OCEAN DEFENDERS

Protectors of our ocean environment and human rights

THE OCEAN DEFENDERS PROJECT

Ocean Defenders:

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This report is dedicated to ocean defenders worldwide who are organizing, advocating and protesting for the protection of the ocean environment, their marine territories and resources, and their human rights.

It is our hope that it helps to increase knowledge of, bring greater attention to, and increase support for ocean defenders.

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Foreword:
Protecting, Celebrating and Supporting Ocean Defenders

We live on Planet Ocean, as 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered by marine ecosystems. Oceans are the biggest biome and a vital element of the global life support system, from producing oxygen to absorbing carbon. Oceans are also marvelous reservoirs of biodiversity, while seafood products are a vital source of food for billions of people.

Oceans are more than a biome. Oceans are also kai, moana or wardan, that have defined many cultures all over the planet. The Kawésqar, Indigenous Peoples from Austral Chile, use the word maritorios to describe the interconnected land, fjords, islands and ocean areas they call home. Oceans are essential for the existence of people on Earth.

Despite their critical importance, oceans are in deep trouble everywhere, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, to the Caribbean and the Pacific, and from the surface to the deepest depths. Warming and acidification caused by the climate crisis, declining fish populations caused by overfishing, pollution from industry, agriculture, human wastewater and plastic, and the destruction of critical habitat such as estuaries, mangroves and coral reefs. These interconnected problems have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalized groups, including Indigenous Peoples, small-scale fishers, women and children, among others.

Millions of people, especially in coastal communities, are striving to conserve, protect and restore the oceans. They are struggling to protect their livelihoods, sustain the food they eat, safeguard their cultures, and preserve their sacred places. These ocean defenders, many women, girls, and youth, are also human rights defenders, bravely working to protect rights related to food, health, culture, an adequate standard of living and a healthy environment.

And yet these ocean defenders are under assault. Because of their courageous advocacy and activism, challenging powerful actors, they are being harassed, intimidated, marginalized, criminalized, attacked and even murdered.

This trend is totally unacceptable. It must be stopped in its tracks and reversed. Governments have obligations to protect, respect and fulfill all human rights, from freedom of expression and freedom of association to the right to a healthy environment. As well, governments must ensure safe civic spaces for everyone to debate both problems and solutions.

Governments should apply a zero-tolerance policy to actions that harm or threaten ocean defenders. Those responsible for violence and intimidation should be investigated, prosecuted and punished. And those in marginalized situations should be specially protected.

Businesses also have human rights responsibilities they must act upon. Yet too many private sector actors are contributing to the ocean's problems, rather than complying with their obligations and implementing just and sustainable solutions. Businesses should be supporting, not sabotaging, the vital work of ocean defenders.

One of the most powerful tools that ocean defenders can harness is the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, recently recognized by the United Nations. The right to a healthy environment is critically important for the world's oceans because it includes a safe, livable climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, non-toxic environments, clean air, safe and sufficient water and healthy and sustainably produced food.

This right also includes access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice, all in relation to oceans, with effective remedies when the right to a healthy environment is violated or threatened.

We know that the right to a healthy environment can be a powerful catalyst for progress in the context of ocean conservation. Some examples of many include: in Costa Rica, ocean defenders used this right to end bottom trawling, establish a moratorium of oil extraction in the ocean, protect habitat for sea turtles and safeguard endangered hammerhead sharks from the fishing industry; in Croatia, Portugal and Papua New Guinea, ocean defenders used this right to advocate for the establishment of new marine protected areas; and in South Africa, coastal communities relied on this right in their successful effort to stop offshore fossil fuel development.

Ocean defenders should be recognized, rewarded and supported as heroes for the planet. Protecting them is a prerequisite for effectively and equitably protecting the oceans that help to sustain all life on Earth.

Therefore, this report is a key contribution to understanding and learning from many crucial cases regarding the challenges that ocean defenders are facing, and also the important solutions they are already contributing with.

Astrid Puentes Riaño

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Executive Summary

Globally, surging demand for resources has increased and intensified economic activities in the ocean. A rapid acceleration of all sectors of the ocean economy — including oil and gas, renewable energy, aquaculture, fishing, tourism, mining, bioprospecting, shipping, and transportation — is placing ever greater and accumulating pressure on marine environments and coastal populations. In many places, burgeoning ocean economy development activities are impacting fisheries, destroying habitats, undermining biodiversity, and polluting the marine environment. These environmental issues can undermine local people's fundamental human rights, including their right to food, health, security, and livelihoods, as well as their human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable ocean. Ocean economy developments can also physically displace local communities, small-scale fishers, and Indigenous Peoples from coastal areas where they live, and ocean areas that they have traditionally used and continue to depend on for livelihoods and well-being.

Many coastal groups and communities proactively engage in marine stewardship actions focused on sustainably using, protecting, managing, and restoring the marine environment. However, coastal populations worldwide are increasingly put in a situation where they must instead focus on reacting to and resisting externally driven and threatening activities related to the ocean economy. They are thrust into the role of 'ocean defenders'. Ocean defenders are individuals, groups and communities who are organizing, mobilizing, advocating, and taking action to protect and defend marine and coastal environments, their territories and resources, and their human rights against existential threats. Yet, for their efforts to safeguard the ocean environment and human rights, ocean defenders are often experiencing political marginalization, intimidation, threats, violence, and murders.

In recent years, there has been substantial attention to defenders of terrestrial and freshwater environments in human rights and conservation policy, practice, and funding circles. Yet very little attention has been paid to the issues facing and solutions to safeguard defenders of marine and coastal environments. There has also been very limited research focused specifically on ocean defenders, including on where, why, and how ocean defenders are opposing threats to the marine environment and their rights, the repression and attacks that they are facing, and the documentation of deaths and murders. This lack of attention to and understanding of ocean defenders undermines our collective ability to take effective action to support their efforts and safeguard them.

Recognizing these gaps in knowledge about and attention to ocean defenders, The Ocean Defenders Project was launched as a collaborative initiative with the aim to increase understanding of, raise the profile of, and bring greater support to ocean defenders worldwide. Key activities of The Ocean Defenders Project have included convening a global group of collaborators to explore the issues, documenting a global set of case studies to better understand the struggles of ocean defenders, organizing events and making presentations at global ocean focused conferences, conducting research and producing knowledge products, collating and sharing resources relevant to ocean defenders, advocating for greater attention to ocean defenders and facilitating a discussion with an advisory group on future needs related to ocean defenders. The project has also produced a website, this report, and several publications to share case studies and synthetic insights into the struggles and resistance efforts of ocean defenders, and conducted research into actions that can be taken by allies to support and safeguard ocean defenders.

This report presents some of the research and knowledge gained through the activities of The Ocean Defenders Project. It starts with an introductory chapter on environmental and ocean defenders. The second chapter presents narratives and a synthetic analysis of global case studies of ocean defenders from collaborators on The Ocean Defenders Project. The third chapter, prepared by Global Witness, discusses how the deaths and murders of ocean defenders are "hidden beneath the waves" due to incomplete data. The fourth chapter, prepared by members of the ALLIED (Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders) Data Working Group (DWG), explores the limited scope of data on non-lethal attacks on ocean defenders. The fifth chapter, which is based on interviews with ocean defenders and representatives from allied organizations, examines the types of support that ocean defenders need and the role of allies. The final concluding chapter summarizes key insights from the report. The Appendices contain additional resources relevant to ocean and environmental defenders.

The materials presented in this report and other research and engagement activities of The Ocean Defenders Project offer the following key insights:

1.

Human rights violations related to ocean economy development are on the rise

As the ocean economy accelerates, intensifies, and expands, so do the impacts on the marine environment and the social impacts on coastal populations. In many places, this is leading to violations of substantive human rights — including rights to a healthy ocean, food, livelihood, health, and security. The collective tenure and access rights of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers are also at stake. Furthermore, coastal communities are often not being adequately informed, included, or consenting to decisions related to emerging activities that will impact the ocean environment or their lives.

2.

Around the world, ocean defenders are actively defending the ocean environment and human rights.

Conflicts between coastal communities and ocean economy projects are ubiquitous. Thus, various groups of ocean defenders - including small-scale fishers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and broader civil society networks — are mobilizing and taking action to protect the ocean environment, their territories, and human rights. To achieve their aims, they use diverse tactics to resist threats from the ocean economy - including legal and policy interventions, creating organizations and networks, awareness and communications campaigns, public protests and demonstrations, research and documentation, monitoring and enforcement, joining social movements, reinforcing their own livelihood activities or alternatives, and engaging in disruptive activities.

3.

While ocean defenders operate in diverse governance contexts, there is evidence of widespread repression and a worrying number of murders.

All people must be secure in their right to organize and peacefully protest. However, civic space varies substantially for ocean defenders around the world. Ocean defenders are experiencing non-lethal attacks, including political marginalization, threats and harassment, repression and silencing, delegitimization and denigration, arrests and imprisonment, physical violence, generation of social division and conflict, damage to property, criminalization, economic marginalization, and lawsuits. There is growing evidence that ocean defenders are being murdered. It also appears that perpetrators of repression and violent acts against ocean defenders are acting with impunity.

4.

Research on ocean defenders is nascent, and there is still much to know and learn.

A limited and incomplete understanding of the situations facing and lived experiences of ocean defenders in different contexts and geographies undermines our ability to take effective action to support and safeguard them. There is also a need to better understand: the drivers behind threatening ocean development activities; the impacts of ocean governance frameworks on human rights and ocean defenders; the level of recognition of human rights within ocean governance frameworks; the extent to which human rights are respected in different types of ocean development, conservation and management activities; whether government and businesses in the ocean economy are complying with their obligations and responsibilities to protect human rights and safeguard ocean defenders; and, how safe different national governance contexts are for ocean defenders.

5.

Significant gaps exist in the data regarding lethal and non-lethal attacks on ocean defenders.

Various organizations and groups are engaged in the important, challenging, and ongoing work of documenting both lethal and non-lethal attacks against environmental defenders. However, past data collection efforts have mostly focused on repression of and attacks on defenders of terrestrial and freshwater environments. Yet, the available evidence suggests that ocean defenders around the world are also experiencing similar issues. There is a pressing need to fill the gaps in the data on repression of, non-lethal attacks on, and murders of ocean defenders to better understand the scale of the issue, hotspot geographies, problematic sectors, and the characteristics of perpetrators.

6.

Governments and the private sector must do more to meet their obligations and responsibilities to protect human rights, including the rights of ocean defenders.

Under international human rights law, states have an obligation, and the private sector has a responsibility to promote, respect and protect human rights - including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable ocean. Therefore, a human rights-based approach must guide all ocean development and management efforts. States must also maintain an enabling environment for people to gather, organize and advocate for a sustainable ocean and related human rights, without the fear of harassment, threats, and violence. Violators of human rights and perpetrators of attacks must be held to account.

7.

