

# REPOA Brief



## Learning from the Experience of the Namibian Blue Economy 1

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Key Messages	
<b>Blue Economy Policy (2022-2031)</b>	• How the BE policy framework was developed to pave way for a governance framework that will strengthen linkages and minimize conflict between, <i>inter alia</i> , fisheries, transport, environment, marine mining, marine tourism and logistics.
<b>Sustainable Blue Economy</b>	• How the blue economy contributes to the transformation towards a carbon-neutral, circular and biodiverse Namibian economy.
<b>Fisheries and Aquaculture</b>	• To understand the organization of fisheries and aquaculture subsectors, their growing role in a sustainable food system for Namibia, challenges (if any) and applied solutions.
<b>BlueInvest</b>	• To learn efforts by Namibian agencies to boosting innovation and investment in sustainable solutions and technologies for the blue economy.
<b>Skills and Career Development</b>	• How Namibia unlocked the opportunities of the blue economy by investing in new blue skills and careers.

This brief outlines some lessons from the experiences of Namibian blue economy following the mission of REPOA and Bank of Namibia teams, which met with the relevant Government authorities and the private sector agencies:



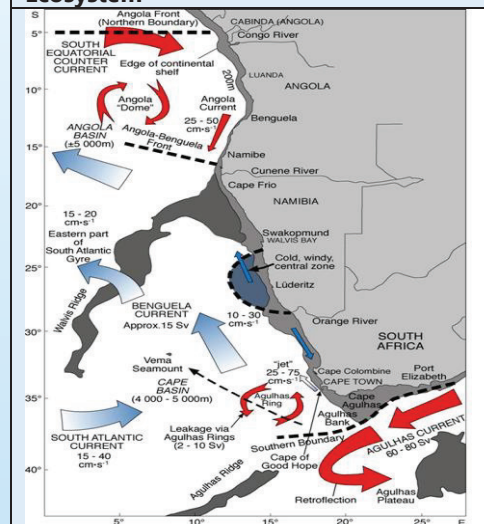
<b>Objective</b>	➤ To explore the underlying opportunities and constraints for sustainably enhancing the expansion of the blue economy in Namibia one of the best-case experiences for Tanzania.
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Baseline Definitions – Blue Economy	
<b>World Bank</b>	Defines BE as a sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem.
<b>EU Commission</b>	Defines BE as encompassing all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts.
<b>Centre for the Blue Economy</b>	Defines BE as the overall contribution of the oceans to economies, the need to address the environmental and ecological sustainability of the oceans, and the ocean economy as a growth opportunity for both developed and developing countries.
<b>United Nations</b>	Defines the BE as an economy comprising a range of economic sectors and related policies that together determine whether the use of ocean resources is sustainable.
<b>Environmental Institutions</b>	Consider the BE to include economic benefits that may not be marketed, such as carbon storage, coastal protection, cultural values and biodiversity.
<b>East African Community</b>	Considers BE as the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources in both marine and freshwater environments, including oceans and seas, coastlines and banks, lakes, rivers and groundwater.

## The Significance of the Blue Economy in Namibia

The coast of Namibia is part of an exceptionally rich marine ecosystem, supporting one for the most productive fisheries areas in the Atlantic. Namibia's coastline extends for 1,570 kilometres (km) and is bordered to the north by the Kunene River and in the South by the Orange River.

### Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem



Source: Benguela Current Commission

- The Northern Benguela wind-driven upwelling system off Namibia's coast is recognized as one of the most biologically productive ocean regions in the world, positioning Namibia well to prosper from renewable food production in both fisheries and aquaculture, carbon sequestration and renewable wind energy.
- The Namibian Blue Economy includes; Fisheries, Marine mining, Marine and coastal tourism, Marine transport, Coastal infrastructure, Ports and towns, Coastal Industries.
- When effectively harnessed through appropriate policy frameworks, the existing and emerging sectors of the blue economy can result in increased food security, employment creation, tourism, infrastructure development, green energy, and a technologically advanced country, among other benefits.
- Namibia is endowed with human capital that, if trained and involved, could change the country and make it benefit from the blue economy in a sustainable way by creating sector-wise wealth and jobs.

## Blue Economy Policy

The Development of a Blue Economy Policy for Namibia began in 2016 under the direction of the Cabinet and spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform as custodian of marine and other aquatic ecosystems.

### Namibia's Blue Economy Sectors



### BE Policy Development Process

- Mapping—all stakeholders
- Inter-Ministerial Committee to draw the Roadmap;
- Zero Draft—National consultations in the 14 regions;
- Policy implementation plan;
- Learning & Benchmarking visits to: Australia, Norway and Seychelles;
- Draft policy shared with SADC, AfDB, and AU to gather effective inputs;
- Stakeholders' validation.

### Structure of the Policy

- National, Regional, Continental and Global Alignment;
- Vision and objectives;
- Strategies for implementation;
- Sectoral responsibilities;
- Resource mobilization including the Youth Generation;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Advocacy and dissemination. Conclusion.

## The Namibia Blue Economy policy and action plan provides:

- A framework that regulates and guides the activities of different role players in the aquatic systems (marine and inland); and
- A governance framework aimed at unlocking the full potential of the blue economy, contributing to poverty alleviation, sustainable economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, creating employment opportunities, and improving human welfare.

## Fisheries and Aquaculture

Namibia has one of the most productive fishing industries in Africa due to the presence of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) that constitutes "an important centre of marine biodiversity and marine food production" and "one of the most productive ocean areas in the world." The cold Benguela current flows northwards through the ocean adjacent to the country's coast and is rich in inorganic nutrients, which are distributed along the coast and fed on by microscopic plants or phytoplankton. These plants form the foundation of Namibia's plentiful marine life, including anchovy, pilchard, hake and monkfish, mammals such as seals, and seabirds.

