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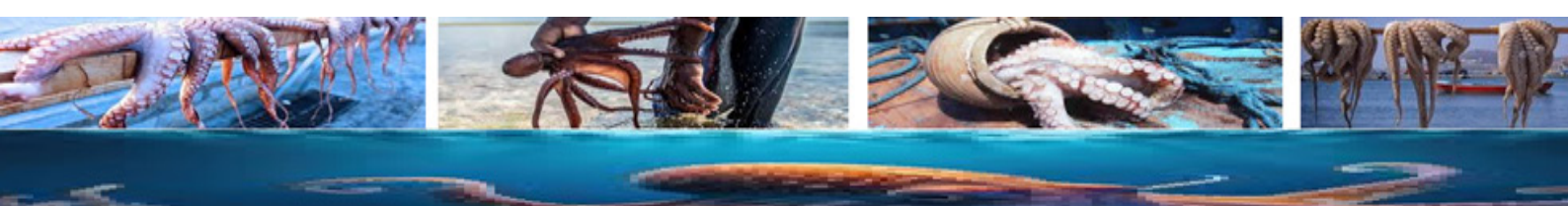
WION-SOF
WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN
NETWORK OF SMALL-SCALE
OCTOPUS FISHERIES

Sweden
Sverige

TECHNICAL REPORT

ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL BLUE VALUE CHAINS IN SMALL-SCALE OCTOPUS FISHERIES AND MECHANISMS FOR STRENGTHENING GENDER DIMENSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN EAST AFRICA AND SOUTH-WEST INDIAN OCEAN





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1. INTRODUCTION

Aquatic biodiversity conservation is central to the sustainable development of Africa's blue economy, requiring inclusive approaches that empower women. Despite their significant roles in coastal communities and deep knowledge of aquatic ecosystems, women face persistent challenges that limit their participation in conservation and resource management.

In response, the African Union–InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) is implementing a three-year project titled "Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy". This initiative aligns with the African Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) and aims to enhance policies, regulations, and institutional capacities of African Union Member States (AU-MS) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). A key component is promoting gender inclusivity and strengthening the role of women and youth in biodiversity conservation and environmental governance, thereby improving their livelihoods.

As part of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)-supported project, AU-IBAR developed and launched the Continental Gender Strategy on Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation, endorsed by African Heads of State in February 2024. The strategy promotes nature-based solutions such as seaweed farming, mangrove restoration, and climate-resilient practices in small-scale octopus fisheries.

Octopus small-scale fisheries (SSFs) in East Africa and the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO)—notably in Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros, and Madagascar—serve as key case studies. Women dominate many parts of the octopus value chain, including harvesting, processing, and marketing, playing a vital role in income generation, food security, and ecosystem-based fisheries management. However, limited data exists on gender dimensions in these fisheries.

This consultancy examined the regional value chains, highlighting stakeholder roles and assessing opportunities for gender integration. It also identified environmental threats, particularly the impacts of climate change on coral reef habitats critical to octopus populations. The findings underscore the need for inclusive conservation strategies that recognize and support women's contributions to sustainable aquatic resource use.

1.1 Objectives of the Assignment

The primary objective of this consultancy was to develop sustainable and inclusive regional blue value-chains for Octopus fisheries in Eastern Africa and South West Indian Ocean Island states

The specific objectives were fivefold: -

1. Stakeholders and value-chain analysis
2. Sustainability and conservation and propose strategies to strengthen conservation measures in the Octopus fisheries

3. Incorporating gender dimensions by mechanisms to ensure gender equity is integrated across all levels of the value chain
4. Capacity Building and recommendations for interventions along the value chains, mechanism for inclusive governance in the fisheries, and mechanisms for strengthening gender and inclusivity, along the value chain.
5. Provide insights on policy, regulatory frameworks, and institutional changes required to facilitate the development of sustainable and inclusive value chains for gender sensitive and inclusive small-scale octopus fisheries and conservation measures.

1.2 Approach to Execution of the Assignment

The consultant, working closely with the AU-IBAR project team, conducted a detailed literature review and field missions in Zanzibar, Mainland Tanzania, Comoros, and Madagascar to analyze octopus small-scale fisheries (SSFs) in Eastern Africa and the South-West Indian Ocean. The study focused on value chains, gender roles, climate change impacts, and conservation practices. It also reviewed policy and institutional frameworks, identifying gaps and opportunities for gender integration. Through stakeholder mapping and interviews, the study gathered insights to document best practices and propose strategies to enhance women's roles. The consultancy will recommend inclusive governance mechanisms, regional women's networks, and actionable policy reforms.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overall approach

The consultant adopted a multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral approach to conduct a systematic, regionally focused review of octopus small-scale fisheries (SSFs) in Eastern Africa (Kenya and Tanzania) and the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO) region (Comoros and Madagascar). The objective was to understand the value chain, governance structures, and stakeholder dynamics to inform inclusive and sustainable policy and management interventions. Special attention was given to promoting women's leadership and participation in these fisheries, laying the foundation for gender-responsive strategies in the blue economy.

The study included a comprehensive literature review of policy and institutional frameworks, supported by primary data collection through interviews, focus group discussions, and field missions. The consultant analyzed the octopus SSF value chain—focusing on production, processing, marketing, and export—identifying key actors and challenges using qualitative tools and Excel-based analysis. The study synthesized regional findings to uncover shared challenges, unique trends, and gaps in governance, stakeholder collaboration, and external market pressures.

A thorough stakeholder mapping exercise categorized individuals and institutions by their roles, sectors (public, private, or community-based), and levels of influence (local to international). Tools such as stakeholder matrices and power-interest grids were used to visualize stakeholder relationships, power dynamics, collaboration opportunities, and areas of conflict. Mapping also included institutional frameworks, identifying mandates and inter-agency interactions from local to regional levels.

A follow-up needs assessment focused on understanding the roles and challenges faced by women in the octopus fisheries value chain. It evaluated existing women's groups and their capacity gaps, including access to capital, markets, training, and decision-making. Stakeholder engagement forums were held in the four countries, and the study proposed establishing a regional women's network. It recommended leadership and capacity-building initiatives, such as peer learning programs, to empower women in sustainable octopus fisheries and promote their inclusion in conservation and value-chain governance.

3. RESULTS AND OUTPUTS OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Findings from the field mission

A field mission was conducted from the 23rd March to 2nd April, 2025, covering selected WIO countries viz. Kenya, mainland Tanzania, Zanzibar, Comoros and Madagascar (see Field Mission Photos and Annex 1)

3.1.1 General Overview of the Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in the WIO

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region's artisanal octopus fishery, dominated by Octopus cyanea and to a lesser extent O. vulgaris, is an increasingly vital livelihood activity. Traditionally practiced in intertidal and subtidal reef areas using methods like gleaning—primarily by women and children—this fishery has experienced rapid growth due to surging international demand. While octopus was once largely consumed locally, the rise of export markets has intensified fishing pressure, especially in Tanzania and Kenya, where catches have significantly increased. However, male involvement is growing due to higher profitability, shifting the gender dynamics of a fishery historically dominated by women. Despite their key roles in harvesting, processing, and marketing, women remain largely excluded from governance structures such as Beach Management Units (BMUs) and fisheries committees. Organizations like Mwambao in Zanzibar have begun addressing this gap by supporting women's savings groups and promoting gender-inclusive management approaches.

