

THE COMOROS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Dahari's Strategic Plan
2022-2027

INTRODUCTION FROM THE BOARD AND THE DIRECTORS

We are delighted to present our new strategy, the fruit of 18 months of reflection and exchanges involving all our key stakeholders. We are confident that this strategy represents the best approach to restoring the forests, rivers, soils and reefs in our current intervention zones in Anjouan, and provides a solid basis for environmental regeneration throughout the Comoros. Restoring key ecosystems is vital to our long-term goal of *'increasing the resilience of Comorian livelihoods and biodiversity'*, and essential if the country is to adapt to the impact of climate change.

Our new strategy contributes directly to the realisation of the Comorian government's *Plan Comores Emergent*, notably regarding Foundation 4 focused on sustainable agricultural development, and Condition 2 around resilience to climate change. More widely, this strategy also directly supports the realisation of the Comoros' commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to 2030, and the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Drawing on the results achieved since our creation in 2013, the strengths and capabilities of our team, our guiding values of adaptation, innovation, integrity, participation, professionalism and unity, and the foundation this strategic plan provides, we believe that Dahari is well placed to make a transformational

impact on conservation and development in the Comoros over the next five years and beyond. We are excited to take this promise forward, starting with the translation of this strategy into a transitional action plan for the period covering 2022 and 2023.

We would like to give heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed their time and energy to creating this plan, especially WWF Madagascar, who provided the funding, our external consultant Emily Wilson, who led the process, and Kasmira Cockerill, who helped to get the thinking started. We would also particularly like to thank the many people who contributed key informant interviews and/or took the time to comment on draft versions of this plan - including representatives of all our key partners. Lastly, special thanks go to our team, who engaged wholeheartedly in the debates around the future of their organisation and made the process so enjoyable.

We will continue to draw on the support and expertise of all our stakeholders over the next five years as we put this strategy into action, working towards achieving our long-term vision of *'a prosperous future in which Comorians regain a harmony with nature'*. We very much hope you can join us on the next stage of this journey.

The Board and the Directors strategizing in Mohéli (left to right): Anllaouddine Abou (President), Dhahaleb Ali Charif (Finance Director), Hugh Doulton (Co-Director), Misbahou Mohamed (Co-Director), Anssoufouddine Mohamed (Vice-President), Siti Mohamed (Mobilisation Director), Ali Ahamadi (Treasurer), Himdata Aboubacar (Secretary), Said Mohamed Ali Said (Advisor - Board), Effy Vessaz (Advisor - Directors)



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 30 years the Comoro Islands have suffered from one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, and rank in the top ten countries most vulnerable to coral reef degradation. In response to these threats, **the NGO Dahari has spent the past eight years working to conserve and restore the forests and reefs of the island of Anjouan. With the support of international and national partners, we have achieved a number of unique results for the country:**

 <p>The first sustainable reforestation initiative, which involves local farmers planting over 50,000 trees per year in critical watersheds and degraded areas on Anjouan</p>	 <p>The first targeted conservation programme protecting 23% of the population of one of the most endangered fruit bats in the world</p>
 <p>The creation of the first community-led no take zone and the implementation of six temporary fisheries closures benefiting 1650 fishers</p>	 <p>We provide agro-ecological training and support to 3200 farmers per year on Anjouan and Grande Comore, over 40% of whom are women</p>
 <p>The most extensive collection of 77 food crop seed varieties coupled to a successful mechanism for these to be multiplied by farmers themselves in order to improve food security</p>	 <p>The first detailed forest maps and species distribution models for Anjouan, and for Mohéli and Grande Comore at lower resolution</p>

Together, these ongoing initiatives help improve the resilience of Comorian livelihoods and biodiversity and prepare the country for the increasing impacts of climate change. By investing in a thorough strategic planning process in 2020 and 2021, we wanted to capitalise on, and interrogate, actions and results to-date in order to ensure greater impact in the future.


We believe that the key to long-term success is to make a direct link between improved livelihoods and the sustainable management of natural resources, in order to ensure that people will invest in their protection and restoration. On the terrestrial side, we will establish individual incentive mechanisms to engage farmers in actions to conserve and restore forests; on the marine side, we will establish collective management mechanisms, led by local fisher associations, to conserve reefs.


STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the process was designed as a mix of externally-facilitated virtual sessions and internally-facilitated workshops. Following focus group discussions in nine villages and key informant interviews with eight other stakeholders in the Comoros, the process began in earnest in July 2020 with the first Zoom workshop between our five-member Direction team and the external consultant, and ended almost exactly a year later in July 2021 with a final workshop in Anjouan involving the whole staff team and the Board. During the first part of 2021 we also took time away from the facilitated sessions to do deeper thinking and to carry out field research in key forest areas to test the relevance of our proposed terrestrial approach with 25 farmers. Many of the stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process and other partners subsequently contributed comments and suggestions during drafting of this document.

To achieve our new mission of ‘supporting rural communities to restore the ecosystems of the Comoros’, **we will focus our efforts in ‘win-win-win’ zones: areas of importance for ecosystem service provision, biodiversity and livelihoods.** We believe that by focusing work in these areas of the landscape, it will be possible to maximise our impact on both nature and people.


