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International marine conservation

Fund to protect coasts and oceans

For a number of different reasons, the world's oceans are under pressure: their resources are being exploited by extreme overfishing, and untreated pollutants and rubbish often end up in the ocean's waters. These factors are compounded by conflicting user interests of off-shore wind farms, deep-sea mining, tourism and the fishing industry, which all impact the oceans with varying levels of severity. Climate change further exacerbates the situation as a result of rising sea levels and higher water temperatures. As the same time, millions of people are directly dependent on fish – either as a source of protein or a source of income. To curb the adverse effects on oceans and coasts and safeguard their biodiversity for future generations, KfW launched an innovative fund in collaboration with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) called the Blue Action Fund in 2016.

Current situation

Oceans and coastal regions with their high level of biodiversity make an enormous contribution to global food security: fish is an essential part of the diets of nearly three billion people. Additionally, more than 500 million people around the world – 90% of them in developing countries – are directly or indirectly dependent on fishing. But due to a variety of different factors, the oceans are facing severe problems, fish stocks have declined drastically over the past few decades. Twice as much fish is currently being taken out of the world's oceans than is sustainable.

Climate change further intensifies this effect because it increases the temperature of the oceans and causes sea levels to rise, shrinking coral reefs around the world as a result. This makes thousands of kilometres of coastline more vulnerable to storm tides, destroys the refuges for many species of fish and can threaten the livelihoods of millions of people. The oceans also play a key role in climate change adaptation because they absorb 25 to 30% of CO₂ emissions. The protection and preservation of the oceans is one of the greatest challenges of the decades to come. However, so far, only a small part of

marine areas – between 7 and 8% – have been placed under protection. The few protected areas that exist are often poorly linked and inadequately managed.

Project approach

To intensify marine conservation and coastal protection globally, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) formed the Blue Action Fund (BAF) together with KfW in 2016. In legal terms, the fund is a non-profit trust based in Frankfurt. The fund does not carry out projects itself, but finances projects of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which can enhance and expand their work through access to public funding. This is because relevant NGOs have the necessary expertise and operations on the ground. Funding is

Project title	Blue Action Fund
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Global
Project partners	International, regional and local non-governmental organisations



Fisherman in Senegal. Photo: KfW photo archive / Bernhard Schurian



Coral reefs are massively threatened by global warming. Photo: thinkstock / vlad61

made available for measures that:

- create new protected areas or enlarge existing ones
- manage existing protected areas more effectively
- improve the living conditions of local communities through the sustainable management of marine resources

Interested NGOs can submit project proposals. When selecting projects, the BAF observes any national and regional protection strategies and makes sure projects are consistent with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 2030 and the BMZ's 10-point action plan for marine protection. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) works with the BAF to select projects and provide strategic advice.

The fund is now also financed by Sweden and France, which joined in 2017 and 2018. As a result, the BAF currently has endowment capital of EUR 93 million. In 2020, a further EUR 30 million is planned from the Green Climate Fund, which BAF intends to use to support climate adaptation of coastal residents through marine conservation projects in the Mozambique Channel. The fund is open to other members in order to gradually expand its reach.

Impact

There are now nine ongoing projects, to which four are likely to be added in 2020 and between seven and ten more in 2021. For example, a project by Conservation International (CI) around the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador, Colombia, Panama and Costa Rica on sustainable fishing methods is already being supported. The aim is to better reconcile economy and environment in this species-rich and sensitive maritime area. WWF, Flora & Fauna International and the World Conservation Society are implementing further projects. For example,

in the Indian Ocean and Mozambique Channel, off the coast of Tanzania, off Madagascar and around various Pacific archipelagos, protected areas are currently being created to safeguard biodiversity and livelihoods. With each additional financier and project, the commitment to the oceans and coasts can be further increased.

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