

Procurement of specialist marine data services for the Living High Seas project

ANNEX 1

Technical summary of the Living High Seas project

www.livinghighseas.org

1. Overview

The Living High Seas project translates the Agreement on High Seas Biodiversity (BBNJ) into practical area-based management realities. At the core of the project is a diverse coalition of partner countries (Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Indonesia, Federated States of Micronesia, Senegal). Living High Seas will support these pioneers in submitting regionally co-developed proposals for area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs), to the BBNJ Secretariat for selected sites of high biodiversity and climate value in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans. The project aims to strengthen capacities of partner countries and relevant actors for the design of evidence-based ABMT/MPA proposals and their management, develops governance mechanisms, foster knowledge exchange and policy uptake, and generate ABMT/MPA quality standards that enable replication. It will contribute to the “30x30 target” of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by paving the way for protection of high seas marine ecosystems.

Living High Seas is implemented by a global coordination team, led by the [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit \(GIZ\) GmbH](#) working hand in hand with the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI; represented by Seascope Consultants Ltd) and the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#). The consortium is strengthened by i) national and regional implementing partners, ranging from marine science institutions to non-governmental organisations and regional bodies, who will co-drive implementation together with the partner countries in their respective regions, and ii) key knowledge partners, such as the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence (AI2), who will provide targeted expertise, including support on satellite- and AI-based technologies that could help inform future management.

Living High Seas is funded by the [German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety](#) through its [International Climate Initiative](#), contributing directly to advancing shared global biodiversity and climate goals. The [Minderoo Foundation](#) provides additional financial support to embed gender equity and human rights into the design of ABMT/MPA proposals, ensuring the Agreement’s equity provisions are effectively implemented in practice.

Living High Seas began its implementation phase in January 2026 for a period of 56 months, so we are nearing the end of Year 1.

2. Target countries and scoping areas

Living High Seas is implemented with six partner countries that have been selected based on their leadership role in the BBNJ negotiations and signatory/party status to the Agreement. They are parties to a Regional Seas Convention or other regional cooperation mechanism and have geographical proximity and ecological and/or socio-economic connections to the five ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) identified by Living High Seas as scoping regions for ABMTs/MPAs (including via their national MPA systems) (see Fig. 1).