Five interrelated intervention pillars underpin our integrated approach, which will be applied across both our terrestrial and marine programmes:

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Promoting sustainable livelihood practices, to replace key destructive ones affecting areas of importance for ecosystem service provision and biodiversity conservation
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Facilitating revenue generation through sale of agricultural produce and seafood, to incentivise farmers and fishers who adopt sustainable livelihood practices in target areas
- 

Supporting agroforestry development within and adjacent to target restoration areas, to improve livelihoods, restore soils, and indirectly reduce pressure on forests and reefs
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Reinforcing appreciation of nature, to support non-economic motives for people to conserve natural resources and biodiversity
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Engaging key stakeholders at different levels, to work towards formal support of the terrestrial and marine management models

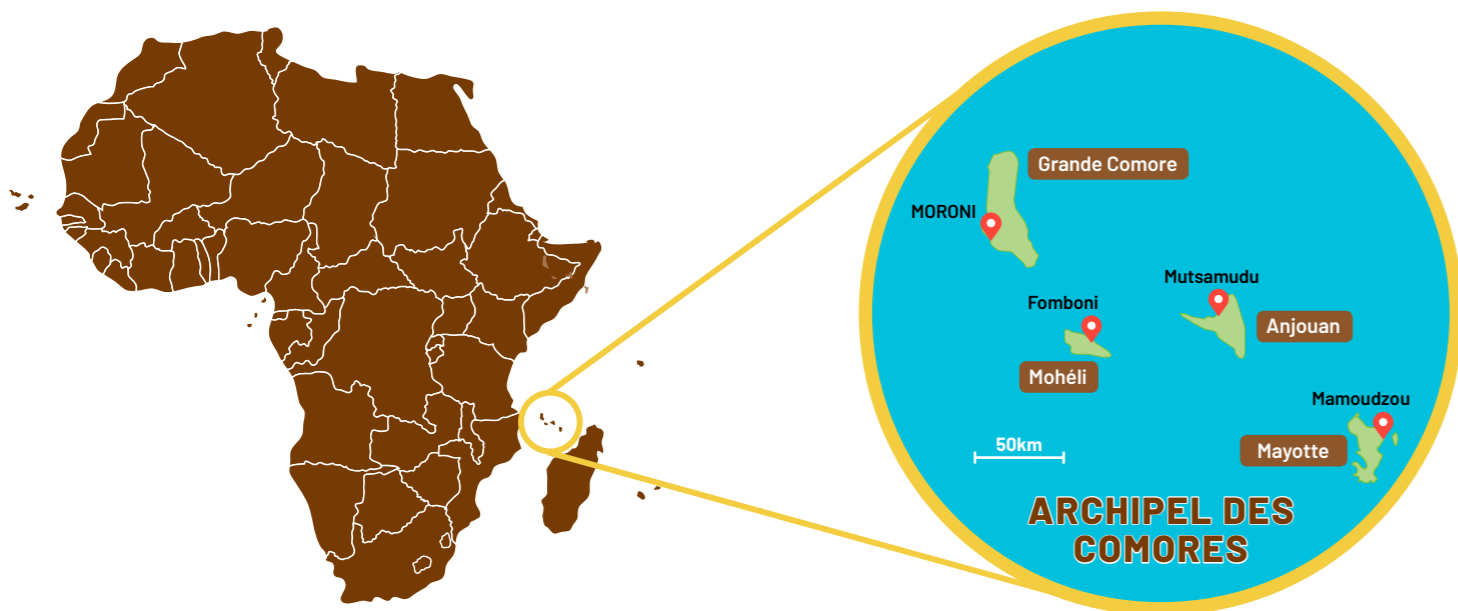
Over the next five years, we aim to support communities to **conserve and restore at least 1000 hectares of forest in areas critical for maintaining freshwater supplies and terrestrial biodiversity, and to conserve 730 hectares of reefs which supply protein to local communities and harbour marine biodiversity.** Overall, this work will allow around 52,000 people to achieve more sustainable and secure livelihoods.

Terrestrial work will continue to be concentrated in the Moya forest region (a Key Biodiversity Area), with the complementary marine programme stretching along the southwest coast of Anjouan – forming an integrated ridge to reef model in this area. The strategy outlined in this document is tailored to the context of Anjouan, but will serve as a basis for the development of a site-specific plan for the massif of La Grille in Grande Comore by the end of 2023. **To fund this expansion, we are aiming to raise €884,000 per year by 2027.**

Parallel to activities in the field, we will continue to invest in our institutional development, starting with a transition plan for 2022 and 2023, charting changes to our current actions and structure.

② THE CONTEXT OF ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION IN THE COMOROS

The Comoro Islands form a tropical archipelago of volcanic origin located between Madagascar and Mozambique in the Western Indian Ocean. **Over the past 30 years the Comoros have suffered from one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world¹, and rank in the top ten countries most vulnerable to coral reef degradation².**



This is in part due to inequalities in how land and resources were allocated at independence, forcing poorer people into livelihoods based on unsustainable resource extraction. Subsequently, pressure on natural resources has been exacerbated by dependency on agriculture and fishing for 80% of livelihoods, widespread poverty (Comoros is ranked at 156 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index), and a fast-growing population.

As a consequence, the natural resource base, whether terrestrial or marine, is not being given time to regenerate, and is rapidly being depleted. This process, made worse by the impacts of climate change, threatens the viability of both livelihoods and biodiversity. **A stark statistic is that only ten rivers on Anjouan still flow permanently, compared to fifty around forty years ago³.**

Efforts to reverse these trends since the 1980s have been largely unsuccessful. The country's first protected area was created on the island of Mohéli in 2001, and subsequent efforts led to the creation of terrestrial and marine protected areas on each island in 2020. However, laws relating to these protected areas and to environmentally destructive practices lack support and application at the local level. Despite their reliance on natural resources, farmers and fishers – particularly women – are often excluded from access to resources, services and decision-making, preventing them from playing an active role in conserving their ecosystems. A lack of social cohesion and respected leadership at this level also stymies collective community-based conservation action.

The key ongoing problem that we aim to address through this new strategy is therefore that Comorian ecosystems – which are the foundation of farmer and fisher livelihoods and home to many endemic species – continue to degrade.

To date, no solutions have been found that allow local communities to benefit to a significant extent from natural resource management. But we believe that it is only by demonstrating direct links between ecosystem restoration and livelihood security that we can persuade Comorian farmers and fishers to commit to conservation initiatives.