The fishery's economic structure remains skewed in favor of intermediaries and middlemen who dominate trade, leaving fishers—especially women—underpaid and lacking bargaining power. This is compounded by poor infrastructure, including inadequate cold storage and transportation, which forces immediate sales and limits the potential for value addition. Enhancing post-harvest facilities could significantly improve incomes and product quality, particularly for women and youth. Environmental degradation, overfishing, and inadequate data continue to threaten sustainability. However, measures like seasonal closures and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in Kenya and Tanzania have shown positive outcomes in stock recovery and income generation. Still, governance challenges persist due to fragmented regulations and weak enforcement. Countries like Madagascar are piloting improvements through initiatives like Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs).

Knowledge gaps in ecological and socio-economic data hinder evidence-based policymaking. Collaborative regional platforms like SWIOFC aim to harmonize policy and research, but their implementation remains inconsistent. Inclusive governance, especially the participation of marginalized groups such as women, is essential for long-term success. The WIO octopus fishery is at a crossroads. While threats from

overexploitation and weak systems remain, promising community-led conservation, regional cooperation, and gender-responsive strategies provide a pathway toward a sustainable and inclusive blue economy.

3.1.2 Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in Comoros

The Union of the Comoros is categorized as a lower-middle-income country, spans approximately 2,232 km² across four islands: Mayotte (370 km²), Anjouan (424 km²), Mohéli (290 km²), and the Grande Comore (1,148 km²). Inshore fishing has evolved significantly, primarily using paddleboats and 15 HP outboard motorboats, contributing 5% to the national GDP. Most fishermen (82.5%) use foot or diving methods, while 17.5% use boats, with fresh octopus being a local staple. Women-led cooperatives focus on drying octopus, sometimes smoking it based on demand, mainly for local consumption. Currently, there are 20 women's associations, with a distribution of seven (7) in Anjouan and Grande Comore, and six (6) in Mohéli.

The small-scale octopus fishery in Comoros plays a vital cultural and economic role. Fishing is typically informal, using simple tools like spears and harpoons in shallow lagoons during low tide. Both men and women participate, with women especially active in intertidal harvesting, though their contributions remain largely acknowledgment in policy and institutional frameworks, limiting women's influence in decision-making and development opportunities. The cold chain is largely underdeveloped, and the processing of octopus mainly involves boiling, sun-drying, or smoking, often carried out by women in their homes. The absence of cold storage, sanitary processing, and consistent packaging standards significantly hampers quality, marketability, and incomes. Without a well-developed cold-chain infrastructure or access to high-value markets, most of the octopus is sold fresh or dried, at local beaches or markets. The presence of middlemen is limited and informal due to disorganized supply chains and price uncertainty, which discourages investment in sustainability or value addition.

Policy and management structures are weak. Comoros lacks a specific octopus management plan and effective monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) systems. However, the fisheries management system has received notable support from SWIOFish1 Projects and the Reef-fish project in since 2020 which implemented nine (9) community co-management agreements. Currently (2025), there are 16 totalized agreements through the World Bank's FSRP project. Additionally, Fishery Development plan is in progress including the development of the octopus fishery management coastal ecosystems conservation. Notwithstanding, the national fisheries agency is under-resourced. Reports of declining catch sizes and overfishing exist but are unsupported by data. Successful models from Madagascar and Tanzania—like fishing closures may offer replicable lessons. Improving hygiene, transport, storage, and market access, especially for women, alongside gender-inclusive training and cooperative development, could strengthen livelihoods and sustainability. NGOs and development partners should prioritize women's empowerment and community-based conservation in this critical fishery.



Photo 1:Women fishers in Ouropveni, Comoros



Photo 2: Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) at Male fishing village Comoros




Photo 3 & 4: Octopus "marketing / Selling" in Male, Comoros

3.1.3 United Republic of Tanzania

3.1.3.1 Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in Mainland Tanzania

The small-scale fishing is governed by both national and international laws, with the European Union being the leading international export market—49% of exports consist of octopus and prawns. Octopus fishing occurs in three designated zones and that women's associations have established to support small-scale women octopus fishers in growing their aquaculture businesses. The fishery is centered around species Octopus cyanea, and is essential for food security and income in many coastal communities, particularly in areas like the Mafia Archipelago. Fishing is done through simple methods—gleaning, skin diving, and spearfishing—and is closely tied to natural conditions such as tides and water clarity. Gender roles are clearly defined: women often harvest octopus in shallow waters, while men dive deeper although some women also participate in deeper octopus fishing in Tanzania.

The Mafia Archipelago stands out for its use of temporary octopus fishing closures, where communities like Jibondo and Juani have seen measurable gains in catch size, income, and stock recovery. These community-led closures highlight the success of inclusive and participatory management. Post-harvest, processing methods remain basic—mostly sun-drying or selling fresh—due to limited infrastructure such as drying racks or cold storage. This disproportionately affects women, who often handle processing but lack access to capital, training, and networks.

The market structure includes many middlemen, limiting fishers' earnings and access to high-value export or tourism markets. Tanzania has begun adopting the FishPath framework to guide fishery governance using local knowledge and data-limited decision tools, offering a scalable model for the region. However, major challenges persist: BMUs face funding and capacity gaps, and there's no national octopus management plan. Overfishing, habitat degradation, and climate impacts also threaten sustainability. Empowering women through training, micro-loans, and leadership roles in BMUs could improve equity and conservation outcomes.

Generally, the contribution of women in the octopus fishery is largely undervalued and they remain largely excluded from decision-making in Beach Management Units (BMUs), leading to unequal benefits and weak gender representation in fisheries governance. Major challenges faced by the industry include post-harvest losses due to limited facilities for harvesting and storage, the impacts of climate change on fishing, and illegal fishing practices. The government provides certifications and has established standard regulations for fishing and marketing.

3.1.3.2 Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in Zanzibar

Zanzibar's octopus fishery, primarily targeting Octopus cyanea, stands out in the Western Indian Ocean for its community-led, gender-inclusive, and conservation-oriented approach. Spanning both Unguja and Pemba islands, this small-scale fishery is vital to coastal livelihoods, especially for women who engage in gleaning during low tide. Despite its importance, women often operate under risky conditions and remain underrepresented in fishery governance. Zanzibar has pioneered the use of temporary octopus fishing closures, supported by NGOs such as Mwambao and Blue Ventures. These closures, lasting 2–3 months, have shown ecological and economic benefits—larger catch sizes and higher incomes—encouraging compliance from local fishers. The success of sites like Fundo and Kukuu has made Zanzibar a regional model for community-based fisheries management.

Women dominate post-harvest processing—cleaning, boiling, drying, and smoking octopus—but often lack access to clean facilities, proper drying equipment, or cold storage. This affects product quality and market access, especially to higher-paying tourism and export markets. Marketing remains informal, with most women selling in village markets or to middlemen, limiting their bargaining power. Zanzibar's 2010 Fisheries Act supports co-management through Beach Management Units (BMUs), though enforcement and women's representation remain weak. Promising initiatives include women's savings groups tied to fishing closures, which build financial resilience, support conservation, and promote leadership.

Challenges persist, including poor infrastructure, limited access to formal markets, and insufficient ecological monitoring. However, partnerships between NGOs, government, and private actors—focused on cooperative models, better facilities, and inclusive governance—can unlock the fishery's full potential for both sustainability and equity.