Ocean defenders need more direct support and safe spaces to support their agency and sustain their efforts.

Ocean defenders have various needs in order to enhance and strengthen their capacity for organization, mobilization, and resistance - including with setting visions, understanding threats, finding allies, considering resistance options, resourcing their efforts, and connecting with other communities in similar situations. Ocean defenders need direct support in the form of legal expertise and advice, scientific research, funding and financial management, and safety and security measures. Safe and neutral spaces away from communities are needed in moments of crisis, but also so that ocean defenders can engage with and learn from others in similar situations, get training, find reprieve, rest, and recharge.

8.

Allied organizations can play an important role in supporting and safeguarding ocean defenders.

The efforts of ocean defenders are often supported by various allied organizations, including grassroots networks, funders, legal non-profit organizations, human rights institutions, NGOs, university researchers, and the media, operating nationally or internationally. Allied organizations can engage in a broad range of actions to support ocean defenders, which fall into six main categories: capacity development, legal support, advocacy and visibility, financial support, facilitation and mediation, and documentation. Unfortunately, many ocean defenders are not getting adequate support from allied organizations as the scale of the issues does not match the scope of organizational support available.

9.

Efforts to support ocean defenders must be fit to context and center their voices and needs.

It is essential that any actions to support ocean defenders center their voices and needs, ensuring they are at the forefront of determining when, where and how to support them so they are not put at further risk. Organizations working to support ocean defenders will need to facilitate careful collaborations, build trusting relationships, listen thoroughly, assess risks, and consider implications of actions.

In summary, ocean defenders are protecting marine and coastal environments, their livelihoods and territories, and human rights against threats from the growing ocean economy globally. They are using diverse tactics to resist these harmful incursions. Yet, they are often experiencing repression and violence perpetuated by states and the private sector, including in some cases through lethal attacks. Currently, there is insufficient attention to the situation of ocean defenders, there are huge gaps in our knowledge, and they are not receiving adequate support. This must urgently change. States and private sector actors must work diligently to respect and protect human rights, and to safeguard ocean defenders. Allied organizations must do all that they can to support the advocacy efforts and safety of ocean defenders. Society, as a whole, needs to recognize and support the struggles of those bearing the costs of an expanding ocean economy.

Ocean defenders are at the forefront of efforts to protect our ocean and human rights. We have a collective responsibility to do all that we can to ensure that ocean defenders are encouraged, are supported, and are safe.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background on Environmental Human Rights Defenders

Globally, surging demand for resources has intensified economic activities in urban areas and pushed environmentally destructive resource extraction and development activities further into peripheral regions (1). Not only does this threaten the environment, but it can also place pressure on and displace Indigenous Peoples and rural populations from their lands, and undermine human and Indigenous rights (2). In the face of these growing threats, 'environmental defenders' (also called 'environmental human rights defenders' or 'land defenders') all around the world are taking it upon themselves to respond to and resist these incursions (3,4). Environmental defenders can be defined as individuals and groups who organize, mobilize, advocate and protest for the protection of the environment and related human rights against harmful or threatening activities in a peaceful manner (5,6). They include individuals who are men and women, who are younger and older, who are of different racial groups and socio-economic classes, who depend more or less on the environment for livelihoods and survival, and who come from all regions of the world. What unites them is a connection to and common care for the environment, and the willingness to mobilize and raise their voices on behalf of the environment and people's rights. And, yet, environmental defenders worldwide are experiencing an array of risks, including routine marginalization, criminalization, threats, violence, and even

assassinations (7—11). Closing civic spaces, political and corporate corruption, and a culture of impunity are enabling governments and corporate actors to perpetrate these acts that undermine the rights of environmental defenders (10,12,13).

The world's oceans and coasts are also experiencing a rapid and exponential growth of development activities (14). This acceleration is occurring across all sectors of the ocean economy - including oil and gas, renewable energy, aquaculture, fishing, tourism, seabed mining, bioprospecting, shipping, and transportation - placing ever greater and accumulating pressure on marine environments and coastal populations (15—17). The development frontier is steadily expanding geographically across coastal areas and the oceans, going deeper beneath the surface, and moving into areas that are increasingly further afield (14,18,19). At the same time, there is growing industrial and port infrastructures being developed to service the accelerating ocean economy in urban areas (20—23). Environmental 'sacrifice zones' have also been designated in coastal areas of the world or along river corridors that lead to the sea (24—26). In many places around the world, ocean development activities are growing in such a way that it is leading to overharvesting of fisheries, declines in important species, destruction of habitats, reduction in biodiversity and ecosystem services, and pollution of marine environments (27—32). These environmental issues can undermine people's fundamental human rights, including their right to food, health, security, and livelihoods, as well as their human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable ocean (33,34). Ocean economy developments can also physically displace local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale fishers from areas that they have traditionally used and continue to depend on for livelihoods, well-being, and cultural continuity (17,18,35,36).

1.2 The Rise and Neglect of Ocean Defenders

There has been steadily growing interest in and attention to the plight of environmental defenders. Civil society organizations first recognized and brought the issue to the attention of the global human rights and conservation community. In 2012, Global Witness published the first systematic survey seeking to account for defenders killed around the world while trying to protect lands and forests (37). Then, in a 2016 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, raised the alarm about violence against environmental defenders (5). Since that time, the global conservation community has increasingly recognized that protecting environmental human rights defenders is an important part of safeguarding environmental democracy and indeed the environment worldwide - as most recently acknowledged in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (38). A substantial body of research has also emerged that documents the threats facing, the resistance efforts of, and the risks endured by environmental defenders (3,4,39,40). Attacks on environmental defenders, including killings, have been extensively documented by various organizations, including Global Witness, the Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders (ALLIED), and Front Line Defenders (7—9).

Around the world, affected and caring individuals, groups, and communities are rising and mobilizing to steward and defend the oceans. While many coastal communities proactively engage in marine stewardship actions focused on sustainably using, protecting, managing and restoring the marine environment, increasingly they are being put into a situation where they have to reactively resist externally driven and threatening activities that are environmentally destructive and/or socially harmful (16,41,42). For example, EJAtlas reports 838 environmental justice conflicts around the world that have mobilized fisher people, including at least 650 taking place in maritime or coastal areas (43,44). Coastal communities, groups and individuals are thus thrust into the role of 'ocean defenders'. Ocean defenders can be defined as individuals and groups who are at the forefront of taking action to protect and defend marine and coastal environments, their territories, and the human rights of coastal populations against existential threats (45). Ocean defenders include coastal communities, small-scale fishers, Indigenous Peoples, women, young people, and other groups. They engage in various acts of resistance, such as public protests and demonstrations, research and documentation, awareness and communications campaigns, creation of organizations and networks for collective action, formation of and alliances with social movements, legal and policy interventions, monitoring and enforcement activities, and corporate activism (16,42,45—47). A growing body of evidence also suggests that ocean defenders are frequently confronting an array of risks, including political marginalization, intimidation, threats, violence and murders, as they resist activities that threaten their established relationships with and the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable ocean (45).

And, yet, very little attention has been paid to the issues facing and solutions to safeguard defenders of marine and coastal environments across human rights and conservation policy, practice, and funding circles (41). There has also been very limited research focused specifically on ocean defenders, including on where, why, and how ocean defenders are opposing threats to the marine environment and their rights, the risks and attacks that they are facing, and the documentation of deaths and murders. This lack of attention to and understanding of ocean defenders undermines our collective ability to take effective action to support their efforts and safeguard them.

1.3 The Ocean Defenders Project

Recognizing these gaps in knowledge about and attention to ocean defenders, The Ocean Defenders Project (http://oceandefendersproject.org) was launched in 2022 as a collaborative initiative with the aim to increase understanding of, raise the profile of, and bring greater support to ocean defenders worldwide. Key activities of The Ocean Defenders Project have included convening a global group of collaborators (who are experts in small-scale fisheries, coastal communities, ocean governance, human rights and environmental defenders) to explore the issues and document a global set of case studies to better understand the struggles of ocean defenders, organizing events and making presentations at global ocean focused conferences, conducting research and producing knowledge products, collating and sharing resources relevant to ocean defenders, advocating for greater attention to ocean defenders, and facilitating a discussion with an advisory group on future needs related to ocean defenders. The project has also produced a website, this report, and several publications to share

case studies and synthetic insights into the struggles and resistance efforts of ocean defenders, and conducted research into actions that can be taken by allies to support and safeguard ocean defenders.

The Ocean Defenders Project focuses primarily on ocean defenders that represent local communities and groups who depend on and have rights to marine and coastal resources and spaces. The project in particular puts a spotlight on how the global acceleration of various ocean economy activities, and also poorly implemented efforts to conserve and manage dwindling marine resources, are threatening coastal communities in various geographies and contexts. Thus, the emphasis is on collectives of ocean defenders who are actively advocating against threats to the marine environment and their rights. Yet, there are individual organizers and leaders who are at the forefront of efforts to defend the ocean, and that it is often these individual ocean defenders who are killed or murdered with the intent of undermining their cause, striking fear into the heart of their families and communities, deterring supporters and demobilizing resistance efforts. Further, many allied individuals and organizations - for example, from the media, universities, legal organizations, non-governmental organizations, and human rights institutions - actively support the efforts of and help to safeguard local ocean defenders.

1.4 Overview of Report

This report presents some of the key insights gained from research activities of various collaborators and contributors on The Ocean Defenders Project. The remainder of the report is structured as follows. The second chapter presents narratives and a synthetic analysis of a global set of case studies of ocean defenders. The third chapter, prepared by Global Witness, discusses how the deaths and murders of ocean defenders are “hidden beneath the waves” due to incomplete data. The fourth chapter, prepared by members of the ALLIED (Alliance for Land, Indigenous and Environmental Defenders) Data Working Group (DWG), explores the limited scope of data on non-lethal attacks on ocean defenders. The fifth chapter, which is based on interviews with ocean defenders and representatives from allied organizations, examines the types of support that ocean defenders need and the role of allies. The final concluding chapter provides an overview of key insights from the report. The Appendices contain additional resources relevant to ocean and environmental defenders.

It is our hope that this report will reach a broad audience of ocean defenders and allies, and that the information provided herein will continue to raise the profile of and bring greater support to ocean defenders.

CHAPTER 2

Global Case Studies of Ocean Defenders

2.1 Introduction to the Case Studies

Ocean defenders are actively resisting threats to the marine environment, their territories, and their rights in all regions of the world. In this chapter of the report, we present narratives and analysis of a global set of case studies of ocean defenders. Through employing a multiple case study approach, we sought to isolate the central topic of interest for in-depth examination (48—50). Our specific aim through The Ocean Defenders Project was to identify and analyze a diverse set of case studies of ocean defenders to garner broad insights into the types of threats they are facing, their characteristics, their resistance efforts, and the acts of repression they are experiencing.