THE MAIN DRIVERS OF ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION

- **Overexploitation of natural resources:** 80% of the population is dependent on agriculture and fishing due to a lack of economic alternatives, the population density is over 750 people/km² on Anjouan and continues to grow rapidly, and land and resources are very limited;
- **Use of destructive practices:** livelihoods are largely based on methods that degrade the natural resources and prevent regeneration, such as extensive farming, cutting down mature trees, excess pesticides, use of poison and small net-sizes for fishing, and sand extraction;
- **Weak governance:** a lack of social cohesion and effective governance stymies natural resource management measures. The loss of traditional beliefs related to natural resource management have also contributed to this problem;
- **Climate change:** the above factors are being exacerbated by climate change, which is already contributing to changing weather patterns and more frequent natural disasters.



1- FAO (2020) Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020. Main Report. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9825en>

2- Burke et al. (2011) Reefs at Risk Revisited. WRI <https://www.wri.org/research/reefs-risk-revisited>

3- Fernandez and ECDD (2012) Tarissement des rivières sur Anjouan.

3 DAHARI'S DEVELOPMENT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

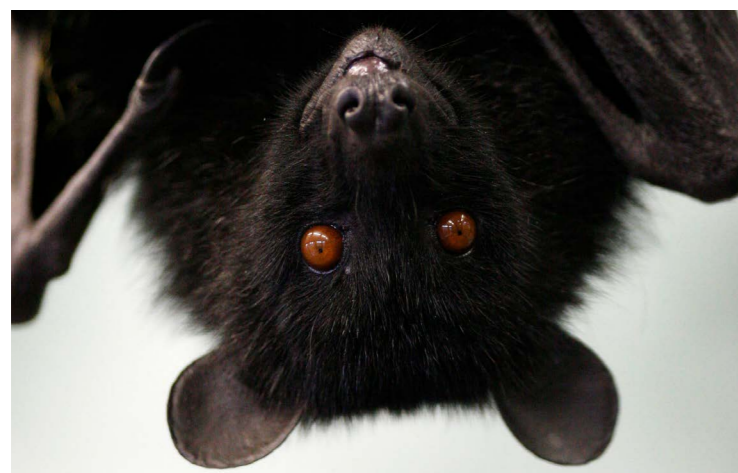
Dahari (which means 'sustainable' or 'for always') is a Comorian NGO founded in 2013 to conserve and restore natural ecosystems and the biodiversity within them whilst improving the livelihoods of the rural population. We have focused our terrestrial work in and around the Moya forest in the south of Anjouan, whilst developing a marine initiative in the southwest of Anjouan since 2015. More recently we have started to engage in agricultural work and research with a view to developing a wider intervention in the north of Grande Comore.

Our work has been a significant driver of increased capacity for ecosystem restoration and livelihood development on Anjouan in particular, and we now have a team of 65 employees. We also have an active group of 10 Comorian trustees, many of whom participated in the foundation of the organisation in 2013. Over the past eight years we have secured significant funding and established relationships with a variety of donors and partners, both nationally and internationally.

Our key results to-date include:

TERRESTRIAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In collaboration with World Agroforestry, we have developed an innovative participatory methodology for farmer-led reforestation in critical watersheds and degraded areas, and currently support 1100 farmers per year to plant over 100,000 tree seedlings and cuttings on Anjouan.



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BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

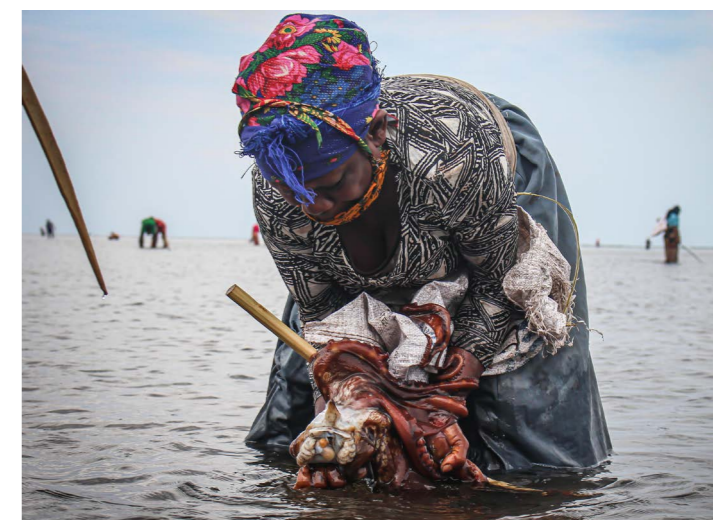
We published seven policy recommendations for biodiversity conservation on Anjouan, based on the ecological research and habitat mapping we have undertaken over the past decade. The key conservation action adopted based on this research has been the piloting of a conservation agreements scheme now protecting 23% of the population of the Critically Endangered Livingstone's fruit bat.

PILOT PHASE OF THE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS SCHEME SINCE 2015

The pilot scheme has targeted roost sites of the Livingstone's fruit bat. Dahari signed agreements with all seven land owners around roosts in the Moya forest KBA. Participating farmers benefit from agricultural investments in their other fields, and from small payments for research and tourist visits to the roost sites. In return, they agree not to cut any trees in their field that host a roost site, and to reforest the plots with native species. No mature trees have been lost from these plots since contract signatures. The potential for application of this model with farmers at higher altitudes on Anjouan was confirmed through research in early 2021.

MARINE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Our model, developed in partnership with the NGO Blue Ventures, provides fishers with short-term benefits from temporary fishery closures, in order to motivate them to engage in longer-term conservation efforts. Agricultural support is also integrated into the programme. This work has resulted in the implementation of six temporary closures and the creation of the first community-led marine no-take zone in the Comoros. In total the work has benefited 1650 fishers.



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

We support around 3200 farmers a year on Anjouan and Grand Comore – over 40% of whom are women – to improve their yields from food crops and market gardening. In partnership with CIRAD under the Germination project, we have established the most extensive collection of food crop seed varieties in the Comoros and developed a successful mechanism for these to be multiplied by farmers themselves in order to improve food security.

We also developed important and rapid responses to Cyclone Kenneth and Covid, working in collaboration with the Comorian Red Cross and the authorities on these crisis projects.

