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OCPP GEDSI Analysis: Marine Biodiversity in Madagascar

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Acronyms and glossary

ALB	Arms' Length Bodies
ALDFG	Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEFAS	Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Scient
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRADES	Committee of Reflection and Action for the Development and the Environment of Sambirano
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DELC	Development & environmental Law Center
DGPF	General Directorate for the Promotion of Women
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FiTI	The Fisheries Transparency Initiative
FWLP	FisherWomen Leadership Programme
GBV	Gender based violence
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KII	Key informant interviews
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex +
MNP	Madagascar National Parks
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCPP	Ocean Country Partnership Programme
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disability
ROSEDA	Rally of Operators for Ambilobe's Environment and Development Department
RQ	Research Question
SDDirect	Social Development Direct
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToRs	Terms of Reference
VAC	Violence Against Children
WRO	Women's Rights Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Executive summary

This report presents a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) analysis for the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) in the marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar. This research forms part of a broader project by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) on better including GEDSI considerations in their work. CEFAS contracted Social Development Direct (SDDirect) to undertake a series of GEDSI analyses to support their requirement to better integrate GEDSI responsive approaches in the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP). This thematic research on the marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar provides an intersectional assessment and analysis of the social and economic context and identifies key sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) risks and GEDSI aspects that can be addressed and mitigated.

This research is based on an in-depth review of around 30 selected documents and 7 key informant interviews with stakeholders working on marine biodiversity in Madagascar.

Six research questions (RQ) guided this thematic analysis. Key findings relating to these research questions are summarised below:

Key findings

Vulnerable and marginalised groups: The key marginalised groups that need to be considered in the marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar include: artisanal fishing communities at large, women and girls, especially pregnant teenage girls, mothers and female-headed households, persons living with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community and migrant newcomers in coastal communities. Gender inequality is deeply rooted in cultural norms that restrict women's participation in local governance and higher-value economic activities. Productive activities in these sectors are typically divided along gender lines: men dominate the high-value fishing activities, while women are more often involved in lower-value tasks such as gleaning, fishing by foot at low tide, and pre- and post-harvest work.

Impacts of marine biodiversity loss on these communities: Marine biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and climate change disproportionately affect the most marginalised groups within fishing communities that dependent on marine biodiversity for their subsistence and food security. At the same time, climate change has driven a decline in agricultural livelihoods, contributing to increased migration toward coastal areas, intensifying competition over already depleted marine resources. In this context, marine biodiversity conservation and management efforts risk reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion and discrimination. Without careful design and implementation, such initiatives may further restrict access to marine resources for vulnerable groups or concentrate benefits and decision-making power in the hands of dominant actors within coastal communities.

Safeguarding risks: High rates of gender-based violence, child exploitation, and trafficking in Madagascar underscore the urgent need for OCPP to strengthen safeguarding measures and integrate SEAH risk mitigation into partnerships and community engagement activities, as well as heightened attention to vulnerable groups in programme activities. Of particular concern is child exploitation and trafficking, which disproportionately affects girls. Girls may be forced into domestic work or sexually exploited and abused, while cultural norms require children to engage in fishing activities from a young age. Child exploitation and trafficking whether in coastal communities or in international fishing vessels that operate in Madagascar's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has been associated with fishing activities.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities: There is an increasingly diverse range of stakeholders working on marine biodiversity that address aspects of gender inequality in participation and marine biodiversity governance, particularly those working at the community level. Projects implemented have shown that inclusive, participatory approaches can ensure conservation does not inadvertently deepen inequalities and reinforce marginalisation of women in coastal communities. However, evidence from interviews and the review of literature, which seldom mentions disability, suggests that other marginalised groups such as persons living with disabilities have not been well integrated in marine biodiversity efforts to date.

Data Availability Gaps: While Madagascar has national-level GEDSI data and growing research on gender and vulnerability in coastal contexts, there are critical gaps in disaggregated, intersectional, and data specific to the biodiversity sector—particularly regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities, the social impacts of biodiversity loss, and gendered power dynamics within coastal communities, which limits the ability of government and NGO actors to design fully informed and equitable marine conservation interventions.

GEDSI Entry Points: This report highlights various entry points for GEDSI in OCPP's activities in Madagascar, across various activity areas. It is important to highlight that it is not always appropriate, necessary or safe to seek to be GEDSI transformative in all activities and there may be very good reasons to limit the ambition to GEDSI strategic or empowering, or even sensitive in some cases. There is, however, never a justification to remain GEDSI unaware. Some examples provided in the report include, conducting GESI sensitisation and value clarification activities as part of sensitisation work, and consider holding separate meetings for women and young people to enable them to participate and have their voices heard; provide training and capacity building for local organisations, including women's groups and organisations of persons with disability to raise awareness of benefits of healthy marine ecosystems among their constituencies and to participate in MPAs'; establish partnerships with social norms change programmes like the theatre group showcased in the Blue Ventures 2021 technical brief'; and conduct GEDSI analyses to better understand who is using destructive fishing practices and why, and involve governmental/civil society partners in activities designed to reduce the use of these

practices to ensure that safety nets are in place to help vulnerable groups transition away from them.

Recommendations

The following four recommendations are derived from the findings and conclusions of this research:

1. **Integrate GEDSI considerations into OCPP programme activities:** Prioritise practical entry points for GEDSI integration by focusing on immediate, achievable actions:
    - ensure systematic tracking of sex-disaggregated data of participants in community activities
    - expand participation of women's rights organisations, youth networks, and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in local decision-making platforms
    - ensure that economic and livelihood activities proactively include different marginalised groups, by addressing the barriers to their participation
    - provide basic GEDSI training to OCPP staff, implementing partners, and relevant stakeholders to build awareness and capacity
2. **Address SEAH and safeguarding risks in OCPP activities:**
    - Advocate for the inclusion of local civil society organisations focused on gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights or gender based violence in relevant decision-making platforms and programme design.
    - Establish partnerships with international organisations working on gender and social inclusion to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy support for integrating GEDSI into marine biodiversity and blue economy agendas.
    - Invest in building internal OCPP capacity to proactively mitigate SEAH risks in all activities.
3. **Develop partnerships for integrating GEDSI in marine biodiversity:**
    - Engage in advocacy work with key actors to ensure that GEDSI considerations are better considered in the blue economy framework.
    - Share findings with stakeholders engaged in marine biodiversity programmes in Madagascar that will continue after OCPP programme concludes so that recommendations can be considered in future work
    - Focus on improving existing partnerships and building capacity of build OCPP and partners on GEDSI to ensure that these aspects are integrated in marine biodiversity programmes going forward.

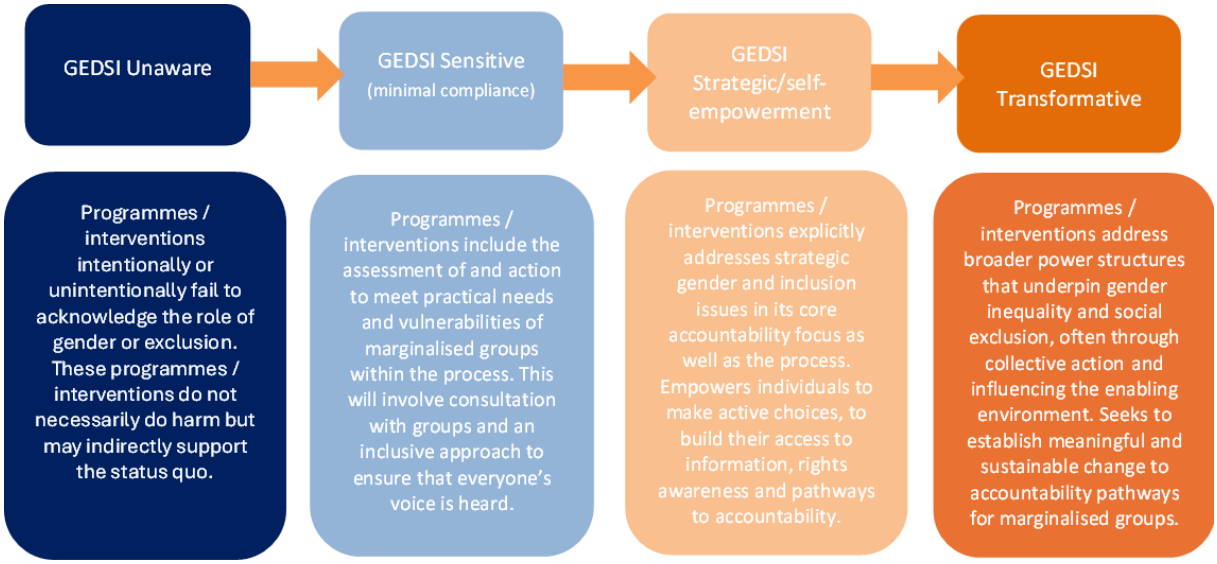
4. **Address GEDSI data gaps in programming:**
    - Develop targeted GEDSI studies in coastal communities, focusing on gender, disability, and intersectional vulnerabilities in relation to marine biodiversity.
    - Track and evaluate the impacts of biodiversity and conservation activities on different groups, particularly women and girls and persons living with disabilities using participatory feedback mechanisms and qualitative approaches, including participatory feedback methods (e.g. community dialogues, focus group discussions, community score card approaches).

By addressing these key areas, OCPP can enhance its GEDSI responsiveness and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes in the seafood sector in Madagascar.

1. Introduction and overview of the analysis

1.1. Purpose and objectives

Following an assessment by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) in November 2023, where the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) was assessed as unaware on the Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Responsiveness Continuum, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) contracted Social Development Direct (SDDirect) to undertake a series of GEDSI analyses to support their requirement to better integrate GEDSI responsive approaches in OCPP. This continuum is a framework used to assess and guide programmes, policies, and initiatives in terms of their approach to GEDSI, helping organisations and practitioners understand how their work either reinforces or challenges existing inequalities. Along the continuum[1], programmes or interventions can range from being GEDSI Unaware, GEDSI Sensitive, Strategic or Self-Empowering, or GEDSI Transformative, as shown in Diagram 1 below. ICAI's assessment of OCPP was deemed to be GEDSI unaware.



In order to meet the requirements of the International Development Act 2002, all International Climate Finance programmes must comply with the UK's legal obligations and international commitments, including to 'do no harm' and align with the UK's pledge under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to "leave no-one behind", prioritising the needs of those left furthest behind, who have the least opportunities and who are the most excluded. The OCPP must thus reduce poverty in places it is working and improve conditions for poor people and the most

[1] Several versions of the GEDSI continuum exist, including one developed by DEFRA and used by the Uk government, more information at https://oceangrants.org.uk/applicant-resource/gender-equality-disability-and-social-inclusion-gedsi/

marginalised in this world. It must also ensure this is done in a way that addresses GEDSI and substantially improves wellbeing , alongside ensuring that programmes are free from risks associated with sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) which may be inherent in programming within fragile states characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality. As such, on behalf of all the arms' length bodies involved in OCPP, CEFAS has contracted Social Development Direct (SDDirect) to undertake a series of GEDSI analyses to support the OCPP's requirement to becoming more GEDSI Sensitive, and where possible, GEDSI Empowering. Country-level analysis has been undertaken for Ghana, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Belize, and Thematic analysis on the seafood sector in Bangladesh and marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar. This report focuses on the marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar.

Objectives: This assignment is intended to further OCPP's understanding of the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the biodiversity sector in Madagascar. This assignment will enable CEFAS to adapt interventions to become more GEDSI sensitive/empowering. It will achieve this by providing an intersectional assessment and analysis of the social and economic context in the marine biodiversity sector in Madagascar and identifying key SEAH and GEDSI risks that can be quickly addressed and mitigated.

Scope: This analysis will focus on the marine biodiversity sector.

1.2. What do we mean by GEDSI

Terminology
Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in opportunities, in the allocation of resources or benefits or in the access to services, such that all individuals can enjoy equal standards of well-being. It is the full and equal exercise by women, men, boys, girls and people of other gender identities of their human rights: in this situation, women, men, girls and boys have equal rights and equal access to socially and economically valued goods, resources, opportunities and benefits; the different gender roles are valued equally and do not constitute an obstacle to their wellbeing and finally; the fulfilment of their potential as responsible members of society is possible. **Social inclusion** is the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individual and groups to development opportunities. These barriers may be formal (written laws on spousal property for instance), or they may be informal (e.g. time village girls spend carrying water instead of attending school). In short, social inclusion is about levelling the playing field by making the 'rules of the game' fairer. **Disability**, according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society, on an equal basis with others'" (UN CRPD, 2006). **Safeguarding** means preventing harm abuse and neglect perpetrated by staff, contractors and as a result of programmes that are being implemented. An important component of that

is SEAH being perpetrated by staff, consultants and contractors. Because it is primarily perpetrated by people (usually men) in positions of power it often goes unreported. SEAH and other forms of safeguarding related misconduct is often a form of **gender-based violence** (GBV) and tends to be targeted at either women or children.

1.3. Overview of the report

After the introduction to the report, the second section of the report details the methodology employed, including the literature review, key informant interviews (KIIs), and data analysis processes, as well as the methodological limitations. Section 3 presents the findings in response to each of the research questions (adapted from the Inception Report for the specifics of the biodiversity sector). This section also includes a stakeholder mapping, and lessons learned. Sections 4 and 5 present conclusions and recommendations, respectively.

2. Methodology and methodological limitations

2.1. Methodology

The GEDSI analysis has been conducted through a secondary literature review and key informant interviews.

For the literature review we reviewed 21 external documents available from Google Scholar and relevant electronic databases and identified them using key search terms as well as governmental and other grey literature documents. Online literature was identified using key search terms such as:

- GEDSI; women; gender; girls; disability; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex + (LGBTQI+) Intersectionality; vulnerable/alit; marginalised; poor/ poverty; leave no one behind, do no harm, religion, ethnicity, age
- SEAH; safeguarding; child safeguarding; child labour; gender-based violence (GBV) / gender-based violence; violence against children (VAC); interpersonal violence, sexual violence; sexual harassment; sexual exploitation
- Marine biodiversity; fishing; Aquaculture; fishermen / women, fishers, fisherfolk; overfishing,' pollution; aquatic animal health; climate change; coast; seafood; marine; coastal livelihoods; blue economy, coastal communities; Madagascar

Full detail of the search and inclusion criteria of external literature can be found in the inception report. The research team have endeavoured to identify and use more recent literature from 2015-present. In some instances, older sources of literature have been cited in the absence of more recent data or information publicly available.

Literature has been coded in a coding matrix to highlight key findings and themes against the research questions.

In addition, seven key informant interviews have been conducted with representatives of international NGOs, national networks and consultants working for the Malagasy government to capture their views on GEDSI and marine biodiversity. A full list of respondents is included in annex to this report.

2.2. Limitations

Limitations	Mitigations
There was limited literature available on gender equality, and discrimination against specific groups such as migrants, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) persons and persons with disabilities especially in relation to coastal communities in Madagascar	Efforts have been taken to consult the grey literature and speak with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to learn more the impacts on these groups. as to risks for these groups.
Limited quantitative disaggregated data, by geography, gender, age or ability status	We reviewed databases providing national level indicators disaggregated by different dimensions. Where available we have also analysed published studies on coastal communities providing relevant quantitative data on GEDSI aspects.
The examination of SEAH risks were based on our understanding of the GEDSI situation in Madagascar and the broad thematic approach that the programme is taking in the country based on a rapid review of programme documents shared and interviews with OCPP staff.	SEAH risks identified are generic *potentia*l risks, based on a rapid review of programme interventions and evidence from other countries, or international good practice and learning. They are intended to identify areas for the programme to explore further rather than as a definitive set of risks to be addressed and actively managed.
Several respondents proposed by the client did not respond to the request for interview	The National consultant was able to reach out to her networks to secure a sufficient number (7) of respondents from key stakeholders groups (international and national NGOS, networks, researchers and government officials)
We were not able to speak to Organisations of Persons with Disability (OPDs), and Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) to obtain insights into the opportunities and challenges that arise within the fisheries sector for these groups.	We mitigated against this by speaking with NGOs and networks working at community level, including engaging with WROs. However, none reported working with OPDs.

3. Research findings

3.1. Country context

3.1.1. Environmental, population and economical context

Madagascar is the world's fourth-largest island, situated in the Indian Ocean off the coast of southern Africa. Its coastline of 4,800km is the longest among African countries, with an exclusive economic zone more than twice as large as its land area. The country has 327,000 hectares of mangroves mostly on the west coast, which host fish nurseries. Other coastline areas are home to large seagrass beds and close to half a million hectares of coral reefs (Madagascar Biodiversity, Nairobi Convention). Madagascar has an extremely rich marine biodiversity, hosting around 15,000 plant species, of which more than 12,000 are endemic, 400 species of fish and 40 species of seabirds. These marine ecosystems are however threatened by human activities, such as unsustainable fishing practices, pollution and habitat destruction. Climate change poses significant threats to Madagascar's marine ecosystems, threatening to exacerbate the impact of cyclones that affect the East coast during monsoon season (November to April).

The country's population, estimated at 30.3 million in 2023, experience high levels of poverty (poverty rate:75% in 2022). The economic growth rate (4.2% annually in 2024) is driven by the tertiary sector (tourism and telecommunications), while the fishing sector represents around 7% of GDP. The sector, which includes both fishing and aquaculture, supports almost 1.5 million people mostly in the coastal areas. Fishing also plays a key role in food security and nutrition, providing around 20% of animal protein consumption for Malagasy people (World Bank, 2020). One of the most fundamental challenges for the sector is finding ways to balance conservation and exploitation of fisheries resources. In this respect, Madagascar has adopted a Blue Economy strategy, defined as the sustainable and integrated development of economic sectors in healthy oceans. A blue economy approach considers how best to use natural capital for sustainable growth in the long term by integrating ocean sectors, explicitly considering spillover effects, and considering current and future climate risk (World Bank, 2024).

3.1.2. Gender equality context

Socio-cultural and political constraints, compounded by systemic impunity regarding violence against women, represent significant barriers to gender equality in Madagascar. These challenges are further exacerbated by the limited access to decent employment opportunities and resources for women.

Educational disparities between boys and girls are pronounced during childhood, with girls outperforming boys, particularly in rural and low-income households. However, this trend reverses in adolescence, as girls exhibit higher dropout rates from school compared to boys, irrespective of their socio-economic status or location. This gendered educational disadvantage is associated with increased exposure to

reproductive health risks, including early pregnancies and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. The vulnerabilities are particularly pronounced among girls from impoverished backgrounds, rural areas, and those born to very young or older mothers (Arciprete and Leander, 2022).

At the household level, **economic constraints** exacerbate gender inequality, with unequal resource distribution often favouring boys and biological children over girls and foster children. However, female-headed households tend to experience lower levels of deprivation, with girls in such households exhibiting fewer instances of early pregnancies and child marriages. This suggests that household structures and the gender of the head of the household can significantly influence the socio-economic outcomes for children.

In Madagascar, traditional gender norms prioritise **men as the leaders within families and communities**, men being perceived as the breadwinners while women tend to be relegated to domestic and caregiving responsibilities, which is reflected in the saying “Ny lahy no lohan’ny vavy” ("The man is the head of the woman”). Women’s roles in Madagascar, especially in rural and coastal areas, are defined by the expectation that they will manage the household, care for children, and perform reproductive tasks like cooking and fetching water. Men are the primary participants in community meetings and assume responsibilities associated with “adidy”—traditional duties, acting as the spokespersons for their households which reinforces their position as decision-makers and representatives.

Women remain underrepresented in **political and governance structures**, with only approximately 1 in 6 seats in the National Assembly, 1 in 5 seats in the Senate, 1 in 3 ministerial positions, less than 1 in 10 governorships, and 1 in 20 mayoral roles held by women (Arciprete and Leander, 2022). This low representation reflects entrenched societal norms that limit women’s access to leadership roles and decision-making positions. In Malagasy communities, men are considered the primary representatives of households and the main voices in public forums. Women’s participation in community meetings is rare, as speaking publicly risks being labelled as “akoho vavy maneno” ("a hen that crows") - a phrase suggesting unnatural behaviour, as only roosters are meant to crow. This power imbalance extends to the political landscape, where women remain underrepresented, with only 16% of parliamentarians and a low proportion in political bodies despite legal frameworks supporting gender equality. In contrast, in the private sector, women occupy a considerable share of leadership roles, with 28% of top managerial positions and 33% of management roles in small enterprises, a relatively high figure by international standards.

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue in Madagascar, with 41% of women aged 15-49 reporting lifetime experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), with urban areas showing higher prevalence rates. The normalisation of violence against women is evidenced by the high social justification for violent disciplinary actions, particularly when women do not adhere to gender norms. A significant

portion of women (41%) and men (29%) believe that hitting your wife can be justified under certain circumstances, highlighting high levels of societal acceptance of GBV (Madagascar Demographic Health Survey 2021) The risk of violence is further compounded for women in marginalised groups, such as those with disabilities or from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are also prevalent, particularly in poorer regions, contributing to cycles of violence and economic dependency. Nearly 37% of women were married before the age of 18, and 12% before the age of 15 (UNFPA data portal). This practice, coupled with early pregnancies, exacerbates the vulnerability of young girls to exploitation and limits their educational and economic opportunities. Moreover, food insecurity in the country, particularly in rural areas, further compounds these challenges, placing women and children in vulnerable positions with limited support systems.

Moreover, **children of young mothers** (those who give birth before the age of 18) are more likely to experience intergenerational deprivation, including exposure to sexual violence, early pregnancies, and other socio-economic vulnerabilities. These circumstances create a cyclical pattern of disadvantage, wherein both young mothers and their children are trapped in a cycle of poverty and marginalization (Arciprete and Leander, 2022).

3.1.3. GEDSI political and institutional context

The county has made several **political commitments** to gender equality and disability inclusion. In particular, the Government has ratified key international instruments on women's rights, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1988 and the Beijing Declaration in 1995. Madagascar is also a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) since 2012. Madagascar has also signed up to key global agendas that promote gender equality, equity and disability inclusion such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Indian Ocean Commission's Gender Policy and Strategy (2016), and the Francophonie's Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Women's and Girls' Rights and Empowerment.

The national strategic framework on GEDSI is guided by the National Policy for the Advancement of Women from 1995 and associated five-year action plans. The promotion of gender equality is supported by the General Directorate for the Promotion of Women (DGPF) within the Ministry of Social Protection.

In relation to the environmental sector, gender considerations have been integrated into key strategic documents:

The **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)** to climate change (MEDD, 2021): As part of the development of the NAP, a dedicated gender study was commissioned by *the Bureau National de Coordination sur le Changement Climatique* REDD+, the global network of NAPs, and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

This study highlighted the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women in Madagascar and identified organisational weaknesses in gender integration.

A specific **Gender and Climate Change Strategy** was developed by the Ministry of Environment in 2023. In order to implement this strategy, a gender focal point was established to monitor the integration of gender-specific measures outlined in diverse national strategic documents aimed at combating climate change. The focal point's primary role is to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations throughout the implementation process.

The **Convention of Biological Diversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025)** integrates gender considerations into its objectives and actions. The Plan acknowledges the low participation of women in biodiversity-related development activities and sets out several actions: ensuring equitable access to ecosystem services, involving rural women in documenting traditional knowledge, developing gender-sensitive awareness and training tools, and systematically collecting gender-disaggregated data. The goal is to make sure that the specific needs and concerns of both women and men are considered in biodiversity management and ecosystem conservation.

However, **there are also important gaps** in the policy framework regarding GEDSI in environment and climate change.

The **National Strategy for the Blue Economy (2023-2033)** is gender and disability unaware. There is only one mention of women in the strategy and no mention of persons with disabilities or other intersectional characteristics and how they are differently impacted or involved in the Blue Economy.

The Blue Policy Letter, the National Action Plan for Sea-Based Marine Plastic Litter, and the Guidelines for Mangrove Restoration only consider gender to a limited extent, mentioning women in passing, in the context of specific income diversification activities, without deeper analysis of gender dynamics or structural inequalities.

3.2. Who are the most vulnerable, marginalised or disadvantaged people most impacted by changes in marine biodiversity? (RQ1)

A number of different groups experience different levels of marginalisation in coastal areas in Madagascar, some of whom have been detailed above. While this section describes key vulnerabilities in relation to the marine biodiversity sector in specific population groups, intersectionality underpins this data. For example, whilst women, children, and people with disability face different types of disadvantage, it is where those characteristics interact that the deepest marginalisation may arise. The intersection of poverty, environmental degradation, traditional gender norms and other factors creates specific challenges for ensuring that no-one is left behind in marine biodiversity programmes.

3.2.1. Women and girls in fishing communities

While the more general analysis of gender equality and social norms applies to fishing communities as it does the country more broadly, there are particular aspects of being part of the fishing communities that exacerbate women's and girls' marginalisation. Women account for between 40% and 55% of workers in fishing communities and are mostly engaged in pre- and post-harvest activities, representing 57% of those involved in post-harvest activities and 21% in fishing activities (FAO, 2024).

Interview respondents described the gendered division of fishing activities in Madagascar based on their experience. According to several respondents, both men and women participate in fishing activities. However, there are differences: *"women fish for octopus and invertebrate species, while men fish for finfish. Men spend more time at sea."* (International NGO respondent to key informant interview) Two respondents also highlighted that it is mostly men who swim, and women only engage in foot fishing during low tide, which limits their activity, and therefore their economic gain, and status as fisherwomen. Access to the sea is open, so theoretically no one is excluded from fishing activities, but the status and economic return that different groups are afforded tends to follow gender and power dynamics. The organisation of these activities is governed by social norms. For instance, fishing in the mangroves is considered an activity for the poorest, as the tools used are simple and inexpensive. This activity is perceived as suitable for the most economically disadvantaged.

Women and girls face particular limitations in terms of accessing capital to support their subsistence livelihoods. Equal rights are not guaranteed for women as customary practice discriminates against women on inheritance rights, access to property and economic assets. In addition, women's role in the whole value chain associated with fishing beyond harvesting activities is often overlooked, and so their participation in projects for the sector remains in some instances limited, further reinforcing their marginalisation:

> *"Despite their deep involvement in marine fisheries and their labour in sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation, women are often underrepresented in and overlooked by environmental management institutions." (Baker-Médard et al., 2023)*

Women's and girls' participation in biodiversity conservation and marine and coastal resources management programmes

Interview respondents highlighted the following key barriers limiting the participation of women and girls in biodiversity conservation work, including:

- Resistance to changing gendered social norms due to a desire to continue doing things as before, and maintaining the status quo
- The distribution of household tasks, limiting women's freedom and availability for meetings because they are required to cook or do other household chores

- Husbands can forbid his wife from participating in paid activities because he requires her to cook or do other household chores. Men also prevent women from taking on more responsibility and decision making and assuming roles that carry more power.

The need to involve women more in biodiversity efforts was underscored by several respondents. One respondent commented *"Even in discussions about biodiversity, inheritance rights, or division of labour, men are typically the ones emphasised. Yet, issues related to the rights of women and children are becoming increasingly visible."* (National NGO respondent to key informant interview)

While social and cultural factors limit the participation of women in the governance of the fisheries and marine resources, respondents to key informant interviews have highlighted the benefits of more meaningful involvement of women in conservation efforts in terms of improving the effectiveness of biodiversity efforts:

> *"What clearly emerges from our observations is that women are the most responsive, active, and engaged in change dynamics. They are also more inclined to share their knowledge and to become involved in environmental protection efforts."* (National NGO respondent to key informant interview).

Another respondent highlighted the benefits derived from women's awareness of environmental issues*:*

> *"In the handicrafts sector, for instance, women are particularly sensitive to the quality and origin of raw materials they use. This shows their awareness and involvement in sustainable practices, even though their roles remain marginalized in formal decision-making structures."* (Government official respondent to key informant interview).

In response, some organisations have put in place specific programmes to foster women's rights and agency in the fishing communities, such as an FAO project Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for Gender-Equitable and Climate-Resilient Food Systems and Livelihoods, the Blue Venture-supported FisherWomen Leadership Programme (FWLP) implemented with the MIHARI network (Blue Ventures, 2020), or the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Marine biodiversity and gender project launched in 2024 (more detail on such projects is presented under RQ5)

3.2.2. Teenage mothers

Malagasy women and girls face challenges in access to maternal, sexual, and reproductive health services, as seen by the high unmet need for contraception (around 30% in 2022) (UNFPA, n.d.). Barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services are particularly high for young women, which contributes to a high rate of teenage pregnancies, as 31.1% of girls ages 15–19 have begun childbearing. Young, pregnant girls face social stigma. For many poor girls and their families, the decision to start a family at a very early age is driven by the lack of means and

aspirations to escape poverty at home. In addition, widespread negative attitudes toward unmarried women and out-of-wedlock pregnancies often drive adolescent girls and their families to pursue marriage early.

Early pregnancies risk reproducing the pattern of poverty and the intergenerational process of early pregnancy. The children of mothers who had their child before the age of 18 tend to have more deprivation, and to be more exposed to the risks of sexual violence and early pregnancy (UNICEF, 2022). While there are no specific studies documenting the situation of teenage mothers and girl-headed households in fishing and coastal communities in Madagascar, it can be inferred that patterns of discrimination are compounded by economic hardship in those communities.

3.2.3. LGBTQI+

There is no published literature exploring the situation of members of the LGBTQI+ communities in the fishing communities of Madagascar. However, prevalent cultural and social norms in the country are likely to also apply in that context, for which discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity must be considered as part of an intersectional approach to GEDSI. Homosexuality is legal in Madagascar, although the country has an unequal age of consent for homosexual sex compared to heterosexual sex (at 21 versus 14 years old) and civil unions or marriage are not legally available for same-sex couples. Although there is an active LGBTQI+ civil society, homosexuality is widely considered socially unacceptable and there is limited protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual life.

3.2.4. Persons living with disabilities

Globally, around 16% of the population lives with a disability (WHO, 2024). Within fishing communities people living with disabilities may be involved in particular in activities such as pre- and post-harvest work. The situation of persons living with disabilities in fishing communities in Madagascar is not well documented in the published literature and seems to have received little attention from development partners engaged in the fishing sector or in marine biodiversity. There is however a publication considering this aspect in other island States in the Pacific region, which is relevant to the Malagasy context (House et al., 2024). It highlights that persons living with disabilities are often not in formal employment and rely heavily on subsistence activities, such as fishing. Changes in the demographics of coastal communities can have an impact on persons with disabilities, as the younger professionally active population tends to migrate, leaving behind persons with disabilities that may depend on others to fish for food. Existing barriers to the participation of people living with disabilities in economic activities may increase as fishing practices change (such as more offshore fishing), inability to access loans or technologies, and certain technologies not being accessible. In addition, economic and food security impacts of climate change are likely to have a disproportionate effect on persons with disabilities, who may not be able to count on alternative livelihoods.

3.2.5. Migrants from other areas of the country

The southern and southeastern regions, as well as the highland areas, are particularly affected by internal migration driven by environmental factors (Ranaivoson et al., 2018). Three key climatic drivers—droughts, cyclones, and deforestation—emerged as the primary catalysts for these movements, each contributing to environmental degradation in distinct ways. In regions such as Boeny, there are fluctuating and temporary-to-permanent long-distance migrations from southern Madagascar, driven by insecurity and insufficient grazing for livestock. As a result, an increasing number of people are relocating to the region with more favourable climates. However, these migrations can create environmental pressures and pose challenges for coexistence between migrants and established residents.

According to respondents, a priority issue is for migrants to integrate and adopt the local community's fishing practices and abide by those rules. Some respondents consider that local communities do not object to migrants engaging in fishing activities. While others consider that increased migration by farmers affected by climate change to coastal areas creates tensions with established fishing communities. Three respondents highlighted in particular the issue of migrants not respecting local customs and regulations for fishing. Community-based marine resource management associations have established *dina* (community rules) prohibiting practices that harm fish stocks in specific fishing areas. Respondents consider that migrants often ignore or do not abide by these community rules, often practicing fishing illegally. One respondent thus commented: *"Local populations dominate fishing activities. Migrants are not excluded, but there are differences in mindset. For example, when certain harmful fishing tools are banned, migrants often refuse to comply and simply leave the area instead of changing their practices."* (International NGO respondent to key informant interview).
There are also cultural differences at play between established coastal communities and migrants that may impact on the differential practices of migrants, potentially reinforcing the threat of biodiversity: "*The presence of taboo within the Tandroy and Mahafaly tribes, for whom it is forbidden to touch or eat turtles, is one of the main factors protecting turtles.*

For other tribes such as the Tanosy, Merina, and Betsileo who migrate there, there is no prohibition regarding the consumption of turtles." (National NGO respondent to key informant interview).

3.2.6. Artisanal fishing communities

Artisanal fishing communities generally are among the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the country. Most fishermen do not have other assets such as a land to diversify their revenues. In addition, fishermen start very young, from the age of 11 to 15. As a result, around two-thirds of fishermen do not attend school and only 6% go beyond primary school (National Survey on Monitoring the MDGs, 2012). Members of fishing communities are particularly vulnerable to shocks such as bad weather, drought, cyclones, and disease outbreaks, all of which may be

exacerbated by climate change. In addition, fishing communities may also be socially marginalized: A 2023 report on Madagascar political economy points to the difficult integrations of coastal communities with other population groups that come from a different cultural background. One group is considered by the other as dynamic and 'modern' and dominating, vs. a 'traditional' and 'dominated' group (OPML, 2023).

3.3. How are those most dependent on biodiversity at risk from future environmental degradation? (RQ2)

3.3.1. Who is most dependent on marine and coastal resources in Madagascar?

Artisanal fishing communities, heavily dependent on marine biodiversity, are particularly vulnerable to a range of environmental risks. Overfishing, coastal erosion, and pollution contribute to habitat destruction, further threatening the stability of local fish stocks. In addition, climate change-related impacts such as sea-level rise and ocean acidification disrupt the food supply, diminish income opportunities, and jeopardize cultural practices deeply tied to the marine environment (OPML, 2023).

Within fishing communities, the **poorest members** depend on marine and coastal resources for nutrition, being particularly vulnerable to the depletion of fish stocks. The fishing sector plays a critical role in ensuring food security for marginalised groups within fishing communities, particularly for women living in poverty. In many rural areas, women are often involved in gleaning activities, which they rely on to feed their families. However, the harmful effects of overfishing, such as depletion of fish stocks, exacerbates food insecurity for these households (Easton R. White et al. 2022). In addition, increased competition for resources may increase the risk of violence to which those groups are already exposed. As fish resources dwindle, competition for access to marine resources intensifies, potentially leading to conflicts and heightened tensions and violence among community members, specifically increasing the risk of exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence for women and children (Sangeeta Mangubhai et al. 2023).

In climate-related migration scenarios, **women** often bear a disproportionate burden, shouldering the responsibility of caring for children and the elderly. Moreover, as environmental degradation and resource scarcity intensify, women face heightened competition for essential resources, further exacerbating gender inequalities in access to land, water, and food.

3.3.2. In what ways are these communities/ populations at risk from future environmental degradation?

Overfishing

The combination of encroachment on coastal areas by distant-water fishing fleets and overfishing by coastal communities affect food and economic security in coastal communities and also heightens the risk of interpersonal and gender-based violence.

Although numbers are unknown, it is estimated that around half of the total fisheries sector production is derived from illegal catch (World Bank, 2020).

Distant-water fishing fleets from Asia and Europe account for a significant portion of the catch within the Malagasy Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Fleets from Europe and Asia are placing huge pressure on Madagascar's fisheries by catching nearly 80,000 tonnes of seafood each year - almost the same amount as local fishermen. Consequently, catches of several key species groups seem to be in decline, including mostly exported shrimp, shark and sea cucumber. In an encouraging step Madagascar signed up to The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) in 2024, a global initiative to promote transparency and participation in the management of marine fisheries.

There is evidence that impoverished populations turning to **artisanal fishing also threatens the sustainability of fish stocks** (Frédéric Le Manach, 2011). Interview respondents working in the biodiversity sector outlined specific dynamics associated with migrants from other areas of Madagascar that engage in fishing activities in search of income, which may further exacerbate the pressure on marine and coastal resources. They may not integrate the conservation practices of the local communities: *"Migrants will fish in forbidden zones or practice overfishing. Activities must be legalised, and these populations often practice their activity illicitly. If they want to stay and settle locally, they must then integrate into the system and respect local rules."* (government official respondent to key informant interview). Competition for ever reducing marine resources can also exacerbate conflicts in the communities, likely affecting women in particular. One of the respondents thus described:

> *"Men increasingly turn to night diving for octopus, causing conflicts with women traditionally engaged in this activity. The women complain that men are taking over what used to be their domain and primary source of income, making it harder for them to earn a living."* (International NGO respondent to key informant interview)

Environmental degradation from pollution

Key risks of environmental degradation arise from pollution which affects coastal and marine water quality, including from the runoff due to deforestation and agriculture or heavy metal contamination from mining areas into coastal areas, or from the lack of proper water and sanitation services in communities in coastal areas. Marine litter also contributes to the loss of marine biodiversity locally: fishing is undertaken both by national and foreign vessels, and the lack of regulations or guidance on the marking of fishing gear can be thought of as the main cause of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) problems (CEFAS, n.d.). While poorer populations are more dependent on natural resources, they are also more vulnerable to environmental degradation. This situation further limits the adaptive capacities of vulnerable groups, including women, to environmental degradation and the loss of

livelihoods due to overfishing, both by the coastal fishing communities themselves and by industrial/international fishing boats in near shore waters.

Interventions to protect ecosystems/develop new economic activities can further exclude women and marginalised groups, depriving them of their livelihood and worsening food security situation (Westerman and Benbow, 2013). For example, in Madagascar the authorities had put in place 'reserves' from where local people had been evicted. This has forced Malagasy people to perpetuate destructive resource exploitation practices (including switch from land area to sea exploitation). The model of "protected areas" has also caused many conflicts between parks and local population (OPML, 2023).

The development of protected areas may affect specific groups in the communities. One respondent highlighted the challenge for younger generations who have experienced a loss of income and economic opportunities that has not been addressed by the authorities.

> "*Young people are vulnerable due to the creation of parks. There is a restriction on access to land, but since people have many children, there is pressure from the population to have land and for young people to have livelihoods. Perhaps the parents benefited from compensation or alternative livelihoods, but not necessarily the young people. When they become adults, there is less land available. Young people are also among the most vulnerable because they are not necessarily involved in the decision-making process."* (International NGO respondent to key informant interview)

Potential risk of perpetuating or aggravating the exclusion of marginalised groups who depend on marine resources are also analysed in the OCPP activities matrix in Annex.

3.3.3. Climate change associated risk

Climate risks are increasing, with increases in temperatures, reduced and more variable precipitation, more frequent droughts, more intense cyclones, and rising sea levels. All these phenomena impact ecosystems, and lead to potential decrease of marine species (molluscs, crustaceans, and coral reefs). Part of the coastal areas of Morondava and Mahajanga might be submerged by 2100 due to the rising sea level. Recent reports observed a decrease among marine species (molluscs, crustaceans, and coral reefs of cold water) in seasonal activities. Migration climate risks for marine and inland fisheries include ocean acidification, changes in cyclone events, sea level rise, increasing temperatures, wind intensification, increased occurrence of extreme weather events, and the facilitated spread of exotic species (OPML, 2023). The decline in production due to climate change represents a loss of livelihood for many families in coastal communities. One interview respondent reflected:

> *"In such a context, local custom persists that the man must have the best dish, women and children, we will have much less. Linking this to climate change, I think it is really a problem of fish production. That is to say that there will be*

> *less than the needs of the populations. Moreover, the increase in temperature, notably of the sea, harms fish habitat. They may change habitats (zones) and even risk no longer being able to reproduce. This will reduce production during fishing."* (Government official respondent to key informant interview)

In addition, climate change affects inland agricultural production, causing farmers to migrate to the coast in search of an alternative source of livelihood. One respondent commented: *"There is a growing pressure within fishing communities, due to the migration of farmers affected by climate change, who convert to fishing. This leads to conflicts of interest."* (local NGO respondent to key informant interview)

Climate change affects both women and men, but their vulnerability and ability to adapt differs due to variations in their roles, opportunities, and access to resources. Women are affected disproportionately due to their heavy reliance on natural resources (water, forests) and various socio-economic factors (inheritance, education, etc.) while also experiencing a range of discrimination. In addition, climate change affects women by reducing the opportunities for them to fish. A respondent thus describes: *"When southern winds (tsioka atimo) occur during the fishing period, women are the most affected. These winds often blow during low tide, which is the ideal time for women to fish. As a result, their income is reduced, creating financial hardship for fishing households. Over a 15-day period, only 4 to 5 days may be suitable for fishing, leading to severe income instability."* (International NGO respondent to key informant interview)

3.4. What are the key issues in terms of SEAH for OCPP to be aware of within the Madagascar programme that are flagged through GEDSI analysis? (RQ3)

3.4.1. SEAH, GBV and VAC context in Madagascar

Regarding the prevalence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC) in Madagascar, available sources include the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the 2021 Demographic Health Survey and the UNFPA Population data portal which provides trend estimates on standardized global indicators.

GBV and intimate partner violence. According to the 2018 MICS, 32% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, with rates varying significantly across regions—ranging from 43% in Analamanga and Anosy to 14% in Melaky. Notably, 46% of currently married women have encountered physical violence, compared to 34% of unmarried women. The majority of perpetrators (88%) are intimate partners, underlining the prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). IPV is found to be prevalent in regions such as Analamanga and Vakinankaratra, with 41% of women reporting such violence. Notably, 41% of women and 29% of men believe that hitting their wives is justifiable under certain circumstances. Educational level further impacts these perceptions, with more highly educated women more likely to justify violence (UNFPA data portal). Conversely, men with higher education

are the least likely to condone IPV. Furthermore, 14% of women report having faced sexual violence.

Madagascar remains a source country for **human trafficking**, with women and children being trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation (US Department of State, 2024). Domestic trafficking of children for forced labour in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and domestic work is widespread. Despite the existence of anti-trafficking legislation, including the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, enforcement remains weak.

Violence against children is a pervasive issue, with physical and sexual violence against children occurring across multiple environments, including households, schools, and workplaces. A 2016 UNICEF study identified male relatives (uncles, grandfathers, cousins) as the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls aged 0–14. Psychological violence and neglect are prevalent, particularly directed at girls. 28% of children aged 5–17 engaged in labour, primarily in agriculture and fishing. Girls are often trafficked to urban areas or sold into domestic servitude, where they face a heightened risk of sexual violence. In addition, Madagascar's position as a popular tourist destination has led to child sex tourism, with children under 18 being sexually exploited.

Despite legal reforms in 2007 that raised the legal marriage age to 18, **child marriage** remains widespread, particularly in rural areas and certain regions such as Atsimo-Atsinanana and Androy. The MICS 2018 found that 37% of women aged 20–49 were married before the age of 18, with 12% married before 15. The incidence of child marriage is inversely related to the level of education and wealth, with poorer and less-educated women more likely to marry early. Child marriage is linked to teenage pregnancy, with a high Adolescent Fertility Rate (151 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19), far exceeding the Sub-Saharan African average (110). The percentage of under-18 marriages is particularly high in Atsimo-Andrefana, Androy, and Melaky. In certain regions, families engage in bride price transactions to legitimise these unions, particularly in northwest Madagascar.

SEAH in fishing communities

Sexual exploitation and trafficking apply to a range of practices and contexts in the fisheries sector. Key aspects to highlight include:

- **Human trafficking in foreign commercial vessels**, particularly those that operate illegally in Madagascar’s waters, which have been associated with human trafficking. The Trafficking in Persons Report states that there is forced child labour in the fishing industry in Madagascar (US Department of State, 2020).
- **Child labour in coastal communities.** Within coastal communities, children participate from an early age in fishing activities, starting to learn fishing and help their parents around 8 years old. From these cultural practices, children practice deep diving for shrimp and lobster without breathing aides or diving

protection. Traffickers exploit Malagasy children, mostly from rural and coastal regions and from impoverished families in urban areas, forcing them into domestic servitude in homes and businesses and in a variety of economic activities including fishing.

- **Sexual trafficking of girls** Parents often encourage girls as young as 15 years old to become financially independent by dating, marrying, or engaging in commercial sex with foreign tourists; traffickers use this expectation as an opportunity to exploit girls. Traffickers continue to abuse traditional practices of arranged and early marriage, bride purchasing, and girl markets to engage girls in child sex trafficking. (US Department of State, 2024). While this practice is not specifically described in coastal and fishing communities, statistical data shows a corelation between child sexual exploitation, trafficking and poverty, and so this issue is likely prevalent in fishing communities.

3.4.2. SEAH Considerations for OCPP

OCPP is working with development partners and government ministries, so it is important to raise their awareness of the improvements needed on SEAH. It is crucial to focus on developing strong linkages between OCPP and current government initiatives to ensure that, to the extent possible, adequate and appropriate technical support is provided to adopt a preventative approach to SEAH and fully understand the intersections with gender and social inclusion SEAH and GEDSI are largely absent from key national strategies and policies relating to the Blue Economy. This said, interviews with key informants and the literature reveal a growing number of initiatives and increasing awareness of GEDSI and GBV issues among stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation and management of marine resources. From interviews however, little has been done as yet to research and address SEAH risk. However given the growing contextual understanding of the prevalence of wider GBV and GEDSI risks, it does provide a useful starting point to consider SEAH risks within programming and how these risks might be addressed

Safeguarding implications for OCPP

This GEDSI review has identified the following safeguarding considerations for OCPP:

Unclear safeguarding arrangements across partner organisations

- The programme works with a range of diverse partners including both Government agencies, consultancy companies, and other marine management programmes as well as NGOs. It might be useful to begin discussion around SEAH awareness even though the programme is coming to the end of its delivery cycle, as there are still useful discussions to be had about safe closure, messaging to any communities about programme closure and any pathways for community feedback to be provided if appropriate. It still may be of benefit for OCPP partners to consider together what needs to be done to reduce risks within the time remaining before the closure of the programme to ensure adherence to a

common standard on PSEAH, aligning to CEFAS' Safeguarding and SEAH policy.

- It will be important for OCPP to take a different approach to safeguarding for the different partners and work with them to understand what arrangements they should have in place**. For CSOs and small private sector initiatives, often due diligence can be used as an entry point to offer technical assistance on safeguarding as needed**. For universities and Government institutions, OCPP will need to use a different approach. This may include understanding the existing safeguarding procedures within Government departments and taking a collaborative and 'positive influencing' approach to mitigate risk.

Safeguarding risks within the programme

There is a risk that other forms of SEAH and safeguarding related misconduct may occur within OCPP funded activities

- It is important for OCPP to understand that OCPP-funded personnel (including delivery partners) may come into contact with marginalised individuals due to their work in communities, for example, through data collection and site visits training and capacity building sessions. This increases the risk of safeguarding-related misconduct including SEAH targeted at the most marginalised community members. It is thus important that safeguarding procedures aligned to CEFA's Safeguarding and SEAH policy (including mechanisms for community members to raise concerns) are in place to mitigate the risk of SEAH and other forms of harm.
- OCPP should work with partners to build understanding of sexual harassment between colleagues, as in many organisations this often goes unreported. Efforts should be made to ensure OCPP-funded staff are provided appropriate support if they have experienced sexual harassment and staff are trained to understand what constitutes sexual harassment and how to report any concerns.

There are a small number of OCPP-funded activities where there is a higher risk of SEAH and other forms of safeguarding related misconduct.

- **Capacity building and training activities in coastal communities**. Although the OCPP team have advised research team that this work primary sits within the Compliance Enforcement Team, it was acknowledged it still has direct linkages to the biodiversity and conversation pillars of the programme so this has been included. This is a significant area where there is direct contact between OCPP partners and community members. This poses potential risk of SEAH and other forms of harm due to inherent power dynamics between trainers and participants. Effective mitigation measures may include safer recruitment procedures of staff who will deliver the training, developing reporting and referral pathways for individuals to raise concerns, and addressing the safeguarding commitments including 'zero tolerance' to inaction at the start of the trainings.

- **National Junior Eco Guard programme**. Efforts should be made to ensure this programme is safely managed and participating staff (and recognising the power imbalance between staff and children and agree safe ways of engagement. Parental consent should be obtained, and child friendly referral pathways should be in place. There should be robust oversight and monitoring of this programme inclusive of direct feedback from both parents and children and a continuous review of risks.
- **Improve infrastructure to increase economic and social development of rural coastal communities.** Infrastructure and economic development activities risk reinforcing existing power relations in the communities, potentially posing a risk of perpetuating exploitation of certain groups children, girls, vulnerable women. These activities require specific attention to be paid to the needs of vulnerable groups in the locations chosen, access for persons with physical impairments, and ensuring that child exploitation and SEAH risks are recognised, and appropriate detection and prevention measures are put in place.
- **Develop sustainable alternative economic and livelihood opportunities, including sustainable tourism.** Tourism poses a risk of SEAH especially for child-headed households, female headed households, girls and boys with disabilities, and, if not specifically designed with a GEDSI lens, risks further exacerbating the social and economic marginalisation of these vulnerable groups. If OCPP is engages in economic empowerment or livelihoods initiatives, it is important to consider a Do No Harm approach by proactively identifying potential risks embedding robust mitigation to protect and promote the well-being and safety of vulnerable groups. This should be done alongside a GEDSI analysis to better understand the context and specific gender and social inclusion dynamics at play.

3.5. Who are the key stakeholders to engage on GEDSI and why? What work is already going on to address poverty and vulnerability and empower groups across OCPP areas (those interacting or dealing with biodiversity)? What lessons can be learned from this? (RQ5)

3.5.1. Stakeholder mapping

There are a number of key stakeholders in Madagascar that OCPP could consider engaging with who work on both biodiversity/conservation and addressing poverty and vulnerability. Key relevant areas of work that these stakeholders are involved with include:

- Initiatives supporting income-generating activities for vulnerable women and girls such as fish product processing, aquaculture, and sustainable tourism.
- Actions aimed to strengthen women's participation in local environmental governance bodies.

- Community awareness programmes emphasising the gender-differentiated impacts of environmental change.
- Integration of traditional and cultural values into coastal management strategies

The table below highlights key stakeholders that OCPP could consider engaging with that already work at the intersection of gender equality and social inclusion and biodiversity:

Stakeholder categories	Key stakeholders	Current work relevant to GEDSI	Why engage with them?
Local civil society organisations	CRADES - Committee of Reflection and Action for the Development and the Environment of Sambirano ROSEDA - Rally of Operators for Ambilobe's Environment and Development Department DELC - Development & environmental Law Center)	These organisations are supporting vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth in coastal areas as part of their work on biodiversity. They implement alternative livelihood projects, community awareness initiatives, and promote inclusive participation in natural resource governance.	Potential allies to implement activities promoting the participation of marginalised groups, women and girls in biodiversity projects Expertise on biodiversity and community-based livelihood projects that can be leveraged to support GEDSI
Government counterparts	Madagascar National Parks (MNP)	At MNP level, there is as yet no research directly linking gender and climate change, but rather the distinction between the ability of men and women to monitor biodiversity.	
	Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy	Activities associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, marine conservation, sustainable fishing practices, marine biodiversity and promoting education in these areas.	Current partnership with OCPP, but listed activities in the programme document (e.g. capacity building activities with local communities) do not mention GEDSI considerations, nor gender disaggregated data
	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Activities associated with marine protected areas to achieve international,	Currently in a partnership with OCPP, but listed activities in the programme

		regional and national commitments and priorities to sustainably manage marine resources (for the benefit of present and future generations).	document (e.g. capacity building activities with local communities) do not mention GEDSI considerations, nor gender disaggregated data
International NGOs	Blue Venture	Several initiatives already support coastal community resilience to environmental pressures, and promote rights-based, gender-equal and socially inclusive approaches. Blue Venture has created a toolbox and a case study on gender transformative approaches in octopus fisheries management	Promoting women participation in fisheries governance, a share proven methodologies and provide technical support on gender mainstreaming in conversation/biodiversity
	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)	Coral Reef Rescue Initiative (CRRI) a project focusing on rights and gender equality	Integrates gender equality and disability inclusion in their work on community resilience through livelihood opportunities to help build economic capacity in the face of climate change
International organisations	World Bank	The World Bank is actively supporting the development of Madagascar's blue economy, focusing on sustainable and integrated development of marine-related sectors like fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection, while preserving marine ecosystems.	Partner to involve in policy and advocacy work to promote integration of GEDSI in the blue economy
	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Has launched the ReSea Project in Feb 2024 on marine biodiversity and gender, focusing on climate resilience and economic empowerment	Enhance participation of women, girls and marginalised groups in coastal and marine management and protection and restoration of ecosystems (mangroves, corals, seagrasses) while addressing pollution) Create income generating/alternative livelihoods opportunities for local communities including most marginalised groups within them

Community networks	Malagasy women leaders networks Organizations of People living with disabilities (OPDs)	Grassroots organisations with expertise in GEDSI that may or may not already be involved in biodiversity work	Key allies to involve in supporting more inclusive and equitable participation in how marine resources are managed at local level
	MIHARI network	National Locally Managed Marine Area network which includes 150 communities, organised into 64 associations, managing natural resources at local level by putting gin place permanent and temporary reserves and fishery closures, implementing fishing gear restrictions, developing alternative livelihood initiatives such as aquaculture, contributing to mangrove forest restoration management	They are supporting more inclusive and equitable participation in how marine resources are managed They engage men and community leaders in dialogue around gender norms Support alternative livelihood initiatives adapted to the needs of marginalised groups to mitigate against potential harmful consequences of conservation/biodiversity projects on them
Private sector stakeholders	This includes finances institutions such as the Baobab Bank, Access Bank, and Youth Bank Money Transfer – and commercial sector partners targeted through the Development Credit Authority	Customer outreach: The private sector offers opportunities to enhance social inclusion and women's economic empowerment, for example through aquaculture, product development, eco-tourism, micro-credit for income generating activities	Support implementation of GESI best practices in the commercial sector

3.5.2. Lessons

The following lessons are derived from both the literature review and key informants' reflections:

There is more awareness of gender equality in marine biodiversity programmes that in other aspects of GEDSI which are often overlooked. Actors in the biodiversity and marine resources sector are increasingly aware of some GEDSI issues, in particular gender equality dynamics. Many of projects reviewed during the literature review included a focus on gender parity among participants, the promotion of women leadership and establishing specific women's spaces to encourage their participation in the fisheries sector. According to respondents, these initiatives are not consistently integrated in project targets and monitoring. Other aspects of GEDSI remain largely overlooked - for example, disability inclusion in the fisheries sector appears absent from both national strategies and programmes, and child labour and child trafficking and exploitation, particularly among girls, and how they relate to the preservation of biodiversity and marine resources are largely ignored.

There can be a trade-off between empowering vulnerable groups in fishing communities and conservation of marine biodiversity in the absence of targeted measures to support the development of alternative/sustainable livelihoods. Poverty reduction measures which support women to engage more in fishing activities, or with farmers affected by climate change to migrate to the coast in search of a new revenue source may both accelerate overfishing and cause detrimental environmental impacts. Conversely, biodiversity conservation efforts can harm vulnerable, marginalised groups in different ways by perpetuating or increasing their marginalisation and reduce their access to the natural resources they depend on which in tun may increase food insecurity. This can be a vicious cycle if not properly understood and programmed for.

There were also lessons relating to **successful approaches in integrating GEDSI in marine biodiversity** programmes. Respondents highlighted that:

- Empowering marginalised groups requires a participatory approach (for example community dialogues, participatory action learning[2], adaptations of the stepping stones methodology[3]) that considers traditional roles and socio-cultural context.
- Effective action depends on coordination among different actors, especially between local initiatives and national policies.

[2] More information on participatory action learning can be found here: https://gamechangenetwork.org/action-learning-for-planning-advocacy/participatory-action-learning/#:~:text=Participatory%20Action%20Learning%20'System',strengthen%20and%20improve%20the%20process.
[3] More information on the stepping stones methodology can be found here: https://steppingstonestorights.net/

- Recognising and documenting local knowledge and strengthening community capacities supports more sustainable and equitable marine biodiversity management. This can be done through developing practice-based learning briefs, case studies and interviews for example.
- Involving women and youth in environmental governance enhances community resilience to climate change. This can be done through engaging community groups to organise community engagement activities to increase awareness and participation. Working in a more intentional way with existing governance and leadership structures to increase their awareness and understanding of the benefits of involving diverse perspectives and a range of participants at decision making levels can create space and opportunities for women and young people to engage.

3.6. What data is available in-country that can be used for GEDSI analysis and what are the data gaps? (RQ6)

3.6.1. Available data for GEDSI analysis

Key data sources on the GEDSI situation in Madagascar at national level are listed in the table below.

Data Source	What it contains
World bank country gender statistics	Development statistics disaggregated by male/female
Gender gap index report from the World Economic Forum	benchmarks progress towards gender parity across four dimensions: economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership
Child Marriage Atlas Madagascar from Girls Not Brides	Data on child marriage, legal framework and initiatives
Population Data Portal Madagascar from UNFPA	Gender based violence statistics
DHS, 2021 (in French)	Section on gender-based violence
Disability data report, 2022	National data on disability statistics, disaggregated by gender

In addition to national statistics, there is a growing body of studies and published papers on gender equality and vulnerability in fishing communities (referenced in the bibliography and annex).

Examples of entry points to integrate a GEDSI lens in activities of OCPP on biodiversity in Madagascar can be found in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

3.6.2. Data gaps

While some research covers aspects of gender equality in the fisheries sector in Madagascar, there are significant gaps in understanding the interdependency of GEDSI and biodiversity outcomes, with much of the evidence often anecdotal. Key gaps include:

- No studies focusing on the extent to which loss of marine biodiversity or measures to protect marine biodiversity impact vulnerable and marginalised groups, or how dynamics of marginalisation may hinder efforts to protect marine biodiversity.
- No known research examining the relationship between **disability inclusion** and marine biodiversity initiatives and coastal community management practices.
- The impact of loss of biodiversity and reduced availability of fish on **child trafficking and child labour** in coastal communities.
- The dynamics between established fishing communities and **migrants and biodiversity conservation** efforts as well as climate change impacts.
- **Quantitative data** on gender, disability, and other aspects of social inclusion in coastal communities is scarce. Where data exists, it is rarely disaggregated by geography or other demographic factors. Intersectional analysis—considering how gender intersects with age, ethnicity, ability, etc.—is almost entirely absent.
- Limited **qualitative data** exploring gender perceptions, and intra-household power dynamics, and experiences of gender-based violence within coastal communities. The social and cultural dimensions of resource management, including gendered labour, decision-making roles, and access to resources also require investigating.

3.7. What are the entry points for GEDSI in OCPP's activities in Madagascar?

The table below presents suggested entry points to integrate a GEDSI lens in activities of OCPP on marine diversity in Madagascar. It is based on an Excel spreadsheet listing the outputs from the Madagascar programme by theme, including Marine Biodiversity. Some of those were selected as proposed entry points based on their potential for directly engaging communities and partners on GEDSI.

Activity area	Unaware	Sensitive	Strategic 'empower'	Transformative 'addresses root causes'
Raise awareness of biodiversity values, measures for protection and sustainable use of natural resources at all levels.	Risk that mostly men participate in this activity because of social (women engaged in caretaking activities at times of meetings) or cultural barriers (women not participating in public meetings in some regions, young women and boys being excluded). Risk that venue or means of communication (including about the event) exclude people living with disabilities	Encourage equal representation and participation of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in communication about the event Liaise with local women and youth organizations and Organizations of People Living with Disabilities (OPDs) to find out best way of reducing barriers for their constituency Adapt length and time of meetings and provide transport reimbursement to ensure vulnerable community members can attend Consider separate meetings for youth/adults or men/women if appropriate	Ensure that discussions on values and sustainable use of resources also include equity issues, rights and gender equality values	
Increase the inclusion of local people and traditions in the management of MPAs, and restoration projects	Risk of perpetuating exclusion of women from decision making platforms	Ensure that data on participants is disaggregated by sex and include gender parity target Encourage equal representation and participation of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in communication about the event Liaise with local women and youth organisations and Organisations of People Living with Disabilities (OPDs) to find out best way of reducing barriers for	Conduct GESI sensitisation and value clarification activities as part of sensitisation work Build the capacity of local women organisations, youth organisations or OPDs through partnerships, to participate in MPAs	Advocate for/ establish partnerships with social norms change programmes addressing inequities and socio-cultural barriers to participation of women, girls, people living with

