



REGENERATION GENERATION

Report by **Kaija Barisa and Nicola du Plessis**

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FOREWORD

by **Clare Brook**, Blue Marine's CEO

196 countries have committed to protect at least 30 per cent of land and sea by 2030, but to date, only around ten per cent have actually protected 30 per cent of their waters. What is holding them back?

In the conversations I've had, it isn't political will; far from it – I've met many impressive, visionary politicians who understand the role of a healthy and abundant ocean in underpinning their economies. Their hesitation, quite understandably, stems from the cost of protection (the science to establish optimal protection and then the ongoing cost of monitoring and enforcement) and the perceived cost in terms of lost jobs, mostly in fishing. Blue Marine aims to help, where we can, to provide the necessary science and unlock finance mechanisms to solve the first conundrum.

We can also demonstrate that marine protection need not lead to job losses in the fishing sector – quite the opposite, because more abundant waters can in time improve livelihoods.

But what if an even better paradigm were possible – namely that through regeneration of nature, it was possible to create a whole new sector of employment: in science, as

data collectors and analysts, eDNA samplers, benthic mappers – in education, in diving and ecotourism, in monitoring and enforcement (drone operators, satellite image assessors)? Rewarding (in every sense), fulfilling roles that could attract the best and the brightest in the country.

I first met Aquanjé Robinson in March 2025 in Curaçao at a Dutch Caribbean conservation finance workshop. He told me he came from St Kitts and was passionate about environmental sustainability. The following February, in 2026, I again met Aquanjé, back in St Kitts, where he was working for the conservation department of the government. I asked him if he was planning to stay to see through St Kitts' plans to establish marine protected areas in their waters. He told me that he was off to Taiwan for four years to study – his boss was devastated.

So I wondered what would entice Aquanjé to return to St Kitts, once he'd got his degree and his Master's. This is what he said:

"I think the question is not what would entice young people to return home, but what would mean that they could fully realise their potential."

We are cultured to believe in the transformative power of higher education. We encourage our brightest young people to acquire knowledge, qualifications and capabilities to change the trajectory of their lives. But when they emerge with that capacity, we do not always create the spaces for them to exercise it. Unfortunately, that contributes to brain drain.

So how do we build countries, economies and a region that honour indigenous talent so deeply that our people can see a future in exercising their capacity at home?

For me, the regenerative blue economy offers part of that answer. It can create new careers, enterprises and opportunities around the regeneration of our ocean, making home a place where ambition does not have to compete with belonging."

This report, a reflection on this subject by Blue Economics, will explore how marine conservation can fulfil the ambition of people like Aquanjé Robinson.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of the people who agreed to take part in our surveys and interviews, without whom this report could not have been produced. Additionally, we would like to thank our project partner colleagues in Mexico, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Maldives, Greece and Indonesia for their incredible support and hard work collecting all the relevant data.

Cover photo A marine park ranger conducting a patrol in Raja Ampat.
This page photo by Henley Spiers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coastal communities face growing pressures from declining fish stocks, habitat degradation, climate change and a lack of secure employment opportunities. These challenges are particularly acute for young people, who often leave coastal areas due to limited career prospects. The departure of people away from coastal areas often leads to a loss of indigenous and local knowledge, skills and ultimately affects the economic resilience within coastal communities.

Drawing on 36 interviews across five pilot programmes in Greece, the Maldives, Mexico, Indonesia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, this report examines how regenerative blue economy initiatives can support livelihood transitions alongside marine conservation.

The results of the surveys demonstrated that the creation of high-quality jobs is essential for both conservation and community resilience. Support for conservation was strongest where communities saw tangible benefits and played a meaningful role in decision-making, highlighting the importance of local leadership and co-management.

However, costs remain a significant barrier, making long-term financial support critical to ensure opportunities are accessible, equitable and capable of attracting the next generation into ocean-based careers.

Project

Summary results

AMORGORAMA
Amorgos, Greece

Fishers reported stronger stewardship, pride and support for conservation through participation in community-led fisheries closures and protected areas, despite ecological and economic benefits not yet being fully realised. Compensation for lost fishing income during seasonal closures emerged as the key factor in enabling participation and support for the programme.

Fish for Tomorrow
Laamu Atoll, Maldives

Fishers reported improved income security, more reliable markets and stronger support for sustainable fisheries and marine protection, with participation linked to premium prices and guaranteed seafood buyers. The main concerns raised were the need for stronger fisheries management and equitable benefit sharing between fishers and the tourism sector.

Proyecto Tiburón
Agua Amarga, México

Former shark fishers who transitioned into tourism, research and citizen science reported improved income stability, safer working conditions, greater pride in their work and stronger conservation attitudes. However, training costs, equipment requirements, temporary income losses and concerns around cultural identity and equitable access remain barriers to broader participation.

Raja Ampat Dive Guide School
Raja Ampat, Indonesia

All participants reported improvements in income, wellbeing, confidence and future opportunities after gaining skills in diving, tourism and conservation, with many becoming role models within their communities. The programme demonstrated the potential of conservation and tourism careers to create better quality jobs for young people, although language and professional skills development remain important for these schemes to address.

Wild Nurseries
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Community ranger roles improved income security, wellbeing, conservation awareness and pride, with participants valuing both the additional income and the opportunity to contribute to marine protection. The main challenge was perceptions that rangers were acting against other fishers, highlighting the need for broader engagement and clearer communication.

Based on our results we **identified six key recommendations to support the successful implementation and scaling of these programmes:**

- 1 Create long-term financial incentives and transition support**, including funding for training, equipment, certification and temporary income support during transitions.
- 2 Put communities at the centre of programme design and decision-making** through participatory governance and co-management approaches.
- 3 Invest in skills and education pathways for young people**, including access to training and leadership opportunities to encourage emerging careers in tourism, conservation, monitoring and sustainable fisheries.
- 4 Strengthen conservation governance through monitoring, enforcement and transparent communication** so communities can see clear evidence of demonstrable environmental and socioeconomic benefits.
- 5 Ensure transitions do not lead to environmental or social pressures elsewhere**, through strong safeguards, environmental standards and fair benefit-sharing.
- 6 Build climate resilience into livelihood planning**, supporting communities to diversify income while restoring and protecting the ecosystems on which local economies depend.

Conservation succeeds when coastal communities see a future within it. By creating dignified jobs, investing in skills and training, strengthening local stewardship and reducing the economic risks, regenerative blue economy initiatives can help deliver lasting benefits for both people and nature. As countries work towards protecting 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030, investing in the next wave of conservation-aligned professionals will be as important as investing in the protected areas themselves.

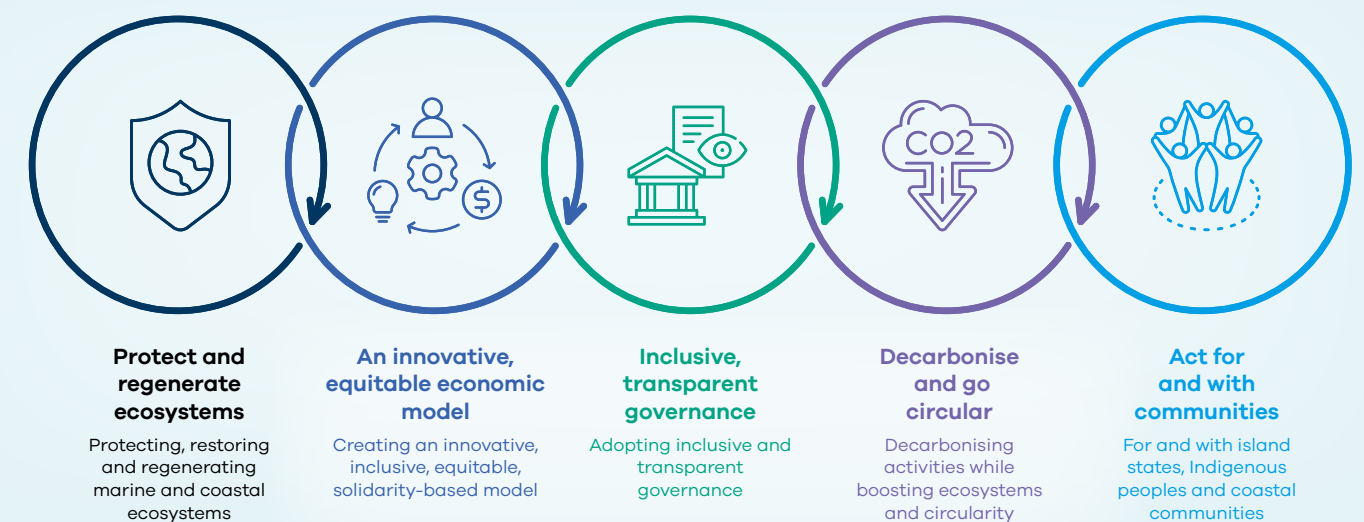
INTRODUCTION

Across the world, coastal communities are facing multiple threats including declining fish stocks and degraded marine ecosystems with fewer viable job opportunities for the next generation. As traditional livelihoods become less secure, many young people are leaving coastal areas in search of work elsewhere, weakening the social and economic fabric of communities that have depended on the ocean for generations.

The regenerative blue economy offers a pathway beyond extractive approaches that deplete marine resources and undermine long-term prosperity (Fig. 1) and instead supports the protection and restoration of ocean ecosystems through sustainable livelihoods, creating new employment opportunities which may appeal to younger generations who want to take action to benefit their local and the global environments. There is potential to create a positive cycle in which healthier seas support greater economic opportunities and give the next generation a greater stake in protecting the resources they depend on.

AS TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS BECOME LESS SECURE, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LEAVING COASTAL AREAS IN SEARCH OF WORK ELSEWHERE

Fig 1. The five founding principles of the IUCN Regenerative Blue Economy definition



Sustainable fisheries, conservation, science, ecotourism, habitat restoration and nature-based investment are all activities that fit within this model, and can create skilled jobs, diversify incomes and empower people often excluded from the traditional blue economy to become stewards of their marine heritage. For countries with an intrinsic reliance on the ocean, such as small island developing states (SIDS), building a regenerative blue economy is both an environmental necessity and an economic opportunity for building long-term coastal and community resilience.

Incorporating a regenerative blue economy into current governance can take many forms, depending on the local context, existing livelihoods and the condition of marine ecosystems. Some transitions improve practice within existing ocean activities, so they reduce harm and contribute to recovery. Fisheries are one example, where changes such as seasonal closures, more selective gear, stronger traceability, improved catch handling or better market incentives can help reduce pressure while allowing people to retain their existing skills, rights and connection to the sea. Other transitions create new or complementary livelihoods across the wider blue economy, including ecotourism, data collection, science and technology, enforcement roles or monitoring. These pathways are becoming more important as countries work towards protecting 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030, with one study estimating that meeting this target will require a 40-fold increase in the global marine protected area (MPA) workforce¹. These types of transitions may also have wider reaching impacts on other economic livelihoods throughout the value chain.

Transition opportunities can diversify income and strengthen stewardship, but they often require training, equipment, start-up finance, licences, market access and time before income

becomes stable. Historically, a lack of jobs and restrictive access to careers within the regenerative blue economy has led to limitations on how coastal communities can engage in the sector in a meaningful way. Without adequate support for these schemes, the costs of transitions can fall unfairly on the people least able to absorb them. This can weaken trust, compliance and ultimately, long-term conservation outcomes. Creating fair and inclusive routes into the regenerative blue economy sectors thus needs to be central to these transitions.

INCORPORATING A REGENERATIVE BLUE ECONOMY INTO CURRENT GOVERNANCE CAN TAKE MANY FORMS, DEPENDING ON THE LOCAL CONTEXT, EXISTING LIVELIHOODS AND THE CONDITION OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS.

Just transitions are increasingly presented as a way to bring livelihoods, conservation and local economic and social development together, but practical examples of these transitions remain limited. Crucially, important benefits, including community resilience, wellbeing and environmental stewardship, are poorly captured by standard accounting frameworks and conventional cost-benefit analysis. As a result, transition schemes can struggle to compete with activities whose short-term returns are easier to measure, even when those activities impose longer-term costs on ecosystems and communities. Closing this evidence gap is therefore essential to make regenerative blue economy transitions a credible policy choice.



Above A local fisher measures tuna caught under the Fish for Tomorrow programme.

Scope of this report

Blue Marine Foundation and our partners have developed Regeneration Generation as a response to this evidence gap. This report draws on qualitative evidence from five livelihood transition programmes to explore what these transitions look like in practice, the benefits generated, the cost and trade-offs involved, and the conditions needed for them to be socially fair, financially viable and ecologically credible.

These interviews provide a bottom-up understanding of how these programmes should be designed from the perspective of communities who are most affected by them. The evidence gathered is intended to inform governments, NGOs, funders and conservation practitioners on how to design approaches that are both ecologically effective and socially durable. It showcases to communities what is possible and how conservation can lead to genuine economic and social community benefits. Getting community buy-in for MPAs is critical to ensure long-term success and

demonstrating links to sustainable livelihoods that give all generations access to opportunities may help us overcome some of the biggest challenges. The evidence will also help participating projects establish clearer baselines, track impact over time, demonstrate progress and make a stronger case for future investment.