Our new strategic plan represents a culmination of the learning and experience that we have gained over the past eight years, and previously under the ECDD project¹. Whilst we will maintain our core areas of intervention, we are now aiming to better integrate these efforts and better target priority areas in order to ensure that people and nature benefit in parallel.

¹ The ECDD or 'Engagement Communautaire pour le Développement Durable' project ran from 2008 to 2012 on Anjouan and led directly to the creation of Dahari, which retained many of the core team and activities

OUR VISION

A prosperous future in which Comorians regain a harmony with nature

OUR MISSION

We support rural communities to restore the ecosystems of the Comoros

OUR VALUES



We regularly review our methods and results as part of an adaptive management process, in a constant search for improvement



We are transparent in the use of our resources and maximise their impact in achieving our goals



We collaborate with research institutions to facilitate learning from evidence and to introduce new approaches to the Comorian context



We work closely with farmers and fishers to develop and implement our initiatives, empowering them in the long term

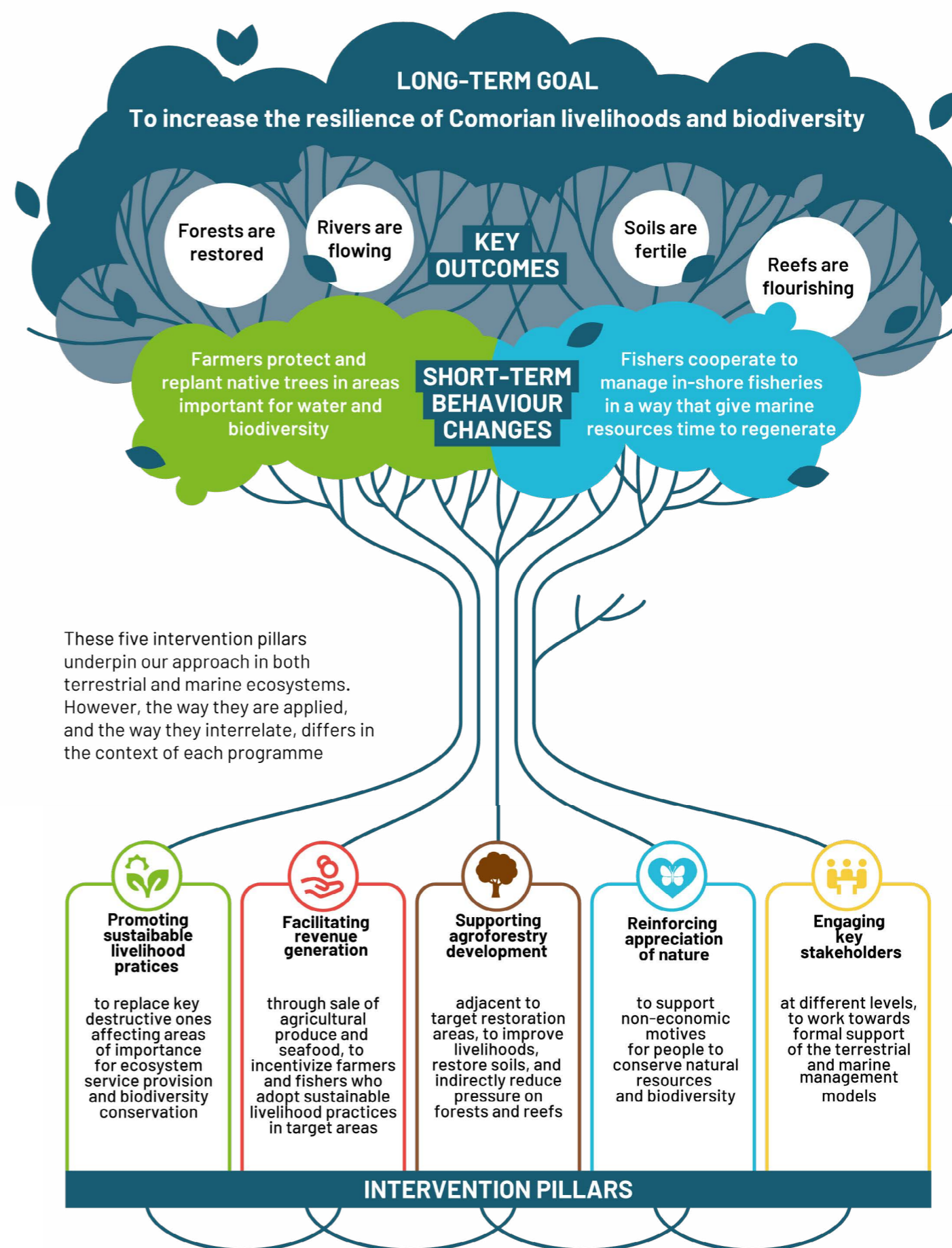


We are committed to maintaining high standards in our work ethics and practice



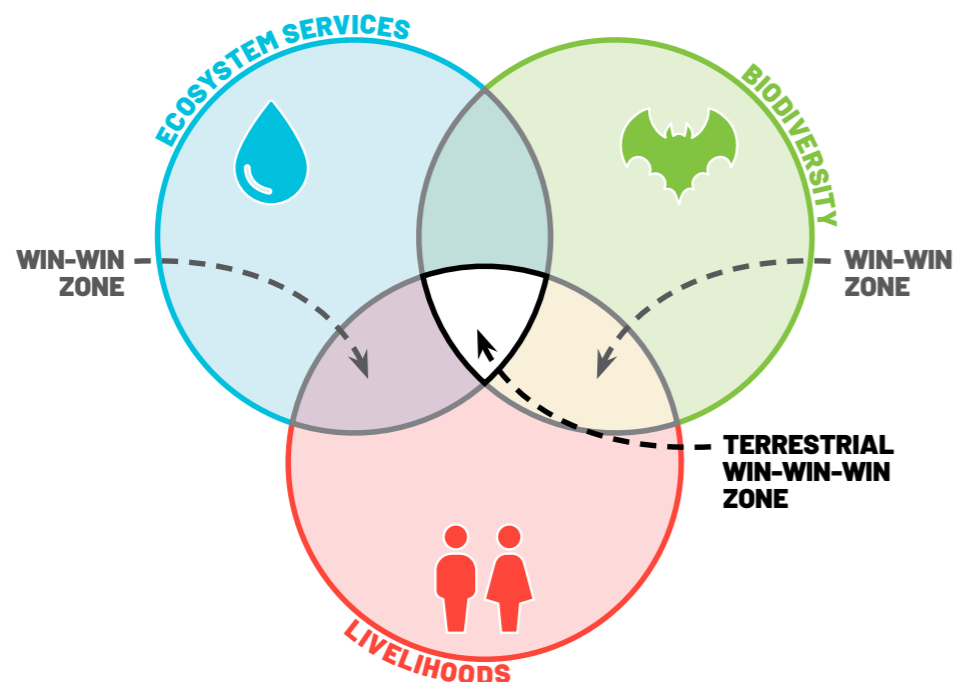
We prioritise solidarity and honesty within our team, and with our partners and beneficiaries, in order to foster long-lasting relationships

