Global Gateway

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WEST AFRICA SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PROGRAMME

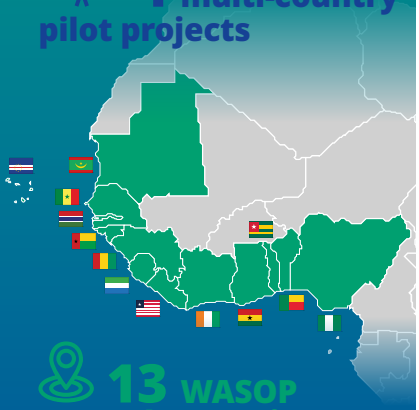
▶ SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

FOUR PILOT PROJECTS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY IN WEST AFRICA

Through four complementary projects, the European Union, through WASOP, funds and supports the development of blue economy businesses and value chains in West Africa to create sustainable and inclusive jobs, increase incomes and open up new market opportunities.

Approximately €10 million in combined budgets

4 multi-country pilot projects



13 WASOP coastal countries

Implementation period 2026-2029

One shared ambition: making the blue economy a driver of shared prosperity, innovation, jobs and climate resilience.

LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES, REGIONAL AMBITION



Why these four projects?

The BOAD–WASOP study on blue finance (2026), carried out as part of the West African group of the Finance in Common Summit (FiCS) Ocean Coalition, highlights the potential of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the blue economy — fishing, aquaculture, sustainable tourism, waste recovery, etc. — to create local added value. However, informality, a lack of collateral, and insufficient technical and managerial capacity are hindering their access to finance and their development.

The four multi-country pilot projects funded by WASOP work in a complementary manner to remove these barriers: strengthening value chains, facilitating access to markets and finance, developing new services and creating jobs, whilst preserving ecosystems.

Four drivers of transformation

1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOB CREATION

The projects support, in particular, women-led service businesses in fisheries, recycling entrepreneurs, blue economy businesses and start-ups at the pre-acceleration or acceleration stage, as well as SMEs, cooperatives and entrepreneurship support organisations active in the sectors that sustain West Africa's blue economy.

2. PRODUCING, PROCESSING AND ADDING VALUE DIFFERENTLY

Solutions being tested include solar-powered refrigeration, energy-efficient fish smoking, improved storage and transport, aquaculture, shellfish farming, salt production, rice–fish farming, ecotourism, beekeeping, the circular economy and new activities linked to ecosystem conservation and restoration. These aim to reduce losses, improve quality, develop appropriate services and capture more value locally.

3. PRESERVING AND REGENERATING ECOSYSTEMS

Mangrove restoration; the establishment of community-based monitoring, reporting and verification systems for mangrove and wetland ecosystems; the reduction and economic recovery of plastic waste; and the development of blue carbon- and biodiversity-related services all help reconcile ecological resilience with value creation. The pilot projects demonstrate that ecosystem protection is a major component of economic development in West Africa's coastal areas.

4. CONNECTING SOLUTIONS TO MARKETS AND FINANCE

The four projects receive support to build partnerships with leading companies and major value-chain stakeholders, opening up market opportunities, facilitating scaling and mobilising catalytic finance and investors. This strengthens stakeholders' business models, access to markets and ability to attract capital.

Value chains at the heart of the transformation

The four projects operate in different sectors but follow the same approach: making better use of resources, reducing losses and environmental pressures, and strengthening local economic actors by creating jobs and new sources of income in coastal areas.

ARTISANAL FISHERIES
Cold-chain services, improved smoking techniques, storage, transport and marketing.

AQUACULTURE & SHELLFISH FARMING
Value-chain development and improved market access.

SALT PRODUCTION & RICE–FISH FARMING
Developing production systems compatible with mangrove conservation.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY
Paid collection, local plastic processing and marketing of recycled products.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES
Blue carbon, biodiversity, ecosystem restoration and new financing opportunities.