To achieve this aim, a global working group of project collaborators was convened to collaboratively develop criteria for identifying case studies and establish a framework to guide analysis (Appendix A). Project collaborators then identified 17 case studies using the criteria that focused on collectives who depend on, have rights to, and are actively defending the marine environment from threats related to the ocean economy. Attempts were made to include case studies representing diverse contexts, scales, threats, groups of ocean defenders and global geographies. Case studies were also chosen from places and situations that collaborators were familiar with, where they had often conducted extensive or ongoing primary research, and/or where there was sufficient supporting secondary evidence. Analysis

of individual case studies was then completed by project collaborators and contributing authors using the co-developed analytical framework drawing from a combination of published materials or primary data (e.g., interviews, focus groups). The analytical framework includes questions related to five overarching themes: the context and nature of the threat or conflict, the characteristics of the ocean defenders, their defense and resistance activities, the repression and risks they face, and the outcomes they have achieved (see Appendix A for more details).

This chapter of the report is divided into two sub-sections. The first section presents an overview and synthetic analysis of all 17 case studies analyzed as part of The Ocean Defenders Project. It provides descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of key insights, commonalities, and differences across the case studies. The second section presents narratives of 13 of the case studies that convey the complex experiences, resistance strategies, and risks facing ocean defenders in different regions of the world. These narratives provide a glimpse into both the successes achieved by and challenges that interfere with ocean defenders in their efforts to protect the ocean and human rights.

2.2 Overview of and Insights from Case Studies

2.2.1 Location and Context of Case Studies

To date, The Ocean Defenders Project has documented a total of 17 case studies from around the world (Figure 2.1). This includes cases from Bangladesh, Brazil (2), Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, France, Ghana, India, Madagascar, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Senegal, and Turkey. While this list includes case studies from South America (4), Africa (5), Europe (2), Oceania (2), and Asia (4), there are geographical gaps in coverage for North America, Central America, and also Eastern Asia. Identifying and documenting cases from these regions represents an important area for future research.

Figure 2.1: Map of Case Studies analyzed as part of The Ocean Defenders Project

The set of countries included here is diverse, encompassing low, middle, and high-income economies, as well as varying types of political regimes and levels of good governance (Table 2.1). Consequently, this shows that potential conflicts between coastal communities and ocean economy projects are ubiquitous across different social, economic, and political contexts. A common denominator for coastal communities across all these countries is their critical reliance on healthy oceans for fundamental human rights - including substantive rights such as the right to food, health, and livelihoods, and coinciding procedural rights which relate to participating and having a voice in ocean governance (33).

Table 2.1 Key governance indicators for each of the case studies

Country (ordered by HDI)	HDI[1]	Economic inequality[2]	Human Rights[2]	Voice and Accountability[3]	Control of Corruption[3]	Rule of Law[3]	Chandler Good Government Index[4]
Low Income Countries[5]							
Madagascar	0.51	8.9	5.7	37.75	17.92	18.87	0.318
Lower Middle Income Countries							
Bangladesh	0.51	8.9	5.7	27.45	17.92	33.49	0.384
Senegal	0.52	6.2	4.7	51.96	53.77	42.92	0.427
PNG	0.57	7.9	7.0	47.06	25.47	29.72	-
Cameroon	0.59	7.3	7.4	19.61	13.21	16.51	0.320
Cambodia	0.60	6.3	8.4	12.75	9.91	23.58	0.385
Ghana	0.60	6.8	3.5	60.78	52.83	49.53	0.409
India	0.64	5.7	7.6	51.47	44.34	56.13	0.472
Philippines	0.71	4.8	7.2	46.57	33.49	37.26	0.475
Upper Middle Income Countries							
South Africa	0.72	6.8	5.1	70.59	44.81	54.25	0.445
Brazil	0.76	6.3	7.4	59.80	32.08	41.98	0.486
Peru	0.76	5.9	5.8	49.51	22.17	30.19	0.480
Turkey	0.86	7.1	7.7	25	34.91	32.55	0.470
High Income Countries							
Palau	0.80	-	-	83.82	71.70	80.66	-
Chile	0.86	4.7	3.3	79.90	80.66	71.23	0.626
France	0.91	2.8	1.0	79.90	85.38	84.91	0.737

SOURCES: [1]Human Development Index, Data for 2023/2024 (https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks); [2]Fragile States Index 2024 (https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/) ; [3]World Bank - Governance Indicators 2023 (https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators); [4]Chandler Good Governance Index, Data for 2024 (https://chandlergovernmentindex.com/); [5]World Bank (2024 - with major processing by Our World in Data. "World Bank income groups" [dataset]. World Bank, "Income Classifications" [original data] (https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/world-bank-income-groups).

INDICATOR SCORE DESCRIPTIONS: [1]Human Development Index (0-1), with 0 being the lowest score and 1 being the highest score; [2]Fragile State Index (0-120), higher scores indicate greater levels of fragility and instability, while the lower score suggests a more stable and resilient state; [3]World Bank indicators (0-100), 0 corresponds to lowest rating and 100 corresponds to highest rating; [4]Chandler Good Government Index (0-1), with 0 being the lowest score and 1 the highest score.

2.2.2 Threats Facing Coastal Communities

Across the case studies, the threats facing coastal communities varied substantially and encompassed many sectors and activities of the ocean economy. This included industrial fisheries (6), illegal fisheries (3), aquaculture (3), oil and gas (3), onshore industrial development (2), port development (1), renewable energy (1), tourism (1), sand mining (1), deep sea mining (1), charcoal production (1), marine conservation (1), commercial pearl farming (1), sea cucumber fisheries (1), a coastal industrial megaproject (1), and an oil spill (1).

In many of the case studies, ocean defenders were fighting against a single substantive threat. Such was the case in Cambodia where small-scale fishing communities and the NGO Mother Nature campaigned against coastal sand mining, and in South Africa where small-scale fishers are engaged in ongoing legal battles against oil and gas exploration. In other locations, communities were or are mobilizing against multiple, overlapping and compounding threats. For example, in the Philippines, the Tagbanwa Indigenous People's rights are threatened by destructive and illegal industrial fisheries, unsustainable tourism, sea pearl farming, onshore infrastructure development, and the creation of marine protected areas. In Senegal, industrial fisheries and the fishmeal industry are both placing pressure on resources that small-scale fishing communities rely on for livelihoods and human consumption to meet global demand for fish and feed for aquaculture. In one case study from Brazil, small-scale fishing communities are experiencing threats through growth in all sectors of the ocean economy - which is supported by a national 'blue economy' narrative and policies that are being pushed by the government.

Threats existed at various spatial scales, and differed by location and depth in the marine and coastal environment. The threats being experienced by coastal communities were at the local scale in 8 of the case studies, followed by 5 at the sub-national scale and 4 at the national scale. None of the case studies focused specifically on regional or global threats, such as climate change. However, many of the identified threats (e.g., industrial fisheries, aquaculture, oil and gas, port development) are prevalent on a global scale. For example, heavily subsidized industrial fishing fleets now operate in 90% of the world's oceans, and fleets from higher income nations dominate industrial fishing effort in the exclusive economic zones of lower income nations (51,52). In terms of the location of the threatening activities in the marine and coastal environment, 2 cases were situated on the coast, 5 were both on land and at sea, 5 were at sea near the coast within the EEZ, and 5 were at sea further out within the EEZ. None of the case studies were focused on threats in international waters. Threatening activities were occurring at and impacting various depths in the marine environment - including above the ocean (4), on the surface (9), in the water column (13), and on or below the seabed (6). In most of the cases (10), the threats were happening at more than one depth.

Six (6) of the ten threats and pursuant conflicts covered in the case studies occurred in the past, but most (11) are ongoing. None focused on emerging threats - which is perhaps because coastal communities are often already preoccupied fighting against current threats, and there is frequently a lack of sufficient provision of information and prior consultation with communities in relation to future ocean developments. This pattern is likely cyclical in contexts where multiple overlapping threats are emerging, putting ocean defenders into reactive mode.

2.2.3 Environmental and Social Impacts of the Threats

The threats caused an array of real or perceived environmental and social impacts that were identified through the case studies (Figure 2.2). The most identified environmental impacts were related to declines in fish productivity and abundance (16), followed by degradation of marine ecosystems (13), impacts on species (11), habitat destruction (10), and pollution and contamination (7). Other environmental impacts include declines in marine biodiversity (4), disruption of the seabed (4), water quality (4), underwater noise (3), disruption of marine food webs (3), eutrophication (2), coastal erosion (2), invasive species (2), reduction of ecosystem services (2), and marine litter (1). In almost all cases, more than one environmental impact was identified.

The most identified social impacts were related to traditional and small-scale fishing livelihoods (16), social and cultural impacts (14), negative economic impacts (9), food security (8), exclusionary governance (8), tenure and access (7), displacement or relocation (7), physical or psychological violence (7), and human rights (6). Less mentioned social impacts included gender equity (4), health (4), lack of economic benefits (4), environmental injustices (3), Indigenous rights (3), infrastructure impacts (1), human-nature relations (1), and human right to a healthy environment (1).

It is important to clarify that the environmental and social impacts identified through the case studies were ones of concern to local coastal populations and ocean defenders. Furthermore, just because an impact was mentioned less frequently across the case studies, it does not mean that it was not a substantial and pressing concern in specific locations.

Figure 2.2: Environmental (a) and social impacts (b) of threats identified across the case studies

