

Q&A

OUR BLUE FUTURE



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1. What is Our Blue Future?

Our Blue Future is a multi-stakeholder initiative for an inclusive and sustainable blue economy in the Western Indian Ocean region. We are a public – private – civil society alliance that fosters a diverse network of impact-oriented partnerships, projects and champions. We actively contribute to the common vision of a healthy, prosperous and resilient future for the region's communities, businesses and natural habitats. Building on existing initiatives, we empower people and lever resources to promote good governance, innovation and stewardship, catalysing sustainable livelihoods, enterprises and ecosystems.

Our Blue Future is one of the key initiatives under the wider BMZ-funded Western Indian Ocean Governance Initiative (WIOGI), a partnership between the Nairobi Convention and GIZ. WIOGI is working across the region towards a sustainable blue economy by facilitating greater cooperation between local and regional stakeholders around the protection and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.

2. What is a Multi-Stakeholder Initiative?

A multi-stakeholder initiative is a framework for engagement between businesses, civil society and other stakeholders such as governments. In the case of Our Blue Future, seeking to address issues of mutual concern around the challenges in the Western Indian Ocean region through a participatory and inclusive design and approach.

Our Blue Future has been developed as a Collaboration System with a transformation network of projects and partnerships.

3. Who are the founding partners in Our Blue Future?

Nairobi Convention, UNEP – UN Environmental Program, IUCN, WWF, GIZ, German Cooperation, Collective Leadership Institute, Conservation International, Wetlands International, Cordio East Africa, WIOMSA.

More companies and community organisations are in conversation to be a part of Our Blue Future and we welcome hearing from anyone interested. Please contact XXX.

4. What is the vision of Our Blue Future?

Our Blue Future is actively working towards the common vision of a healthy, prosperous and resilient future for the region's communities, businesses and natural habitats.

A well-resourced multi-stakeholder initiative will act as a catalyst for innovation, new forms of cooperation, improved effectiveness, knowledge exchange/transfer and joint accountability across the region – private sector, public sector and civil society.

5. How is it related to ocean governance?

Our Blue Future strengthens participation in the regional policy dialogue of ocean governance by creating a platform to centre the voices of the local WIO private sector and its communities, improving collective responsibility and joint accountability. By calling for action, leading by example and working with regional policy makers to begin a process of recognising the many actions that can be taken to create a sustainable blue economy for the benefit of the whole region and its people.

6. What is a Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE)?

A sustainable blue economy is one in which people and countries can derive a continued source of economic benefit into the future, while simultaneously protecting, maintaining, and restoring diverse, productive, and resilient marine ecosystems.

Actions towards a sustainable blue economy come in many shapes and sizes. For example, to contribute to climate change mitigation actions can be taken around developing offshore renewable energy, decarbonizing maritime transport and making ports greener. By creating a more circular economy through better fishing practices and recycling equipment, and developing green infrastructure in coastal areas which will help preserve biodiversity, which will benefit tourism and the coastal economy.

To reach a sustainable blue economy policy changes, infrastructure changes and behaviour changes will all need to come together in the future.

7. How is Our Blue Future working towards a Sustainable Blue Economy?

Our Blue Future has been set up with the belief that bringing ALL users together around the development of an SBE is the only way to ensure a successful model for the future, for people and nature. This means communities and the private sector need to be at the centre of global, regional, and local efforts to build a sustainable blue economy, to ensure equity and all voices are heard. It is also essential if practical and effective interventions to deliver marine and coastal conservation are to succeed, as well as recognise that any economic benefits from the oceans and coasts need to be shared among all those who live and use them.

Our Blue Future will mobilise technical, financial, and political support to help remove barriers and harness opportunities for enterprises and communities to become more sustainable, with a focus on three action areas:

- 1. Blue empowerment and stewardship** - citizens, businesses and governments empowered as stewards of the regions' rivers, coasts, and oceans to underpin an SBE.
- 2. Blue governance** - holistic and participatory policymaking, accountability, planning, and information management to enable an SBE.
- 3. Blue investment** - business models, value chains, technology, infrastructure, and jobs at the heart of an SBE.

8. Our Blue Future partnerships -we are looking to engage across sectors.

Our Blue Future is still in its infancy, but with a strong mandate and vision, and commitment of international funders, regional and international organisations, and a strong oversight committee.

As it develops further, with formalised structures and projects and further funding and resources dedicated, we are keen to engage with interested organisations and companies from across sectors.

9. Our Blue Future for the Private Sector.

As a business operating in the Western Indian Ocean region, companies will already be experiencing some of the challenges brought on by climate change, lack of strong policies around environmental protection and a difficult investment climate. By coming together with other stakeholders, hearing concerns as well as solutions and working with a truly regional and corporate responsibility approach, a sustainable business future will more likely emerge.

