Terms of Reference for IUCN Consultancy

Consultancy to assess the feasibility and design of an IPLC conservation trust fund and to evaluate the economic value of LMMAs in the Western Indian Ocean to inform investment and business plans.

Objective of the Consultancy

The objective of this consultancy is twofold and interconnected. First, it aims to conduct a feasibility analysis for establishing a Conservation Trust Fund for Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) in Africa and propose the design of the IPLC Conservation Trust Fund. Second, it seeks to assess the economic value and investment potential of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean, including the development of Special Economic Regenerative Blue Zones (SERBZs), and to develop an investment strategy and business plan that responds to the specific needs of IPLCs engaged in the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources.

A key underlying premise of this consultancy is that understanding and clearly communicating the economic value of LMMAs can contribute to their legal recognition at the national level. Legal recognition not only strengthens the legitimacy of LMMAs but also enhances their eligibility for funding and investment, particularly by offering formal assurances to potential donors and investors. It also enables mechanisms such as trust funds to operate more effectively, with clear governance frameworks and accountability pathways. By demonstrating their value and aligning with national policy priorities, LMMAs and SERBZs can be positioned as credible, investable, and impactful conservation models.

To support these objectives, the consultant will develop simple infographics and visuals to present key findings in an accessible way. This piece will summarize the main findings through infographics, visual summaries, and narrative highlights, and include a dissemination plan aimed at sharing the results with relevant audiences. The goal is to advance the development, formal recognition, sustainable financing, and blue economy-based livelihood entrepreneurship of LMMAs and SERBZs in the region.

Background

Project Reference:

P05126

Donor reference:

DR05126.03, DR05126.04

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,400 Member organisations and around 15,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being.

www.iucn.org
https://twitter.com/IUCN/

About the Project

In September 2024, the first Western Indian Ocean (WIO) Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Forum was held in Mahajanga, Madagascar, bringing together over 200 participants from nine countries. The forum resulted in the adoption of the WIO LMMA Declaration and a strong collective call to establish a regional LMMA Alliance. This Alliance aims to address key regional challenges, including the absence of a shared definition of LMMAs, uneven development across countries, and limited representation of LMMA communities in regional and global platforms. It also seeks to promote gender equity and inclusivity in LMMA management

The Alliance will build on existing networks and initiatives in the region, avoiding duplication of efforts and working as an umbrella platform to foster collaboration. It will also rely on Madagascar's leadership and the lessons learned from MIHARI, the largest LMMA network in Africa to support the replication of successful models across the region. The broader vision is to establish a Pan-African LMMA Alliance, beginning with the WIO as a pilot region.

The Gret Blue Wall initiative is built around four key pillars that align with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Pillar 1: Blue Planet focuses on scaling and improving the management and governance of protected and conserved marine areas, with a strong emphasis on equity, gender-responsiveness, and local stewardship—supporting countries to achieve target 3 of the GBF. Pillar 2: Blue Nature aims to restore and conserve critical ecosystems through gender-responsive Nature-based Solutions (NbS), aligned with GBF Target 2, and guided by the IUCN Global Standard for NbS. Pillar 3: Blue People promote a regenerative and inclusive Blue Economy by empowering local communities especially women and youth in nature-based value chains for climate adaptation, aligned with GBF Target 9. Pilar 4: Blue Partnerships which is a cross-cutting pillar focussing on strengthening connectivity at all levels and of all nature, i.e. social, ecological, institutional, local, national, regional, international, cross-sectorial, etc. These pillars support the broader goal of establishing the WIO LMMA Alliance to drive transformative and inclusive ocean governance in the region, including the development of communication and advocacy campaigns to support LMMA development, recognition and expansion in the region.

One of the missions of the Alliance is to support direct access to funding for marine IPLCs, as well as to promote the development of alternative livelihoods and businesses that can attract investment in these areas. Despite their significant contributions, IPLCs often face barriers in accessing direct funding to support their initiatives and to secure their rights to manage and protect natural resources.