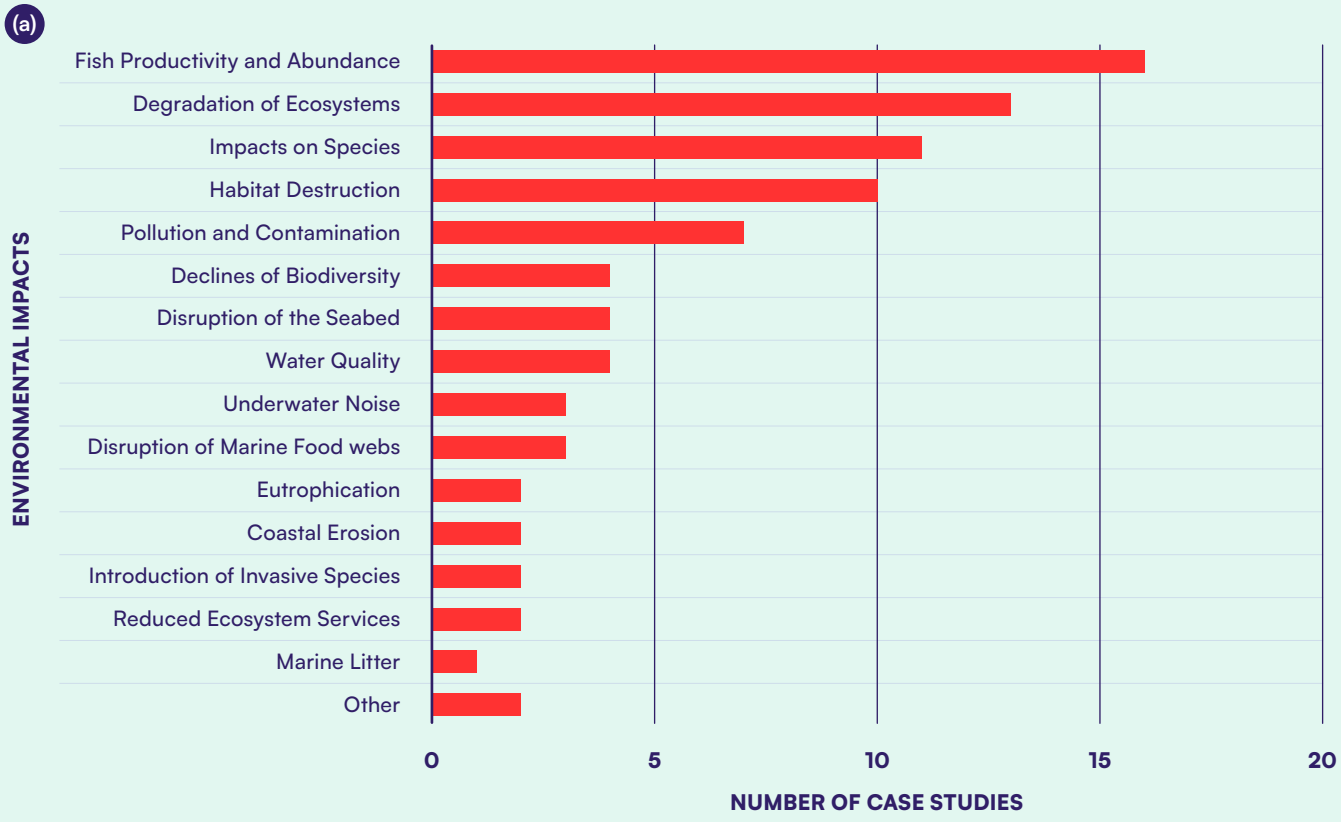
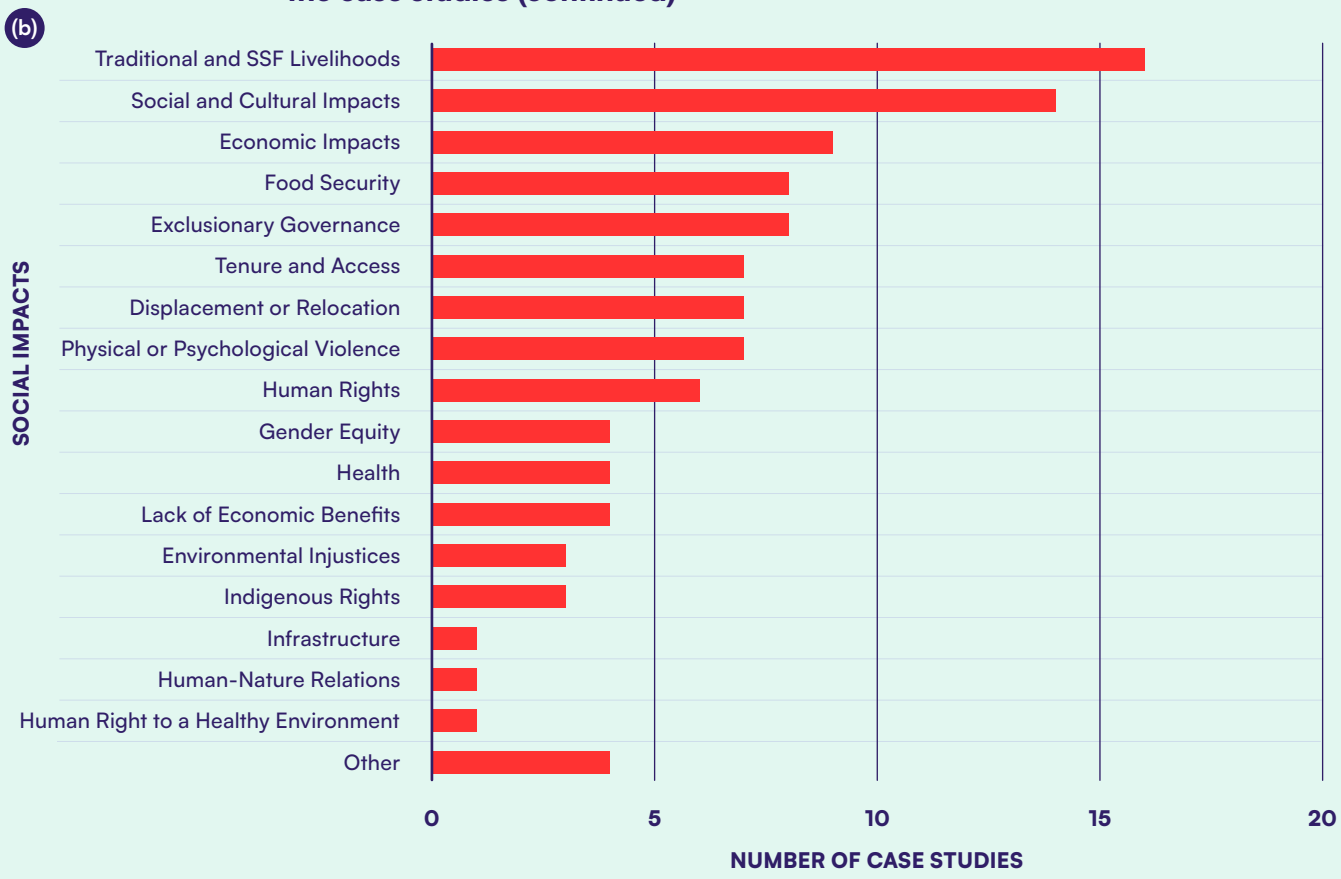


Figure 2.2: Environmental (a) and social impacts (b) of threats identified across the case studies (continued)



2.2.4 Who is Driving the Threats and Conflicts

In most cases, the main driver of the threatening activities and related conflicts was the pursuit of resource extraction for export and profit. The threats and conflicts highlighted in the case studies are thus primarily driven by private sector actors, often involving national and international corporations. This is the case, for example, with salmon aquaculture development in Chile, oil and gas development in Ghana, and industrial fisheries in Cameroon. However, governments at different levels are often deeply involved in promoting industrial development projects or ocean economy policies that are threatening communities. Governments were the major proponents behind the mega-development project in Bangladesh, the broader policy push for the ocean economy in Brazil, and the offshore wind farm development in France. Furthermore, even when governments are not behind the threat, they are enablers or supporters - in so much as government policies and authorities allow the threatening developments to proceed often with inadequate information, participation or the consent of local people and communities. Or, as will be highlighted below, governments may allow corporate actors to engage in repressive acts against ocean defenders without holding them to account or are themselves responsible for carrying out repressive acts. Informal illegal resource harvesters and criminal organizations can also be behind the conflicts and related acts of repression and violence (see below) - as was the case with sand mining in Cambodia or mangrove harvesting in Madagascar.

However, it is not always possible to know exactly which specific actors or parties are behind the threatening development activities, or related impacts, violence, or acts of repression. This may be

due to the complexity of corporate structures and opaque ownership, secrecy within security forces and government chains of command, as well as ocean defenders being at times involved in several struggles. Accountability is particularly challenging when criminal organizations are involved, including through complicity with staff from corporations and/or government authorities.

2.2.5 Characteristics of Ocean Defenders

The group identities of ocean defenders in the documented set of case studies included small-scale fishers (10), broader grassroots networks (6), local communities (4), Indigenous Peoples (2), and women (2). More than one group was active in seven of the case studies - mainly because specific groups were supported by their local communities or broader grassroots networks that extended beyond their communities. In Peru, for instance, small-scale fishers' groups advocating for an MPA were supported by their broader local communities to strengthen their claims. In Senegal, fish processing women have been working closely with a national-level organization of women to effectively advocate for their rights. In Cambodia, small-scale fishers shared information with national campaigners who could take greater risks in exposing illegal sand mining practices.

The level of mobilization of ocean defenders ranged from very little organizing in one case (due to safety concerns), to some local organizing in two cases, to an organized group mobilization in seven cases. Organized groups included local cooperatives, associations, and civil society organizations - which at times were newly created for the purposes of organization and advocacy against the threat and simultaneously for the achievement of desired social and environmental objectives. The broader community mobilized in another seven cases. There were no cases that involved a mass mobilization of a cross-section of society.

The size of ocean defenders' movements across the case studies ranged from less than 10 individuals in one case study, to between 10-100 in two case studies, to between 100-1,000 in four case studies, to between 1,000-10,000 in four case studies, to more than 10,000 in six case studies. The largest group of ocean defenders was small-scale fishers in the case of the "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" in Brazil, who number more than 1,000,000. The prevalence of large group sizes in our sample is due to the fact that in many cases it is difficult to differentiate active ocean defenders from the broader community of individuals who identify as small-scale fishers or Indigenous Peoples, and who are invested in protecting a place, livelihood, or way of life against threats. Moreover, these findings highlight the collective nature of efforts to safeguard the world's marine and coastal environments from threats. This is often masked by a tendency for the media and conservation community to celebrate individuals, or highlight the tragedy of their murders, while ignoring the broader groups and movements involved in defending the ocean (53).

2.2.6 Resistance Activities of Ocean Defenders

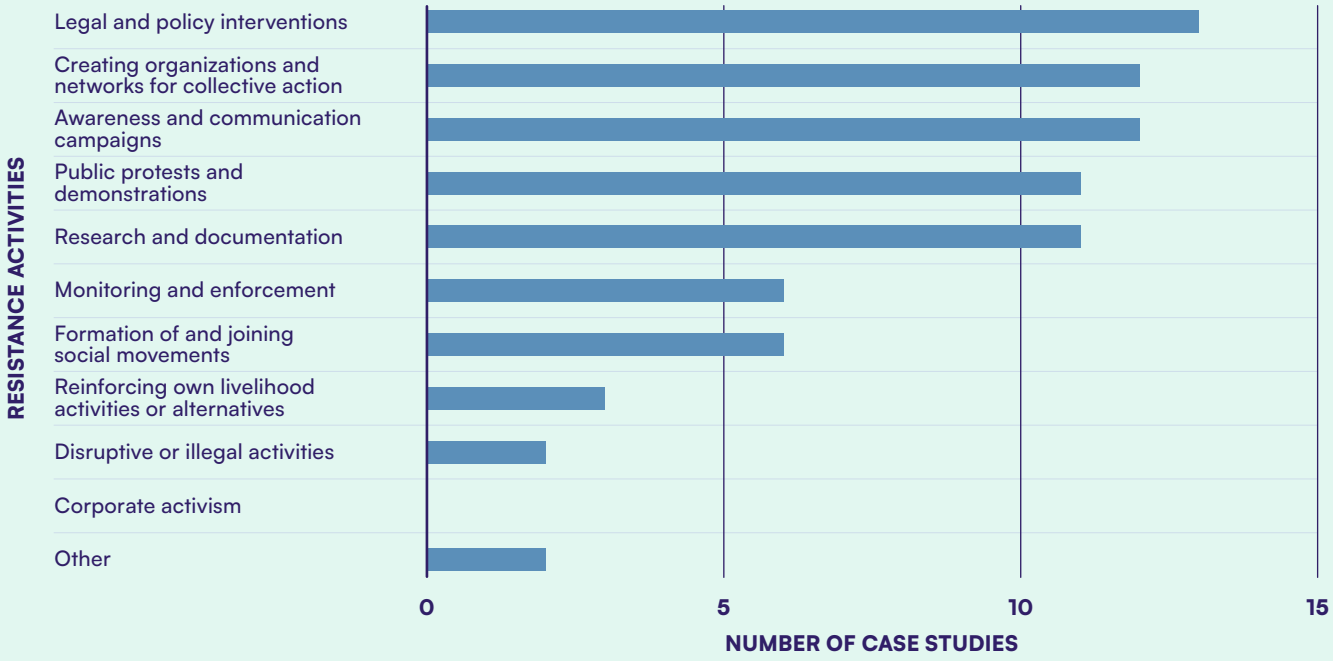
Resistance activities of ocean defenders can include public protests and demonstrations, research and documentation, awareness and communication campaigns, creating organizations and networks for collective action, legal and policy interventions, monitoring and enforcement, corporate activism, as well as disruptive and illegal activities (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Descriptions of resistance activities by ocean defenders (45)

