Unsustainable natural resource use and climate change are endangering Mozambique's coastal ecosystems, threatening the food security and livelihoods of its coastal communities. Rare empowered fisheries-dependent communities in six sites to establish and maintain locally managed marine protected areas (MPAs). The project aimed to sustain small-scale coastal fisheries and conserve marine ecosystems by establishing a community-led approach to fisheries management and strengthening financial resilience in these communities in partnership with the Mozambican government. A number of barriers that were stopping behaviours and values shifting towards a community-led fisheries approach were addressed by behaviour adoption measures, ensuring the project's long-term impact.

Context
Healthy fisheries are critical for the food security and livelihoods of Mozambique's coastal communities. Many communities lack the capacity to manage their fisheries effectively, leaving them vulnerable to unsustainable fishing practices and the effects of climate change. National data reveals an overall decline in fish catch sizes and landings, while small-scale fishers are reporting less fish diversity. Overall, artisanal catch is estimated to have dropped by nearly 30% over the last 25 years. The impacts of climate change are exacerbating this situation on Mozambique's highly vulnerable coasts. Ecological resilience needs to be enhanced as a buffer against these effects, through sustaining critical habitats and improving fish abundance and diversity. Rare has enabled fisheries-dependent communities in Memba, Machangulo, Ilha de Moçambique, Pomene, Zavora, and Fequete, to establish and locally maintain Community-Managed Access Areas with Reserves (CMA+Rs) that foster the sustainable use of marine resources and boost their financial resilience.

Objectives and approach
The primary objective of this project was to identify and demonstrate a scalable approach to strengthening the natural resource management outcomes and biodiversity of Mozambique's small-scale fisheries, while improving the livelihoods of 41,495 people. Using social marketing, a community rights-based management toolkit and market-based interventions, the project aimed to bolster the resilience of six coastal areas and communities to climate change-related effects and unsustainable fishing practices. It focused on creating 639 km² of MPAs and increasing local and political capacity in order to manage those effectively as CMA+Rs with the support of government and Community Fisheries Councils (CCPs).
The project has established Mozambique’s first formal area of ocean under community co-managed access with reserves (CMA+Rs) covering 679 km² under sustainable management, including 65 km² under full protection.

Key achievements and impact
This project 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 five areas:

- Developing community-based Fisheries Management Plans and CMA+R designs for all project sites in cooperation with CCPs and submitting them for government approval.
- Establishing Mozambique’s first CMA+Rs, currently covering a total of 679 km², following the approval of the General Regulation on Marine Fisheries (REPMAR), including the demarcation of 65 km² of no-take reserves, which fully protect critical coral, seagrass, and mangrove habitats from all fishing activities.
- Building the capacity of community fisheries management bodies and fish buyers by, for example, helping them to acquire new skills and the equipment required for electronic catch registration via the OurFish mobile app. As a result, self-governance and informed decision-making are being promoted. In total, 45 fish buyers record their catch and price data on a regular basis, and 1,720 fishers have been registered.
- Using behaviour adoption campaigns to mobilise and empower a conservation constituency. This led to more than 75% of community members having positive attitudes toward biodiversity protection, the CMA+R approach, their own ability to manage resources sustainably, and trust in decision-makers.
- Strengthening the financial resilience of communities by: 1) establishing 36 Savings Clubs (992 members, 65% of whom are women, who have collectively saved USD 327,778); and 2) granting seed funding to 11 microenterprises, which provide value-enhancing income and fisheries opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key target</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Achieved (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPAs</td>
<td>Newly created</td>
<td>639 km²</td>
<td>679 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More effectively managed</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
<td>41,495</td>
<td>44,134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outlook
Rare’s project methodology was developed to ensure that CCPs and designated management areas thrive well beyond the lifetime of this project. Ultimately, the sustainability of the project’s successes depends on local communities and resource users, and the project provided them with the tools and capacity to
implement community rights-based management in CMA+Rs, ensuring a lasting future. A local conservation constituency was built in communities, enabling community support for sustainable fishing practices, which in turn ensures widespread compliance with fishing regulations. Financial inclusion measures are helping people to retain, manage and augment their incomes. For example, community enterprises were established to provide alternative income sources, such as baking and hen farming, as well as the set-up of fisheries-related enterprises, such as ice machines, that can reduce post-harvest loss. Furthermore, Savings Clubs were created to build financial resilience and social security, allowing fishing households to make decisions based on their long-term interests. Finally, ecosystem reliability and health were enhanced by creating long-term no-take areas that protect critical habitats. Due to a number of challenges faced by the project, some activities were still only close to being achieved but they will continue beyond the lifetime of this project. The CMA+R approach used in this project was designed to be a replicable model that can be extended to more vulnerable coastal communities in Mozambique and other developing tropics nations.

**Key lessons learned by grantee**

As with any new project, there has been a learning curve. Inevitably, the project was confronted with numerous challenges beyond its control, including the COVID-19 pandemic, cyclones and severe storms that impacted several project sites and limited the ability to travel and interact with communities. Rare and Blue Action’s flexibility was critical to keeping the project on track, for example, by shifting to virtual training and meetings whenever possible. These events also demonstrated the critical need to build the resilience of rural coastal communities, giving them the ability to adapt to evolving and unexpected threats. The situation was compounded by the slow political process of the REPMAR revision, which caused significant delays to project activities. More rigorous risk assessments could have aided the earlier identification of political and/or bureaucratic bottlenecks, and proactively identifying and mitigating the associated delays proved difficult. It has been acknowledged that mangrove conservation and restoration must be further prioritised in future efforts.

**Key lessons learned by Blue Action**

The absence of a formal legal foundation for some project activities can significantly impact a project, and requires the adapting of timings, activities and resources. For instance, various partner organisations might be needed to engage in the political process as opposed to field implementation. Moreover, work on sustainable livelihoods needs to start from the onset of the project. This is due to the fact that it takes time to assess and mitigate the effects of access restrictions, in particular for vulnerable groups, and to gain additional support for marine conservation. Finally, it is important to also invest in projects that result in the establishment of a new MPA, even if its impact on, for example, biodiversity can only be measured at a later stage.