IMPACT STORY

RARE

Mozambique

The project has established Mozambique's first formal area of ocean under community co-managed access with reserves (CMA+R), aiming to cover 582 km² under sustainable management and 83 km² under full protection.

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NETWORK OF COMMUNITY-MANAGED MPAs, MOZAMBIQUE

PROJECT DURATION: MARCH 2018 TO DECEMBER 2021			
BUDGET		**KEY TARGETS**	
Blue Action grant	€ 1,635,075 (75%)	Newly created MPAs	639 km^2
Match funding	€ 546,003 (25%)	Effectively managed MPAs	N/A
Total project costs	€ 2,181,078	Number of beneficiaries	41,495

Mozambique's coastal ecosystems are under direct anthropogenic threat from unsustainable natural resource use and intensifying fishing pressure. Fish catches are decreasing and – in combination with persistent socio-economic vulnerability – this is putting even more pressure on vulnerable coastal communities and the marine ecosystems they depend on. A Blue Action grant is supporting a project led by Rare that aims to sustain small-scale coastal fisheries and conserve marine ecosystems by working in partnership with the Mozambican government to establish a community-led approach to fisheries management and strengthen financial resilience in local fishing communities.

What unique issue is this project addressing?

Healthy coastal fisheries are critical to the food security, livelihoods, and well-being of coastal communities in Mozambique, but they are often overlooked and undervalued. Many communities lack the capacity to manage their fisheries effectively, leaving them vulnerable to overfishing and other destructive practices, as well as the impacts of climate change. National data reveals that fish catch landings and overall catch sizes are declining, and small-scale fishers are reporting that some species are no longer showing up in their nets at all. It is estimated that Mozambique's overall artisanal catch has dropped by nearly 30% over the last 25 years, and climate change is expected to exacerbate this situation as Mozambique's coasts are highly vulnerable to cyclones, storm surges, and flooding. To address these threats, Rare is empowering fisheries-dependent communities across six sites in Mozambique to establish and maintain locally community-managed access areas with reserves, enabling people to use their marine resources more sustainably and boosting their financial resilience.

How is the Blue Action grant helping to deliver project goals?

This project aims to increase ecosystem health, build local support for the protection of marine biodiversity, and improve the livelihoods of coastal communities. With the support of Blue Action, Rare has been able to benefit over 41,000 people directly and over 158,000 people indirectly. The project has reached communities in six districts of Mozambique, extending vital support to small-scale fishers, fish buyers, savings club participants, and other community members.

What has been achieved so far?

Since the project launched in 2018, it has helped the Mozambican government at all levels in demonstrating the benefits of taking a community-led approach to managing coastal waters, making a particular impact in six key areas by:

- Providing technical assistance to national government partners to develop the legal pathway for implementing community co-managed fisheries and rights-based approaches.

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This project is empowering local communities to manage their natural resources and helps create alternate income sources that reduce fishing pressure. With the support of Blue Action, it benefits over 41,000 people directly and over 158,000 people indirectly, including small-scale fishers, fish buyers, and savings club participants. The good news is – it's a replicable model.

- Establishing Mozambique's first formal areas of ocean under community co-managed access with reserves (CMA+R), currently covering 428 km^2 under sustainable management and 65 km^2 under full protection. Additional areas will follow in the coming months.
- Building the capacity of community fisheries management bodies and fish buyers by helping them to acquire new skills and equipment needed for the electronic registration of catches, and by supporting self-governance and informed decision-making.
- Developing participatory ecosystem-based local fisheries management plans and submitting them for government approval.
- Strengthening financial resilience by designing supplementary income initiatives and supporting Savings Clubs for fishing communities, to bolster household incomes and reduce the pressure to overfish.
- Creating demonstration cases that show how locally managed fisheries and coastal communities can contribute to the implementation of nature-based solutions that support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

What's the impact on local communities and how are they engaged in the project?

The project is working with the six coastal fishing communities to reduce post-harvest catch loss and increase the value of existing fisheries. In parallel, financial inclusion measures are helping people to retain, manage and augment their incomes. Overall, nearly 800 community members have been financially supported to start 11 community enterprises that provide alternative income sources, such as baking and hen farming, as well as to set up fisheries-related enterprises, like ice machines, that can reduce post-harvest loss, enhance livelihoods, and reduce fishing pressure. The 36 Savings Clubs supported by the project have a total of 992 members – 68% of whom are women – and have collectively saved over USD 270,000 so far. These savings increase financial stability and

social security, and allow fishing households to make decisions based on their long-term interests rather than the short-term pressures that can compel overfishing.

What are the main challenges faced and how is the project overcoming them?

As with any new project, there has been a learning curve. Following the pilot phase, the project will continue to scale up what works – like establishing Savings Clubs – and strengthen the local management bodies that oversee the management of coastal fisheries. Inevitably, the project had to face many challenges beyond its control – not least a global pandemic, cyclones, and severe storms that impacted several project sites and limited the ability to travel and engage with communities. The flexibility of both Rare and Blue Action was key to keeping the project on track, for example by pivoting to virtual trainings and meetings whenever possible. These events also highlighted the critical need to build the resilience of rural coastal people to give them the ability to adapt to changing and unexpected threats.

How can this project inform and inspire other communities to take similar action?

Rare's work is driven by the desire to empower local communities with the tools, knowledge, and rights they need to manage their natural resources effectively. With the support of Blue Action, it has been possible to achieve transformational results for both people and nature. And the good news is that it's a replicable model. Rare is continuing to expand its impact in more communities both in Mozambique and in other countries across the developing tropics where lives and livelihoods are closely tied to the health of coastal ocean ecosystems.

What are the top project priorities for the year ahead?

This has been a watershed period for coastal communities in Mozambique. The passage of the revised Fisheries Maritime Regulation (REPMAR) in late 2020 was a major step towards granting local communities formal rights to steward their coastal fisheries. Building on that momentum, following this pilot phase Rare will roll out a provincial approach to supporting sustainable, climate resilient small-scale fisheries in Mozambique, focusing on biodiversity hotspots in high human dependency areas, and continue to advance community-led co-management of coastal waters. Priority focus will be on establishing CMA+R areas in other sites, working with savings clubs and microenterprises to build financial resilience at the community level and implementing strategies to increase the participation and leadership of woman in fisheries management bodies.