ACTIVITY	DETAILS
Public protests and demonstrations	Public demonstrations and other forms of public dissent (e.g., marches, gatherings, artistic displays, blockades, occupation of public areas, strikes or walkouts) to express opposition and call for the attention of authorities and the public to an issue.
Research and documentation	Conducting research to document impacts from the perspective of affected communities (e.g., community-based environmental impact assessment), and to collect evidence for legal processes (e.g., photos, testimonies).
Awareness and communication campaigns	Engaging in public awareness efforts to communicate in various formats (e.g., media, reports, videos, online maps, databases) for different audiences.
Creating organizations and networks for collective action	Creation of local, national, and transnational organizations or networks to gain visibility, influence, and protection, including through 'allyship' with other organizations (e.g., unions, human rights organizations, international environmental NGOs, international organizations).
Legal and policy interventions	Actions seeking to assert legal claims or seek remedy for illegal actions (e.g., court-cases), influence policy (e.g., advocacy), or transform decision-making institutions and processes (e.g., participation in meetings, organization of alternative meetings).
Monitoring and enforcement	On the ground efforts seeking to identify (e.g., patrols), and stop harmful actors or activities or actors (e.g., enforcement, communication with authorities, blockades).
Corporate activism	Actions to try to change corporate activities (e.g., vocal participation in public consultation processes), influence corporate decision making (e.g., official complaints, petitions, shareholder activism and resolutions), or undermine corporate profits (e.g., boycotts)
Formation of and joining social movements	Forming or joining broader alliances under social movements (e.g., World Forum of Fisher People) or with other social actors (e.g., small-scale fishers together with peasants, farmers, and Indigenous Peoples in La Via Campesina) whose strategic interests align. These alliances put pressure on international organizations (e.g., UN, IUCN, World Bank) to support their human rights, tenure rights, food security and sovereignty.
Reinforcing own livelihood activities or alternatives	Proactive engagement in and/or reinvigoration of traditional or subsistence livelihoods (e.g., fishing, harvesting, marketing), and related stewardship practices, to create a presence in and lay claim to areas of the coast or sea or resources. Active articulation and promotion of an alternative vision for development, including alternative livelihood options.
Disruptive or illegal activities	Disruptive or illegal activities can include both non-violent actions (such as disruptive protests and blocking access to infrastructure) as well as violent actions (such as destruction of property and physical violence). While illegal and violent activities should not be condoned, acts of self-defense or defense of property are a gray zone - for example, when private sector or state actors incite violence against people or destroy property. Furthermore, acts that are legal under human rights law - including organizing, self-expression, and peaceful protest - are sometimes labeled illegal by state actors to criminalize and repress defenders.

In all of the case studies, ocean defenders were engaged in multiple acts of resistance in an effort to achieve their objectives (Figure 2.3). The most used resistance activity, highlighted in thirteen case studies, is promoting legal or policy interventions. In South Africa, for example, small-scale fishers took the government and corporate actors to court to protest seismic surveys used to explore for oil and gas (54,55). Indigenous Mapuche communities in Chile were and are advocating for legal recognition by the state of an "Espacios Costeros Marinos para Pueblos Originarios" (ECMPO) in efforts to halt the expansion of salmon farms. Other often employed resistance activities included creating organizations and networks for collective action (12), using awareness and communications campaigns (12), and organizing public protests and demonstrations (11) to raise the profile of the issue. Many groups (11) conducted research and documented issues, often with the assistance of research partners, in support of legal or policy efforts or awareness and communication campaigns. Six case studies highlight how, in the absence of adequate state capacity and accountability, local groups and communities were taking monitoring and enforcement into their own hands. Local ocean defenders in six cases linked up with national or international social movements (such as La Via Campesina and the World Forum of Fisher Peoples) working on similar or related issues - for purposes of solidarity, learning, or to help raise the profile of their conflict and struggles on the international stage. In several cases, ocean defenders reinforced their own activities or alternative schemes to counter the threats - such is the case in Palau, where women sought to revitalize and restore their own sea cucumber fisheries after a commercial sea cucumber fishery was banned. In two cases, local groups engaged in disruptive activities or illegal blockades to try to impede threatening development activities and/or to draw attention to their cause. In the case of Cameroon, local small-scale fishers engaged in no direct resistance activities, as they did not feel safe enough to advocate on their own behalf due to limited empowerment and threats - so would reach out to NGOs, researchers, and media to communicate their concerns with the government. Finally, there were no cases of corporate activism, which is perhaps because companies engaged in threatening activities were not publicly listed or defenders did not have the capacity to engage at that level.

Figure 2.3: Resistance activities used by ocean defenders to deter, prevent, or disrupt activities that are threatening their environment, territories, or human rights

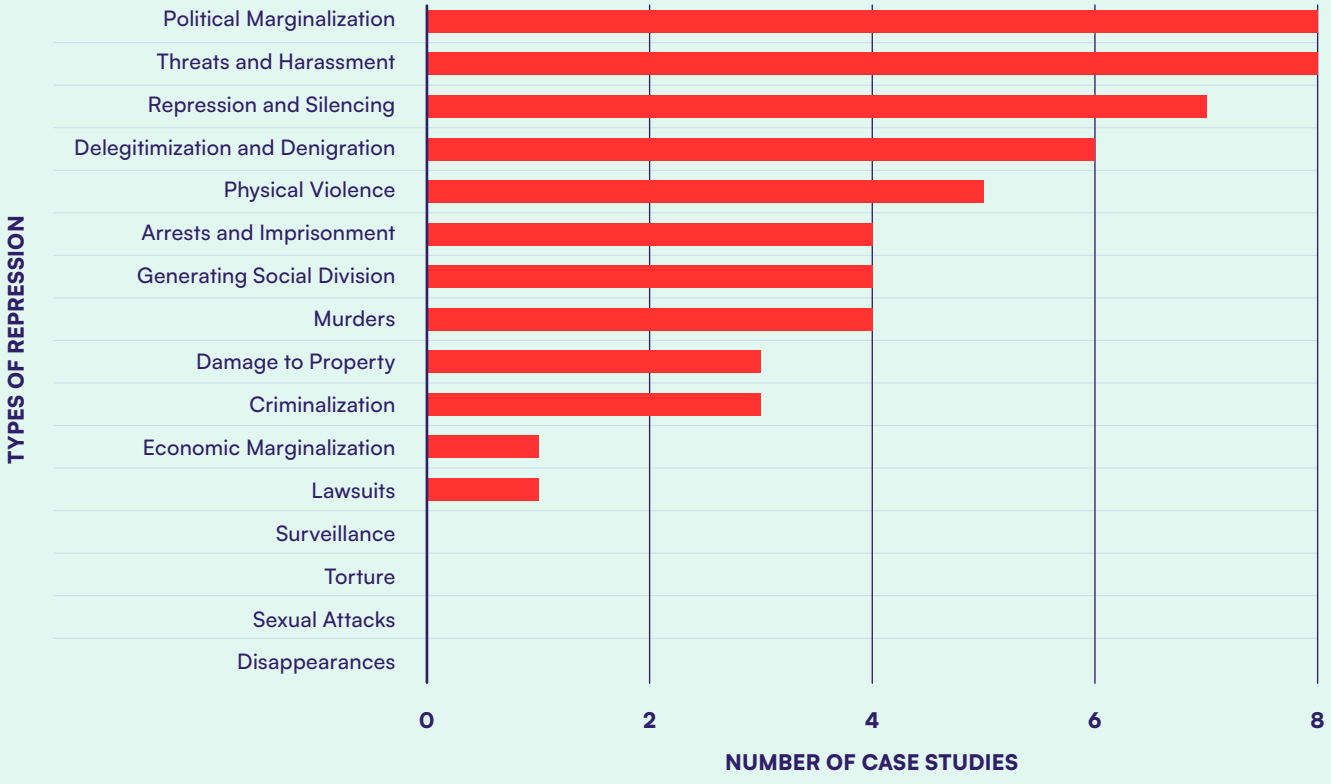


2.2.7 Repression of Ocean Defenders

The case studies highlight how ocean defenders are experiencing numerous forms of repression around the world (Figure 2.4) and are often facing multiple forms of repression simultaneously. The most prevalent types of repression identified through the case studies were political marginalization (8), threats and harassment (8), repression and silencing (7), delegitimization and denigration (6), physical violence (5), arrests and imprisonment (4), and generating social division and conflict (4). There were reports of murders in at least 4 of the cases, which is a worrying statistic given the small number of case studies in our sample. Examples of damage to property (3), criminalization (3), economic marginalization (1), and lawsuits (1) were also reported. While surveillance, torture, sexual attacks, and disappearances are commonly reported in the broader literature on environmental human rights defenders, these acts of repression were not a feature of the case studies. Finally, the number of different forms of repression documented in an individual case study ranged from none in Palau to six in Cameroon. Yet, the forms of repression are likely an underrepresentation given that we can only rely on those that have been documented in the case studies.