5 OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



6 WHERE WE WILL WORK

We will focus our terrestrial interventions around 'win-win-win' zones - places where restoring forest will ensure ecosystem service provision (particularly water), conserve endemic biodiversity, and support more secure livelihoods for farmers living in poverty. On Anjouan, these zones are located at higher elevations, generally above 1000m. We will also work in 'win-win' zones which are found at mid-elevation - generally between 500m and 1000m - in particular around Livingstone fruit bat roost sites (but not necessarily in areas important for water provisioning) or alongside rivers and water sources (but outside of areas important for biodiversity).

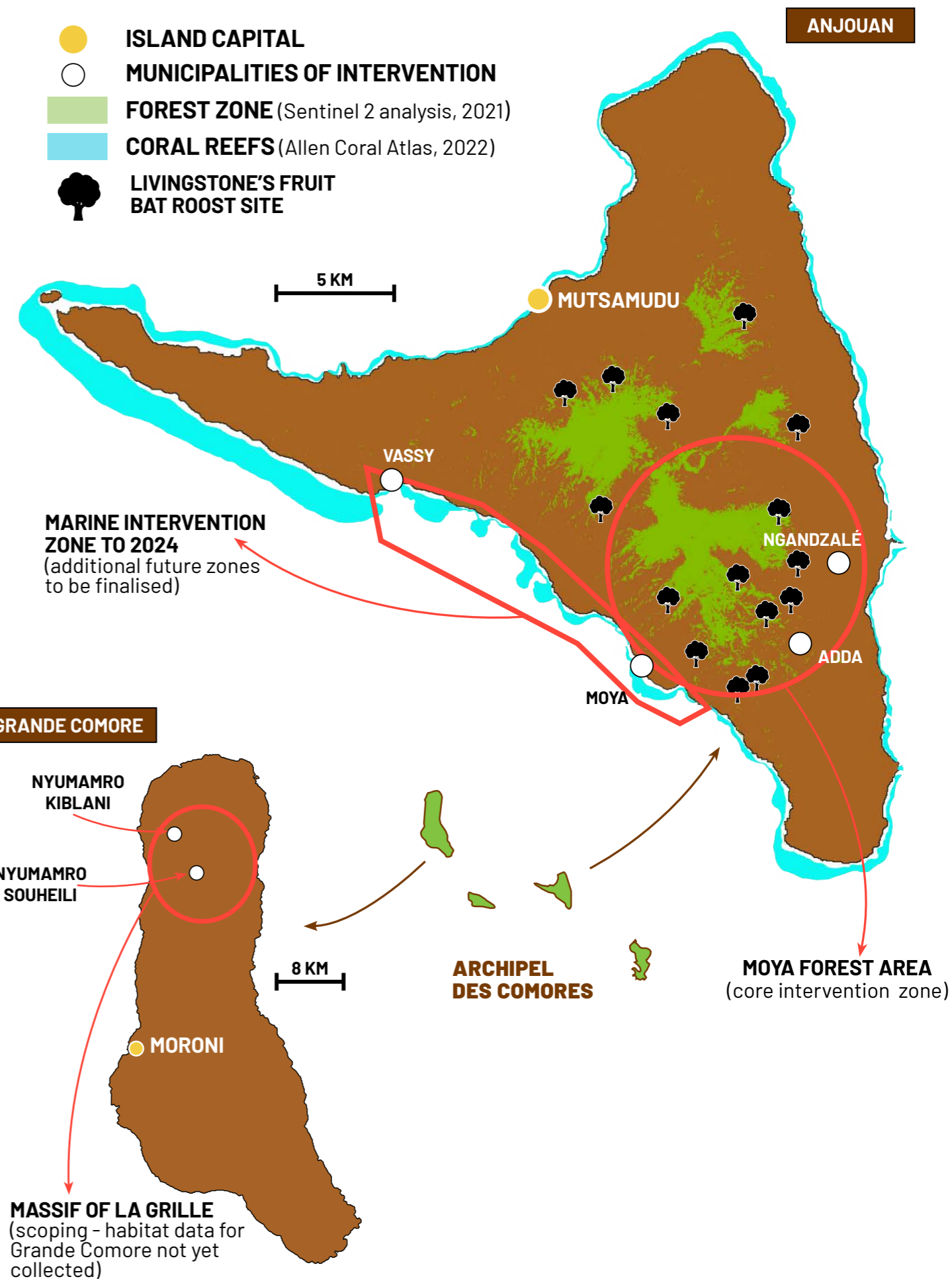


On the marine side, the principle of focusing on areas that are simultaneously important for ecosystem service provision, biodiversity and livelihoods translates for our work on Anjouan into areas with coral reef ecosystems. Coral reefs are a reservoir of marine biodiversity, and provide the population with protein (an ecosystem service), which in turn sustains livelihoods. The livelihoods of most small-scale fishers in the Comoros are also dependent on agriculture, highlighting the synergies to be made through combining terrestrial and marine interventions.

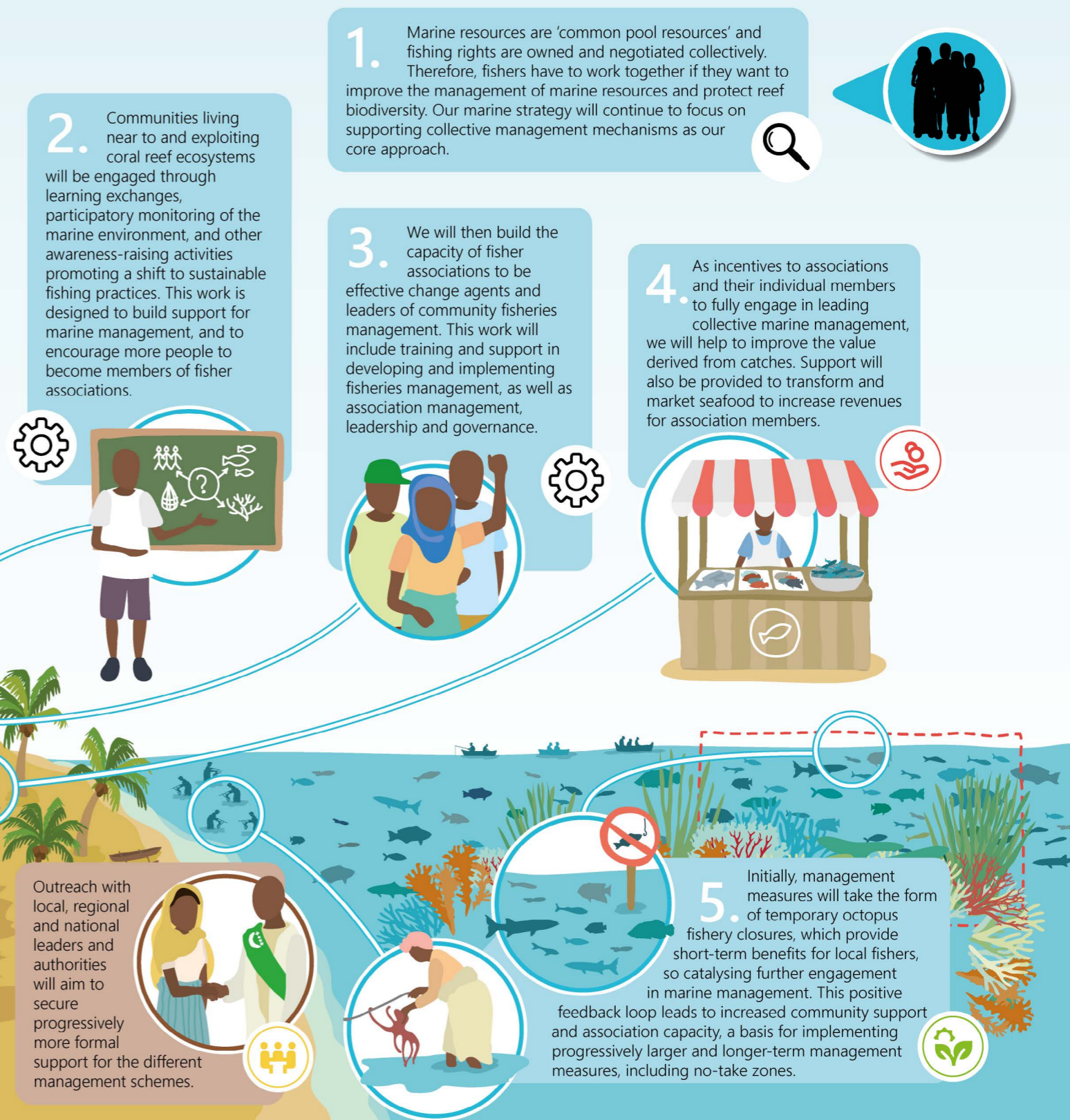
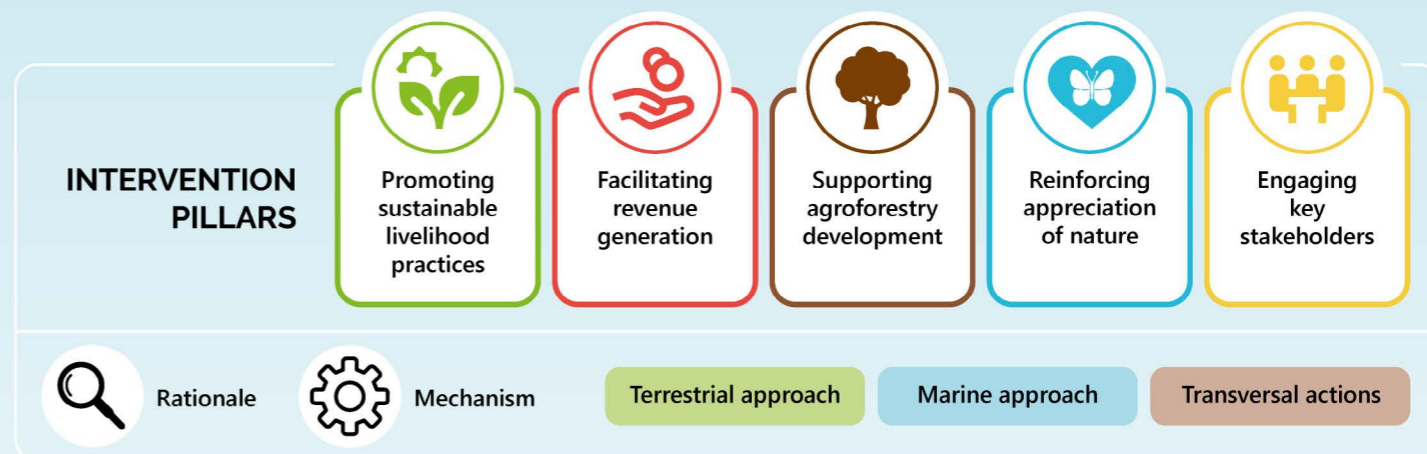
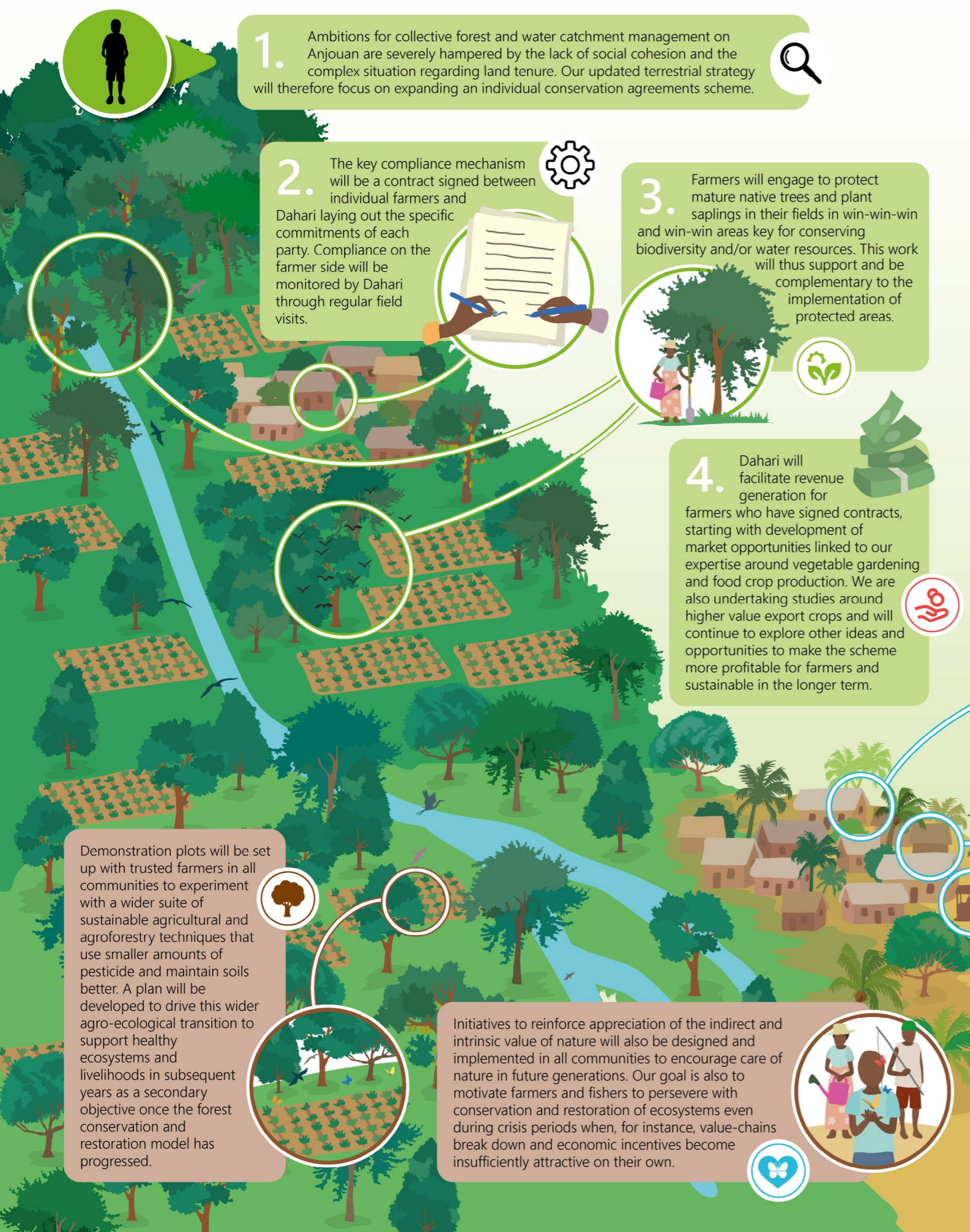
Our core terrestrial intervention zone will remain the Moya forest area in the south of Anjouan, a Key Biodiversity Area. We will also look to cover all the roost sites of the Livingstone's fruit bat on the island. The marine programme will continue to be implemented in the adjacent area around Vassy and will be extended along the southwest coast of Anjouan to capitalise on synergies with the terrestrial programme, forming a ridge to reef model in this area. The management of these areas and initiatives has been officially delegated to Dahari via a partnership agreement with the National Parks Agency.