		their constituency Adapt length and time of meetings and provide transport reimbursement to ensure vulnerable community members can attend Consider separate meetings for youth/adults or men/women if appropriate		disabilities and other vulnerable groups (e.g. theatre group showcased in the Blue Ventures 2021 technical brief)
Reduce the use of destructive fishing practices	Example of the octopus fisheries closure by Blue Ventures, risk of shifting economic incentives, men becoming more involved in previously non-commercial, subsistence fisheries	Conduct a GESI analysis to understand who is using these destructive practices and identify potential vulnerable groups that may 'lose out'	Involve governmental/civil society partners in ensuring that safety nets are in place for those using destructive practices to help them transition away from them	
Develop good governance practices for all marine plans, including clear roles and responsibilities.	Risk of perpetuating exclusion of women from decision making platforms	Encourage equal representation and participation of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups Lift barriers to participation for girls, socio-economically vulnerable women and people living with disabilities through engaging with local networks (see above) Monitor and address issues in participation	Conduct GESI sensitisation and value clarification activities as part of coordination work Advocate for the inclusion of women, youth organisations and OPDs in decision making platforms on the protection and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems	
Produce framework for the identification & engagement of	Risk of perpetuating exclusion of women, girls, people living with disabilities and	Ensure the framework includes considerations of gender equality, disability inclusion and equity in its	Conduct GESI sensitisation and value clarification activities as part of engagement to ensure that	

valuable stakeholders and identification of potential conflicts	marginalised groups from decision making	design and description of 'valuable stakeholders'	all participants have equal say in decisions Advocate for the inclusion of women, youth organisations and OPDs in discussions	
Develop integrated management that engages with and empowers local communities to manage their coastal areas	Risk of further excluding marginalised groups (female headed households, people living with disabilities)	Monitor the economic and social development impact for different groups (based on gender, ability, geographies)	Assess risks and opportunities for including considerations for specific needs of vulnerable groups (e.g. geographies chosen, access for persons with physical impairments, ensuring that SEAH risk for women and girls is reduced) Advocate for the inclusion of women, youth organisations and OPDs in decision making platforms on infrastructure development	
Increase engagement with local communities to build up education and awareness of the long-term benefits of healthy marine ecosystems	Risk that mostly men participate in this activity because of social (women engaged in caretaking activities at times of meetings) or cultural barriers (women not participating in public meetings in some regions, young women and boys being excluded). Risk that venue or means of communication	Ensure that data on participants is disaggregated by sex and include gender parity target Encourage equal representation and participation of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in communication about the event Liaise with local women and youth organizations and Organizations of People Living with Disabilities (OPDs) to find out best way of reducing barriers for their constituency	Ensure that discussions on education and awareness of the long-term benefits of healthy marine ecosystems also include equity issues, rights and gender equality values Build the capacity of local women organisations, youth organisations or OPDs through partnerships to raise awareness on the long-term benefits of healthy marine	

	(including about the event) exclude people living with disabilities	Adapt length and time of meetings and provide transport reimbursement to ensure vulnerable community members can attend Consider separate meetings for youth/adults or men/women if appropriate	ecosystems among their constituencies	

4. Conclusion

Conclusion 1 – RQ1: Who are the marginalised groups in coastal communities?

Programmes focusing of marine biodiversity in Madagascar operate in a complex social and cultural context characterised by a diversity of populations cohabiting in coastal areas and presenting various intersecting factors of vulnerability. Coastal communities in Madagascar rank among the country's poorest populations. Within these communities, certain groups face compounded vulnerabilities, in particular teenage mothers and pregnant girls, members of female-headed households, migrants, and persons with disabilities. Gender inequality engrained in social and cultural norms restricts women's participation in local governance and higher-value economic activities. Economic division of labour is typically divided along gender lines: men dominate the high-value fishing activities, while women are more often involved in lower-value tasks such as gleaning, fishing by foot at low tide, and pre- and post-harvest work.

Conclusion 2 – RQ2: How are those groups impacted by marine biodiversity loss?

Marine biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and climate change disproportionately affect the most marginalised groups within fishing communities. Female-headed households, teenage mothers, and persons with disabilities are among those most dependent on marine biodiversity for their subsistence and food security. At the same time, climate change has driven a decline in agricultural livelihoods, contributing to increased migration toward coastal areas. New arrivals may not share the same social and cultural norms or comply with local fishing rules, which can create tensions with established communities and intensifying competition over already depleted marine resources. In this context, marine biodiversity conservation and management efforts risk reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion and discrimination. Without careful design and implementation, such initiatives may further restrict access to marine resources for vulnerable groups or concentrate benefits and decision-making power in the hands of dominant actors within coastal communities.

Conclusion 3 – RQ3: What are key SEAH concerns relating to marine biodiversity in Madagascar?

High rates of gender-based violence, child exploitation, and trafficking in Madagascar underscore the urgent need for OCPP to strengthen safeguarding measures and integrate SEAH risk mitigation into partnerships and community engagements, as well as heightened attention to vulnerable groups in programme activities. Of particular concern is child exploitation and trafficking, which disproportionately affects girls. Girls may be forced into domestic work or sexually exploited or abused, while

social and cultural norms require children to engage in fishing activities from a young age. Child exploitation and trafficking has been associated with fishing activities, both in coastal communities as well as in international fishing vessels that operate in Madagascar's EEZ.

Conclusion 4 – RQ5: Who are key stakeholders to engage with on GEDSI and marine biodiversity?

There is an increasingly diverse range of stakeholders working on marine biodiversity that address aspects of gender inequality in participation and marine biodiversity governance, particularly those working at the community level. Projects implemented in this area have shown that inclusive, participatory approaches can ensure conservation efforts do no harm and are not inadvertently deepening inequalities and reinforcing marginalisation of women in coastal communities. However, other marginalised groups such as persons living with disabilities have not been well integrated in marine biodiversity efforts to date.

Conclusion 5 – RQ6: What data is available?

While Madagascar has national-level GEDSI data and a growing body of research on gender and vulnerability in coastal contexts, there are critical gaps in disaggregated, intersectional, and data specific to the biodiversity sector — particularly regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities, the social impacts of biodiversity loss, and gendered power dynamics within coastal communities, which limits the ability of government and NGO actors to design fully informed and equitable marine conservation interventions.

5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (relating to RQ1 & RQ2) Integrate GEDSI considerations into OCPP programme activities

Prioritise practical entry points for GEDSI integration by focusing on immediate, achievable actions:

- Ensure that sex-disaggregated data of participants in community activities is systematically tracked and parity targets and milestones are set.
- Expand participation of women's rights organisations, youth networks, and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in local decision-making platforms taking advantage of existing initiatives in this area
- Ensure that economic and livelihood activities do not exclude or unintentionally disadvantage marginalised groups and proactively target their inclusion
- Focus initially on responsive GEDSI actions, with selected strategic interventions where feasible (see **Error! Reference source not found.**)
- Provide basic GEDSI training to OCPP staff, implementing partners, and relevant stakeholders to build awareness and capacity

Recommendation 2 (relating to RQ3) – Address SEAH and safeguarding risks in OCPP activities

- Advocate for the inclusion of local civil society organisations (particularly those focused on gender, SRHR, or GBV) in relevant decision-making platforms and programme design.
- Establish partnerships with organisations such as UNFPA or similar, to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy support for integrating GEDSI into marine biodiversity and blue economy agendas.
- Invest in building internal OCPP capacity to proactively mitigate SEAH risks in all activities.

Recommendation 3 (relating to RQ5) – Develop partnerships for integrating GEDSI in marine biodiversity

- Engage in advocacy work with key actors such as government partners and the World Bank to ensure that GEDSI considerations are better taken into account in the blue economy framework.
- Share these findings with stakeholders engaged in marine biodiversity programmes in Madagascar to ensure recommendations can benefit future work after OCPP programme concludes.
- Recognising that shifting entrenched gender norms requires long-term engagement, and such changes may not fully materialise within the current programme timeframe, focus on building OCPP and partners capacity on GEDSI to ensure that these aspects are integrated in marine biodiversity programmes going forward.

Recommendation 4 (relating to RQ6) – Address GEDSI data gaps

- Develop targeted GEDSI studies in coastal communities, focusing on gender, disability, and intersectional vulnerabilities in relation to marine biodiversity.
- Ensure systematic collection and analysis of disaggregated data (by sex, age, disability, migration status) in relevant programme components.
- Track and evaluate the impacts of biodiversity and conservation activities on different groups, particularly women and girls and persons living with disabilities using qualitative, participatory feedback methods (community dialogues, focus group discussions, and community score card[4] approaches).

[4] This method was originally developed by CARE to assess services by different groups in the community in a participatory manner, more information at https://www.care.org/our-work/health/strengthening-healthcare/community-score-card-csc/

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Annex

Annex 1: List of organizations from which respondents were interviewed

National Wildlife Conservation Society

MIHARI Network

Turtle Survival Alliance Madagascar

Madagascar National Parks

Association of Journalists in Environment

National Office for the Environment (ONE)

Simonette Rasoanantenaina, Blue Ventures

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) is a bilateral technical assistance and capacity building programme that provides tailored support to countries to manage the marine environment more sustainably, including by strengthening marine science expertise, developing science-based policy and management tools and creating educational resources for coastal communities. The OCPP delivers work under three thematic areas: biodiversity, marine pollution, and sustainable seafood. Funding is provided through the overarching Blue Planet Fund (BPF) by the UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

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