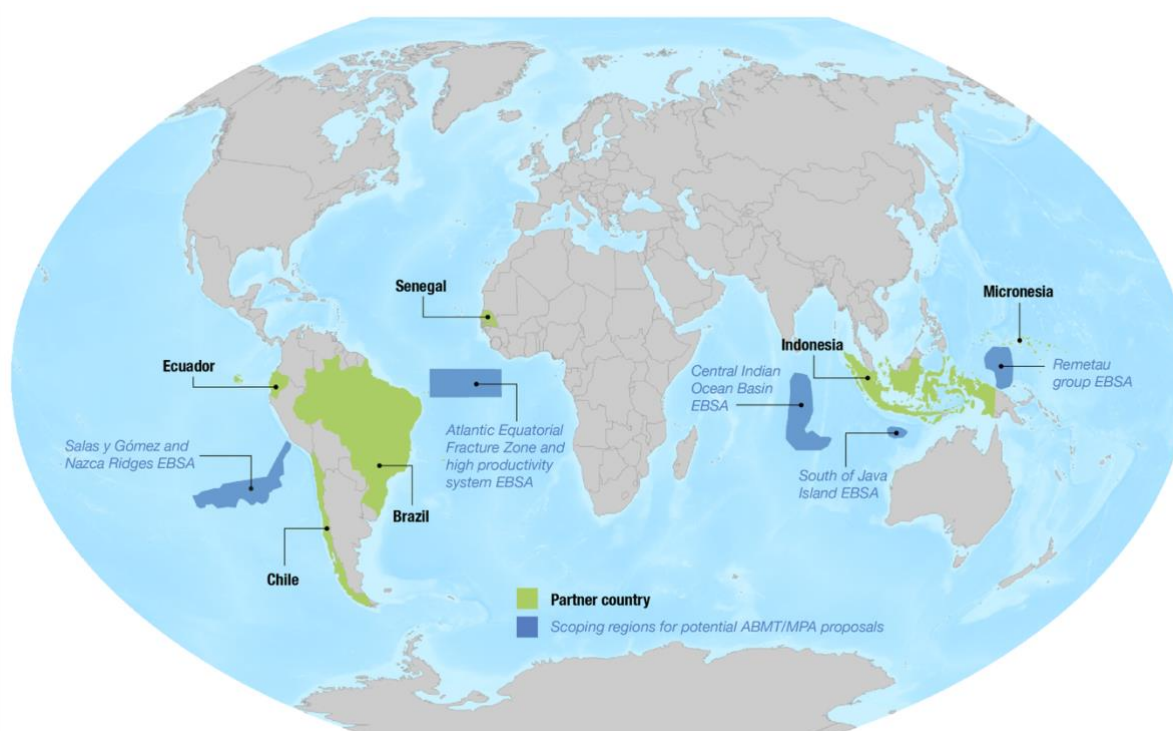


Fig 1. Overview of project partner countries and scoping regions for potential ABMT/MPA proposals (based on EBSAs)

In the Southeastern Pacific, the **Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges EBSA** extends over 2,900 km length, has some of the highest levels of marine biological endemism, and is important for migratory species. It includes two chains of submarine mountains (total of 110) that lie south of the Ecuadorian Galapagos islands and west of Chile. In the central Atlantic Ocean, the **Atlantic Equatorial Fracture Zone** is an EBSA that combines a wide spectrum of historical, geological, oceanographic and biodiversity features. It transcends beyond the national jurisdiction of Brazil across the Atlantic and connects with deep-sea basins offshore West Africa connecting with Senegal. There are two EBSAs of high importance for migratory species in the Eastern Indian Ocean. The **Central Indian Ocean Basin EBSA**, a key seasonal feeding site of migratory seabirds, is situated west of Indonesia. The **South of Java Island EBSA**, the only known spawning area of southern bluefin tuna, lies between Indonesia and Australia. In the Southwestern Pacific, the **Remetau Group EBSA** includes ecologically rich coral reefs and seamounts boasting an abundance of rare and endemic species, such as commercially threatened tuna and endangered seabirds. It links national jurisdictions of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, extending into areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). The final sites will be selected based on results from Outputs I and II.

The six countries demonstrate political leadership for and commitments to establishing ABMTs/MPAs in ABNJ. The project receives full political support in all partner countries, whereas marine resource users from the partner countries or other countries might not always be supportive of the implementation of ABMTs/MPAs, due to strong economic interest in the target regions and sites. These need to be carefully mapped, monitored and addressed with participatory governance mechanisms, including increased levels of gender justice and female participation in decision making.

Brazil is a G20 member and key partner for implementation of the BBNJ Agreement globally and in the Atlantic. It ratified the Agreement in November 2025. Brazil's national MPA network covers 26.5% of its marine estate and its 2024 G20 presidency has accelerated area-based management in national jurisdiction. The blue economy accounts for approx. 20% of the national Gross Domestic Product and

employs approx. 20 million people, mainly in fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, oil and gas. Key actors are the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the Interministerial Commission for Marine Resources, coordinated by the Navy and composed of 17 ministries (including Fisheries & Agriculture, Science, and Foreign Relations) and the Presidency. Brazil is already engaged in marine protection in ABNJ through the Brazilian Antarctica Program and the International Whaling Commission where it is a leading advocate for establishing a Whale Sanctuary in the South Atlantic. New research in parts of the scoping region is scheduled for 2026 by the Brazilian marine research community.

Chile initiated the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. It was the second country to ratify the BBNJ Agreement and is positioning itself as applicant to host the BBNJ Secretariat. It instigated the BBNJ First Movers Initiative, which seeks to accelerate ABMT/MPA action under the Agreement. The country has expanded its MPA network to 41% and is part of the High Ambition Coalition. Chile plays a lead role in the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) for marine conservation in the region, including as coordinator of the CPPS working group on BBNJ. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently preparing a MPA proposal under the BBNJ Agreement, with the objective to protect the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges from fisheries impacts. Chile expects to secure the political support of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and other countries for the MPA proposal. Living High Seas will support this effort to ensure a robust, regionally supported and comprehensive proposal is produced. In addition, the project will work to supplement and enhance its value and utility by considering ecological connectivity and migratory pathways to other high seas areas and national jurisdictions in the region, ensuring that this proposal can help progress towards the ambition of Article 17a of the BBNJ Agreement: *“establishment of a comprehensive system of area-based management tools, with ecologically representative and well-connected networks of marine protected areas”*. Although no national activities will be funded by the project, Living High Seas will benefit from Chile’s involvement as a partner country, notably in view of sharing of lessons-learned, fostering policy uptake and stimulating political leadership by Chile, in the region and beyond.