Our report draws on 36 case study interviews, using the qualitative data from five distinct livelihood transition programmes across five countries: Greece, Mexico, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Indonesia, and Maldives.

¹) Ward-Paige et al. (2026 preprint) <https://society.org/articles/activity/10.32942/x2gh38>

BACKGROUND

Evidence from both terrestrial and marine conservation shows that when conservation management excludes people from nature or treats local use as a threat, it often fails to achieve lasting outcomes². This underlines the importance of involving communities from the outset, recognising fishers and coastal communities as rights holders, knowledge experts and stewards. Careful spatial planning, participatory decision-making and fair benefit-sharing can help reduce costs, build trust and improve long-term conservation outcomes^{3,4}.

A regenerative transition should therefore be measured not only by livelihood outcomes, but also by whether it reduces harmful use of marine ecosystems, builds resilience and dignity for the people affected, creates incentives for stewardship and is governed in a way that is fair, credible and ecologically bounded. Without these conditions, an alternative livelihood may improve income in the short term but still fail to contribute to ocean recovery or long-term community resilience. Some transitions involve adaptation within the existing sector such as into sustainable fisheries while others involve moving into adjacent parts of the blue economy, including conservation, monitoring, restoration, sustainable tourism and enforcement. Some involve a mixture of both approaches.

Wellbeing, dignity and pride are increasingly recognised as key components of a just transition and a regenerative blue economy alongside income. The UNEP, World Bank and the UN Ocean Decade all highlight that the sole focus should not be job creation, but support for social inclusion, community resilience and a general improvement in quality of life^{5,6}. Jobs in the regenerative blue economy can provide people with a stronger sense of purpose, connection and recognition particularly in coastal communities that are intrinsically linked to the sea. Although not limited to age demographics, for young people especially, these jobs can create opportunities to remain in their communities, develop new skills and build meaningful careers that combine economic opportunity with environmental and social impact.



Above Former fisher participating in ecotourism activities in Baja California Sur, Mexico.

A REGENERATIVE TRANSITION SHOULD THEREFORE BE MEASURED NOT ONLY BY LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES, BUT ALSO BY WHETHER IT REDUCES HARMFUL USE OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS, BUILDS RESILIENCE AND DIGNITY FOR THE PEOPLE AFFECTED, CREATES INCENTIVES FOR STEWARDSHIP AND IS GOVERNED IN A WAY THAT IS FAIR, CREDIBLE AND ECOLOGICALLY BOUNDED.

2) WWF. (2020). *Guide for planning and managing Marine Protected Areas with local and/or indigenous community participation based on conservation standards*. WWF Chile.

3) Mast et al. (2025). *Shared governance increases marine protected area effectiveness*.

4) Christie, P. (2004). *Perceptions of livelihood loss as a predictor of MPA opposition*

5) UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/ecosystem-based-approaches/sustainable-blue-economy>

6) World Economic Forum, 2026, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-regenerative-blue-economy-pathways-to-prosperity/>

Transitions within fisheries

Small-scale, low-impact fishing is a declining occupation, facing pressure and competition from industrial fisheries coupled with the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. This has led to an ageing workforce with younger generations engaging less in an industry where opportunities are shrinking. The transition towards more sustainable small-scale fishing can mitigate this risk on both the biodiversity and community fronts. As catches improve this can expand opportunities and may encourage people back into the industry.

Transitions within the fisheries sector can support both ecosystem recovery and community resilience by reducing pressure on marine resources while enabling fishers to retain and adapt their existing skills, vessels, and cultural identity. This may include transitioning towards more sustainable methods through changes in fishing gear or gear configuration, fishing grounds, target species and even catch composition. However, these must be done alongside clear conservation management measures such as minimum size of landed species and seasonal closures, so that adaptations can deliver both environmental and economic benefits.

Transitions within the sector are rarely straightforward. Fishers may face significant

upfront costs for new equipment and training, regulatory barriers, and uncertainty around future catches and income. While the long-term benefits can include healthier fish stocks, more resilient livelihoods due to reduced pressure on marine ecosystems, the short-term risks can be challenging for fishers and their communities to absorb.

As a result, successful transitions require close collaboration with fishers and should be supported through appropriate financing, capacity building, market development, and enabling policies. Effective management is also essential to ensure that fishing effort is not simply displaced onto other species, habitats, or communities, undermining both conservation and livelihood objectives.

Left Local fishers participating in the AMORORAMA Initiative.

Transitions away from fisheries

Transitions away from fisheries into alternative livelihoods can offer some of the clearest long-term gains for communities and marine ecosystems, but only where new opportunities are credible, accessible and locally retained. These pathways may include ecotourism, MPA and fisheries restricted area (FRA) management and enforcement, scientific monitoring, habitat restoration or offshore renewables. Across other examples that have been developed in Namibia, the Philippines and Madagascar (see Annex 1), reported benefits include increased income and reduced pressure on fisheries, but these gains depend on equitable benefit-sharing, strong government mandates, long-term financing and continued technical support.

Moving out of fishing into a completely new profession is not a simple switch. Retraining takes time and money, while jobs in these emerging sectors often arrive slower than fishing restrictions or ecological decline. These new roles often require a different set of skills, language abilities, equipment, licences or social networks, which can exclude the people most affected by conservation measures. For communities whose identity, social fabric and intergenerational knowledge are bound up in the fisheries sector, leaving the sector can also have strong cultural ramifications.

A just transition that considers a balanced and participatory approach to marine management must therefore aim to protect not only income, but also the traditions, rights and connections that bind coastal communities to the sea.

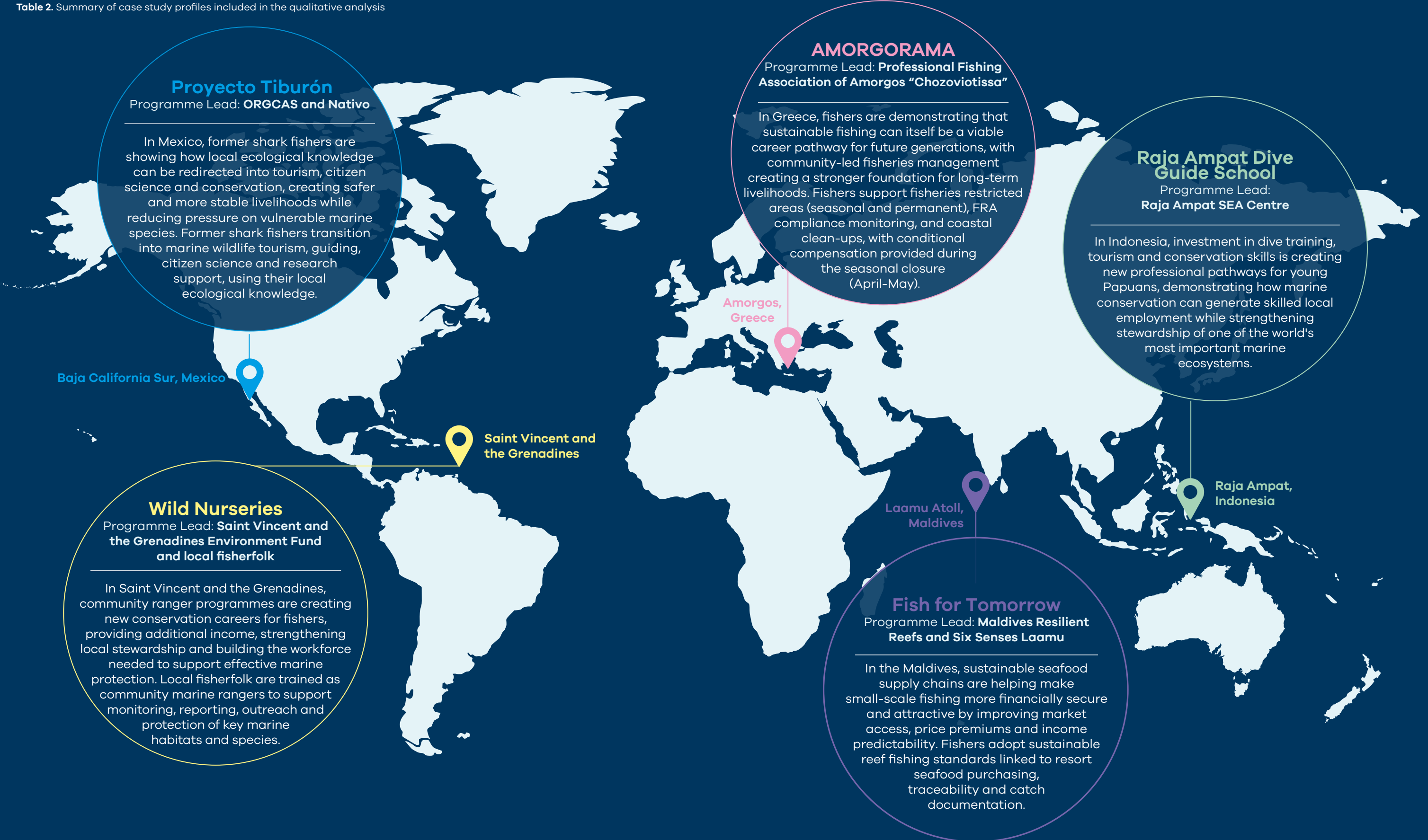
These transitions also need strong safeguards to ensure that environmental pressure is not simply displaced into other sectors. For example, while tourism can provide important economic opportunities, evidence from small island contexts demonstrates that it does not automatically generate positive conservation or development outcomes. Emerging concerns from Raja Ampat – where rapid tourism growth has placed increasing pressure on coral reefs and wastewater systems, leading to habitat degradation and pollution – underscore the importance of managing livelihood transitions and incentives within a wider regenerative economy framework^{7,8}. Achieving these benefits requires governance systems that address unequal participation, skill gaps, and the root causes of unsustainable livelihoods.

Above Local fishers conducting habitat monitoring as part of the Wild Nurseries programme.

7) Tjilen, A.P., et al. (2022). Tourism growth, governance and environmental pressures in Raja Ampat, Indonesia.
8) Indonesian Conservation (2026). Raja Ampat tourism, coral reef pressure and wastewater management concerns.

CASE STUDY PROFILES

Table 2. Summary of case study profiles included in the qualitative analysis



METHODOLOGY

Survey structure

With the support of staff in Greece and partners Maldives Resilient Reefs, ORGCAS, SeaCentre and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund, Blue Marine led a series of qualitative surveys focused on the socioeconomic impact of livelihood transitions into the regenerative blue economy. Programmes were selected from the Blue Marine project portfolio where initiatives have been actioned in the last few years to support participants to move into more regenerative livelihoods.

The survey was designed by Blue Marine in conjunction with project partners and conservation practitioners. Project partners based in each project location conducted two rounds of semi-structured surveys and filmed interviews with participants. All survey and interview respondents gave signed consent to participate in the research and for their data to be published.

The survey collected qualitative socioeconomic data from participants across each case study (Table 3). These questions aimed to assess the pre- and post-transition impacts across six themes:

- 1. **Total income**
- 2. **Income stability and security**
- 3. **Well-being**
- 4. **Pride and identity**
- 5. **Job dignity**
- 6. **Perceptions of conservation**

The survey also looked at changes in their perception of conservation and asked them to describe what they perceived to be the key enabling factors and challenges within their respective programmes. Finally, they were asked to make specific recommendations to policymakers in their country.

Table 3: Overview of survey samples across study sites

Scheme / Programme	Location	Survey details	Programme inception
AMORGORAMA	Greece	The ten most active fishers on the island were interviewed, encompassing a broad spectrum of opinions regarding the AMORGORAMA initiative.	2025
Proyecto Tiburón	México	Six fishers were interviewed, with additional economic evidence drawn from fisher logbooks between 2020 and 2025.	2021
Raja Ampat Dive Guide School	Indonesia	Nine graduates from 2024 and 2025 cohorts were interviewed.	2024
Wild Nurseries	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Three community rangers were interviewed.	2026
Fish for Tomorrow	The Maldives	Eight participating fishers were interviewed, each having been involved in the programme for two to four years.	2021



Right A Fish for Tomorrow officer trains local fisher on the programme’s sustainable fishing standards.

Survey limitations

The survey has several methodological limitations, primarily due to the small sample sizes across project sites. In some cases, this reflects the scale of the programmes themselves: in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Raja Ampat and Mexico, fewer than ten participants had completed or begun the transition at the time of the survey. In the Maldives, participants were selected based on their active involvement in the programmes and willingness to take part. In Greece, participants were selected based on the intensity of their fishing activity and willingness

to take part. Across all sites, time and capacity constraints meant that only a limited sample could be surveyed. Some of the programmes are also nascent, with two having been launched in the last year. For these projects the initial surveys may serve as a baseline assessment and aid in impact tracking going forward. The findings should be interpreted with caution, given the limitations in sample representativeness and the early stage of programme implementation. However, the results still provide useful evidence on participants’ experiences, perceived impacts and recommendations.

