24 marine eco-clubs in schools and reach 25,000 residents through marine awareness campaigns.
6. Operationalize community ranger teams in all MMAs and reduce reported illegal fishing cases to below 100 annually nationwide by 2027.

Objective 2: Establish and Operationalize Fisheries Replenishment Zones (FRZs) as Ecological Anchors for MMAs

To regenerate marine biodiversity and rebuild fish stocks, we will support communities to establish and manage Fisheries Replenishment Zones (FRZs), no-take areas embedded within MMA boundaries. Through participatory zoning, legal recognition, enforcement integration, and ecological monitoring, FRZs will serve as ecological anchors for recovery and as tangible proof of community-led conservation success.

Targets

1. Establish at least four community-endorsed and legally recognized FRZs across the supported MMAs.
2. Develop zoning maps and FRZ bylaws integrated into MMA governance plans.
3. Train community members in ecological monitoring and compliance tracking for FRZs.
4. Conduct baseline and biannual ecological assessments of fish biomass and habitat health to evaluate the status of these resources.
5. By 2030 achieve an increase in fish biomass or coral/seagrass health within FRZs.

Objective 3: Strengthen Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Community-Led MMAs

To ensure the long-term sustainability of conservation outcomes, we will build the financial resilience of MMAs through diverse local revenue strategies and external climate-linked financing. This includes training CFMAs, Village Natural Resources Committees (VNRC), Beach Management Units (BMUs), and Village Liaison Committees (VLCs) in financial management, establishing local revenue systems (e.g. permits, fishing licenses, eco-tourism), and piloting blue finance models where viable (e.g. blue carbon, biodiversity credits, bonds). Importantly, the focus of these mechanisms is to generate revenue that sustains the governance, operations, and enforcement capacity of MMAs, rather than serving as direct household income, thereby anchoring conservation in economic reality and ensuring communities can maintain management structures and local benefits over time.

- **Blue Carbon:** Carbon captured and stored by coastal and marine ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes, which can generate tradable carbon credits.
- **Biodiversity Credits:** Financial units that represent measurable gains in marine biodiversity (e.g. healthier reefs, restored habitats), sold to fund conservation outcomes.
- **Blue Bonds:** Debt instruments issued to raise capital specifically for marine and coastal conservation projects, repaid through returns linked to sustainable ocean management.

Targets

- Develop and implement sustainable financing strategies in all five revised MMA plans.
- Train 12 CFMAs on budgeting, transparent financial governance, and benefit distribution.
- Establish local revenue collection systems in at least five CFMAs and one MPA (e.g. permit fees, tourism and fisheries levies).
- Pilot two blue financing initiatives in mangrove, coral or seagrass zones by 2030.
- Facilitate co-financing or public-private partnership agreements in at least three MMAs.

Goals And Objectives

GOAL 03

Resilient coastal communities built through scalable, conservation-friendly livelihoods



We aim to strengthen the economic resilience of coastal communities by promoting conservation-friendly and financially inclusive livelihood models through our CLEAR approach. By supporting group-based enterprises with access to savings, credit, equipment, and markets, we will help reduce pressure on marine resources and create sustainable, traceable income opportunities. This goal recognizes that while conservation is essential, its benefits take time to materialize. Linking livelihoods to conservation ensures that communities are both stewards and beneficiaries, aligning environmental protection with improved well-being and long-term coastal development.

What success looks like

By 2030, at least 1,000 groups will operate sustainable livelihood ventures supported by financial inclusion, capital access, and reliable markets delivering a five times return on every \$1 invested in community enterprise while reducing pressure on marine ecosystems.

Objective 1: Scale Coastal Community Enterprise through Group-Based Savings, Eco-Incentives, and Inclusive Financial Systems

We will empower coastal communities by organizing and strengthening locally driven economic groups that serve as entry points for conservation-aligned livelihood opportunities. Through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and the Eco-Credit approach, groups, especially those led by women and youth, will gain access to capital, financial skills, and business mentoring. These groups will serve as the foundation for sustainable aquaculture, eco-tourism, and other marine-friendly enterprises, integrating environmental stewardship into local economic systems.

Targets

1. Support 81 communities to develop and implement eco-friendly and economically viable livelihood initiatives.
2. By 2027, a feasibility study will be conducted for five potential community businesses.
3. In five years 1,000 groups will be formed, capacitated, and supported (300 groups for the first two years and 700 for the remaining years).
4. By 2030, community facilitators will mentor 1,000 groups weekly.

Objective 2: Enable Access to Capital to Support Conservation-Friendly Enterprises

Access to productive equipment is a major barrier to enterprise growth in coastal areas. We will provide targeted equipment financing, in-kind support, and small grants for priority sectors, including sustainable aquaculture, mangrove-based products, ecotourism, and seaweed processing, enabling scale and improved product quality.

Targets

1. Provide equipment financing to 70% of groups by 2030 to scale and improve their conservation-aligned businesses.
2. Provide matching grants for 300 groups for the first two years and 233 for each year following that to invest in productive assets.
3. Ensure all equipment-financed groups are linked to weekly mentorship and Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA) structures.

Objective 3: Strengthen market access and value chain linkages for community enterprises

We recognize that financial barriers often limit community participation in sustainable economic activities. By improving market access, providing connections to financial institutions, and offering financial literacy training, we help communities enhance their economic opportunities. These efforts enable individuals and groups to manage their finances more effectively, access funding for sustainable projects and secure fair product prices, thereby contributing to long-term financial stability and resilience.