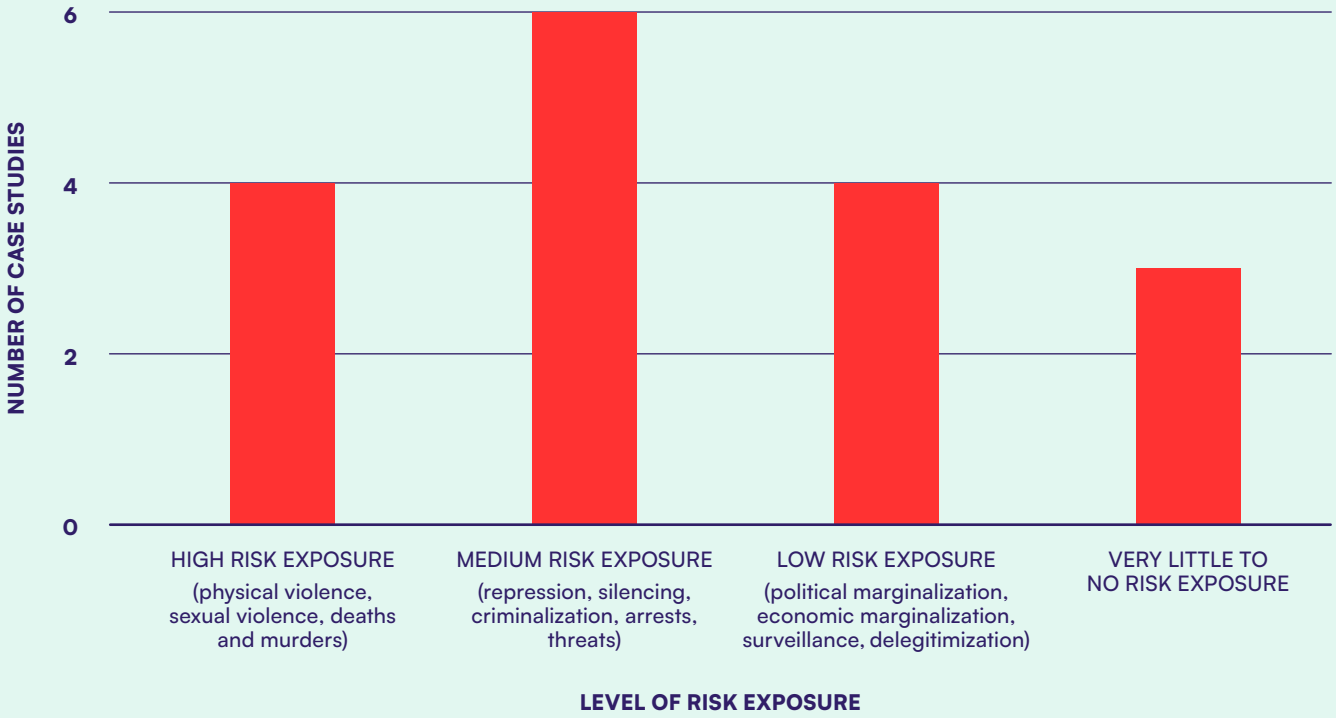
Regardless, all of the documented forms of repression can have a chilling effect on people's feeling of safety and their willingness to organize and advocate for the health of the ocean and human rights. It can leave local people who are at the forefront of efforts to safeguard the ocean feeling both hopeless and helpless. In one case study where ocean defenders were experiencing an increasingly hostile environment, the worst occurred: one of the leaders of the local movement recently died by suicide.

Figure 2.4: Repression of ocean defenders across the case studies



In the list of case studies, the risk of exposure to acts of repression was high in four cases, medium in six cases, and low in four cases (Figure 2.5). There was very little to no risk exposure in three cases. This shows clearly that ocean defenders throughout the world operate in contexts with highly variable levels of civic space and repression. The case studies also demonstrate that ocean defenders often adjust their resistance strategies to avoid these risks in authoritarian, repressive or violent political environments.

Figure 2.5: Level of risk exposure of ocean defenders to acts of repression



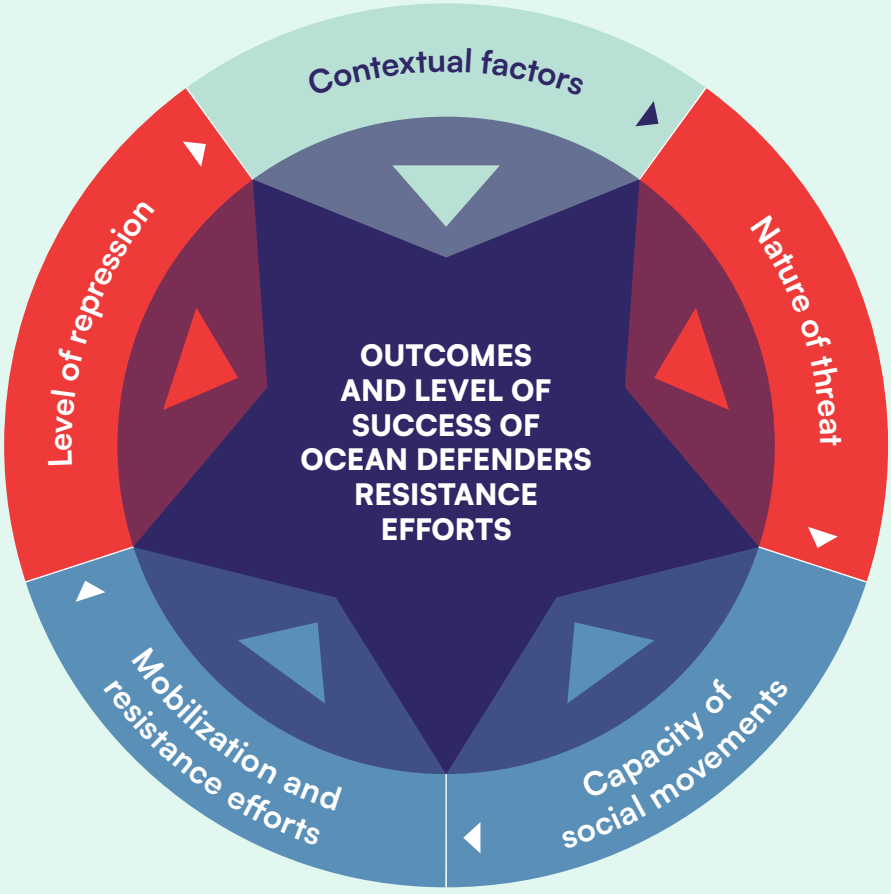
Private sector and government actors were primarily behind the acts of repression. However, it was often challenging to know who exactly was responsible in the case studies. Sometimes it is obvious that individuals who are working in the threatening activity used threats or perpetuated violence against ocean defenders. This was often the situation in case studies involving industrial and illegal fishing. In several case studies, the private sector used strategic counter messaging to delegitimize ocean defenders or infiltrated social movements to generate social division. However, state actors were often hostile towards coastal communities as recognizing their rights may interfere with broader political and economic agendas - thus they used the tools at their disposal to marginalize, delegitimize, criminalize, and arrest ocean defenders. In a number of case studies, the available evidence suggests that the private sector may have been in cahoots with corrupt government officials - but this was hard to corroborate. In some cases, repression resulted in an escalation of violence, including through skirmishes between defenders and security agents or the destruction of project assets; this, in turn, facilitated the criminalization of defenders by authorities, with injunctions and jail times being imposed. One thing that is clear, however, is that perpetrators of repression against ocean defenders were and are acting with impunity. There is very little evidence that they have been held to account across the cases.

2.2.8 Status and Outcomes of the Conflicts

The level of success that ocean defenders have had in achieving their objectives through their mobilization and resistance efforts varies substantially across the case studies. Although the success of a struggle can be subjective, analysis of the case studies suggests that in four case studies there was no success, in nine there was some level of success, and in four there were substantive successes in meeting objectives. For instance, in northeastern Brazil, small-scale fishers have had no success in their efforts to be compensated for the impacts of and clean-up efforts related to an oil spill of unknown origin. In Peru, small-scale fishers' advocacy led to the creation of a marine protected area, but pressure from industrial fisheries continues unabated due to insufficient co-management and enforcement capacity. In Papua New Guinea, ongoing advocacy and pressure from the Solwara Warriors may have helped to push the company licensed to begin deep seabed extraction into insolvency. However, the threat of deep-sea mining has returned as other companies have been reported for new, unknown exploration efforts in the region in late 2024. In Palau, efforts to stop an unsustainable commercial sea cucumber fishery that was undermining local rights and women's livelihoods led to a complete ban on the export-oriented sea cucumber fisheries by the government.

Successes in achieving objectives have also not always translated to changes on the ground and in the water. Where changes occurred, they could be classified as project level changes in four locations and systemic changes in four locations. In Bangladesh, local communities stopped foreign investment to build one major power plant, but the government is now looking for other investors. In Madagascar, mangrove harvesting for charcoal production was halted in the case study location but not more broadly (project level change). In Brazil, organizers of the "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" have been hired into government positions - which has the potential to contribute to systemic changes. Yet, there was no real change in development activities in nine of the case studies. In several of the cases, policy-related successes (e.g., rights recognition, establishment of a regulation) have not really translated into changes on the ground.

Figure 2.6: Factors that play a role in the success of ocean defenders' resistance efforts



Various factors likely played a role in the outcomes and relative level of success of ocean defenders' resistance efforts seen across the case studies, including contextual factors, the nature of the threat, the capacity of social movements, their mobilization and resistance efforts, the level of repression, and support from allied organizations (Figure 2.6). Contextual factors that shape outcomes include the level of political and economic marginalization or support for coastal communities and rights holders, the broader governance context (i.e., political stability, governance effectiveness, corruption), prevailing economic conditions and development models, and other deeply embedded structural issues (e.g., racism, gender equality, asymmetric power). Some threats are smaller in scale and drivers are more localized, while others are much larger in scale and are driven by international forces making them harder to resist. Some resistance activities used by ocean defenders are more effective at raising the profile of the issue, producing policy changes, requiring promoters to meet specific obligations, or leading to the cessation of activities. The capacity of social movements to organize and mobilize can also influence the effectiveness of resistance activities in the case studies. In some cases, long histories of social mobilization and advocacy against unfair policies and/or past development activities meant

that these groups had established networks, institutional memory, or experienced leaders. Several case studies highlighted how support from external organizations can also be key to augmenting the capacity and bolstering the efforts of local ocean defenders. For example, in Madagascar, an international NGO not only provided capacity building for local people but also paid for legal fees to support prosecution of the killer of an ocean defender. In South Africa and Chile, networks that included researchers, NGO representatives, and legal professionals worked in solidarity with ocean defenders. Finally, the level and types of repression experienced by ocean defenders can act as a deterrence to mobilization - such is the case in Cameroon, where small-scale fishers do not feel safe to protest for fear of reprisal.

2.2.9 Summary of Insights from Case Studies

In sum, the set of case studies analyzed for this project provides a number of important insights into the situation facing ocean defenders.

1. First, **ocean defenders are present in all regions of the world's oceans and operate in varied environmental, social, economic, governance, and political contexts.**

2. Second, **coastal communities are facing threats from many different ocean economy activities that push them into the role of ocean defender. Industrial fisheries, intensive aquaculture, and oil and gas exploration and extraction are the most prevalent threats in our current sample. Many other forms of ocean development that are biased towards economic profit over societal wellbeing, or that are poorly planned and implemented without meaningful participation, are also threatening to communities. Threats occurred at various spatial scales, from the coast to offshore, and at all ocean depths.**

3. Third, **the most prevalent environmental concerns were related to fish productivity and abundance, degradation of marine ecosystems, impacts on species, habitat destruction, and pollution and contamination. The most prevalent social concerns were related to traditional and SSF livelihoods, social and cultural impacts, economic impacts, food security, exclusionary governance, tenure and access, displacement or relocation, physical or psychological violence, and human rights.**

4. Fourth, **the threats are mostly driven by the private sector, however, governments also promote, enable, and support ocean developments that are environmentally unsustainable and adversely affect human rights. In some cases, illegal actors and criminal organizations are also involved.**

5. Fifth, ocean defenders represent groups of small-scale fishers, Indigenous Peoples, women, coastal communities, and broader grassroots networks, ranging in size from fewer than 10 to more than 1,000,000. This result highlights the collective nature of efforts to protect the ocean.

6. Sixth, these groups of ocean defenders employed various resistance strategies - including promoting legal or policy interventions, creating organizations and networks for collective action, using awareness and communications campaigns, organizing public protests and demonstrations, conducting research and documentation, and reinforcing their own livelihoods or alternatives.

7. Seventh, the results highlight how ocean defenders are experiencing numerous and often multiple forms of repression - with the most prevalent being political marginalization, threats and harassment, repression and silencing, delegitimization and denigration, physical violence, arrests and imprisonment, and generating social division and conflict. There were also reports of murders in four of the case studies, which is worrying. While there are huge contextual differences, the oceans are a violent place for many ocean defenders - and perpetrators of repression are acting with impunity and not being held to account. All people and defenders must be safe to gather, organize, advocate, and peacefully protest on behalf of the ocean environment and human rights.

8. Finally, the level of success of ocean defenders' resistance efforts varies from no success to substantive success - which is influenced by various factors including contextual factors, the nature of the threat, the capacity of social movements, the effectiveness of mobilization and resistance efforts, the level of repression, and support from allied organizations. Yet, even in situations where the threat was historical and resistance efforts have been successful, there is always the possibility that it will reemerge, or new threats may continue to emerge in the burgeoning blue economy.

Moreover, the work of coastal communities, small-scale fishers, Indigenous Peoples, and other groups seeking to defend the ocean is ongoing and may never really end in the context of a rapidly accelerating ocean economy. Thus, the central role of ocean defenders in the protection of marine ecosystems and human rights needs to be urgently acknowledged and their efforts must be strongly supported by allied organizations.

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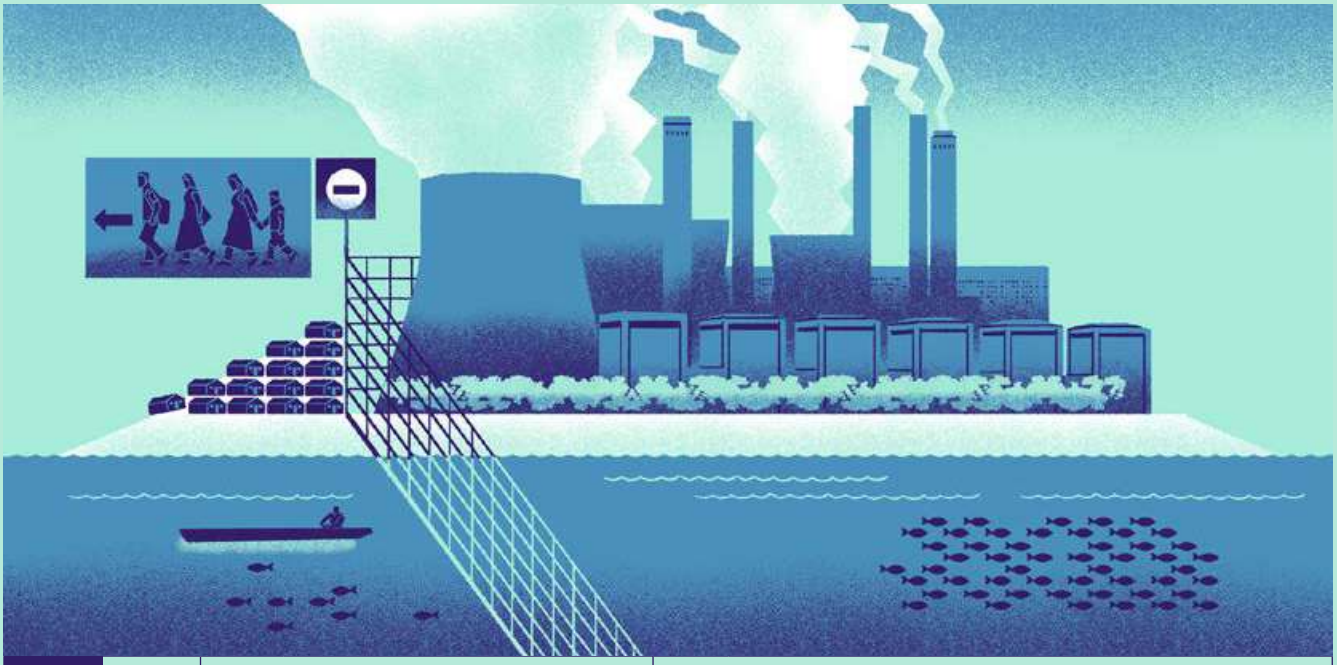


CASE STUDY 1

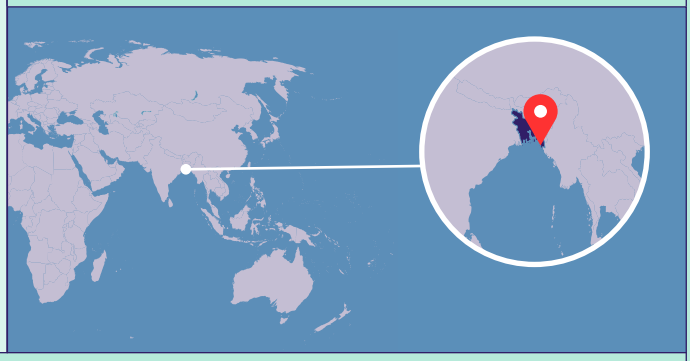
Bangladesh

LOCATION: Island of Moheshkhali, Bangladesh

SCALE: Regional

Guardians of Moheshkhali:

Defending Traditional Ways of Living by the Sea Against Unsustainable Blue Growth in Bangladesh



AUTHORS Samiya Selim, Jewel Das, Marion Glaser, Prabal Barua, Tahura Farbin, and Shahriyer Hossain Shetu

Launched in 2015, the Matarbari Mega Project seeks to transform Moheshkhali Island into an economic hub, including a coal power plant and port facilities. Despite promises of modernization, the project has caused environmental harm and displaced 20,000 locals, impacting livelihoods and cultural identity. Since 2018, local ocean defenders have protested, resulting in successes like the cancellation of certain coal plants. Yet, the struggle to preserve heritage and environment against industrial expansion persists. This highlights the crucial role of community involvement in development decisions and the ongoing need for a sustainable and culturally sensitive approach to economic growth.

THREAT: Establishment of Economic Development Zone, Port Development.

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protest and Demonstrations, Research and Documentation, Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action

In the Bay of Bengal's lively waters sits the charming Moheshkhali Island, where a vibrant community has thrived for generations through fishing, aquaculture, and agriculture. The island is divided into two administrative units, Dhalghata Union and Matarbari Union. In total, the island has a population of 57,814 inhabitants (56). The main occupations include salt cultivation, agriculture, shrimp culture, and fishing in the Bay of Bengal (56). The island's tranquility was shattered in 2015 when the government of Bangladesh designated Moheshkhali as one of the country's economic zones. This designation set the stage for a conflict that pits the aspirations of industrial development against the rights and livelihoods of the local population.

Figure 2.3.1: **A fisherman's hope: A local fishing boat waits patiently on the sandy shores of Moheshkhali, carrying the dreams of fishermen striving to bring joy to their families amidst the challenges of changing coastal life.**

CREDIT: Emon Rahman (CSD-ULAB)

The conflict revolves around the rapid development projects on Moheshkhali Island, collectively known as the Matarbari Mega Project. The island, covering an area of 268 square kilometers, is planned to include one coal power plant, five LNG and LPG terminals, a deep-sea port, a petrochemical refinery, gas pipelines, and even a tourism park. While these initiatives promise economic growth and modernization, they have unleashed a wave of environmental and social challenges that threaten the very fabric of the island (57,58).

The Matarbari Mega Project has left a trail of destruction in its wake. Coastal erosion, driven by extensive dredging and soil removal, threatens the fragile shoreline. Pollution from industrial facilities, both on land and in the water, imperils marine ecosystems (59). Disturbingly, there are anecdotal reports of disruptions in local fish populations, though these claims await scientific validation (60). However, it's the human toll that paints the most harrowing picture. Around 20,000 people have been forcibly displaced from their ancestral homes and occupations to make way for the coal power plant alone (56). Salt farmers, shrimp farmers and workers, crab farmers, agricultural laborers, and fishermen have all found themselves brutally uprooted. Their loss extends beyond livelihoods and land; it reaches into the heart of their cultural identity and community cohesion, particularly impacting women who already had limited access to livelihoods and mobility (60,61).

In the face of this mounting crisis, a dedicated group of ocean defenders has risen to challenge the industrial juggernaut. They hail from diverse backgrounds, with most being members of various small NGOs and rights groups and are between 25 and 40 years old. What distinguishes them from others in the community is their level of education and income, which provides them with the means and determination to fight for their rights. These defenders self-identify as activists striving for the voice and rights of the local community in the decision-making process. They are the guardians of their fishing and coastal farming territories, driven by their deep connection to the land that has been home to their families for generations.

Figure 2.3.2: **Empowered hands weave tales of Moheshkhali: A collective of women from displaced families stitch dreams into art, crafting stories with every delicate thread.**

CREDIT: Emon Rahman (CSD-ULAB)

The ocean defenders' mobilization efforts, the group remains nameless, began in earnest in 2018, but the roots of their resistance date back to the initial project announcement in 2015 (57). They have organized protests, conducted demonstration marches across Moheshkhali, and even extended their actions to the city of Cox's Bazar, where they have aimed to raise awareness about the project's devastating consequences and draw attention to the plight of local people through newspapers and social media platforms. Their demands are clear: halt the construction and prevent the evictions.

The ocean defenders are fighting for the right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their land and livelihoods. They aspire to defend their territories, ensure equitable compensation for those displaced, and safeguard their environment from unchecked industrialization. Their ultimate goal is to secure a future where the people of Moheshkhali can prosper without sacrificing their heritage.