RESULTS



Amorgos, Greece

AMORGORAMA

Right Amorgos fisherman, Greece

The Professional Fishing Association of Amorgos “Chozoviotissa” was established in 2003. In 2010, fishers on Amorgos were experiencing declining fish stocks and falling incomes, while also witnessing growing marine pollution, particularly along remote northern beaches that were inaccessible by land. In response, members of “Chozoviotissa”, developed a four-pillar action plan in 2014 aimed at supporting sustainable livelihoods while addressing overfishing and marine pollution, which was at the time neglected by the competent state authorities. The fishers persisted and this vision evolved into the creation of AMORGORAMA in 2019, an initiative led by the Amorgian fishers, proposing (1) cessation of fishing during the key fish spawning months of April and May within 1.5 nautical miles from shore (seasonal FRA); (2) coastal cleanups during seasonal closure; (3) gradual adoption of more selective, environmentally friendly gear and (4) creation of three no-fishing zones (permanent FRAs).



Above Bay on Amorgos Island, Greece.

From the outset, AMORGORAMA was supported by the Municipality of Amorgos, and in 2019 the Cyclades Preservation Fund (CPF) became the first external supporter, providing funding, capacity building, networking opportunities, and visibility. In 2021, the initiative was officially launched with the support of a crowdfunding campaign and in 2022 Blue Marine joined forces, with both organisations providing funding, capacity building, networking opportunities and visibility. Together they secured institutional support through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving the Ministry of Fisheries, the General Secretariat of Island Policy, the Municipality of Amorgos, and the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA). The 2023 fisheries study implemented by AUA funded by Blue Marine and Cyclades Preservation Fund validated and provided scientific credibility to AMORGORAMA and this was ultimately adopted via a Presidential Decree in 2025, officially establishing the FRAs in Amorgos for a five-year period.

‘For us, there was no other way. Our choice was either to abandon our profession and do something completely different—to leave the sea and move onto land— and the fact that our work could no longer provide for us, I think that was the major decision that led us to take action and change the situation.’

MICHALIS, FISHER AND
AMORGORAMA MEMBER

The initiative represents a milestone for marine conservation in Greece, as these are the first community-driven FRAs to be officially designated by the Ministry of Fisheries. Their establishment marks a turning point in national policy, creating a new legislative framework for locally initiated MPAs/FRAs and offering a replicable model for community-led marine protection across the country.

Since November 2025 the AUA, with the financial support of the General Directorate of Fisheries, runs the scientific monitoring for the Amorgos’ FRAs, which will extend until the end of 2029. During this five-year period, collaboration among all stakeholders led by “Chozoviotissa”, Blue Marine and Cyclades Preservation Fund continues, including actions around: (1) enforcement of the FRAs (seasonal and permanent); (2) community-based scientific monitoring; (3) plastic pollution; (4) governance of the FRAs through the establishment of a co-management committee; and (5) communication and dissemination of results.

With the support of Blue Marine, a compensation fund has been set up aimed at supporting the fishers through the seasonal closure. Compensation is conditional, committing them to implement beach cleanups and not displace their fishing activity during the seasonal closure, as well as provide fisheries and other project-related data whenever needed. Participation in the co-management committee and becoming ambassadors and support in the communication of this initiative in events and other communities are also part of the conditions. The total compensation for the fishers for 2025 was approximately 132,000 USD and the per fisher average (based on their historical fishing effort) ranged between 3,500 USD and 5,800 USD. Furthermore, Blue Marine strengthened the association’s operational

capacity by funding a dedicated speedboat and personnel to support awareness-raising efforts and FRA compliance monitoring around Amorgos Island.

The aim of this partnership is to strengthen the collaboration between fishers, civil society, science and policy makers by integrating local ecological knowledge with scientific research and conservation. The active involvement of the fishers is one of the foundational pillars of the management plan, where they lead on conservation, scientific monitoring, clean-up efforts and outreach activities while also contributing local expertise, identifying practical solutions, and taking part in decision-making processes that shape the future of the FRAs. This collaboration is central to achieving effective and lasting marine protection and fisher involvement strengthens community ownership, enhances compliance, and increases the overall credibility and effectiveness of enforcement efforts.

Below Local fishers, Amorgos, Greece.



Socioeconomic survey findings

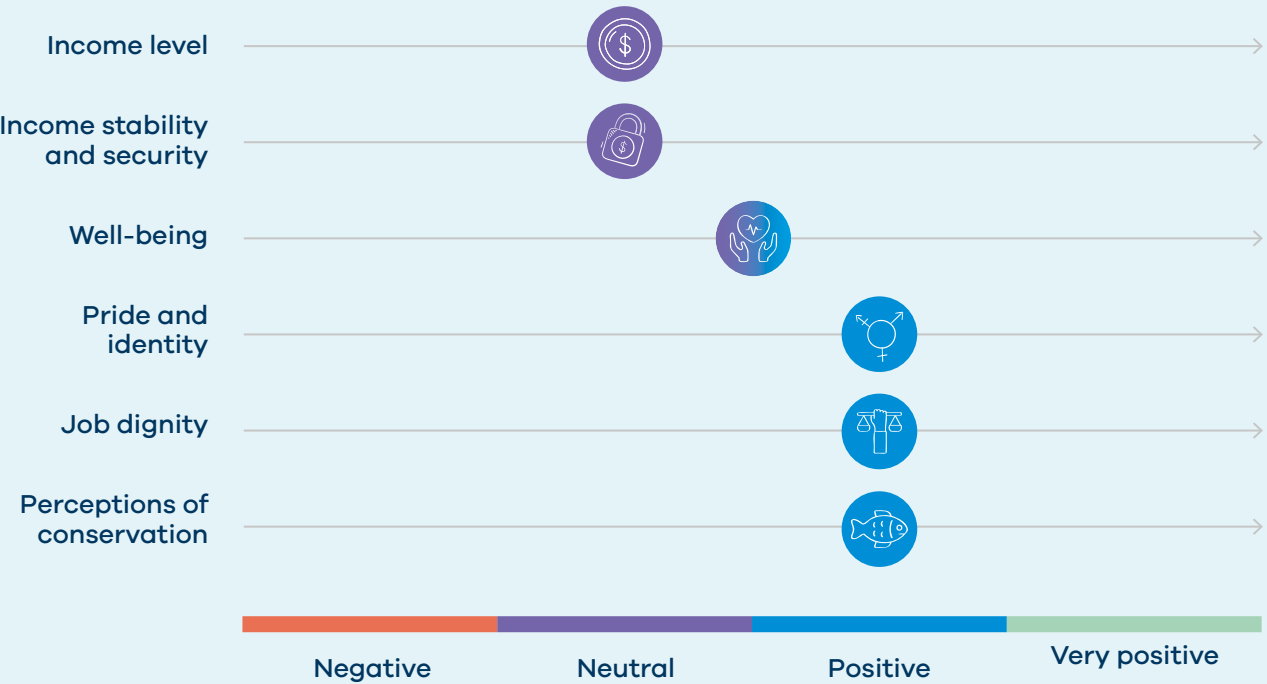


Figure 2: Change in socioeconomic indicators post-transition. Unanimous results are presented on the circle, results with mixed responses are represented in the middle.

There was unanimous understanding that change was needed to halt ecological decline alongside a sense of hope that the programme may be able to support this change. Although quantitative well-being and economic benefits are currently limited, most respondents demonstrated a stronger sense of stewardship, both as fishers and environmental guardians. The compensation mechanism was a key enabling factor incentivising participation and fostering a shared responsibility between fishers, scientists and NGOs.

Length of training for transition

N/A

Cost of transition

Annual compensation of 3,500-5,800 USD per person during closed season for five years. Total cost of ~132,000 USD (114,443 EUR)

Who paid

Blue Marine Foundation (NGO/philanthropy)

Above Local fisher speaking to Blue Marine staff, Amorgos, Greece.

'WE MUST... NOT JUST RESPECT IT, BUT RESPECT IT LIKE WE RESPECT OUR MOTHER, OUR PARENTS — I DON'T KNOW HOW ELSE TO PUT IT. BECAUSE FROM THE MOMENT THE SEA PROVIDES US, THROUGH OUR PROFESSION, WITH OUR ENTIRE LIVES — OUR OWN LIVES, THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN, OUR CREWS, AND THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH — BECAUSE THIS IS NOT JUST ONE PROFESSION; THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE CONNECTED TO IT — THERE MUST BE ENORMOUS RESPECT.'

NIKOLAS V., FISHER AND MEMBER OF AMORGORAMA

Benefits

One of the most prominent positive impacts of the programme was the strong sense of collective stewardship. Eight of the ten respondents reported a stronger sense of pride as a result of participating in the programme, noting its collective approach, its role in setting an example for other fishing communities, and its fisher-led design.

Due to the early stages of the project, there remained some questions about the potential

success of the programme. However, most agreed on the need for change from 'business as usual' in order to protect their livelihoods. Reduction in the weight and size of catch and more dependence on lower-value species leading to income insecurity was noted by nearly all respondents. Even those who were less confident about the long-term outcomes of AMORGORAMA viewed it as one of the few viable approaches for addressing the continued decline of fish stocks around the island.

9) <https://reviveourocean.org/stories/reviving-the-most-overfished-sea-on-our-planet/>

Challenges and trade-offs

The most significant economic impact for fishers participating in AMORGORAMA is the total loss of fishing income during the fishing closure period in April and May. Survey results suggested that access to compensation plays a fundamental role in securing support for the management plan and associated FRAs around Amorgos. The compensation mechanism is a key enabling condition for participation and support for the conservation measures as only five of the ten respondents indicated full support for the closure with partial support strongly influenced by the compensation scheme. This indicates the need to continue trust building with the community and ensure results of the closures are monitored and reported so tangible impacts of the programme can be seen by the fishers.

'It was very difficult for two months to see our boats in the harbour, because the weather was also good. We remember what we used to catch in those days, during those seasons. It wasn't easy.' Michalis, fisher and member of AMORGORAMA

At present, compensation is funded through NGO and philanthropic support. However, scaling this approach will require broader financing mechanisms,

including government-backed compensation schemes. The long-term objective is to promote recovering fish stocks, both in terms of abundance and biomass, and to generate sufficient increases in catch productivity during the open season to offset income losses from fishery closures. Similar outcomes have been seen in other locations, such as Gökova Bay MPA in Turkey⁹. Until these ecological benefits are realised, transitional compensation remains essential to support fishers and maintain participation in management measures.

Respondents also highlighted a number of other challenges associated with the programme. These included the economic and cultural impacts of reduced access to traditional fishing grounds, given the long-standing importance of fishing as both a livelihood and way of life on the island. Several respondents also reported difficulties with the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) technology required under the programme, expressing concerns that its complexity and ongoing maintenance requirements may create barriers for older fishers with more limited technical capacity. Another important concern that was raised was the potential risk that improved fish stocks due to the FRAs may attract additional fishing effort over time, putting additional pressure on fish stocks around the island, resulting in overfishing.

Recommendations for policymakers by respondents

1. **Stronger communication on why the programme is in place, who receives compensation and why, what benefits are expected and how these will be measured and reported.**
2. **Direct fisher participation in decision-making.**
3. **Robust science, monitoring, and enforcement with transparent reporting.**
4. **Financial support and the provision of viable transition options when necessary.**
5. **Implementation of broader management efforts including strong enforcement, more selective gear, measures to prevent displacement to other areas, and a focus on recreational fishing.**

Maldives

Fish for Tomorrow

This page photo UnSplash

The Maldives' atolls are the jewels of the Indian Ocean. Its reef system is the seventh largest in the world and the largest in the Indian Ocean. Tourists visiting the Maldives enjoy the dual elements of marine life on the island, experiencing thriving fish populations on dives and snorkels, and enjoying the consumption of varied fish and seafood products. The popularity of tourism on the islands has grown exponentially over the last fifty years – growing from just 280 beds in holiday accommodation in the 1970s, to over 65,000 in 2024¹⁰. This alongside a nationwide lack of effective coral reef fisheries management has led to tourism-driven overfishing of reef fish

being one of the biggest threats facing Maldivian coral reefs today.

In response to this crisis, Maldives Resilient Reefs (MRR) and Blue Marine established the Fish for Tomorrow programme (FFTP) in partnership with Six Senses Laamu in 2020. The FFTP ensures that the seafood sourced by tourism operators has been caught in an equitable and sustainable way, with minimal ecological impact on the marine environment. By working alongside local fishers, the FFTP provides a sustainable local seafood market, where fishers are not seen as the issue to overfishing, but central to the solution.

10) Tourism Yearbook, 2025 <https://www.tourism.gov.mv/dms/document/629df33203a52282d500db5cb605788b.pdf>

The programme stipulates a code of conduct across multiple sustainable fishing criteria. Fishers are expected to: 1) follow minimum size limits and release all juvenile fish; 2) release all nationally protected species and species protected for conservation concerns through the FFTP; 3) use sustainable fishing methods (e.g. handlines, droplines, trolling) and never use banned or destructive methods (e.g. nets, longlines, jigging); 4) never fish from within protected areas or among known spawning aggregations; 5) maintain catch quality and follow seafood storage guidelines; and 6) fully document their catch when selling to the tourism operators.