Ecuador has demonstrated its commitment to marine protection through the creation of the Hermandad Marine Reserve in 2022, bringing Ecuador’s MPA coverage to 19% of its marine estate. Marine resources are important for Ecuador’s economy, providing over 17,000 jobs so balancing economic activities with biodiversity conservation is a national priority. Ecuador’s Ministry of Environment and Energy is responsible for the BBNJ Agreement and leads inter-institutional coordination for Ecuador’s engagement in the BBNJ process. Strengthening cooperation with neighboring countries in the Southeast Pacific is a priority for Ecuador, as national perspectives and sectoral interests regarding the BBNJ Agreement vary across the region. Ecuador has limited scientific information on marine biodiversity in the high seas and limited access to adequately equipped vessels for scientific research and monitoring activities in these areas.

Indonesia, a G20 member, has announced ratification of the BBNJ Agreement at the third UN Ocean Conference. It has committed to expanding its MPA system from currently 10% coverage to 30% by 2045 and is active in the Coral Triangle Initiative and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The country has the world’s second largest fishery sector, providing about 7 million jobs and over 50% of the country’s animal-based protein needs. National and international economic pressures in ABNJs are increasing, including in the South of Java Island EBSA, the only known southern bluefin tuna spawning ground, whose stocks have collapsed in the last years. Around 120 longline vessels from Indonesian associations are fishing in this area. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Research and Innovation Agency seek to advance sustainable use of marine resources, a better management of the Southern Bluefin Tuna spawning ground, strengthening their MPA network and management, and improve monitoring, control and surveillance mechanism.

The **Federated States of Micronesia**, a member of the High Ambition Coalition, was one of the Small Island Developing States in the Pacific pivotal in negotiating the BBNJ Agreement and was one of the first countries to ratify it. Being a subsistence economy, most people living on the 600+ islands depend

on marine resources. Artisanal fishing and selling licences to foreign fishing companies are key income sources. While Micronesia's MPA system is currently focused on locally managed marine areas, the aim is to realise the 30x30 target through the regional intergovernmental conservation initiative "Micronesia Challenge". The national Department of Resources and Development has the mandate to engage in ABNJ processes, in interplay with the country's four states. It has a high interest in furthering Pacific Small Island Developing States engagement and integration of traditional local knowledge in the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, including through close cooperation with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC).

Senegal is a regional marine conservation champion with a growing MPA system of currently 2,2% of its marine estate. MPA establishment is considered a key to sustainable ocean development. Though Senegal does not have strong economic activities in the high seas, its high interest in ABMT/MPA establishment in ABNJ is centred on the connectivity to its artisanal fishing grounds. These play a key role for job creation and food security. However, there has been a drastic reduction of several important species due to degradation of marine ecosystems (potentially aggravated by upcoming oil and gas exploitation activities), illegal fishing and overfishing. This is negatively affecting 600,000 families in fishing communities and is leading to conflicts between communities and with neighbouring countries. At national level, the Ministry of the Environment and Ecological Transition is responsible for Senegal's MPAs and drives ratification of the BBNJ Agreement and future implementation. Senegal is host country for the Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas (RAMPAO) and the Regional Partnership for the Conservation of the Coastal and Marine Zone in West Africa (PRCM). The Economic Community of West African States and the Abidjan Regional Seas Convention provide mechanisms through which Senegal will foster West African engagement for high seas MPA establishment.

3. Target groups

Living High Seas targets and facilitates interactions between the following mandated organisations, supporting partners and stakeholder groups and drawing upon its well-established networks in all partner countries to engage them:

- Partner country governments at both technical and political levels, including ministries and authorities responsible for coordinating national-level contributions to implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and those with mandates for marine biodiversity and spatial planning;
- Other relevant partner country ministries, (e.g., environment, fisheries, mineral resources, shipping, defence, tourism, foreign affairs, science and women) in their role as line ministries that need to be engaged in supporting and contributing to ABMT/MPA proposals and management solutions;
- Governments from other countries with interests in the targeted areas that are engaged in co-developing ABMT/MPA proposals, supporting their submission and future management;
- Instruments, frameworks and bodies (IFBs), especially those responsible for marine biodiversity (e.g., Regional Seas Conventions), fisheries (e.g., Regional Fisheries Management Organisations), shipping (the International Maritime Organisation), and mineral resources (the International Seabed Authority) that are engaged – according to their mandates – to facilitate ABMT/MPA development, implement management measures and support novel governance regimes for future ABMTs/MPAs, as well as other international organisations that provide (regional) mechanisms to contribute coordination and support for ABMT/MPA development and future implementation by their member states (e.g. Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Coral Triangle Initiative, Indian Ocean Rim Association, Economic Community of West African States, Pacific Community and Islands Forum);

- The (interim) BBNJ Secretariat and emerging subsidiary bodies of the Agreement for policy uptake;
- The marine and relevant social and legal science communities at national, regional and global levels (including research institutes, universities, think tanks, and NGOs) that provide evidence-based, practice-oriented and policy-relevant advice, *inter alia* through facilitation of access to data, collaborative data processing, networks and other resources (e.g., joint research funding proposals);
- Civil society organisations at national, regional and global levels that work on marine conservation and strive towards gender equality;
- National and/or regional private sector actors that use and/or impact marine biodiversity, such as high seas fisheries, mining and transport, to be consulted as stakeholders and potential data providers on ABMT/MPA proposals (via IFBs or national partners) and who will need to contribute and adhere to management measures;
- Seafaring Indigenous Peoples as rights- and traditional knowledge holders, where applicable; and
- Public, non-governmental and private sector organisations representing female and young professionals' interests related to marine biodiversity use and conservation.

4. Project results logic

Implementation of the BBNJ Agreement drives vital **transformation of high seas governance** by enabling and stimulating collective action by the international community through the establishment of ABMT/MPAs as area-based solutions for conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. By supporting regionally-supported ABMT/MPA proposal co-development and submission for multiple sites in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans, Living High Seas generates country-level momentum and mobilises regional and global actors to move BBNJ from the negotiating table to the realities of specific high seas areas. At the core of Living High Seas are the partner countries co-developing proposals for high seas ABMT/MPAs in marine regions of interest to them, working in partnerships with neighbouring countries who can act as co-proponents. Living High Seas supports ABMT/MPA proposals through a four-pronged approach: (i) within partner countries, (ii) with additional countries as co-proponents, (iii) including relevant IFBs, and (iv) in close consultation with science, private sector and civil society. It is mainly driven by national or regional organisations and institutions in south-south partnerships, strengthened through inter-regional learning, and complemented by support from and feedback into global BBNJ networks and policy development.

The project applies a **gender responsive approach** to address the intersecting and systemic barriers women face in high seas governance. By integrating gender considerations into all relevant activities, the project aims to advance gender equality at the individual level within the project's target group, taking into account diverse gender roles, needs and lived experiences. Key measures include developing inclusive and gender-sensitive knowledge products, using inclusive language, and addressing gender-based gaps in access to training, professional development, information, decision making and, if applicable, financial support for enhanced participation. These efforts aim to advance women's participation in governance spaces, empowering them to actively shape ABMT/MPA processes. In close cooperation with national key stakeholder organizations and relevant regional/international organisations, the project aims to identify potential gender transformative changes in ABMT/MPA co-development and decision-making processes. This might include measures unpacking gender norms and their potential negative consequences in high seas governance mechanisms.

5. Project approach

The project approach is delivered through **three interrelated outputs**:

In **Output I** (led by **GOBI**) the scientific evidence base from which ABMT/MPA proposals are derived will be generated from the best available data and information¹ and guided by globally applicable standards. Evidence-based scientific recommendations from Output I will be taken up in Output II, for co-development of the ABMT/MPA proposals.

Output II (led by **GIZ**) will focus on strengthening capacities of partner countries and relevant actors for collaborative development, management and governance of high seas ABMTs/MPAs with co-finance from the Minderoo Foundation to strengthen gender responsive approaches, including through enhancing capacities of female leaders.

The experiences and lessons learned from Output I and II will be taken up by **Output III** (led by **IUCN**). It ensures that BBNJ Agreement future implementation and policy uptake processes on high seas ABMT/MPAs – within the First Movers Initiative of BBNJ protection pioneers, between target regions and globally – are facilitated by exchange of knowledge and experiences generated. In a learning-by-doing approach, the cohort of forerunner countries will collaboratively implement these outputs to facilitate submission of regionally supported, co-developed high seas ABMT/MPA proposals to the BBNJ Secretariat for multiple sites of high biodiversity and climate value (**project outcome**).