This ecosystem supports the economically important commercial and recreational fishing sectors, which contribute approximately 4% of Namibian GDP. Shore-based recreational fishing is the lifeblood of the coastal communities of central Namibia, providing a critical source of tourism, income and food.



#### The fishing sector is very important in terms:

- ⊙ The second largest foreign currency earner after Mining, and the fourth of the top five commodities exported;
- ⊙ Export value of fish and fishery products increased from N\$ 12.31 billion in 2022 to N\$ 14.98 billion in 2023;
- ⊙ 90% of fish is exported to the EU market on duty free basis through the EPA with SADC;
- ⊙ Direct employment recorded at 18,000 in 2024, whilst indirect employment stands at 200,000;
- ⊙ Improving domestic food supplies and security;
- ⊙ Fisheries also play a role in tourism through eco-tourism.

The Government of Namibia is effective in controlling the fishing activities mainly through quotas for harvesting of the fisheries. It is estimated that the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources has issued more than 148 aquaculture licenses to date to spur the industry's growth.



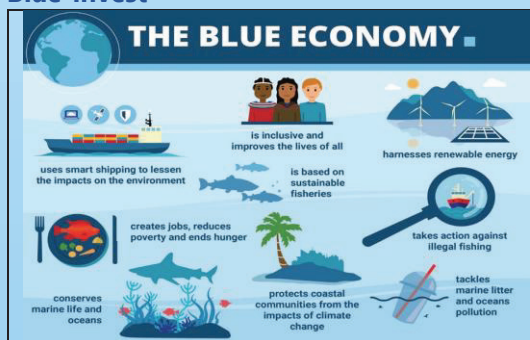
#### Aquaculture in Namibia:

- Mariculture aqua-system—is highly capital-intensive systems, requiring significant capital and technical expertise;
- Major role for foreign investors--Spanish dominated;
- Commercial marine aquaculture is currently dominated by oyster production in Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Lüderitz;
- Production of high-value species intended primarily for export markets;
- Research—for fresh species—especially oysters, salmon, Nile tilapia, Mozambique tilapia and catfish—to facilitate diversification.

#### Underlying challenges include:

- Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activities, which will require substantial investments in maritime security;
- Lack of advanced fishing gear;
- Limited factory modernization – for processing of fish and derivative fish products;
- Old vessels—30 years—not that efficient for fishing operations;
- Value addition remains limited, as processing is done in foreign countries, mainly Spain.

#### Blue-invest



- The BE applies to the mandate and work of the Bank of Namibia (BoN);
- The Environmental Investment Fund (EIF) since 2001 mobilize resources for climate change projects—four key projects worth 40 million Euros—under successful implementation;
- EIF mobilized €43 million concessional loans in partnership with commercial banks;
- EIF mobilized new investment of US \$ 550 million for grants for transition to the blue economy and green hydrogen;
- Namport Social Investment Fund (NSIF) established in 2006, with total disbursement of N\$58 million by 2024.

#### Eco-Tourism


Namibian tourism is also picking up, recently surpassing the pre-covid levels. **Coastal /Cruise tourism** - In 2018 the sector contributed USD80 billion, about 3.4% of the GDP, at annual growth rate of 1.3% over the last decade.



The distinctive value offering for cruise tourism at the Ports of Walvis Bay and Luderitz is centered around modern infrastructure, natural beauty, rich cultural experiences, strategic geographic advantages, and growing demand in the cruise industry. By leveraging these advantages effectively, Namibia has established itself as a key player in the global cruise tourism market. The sector has potential for expansion and growth as most areas are yet to be exploited.



## Skills and Career Development

Three key areas of BE that benefit from targeted research & career development	Main thrusts
	Currently, the main research and education activities are linked to fisheries and aquaculture, with a huge gap of expertise in renewable energy, deep-sea mineral exploitation, oil and gas as these sectors are research driven by international companies with low connections to Namibian and African education and research institutions.
	The growing importance of BE sectors and BE components such as Blue Carbon is currently pushing the development of new educational programmes in Namibia and other pilot countries such as South Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius and Ghana.
	The University of Namibia also has a BE research campus in Henties Bay which is a school of marine engineering that covers: fisheries, seaweed industrialization, oil and gas, and mining;
	Research—is a core function of the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) with various working groups and experts on Eco-Science.

*Source: Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia; Ensuring Sustainability.*

Namibia's Directorate of Resource Management (under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform) is responsible for conducting research and advising on the sustainable use of the living marine resources and the state of the marine environment. There are two research institutes in Namibia, the main centre in Swakopmund and a smaller one in Lüderitz.

## Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The blue economy presents an opportunity to boost the Namibian economy, contribute to food security and create job opportunities for its people. The BE Policy guides the coordination and promotion of sustainable and equitable economic opportunities. The BE policy further advocates for investment in Namibia's Blue Economy by both local and international investors to strengthen growth and allow expansion of the Blue Economy within its guiding principles for the benefit of the current and future generations of Namibia.

**Namibia is committed to the principle of optimum sustainable exploitation of aquatic resources.**

The success of these blue economy activities and their respective benefits to the economy depend on two key factors:

- Effective leadership, strong political will, and bold decisions to implement plans by the National Planning Commission; and
- Policy predictability and certainty—these help to reduce the need for applying fiscal incentives, which are often distortionary and lead to revenue loss.

## Bibliography

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