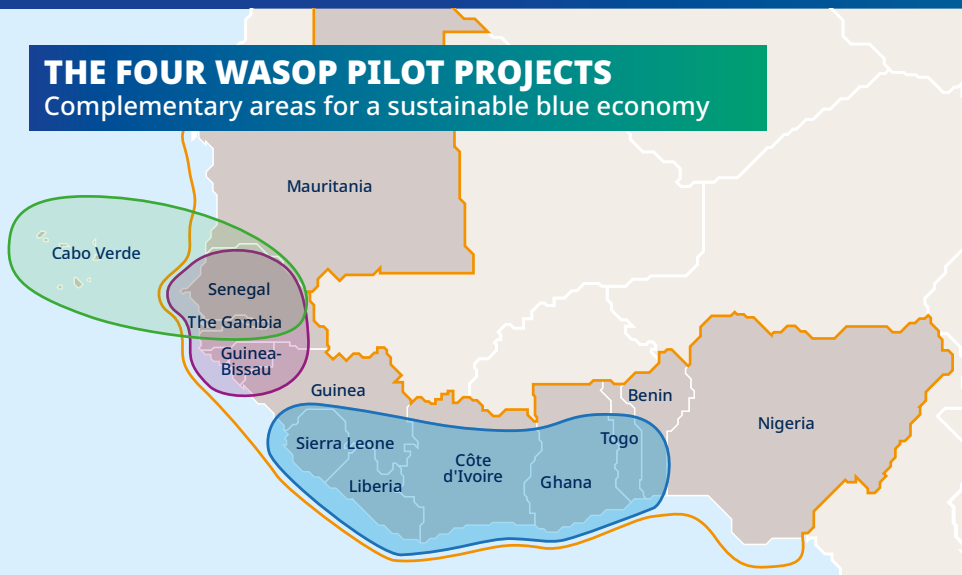
Creating more value locally while reducing losses and pressure on ecosystems.

A regional ambition

The pilot projects combine targeted interventions in specific areas with regional coverage. This approach makes it possible to test solutions in particular contexts while organising learning, networking and dissemination across West Africa.

THE FOUR WASOP PILOT PROJECTS

Complementary areas for a sustainable blue economy



WASOP BLUE ACCELERATOR
Capacity building, access to markets and finance, and support for innovation.
all 13 WASOP countries (all coastal countries in the region)

CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS
Plastic waste recycling, the circular economy and new low-impact activities.
Senegal • Cabo Verde • The Gambia

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES
Cold-chain services, improved smoking, storage, transport and marketing.
Côte d'Ivoire • Ghana • Liberia • Sierra Leone

SEASCAPES
Sustainable resource management, ecosystem restoration and territorial value creation.
The Gambia • Guinea-Bissau • Senegal

Sustaining projects and preparing for scale-up

Beyond the grants awarded (more than €9.4 million for the four projects), a fund totalling over 550,000 euros is dedicated to supporting the four pilot projects. This assistance aims to strengthen their capacities during implementation and ensure their sustainability beyond WASOP.

This additional support helps consolidate business models, strengthen the conditions for long-term sustainability, prepare the mobilisation of new funding and facilitate the replication of solutions that have demonstrated their relevance.

More than €550,000 TO AMPLIFY IMPACT

From pilot projects to scaling up: developing sustainable, financeable and replicable models capable of amplifying their impact in West Africa.

Four multi-country projects with West African reach

The pilot nature of these projects gives the WASOP sustainable blue economy pillar a particular responsibility: to document what works, identify success factors, learn from challenges encountered and facilitate the circulation of solutions between territories and stakeholders.

1. Test solutions in real-world contexts.
2. Measure economic, social and environmental results.
3. Capture lessons learned and document models.
4. Strengthen business models and the capacities of project implementers.
5. Connect promising solutions with new partners and financing.
6. Encourage their replication and adaptation in other coastal areas.

WASOP does more than fund pilot projects: it creates the conditions for locally successful solutions to inspire the transformation of the blue economy at regional level.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MEASURABLE COLLECTIVE RESULTS

- More than 200 private-sector entities (microenterprises, SMEs and cooperatives) contributing to the sustainable blue economy are strengthened.
- More than 1,500 local jobs are created or improved.
- More than 80% of supported local organisations see an increase in their annual income.
- 3,3 million euros in external financing are mobilised.
- More than 10,000 final beneficiaries are reached.
- At least 300 hectares of mangroves are restored.
- At least 1,000 metric tonnes of marine and coastal plastic waste are recovered and recycled each year.
- Post-harvest seafood losses and pressure on fishery resources are reduced.
- Inclusion and gender issues are addressed within supported entities.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The interventions combine improved working conditions, development of tailored services, strengthened entrepreneurial capacities, access to equipment, organisation of cooperatives, and connections to markets and finance. They thereby aim to increase the economic participation of groups (women, young people and informal-sector actors) who already play an essential role in coastal economies but whose potential often remains underutilised.




