LOCALLY EMPOWERED AREA
OF PROTECTION

Enhancing coastal and marine biodiversity conservation and resilience in the Western Indian Ocean
Background

The coastal and marine environment of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is a hotspot of biodiversity hosting over 2,200 species of fish, five species of marine turtles and more than thirty-five marine mammal species. The region boasts of the longest unfragmented fringing reef in the world, with over 350 species of corals, and a diverse assemblage of coastal forests, mangrove forests and seagrass beds. It is estimated that about 22% of the species found in the WIO region are unique to this region. The ecosystem services provided by this rich marine environment are estimated at over 25 billion US$ per year and more than 60 million people directly depend on these ecosystems.

Time for action...

Today, because of its particular exposure and vulnerability, the WIO region is facing the full scale of the climate and biodiversity crisis, directly putting more than 60 million people lives at risk. 2019 Idai and Kenneth Cyclones are the most recent catastrophic events that illustrate the urgent need to take action to protect these communities, conserve these ecosystems and restore their biodiversity so that the people that rely upon them for goods and services as well as for their livelihoods and income will be less impacted and more resilient.

Towards a blue future...

The world is about to enter into a decisive period of its history. The next 10 years (2020-2030) will determine the future of our and the next generations for centuries. Unprecedented challenges require unprecedented solutions. Aware of this reality, IUCN has redesigned its WIO coastal and marine resilience program strategy to efficiently address current challenges. This new strategy called Towards a Blue Future, is composed of 3 key pillars: Blue Planet, Blue People and Blue Partnerships.

The Blue Planet pillar aims at securing the integrity of critical marine and coastal ecosystems. The Blue People pillar aims at increasing ocean leadership and benefits to the people.

The Blue Partnerships pillar aims at establishing the necessary partnerships to dramatically accelerate marine and coastal conservation at scale.

This strategy aims at responding to the needs of the WIO region, both in terms of conservation and development. Because keeping ecosystems healthy and protecting biodiversity provides so many benefits, unlocking the potential of WIO’s natural capital by promoting the development of a blue economy represents a unique opportunity.
The project

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in partnership with Nature Seychelles, Associação do Meio Ambiente (AMA) and Coastal Oceans Research and Development – Indian Ocean (CORDIO) are implementing an initiative titled Locally Empowered Area Protection (LEAP) with funding from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). This initiative is a direct contribution to IUCN’s Towards a blue future strategy.

The overall objective of the LEAP project is that by 2023, the effective management of coastal, island and marine biodiversity and ecosystem services in Mozambique, Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania is improved through adoption of locally-relevant conservation area governance frameworks by national governments and non-state actors.

The initiative is investing in policy-related activities as well as infrastructure, conservation and restoration actions, training and equipment, public awareness programmes, and introduction of sustainable funding mechanisms.
Output 1: Improved locally-relevant governance frameworks are developed and promoted to support equity and effectiveness in the design, decision-making and benefit sharing in at least 7 coastal, island and marine conservation areas in Mozambique and Seychelles.

Output 2: Protected and conserved area planning, assessment and sustainable management tools developed and/or operationalized in at least 7 key sites in Mozambique and Seychelles.

Output 3: Knowledge and awareness products on locally-appropriate PA governance and management approaches are developed and disseminated among local communities, civil society, private sector and government in Mozambique, Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania.

Output 4: National policy and regulatory frameworks are strengthened through an evidence based policy advocacy/review in Mozambique, Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania.