

OUR OCEAN OUR VOICE

KENYA COASTAL COMMUNITIES MANIFESTO





Preamble

We, the civil society organizations, community-based organizations, Beach Management Units (BMU's), Community Forest Associations (CFA's), women and youth groups, indigenous and local communities, persons with disabilities, conservation organizations from Kenya's coastal counties of Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River, and Lamu, united through consultations convened by the East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS) ahead of the 11th Our Ocean Conference 2026, affirm our collective commitment to the sustainable management, protection, and equitable governance of our ocean and coastal resources.

Kenya's coastal and marine ecosystems are central to our livelihoods, food security, culture, identity, biodiversity, climate resilience, and economic development. Yet our coastal communities continue to face growing challenges, including marine pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, degradation of marine ecosystems, unsustainable resource use, weak governance, fragmented coordination and enforcement, maritime insecurity, inadequate participation in decision-making, and unequal distribution of benefits derived from ocean resources. These challenges continue to threaten

these critical ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Despite our critical role in ocean stewardship, African civil society organisations, small-scale fishers, women, youth, local and indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities have historically been underrepresented in global ocean governance processes due to financial, informational, and institutional barriers.

As frontline custodians of coastal ecosystems, we believe that meaningful ocean governance must place communities at its centre. We therefore present this manifesto as a collective declaration of our priorities, aspirations, and policy asks to national and county governments, regional institutions, development partners, private-sector actors, and the international community.

We call upon the Government of Kenya, ministries, state agencies, county governments, development partners, private sector regional institutions, and actors to make measurable, time-bound, and adequately financed commitments that deliver tangible benefits for coastal communities and marine ecosystems.

OUR VISION

A resilient, inclusive, and sustainable ocean economy where coastal communities are empowered as rights holders, stewards, and beneficiaries of healthy marine ecosystems, equitable blue economy opportunities, climate resilience, and secure maritime spaces.





Guiding Principles

This manifesto is guided by;

1. Community-Centered Ocean Governance

Coastal communities must be recognised as key partners in ocean management and decision-making.

2. Equity and Social Justice

Women, youth, local and indigenous communities, vulnerable and marginalised communities, persons with disabilities, and small-scale fishers must have equitable access to opportunities, resources, and benefits.

3. Environmental Sustainability

Conservation and development must safeguard marine biodiversity and ecosystem integrity for present and future generations.

4. Transparency and Accountability

Public institutions and private actors must be accountable in the management of ocean resources and public investments.

5. Climate Resilience

Coastal development and ocean governance must strengthen adaptation to climate change and reduce environmental vulnerability.

6. Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Communities have the right to participate meaningfully and to give informed consent regarding developments that affect their livelihoods and resources.

As coastal civil society organisations, we commit to strengthening ocean governance through community education, inclusive participation, evidence-based conservation, accountability, strategic partnerships, and amplifying local voices in decision-making processes.

Community Priority Call for Action

Recognising the urgency of ocean degradation, climate impacts, biodiversity loss, and increasing pressures on coastal livelihoods, We therefore call upon the Government of Kenya, county governments, development partners, regional institutions and private sector actors to commit to:

End Marine Pollution and Protect Coastal Ecosystems

Emphasising that Marine pollution threatens public health, fisheries, tourism, biodiversity, and coastal livelihoods.

We call for urgent action to prevent waste from reaching our rivers, beaches, creeks, and oceans through:

- Universal decentralised waste infrastructure in coastal counties
- Zero discharge of untreated wastewater into marine ecosystems
- Enforced regional, national and county plastic pollution reduction and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems

Strengthen Marine Protected and Conserved Areas through Community Stewardship

Recognising that Kenya has six gazetted Marine Protected Areas (about 0.67% EEZ). Still, effectiveness is constrained by weak financing, enforcement, and limited community benefit-sharing, while emerging Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA's) and Joint Co-Management Areas (JCMA's) lack full legal recognition and harmonised governance frameworks, limiting their effectiveness in conservation and livelihood support.

Acknowledging our support for effective conservation measures that balance biodiversity protection with community rights and livelihoods, we call for:

- Increased public awareness and community outreach programs on the importance, benefits, and governance of Marine Protected and Conserved Areas.
- Participatory, legally recognised, and digitally mapped boundaries for all Marine Protected Areas and conserved areas to reduce conflicts and improve management.
- Ensure fair revenue sharing from conservation and tourism to benefit coastal communities, support local development,





diversify livelihoods, and strengthen conservation efforts.

Promote Safe and Secure Maritime Spaces
Taking into account that Maritime insecurity undermines trade, livelihoods, environmental protection, and national security, we call for;

- Strengthened maritime security through enhanced surveillance, intelligence sharing, and regional cooperation.
- Combating maritime crime using modern technology, anti-corruption measures, and coordinated enforcement.
- Promoting community participation in maritime safety, environmental protection, and reporting systems.