To address these challenges and empower IPLCs with greater control over financial resources, the Alliance seeks to better understand the landscape of funding mechanisms that support the development priorities of IPLCs, particularly those that enable direct and reliable access to funding. The review will examine how these mechanisms are structured to prioritize IPLC needs, how access to financing is streamlined, and how such mechanisms have supported or are currently supporting community-led solutions.

As part of this effort, evaluating the economic value of LMMAs is a strategic component of the project. Demonstrating how LMMAs contribute to broader, cross-sectoral economic development can help strengthen stakeholder support and recognition of their importance. This broader acknowledgment may, in turn, accelerate the formal recognition of LMMAs and unlock more direct funding opportunities for communities, especially from investors seeking initiatives with clear, measurable impact and legal standing.

Description of the Assignment

The consultant is expected to work on the following tasks:

A. Conduct a feasibility analysis for establishing a Conservation Trust Fund for marine African IPLCs and propose the design of the IPLC Conservation Trust Fund based on the current economic context of Locally Managed Marine Areas in the Western Indian Ocean region.

1. Conduct a meticulous review of existing financing mechanisms supporting ocean conservation initiatives, with a particular focus on those empowering IPLCs. This review should identify best practices, valuable lessons learned, and potential challenges that may arise. Among the stakeholders to consult are, among others, the Conservation Finance Alliance, CLARIFI, CAFÉ, BIOFUND, Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN), Blue Ventures, and SEYCAT.
2. Conduct consultations with key stakeholders, including donors, foundations, government, NGOs, private sector at regional an international level and IPLCs networks and Alliances in Africa and in the WIO, regarding the challenges, the

opportunities and their interests in the establishment of the trust fund as well as their potential roles in the systems. Among the IPLC and LMMA platforms to consult are, among others, AICA, MIHARI Network, Mwambao coastal communities, ensuring participation and perspectives of women, youth, and marginalized groups are included.

3. Based on the comprehensive review, recommend 2-3 viable and innovative financing options for IPLCs. This includes:
    - Identifying potential funding sources such as philanthropic foundations, government grants, impact investment instruments (e.g., blue bonds), and private sector contributions.
    - Share recommendations on clear and transparent criteria for how funding will be allocated to IPLCs, ensuring equitable access and supporting a diverse range of IPLC-led ocean conservation and ocean-linked livelihoods initiatives, ensuring equitable access for women, youth, and marginalized groups.
    - Provide recommendations on ways to involve IPLCs in the development of the fund process.
    - Highlight examples of suitable, transparent and accountable institutional and governance structures for an IPLC fund, based on best practices and lessons ensuring gender and social inclusion in governance structures.
    - Feature transactional pathways from the primary donor to the fund and eventually to the IPLCs, noting the requirements, timelines and amount of funding to IPLCs.
4. Propose a strategy for how an IPLC financing mechanism and a trust fund can be established, noting specific research or consultation gaps that need to be addressed. The strategy should feature among other, not limited to:
    - Identifying potential partners, e.g. of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat under the United Nations Environmental Programme, given its mandate and membership, and the recently adopted decisions pertaining to sustainable financing.
    - Recommendations on fund registration or legalization, hosting locations or potential hosting partners.
    - Suggestions for fundraising and or partnership establishment that can aid in capitalizing and setting up a financing mechanism.

B. Produce an analysis of the economic value of LMMA and propose a business and investment strategy

1. Review existing literature and data (satellite data for ecosystem services, community-generated data, or national statistics) on the economic contributions of LMMAs, including ecosystem services, livelihood benefits, and socio-economic indicators relevant to IPLCs, with attention to gender roles and the inclusion of marginalized groups.
2. Develop a valuation framework for assessing the economic value of LMMAs and propose a business and investment strategy tailored to IPLC priorities and LMMA contexts ensuring gender and social inclusion are integrated into the analysis and strategy.
3. Collect and analyse data from selected LMMA sites to evaluate economic benefits such as fisheries revenue, ecotourism income, and coastal protection.

