



CASE STUDY:

Advancing Alternative Livelihoods for Fishers in Mozambique

Coastal communities in Mozambique rely on their fisheries for food, income, and identity. But fish populations are declining, and fishers are compelled to overfish to make up for lost catch. This pressure on marine ecosystems further depletes fish stocks while also destroying the natural systems critical to biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

Alternative livelihoods can provide fishing households with needed income, while reducing pressure to overfish and degrade natural resources. An effective community-led conservation strategy recognizes that the financial resilience of communities and the ecological resilience of fisheries are interconnected.



The Rare approach

Rare advances community-led conservation across the Global South with an approach rooted in the science of human behavior to ensure swifter adoption and lasting impact. Rare supports and empowers fishers and fishing communities with tools, rights, and resources to sustainably manage their fisheries — and build community resilience in the face of economic and ecological challenges.

To both reduce the need to overfish and help fishing communities meet their financial needs, Rare works with community and government partners to create opportunities for diversified, alternative livelihoods.



Diversifying livelihoods

For many people living in coastal communities, fishing is an integral part of their identity. These fishers need support in adopting alternative livelihoods in areas like tourism, fish processing, or aquaculture.

A successful alternative livelihood program reflects and respects the realities of the people they impact. The diversified livelihoods Rare helped people adopt included regenerative agriculture, honey production, and vocational training in culinary arts, carpentry, and tailoring. Rare partnered with companies and organizations who provide seed funding or starter kits to build the capacity of individuals in these fields.



What we did

Recognizing the need to systematize knowledge to guide future interventions, Rare partnered with FAO to provide the Mozambique government with a national framework for the development of sustainable livelihoods in the context of small-scale fisheries (SSF) co-management. The framework is specifically tailored to the realities of Mozambique, including its governance context, institutional arrangements, and unique livelihood challenges of small-scale fishing communities. It is a practical, scalable system for livelihood diversification that strengthens community resilience and economic inclusion while supporting sustainable fisheries governance and marine resource conservation.

Refining the framework

Rare consulted with key stakeholders to refine the framework and ensure it is grounded in national realities. Key improvements were made including clarifying factors that indicate readiness for livelihood interventions, clearly defining implementation steps, strengthening of livelihood screening, market analysis and value chain considerations, and ensuring that monitoring, evaluation and learning are embedded in sustainable livelihood development.



Participatory workshops

National-level stakeholders were invited to participate in a training workshop to validate the framework and associated technical tools. Additional feedback from this workshop was used to further refine the framework. Rare continues to build strong partnerships with government and will support the use of the framework in guiding sustainable solutions for Mozambique's co-managed fisheries and the communities that depend on them.



Delivering the framework

The framework was laid out in three key documents:

Strategic Framework: Defines the national strategy, governance architecture, and financing approach for strengthening livelihoods within fisheries co-management areas.

Technical Implementation Note: Explains the practical process for applying the livelihood framework in programs and projects.

Implementation Manual and Field Toolkit: Provides detailed tools, templates and scorecards used by facilitator and community organizations.



Impact

The national government of Mozambique is embedding the technical guidance Rare developed into national plans. This demonstrates clear recognition of Rare as a trusted partner.

But the partnership between Rare and the national government is not new. In 2020, Mozambique approved a landmark regulation called REPMAR to empower community-based fisheries management and the demarcation of community-led marine protected areas.

The REPMAR regulation was part of a decade-long partnership between Rare and the Mozambican government to strengthen fisheries governance through the expansion of co-management systems, including the reinforcement of Community Fisheries Councils (CCPs). These systems provide the foundation for sustainable resource management, promoting participatory governance, compliance with rules, and the protection of marine ecosystems. Effective governance is a prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods development, ensuring that economic activities remain aligned with long-term resource sustainability.



Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive | Learn more at rare.org

Rare is an international conservation organization with more than 50 years of experience advancing people-centered solutions to our environmental challenges. We build resilience for people and nature by strengthening community leadership and reshaping the systems that enable it to endure.