In return for this compliance, fishers gain access to a guaranteed seafood marketplace, which offers various incentives for committed fishers. These include quarterly fisher meetings for registered fishers, monthly landing data reports, and rejection of any seafood which is undersized or protected. The resort then provides a stable and guaranteed market and a higher price for local seafood. Through embracing a participatory co-management approach, the programme has been able to ensure open dialogue between the tourism sector and local fishers to enable the programme to remain flexible and responsive to differing perspectives and external variables.

Further to resort seafood purchasing, the FFTP also incorporates a citizen science programme for tourists alongside a code of conduct to inform sustainable tourism recreational reef fishing practices. The FFTP recreational fishing code of conduct ensures tourists responsibly enjoy their fishing trip.

This enables the local community and the tourism sector to foster a shared responsibility for the health of the surrounding environment that they both depend on, cultivating a shared sense of marine environmental stewardship between locals and visitors.

'BY PROTECTING CERTAIN AREAS, WE ENSURE THAT JUVENILE SPECIES ARE NOT CAUGHT OR HARVESTED. WHEN THESE SPECIES ARE ALLOWED TO MATURE, THE RESULTING BENEFITS ARE SHARED BY EVERYONE RIGHT?'

KHALID, FFTP FISHER

'FOR SOMEONE WHO GENUINELY WANTS TO PROGRESS AND WORKS WITH DETERMINATION, THIS INITIATIVE PROVIDES A GOOD INCOME AND A STABLE LIFE.'

YOOSUF, FFTP FISHER

Below Fish for Tomorrow fishers, Laamu Atoll, Maldives.





Above Fisher and Maldives Resilient Reefs staff, Fish for Tomorrow, Maldives.

Socioeconomic survey findings

All eight respondents saw a positive increase in income and livelihood security due to more market reliability. This translated to increased well-being and more positive attitudes toward conservation among most participants. Concerns about climate change and its impact on fisheries were prominent in all responses. This was linked with clear understanding that MPAs and sustainable fisheries may help mitigate this risk. Overall, the fishers asked for more representation and communication from decision makers which would help improve a general community shift towards more resilient fisheries and livelihoods.

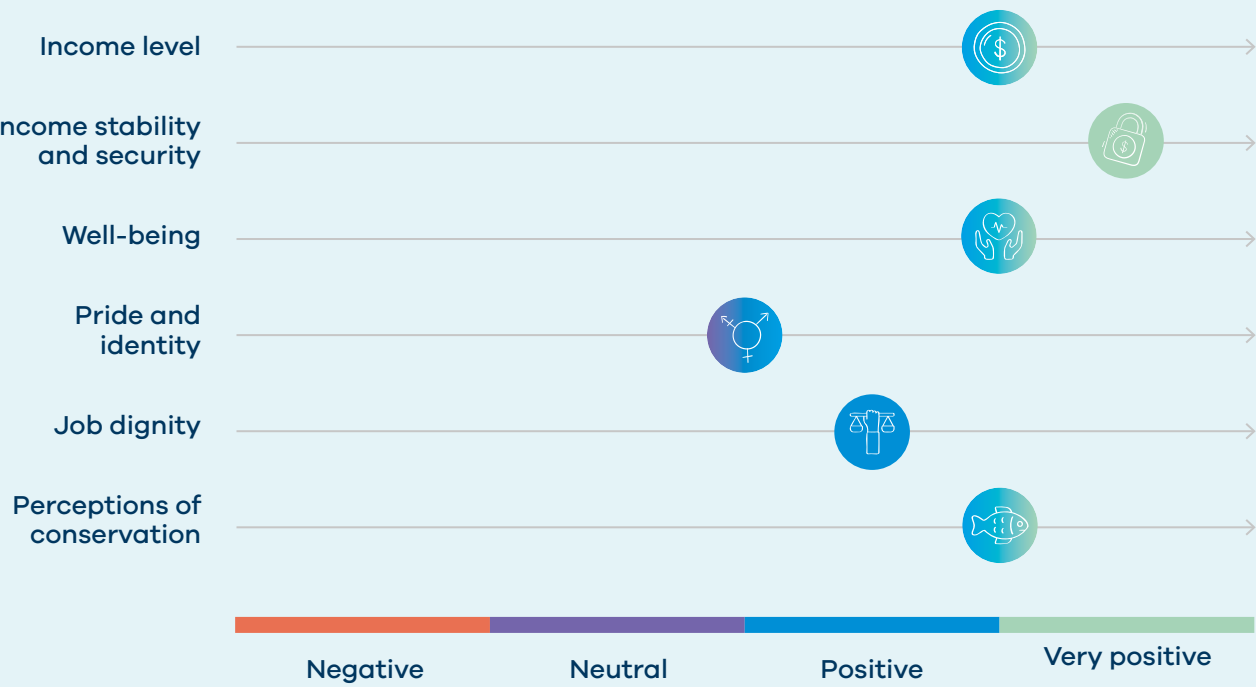


Figure 3: Change in socioeconomic indicators post-transition. Unanimous results are presented on the circle, results with mixed responses are represented in the middle.

Benefits

Motivations for participating in the programme included a general concern about the steady decline of fish stocks and the need to do something about it. **In the short term, premium prices offered by the resort for fishers have led to a fourfold increase in value of the programme participants’ catch (from 10MVR to 40MVR per kg).** This economic incentive serves as an important pillar of the programme. This form of private sector collaboration that benefits fishers, tourists and the environment, can help build longevity in sustainability and conservation efforts and promote a sense of shared responsibility for the marine environment.

Seven out of eight surveyed participants indicated that income security and stability have increased primarily due to improvements in predictability of income coming from the programme. This also applied to respondents who did not report increased income but did report increased income security. Improvements in well-being linked to income security and ability to spend more time with family was referenced by three respondents and was identified as a key benefit of the programme. Respondents also demonstrated nearly unanimous support for MPAs and other conservation measures, citing their contribution to fish stock recovery and the growth of sustainable tourism opportunities.

Challenges and trade-offs

All respondents indicated a concern about the impacts of climate change on their livelihood. This highlights that although these programmes can help with short- to medium-term income benefits, there must be a broader effort to mitigate the effects of climate change and build climate resilient coastal environments. This was complemented by a desire from over half of respondents to see more awareness-raising on sustainable fisheries and their ecological and economic impacts as part of these programmes.

Equity and inclusion were highlighted as a potential challenge to scalability. Six out of eight of the fishers believed the resort gains more than the fishers from the programme and would like to see those benefits distributed more equitably.

Length of training for transition

A few days

Cost of transition

~750 USD per fisherman including resort staff time, educational materials, and quarterly meetings

Who paid

Six Senses Resort Sustainability fund and Maldives Resilient Reefs (private sector and NGO)

Recommendations for policymakers by respondents

1. Stronger management and enforcement including rangers and surveillance.
2. Meaningful community consultation where fishers’ views are listened to and respected.
3. Better communication and awareness raising – both about conservation management measures, sustainable fisheries, and the link between a healthy marine environment and improved socioeconomic outcomes.

Mexico

Proyecto Tiburón

Agua Amarga is a coastal fishing community located in Baja California Sur in the Sea of Cortez, where livelihoods have historically depended on shark fishing and associated value chains. The region forms part of a highly biodiverse marine ecosystem often dubbed the 'Aquarium of the World' due to the abundance of fish, turtles, elasmobranchs, and marine mammals. The area is also home to over 8 million people who rely on the surrounding marine resources.

In Agua Amarga there is a traditional dependence on shark fishing which has led to ecological degradation and economic vulnerability as shark populations remain under pressure from both artisanal and industrial fishing, with broader threats linked

to unsustainable resource use across the region. Shark fishing provides relatively low and unstable returns, often requiring long hours, high fuel costs and exposure to dangerous working conditions. This led some community members to recognise that the activity is physically demanding and economically uncertain, which is where 'Proyecto Tiburón' began.

'Proyecto Tiburón' was started in 2021 when the ORGCAS – a female-run conservation NGO – partnered with local shark fishers to transform their livelihoods from being dependent on shark fishing, to ones linked with eco-tourism and scientific research. Equipment, training, and boats are provided by the ORGCAS, allowing the fishers to use their extensive knowledge of the region and its biodiversity to begin guiding

'WHENEVER I WAS FISHING, OUT AT SEA, AND I SAW A... THE FIN OF A SHARK, IT WAS LET ME... LET'S CAST THE HOOK, LET'S TRY TO CATCH IT, LOOK, SHARKS ARE PASSING BY, RIGHT NOW IS WHEN WE SHOULD SET THIS GEAR TO CATCH THIS SHARK. NOW, NO. NOW IT'S DIFFERENT. YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT IT DIFFERENTLY.'

PANCHO, EX-SHARK FISHER



Above Fisher's meeting in Agua Amarga, Baja California Sur.

expeditions that educate others and strengthen their sense of ocean stewardship. By involving former fishers in data collection, monitoring and citizen science, the project integrates conservation and science, further embedding a sense of them as custodians of the sea.

This transition is based on a clear economic proposition: live sharks generate significantly higher and more sustained value through tourism than through fishing.

Key components of the transition model include:

- **Conversion of fishing vessels into tourism boats (pangas) and provision of equipment**
- **Training in tourism operations, safety, guiding and environmental education**
- **Establishment of tourism cooperatives and organisational structures**
- **Development of codes of conduct and sustainable tourism standards**
- **Capacity building in financial management, governance and entrepreneurship**

Implementation has already demonstrated tangible results. So far, nine shark fishers in Agua Amarga have transitioned to alternative livelihoods in tourism and science, all of them ceasing shark fishing activity in favour of guided expeditions. The nine fishers have now formed their own tour companies, such as Nativo Expeditions, and are independently running services for tourism and research. By aligning economic incentives with ecosystem protection, the 'Proyecto Tiburón' model creates a scalable template for other fishing communities across Baja California Sur.

Socioeconomic survey findings

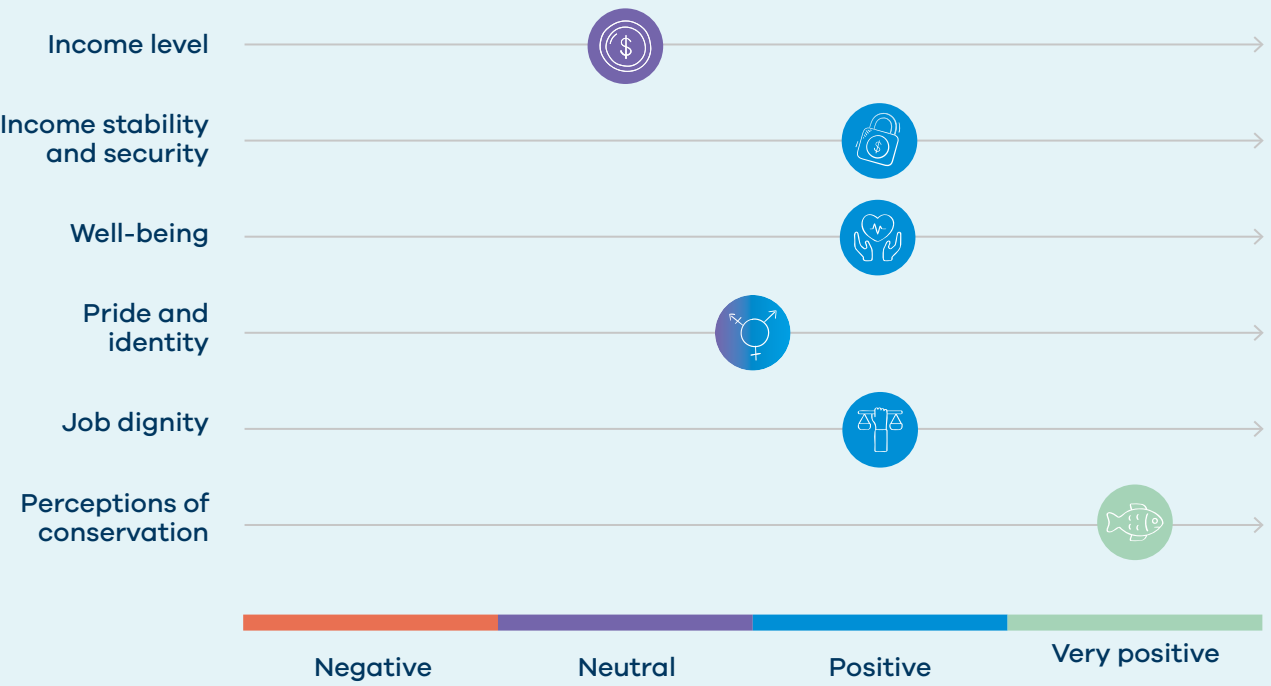
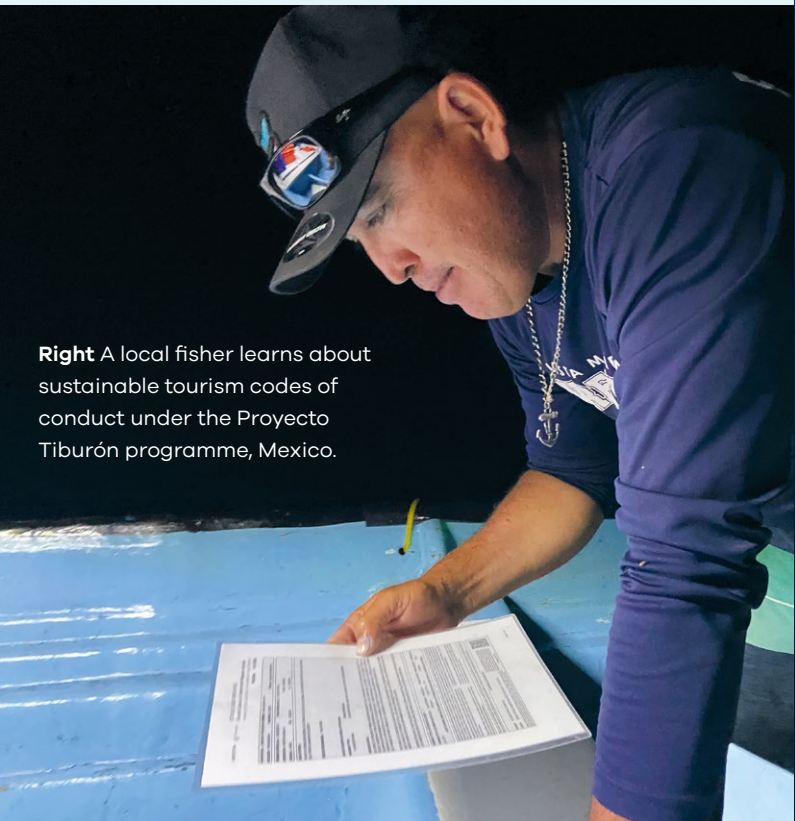


Figure 4: Change in socioeconomic indicators post-transition. Unanimous results are presented on the circle, results with mixed responses are represented in the middle.

While respondents generally reported positive outcomes in terms of income security, stability and pride in their work, some respondents highlighted challenges like skills requirements, income lost during training, and inequitable benefit sharing. Support for conservation for nearly all participants has grown since joining the programme and increased safety and financial sustainability within the tourism sector was noted by five out of six respondents.

The findings suggest that livelihood diversification, rather than complete fishing cessation, offers a transition pathway that can improve income stability, strengthen conservation attitudes, and enhance community standing, while taking into consideration the cultural identity of the participants.



Right A local fisher learns about sustainable tourism codes of conduct under the Proyecto Tiburón programme, Mexico.



‘WELL, HONESTLY, MAINLY BEFORE, FOR EXAMPLE, WE DIDN’T APPRECIATE THE WILDLIFE AS MUCH, AND NOW I’VE HONESTLY GROWN FOND OF THE ANIMALS... I LOOK AT ANIMALS DIFFERENTLY TODAY BECAUSE BEFORE IT WAS JUST WHATEVER, AND TODAY I ACTUALLY GET EXCITED... I GET MORE EXCITED ABOUT IT AND ALL THOSE THINGS.’ CHELINSIN, EX-SHARK FISHER

Benefits

Most participants reported a significant improvement in income stability following the transition, even where overall income levels remained similar or increased only modestly. The shift to tourism-based livelihoods provided more predictable earnings, improving financial security and enabling longer-term planning.

Five out of six respondents reported increased pride in their work alongside a stronger sense of identity, linked to their contribution to environmental stewardship, safer working conditions, and expanded skills and responsibilities. Community perceptions of their work had also improved, with all participants noting that others in the community now view their roles more positively. Nearly all participants reported improvements in community

perceptions, job satisfaction, and pride in their work, highlighting the programme’s positive social impacts. Notably, all participants stated that they would recommend the transition to others, reflecting the value they place on the opportunity despite the challenges encountered.

Conservation is viewed more positively by all participants since joining the programme. They are supportive of management measures that support conservation and believe that relieving the pressure on the environment through the cessation of shark fishing has been beneficial for the ocean. This is a positive sign that with the right incentives, support and stewardship can improve leading to more successful outcomes for biodiversity and people.

Challenges and trade-offs

The most frequently cited challenges included skills gaps, equipment costs, and conflicts with other fishers, alongside a sense of cultural identity loss among some participants. Participants noted that they felt they were often responsible for covering equipment, training, and certification expenses, while five of the six respondents experienced periods of reduced income during the transition. Although many of the costs were covered through philanthropic support, costs to fishers remain a potential barrier for scalability and inclusion.

Two former fishers reported a sense of lost identity following the transition, highlighting that while economic outcomes were generally positive, the social and cultural dimensions of livelihood change were more complex and required careful consideration. Equity and inclusion were often cited as potential barriers to entry and scaling of this type of programme. Barriers to entry due to language abilities, education, and age (which was referenced by all respondents) meant perceived participation remained limited.

Length of training for transition

1-3 months

Cost of transition

Total transition costs for nine fishers: ~100,000 USD. This includes two vessels at ~90,000 USD alongside licences, certificates and permits for two vessels, costing 10,000 USD annually.

Who paid

ORGCAS (NGO/philanthropy)

'...NOW MY NIECE AND MY SON WANT TO TAKE GUIDE COURSES, GET TRAINED AS WELL, SO HELPING THEM OUT THERE, BECAUSE HONESTLY ALL OF THAT COSTS MONEY TOO. AND LATER ON, THE EQUIPMENT ONE MUST HAVE... WE HAVE MADE A LOT OF EFFORT, NOT BOAT EQUIPMENT, BUT SOMETIMES I FEEL WE LACK HAVING PROPER WETSUITS, QUALITY MASKS, THINGS LIKE THAT. HELPING OUT A BIT, AND ONE PAYING BACK BY... NOT GIFTING, BUT PAYING BACK LATER.'

PANCHO, EX-SHARK FISHER.



Above An ex-shark fisher points at a map during a workshop in Agua Amarga, Mexico.

Recommendations for policymakers by respondents

1. Increased access to skills and learning opportunities for different age and gender groups to promote inclusion and participation.
2. Financial support provided during the transition period for equipment and capacity building.
3. Community education and outreach programmes to promote uptake and support behaviour change within communities.

Indonesia

Raja Ampat Dive Guide School

Raja Ampat, located in eastern Indonesia at the heart of the Coral Triangle, is one of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems on Earth. Covering approximately 4.6 million hectares and hosting around 75 per cent of the world's coral species, it supports exceptional fish and coral diversity that underpins both local fisheries and a rapidly growing tourism sector. However, this ecological and economic value is increasingly at risk from unsustainable resource use, population growth, and development pressures. As tourism rebounds following COVID-19, the region faces a critical moment: rising visitor numbers bring revenue and opportunity, but also intensify the need for strong management, enforcement, and meaningful local participation in the tourism economy.

Below Reef restoration in Raja Ampat.



Above Papuan children receiving marine education, Raja Ampat, Indonesia.

Communities around the Raja Ampat MPA, which covers around two million hectares, face the dual challenge of environmental degradation and limited economic alternatives for surrounding communities. Illegal and destructive fishing practices continue to threaten reef ecosystems and fish stocks, while the MPA is constrained by limited enforcement capacity.

At the same time, many local community members, despite deep connections to the marine environment, lack the access to the training and resources that would be needed to transition into alternative livelihoods. High certification costs and limited locally delivered training have historically excluded young Papuans from participating fully in the tourism economy, reinforcing reliance on fishing and, in some cases, driving damaging practices.

Since 2017, the Raja Ampat SEA Centre Foundation has offered and delivered a dive training programme that provides a holistic model combining professional dive certifications with English language teaching, hospitality and marine conservation training. This creates accessible pathways for young Papuans to enter the sustainable tourism sector.

It has also established a marine ranger programme, recruiting and training local community members to patrol key reef areas, monitor biodiversity and work alongside local police and government agencies to reduce illegal activities. This is complemented by systematic monitoring of coral cover, fish biomass and reef health, as well as community-led restoration of damaged reefs. Together, these efforts strengthen the effectiveness of marine protection while embedding conservation capacity within local communities. By lowering financial and access barriers and embedding training locally, the programme links economic opportunity with conservation outcomes.

Through its integrated and locally grounded approach, the Raja Ampat SEA Centre Foundation demonstrates how conservation and economic development can be aligned. By placing local communities at the centre of enforcement, monitoring and tourism, the model not only protects one of the world's most valuable marine ecosystems but also ensures that its long-term sustainability is driven by those who depend on it most.

Socioeconomic survey findings

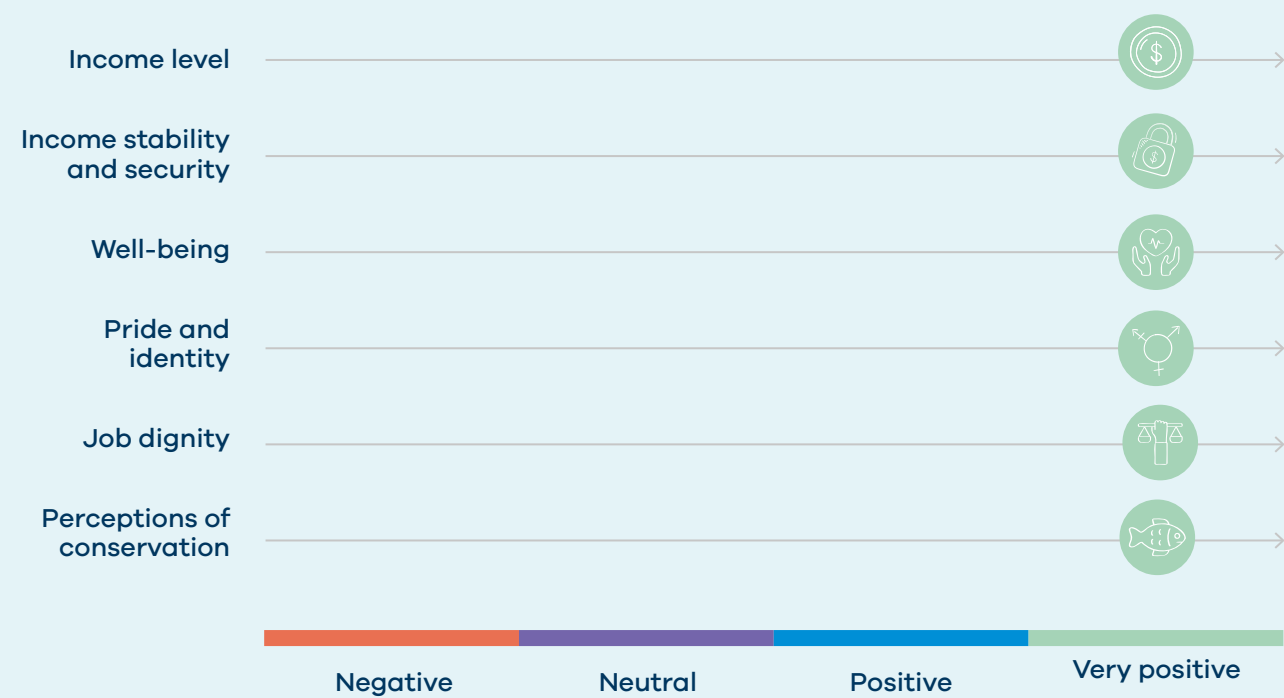


Figure 5: Change in socioeconomic indicators post-transition. Unanimous results are presented on the circle, results with mixed responses are represented in the middle.

For all nine SEA Centre Dive School graduates, the transition into the ecotourism sector generated improvements across income, wellbeing, pride, identity, conservation awareness and future security.

All respondents indicated improvements to total income, income stability and future security. Improvements in job dignity, pride, and wellbeing were seen across all the graduates with some highlighting their emerging positions as role models and environmental ambassadors within their communities. Their unanimous support for the MPA and related conservation measures was closely linked to respondents' growing understanding that healthy reefs and oceans underpin local livelihoods. The principal challenge was not conservation itself, but acquiring the skills, confidence and language abilities needed to succeed in professional tourism and conservation careers.



Below Divers conduct coral reef restoration, Raja Ampat, Indonesia.

Benefits

All respondents indicated a higher income, sometimes ten times their pre-transition income (for example from IDR <100,000 to IDR 1 million). Not only was the total income higher, but it was also more stable and more secure. Participants attributed these improvements to the increased reliability of their income, which reduced financial uncertainty and enhanced their ability to plan for household needs and future priorities.

All respondents reported increased pride in their work, which they associated with improved wellbeing, greater confidence, enhanced knowledge of diving and marine conservation, and a stronger sense of stewardship within their community. Eight out of nine respondents cited how their work is seen more positively within the community due to interest coming from young people and other community members seeking information on how to become guides and how to access these opportunities.

All respondents highlighted their support for conservation measures and MPAs in the area and indicated that they felt more hopeful toward the positive impact conservation measures can have. This is linked to greater awareness of the biodiversity around them, an understanding of the link between biodiversity and tourism, and an enhanced sense of responsibility around their local seas.

Challenges and trade-offs

The aim for graduates of the programme is to find consistent work as dive guides, or more broadly in the tourism sector. However, six out of the nine respondents noted that skill gaps, particularly around language, remain a key challenge and one they collectively would like further training on. This would enable them to engage better with tourists using their services. Four out of nine of the respondents also noted that due to the increased responsibility of their new professions, free time that they had before to spend with family and relax has been lost, highlighting a general cultural shift caused by this new profession.

Length of training for transition

13 weeks

Cost of transition

1,500 USD for accommodation and subsistence, 1,500 USD for certifications

Who paid

Papua Explorers and Raja Ampat SEA Centre (private sector and NGO)

Recommendations for policymakers by respondents

1. Long-term funding support to establish and maintain initiatives.
2. Incentives to drive market demand and participation from the tourism sector to engage in and finance such initiatives.
3. Dedicated skills improvement and training support.
4. Locally led governance structures that support broader inclusion.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Wild Nurseries

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) is home to some of the Caribbean's most vibrant marine ecosystems, encompassing verdant seagrass beds and abundant coral reefs. These include culturally and commercially significant species such as the queen conch, reef fish, sharks and lobsters. The ocean is integral not just for ecosystem functioning and climate adaptation, but also to everyday life in SVG – underpinning food security, livelihoods and local identity. Despite this intrinsic reliance, marine protection in SVG remains severely fragmented and poorly enforced with only 83 km² (0.23 per cent) of its waters fully or highly protected, and existing MPAs lacking sufficient enforcement.

Fishing also poses a significant threat to SVG's waters. Local communities are heavily dependent on marine resources but face long-term insecurity. Baseline surveys conducted in 2022 revealed critical overexploitation of species like the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*), which has suffered regional stock declines, endangering marine biodiversity and jeopardising local livelihoods. Additionally, due to depleting stocks and conch moving into deeper waters, they were seeing increased human wellbeing risks with divers going deeper for longer to make a living. Compounded by the accelerating pressures of climate change, action was necessary to protect marine ecosystems in

Above Lobster v-notching, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Stephan Hornsey.

a way that is both ecologically sound and socio-economically viable.

In response to this challenge and based on scientific evidence, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund (SVGEF) established a marine ranger programme through the Wild Nurseries Project. This program equips local fisherfolk with the necessary skills and knowledge to become active environmental stewards of the marine environment on which their lives depend, protecting nursery areas for conch that will in turn help restore conch populations in the longer term.

These rangers were carefully selected based on their deep knowledge of the local fisheries, their standing as highly respected boat captains and fisherfolk, and their willingness to learn about and protect the habitats and species they depend on. Rangers are trained through specialised educational sessions on fisheries sustainability and marine conservation. Topics include: (1) SVG's local Fisheries Regulations; (2) Lobster biology and ecology; (3) MPA science; (4) A practical approach to MPAs (designing your dream MPA).

The project has also created a community-led reporting mechanism. This is a significant feature, given that daily life in small communities, especially fishing communities, depends heavily on maintaining positive relationships. Channelled through our rangers, this system provides a safe and confidential space for reports of illegal fishing activities or infractions that can be shared and documented.

Alongside the direct creation of local employment, increased conch and lobster populations, stemming from these efforts, will safeguard future fish landings. This will, in turn, secure income and livelihoods for fishers. Empowering fishers further, regular meetings offer a crucial platform, allowing them to actively contribute to fisheries management discussions and ensuring their long-term support for conservation efforts.

The inclusive approach is both replicable and scalable, providing a template for how other SIDS facing similar challenges can pursue sustainable, community-driven conservation.

Socioeconomic survey findings

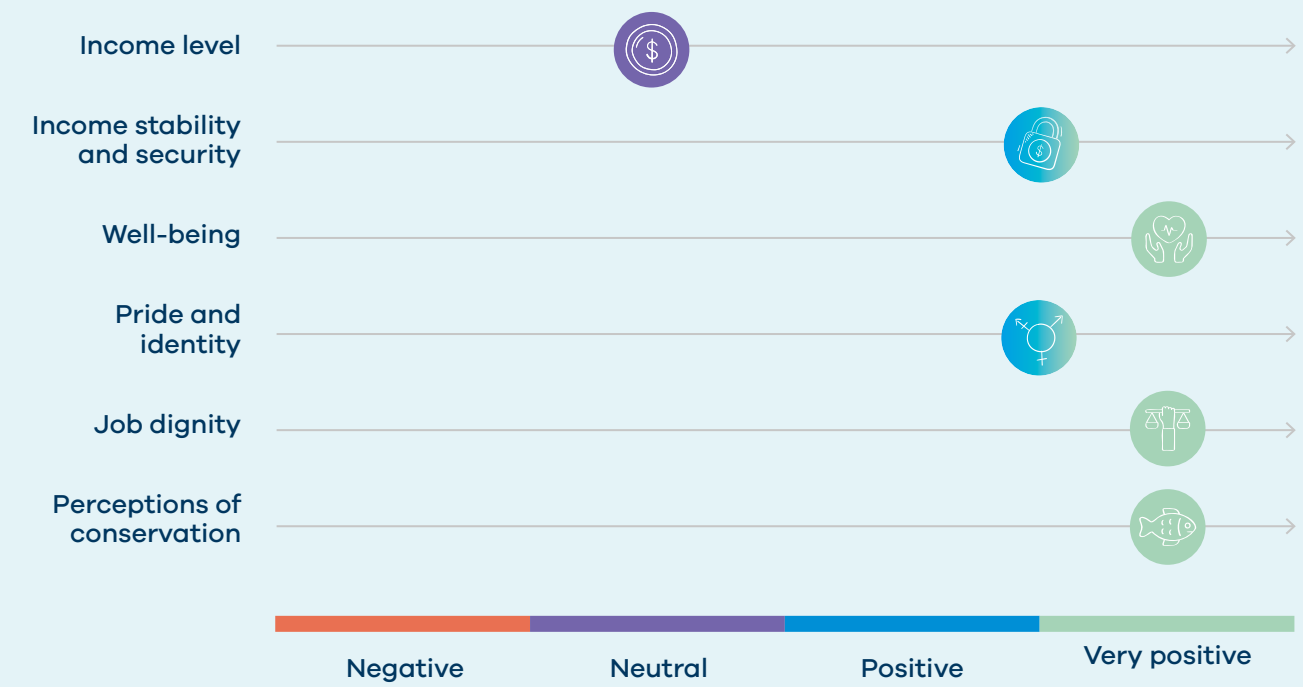


Figure 6: Change in socioeconomic indicators post-transition. Unanimous results are presented on the circle, results with mixed responses are represented in the middle.

All three participants indicated that their reasons for transitioning were due to observed ecological decline and a desire to protect these resources into the future. This demonstrates that participation was primarily based on stewardship rather than income generation. Overall, improvements in wellbeing, income security and stability, pride and general support for conservation were reported among all respondents. Respondents further highlighted a stronger sense of pride and stewardship from the programme, despite challenges from community resistance.



Benefits

All respondents reported greater income security due to more stable and predictable earnings, increased flexibility and less physically demanding work. However, improvements in wellbeing extended beyond economic factors and were attributed to increased pride, confidence, sense of purpose and opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge. These findings highlight that although the supplementary income was welcome, participants valued the stability and predictability of their income more.

Additionally, all respondents found that since joining the programme they have greater pride and satisfaction in their work. These positive improvements were linked to the knowledge that they were preserving important species, contributing to positive environmental change and protecting the marine environment for future generations.

All respondents supported the conservation measures in place due to increased awareness and observed conservation benefits. There was a general understanding that MPAs will support conch and lobster recovery with short-term restrictions being outweighed by the long-term benefits. Overall, the respondents all acknowledged their roles as stewards of their ocean and the importance of conservation measures for ocean recovery.

‘In the community it is half and half – some look at me as the person trying to make a change, and some look at me like someone who is going against the fishing community who was in the fishing community all their life.’

Kirk, fisherman and Wild Nurseries ranger

Challenges and trade-offs

Despite overall improvements in social outcomes, all three respondents reported tensions within the wider community following their transition into ranger roles. Perceptions of participants in the programme as going against the community were noted by two of the three respondents, demonstrating the need to socialise the roles, their purpose, and the expected environmental and socioeconomic benefits with the communities more broadly.

Length of training for transition
2 weeks
Cost of transition
800 USD for certification and equipment costs
Who paid
Covered by Wild Nurseries programme, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund (philanthropy)

Recommendations for policymakers by respondents

- Stronger enforcement including increases in capacity and equipment and the need for clarity in regulations and community-led surveillance.**
- Increased fisher participation and consideration in the decision-making process to ensure local ecological and cultural knowledge is incorporated.**
- Financial support to scale up livelihood programmes that increase environmental awareness and foster community stewardship.**

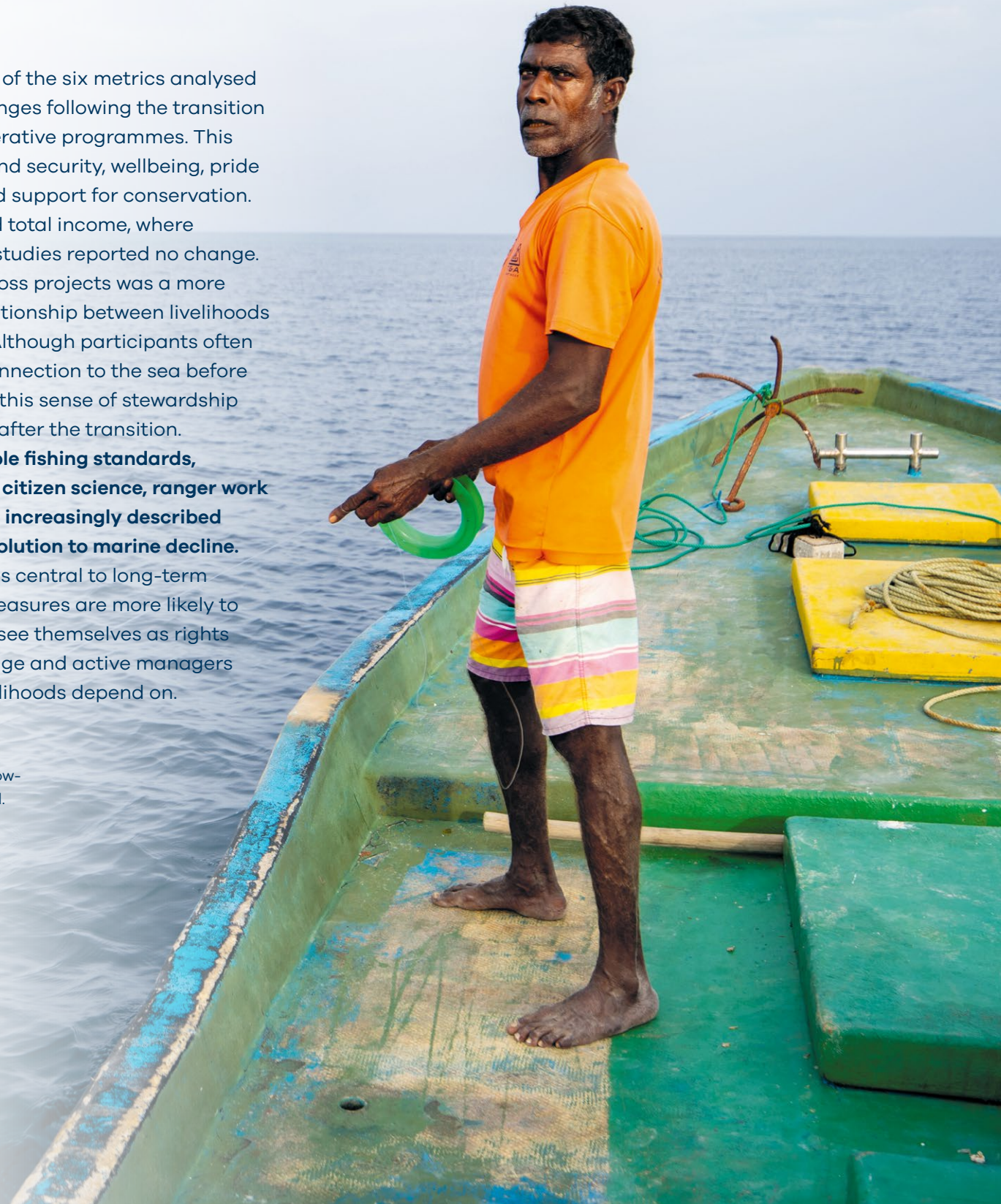
DISCUSSION

Across all case studies, five of the six metrics analysed demonstrated positive changes following the transition into their respective regenerative programmes. This included income stability and security, wellbeing, pride and identity, job dignity and support for conservation. The only outlier was around total income, where respondents in some case studies reported no change. The strongest outcome across projects was a more secure and meaningful relationship between livelihoods and marine conservation. Although participants often had an existing sense of connection to the sea before joining these programmes, this sense of stewardship became more pronounced after the transition.

Whether through sustainable fishing standards, seasonal closures, tourism, citizen science, ranger work or monitoring, participants increasingly described themselves as part of the solution to marine decline.

Fostering this stewardship is central to long-term success as conservation measures are more likely to endure when communities see themselves as rights holders, sources of knowledge and active managers of the ecosystems their livelihoods depend on.

This page Maldivian fisher using low-impact fishing gear in Laamu Atoll.



Transitions within fisheries and transitions away from fisheries create different economic, social and ecological trade-offs. Transitions within fisheries, as seen in the Maldives and Greece, can be less disruptive because they allow fishers to retain their skills, identity and connection to the sea, while improving market incentives, management practices or seasonal protection. Economically, they may strengthen income stability without requiring a full livelihood shift, although they often depend on compensation or financial incentives through new demand levers. Ecologically, their success depends on whether fishing pressure is genuinely reduced or made less harmful, rather than displaced elsewhere.

By contrast, transitions away from fisheries, as seen in Mexico, Indonesia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, may offer clearer reductions in direct fishing pressure, allowing stocks to recover and open new routes into tourism, conservation or ranger work. However, they usually involve higher barriers to entry and greater social and cultural adjustment, and a risk that environmental pressure is shifted across to another sector. Across both pathways, the evidence suggests that livelihood transitions are most likely to be regenerative when they improve income security, protect dignity and identity, and have clearly communicated conservation aims.

Transitions within fisheries (Maldives and Greece)

What worked and what enabled success

Transitions within fisheries aim to reduce pressure on the marine environment while allowing fishers to remain in the sector. The projects in the Maldives and Greece show two different routes: FFTP improved transparency and sustainable sourcing to financially reward better practice, while AMORGORAMA uses fisher-led seasonal and permanent closures to reduce pressure and rebuild stewardship supported by a compensation mechanism.

In the Maldives, the strongest benefit was not only higher prices, but more predictable income for fishers selling into an uncertain local market. In Greece, the main strength is legitimacy. AMORGORAMA was initiated by fishers themselves in response to declining catches, smaller fish and marine pollution. Survey findings suggest that pride, local leadership and a shared recognition of decline are as important as immediate economic gains.

The enabling condition in both cases is a credible financial incentive. In the Maldives, this mechanism is the value chain: resorts buy fish that meet programme standards at a higher price and in return fishers receive a more reliable market. In Greece, the mechanism is co-management: fishers helped propose closures and FRAs which gives the measures local credibility, and for this they receive financial compensation to ensure the management measures are enforced. Similar outcomes have been observed in Belize's managed access programme and Chile's Territorial Use Rights for Fisheries (TURF) system, where access rights, fisher-led committees, and co-management arrangements have strengthened stewardship and resource management when supported by effective institutions (see Annex 1).

seasonal closure, when fishers lose access to fishing grounds and associated income. However, a more persistent trade-off exists throughout the year for small vessels (under 8 m), as two of the three permanent FRAs encompass the island's main fishing ports. During periods of adverse weather, which are frequent in Amorgos, fishers can no longer access the nearby sheltered fishing grounds they traditionally relied upon as they lack the capacity to reach more distant grounds, and so their fishing boats remain moored in the ports. These restrictions impose immediate economic costs, while ecological recovery and any future gains in catch size, biomass or income will take longer to appear. Therefore, compensation is central to fairness and participation, as the FRAs are still new, with commitment and ownership currently driven more by hope and expectations for future benefits than by tangible results.

Limitations, risks and trade-offs

The main limitation across both cases is that impacts are still uncertain and uneven. In the Maldives, the programme has improved income security, but there is not yet clear evidence of reduced fishing effort: six of the eight fishers interviewed still sell some fish outside the programme, but at a significantly smaller proportion. This highlights that the transition cannot always be absolute and may be built more around diversification and a gradual shift, rather than complete livelihood change. Several respondents also felt resorts benefited more than fishers, which points to a benefit-sharing risk if the model scales through tourism demand alone.

In Greece, the establishment of the FRAs creates both short-term and longer-term trade-offs for fishers. The most pronounced impact occurs during the two-month

The risks are different in each case. In the Maldives, dependence on a small number of resort buyers could limit fisher bargaining power unless the model expands across the tourism sector and is backed by stronger incentives. Fishers also raised concerns about climate change and declining fish availability, underlining that sustainable sourcing alone cannot protect livelihoods if reef ecosystems continue to degrade or if younger people see little future in fishing. In Greece, the risks centre on compensation, enforcement and trust. If payments are delayed, rules are unevenly enforced, more fishing licences are issued or technologies such as VMS create practical burdens, then the model risks losing legitimacy before benefits become visible. Examples from other temporary closure programmes globally have experienced similar results (see Annex 1).

Below Members of AMORGORAMA Initiative conduct patrol, Greece. **Photo** Giorgos Moutafis.



Scalability

Lessons from these two pilot initiatives provide valuable insights into the conditions required for similar approaches to be successfully expanded and replicated at scale. Scaling the Maldives model from one resort partnership to wider tourism-sector uptake will depend on reliable and traceable supply, fair pricing and buyer willingness to pay a premium for verified and sustainable local seafood. This will require more education for tourists on the benefits of sustainable fisheries so they encourage other resorts to adopt similar models. As more fishers and buyers participate, there may be opportunities to improve supply consistency and make local sourcing more attractive to resorts. However, if increased supply is not met by wider buyer demand, prices could fall and weaken the incentive for fishers to meet sustainability standards. The programme's tiered certification model provides a starting point, but it will only strengthen fisheries management if more buyers participate and data is used to track changes in fishing pressure, not just seafood origin.

Digital tools can help scale these models beyond individual pilots by making sustainable fishing easier to verify, reward and manage. In the Maldives, wider uptake of FFTP not only depends on more resorts buying sustainably sourced fish, but also on the strength of the traceability systems. To improve traceability, the programme is trialling ABALOB Monitor, a digital platform developed for small-scale fisheries to strengthen transparency in seafood value chains. Tools like this can help track seafood supply chains from hook to plate, improving transparency for buyers. In doing so, they can give fishers a clearer stake in the value of the data they provide, while creating the evidence base needed to scale sustainable sourcing beyond a single resort partnership. However, technology will only effectively scale where there is funding, training, technical support and trust in how data is used¹¹.

In Greece, and models like this, scalability depends more on institutionalisation. For pilots like AMORGORAMA to scale, they need to be embedded in national fisheries law, and compensation schemes need to be well-designed to reflect fishers' lost income during closures, ensuring income stability during the transition period. Strong enforcement is also needed as fishers will only keep supporting closures if they believe everyone is following the same rules. Lastly, ecological and socioeconomic monitoring is needed to demonstrate whether the management measures are leading to actual improvements in biomass, fish size, catch quality or income over time. This data can then inform whether adjustments are needed in the governance or management of these measures to maximise positive outcomes for nature and people.

Funding and governance

At present, both models still rely heavily on resources from NGOs, philanthropy and the private sector and would not function without this support or the financial incentives they have created. In Greece, compensation is essential because fishers are asked to forgo income especially during the seasonal closure, before ecological recovery or future catch benefits can be demonstrated. In the Maldives, the incentive is market-based: fishers participate because verified sustainable fishing practices are linked to more reliable buyers and better prices. Critically, the transition costs were not, and should not, be borne by participants.

Philanthropic or NGO support is often essential for testing the approach, covering early-stage risks and refining programme design. Over time, however, schemes should aim to reduce their reliance on short-term grants by developing a sustainable source of finance suited to the local context. This could include a dedicated finance facility that provides ongoing capital or market-based mechanisms that generate



Above Fishers removing fish from nets, Amorgos, Greece

revenue through activities such as tourism fees or premium pricing for sustainable fisheries. The appropriate model will vary, but long-term viability depends on securing predictable finance that can sustain livelihoods and conservation outcomes beyond the initial pilot phase (see Annex 2).

Local small-scale fishers in both schemes either lead or are meaningfully involved in the programme design and decision-making. Increased support and enthusiasm were linked to whether fishers felt involved from an early stage, understood the purpose of the measures and had a role in shaping how they were implemented. In Greece, fisher leadership and early assurances of support encouraged fishers to take a leap of faith, helping secure buy-in for

seasonal closures and FRAs despite uncertain outcomes.

In the Maldives, regular engagement with participating fishers helped build trust in sourcing standards, traceability and buyer relationships.

This matters because the success of these programmes goes beyond financial incentives: it depends on whether participants see themselves as co-designers and stewards of the transition, rather than passive recipients of rules or market conditions. As these models scale, participation should therefore be treated as a core enabling condition, with success measured by ecological recovery, secure livelihoods and fair distribution of benefits, not only by the number of fishers, resorts or closures enrolled.

¹¹ Blue Marine Foundation (2026). <https://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/all-resources/the-mpa-technology-workshop-channelling-conservation-technology-into-marine-protected-area-design-and-management/>

Transitions away from fisheries (Indonesia, SVG and Mexico)

What worked and what enabled success

Transitions away from fisheries can create some of the clearest reductions in direct fishing pressure, but only when they are effective. From what we learnt from the case studies in Mexico, Indonesia and SVG, the most successful elements of the programmes were those that redirected existing fishing skills and knowledge into guiding, monitoring, enforcement, science and marine tourism. For example, shark fishers in Mexico brought detailed understanding of local waters, species behaviour, navigation and safety into tourism and citizen science while in SVG, experienced conch and lobster fishers used their knowledge of fishing grounds, seasonality and community dynamics in paid ranger roles.

The results suggest that flexibility within these models is important, and often, a mixture of livelihoods might be the most resilient model. In Mexico and Indonesia, some participants continued to fish part-time, while in SVG ranger work supplemented rather than replaced fishing income. Diversified livelihoods can reduce dependence on the most harmful, unsafe or insecure forms of fishing without forcing people to abandon their identity and cultural connection to the sea.

Three enabling conditions stand out amongst the programmes. First, programmes reduced the cost and risk of entry. Mexico provided boats, equipment and training for tourism and citizen science; Indonesia delivered dive, English language, hospitality and conservation training locally; and SVG covered certification and equipment so ranger work could begin without lost income. Second, the new roles were socially

meaningful. Participants reported greater pride, safer working conditions, stronger community standing and a clearer sense of stewardship. Third, the work had a visible conservation purpose, whether reducing shark fishing in Mexico, strengthening reef monitoring and tourism standards in Indonesia or supporting community reporting and MPA enforcement in SVG. When participants understand the wider socio-ecological benefits of their work, they are more likely to stay involved in these programmes.

Limitations, risks and trade-offs

The three schemes supporting transitions away from fishing are still in their early stages, so the findings largely capture immediate socioeconomic benefits such as greater income security, safer work, pride and stewardship. As the programmes mature and reduce fishing pressure, stronger monitoring and improved management have more time to support ecosystem recovery. In parallel, ecological benefits may accumulate alongside these reported gains, creating greater and more durable impacts for both communities and marine biodiversity.

From a systems perspective, transitions away from fisheries are only regenerative if they reduce pressure on the marine environment without shifting risk elsewhere.

Financial burdens can fall on participants when they are expected to pay for training, buy equipment or absorb income gaps before new work becomes reliable. In Mexico, five of the six respondents experienced income gaps during the transition period, and participation depended on training, equipment, certification,

confidence and the ability to absorb risk before tourism income became reliable. By contrast, the ranger model in SVG reduced these barriers because training and equipment were covered, and supplementary income began soon after certification.

Ecological risk can also be displaced if the new livelihood is not managed within clear environmental limits. In Mexico and Indonesia, tourism offers a viable route away from fishing, but unmanaged growth can create new pressures through reef damage, anchoring, waste, wastewater and overcrowding. This has also been reported in similar schemes elsewhere (e.g. Apo Island in Annex 1).

Social and cultural risks also need to be managed. Across Mexico, Raja Ampat and SVG participants described how livelihood transitions changed their roles within their communities, sometimes in positive ways and sometimes in ways that led to tension or uncertainty. Paid conservation roles can create local jobs and generate pride, but they can also create tension where opportunities are limited to a small group, as in the case of SVG. At the same time, these shifts may also create a sense of identity loss, particularly where fishing had been central to personal and cultural identity, local knowledge, family history and social status. Additionally, these programmes need to take into consideration that these communities need to be given time to adapt and change to new ways of working. Transitions thus need to acknowledge this heritage and ensure transparent communication on the benefits and equitable participation.

These findings show that transitions away from fisheries cannot be assessed only through income or employment outcomes. Their social and cultural impacts need to be considered from the outset, with sustained outreach, awareness-raising and adaptive management built into programme design (as emphasised in other examples in Annex 1).

