

THE WIOSAP PROJECT PRESENTS

# MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND COMOROS

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### WHAT IS A MARINE PROTECTED AREA?

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is an area of ocean or coastline that has been specially-designated for protection for the benefit of nature and people. The world, including the Comoros, committed to protecting at least 10% of its marine and coastal areas as by 2020 under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.5. The *WIO MPA Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets* further assesses and analyzes these efforts in order to guide and strengthen marine conservation in the region towards the achievement of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

### WHY ARE MPAS IMPORTANT?

Healthy oceans are critical to human survival. Oceans feed us, regulate our climate, generate most of the oxygen we breathe, and serve as the engine for much of the world's economy.

Yet the ocean and its rich resources are being damaged and depleted faster than ever before. Soon, we may no longer be able to count on the many jobs, health, and economic benefits provided by the ocean.

Marine protected areas offer one of the best options to maintain our oceans' health and avoid further degradation.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MPAS?

MPAs can bring social, economic, and environmental benefits.

### *Economic:*

- An estimated 30%<sup>[1]</sup> of Comorian people are dependent on the fisheries sector. MPAs can prevent overexploitation of fish stocks, helping to maintain food and job security and reduce poverty.
- **Create and protect jobs** linked to the tourism industry in coastal communities

### *Social:*

- Help keep alive **cultural and heritage practices** intricately linked to the ocean

### *Environmental:*

- Help **protect species, habitats, and ecosystem** functions
- Cyclones are a perennial risk in the Comoros, made worse by the growing threats of climate change. MPAs can help the country **build resilience to climate change events**, like cyclones, floods, tsunamis, or sea-level rise.

## WHAT IS THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN (WIO) MPA OUTLOOK?

The *WIO MPA Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets* is the first publication ever to examine the current and future status of MPAs on a regional level. It documents the progress made by nine countries in the WIO region in increasing MPA coverage, highlights best practices and challenges faced by governments in managing MPAs, and provides recommendations for how to make the impact of MPAs even greater.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE MPA OUTLOOK FOR COMOROS?

Comoros has made significant progress towards increasing the total coverage of MPAs. Currently, Comoros has proclaimed one MPA covering 449.22 sq km <sup>[2]</sup>. This protected area has given Comoros the opportunity to maintain food and job security; protect its remarkable biodiversity; and safeguard its cultural heritage. Yet there are several opportunities to build on this progress and ensure that people, the economy, and nature reap even more benefits from MPAs. Opportunities include:

- Continue its efforts to designate the three proposed MPAs (i.e. the Coelacanth, Mitsamiouli-Ndroudé, and Shisiwani National Parks) to help Comoros achieve its vision of protecting 25% of its territory by 2021.
- Further expand MPA coverage to meet future targets under the Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Deepen cooperation with research institutions and other stakeholders to ensure MPA biodiversity, threats, and protection progress are fully documented.

### **Regional Recommendations include:**

- Creating a regional framework to develop the capacity of Comoros and its neighbors for MPA management
- Ensuring sustainable financing to support equipment, infrastructure, skilled personnel, and effective enforcement of MPA regulations
- Working with other countries in the region, develop a standard, region-wide approach to assess management effectiveness of MPAs.

***Read the WIO MPA Outlook: Towards achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets at [nairobiconvention.org](http://nairobiconvention.org)!***

[1] Breuil, Christophe. Grima, Damien. 2014. Baseline Report Comoros. SmartFish Programme of the Indian Ocean Commission, Fisheries Management FAO component, Ebene. 27 pp.  
[2] The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.