Targets

1. Train 1,000 business groups in producing good quality products, branding, and value addition by 2030.
2. Link at least 40% of groups with potential stakeholders, suppliers, and buyers by 2030.

Goals And Objectives

GOAL 04

A resilient, high-performing organisation built to deliver ocean conservation at scale



Over the next five years, AFO will invest in organisational foundations to deliver our mission at scale: financial stability, strong governance, a skilled team, evidence-driven systems, and a recognised voice for ocean conservation in Tanzania and the Western Indian Ocean. Without robust infrastructure, conservation programmes cannot scale, partnerships cannot be sustained, and communities cannot be held accountable.

What success looks like:

By 2030, AFO will be financially diversified with 70% forward funding secured annually, no single donor exceeding 30% of revenue, and earned income contributing at least 20% of total revenues triple the 2025 baseline. Staff retention will remain above 85%, and a robust MEL system will anchor accountability across all four seascapes.

Objective 1: Strengthen Organisational Resilience, Governance, and Leadership

We will formalise governance, establish succession planning, and embed annual risk management.

Targets:

1. Formalise Board committees, governance baseline, and succession framework by 2026; annual Board reviews thereafter.
2. Update HR, Finance, Risk policies by 2026; establish risk register with annual Board reviews and maintain clean audits.
3. Define SMT roles and delegated authority by 2027; leadership review 2028; confirm succession continuity by 2029.

Objective 2: Achieve Financial Diversification and Long-Term Funding Predictability

We will build diversified funding with multi-year agreements and growing earned revenue.

Targets:

1. Secure 100% of 2026 budget and 70% of 2027 budget by Year 1 end; maintain 70% forward funding through 2030.
2. We will explore establishing a for-profit arm to strengthen program delivery and long-term financial sustainability.
3. Triple revenue from 2025 baseline by 2029, sustained through 2030.

Objective 3: Enhance Strategic Influence, Communications, and Partnerships

We will implement a communications strategy, build a content engine, and expand partnerships.

Targets:

1. Launch communications strategy by 2026 with quarterly impact stories and annual flagship report; expand regional media by 2027.
2. Partner mapping and engagement 2026; sign five strategic MOUs by 2027; expand WIO influence.
3. Publish one policy brief/thought leadership output annually from 2026; measurable policy engagement by 2028.

Objective 4: Build Staff Capacity, Systems, and Digital Infrastructure for Scale

We will standardise workflows, integrate digital systems, and implement capacity development.

Targets:

1. Complete capacity assessment and document workflows by 2026; data-driven management operational by 2027.
2. Implement integrated finance and programme systems with real-time dashboards by 2026; risk matrix and compliance review from 2026; compliance dashboard by 2028.
3. Two training opportunities per staff annually, build leadership pipeline, maintain 85% retention.

Objective 5: Establish a Robust, Evidence-Driven MEL System

We will implement a MEL framework, establish cloud-based data repository, and produce transparent public reporting.

Targets:

1. Design and implement MEL across all sites by 2026; launch public dashboard and adaptive management by 2027; independent evaluation by 2029.
2. Adopt data tools and launch cloud repository by 2026; automated reporting and transparency by 2028; four case-study volumes.
3. Annual reflection workshop from 2026, embed learning in programmes, publish annual summaries from 2028 institutionalise as learning organisation by 2030.

Financial Snapshot

The five-year operating budget (FY2026 - FY2030) translates AFO's Strategic Plan into a phased financial roadmap for delivering Goals 1 - 4. The organization is expected to grow from approximately USD 1.86 million in FY2026 to USD 4.15 million by FY2030. This growth reflects a deliberate scale-up of programmatic ambition across all four strategic pillars; marine ecosystem restoration, MPA governance and stewardship, resilient coastal livelihoods, and organizational strengthening. The significant increase in FY2027 (+60%) represents a planned expansion phase, followed by more moderate and sustainable growth rates in subsequent years (10 - 15%), ensuring that scale is matched with operational capacity and institutional maturity.

Resource allocation across the four goals demonstrates AFO's commitment to balanced, mission-driven investment, with each pillar receiving progressively increased funding in line with strategic priorities and implementation capacity. At the same time, the projections highlight a substantial funding gap between secured resources and total required expenditure, underscoring the need for proactive resource mobilization and diversified funding strategies. This financial framework reflects AFO's transition from a project-driven model toward a strategy-led organization, where funding is mobilized to deliver long-term impact rather than limiting implementation to currently secured grants

Category	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030
Annual Growth Rate	—	+60%	+15%	+10%	+10%
Goal 1: Marine Ecosystems Restored	\$402,541	\$644,066	\$740,675	\$814,743	\$896,217
Goal 2: MPA Governance & Stewardship	\$351,471	\$562,354	\$646,707	\$711,377	\$782,515
Goal 3: Resilient Coastal Livelihoods	\$572,381	\$915,810	\$1,053,181	\$1,158,499	\$1,274,349
Goal 4: Organizational Strengthening	\$538,234	\$861,174	\$990,351	\$1,089,386	\$1,198,324
Total Operating Expenses	\$1,864,627	\$2,983,403	\$3,430,914	\$3,774,005	\$4,151,406