We started an intervention in Grande Comore in 2020, and over the next five years will focus efforts on gradually developing a terrestrial programme to conserve and restore the forest of La Grille in the north of the island. The context in Grande Comore is very different from that in Anjouan, whether in terms of social structure, land tenure, hydrology, population pressure, etc. Hence the strategy for forest restoration on Anjouan outlined in this document will need to be adapted in significant ways. We are currently running an agricultural development programme in villages around the massif of La Grille in the north of Grande Comore whilst undertaking studies into resource use - lessons from both will inform the development of an adapted strategy for a terrestrial programme in Grande Comore by the end of 2023.

Over the next five years, we will support farmers and fishers to restore the key forest and reefs highlighted in the maps opposite. We have judged these areas to be the most favourable areas for intervention in the Comoros for different social, institutional, and political reasons.



7 OUR APPROACH



8 KEY OBJECTIVES

The first two years of this new strategy will be spent researching and developing details of the terrestrial approach with the support of international partners. Our marine programme will undergo fewer changes than the terrestrial programme; nevertheless it is still in its early stages. At this point, we have identified the following broad objectives for the next five years. Following the two-year research and development phase, several of these objectives and indicators will be further refined as part of the development of a full Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan.



PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PRACTICES

- Facilitate the signing of conservation agreements with around 1000 farmers to conserve and restore at least 1000 hectares of forest in Anjouan, securing water supplies for 21,000 people and protecting key endemic species, including 50% of the global population of the Livingstone's fruit bat.
- Support ten fisher associations to lead effective collective marine management initiatives over 730 hectares of reefs along the southwest coast of Anjouan, benefiting 5400 fishers and leading to stable biomass of key reef species and improved catches for 31,000 people.