Photo 5: FDGs and KIIs at the Ministry, Nyangumi House, Zanzibar



Photo 6: Fish landings sites in Kunduchi, Mainland Tanzania



Photo 7: Octopus market (auction) at Kunduchi fisheries Cooperative

3.1.4 Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in Kenya

Octopus' fishery occurs along the entire coast and is mainly managed by small-scale, predominantly women fishers, with Lamu archipelago being the most productive waters along the Kenya coast. The archipelago has over 200 fishing grounds and more than 1,600 fishers, mostly local. Octopus cyanea is caught using traditional techniques like gleaning and skin diving, especially during spring low tides. Women play a central role in both harvesting in shallow waters and post-harvest processing. However, fishers—especially women—face low bargaining power and receive less than $2.00 per kilogram, with middlemen and dealers ("Tajiris") capturing most of the profits. The octopus value chain includes three main actors: small-scale traders (41%), dealers (36%), and Tajiris (23%). Most octopus products are sold fresh at landing sites and marketed through informal networks involving local traders, middlemen, and a few processors/exporters. Limited infrastructure—such as cold storage, sanitation, and transport—hampers quality, which restricts access to high-value markets. Only about 21.6% of Lamu's estimated 800 metric tons of annual catch reaches large-scale processors or export markets. The rest is sold locally or to domestic hotels and markets. Low quality and lack of certification further reduce fishers' access to better-paying buyers.

In the south and north coasts (e.g., Shimoni, Vanga, Kuruwitu), octopus fisheries also support food security and alternative incomes. Women fishers here face similar constraints: lack of capital, weak voice in governance, and low representation in Beach Management Units (BMUs). While BMUs exist under the Fisheries Management and Development Act of 2016, majority of them struggle with enforcement, gender inclusion, and management of closures. Managed harvesting strategies such as seasonal closures have shown promise in improving catch sizes and prices, but these need stronger institutional backing. Key value chain challenges include weak data systems, lack of market transparency, and limited fisher capacity in business and processing.

There are 7 processing facilities—5 in Mombasa and 2 in Nairobi—servicing major export markets in the EU and the Middle East. However, to enhance the octopus fishery's value chain, Kenya needs improved post-harvest handling, structured markets, registration of fishers, gender-inclusive governance, access to financing, and better data systems—potentially using mobile technology. Equipping women with skills in processing, business, and cooperative development could unlock economic potential while promoting sustainability and social equity.

The importance of including women in the octopus fishery cannot be overemphasized, in addition to training programs, as well as exchange programs to Madagascar and Tanzania which have given good learning to women fishers especially from the Lamu Archipelago (the home of Mama Pweza Pate, Shanga and Kiunga). Exchange learning also occurs locally, especially between the Beach Management Units (BMUs) of Shanga-ishakani, Shanga-rubu, Pate, Kiunga and Munje and Shimoni in the south coast.



Photo 8: Kenya - Octopus fisher, Pate island (source: NRT)

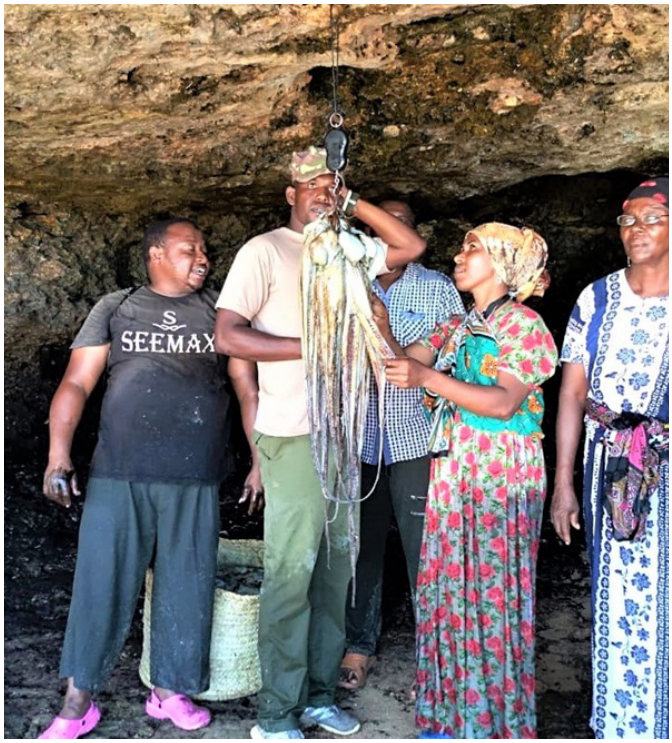


Photo 9: Kenya - Octopus fishers, Pate island (source: NRT)



Photo 10: Kenya - Octopus fisheries, Pate Island (Source NRT)



Photo 11: Kenya - Octopus fishers, Munje, Kwale (source: COMRED)

3.1.5 Small-Scale Octopus Fisheries in Madagascar

Madagascar's southwest coast, especially the Velondriake area and its Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), is a leading example of community-based octopus fishery management in the Western Indian Ocean.

Targeting primarily Octopus cyanea, the fishery is crucial for both food security and income. This fishery relies on traditional free diving techniques with basic equipment like masks and wooden spears. Men and women participate in harvesting—women mostly glean in intertidal zones, while men dive deeper. Fishing follows lunar and tidal cycles, with catch rates and octopus sizes notably increasing after periodic community-enforced closures, which are widely regarded as best practice in the region.

Madagascar's octopus value chain is more developed than many neighbors, with a combination of fresh sales, centralized processing, and export-oriented infrastructure. Women's cooperatives have improved

hygiene and drying techniques, raising product quality and shelf life. Export markets, mainly Europe and Asia, are accessed through well-established cold chains in hubs like Toliara, though remote areas still rely on informal trade.

Key management strategies include the establishment of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), with one created in 2006 covering 64,000 hectares and incorporating temporary fishing closures to boost octopus populations. Governance is strengthened by LMMAs and local customary / governance, known as "Dina" supported by national policies recognizing community rights. Initiatives like the Octopus Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) promote traceability and sustainability certification.

However, octopus stocks face pressure from rising market demand, environmental issues like coral bleaching, and climate change. Many remote communities also struggle to maintain catch quality due to a lack of refrigeration. Assessments from 2004 to 2011 found that while male fishers catch larger octopuses, women contribute more income due to higher participation, even though men dominate decision-making. The Fishery Improvement Project, launched in 2019, aims to enhance sustainability through collaboration among fishers, exporters, NGOs, and government entities. Mr. Andriamaharo highlighted the need to empower local communities for the long-term sustainability of octopus fisheries.

Gender equity is advanced, with women actively involved in planning, monitoring, and financial cooperatives, enhancing social inclusion and household incomes. Ecological benefits from closures include increased catch-per-unit-effort, larger octopus, and higher incomes, reinforcing compliance. Yet challenges persist: uneven NGO support, risks from climate change and habitat degradation, and pressure from migrant fishers. Market volatility and dependency on few buyers threaten producers. Expanding cooperative bargaining, diversifying buyers, and pursuing certification schemes could enhance resilience and sustainability.



