


# Co-Design as the basis for collaboration and science to policy uptake in the Western Indian Ocean Region

MeerWissen Secretariat on behalf of MeerWissen partnership projects;  
WIOMSA

# Background

Nowadays, researchers from different disciplines are expected more and more to collaborate among each other as well as with relevant stakeholders

 we must move away from business-as-usual basic research to more applied and transdisciplinary research and the integration of different knowledge.

# Challenges

Working across scientific disciplines, regions and societal groups requires new methods and concepts regarding

- Communication
- Institutional arrangements and
- Funding opportunities

# Situation in the WIO region

Initiative by the Nairobi Convention and in particular by WIOMSA to improve science-policy interface at regional level well underway

Successful marine research co-design approaches within The Marine and Coastal Science for Management (MASMA) Program

# Data and Knowledge

Data provided by international research programs are rarely sufficiently application-oriented or context specific

What co-design is and how to use it, is not widely known or intentionally practiced in the region yet

# So, what actually is Co-Design?

Co Design is an *“Iterative and collaborative process involving diverse types of expertise, knowledge and actors to produce context-specific knowledge and pathways towards a sustainable future.”*

(Norström et al. 2020)

# Four-step approach developed by Future Earth Coasts – Our Coastal Future



**Step 1:** Bring regional coastal stakeholders together to agree on a way forward



**Step 2:** Build shared understanding about the coast and identify plausible coastal futures



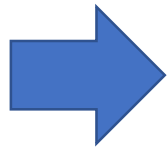
**Step 3:** Co-design robust coastal sustainability strategies



**Step 4:** Co-produce innovative coastal sustainability interventions and enable transition pathways

# Regional and global links

- IOC-UNESCO emphasizes the importance of co-design
- Co-design was highlighted in the context of the Ocean Decade



kicking off the Ocean Decade  
Virtual Series with a session on  
“Co-designing the science we  
need for the Ocean Decade”



# Good Practice Example: MeerWissen

Goal: Improving the conditions for knowledge and science-based policy-making for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean in selected African countries by...



...strengthening capacities in marine research and building knowledge through African-German partnership projects



...stimulating the dialogue and knowledge transfer between marine researchers and policy-makers



...fostering digital solutions, innovation and the use of new technologies

# MeerWissen Co-Design Approach

- Co-design, co-implementation & co-ownership
- Strong partnerships
- Projects are context-specific, increasing chances of policy uptake



- Imbed co-design into funding calls
- Provide an adaptive and evolving co-design framework

# What can be done?

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How to create strong political buy-in and support?

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What does co-design actually mean in practice and how does it benefit political decision-makers?

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But above all, how do the benefits affect the local people concerned?

# Recommendations:



Regional vision and  
guiding principles



Building  
multidisciplinary  
capacities



Capitalize on  
opportunities provided  
in the UN Ocean  
Decade

# Opportunities



Build knowledge and  
practice of co-design



Embed co-design more broadly  
across the WIO region

# Suggestions for a way forward: Regional and inter-sectoral Working Group

1

Design and coordinate the process of phrasing a joint vision.

2

Collect and analyze lessons learned and successes in co-design.

3

Define criteria for research partnerships in the region.

# Suggestions for a way forward: Regional and inter-sectoral Working Group

4

Test, review, adapt and apply existing guidelines and promote their implementation.

5

Review how investigation of research partnerships and co-design approaches in the region can be funded.

6

Create awareness for the relevance of co-design in the research community as well as among decision-makers.

# Suggestions for a way forward: Regional and inter-sectoral Working Group

7

Support the exchange of experiences as well as the development of capacities of researchers and decision-makers for co-design.

8

Proactively approach funding organizations and partners (from the Global North) and encourage funding mechanism that incorporate a co-design and partnership approach.



Thank you for your attention!

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