4. Conduct consultations with key stakeholders, including NGOS and private sectors, already involved in similar activities with LMMA ensuring women, youth, and marginalized groups are represented in the consultation process.
5. Assessment and development of LMMAs as Special Economic Regenerative Blue Zones (SERBZs)

- Map and analyze a representative sample of existing LMMAs across selected WIO countries (e.g., Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius), ensuring diversity in ecological, socio-economic, and governance contexts.
- Assess ecological, socio-economic, and governance conditions of LMMAs.
- Evaluate the potential of LMMAs to attract private sector investment and support regenerative blue economy ventures such as sustainable fisheries, ecotourism, aquaculture, renewable energy, and blue carbon.
- Propose the concept of SERBZs tailored to the WIO context.
- Identify enabling legal, policy, and institutional frameworks at national and regional levels to support the SERBZ approach.
- Align recommendations with AU Agenda 2063, SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Develop concrete recommendations for operationalizing the SERBZ model.
- Identify innovative financing mechanisms (e.g., blended finance, blue bonds, impact investment, conservation trust funds).
- Provide a roadmap for scaling SERBZs regionally, ensuring inclusivity of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), and emphasizing gender equity and the participation of youth and marginalized groups.

6. Quantify the value of ecosystem services provided by LMMAs, including cultural ecosystem services, and assess their contribution to national and regional development goals, highlighting benefits to women and marginalized groups
7. Develop one case study per country in the WIO region that illustrates the economic value and livelihood impact of well-functioning LMMAs or marine IPLC initiatives in different national contexts. This could also include examples from protected area managers or private sector actors that have successful models of collaboration with communities.
8. Formulate recommendations to support advocacy, resource mobilization, and integration of LMMA economic value into relevant policy and planning frameworks, including their legal recognition
9. Design a comprehensive investment and business plan framework tailored to LMMAs, with the aim of enhancing their financial sustainability and attractiveness to potential investors, ensuring gender and inclusion considerations are embedded throughout. The framework should include the following key components:

- Outline how the plan will be developed, including the participatory process, stakeholder involvement, how local knowledge and economic analysis will be integrated to ensure the plan is inclusive and community driven.

- Identify and propose approaches for measuring the economic benefits provided by LMMAs. This should include guidance on assessing the value of ecosystem services such as fisheries, tourism, coastal protection, and other existing or potential services.

- Identify viable income-generating activities linked to LMMAs. The section should explore business models that are scalable, sustainable, resilient and appealing to impact-oriented investors.

- Develop a financial framework that includes estimated costs and projected revenues over time. The analysis should include multiple financial scenarios to assess long-term sustainability.

- Identify key risks that could affect the success of the LMMA business plan and propose practical strategies to mitigate or manage these risks.
- Propose approaches for attracting and engaging investors and donors. This should include strategies for presenting investment opportunities and aligning them with global sustainability and impact investment standards.

C. Develop infographics and visuals to present key findings and propose a concise communication and advocacy strategy demonstrating how the consultancy results, such as LMMA/SERBZ economic valuation or the IPLC Trust Fund model can be used to support advocacy, policy recognition, and engagement with funders and partners.

Duration of the Assignment

The duration of the assignment will be a 50 day period, starting from September 2025 until 31 December 2025, including an additional two weeks for feedback/editing

Deliverables and Activities

The consultant will provide the following deliverables and carry out the following activities:

Deliverable/Activity	Description	Deadline
1. Deliverable 1	A comprehensive workplan and methodology outlining how the consultancy will be carried out, including key stakeholders to consult and relevant case studies to examine.	30 September
Activity 1 A	Develop a detailed timeline and step-by-step methodology for the consultancy, including data collection, analysis, and reporting.	
Activity 1 B	Identify and map key stakeholders to consult, including IPLC networks, government agencies, NGOs, donors, and private sector actors.	
Activity 1 C	Select relevant case studies of existing IPLC conservation trust funds, LMMAs, and innovative financing mechanisms for comparative analysis, ensuring inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups.	
2. Deliverable 2	A full report detailing the feasibility analysis and the proposed design of an IPLC conservation trust fund mechanism that enables direct access to funding for IPLCs. The report should outline the pros and cons, the proposed structure, governance model, eligibility criteria, and potential funding sources,	30 October

	as well as lessons learned from relevant case studies or existing mechanisms. The report should also assess how the trust fund ensures equitable access and benefits for women, youth, and marginalized groups, and recommend ways to integrate gender and social inclusion into fund governance, decision-making, and allocation processes.	
Activity 2 A	Conduct a review of existing financing mechanisms for IPLCs, including philanthropic, government, and impact investment models.	
Activity 2 B	Organize consultations with stakeholders to assess opportunities, challenges, and potential roles in the trust fund, ensuring that gender and social inclusion considerations are integrated into governance and fund allocation processes, and that equitable benefits are highlighted for women, youth, and marginalized groups.	
Activity 2 C	Develop proposed governance structures, eligibility criteria, allocation mechanisms, and fund management options. Integrate gender and social	
3. Deliverable 3	A full report presenting an analysis of the economic value of LMMAs and a proposed business and investment strategy, including the development of Special Economic Regenerative Blue Zones (SERBZs). This should include valuation of ecosystem services, identification of viable revenue models, cost and risk assessments, and recommendations for attracting sustainable investment aligned with IPLC needs and priorities. The report should also evaluate how women, youth, and marginalized groups benefit from LMMAs and SERBZs, and provide recommendations for ensuring that business and investment strategies are inclusive, equitable, and support broad community participation.	10 November

Activity 3 A	Conduct a literature review and data collection on LMMA ecosystem services, livelihoods, socio-economic contributions, and potential for SERBZ development. Include case studies of LMMAs that could serve as Special Economic Regenerative Blue Zones in the WIO.	
Activity 3 B	Develop a valuation framework and financial modelling for LMMAs including potential revenue streams, cost structures, risk assessments, and regenerative blue economy opportunities (e.g., sustainable fisheries, ecotourism, aquaculture, blue carbon).	
Activity 3 C	Identify viable investment opportunities and business models for LMMAs and SERBZs that are aligned with IPLC priorities, ensuring that benefits are inclusive for women, youth, and marginalized groups.	
Activity 3 D	Conduct stakeholder consultations to validate findings and co-design operational recommendations for SERBZs, refining sustainable investment and community-driven business strategies.	
4. Deliverable 4	Develop a concise 10–15 page communication and advocacy strategy with supporting infographics and visuals to present key findings, showing how the results, such as LMMA/SERBZ economic valuation or the IPLC Trust Fund model can be used to engage funders, partners, and stakeholders, support policy or legal recognition, and highlight the social, economic, and environmental benefits, including inclusive benefits for women, youth, and marginalized groups. The strategy should outline approaches to promote the IPLC Conservation Trust Fund, the LMMA business and investment plan, and the development of SERBZs, with practical recommendations on	20 November

	engaging key stakeholders, attracting donors and investors, and ensuring effective communication of outcomes.	
Activity 4 A	Identify key audiences (donors, investors, governments, stakeholders, communities) and prepare simple advocacy messages about LMMAs, SERBZs, and the IPLC Trust Fund..	
Activity 4 B	Create clear communication materials, including infographics, to show the economic, social, and environmental benefits of LMMAs and SERBZs, highlighting inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups.	
Activity 4 C	Propose practical advocacy actions to support LMMA/SERBZ recognition and promote the IPLC Trust Fund, including engagement with policymakers and stakeholders.	
5. Deliverable 5	A comprehensive final report covering the two key outcomes outlined in Deliverables 2 and 3. The report must incorporate all feedback from the IUCN team and relevant stakeholders. It should also include the 10-15page communication material, outlining how the findings will be disseminated and used to support the development of LMMAs in terms of recognition and attracting investors at regional and national levels.	20 December
Activity 5 A	Integrate all feedback from IUCN and stakeholders into the final report for accuracy, completeness, and relevance.	
Activity 5 B	Consolidate findings from deliverables 2 and 3, including the trust fund feasibility study and LMMA economic valuation/business strategy.	