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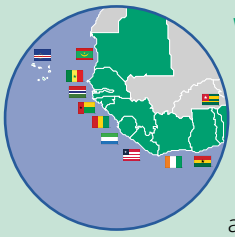
THE FOUR PROJECTS AT A GLANCE



WASOP BLUE ACCELERATOR

Lead organisation: I&P Entrepreneurs & Développement | **Partners:** OceanHub Africa, I&P France, I&P Côte d'Ivoire, I&P Sénégal, I&P Madagascar, I&P Conseil, Comoe Partners, Teranga Gestion, Néré Capital Partners, Idawa Capital Partners.

Intervention areas: 13 WASOP countries | **Budget :** €4 million | **Duration:** 36 months

Objectives: Finance and accelerate a regional portfolio of sustainable blue economy start-ups, SMEs and cooperatives to stimulate their growth, create jobs and mobilise investment. Strengthen a network of incubators and support organisations in West Africa to ensure lasting business support and connect enterprises with public and private investors. View the project sheet here.

BLUE VALUE CHAINS FOR COASTAL RESILIENCE – CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS

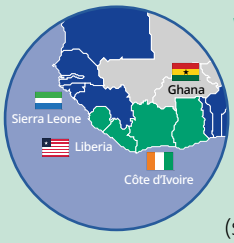


Lead organisation: Plastic Odyssey Foundation | **Partners:** Plastic Odyssey Factories Sénégal ; Nébéday ; Gambiatek ; Biosfera

Intervention areas: Senegal (Palmarin-Fimela and Saint-Louis – two marine protected areas / UNESCO and two fishing areas); Cabo Verde (Mindelo and Santa Luzia); The Gambia (Banjul-Tanbi – fishing areas / protected mangrove park).

Budget : €1 million | **Duration:** 24 months

Objective: Develop marine and coastal plastic waste collection, recycling and recovery value chains by building integrated logistics chains, creating jobs and income for coastal communities and contributing to ecosystem conservation. View the project sheet here.



WOMEN-LED SERVICE BUSINESSES FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN WEST AFRICA

Lead organisation: Conservation International Foundation | **Partners:** Liberia Artisanal Fishermen Association; Green Scenery Sierra Leone; Conservation Alliance International; Union of Artisanal Fishing Cooperatives of Côte d'Ivoire.

Intervention areas: Côte d'Ivoire (Lagunes and Sud-Comoé regions); Ghana (Greater Accra region); Liberia (southeastern coast and Bomi); Sierra Leone (Freetown and Bonthe).

Budget : €2.9 million | **Duration:** 30 months

Objectives: Strengthen women-led SMEs and cooperatives to develop economically viable fish preservation and processing services (solar-powered refrigeration, energy-efficient smoking and storage). Reduce losses, increase incomes and strengthen women's economic resilience while improving their working conditions in West African fisheries value chains. View the project sheet here.

"SEASCAPE" PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM



Lead organisation: Landscape Finance Lab | **Partners:** AGIRE, Univers-sel, GGWF

Intervention areas: Gambia (North Bank Region), Guinea-Bissau (Cacheu) and Senegal (Greater Sine-Saloum).

Budget : €1.8 million (of which ≈ €300,000 in co-funding) | **Duration:** 36 months

Objectives: Support SMEs and cooperatives in three West African seascapes across blue economy sectors (aquaculture, shellfish farming, salt production and rice–fish farming) to improve production, processing and marketing, facilitate access to finance and increase local incomes. Bring together businesses, producers and conservation stakeholders through place-based partnerships that reconcile economic development, mangrove restoration and ecosystem governance. View the project sheet here.

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WASOP - West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme - is a five-year regional programme funded by the European Union with €59 million under its Global Gateway strategy. It aims to strengthen ocean governance, develop a sustainable and inclusive blue economy and preserve marine and coastal ecosystems in thirteen West African coastal countries.

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GROUPE AFD

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