
Rufiji-Mafia-Kilwa: Strengthening Marine Protected Area Management

The Blue Action Fund (BAF) project aims to improve the effectiveness of the management in Marine Protected Areas and associated buffer zones within the Rufiji-Mafia-Kilwa (RUMAKI) seascape in Tanzania to maintain and enhance its ecological value and livelihoods. This initiative supports long-term conservation of the ecological integrity, resilience and biological productivity in the marine ecosystem. It is in the framework of our work in Coasts and Deltas where we conserve and restore wetlands for resilient coastal landscapes and biodiversity protection.



Background

RUMAKI seascape is one of the most biologically productive and diverse marine areas in East Africa.



It encompasses 25% of Tanzanian mainland's nearshore waters that support substantial fisheries production; over 50% of its mangrove forest; and 26% of its coral reef habitat. Marine resources within the seascape support food security and livelihoods for over 100,000 coastal residents.

Threats and Challenges

The area faces a number of significant challenges that threaten its ability to continue providing these goods and services. These include unsustainable fishing and mangrove harvesting practices. In addition, the seascape lies downstream of the Rufiji River basin - 177,420 square kilometres - draining 20% of the country through one of East Africa's largest rivers.

The basin is crucial for major national development initiatives in agriculture and energy sectors which inevitably have adverse effects on the environmental flows into the Rufiji Delta and adjacent marine ecosystems.



Opportunities

In response to the existing threats and challenges, the project seeks to deliver four major outcomes through the following components:

- i. Improving the management effectiveness of the existing Mafia Island Marine Park and the Rufiji Delta Mangrove Forest Reserve.



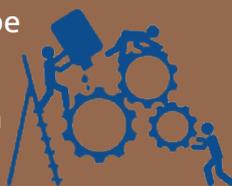
- ii. Enhanced implementation of management and monitoring of eight fisheries co-management areas in the buffer zone between Rufiji Delta and Mafia Island Marine Park.



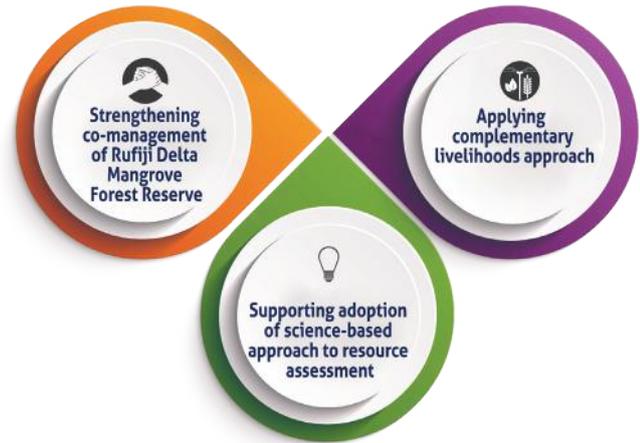
- iii. Providing enhanced enterprise skills and alternative food and livelihood pathways to lessen the dependence of coastal communities on natural resources.



- iv. Ensuring broader seascape level management and seascape value recognition in national development planning through improved coordination and integration of management efforts in Rufiji-Mafia-Kilwa ecosystem including seeking designation as UNESCO Man & Biosphere Reserve.



Our Role and Approach



For the achievement of the envisaged outcomes, Wetlands International is implementing a collaborative approach that contributes to enhanced ecosystem of Rufiji Delta and communities' livelihoods resilience.

We focus on:

- i. Strengthening co-management of the Rufiji Delta Mangrove Forest Reserve through development and adoption of a participatory mangrove forest management plan and raising the profile of the values of mangroves.
- ii. Supporting the adoption of a science-based approach to resource assessment that will inform the understanding of stock status, setting of sustainable harvesting levels and formulation of appropriate harvest control rules for the mangroves.
- iii. Applying a complementary livelihoods approach which appreciates the vital role of communities' buy-in and compliance with co-management-related restrictions on the access to natural resources, if short-term losses are compensated through diversification of income sources.





The Project is funded by:



Project Patners

WWF Germany, WWF Tanzania Country Office, Tanzania Forest Service agency (TFS), Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Kibiti, Rufiji, Mafia and Kilwa District Councils, approximately 16 coastal communities including their respective village councils, Beach Management Units (BMUs) and Village Natural Resources Committees (VNRCs).



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