

What are Ocean Accounts?

Ocean accounts (OA) are integrated records of regularly compiled and comparable data concerning ocean environment assets and activities (e.g., extent/condition of mangroves), economic activity (e.g., sale of fish) and social conditions (e.g., coastal employment, cultural heritage).

National accounts influence public policy — All countries maintain systems of national accounts, which inform and justify decision-making about economic policy and development. The accounts are generally maintained by National Statistical Offices or Finance Ministries. They are based on the international standard System of National Accounts 2008 (SNA) and are used to regularly produce and report the headline indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Ocean accounts organise ocean data in a common framework, integrated with existing national accounts — Ocean accounts are simply integrated records of economic activity (e.g. sale of fish), social conditions (e.g. coastal employment and poverty), and environmental conditions (e.g. extent / condition of mangroves) that are compiled on a regular basis (e.g. annually) and are compatible with international statistical standards. They are based in particular on the SNA, and System for Environmental Economic Accounting 2012 which is now used by at least 80 countries to account for policy-relevant environment–economy relationships

Ocean accounts integrate four key components:

1. Macro-economic accounts, providing economic measures such as GDP.
2. Environmental-economic accounts that report on: (a) the state of ocean assets, or stocks (such as fish or coral reefs) and (b) flows. Flows include goods and services taken from or flowing to the oceans. Physical flows include fish production or pollution
3. Ecosystem accounts which present the oceans in a spatial framework or report on the extent, condition, biodiversity, provision of services, and value of ecosystems.
4. Structured data on ocean beneficiaries, on technology, on governance, and on ocean management.

The ocean accounts framework provides a standard accounting structure to integrate social, economic and environmental information in alignment using international statistical standards. Applying the framework produces integrated indicators against which changes can be assessed and measured. These indicators also inform decision-making and support the prioritisation of areas requiring further attention by highlighting data deficiencies, ocean governance gaps and under-explored research areas.

The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) Africa Community of Practice (ACoP) is a regional collaboration platform bringing together governments, international organisations and research institutions who are interested in learning about and developing ocean accounts in Africa. The ACoP is led by the [Cape Peninsula University of Technology \(CPUT\)](#). The ACoP objectives are to:

- Build interest in, and understanding of, ocean accounting in Africa.
- Support countries in Africa with the development and implementation of ocean accounts.
- Assist countries in Africa to mainstream ocean accounting into ocean governance tools, economic accounts and national development planning.
- Provide a communication and collaboration platform for regional GOAP members and local partners to engage in mutual capacity building and share knowledge on ocean accounting.
- Showcase how ocean accounts can support evidence-based decision-making and policy development to underpin the sustainable development of the ocean.
- Showcase how information on the ocean and ocean resource-use can be utilised to produce statistics and indicators to aid sustainable development decision making.
- Promote learning, science diplomacy and the creation of new knowledge to advance the development and uptake of ocean accounting in Africa.
- Contact persons are: [Prof. Ken Findlay](#), CPUT, South Africa; [Dr. Tai Loureiro](#), GOAP Africa CoP & Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Oceans, CPUT, South Africa

Links for further reading

[Global Dialogue on Ocean Accounting and First Annual Meeting of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership](#), Sydney, Australia, 12-15 November 2019.

[High Level Ocean Panel – Ocean accounts](#).

GOAP ACoP Position paper: [Ocean Accounting in Africa](#).

Policy brief on opportunities for ocean accounting in Africa: [Ocean Accounts – A Sea Change Approach in Ocean Decision Making](#)

Websites: [The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership](#); [West Indian Ocean Governance Exchange Network](#); [Africa Natural Capital Accounting Community of Practice](#).

Introductory webinar: [African NCA Community of Practice Webinar: Ocean Accounting – Novel approaches to Ocean Governance](#)