FACILITATING REVENUE GENERATION

- Coordinate development of successful market initiatives that underpin the ecosystem restoration schemes and significantly boost the revenues of farmers and fishers. Initially :
 - On the terrestrial side, we are researching export opportunities to Mayotte and, with World Agroforestry, potential for high-value agroforestry crops compatible with forest restoration.
 - On the marine side, with the support of an external consultant, we are analysing added-value and new market opportunities.



SUPPORTING AGROFORESTRY DEVELOPMENT

- By the end of 2022, capitalise on the results of our existing agricultural programme to develop a crisis-response package ready to deploy widely for those in need when e.g. the next cyclone hits.
- Through experimentation and demonstration, develop by 2027 an agro-ecological support package that can be rolled out in subsequent years to encourage farmers and fisher-farmers to reduce their use of pesticides, adopt sustainable agroforestry practices, and ensure better soil management.



REINFORCING APPRECIATION OF NATURE

- Develop awareness-raising initiatives to build community support for forest and reef restoration that reach 50% of our target population (26,000 people) by 2027.



ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Undertake dedicated advocacy work with the aim of securing formal support from key authorities for the conservation agreements scheme and the community-based fisheries management model.

GRANDE COMORE

In addition to the above objectives focused on Anjouan, we will look to develop a locally-adapted strategy for the conservation and restoration of the La Grille forest in Grande Comore by end 2023.

9 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

We have identified the following priorities to support the realisation of our objectives in the field:

- Transition Plan from our current activities and structure:** to guide how we go about the shift from our current strategy during 2022 and 2023, including associated changes to our organisational structure. A critical element will be an 18-month research and development phase to develop a more robust conservation agreements scheme, supported by collaborators from Natura Bolivia and Bangor University. A second key area where we need to reinforce our capabilities – for both the terrestrial and marine programmes – is in value-chain development and marketing, and we are currently seeking partners in this area.
- Communications Strategy:** to be developed with the support of our partner Sango in Madagascar to complement this strategic plan and ensure that we effectively communicate with our beneficiaries, partners and other stakeholders.
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy:** we will develop separate strategies for the marine and terrestrial programmes, including more specific milestones and indicators, in 2023. We will also continue to roll out smart digital data collection and monitoring tools across all our departments to improve the speed, accuracy and accessibility of programme data.
- Governance and Administrative Systems:** working with our Board of Trustees, we will continue to strengthen our governance model and mechanisms, and are currently reviewing our membership structure. We have also started a new collaboration with the FTHM consulting group from Madagascar via their Moroni office to reinforce our administrative management, including human resources, finances, and logistics.
- Team Development:** we are investing increasing resources in the professional development of our team. We are currently developing bespoke leadership and management support for Dahari managers, and providing professional coaching for our leadership team. We will develop a comprehensive team development plan during the Transition phase.



10 FINANCING PLAN

Our annual budget for 2022 excluding support from partners is 625,000 euros. As we start the transition to our new strategy, the investment in our terrestrial programme will dip initially in 2023, whilst our marine programme expands and our management and operational costs grow as we prepare for further enlargement. From 2024 we anticipate that our needs will start to expand across the whole of our budget as we grow our team to bring in the capacity we need to implement the new strategy, and expand our work into new areas on Anjouan and Grande Comore.

In Euros (€)	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Management and admin staff	103,000	132,000	145,000	160,000	176,000
Operations	113,000	128,000	150,000	158,000	166,000
Terrestrial programme*	239,000	200,000	220,000	240,000	260,000
Marine programme	99,000	114,000	126,000	138,000	150,000
Programme Grande Comore	41,000	47,000	60,000	75,000	90,000
Contingency 5%	29,750	31,050	35,050	38,550	42,100
TOTAL	624,750	652,050	736,050	809,550	884,100

*Includes investments in our agroforestry work contributing to all three field programmes

- The first goal of our funding plan is to strengthen support from our major donors and funding partners



- However, most of these donors work through calls for proposals or annual grants, which means our funding currently lacks stability in the medium to long term. The second goal is therefore to work with our network to attract support from funders that provide longer-term and more flexible financing.
- At the same time, we will work with our technical partners to submit grant applications to cover the costs of their scientific and technical input, and also contribute to resourcing Dahari.
- Lastly, we plan in the medium term to develop a commercial arm of Dahari, which would manage trading of agricultural produce and seafood to be purchased from farmers and fishers who adopt sustainable livelihood practices. This commercial arm would seek to increase revenues for our beneficiaries whilst also reserving a proportion of sales income to help finance our work.

11 KEY TECHNICAL PARTNERSHIPS



At the University of Bangor Professor Julia Jones advises on the design of incentive mechanisms and impact evaluation, and Dr Tim Pagella supports Dahari's agroforestry and reforestation work



Bat Conservation International is leading research on the Livingstone's fruit bat



Blue Ventures is our core partner on the marine programme and also supports our institutional development



CIRAD works with Dahari on agricultural research and experimentation via the regional platform PRéRAD-OI



The Lycée de Coconi in Mayotte supports Dahari with agro-ecological research, in particular towards reducing pesticide use in market gardening



We collaborate with various departments at the Comorian Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment to ensure that our work aligns with national policy



Our partnership agreement with the University of Comoros covers research, conferences and student placements



Natura Bolivia supports the development of the conservation agreements scheme



Professor Owen Lewis at the University of Oxford supports research on the impacts of our work on forest and biodiversity



Our partnership agreement with the National Parks Agency delegates to Dahari management of the Moya forest KBA, the Vassy marine area and conservation of the Livingstone fruit bat on Anjouan



SANGO, based in Madagascar, supports all our communications work



World Agroforestry leads research on agroforestry and supports the reforestation work

All photos © Dahari, unless otherwise mentioned



We would love to hear from you if you are interested in supporting the implementation of our strategic plan ! Please contact us via:



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