Photo 12: Octopus fishers in Madagascar



Photo 13: Weighing octopus fishers in north Madagascar fisheries



Photo 14: Octopus in Madagascar; generally larger Octopus compared to the rest of WIO surveyed countries

3.1.6 Policy Frameworks in the WIO

The governance of small-scale octopus fisheries in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) varies widely across countries but shares common challenges such as lack of species-specific management, weak gender integration, and limited climate adaptation. This summary focuses on five countries: Comoros, Tanzania, Kenya, Zanzibar, and Madagascar.

In Comoros, fisheries governance is informal with no specific policies for octopus, little conservation effort, and complete absence of gender considerations despite women's important roles. Climate change adaptation is also missing, leaving the sector vulnerable. Tanzania's Fisheries Act (2003, amended 2020) promotes co-management through Beach Management Units (BMUs) but does not mandate gender inclusion, resulting in women's underrepresentation. Temporary closures, especially in Mafia Archipelago, show conservation success. Climate adaptation is emerging via tools like FishPath for ecosystem-based management. Kenya's 2016 Fisheries Act provides a solid co-management framework including gender-sensitive language, though women's participation is uneven. Conservation efforts include marine protected areas and seasonal octopus closures, but climate adaptation remains weak. Zanzibar, with semi-autonomous governance under the 2010 Fisheries Act, has effective community closures and stronger gender inclusion, with women benefiting from savings groups linked to fishery management. However, climate concerns remain peripheral. Madagascar stands out with integrated policies recognizing LMMAs, strong co-management, and innovative projects like the Octopus Fishery Improvement Project linking closures to export certification. Gender mainstreaming and climate resilience through ecosystem-based approaches are notable strengths.

Across the WIO, gender inclusion in fisheries governance is limited outside Madagascar and Zanzibar, hindering co-management and socio-economic gains. Climate adaptation is nascent, with most countries lacking specific policies or resources to address environmental threats impacting octopus fisheries.

Conservation tools like temporary closures and LMMAs are gaining ground but require legal backing and enforcement. Regional coordination remains weak, highlighting the need for harmonized guidelines incorporating gender equity, climate adaptation, and community-based conservation. Overall, the WIO's octopus fishery policies are fragmented and under-resourced; strengthening legal frameworks, empowering women, investing in adaptive management, and fostering regional cooperation are essential for sustainability.

3.1.7. Legal and Institutional Arrangements

Small-scale octopus fisheries governance across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is marked by diverse national approaches but shared challenges: insufficient species-specific policies, limited gender integration, and weak climate adaptation. This summary highlights the situation in five focal countries—Comoros, Tanzania, Kenya, Zanzibar, and Madagascar—focusing on governance frameworks, gender roles, conservation efforts, and climate resilience.

Comoros exhibits largely informal fisheries management with no octopus-specific regulations, minimal enforcement, and absent gender considerations despite women's significant involvement in gleaning and processing. Climate adaptation is not integrated, leaving fisheries vulnerable to environmental threats. The country's centralized governance and lack of community-based co-management limit sustainable management, though traditional marine tenure systems could provide a foundation for future reforms.

Tanzania's Fisheries Act (2003, amended 2020) establishes Beach Management Units (BMUs) to promote local co-management. Temporary octopus closures, particularly in Mafia Archipelago, have demonstrated positive ecological and economic impacts but remain pilot projects, underfunded and weakly enforced outside key sites. Women's participation in BMUs is minimal, despite their important roles in harvesting and processing. Tanzania is beginning to adopt climate-smart fisheries tools like FishPath, but these lack formal integration and funding.

Kenya's Fisheries Management and Development Act (2016) provides a strong legal framework with gender-sensitive language and co-management emphasis, including BMUs and marine protected areas (MPAs). However, women are often excluded from decision-making at community levels, and climate adaptation is weak in policy despite growing environmental threats.

Zanzibar operates semi-autonomously under the Zanzibar Fisheries Act (2010), supporting community-based closures and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) with demonstrated ecological and economic success. Notably, Zanzibar advances gender inclusion through women-led savings and loan groups linked to closures, enhancing women's participation and economic resilience. However, climate adaptation measures remain limited, and enforcement depends heavily on community buy-in and NGO support.

Madagascar stands out as the regional leader with integrated policies supporting LMMAs as legal governance units, strong co-management, and mainstreamed gender inclusion. The Octopus Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) links community closures with export certification, fostering sustainable fisheries and market access. Women actively participate in management and benefit from savings groups and training programs.

Madagascar also embeds ecosystem-based climate resilience in policies, enabling adaptive responses to environmental changes. Challenges remain in sustaining NGO-supported models and improving coordination among stakeholders.

Across the WIO, gender integration in fisheries governance is mostly aspirational outside Madagascar and Zanzibar, weakening co-management effectiveness and socio-economic benefits. Climate adaptation is underdeveloped regionally, leaving communities vulnerable to sea temperature rise, coral bleaching, and habitat loss. Conservation tools like temporary closures and LMMAs show promise but require stronger legal backing, resources, and enforcement. Regional coordination through bodies like SWIOFC and SWIOFP offers platforms for harmonizing policies and sharing best practices, but national implementation is inconsistent. There is a pressing need for regionally endorsed octopus management guidelines that integrate gender equity, climate adaptation, and community-based conservation to improve cross-border cooperation and ecosystem-level management. In conclusion, the WIO's small-scale octopus fisheries governance landscape is fragmented and under-resourced. Strengthening species-specific legal frameworks, promoting women's empowerment, investing in adaptive, climate-smart management, and fostering regional collaboration are critical to achieving sustainable, equitable fisheries and resilient coastal communities

3.1.8 Cross-Cutting Gaps and Opportunities in Octopus Fisheries Governance

Small-scale octopus fisheries management in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) faces common challenges across Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Comoros, and Madagascar. A major gap is the lack of species-specific management plans for Octopus cyanea, leaving most countries—except Madagascar—to rely on broad fisheries laws that inadequately protect octopus during critical life stages. Institutional weaknesses are widespread: Beach Management Units (BMUs) and fisheries committees often lack technical skills, funding, and enforcement capacity, with Comoros having minimal co-management structures. Coordination among agencies is poor, undermining governance effectiveness.

Gender exclusion is a critical issue; although women play key roles in harvesting and processing, they remain largely absent from decision-making bodies except in Zanzibar and Madagascar, reducing management efficacy and equity. Climate adaptation is another weak spot, as most policies overlook coral bleaching, rising sea temperatures, and ecosystem changes, leaving communities vulnerable. Despite these gaps, innovative local initiatives show promise, such as Zanzibar's women-led savings groups, Tanzania's FishPath tool, Kenya's Kuruwitu closures, and Madagascar's Fishery Improvement Project. Regional bodies like SWIOFC and WIOMSA offer opportunities to harmonize policies, share knowledge, and develop gender- and climate-sensitive octopus management guidelines. Strengthening value chains and investing in gender-inclusive, climate-smart governance are essential to enhance ecological sustainability, economic benefits, and resilience in WIO octopus fisheries. A summary of the fishery status, management, legal and policy frameworks etc. for the selected countries of Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and Comoros is appended as Annex 2.

3.2 Stakeholder inputs, report validation, and recommendations

Following the successful completion of the field mission, a stakeholder validation workshop was conducted during 03rd – 5th June, 2025 to fill in gaps in the field mission conducted within the selected countries of the WIO and to validate the final report. The workshop was attended by attended by 35 participants including Representatives from Ministries of Blue Economy and Fisheries and Small-scale Octopus fisheries actors from Kenya, UR Tanzania, The Union of the Comoros and Madagascar, as well Secretariat, media and technical experts from the AU-IBAR.