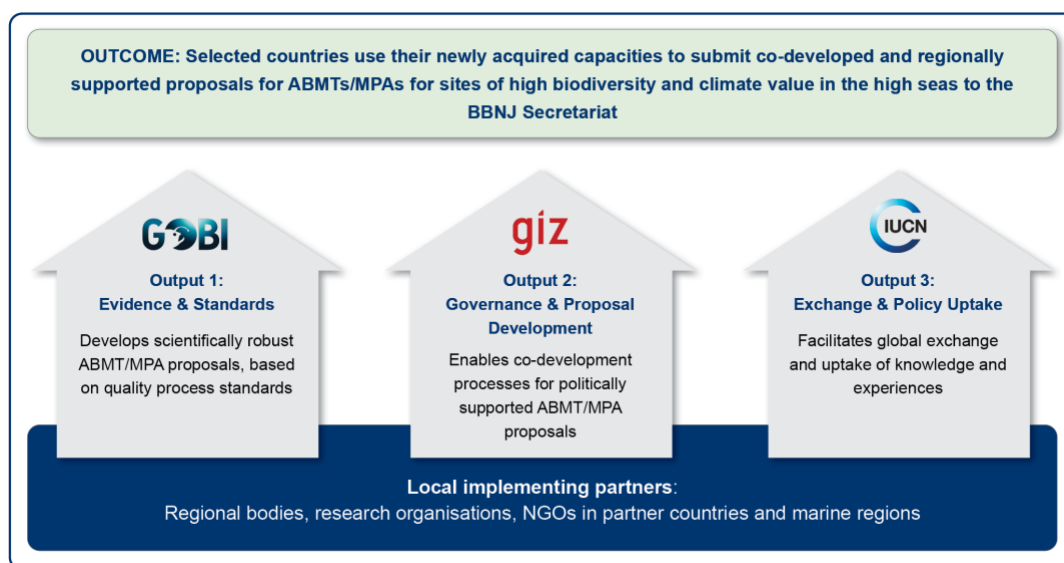


Figure 2: The Living High Seas project approach via three outputs, coordinated by GOBI, GIZ and IUCN and supported by local implementing partners in the target countries and surrounding regions.

5.1 Summary of Output I process

Output I, coordinated by GOBI, is responsible for the identification, collation and analysis of the best available scientific information and knowledge required to develop and support ABMT/MPA proposals in the project's target regions. This component of the project is strongly process-based, drawing on best

¹ Under the BBNJ Agreement, "best available data and information" refers to the scientific and traditional knowledge, including digital sequence information, necessary to make informed decisions about conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

practice and lessons learned from other relevant ocean spatial management processes, and guided by the principles of inclusivity and transparency.

It brings together the relevant science, technical and other relevant organisations in the target regions (and, where applicable, from those outside the target regions) who hold or can provide access to important scientific evidence and knowledge on the selected EBSA scoping areas. Partner countries are supported through standardised data collation and compilation processes, spatial analyses, identification and bridging of data gaps, and identification of sites that have potential for development into ABMTs/MPA proposals according to the technical requirements of the BBNJ Agreement.

Key steps in the Output I process include:

- Identification of key data and knowledge holders for the initial scoping areas
- Compilation and assessment of best available scientific data and knowledge for the scoping area
- Use resulting knowledge base to guide the identification and selection of potential sites for ABMT/MPA proposals
- For selected candidate sites, develop the scientific cases required to support the ABMT/MPA proposals, including evidence-based recommendations on management and monitoring needs. The full ABMT/MPA proposals are developed under Output II.
- Support the review, consultation and any subsequent iteration of the ABMT/MPA proposals (process driven by Output II in close collaboration with Output I).

Activities under Output I run for the full duration of the project, though effort is anticipated to be more intense in Years 2-4. Inevitably, the scientific process will likely progress at different speeds in the different target regions depending on data availability, regional dynamics and technical capacities. As well as providing scientific and technical input to the activities under Output II, work under Output I is closely linked with Output III, ensuring experiences and lessons learned are documented and shared with the broader international BBNJ community.