

Theme: People, culture, communities and societies – the inclusive blue economy



Creating economic growth that is inclusive & sustainable



Our coastlines are vitally important resources for many of the world's most vulnerable people, communities and societies.

Communities living around water bodies have traditionally interacted with these aquatic resources and derived a means of livelihood from them. Through time, they have built a wealth of knowledge on the sustainable utilization of ocean-based resources.

Most governments have focused their socio-economic and environmental development on the exploitation of terrestrial resources. However, there is increasing realization that aquatic resources are fundamental in:

- preserving culture
- supporting livelihoods
- creating social well-being

Culture has been identified as one area that needs to be recognized in discussing matters of sustainability in the management of water bodies.

The blue economy concept seeks to ensure environmental sustainability of these water bodies and their surroundings, while also promoting:

- social inclusion
- economic growth
- preservation of culture
- improvement of livelihoods

Cultural value

Culture has been identified as one area that needs to be recognized in discussing matters of sustainability in the management of water bodies.

A 2005 World Bank report stated that the ocean's economic contribution to humankind has been significantly undervalued. In particular, we've failed to appreciate non-market goods and services, such as:



- recreation
- coastal protection
- carbon sequestration
- cultural and spiritual values

This calls for a new way of understanding the oceans which incorporates environmental and social dimensions.

Community engagement

Communities that live around water bodies have significant roles in ensuring and promoting healthy water ecosystems.

Millions of people around the world depend on healthy marine and fresh water ecosystems for their livelihoods, culture and security. To establish an inclusive blue economy, it is important to engage communities living around

water bodies in practical action to conserve and manage water ecosystems.

Engagement of communities is an essential step but also a challenging one in practice.

Traditional knowledge

Vulnerable fishers and people living around water bodies need support to be able to devote scarce time and resources to conservation. This can be done through incentive-based conservation management plans.

Traditional knowledge systems applied by communities to conserve the natural environment can be integrated into the management of oceans and other water bodies.

Harnessing the full potential of the blue economy requires the

effective inclusion and active participation of all societal groups to protect community culture, heritage and way of life.

Considerations

A unique opportunity for an inclusive blue economy involves global processes to develop international legally binding treaties. These focus on the governance of areas that lie outside national jurisdictions.

Due consideration should also be given for applying appropriate Indigenous knowledge systems for conservation.

There are also opportunities for economic empowerment of communities, such as income generation and wealth creation. This can be done through the development of creative cultural industries along various water bodies.

A well-developed hospitality industry provides employment to communities and promotes investment in infrastructure and growth of related service industries.



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Harnessing medicinal substances and extracts from ocean and other water body resources can contribute to improved health standards for communities.

To achieve sustainable development, investments are needed in community programs that explain their roles and responsibilities in protecting, managing and conserving their water ecosystems.

Challenges

Leveraging the blue economy for sustainable development and inclusive growth faces various challenges that negatively impact individuals and communities. These challenges include:

- piracy
- armed robbery
- human trafficking
- maritime terrorism
- smuggling of contraband goods
- illicit trade in crude oil, arms and drugs
- illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing

Also, tax evasion by enterprises involved in unregulated fishing denies governments and local authorities much needed revenue.

Communities suffer health hazards from the degradation of marine ecosystems caused by oil discharge, toxic waste dumping and environmental pollution.

Illegal sand harvesting and the destruction of coral reefs and coastal forests lead to irreversible environmental damage. This damage reduces the resilience of coastal communities by removing natural barriers that limit climate change impacts, such as storm surge, sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

Other challenges that communities living around water bodies experience include:

- unclear property rights
- overreliance on aquatic resources resulting in the need for alternative sources of livelihoods
- exclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems when taking action to sustain marine and water ecosystems



Opportunities

An inclusive blue economy requires short and long-term efforts.

We can take existing opportunities to bring together stakeholders to establish reforms and sustainable global governance processes. In addition, the blue economy requires the building of inclusive processes, including a concerted effort to identify and involve vulnerable groups.

Improving market infrastructure and access for small-scale fishers and artisans can create more sustainable outcomes that benefit vulnerable communities. The blue economy requires a multi-sectoral approach to design appropriate policies to promote societal well-being and balance the interests of people, communities and societies.



Questions

Panelists will guide discussions on:

- 1.** How can reforms establish and sustain a more effective governance process on water bodies that is inclusive to all people, communities and societies?
- 2.** How can we mobilize resources for a global and comprehensive review to make a more inclusive blue economy?
- 3.** What program investments can be used to sensitize and facilitate people and communities to understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting, managing and conserving water ecosystems to achieve sustainable development and coastal resilience?
- 4.** How do we ensure that women, youth and vulnerable members of communities are involved in the management of oceans and other water body resources and increase local content in the blue economy?
- 5.** How do we:
 - diversify economic activities undertaken by communities to reduce poverty and overreliance on water body resources?
 - expand the value chains in the blue economy to open up economic opportunities for these communities?
 - diversify economic activities to reduce poverty among communities in regions where there has been under-reliance of ocean and other water body resources?