During the workshop, the proposal for a regional network was affirmed and stakeholders agreed on the establishment of "Western Indian Ocean network for Small-scale Octopus fisheries (with acronym WION-SOF). An interim Executive / Bureau for the WIO Network for SSF Octopus was established comprising a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, while the position of Communication Officer was left open, for filling at a later date via a virtual consultative workshop mid-2025.

The Stakeholders emphasized on the following key issues:

i. Recognition of the role of women in small scale octopus' fisheries and aquatic biodiversity conservation and enhance their roles in decision-making on the management of octopus fisheries.
ii. Engagement of both men and women within the established regional networks, including EARFISH and AWFISHNET among others;
iii. The network will work in collaboration with all stakeholders including universities, NGOs, technical institutions etc.in Africa, with regional and country-level chapters;
iv. Emphasis on markets and marketing is crucial for the fishery, and support to local octopus fishers remote areas e.g. Comoros to link with regional markets is needed;
v. Post-harvest losses were a big drawback to fisher profitability, hence the need to reduce post-harvest losses along the octopus value chain;
vi. At the national and regional levels, there is need to enforce laws and policies that regulate the size limit of octopus harvested with awareness creation on the risks of both growth and recruitment overfishing, and the need for sustainable fishing/ harvesting methods to ensure ecosystem health and conservation of octopus stocks
vii. Incorporation of scientific and traditional knowledge while taking care of livelihoods and the ecosystems.
viii. Strengthening of the octopus value chains, there was a need to harmonize guidelines and procedures regarding the octopus' fisheries along the value chain.
ix. It was crucial for the AU-IBAR Projects to continue supporting and strengthening small-scale fisheries and the WIO Network for SSF on Octopus, as well as women's inclusivity in the fishery.
x. AU-IBAR should continue facilitating access to enhance accessibility to meetings, creating welcoming environments that allow gender inclusion, to participate fully and confidently in discussions of aquatic biodiversity conservation.
xi. Both training institutions and NGOs should development programs enacting conservation specifically tailored for women and the broader community, aimed at raising awareness to inspire collective action for the aquatic biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.

xii. Establishment of systems and networks to promote better communication on fisheries, such as multilingual toolkits to enhance network experience narratives.
xiii. Promotion of fair practices that strengthen management strategies for equitable benefits sharing, fostering resource ownership and stewardship among stakeholders.

The findings of the field mission and the inputs and recommendations of the stakeholders have been crafted into a separate Policy Brief to champion aquatic biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and, strengthening of gender dimensions and climate change and environmental considerations in WIO regional blue value chains in small-scale octopus fisheries.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Strengthening Regional Organizations for Gender inclusion in Octopus SSFs

Recommendations

- **Establish a Regional Octopus Fisheries Network (RWIFN-WIO) modelled** after successful platforms like the *African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET)* or *Pacific Women in Fisheries Network*, anchored under WIOMSA or the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) to ensure regional legitimacy.
- **Country Nodes & Coordinators** with designated national focal points (within fisheries departments or fisher cooperatives) to lead local chapters and represent country-specific issues at the regional level.
- **Cross-country Exchange Programs** to facilitate learning exchanges, mentorships, and capacity-building visits (e.g., Zanzibar women's savings groups mentoring Kenyan BMUs or Madagascar's LMMA cooperatives).
- **Digital Platform & Knowledge Hub** with online multilingual platform for women to share success stories, training resources, market information, and advocacy tools.
- **Institutionalization in SWIOFC & AU-IBAR**, recognizing the network as a formal stakeholder in regional Octopus fisheries planning to influence policy and funding allocation.

4.2. *Approaches to Enhance Gender Inclusive Role in Octopus Fisheries and Conservation*

International and Regional Best Practices:

- **Women-Led Savings & Credit Groups (Zanzibar)** can be replicated to other countries to empower women economically during closure seasons and provide capital for processing/storage upgrades.
- **Gender-Responsive Co-Management (Madagascar)** while institutionalizing women's representation in BMUs and LMMAs through legal quotas or gender parity provisions.
- **Post-Harvest Innovation Hubs** promoting e.g. solar drying racks, improved cold storage, and eco-labeling linked to export markets, enabling women to lead high-value segments.
- **Role Diversification & Skills Training** to equip women with roles beyond gleaning—such as data collectors, closure monitors, and ecological stewards—leveraging training from NGOs like Blue

Ventures.

- **Gender-Responsive Fisheries Planning Tools** adapting decision-support systems like FishPath to integrate gender-disaggregated data and women's priorities into fisheries planning.

Opportunities Along the Value Chain:

- **Pre-Harvest stages**, recognizing the role of women as marine resource stewards and climate monitors.
- **Harvest/Post-Harvest** stages with training in sustainable techniques, food safety, packaging, and traceability standards.
- **Marketing/Trade** to develop collective marketing platforms and digital marketplaces for women's octopus products.
- **Policy Influence** and strengthening of women's voice in fisheries governance through leadership development and legal literacy training.

4.3. Policy and Strategy for Inclusive Governance & Value-Chain Development

Policy Recommendations:

- **Develop a Regional Gender Strategy for Octopus and SSFs** e.g. driven by regional networks e.g. WIOMSA, SWIOFC, and AU-IBAR, aligned with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries.
- **Institutionalize Gender Equality in Legal Frameworks** to mandate women's representation in BMUs, fisheries committees, and decision-making bodies in national fisheries laws (e.g., through gender quotas).
- **Integrate Climate Resilience & Gender in Fisheries Policies** requiring climate risk assessments and gender impact assessments in octopus fisheries plans.
- **Standardize Co-Management Guidelines with Gender and Youth Criteria** to include indicators on participation, benefit-sharing, and capacity development in closure protocols and LMMA designs.

4.4 Priority Actions

Table 1: Priority Actions for the EA and SWIO Small-Scale Octopus Blue Value Chains

Action	Lead Stakeholders	Support Stakeholders	Funding Options
Create regional women's SSF network. WIOMSA, SWIOFC		Ministries of Fisheries, NGOs	GEF, UN Women, NORAD
Establish women-led innovation hubs.	Ministries of Blue Economy	Local cooperatives, CBOs	IFAD, Blue Action Fund
Institutionalize women in governance structures.	National Legislatures	Civil society, academia	FAO, EU, national budgets
Regional value-chain diagnostics	WIOMSA, universities	Private sector, NGOs	World Bank, Blue Economy Trust Funds
Cross-border exchanges on best practices	SWIOFC, WIOMSA	Women's groups, research institutions	UNESCO, IOC, SIDA

4.5 Funding Mechanisms:

In order to tackle the issues bedeviling the small-scale Octopus fisheries in the WIO in the face of the need for stronger gender inclusivity and engagement, there is need for

- Dedicated gender-inclusive fisheries funds with establish of a pooled donor fund for gender-inclusive fisheries innovations.
- Climate & Biodiversity blended finance leveraging climate adaptation funds (e.g., GCF, Adaptation Fund) alongside biodiversity funds to co-finance resilient SSFs.
- Results-based financing models tied to measurable outcomes like women's leadership roles, compliance in closures, or improved catch sustainability.