Activity 5 C	Include the 10-15page communication and advocacy document as part of the final report.	
Activity 5 D	Develop a dissemination plan to share findings with relevant stakeholders and guide investment, policy recognition, and sustainable financing for LMMAs.	

Payment Schedule

The Timetable below summarises the chronological order of deliverables and indicates milestones at which IUCN will pay the Consultant.

Deliverable	Milestone payment
Deliverable 1	10%
Deliverable 2	25%
Deliverable 3	25%
Deliverable 4	15%
Deliverable 5	25%

Skills and Experience

The ideal group of consultants for this consultancy should demonstrate a strong combination of technical expertise, regional knowledge, and practical experience aligned with the objectives of the WIO LMMA Alliance and the development of sustainable financing mechanisms for IPLCs and LMMAs. The following qualifications are required:

Technical skills

- Solid finance background with minimum 15 years of experience in conservation trust funds and establishing innovative financing tools.
- Proven experience in designing and assessing financing mechanisms for ocean and environmental conservation, including trust fund development and capitalization, with a focus on community-based approaches and sustainable livelihoods.
- Demonstrated expertise in investment and business planning, particularly in developing financial strategies, investment frameworks, or business models for natural resource management, conservation, or sustainable development initiatives.
- Relevant academic qualifications (e.g., finance, economics, environmental economics, business, conservation finance) or equivalent professional competencies in financial modelling, investment strategy, or conservation finance.
- Solid understanding of ocean conservation and community-based marine resource management, including practical knowledge of LMMAs, IPLCs, and associated governance structures.
- Knowledge of LMMA management and governance, including ecosystem services and socio-economic contributions.
- Proven experience in economic valuation of ecosystem services, especially in marine and coastal contexts, and translating these values into actionable investment strategies.
- Strong grasp of impact investing, fundraising strategies, donor engagement, and familiarity with private sector investors, philanthropic foundations, and multilateral donors, with the ability to align conservation priorities with investor expectations and sustainability standards.

- Technical skills in GIS and mapping, for spatial analysis and production of maps for LMMAs and SERBZs.
- Excellent communication skills to synthesize and present complex financial, ecological, and conservation information clearly for diverse audiences (community stakeholders, donors, policymakers).
- Experience working directly with IPLCs, including LMMAs, in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region or more broadly in Africa is highly desirable.
- Ability to work in a participatory and inclusive manner, ensuring local communities' voices are reflected in all phases of analysis and planning.
- Proven expertise in gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), including applying gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches in project design, implementation, and monitoring.
- Strong understanding of, and proven experience in applying, cross-cutting ethical and safeguarding principles, including protection and safety of all participants and communities, prevention of exploitation and abuse, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), do-no-harm approach, conflict sensitivity, and data protection and privacy across field activities, capacity-building processes, and stakeholder engagement.

Communication skills:

- Skilled in transforming technical and scientific information (financial data, ecological data, LMMA valuation) into accessible, engaging, and visually compelling communication materials for communities, donors, policymakers, and investors
- Familiarity with communication strategies to support advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and promotion of conservation initiatives, including multi-country or regional contexts.

Supervision and coordination

The consultant will report to and work under the supervision of IUCN's Regional coastal and ocean governance Manager. They additionally will have coordination with the other Regional pilar leads of IUCN – Coastal and Ocean Resilience (COR) and the 5 seascape governance officers of the COR program in Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros, Mozambique and Madagascar.