Advance Climate Justice Through Ocean-Based Solutions

Underlining that Coastal communities are among the most vulnerable to climate impacts despite contributing least to global emissions, we call for;

- Increase national climate and environmental financing to strengthen climate adaptation, mitigation, ecosystem restoration, and

community resilience.

- Review and subsidise natural resource user fees to ensure affordable, fair, and equitable access for communities that depend on coastal and marine resources.
- Expand public education and awareness programs on climate change, ocean governance, and environmental rights to empower informed and active community participation.
- Expand investment in mangrove restoration, blue carbon initiatives, and nature-based solutions that support livelihoods and climate adaptation.

Secure Sustainable Fisheries and Livelihoods
Reminding that Small-scale fisheries are the backbone of coastal food security, employment, and cultural heritage, we call for national and county governments, the private sector and development partners to commit to;

- Survey, gazette, and secure tenure rights for all major fish landing sites used by small-scale fishers.
- Increase investment in sustainable aquaculture, mariculture, fisheries value addition, and market access.

- Strengthen monitoring, control, and surveillance systems to eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing.
- Establish integrated fisheries service centres to improve access to licensing, financing, extension services, and capacity development

Build an Inclusive and Equitable Blue Economy
Recalling that the blue economy must deliver inclusive and equitable benefits to coastal communities while safeguarding ecosystems and traditional livelihoods, we call for:

- Mandatory implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for all ocean-related developments affecting local communities, ensuring meaningful participation and community approval before decisions are made.
- Adoption of policies that protect small-scale fishers and coastal communities from displacement, exclusion, or adverse impacts arising from competing ocean-based industries and developments.
- Institutionalise youth, women, and persons with disabilities in blue economy governance.
- Review restrictive bans affecting coastal livelihoods where appropriate.

- Develop financing mechanisms for community-led marine enterprises.

Our Call to the Global Community

We urge the international community to increase technical, financial and policy support for locally led ocean conservation, climate adaptation, sustainable fisheries, marine ecosystem restoration, and community-driven blue economy initiatives across the Kenyan coast.

As the world gathers at the 11th Our Ocean Conference, we urge governments, regional bodies, development partners, private sector actors, and international institutions to recognise coastal communities as indispensable partners in ocean stewardship.

The future of our ocean depends on inclusive governance, equitable benefit sharing, healthy ecosystems, climate resilience, and respect for community rights. We call upon all stakeholders to act with urgency and ambition to ensure that no coastal community is left behind in the transition toward a sustainable and just blue economy.

Our Ocean Our Voice!





Participating Organizations

This Manifesto is developed from consultations ahead of the 11th Our Oceans Conference by:

- **Alnasir Marine Enterprise - Mtongwe**
- **Bahari moja Initiative**
- **Big Shi CBO**
- **Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) Trust Environment and Peace Building**
- **Coastal and Marine Resource Development (COMRED)**
- **Community Action for Nature and Conservation**
- **Coral Garden**
- **Earthlungs Reforestation Foundation**
- **Aga Khan Foundation**
- **East African Universal Solution - Mombasa**
- **Jomvu Beach Management Unit**
- **Jomvu Women in Fisheries**
- **Jumuiya ya kaunti za pwani**
- **Kidongo Beach Management Unit - Mtwapa Creek**
- **Kipini Beach Management Unit**
- **Kishoka Youth Organisation**
- **Kwale Beach Management Unit**
- **Muslim for Human Rights**

- Lamu Youth Assembly
- Lamu Social Justice Centre
- Kiunga Bahari Moja
- Jumuiya ya Vijana wa Pwani- Lamu
- Lamu Women Alliance
- Lamu Boat Operators
- Faza Youth Action Group
- Flipflopi
- Shella Beach Management Unit
- Lamu Marine Conservation Trust
- Furaha Disable Group
- Wetlands International
- Brain Youth Group
- Kwale Youth Assembly
- Marina Beach Management Unit - Mombasa Shanzu
- Maweni Turtle Conservancy
- Mkupe Beach Management Unit - Mombasa
- Blue Ventures
- Mombasa County Beach Management Unit Network
- Mombasa Kilindini Community Forest Association
- Mpozi Community Forest Association
- Mtongwe Beach Management Unit - BMU
- Northern Rangeland Trust - Coast
- Ocean Nurture Network
- Oceans Alive
- Pwani Youth Network
- Baus Taka
- Vanga Blue Forest
- Women Movement for Climate Justice
- Young Christian Women Association Mombasa
- Lamu Human Rights Defenders' Network
- Lamu University and Colleges Students Association
- Pate Marine Community Conservancy
- Kiunga Community Wildlife Association
- The Social Project Kenya/ Women Groups
- Tafakur Youth Group
- Lamu Organization For Youth and People with Disabilities
- BMU Network Tana River
- Pamoja Pwani Network
- Lamu Art and Theatre Alliance
- Vocal Africa
- Lamu Press CBO
- Tunaweza PWD-Mombasa
- Fauna and Flora