Therefore, by building inclusive governance systems, promoting proven innovations, and strengthening regional institutions for women, these recommendations can secure sustainable octopus fisheries while enhancing biodiversity and social equity across Eastern Africa and the WIO.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Field Mission itinerary to the selected WIO countries

KENYA		
Desktop analysis with 4-days field work (Lamu) and engagement with the Nature Conservancy on the Lamu and Pate Octopus fisheries; North coast and the rest of the south coast covered through analysis of fisheries CAS data, and KeFS, KMFRI, County Directorates and KEMFSED project Reports		March, 2025
UR. TANZANIA		
Day 1	Flight Mombasa to Zanzibar	23rd
Day 2 Flight Zanzibar to Dare salaam, Tanzania	Discussions / Interviews with Officers / fishers at the Directorate of Fisheries, Zanzibar	24th
Day 3 Discussions / Interviews with Officers / fishers at the Kunduchi coast, north of Dare salaam	Courtesy call to the Director of Department of Fisheries	25th May
Day 4	Flight Dare salaam Tz to Moroni, Comoros	26th
COMOROS		
Day 5	Comoros /Courtesy call to Director General, Fisheries	27th
Day 6	Field Visits to south Comoros; Male, Chindini & Ouropveni; and interviews with officers, and small-scale fishers	28th
Day 7	Moroni, Comoros to Antananarivo, Madagascar (via Addis Ababa)	29th
MADAGASCAR		
Day 9 Day 10	Courtesy call to Director General, Fisheries and interviews; planned travels to north and south octopus fishing zones wasn't tenable due to flight schedules against the weekend days in Madagascar (Sat-Tuesday)	30th March -1st April
Day 11	Antananarivo – Nairobi - Mombasa	2nd April

Annex 2: Sharing of Country Experiences by Countries; Case studies, Status, Successes, challenges

ISSUE	COMOROS	KENYA	MADAGASCAR	UR TANZANIA
Experiences in the mgt & Development of the fishery	Experience on transformation and conservation at the national level; Regional exchange of experiences on good practices in conservation and transformation between Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and the Comoros; Support for communities of octopus fishermen on the empowerment of women; Distribution and implementation of Octopus pots in communities of octopus fishermen; The closure and opening of fishing for good resource management	Closure seasons increases production of octopus (usually 3 months); Use of traditional knowledge in octopus closures; Proper Cooperation between community, county and national government; Support from county and national government, capacity building, provision of fishing gear, provision of markets	Implementation of LMMA; Implementation of co-management system; Implementation of National Mgt Committee; Community surveillance; Creation of activities generating revenue	Regulations specific for octopus fishery (size limits, gear restrictions); Part V section 17: Management and Control of the fishing industry; National Octopus Fishery management plans; National Octopus working groups (mainland and Zanzibar); Octopus Temporary closure; Draft Octopus Harvest Strategy; Comprehensive Electronic Catch Documentation and Traceability (eCDT) Strategy; Initiatives for ecological label under Marine Stewardship Council -MSC certification
Key challenges your country is facing in this fishery	Lack of infrastructure (for fishing and for conservation); Lack of professionalization of octopus fishing; Poor access to funding; Breakdown in data collection due to a lack of economic means; Challenges on the valorization of fishermen; Challenges on the valorization of octopus; Lack of sectoral policy; Lack of investors for access to the international market	Economic. Inadequate cold storage facilities, inadequate supply of electricity; Low prices of octopus, Middlemen determining prices; Governance, regulation requires a form four grade, most of the members are not educated, sometimes no elections, political interference	Biological (change in the spawning period each year); Monopolization of the price at the landing site; Governance (non-compliance with existing legislation: use of illegal fishing gears)	Poor infrastructures like vishing vessels, lack holding facilities, lack of cold chain facilities (e.g. ice, iceboxes, cold rooms); Lack of skills and knowledge on postharvest handling (handling preservations, and processing) financial management skills, marketing strategies and product branding; Low unit price of octopus and lack of sustainable markets; Different prices between men and women; Northern and southern monsoon wind affect the octopus fishers; Climate change (increasing of sea temperature) reduce octopus production
Contribution of Traditional knowledge to fishery management	Traditional knowledge has contributed to ecosystem management; Traditional knowledge has helped in resource management; traditional knowledge has contributed to the understanding of destructive fishing techniques.	Unity of members, security, exchange of knowledge among members; Sustainable fishing methods; Closure seasons based on traditional knowledge; Ability to identify the resource	Traditional knowledge is used to define temporary closure; Traditional knowledge is often used to determine the right time for catching more octopuses	Identify breeding areas, good fishing season and spawning seasons

Implemented Octopus fishery closures? Benefits	Yes, but not a total closure at the national level; Improvement of production; Restoration of ecosystems in the buffer zone; Improvement of income; Knowledge about the importance with positive impact due to the closure	Yes, Increased production, big sizes of octopus, increased market as the octopus is available; Data collection made easy, increased employment as production increases; Discoveries by fishers on new varieties of fish, awareness on climate change	Yes, the country has implemented octopus fishery closures. Improvement of the CPUE, But the price does not change despite the closure.	Yes. Increase the catches for octopus and also profitability or incomes; Restoration of the ecosystem and return of species that had disappeared; Increase catches of other fish species; Recovery of the coral reefs; Increase sizes of the harvestable octopus; (up to 9kg); Lessons learned- when we close some reefs, we get better catches within shorter period; Collaborative management between BMU and fishers is a good practice; Governments should entrust stakeholders and BMUs with management and conservation of fisheries, giving a feel ownership of the resources and trust.
Existing fishery management structures	Congestion; Community management	Community based through the BMUs; Fishery closures by women groups under BMUs	All type of management	Beach management units/Shehia Fisheries Committee; Local Government Authorities-District Fisheries officers; National octopus working groups
Existing mechanisms exist for compliance and enforcement	The transfer of skills in local management	Community led enforcement and patrols; Government led patrols and enforcement	Local community of surveillance; MSC	National Fisheries Legislations (Policies, Acts, Regulations); By-Laws
Support from NGOs, development partners, or government projects to Octopus fishery	Structuring of the community; Support for the community	NGO, provide fishing gear, training, exchange programmes, fishing inputs; Development partners (USAID, WWF, EU) training, financial assistance, fishing gear, construction of cold stores, provision of cooler boxes, freezers; Government (KEMFSED) provided cooler boxes, training, gender sensitive fishing gear, exchange programmes, environmental awareness. construction of cold stores	They support the community in establishment of association and policies; Support on local surveillance; data collection; Awareness, support implementation revenue generation (financial and technical)	Enforcement of policy, legislation, rules and procedures; Developing guidelines, plans and strategies for octopus closures; Research; Educating fishers on the importance of conservation & its benefits; Providing conservation aids/equipment; Providing practical training (in-water monitoring and verification); Providing opportunities for learning from others; and collecting octopus data (data collection).