Some identified benefits to working with Our Blue Future include:

- A 2021 Global Sustainability Study found that 60% of consumers rated sustainability as an important purchase criterion (74% in energy/utilities, 62% in tourism).
- 85% of people indicate that they have shifted their purchase behavior towards being more sustainable in the past five years
- Working with Our Blue Future can demonstrate strong corporate values and commitment to environmental protection, which shareholders and investors increasingly demand.

10. Our Blue Future for the Public Sector

A Regional Ocean Governance Strategy is currently being developed at both the African Union level and regionally through the Nairobi Convention and UNEP, from which policies will need to be adapted at a country level. Feeding into these processes, understanding the needs of all stakeholders and being able to adapt policy accordingly can only be beneficial.

By working together to realise the potential of a sustainable blue economy, we envisage countries will benefit from:

- Improved employment opportunities in blue economy sectors like tourism, fishing, shipping, etc.
- Increased food security
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Resilience to the effects of climate change

Our Blue Future involvement will open opportunities to network with new partners from the public, private, and civil society sectors and have access to funds, technical support, and expertise

11. Our Blue Future for Communities

Coastal communities are often the poorest and least able to adapt to climate change challenges, as well as harmful corporate practices like overfishing, pollution and coastal mining. However, they are often the most reliant on the oceans and coast for survival, through fishing, tourism, farming and other activities. As such it is crucial communities are represented at the highest levels of decision making around

Our Blue Future will provide a platform for engagement and exchange with companies and government. It is envisaged that through funding projects and creating opportunities for networking and sharing, communities will be empowered and able to represent their needs and find solutions for the future. Access to funds, technical support, and expertise, greater impact through joint advocacy and increased visibility of smaller organisations will also be possible.

12. How does Our Blue Future function?

In the spirit of an ocean governance strategy of co-creation and inclusivity, Our Blue Future is governed at the highest level by a non-hierarchical, member-elected Multi-stakeholder Steering Board. They will provide inspiration, guidance, and mechanisms for collective leadership, supporting a diversity of initiatives to grow in scale and impact in a strategic direction. It is not a mechanism for coordination and control, as each member organisation, partnership and project have their own governance and accountability mechanisms, and the mandate for regional coordination will always be across multiple organisations.

For further details of the MSI's preliminary governance arrangements, please request the Preliminary Governance Arrangements document from XXXX

13. Who can join?

Our Blue Future is looking to partner with as wide a circle of partners as possible from the public and private sector and civil society across the Western Indian Ocean region, who want to join a movement for change towards a blue economy, working together on initiatives, policy changes and joint action. With strength in numbers and broad experience and expertise based on the diversity of partners and voices from the region, the aim is working towards good governance, innovation and stewardship, catalysing sustainable livelihoods, enterprises and ecosystems.

Contact XXXX to talk to us about how to get involved.

14. What is a Blue Champion?

Anyone can be a Blue Champion – a company or an individual that has taken on the vision towards a sustainable blue economy in the western Indian Ocean region, and is leading by example in their practices, business and lives.

Our Blue Future is looking for key representatives from the Western Indian Ocean region to take up the Champion's mantle to articulate the challenges facing the region and educate about the sustainable solutions being worked towards. We want Champions who can inspire and captivate audiences, and who encapsulate the vision of a sustainable blue economy through their actions and work.

15. What does joining Our Blue Future mean?

We are building a wide network of voices from across the Western Indian Ocean region who are willing to share lessons, report on progress and results of their projects and actions towards a sustainable blue economy, will protect and enhance the OBF brand and above all adopt and implement projects and efforts which will contribute in a real way to a sustainable blue economy agenda.

Through meetings, networking opportunities, joint working groups, as well as a strong strategic roadmap which will guide progress and joint results, Our Blue Future is ambitious, but also anchored in ensuring as many of the people reliant on the Western Indian Ocean for their livelihoods are represented and working towards the same goal.

16. What are some of the broader challenges to reaching a sustainable blue economy in the Western Indian Ocean region?

Some 60 million people rely directly or indirectly on the Western Indian Ocean for their livelihoods. Considered a biodiversity hotspot, it is also heavily utilised for fishing, tourism, oil and gas, and other resources. However,

increased global demand for natural resources, pollution, climate change and related issues like ocean acidity and a diversity of human activities are threatening the region's fragile coastal and marine ecosystems.

Even when Blue Economy and sustainable development as avenues for change are recognized, much of the emphasis has been placed on short term economic gains and less on sustainability. As a result, traditional livelihoods and small-scale local operations are frequently outcompeted by international corporations and government initiatives, with little regard for social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Our Blue Future recognises this and wants to turn the tide, bringing the conversation back to those living in the region, who are impacted daily.