Scalability

These pilots can act as blueprints for future scaling but this requires specific conditions to be achieved. For tourism-based pathways, such as Mexico and Raja Ampat, this means local training pipelines, safety standards, fair access to licences and markets, environmental rules for operators, limits on visitor pressure, mooring systems and waste and wastewater safeguards. For ranger and monitoring pathways, such as SVG, it means providing stable wages, equipment, legal clarity, reporting protocols and trusted links to fisheries and MPA authorities.

The wider opportunity is significant. As countries expand marine protection, demand will grow for local roles in monitoring, enforcement, guiding, restoration and visitor management. The participants in Indonesia and SVG illustrate how this future MPA workforce could be built from coastal communities themselves, rather than imported from outside.

At present, many transitions away from fisheries are still funded as short-term projects, even though the transition itself is long-term. Grants and philanthropic funding are often essential for boats, equipment, training, certification, business support and early income gaps, as seen in Mexico and SVG. But lasting scale will require recurring finance, including public budgets for ranger and MPA roles, tourism user fees, conservation trust funds, local enterprise revenue and donor finance (see Annex 2). The key is to fund the whole transition pathway, not just the first training course.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For the long-term benefit of both people and fisheries, governments should support transitions away from fishing activities that damage marine ecosystems or sustain communities through insecure, unsafe, or unsustainable livelihoods. This is especially relevant where vulnerable species are being targeted, catches and incomes are declining, young people lack viable options for their future or new MPAs/FRAs risk imposing significant costs on coastal communities. Where fisheries can remain viable through better management including selective gear, seasonal closures or market incentives, improving fisheries may be fairer and more culturally appropriate than encouraging a complete shift. Based on the results of the survey we believe there are six concrete actions policymakers can take to better support communities in developing and sustaining a regenerative blue economy sector for nature, climate, and people.

1. Create long-term financial incentives and transition support

Regenerative livelihood transitions will not scale without credible economic incentives and long-term finance. Governments should cover the real costs of participation, including training, equipment, certification, temporary income losses, compensation during conservation measures, or early-stage business development. Where government budgets are stretched, they should seek to create blended finance funds including targeted grants, concessional loans, blue bonds, and redirect harmful fisheries subsidies towards training, equipment and income support to be deployed at various stages of the transition (see Annex 2). Public finance should increasingly replace reliance on short-term philanthropy. Private sector partnerships can also support where there is a clear value chain through premium pricing, traceability systems, Fisheries Improvement Funds and impact facilities that support small-scale fishers and nature-positive businesses. Finance should ultimately incentivise better environmental practice while reducing risk for participants instead of shifting the costs of conservation onto the communities being asked to transition.

2. Put communities at the centre of decision-making and programme design

Successful conservation initiatives are frequently characterised by participatory governance, highlighting the importance of establishing participatory co-management systems, strengthening fisher associations and cooperatives, and ensuring communities have formal roles in designing conservation measures, livelihood programmes and benefit-sharing arrangements. These approaches are typically underpinned by transparent and inclusive decision-making and the integration of local ecological knowledge.

3. Invest in skills, awareness and equitable access to opportunities

Experience suggests that livelihood transitions are most effective when they are accompanied by investment in training, education, certification and leadership development. Accessible programmes that reach diverse groups within communities, including young people and underrepresented groups can help ensure that the benefits of emerging blue economy sectors are more widely shared.

4. Strengthen conservation governance through monitoring, enforcement and transparent communication

Transitions to more regenerative fisheries should be embedded in core fisheries and conservation management, not treated as voluntary additions to standalone projects. With nearly a third of global fish stocks overfished and climate change increasing pressure on coastal communities, the cost of maintaining the status quo is likely to exceed the cost of transition. Effective implementation requires investment in robust governance systems, enforcement capacity, ecological and socioeconomic monitoring, and transparent communication with affected communities. Providing clear evidence of the outcomes and benefits of conservation measures can help strengthen legitimacy, compliance and long-term community support.

5. Include safeguards to ensure that pressures are not displaced elsewhere

Pressure reductions in one area can easily be displaced into another if transitions are not governed carefully. Policies should therefore ensure that new livelihood pathways come with the right safeguards, including fair participation, safety procedures, environmental and labour standards, equitable market access and controls on secondary impacts such as wastewater, pollution and overcrowding in tourism destinations. Without these safeguards, a transition may reduce fishing pressure while creating new ecological or social harms elsewhere. Community participation in conservation management, ranger work, monitoring and research must be supported by clear mandates, fair remuneration, consistent data protocols and strong accountability frameworks. For sustainable fisheries, market

incentives must be designed carefully to avoid perverse outcomes, such as rewarding practices that appear sustainable on paper while encouraging new pressure on vulnerable species. In all cases, transitions should be assessed against their net impact across the whole system, not just the sector they are moving people away from.

6. Build climate resilience into livelihood planning

Livelihood transitions should be designed with climate risk in mind from the outset. Many of the communities in this study are already facing declining fish availability, invasive species, habitat degradation, and extreme weather due to warming seas and shifts in climate patterns. These pressures will affect both existing and new livelihoods. Programmes should therefore link livelihood support to wider action on ecosystem recovery and coastal resilience. This means protecting and restoring the habitats that underpin local economies while helping communities diversify income, build skills and plan for climate-related shocks. For example, sustainable fisheries schemes will not protect incomes if reef fish populations continue to decline under heat stress, and tourism-based transitions will remain vulnerable if reefs bleach, beaches erode or extreme weather disrupts visitor flows.

Governments, NGOs and funders should assess how climate risks could affect each livelihood pathway, support locally appropriate adaptation measures and monitor whether programmes are improving long-term resilience rather than only short-term income. Livelihood planning cannot solve wider environmental pressures alone, but it can help ensure that coastal communities are better able to adapt while contributing to marine recovery.

**CONSERVATION
WORKS BEST WHEN
LOCAL FISHERS ARE
EMPOWERED TO
BECOME CONSERVATION
LEADERS RATHER THAN
PASSIVE RECIPIENTS OF
MANAGEMENT DECISIONS.**

Our study shows that regenerative blue economy transitions can improve pride in their work, livelihood security and support for conservation when they are grounded in local context and designed around the realities of coastal livelihoods.

The strongest benefits were not always higher income, but more predictable income, safer work, stronger community standing and a clearer sense of environmental stewardship. This was evident in the Maldives, where fishers benefited from a more reliable resort market; in Indonesia, where dive and conservation training opened new routes into tourism and marine management; in Mexico, where former shark fishers moved into safer tourism and citizen science work; in SVG, where ranger roles created supplementary income and purpose; and in Greece, where fisher leadership built pride and ownership around temporary closures and FRAs.

The results also show that transitions are not cost-free. Participation is often dependent on whether people can absorb income gaps and whether there is access to funding to cover training costs, equipment needs and certification requirements combined with the social risks of changing livelihoods. Across the cases, fishers and coastal community members were more likely to support conservation where benefits were tangible, rules were considered fair and their knowledge was treated as an asset rather than a problem to be managed.

As countries expand marine protection, these roles should increasingly be recognised as part of a future conservation workforce, rather than as temporary project jobs that disappear when external funding ends. Long-term success depends on community buy-in and long-term financing plans. Practically, every MPA/FRA management plan should include a livelihood component from the outset, rather than it being added once restrictions have already been imposed. Such plans should be designed through participatory approaches – involving the community and recognising their existing skills and abilities to understand how affected communities can sustain or diversify their incomes alongside conservation objectives.

Annex 1

Examples of livelihood transition schemes

Example	Type of transition	Description	Benefits reported	Caveats / sensitivities
Temporary octopus closures, Madagascar	Within fisheries: temporary closure	Communities’ close octopus fishing grounds for short periods, then reopen them once octopus have grown.	Higher catches and income have been reported after reopening, and the model has been replicated widely across Madagascar and beyond.	Benefits depend on local enforcement, compliance and fair access to reopened grounds.
Tabu areas, Fiji	Within fisheries: customary temporary closure	Communities use customary no-take or periodically harvested areas within locally managed marine areas.	Research suggests tabu areas can provide short-term protection for targeted fish and invertebrates, with stronger outcomes where closures are larger, longer and well enforced.	Socio-economic outcomes are mixed, and communities may face conflict over rules, access and harvest timing.
Managed access, Belize	Within fisheries: rights-based management	Fishers receive area-based access rights within marine reserves, combined with licensing, catch reporting, enforcement and fisher committees.	Pilot sites reported high catch-data submission, fewer violations and greater fisher participation in management.	Requires strong institutions, monitoring, enforcement and fair rules for who qualifies for access.
TURE system, Chile	Within fisheries: territorial use rights	Artisanal fisher organisations are granted exclusive rights to manage and harvest benthic resources in defined coastal areas.	The system has strengthened co-management and stewardship in some areas and is one of the largest rights-based artisanal fisheries systems globally.	Performance is uneven; some studies find low or unstable ecological and economic outcomes, especially where areas are too small or enforcement is weak.
Spiny lobster fishery, Nicaragua	Within fisheries: safer and more sustainable gear (fisheries improvement project)	Fishers transition from risky diving practices towards traps, artificial shelters and improved data collection to support certification and management.	Projects aim to reduce diver safety risks, improve stock assessment and support access to responsible seafood markets.	Success depends on costs, training, market incentives and whether benefits reach artisanal fishers.

Example	Type of transition	Description	Benefits reported	Caveats / sensitivities
Marine Sanctuary, Apo Island, Philippines	Transition away from fisheries: marine protection and tourism-linked livelihoods	A community-managed marine sanctuary restricted destructive fishing and later supported tourism, guiding and conservation roles.	The case is widely cited for reef recovery, improved fisheries around the reserve and tourism-linked livelihood opportunities.	Tourism benefits need to be shared fairly, and visitor pressure must be managed to avoid new ecological impacts.
Seaweed and sea cucumber aquaculture, Bay of Ranobe, Madagascar	Transition away from fisheries: restorative aquaculture	Fishing households receive training, materials, market access and support to establish seaweed and sea cucumber farms.	Reef Doctor reports that the approach has supported more than 300 families and generated income while reducing pressure on fisheries and turtle hunting.	Long-term success depends on markets, disease risk, climate impacts, farm tenure and continued technical support.
Blue Alliance, Tanzania, Indonesia and the Philippines	Transition away from fisheries: Livelihood diversification alongside MPA management	Blue Alliance works with governments and local partners to co-manage large MPAs while developing reef-positive businesses in areas such as community-based aquaculture, sustainable fisheries, ecotourism and blue carbon.	The model has reportedly supported MPA management across Indonesia, the Philippines and Tanzania, developed reef-positive enterprises, created conservation-linked jobs and enhanced livelihoods for coastal communities.	The model depends on strong government mandates, long-term finance, credible local partnerships and safeguards to ensure reef-positive businesses remain locally beneficial and ecologically bounded.
NIMPA+, Lüderitz, Namibia	Transition away from fisheries: Livelihood diversification alongside MPA management	The programme supports small-scale fishers and coastal entrepreneurs through business training, mentoring, equipment, microfinance and market development. Activities include sustainable fisheries and seafood value addition, marine tourism and guiding, conservation and seabird ranger roles, and marine-themed arts, crafts, textiles and cosmetics.	Early activities have strengthened skills and created new income opportunities. Support for fish processing equipment has enabled small-scale fishers to improve catch quality, and reach wider markets, while craft training has helped women develop marine-themed products for local and tourist markets. The model creates stronger links between livelihoods, community stewardship and MPA management.	The programme is still in development, so long-term effects on incomes, fishing pressure and biodiversity are not yet established. Success will depend on sustained mentoring and finance, reliable market demand, fair access to opportunities and safeguards to ensure tourism and enterprise growth remain environmentally sustainable and locally beneficial.

Annex 2

Descriptions of potential financing mechanisms to support regenerative livelihood transition.

Impact Bonds (outcome-based finance)	Investors provide upfront finance and are repaid only if pre-agreed environmental, governance or social outcomes are achieved and verified. This instrument requires clear baselines, measurable outcomes, credible verification systems and a funder willing to pay for performance.
Blue bonds	Debt instrument for marine-related projects that yield environmental benefits and cash flow to repay capital and interest (can include sovereign, project and corporate bonds).
Debt-for-nature swap	Instrument that reduces or restructures a country’s debt in exchange for commitments to protect nature.
Concessions and user or access fees	Fees paid by visitors, tourism operators or private businesses to access or use protected or managed marine areas such as dive sites, moorings, snorkelling areas or designated visitor sites.
Eco-taxes and permits (polluter pays instruments)	Charges applied to activities that create environmental pressure or benefit from healthy marine ecosystems, such as fishing, cruise visitation, yachting or coastal development. Any levy should be carefully designed to avoid placing additional costs on small-scale fishers or low-income marine users unless there is a clear justification or direct reinvestment in community benefits.
Climate finance	Funding that supports activities to mitigate or adapt to climate change including the protection and restoration of coral reefs, seagrass beds and coastal habitats that contribute to climate resilience, shoreline protection and disaster risk reduction.
Ecosystem service-based payments	Payments made in return for maintaining or enhancing ecosystem services such as coastal protection, fisheries productivity, carbon sequestration, water quality improvement, and biodiversity.

Above Healthy corals, Butterflyfish.



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