Any lessons that can be replicated in other countries?	The Dahari model that supports communities for the well-being of fishermen	Yes, Community Training, Exchange learning programmes	Temporary closures; Village Savings and Loan association (VSLAs)	Eco Credits; Savings and Credit; Development of the cold-value chain by WWF in Songosongo
Environmental / Climate change impacts on Octopus stocks / habitats	Repetitive cyclones that degrade reefs; Acidification that impacts habitats and ecosystems; Impact on the growth of octopuses	Decreased production of octopus, death of corals that provide habitat, destruction of habitats, warming of the waters	Bleaching of coral reef; Impact of cyclone; Impact on the octopus stock	Increased sea surface temperatures impacting on octopus fisheries; heavy rains resulting in reduced salinities, driving local migrations of octopus away from known fishing grounds; smothering octopus refugia due to excessive sediment inputs.
Adaptation strategies or ecosystem-based approaches	Not at the moment; However, a trial project on the ongoing culture corral to be implemented	Diversification to alternative livelihoods; Habitat rehabilitation through mangrove / tree planting	No	Closures to allow recovery of Octopus and ecosystems
Octopus fishery data collected	Effort; Size; Catch; GDP survey; Household survey; And biometric data	Catch data, size, sex, type	Catch; Seasonality	Catch data (weight, length, sex, fishing ground, mode of fishing, time); CPU; Number fishers, Number of vessels; Export data
Major challenges in data collection, management, sharing	Mobilization of funding for the continuation of the collection	Time constraints – do we fish or do we collect data? Use of unauthorized landing sites; Lack of cooperation from fishers	Lack of personnel; Access to the landing site	Some fishers don't want to give data; Data collection is costly; lack of modern technology to ease fisheries data collection; presence of IUU fisheries and illegal trade
Existence of centralized system or database for Octopus fishery information	Yes	Yes, County Fishery Directorates and the National Ministry / Kenya Fisheries Service database	Central Ministry (department of statistic)	Yes, both Govt and NGOs; strengthen a common data collection and create a central database
Main domestic and export markets	Target the local market	Domestic; hotels, domestic consumptions, markets; Export markets; EU and middle east	Local market; EU, Mauritius, China (export)	Export; EU, USA, Turkey, Japan, Regional markets (Uganda and Rwanda); Domestic; Hotel, local markets, venders, and household levels

Market access constraints	Organization and structuring; Lack of government involvement	Quality standards, price	Price in the landing site (low); Monopolization of the village market	Increasing demand for quality and safe seafood products; Paper-based traceability system; Standards Certifications e.g. MSC-are long process); Lack of collective marketing to set prices or prospective prices for fishers; Lack of a strong cold-value chain; Destructive fishing practices impact on octopus fisheries; Lack of knowledge on branding, lack of knowledge on branding, processing and storage.
Value-addition or product diversification	No	Value addition only in the processing establishments	Dry octopus; In general, it is sold fresh	Storage techniques; Frying
Gender roles across the Octopus fishery value chain	They are involved in fishing (men and women); Women are involved in processing and marketing; Involvement in community management (co-management)	Women; fishing, marketing, processing; Men; fishing, marketing, transportation, processing	Fishing (both); Processing and marketing mostly female	There is gender inclusivity, with men and women involved in equal measure; however, trading is male dominated, as well as in industry and hotels; In factories, majority of workers ~80% are women; but export out of landing sites and outside the country are men; even in factories owned by women.
Any initiatives to empower women / gender equity	Yes, the initiative exists at the level of the ministry of gender on a national plan on gender equality	Yes, Provision of fishing gear, training,	No initiative; But there is a national network of women in Fisheries (including octopus fisheries)	Establishment of the Tanzania Women's Forum for Fisheries (TAWFA), with an Indian Ocean chapter; Participation in decision-making/sessions on reef closure and opening; Special women's day for reef closure
Barriers to full gender inclusion? Solutions?	Obstacle on the restriction of religious practices; To overcome them, an awareness campaign is needed on the role of women in the development of society	Lack of adequate equipment and capacity to fish in the deep sea	Culture (in some areas)	Lack of gender education; Customs and traditions of coastal people; Low participation of stakeholders in women's empowerment; Lack of platforms to unite octopus fishermen.

Key gaps in the value chain needing urgent redress	Use of traditional tools; Low yield	Governance; training of BMUs and community groups on governance issues	Transportation; Cold chain; Post harvest materials facilities (cooler box, refrigerator, etc.; Hygiene training	Lack of facilities for storing octopus from harvest to market; Lack of good infrastructure for landing and selling octopus (landing sites and markets); Lack of cold chain systems (ice machines, cold rooms); Education on the best way to process, and marketing/ how to reach a market with good prices, branding, financial management
Innovations to enhance value addition / profits	Create a local exchange group	Technological; frequent training, provision of fishing gear	Technological: innovations (solar panels, drying process); Create cooperatives for improving stock market and prices	Best methods for catching octopus without compromising quality; Storage methods; Alternative ways to add value such as drying octopus
Opportunities for regional collaboration in processing or marketing	Yes, Creation of a partnership between the Comoros and neighboring countries; Organize an exchange visit to learn about the sector's structures in terms of traceability, quality standards, and artisanal processing	Market opportunities for octopus; Exchange programmes	Yes, there are opportunities	Yes, Tanzanian octopus can be sold in markets in neighboring countries like Kenya.
Fishers organization / Structures	Cooperatives and Associations	Beach Management Units (BMU); Fisheries Cooperatives	No cooperatives; There are associations of fishermen or women	BMU; Cooperatives (UWAWADA,
Platforms for knowledge / innovations sharing with fishers / stakeholders	WhatsApp	BMU Assembly, BMU Network, Indian Ocean fisher Network	Management Committee of the octopus Fishery (for the South West region of Madagascar); Platform could be created for the Northern region of Madagascar	TAWFA/ZAWFA; Women fishers network (Mwambao); Octopus business in Rufiji Mafia Kilwa (fishers, traders and officers) to set prices and provide information on closing and opening days
Do you support a regional Octopus fishers' network	Yes	Yes	Perhaps, Madagascar would support regional network through the existing Management committee	YES

Key national policies /legal frameworks for Octopus fisheries	The fisheries code that prevents access to resources with sustainable management; Co-management agreements that guide octopus fishing	Fisheries Management and Development Act cap 378; Enabling regulations (Capture, Safety and quality) regulations; BMU regulations	National regulations such as decree stating the closure period and size standardization	Fisheries Policy 2010 & 2015; Fisheries Act 2003, 2007; Fisheries Regulations 2009 amended 2020, Fisheries Regulations 2010 amended 2014
Policy gaps or overlaps that need urgent redress	Development of texts that regulate the sector on gender and youth integration; Define the roles between ministry and community organization to avoid confusion in implementation.	BMU regulations require amendment to be inclusive (requirement on Level of education)	The need of management plan for octopus fisheries	Gender issues not addressed in Fisheries Laws and Regulations
Priorities for regional policy harmonization or alignment	Compliance with health standards; Harmonizing rules for the protection of marine ecosystems; Strengthening trade agreements; Establishing logistical infrastructure to facilitate trade	None / Not Sure	Harmonizing the existing regulation	Harmonizing Harvest Strategy, Management Laws, Management Plans
Structures needed for functional regional network	Local or regional fisheries committees (by island or fishing area); Clear governance system and capacity building; Exchange of good practices between islands; Organization of annual regional meetings of octopus fishing stakeholders	Formation of regional network with national branches; Effective communication and information sharing within network	National committee for Octopus fisheries is needed to develop	The structure should include representatives from each country at the leadership level; The structure should consider the inclusion of women in leadership at least 50%; Other members should come from the entire value chain of the fishery product; Consider representation from NGOs, Universities, Government and research institutions
Roles for stakeholders (Govt, NGOs, Private, Communities) in network?	Facilitate and coordinate and provide guidance	Financial support; Support training; Information sharing	Government support (technical); NGO, private sector (financial and technical); Participation and application	Government- support the operation of the platform and providing technical support, policies and guidelines; NGO- technical and financial support; Private sector- Financial and markets; Community- actively participate in sharing experiences, success stories, challenges and ways to solve challenges
Needed action for formation of the regional network?	National focal point; Define regional network mechanisms; Adopt regional mechanisms in relation to the national context	Convene meetings; Create awareness; Strengthen existing networks e.g. BMUs	Perhaps we unify the existing platform into a national platform for Madagascar	Identifying stakeholders; Introducing the Network to the governments of the respective countries; Convening an initial stakeholder meeting to discuss and prepare network guidelines; Introducing the Network at the grassroots level of the respective countries

Annex 3: Sharing of Country Experiences by Countries; Strengthening Gender Dimensions in blue value chains

Session 2: Priority issues and actions in strengthening gender dimensions within regional blue value chains and small- small- scale Octopus fisheries in East Africa and the WIO region

ISSUE	COMOROS	KENYA	MADAGASCAR	UR TANZANIA
Main gender-related barriers in the fishery	----	Financing / Funding	Decision-making; Financial issues	Fishing areas are remote, Lack of robust fishing gear, going to deep waters; Lack of reliable markets and knowledge on how to reach markets with good prices and how to brand products; Lack of capital to expand the fishing business and lack of knowledge on financial management; Low decision-making power of women
Key areas where women are marginalized	----	Harvesting; Trade; Leadership; Processing	Harvesting; Processing; Trade	Many women are involved in octopus fishing, and a small number are involved in selling and trading. Processing is done by women in factories, and fried octopus
Good practices promoting gender equality in octopus fisheries	----	Training	Creation of women association network	Women's participation in decisions to close and open octopus reefs; Special octopus opening day for women
Urgent interventions needed to strengthen women's roles and voice in the value chain?	----	Training	Creation of cooperative for the fisherwomen; Implementation of Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) for women only.	Establishment of specific platforms for women in octopus fisheries at the State level and linking them to AWFISHNET; Provision of education on gender and post-harvest management
Role of regional cooperation help elevate gender issues in blue economy policy and practice?	----	Exchange programmes on best practices	Awareness of importance of gender equality and participation in blue economy policy and practice	Have strategies to facilitate regular meetings and education; Practical training; Regional Training and workshops between different stakeholders along the value chain; Identify challenging issues
Any gender-specific fisheries or blue economy policies/ strategies in your country?	----	Yes, Affirmative action; Gender mainstreaming policy	No	Yes. Gender strategic plan and blue economy strategy

Any gender equity considerations in national fisheries legislation, planning, or budgeting?	----	Yes	No	The current review of the 2009 fisheries regulations has taken gender issues into account - under review; MBUs Guidelines
Institutions responsible for mainstreaming gender in fisheries? Effective	----	Gender mainstreaming policy	Ministry in charge of fisheries and blue economy	Ministry of Women, Gender and Children, Ministry of Social Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups; Gender desk at Ministry level and District level
Policy gaps exist at regional level regarding gender & SSF/ Octopus fisheries?	----	Yes, Lack of inclusivity in decision making	Lack of inclusivity in decision making	---
Key policy priorities to mainstream gender in regional blue economy frameworks (e.g., SADC, EAC, IOC)?	----	Involvement in leadership positions	----	---
How can countries align national gender policies with regional efforts?	----	Harmonization of regional policies	By standardization of some the policies on gender mainstreaming; Support from the regional stakeholders such as the NGOs (technically and financially)	----
Regulatory reforms needed to better support the rights and participation of women and marginalized groups in SSF and Octopus fisheries?	----	Currently BMU regulations amended to include gender	We have NPOA SSF For Madagascar (gender equity and support of the right of marginalized groups is taken-into account	Women's participation in fisheries should be legally recognized
Enforcement challenges (e.g., access rights etc.) that dis-proportionately affect women?	----	Safety at sea, Working Conditions at Sea	Safety at sea (lack of proper gear)	Many women are at risk of losing their lives because they are in deep water, and since they fish in one place, men are the ones who catch the most fish; Sexual harassment

Implementing gender-responsive regulations in small-scale octopus fisheries?	----	------	Focus on engaging women in policy making processes; Women empowerment (financially) and participation	Through monitoring and setting various guidelines
Most appropriate structure for a regional network of Octopus SSF actors, including women's groups?	----	Country networks and Regional network; Form interim committee for regional network	Platform (at country level); Association	The structure should include representatives from each country at the leadership level; The structure should consider the inclusion of women in leadership at least 50%; Other members should come from the entire value chain of the fishery product; Consider representation from NGOs, Universities, Government and research institutions
Ensuring inclusive representation and voice for women and youth in the network	----	Enact representation of all gender at all levels of management (Men, women & youth)	Involvement women in policy making and decisions; Creating awareness and trainings on the governance of octopus fishery	The existence of a specific guideline/strategy that will define women's participation
Needed support (technical, institutional, financial) to operationalize the Octopus network?	----	Technical (capacity building); Institutional (form committee on octopus at the BMU/ VFCs); Financial (capacity building, awareness creation, conservation, exchange programmes)	Technical (capacity building, leadership structures etc.; Financial (capacity building, exchange programme)	Focal persons from each country; Specific procedures for sharing information and developing guidelines/strategies; Financial supports from dedicated institutions; Collaboration between stakeholders starting from the fisherfolk level
Role of governments, NGOs, private sector, and fisher organizations play in developing the network?	----	NGOs; capacity building, exchange programmes, advocacy; Government; capacity building, marketing, development of cold chain, policy and legislation; Private sector; capacity building, development of cold chain, advocacy	NGO capacity building; Government (market infrastructure, capacity building); Private sector (capacity building, technical and financial support)	Government- to support the operation of the platform and provide technical support, policies and guidelines; NGO- technical and financial support; Private sector- Financial and markets; Community- to actively participate in providing experiences, success stories, challenges and ways to solve challenges
Elements essential in a regional governance framework for Octopus fisheries	----	Decision-making bottom up	Principles; Rules; Institution	---
Incorporating gender equity, traditional knowledge, and co-management in the framework	----	Legislation on gender equity, traditional knowledge and co-management	----	---

Which regional organizations or platforms should lead or coordinate the governance of Octopus fisheries network?	----	AU-IBAR	AU -IBAR and SWIOFC	---
What mechanisms can be established to ensure accountability and transparency?	----	Ratified Constitution and by-laws	Ratifies by laws	---
Ensuring meaningful engagement of women in governance structures?	----	Enact the 2/3 Gender rule, with 1 women fisher in leadership position for every 2 men	By involving them in policy making	---
Proposed tools/ platforms to facilitate women participation	----	Digital forums; Engagement through phone calls	regional dialogues, community-based monitoring	---
Existing structures for dialogue between government and other stakeholders?	----	BMU structures, county government structures and National government	National network of women fishers	---
Leveraging multi-stakeholder forums for the Octopus fishery support?	----	Form Octopus departments / Committees in the BMU management structure	By training the community and other stakeholders on the fisheries management (especially for octopus)	---
Steps to organize a regional multi-stakeholder forum on gender and Octopus fisheries?	----	Start by formation of Country networks and then regional networks	Regional forum	



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