While the ocean defenders have not been entirely successful in halting the development or preventing displacement, their efforts have not been in vain. Pressure from various quarters led to the cancellation of several coal plants slated for construction. Japan's decision not to fund the second phase of the Matarbari power plant is a testament to the impact of their struggles (62,63). However, local corporate entities are stepping in with their funding, perpetuating the threat.

As a response to the defenders' efforts to halt the mega project, they have faced significant challenges, which include coercion, false promises of jobs and compensation, verbal threats, and the use of police to quell protests. There are even anecdotal accounts of physical violence and murder, though concrete evidence is lacking.

One thing is evident: the ocean defenders operate in a hostile environment where the national governance context is unsupportive of their right to assemble, advocate, and protest for the environment and rights. While the nation's laws ostensibly protect both the environment and human rights, the reality is marked by clamping down on the free press and a controversial digital act that has led to the incarceration of activists and journalists (64).

Figure 2.3.3: **Salt farms provide an economic income to local fishers.**

CREDIT: Emon Rahman (CSD-ULAB)

The struggle in Moheshkhali is ongoing, with the ocean defenders persisting in their efforts to protect their island and livelihoods from unchecked industrialization. While some progress has been made in terms of compensation for displaced families and the emergence of fishing cooperatives, the battle is far from over.

In the Bay of Bengal waters, these ocean defenders keep speaking out against the spread of big industries. They are the protectors of Moheshkhali Island, and they are determined to save their culture and prevent harm to their land, their jobs, and their way of life. Their determination shows how strong communities must be in the face of the seemingly unstoppable march of ocean and coastal development, and it reminds us of the difficulties ocean defenders face when trying to protect the sea and their homes.

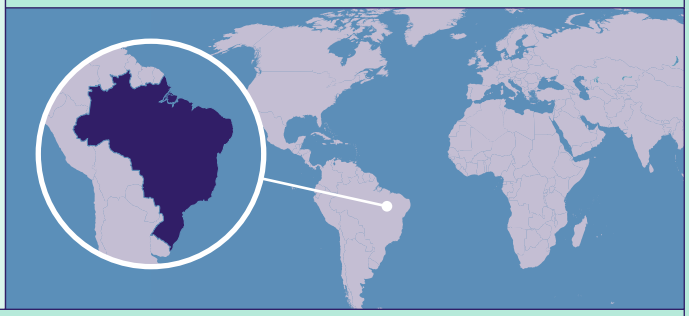
CASE STUDY 2

Brazil #1

LOCATION: Brazil

SCALE: National

Seeking Blue Justice Through the "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" in Brazil



AUTHORS Leopoldo Cavaleri Gerhardinger

In Brazil, a "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" was established in 2022 as an act of resistance against historical and on-going socio-environmental harms caused by ocean economy sectors. Led by a nationwide movement of fisherfolk ocean defenders, it aims to defend traditional fishing communities' rights, fight environmental racism, and preserve traditional ways of life. Despite challenges, the movement has gained political influence and achieved successes, including involvement in the Ministry of Aquaculture and Fisheries as of 2023 after federal presidential elections, while fighting for policy changes and environmental protection.

THREAT: Ocean economy related activities

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protests and Demonstrations, Research and Documentation, Awareness and Communication Campaigns, Legal and Policy Interventions, Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action.

Figure 2.4.1: **Tribunal Popular Da Economia Do Mar event, November 2022.**

CREDIT: Leopoldo Gerhardinger

In Brazil, the "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" (Tribunal Popular da Economia do Mar) was established in 2022 by the "Brazilian Fisherwomen and Fishermen for Fishing Territories Movement" (MPP) and the Fishers Pastoral Council (CPP) as an act of resistance to challenge the historical and emerging threats posed by a burgeoning ocean/blue economy (65,66). In the Brazilian context, this encompasses various forms of development including industrial fishing, aquaculture, oil development, renewable energy, mining, and coastal development. The Brazilian coastline, which is rich in diverse coastal and marine ecosystems and home to countless traditional fishing communities, is the epicenter of this conflict.

The Popular Court is an initiative of a nationwide movement of ocean defenders, primarily led by the MPP and CPP, who are intrinsically linked to the marine environment and their traditional lifestyles as small-scale fishers and harvesters. They view themselves as guardians of the oceans, striving to preserve their culture, livelihoods, and the environment. Their identity is anchored in shared experiences and values, emphasizing the protection of their territories and maintenance of ecological equilibrium.

The broader movement of ocean defenders is engaged in an ongoing struggle that stretches from conflicts facing local traditional fishing and shellfish gathering communities to the broader national political arena. Central to this movement is the confrontation against the ocean economy's extractive model, which inflicts socio-environmental harms on the marine environment and resource-dependent coastal communities (67,68).

The objectives of the movement are multifaceted, including defending fundamental rights, preserving traditional ways of life, combating environmental racism, and advocating for the recognition and respect of their territories. They also seek policy reforms to ensure traditional communities are not negatively impacted by the 'blue economy'. Their resistance methods include protests, documentation of environmental impacts, social media campaigns, legal battles, and participation in the Popular Court.

Preparatory hearings of the Popular Court have shed light on the severe environmental impacts of various forms of ocean/blue economy development. This includes threats to ocean health, marine ecosystems, coastal habitats, species diversity, resource productivity, and ecosystem services and the people who rely on them (69) - as well as pollution and water contamination from urban/industrial discharges, agriculture, and mining (70,71). The social repercussions presented to the Popular Court are equally significant. These include violations of fundamental rights, impacts on women and fishing youth, discrimination specifically aimed at certain racial groups, loss of cultural and social identity, environmental racism, lack of consultation, and threats to the economic autonomy of women in fishing communities (72). In Pará, some of the most severe cases of violence against artisanal fishers occur near the mouth of the Amazon River and the coastal zone. In Aranaí and Monte Alegre, close to this area, fishers face uninvestigated murders and conditions akin to modern slavery, driven by private entities exploiting labor. Aranaí's fishers live in fear with no protection from authorities, while in Monte Alegre, companies trap fishers in debt and exploit them on industrial vessels. In Prainha, death threats are common as powerful groups restrict access to fishing grounds, highlighting the systemic violence these communities endure, as denounced by the Popular Court.

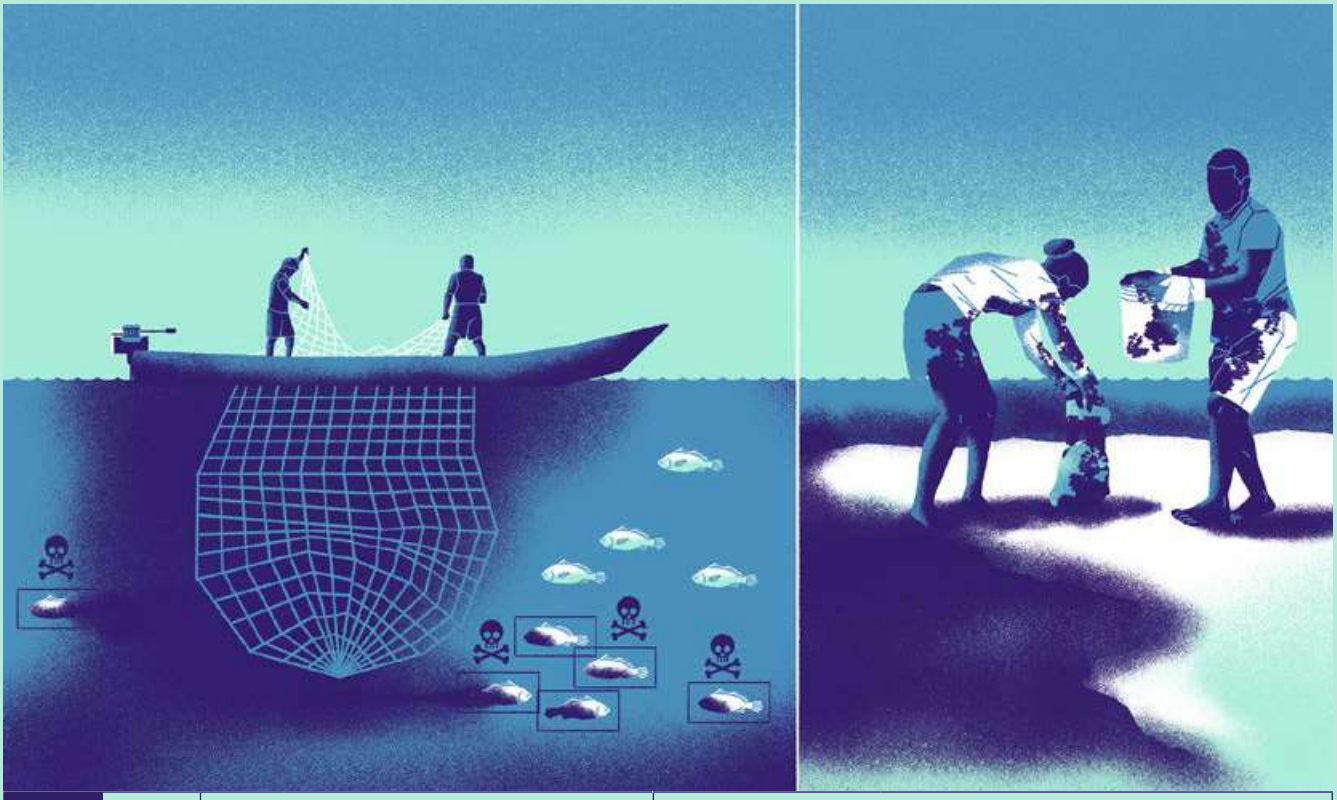
Before these and many other testimonies, the MPP accuses the Brazilian State and various entities of endorsing projects that generate environmental injustices and social conflicts. The defense of human rights as well as of nature and all other living beings are at the core of the MPP claims. And, yet, when small-scale fishing communities try to resist the blue/ocean economy - their voices are silenced, they are criminalized, they are threatened, they are attacked, and some are even murdered (73,74).

Despite facing persistent challenges related to political instability and corporate influence, the movement has achieved significant milestones, such as raising awareness, building capacity, and altering mindsets. The Bolsonaro administration's handling of Brazil's artisanal fishers was fraught with neglect and broken promises. The government pledged financial aid to fishers affected by the 2019 oil spill that devastated the northeastern coast, but many never saw a cent of this promised support. This failure further exacerbated the economic difficulties these communities were already facing. Coupled with this was the administration's systematic dismantling of environmental protections, allowing for increased pollution and illegal activities that further threatened the fishers' livelihoods (75).

The "Popular Court of the Sea Economy" was organized in November, during the final months of the Bolsonaro government. It has been key in enabling fishers to voice their concerns and scrutinize his mandate following presidential elections and the subsequent federal government transition. With the new presidential government starting in January 2023, the fishers' movement has also gained substantial political influence. Several of their leaders are ever since part of the re-established Ministry of Aquaculture and Fisheries. Yet, they continue to navigate a complex social struggle along Brazil's coast, with fishing communities affected by major floods due to climate change struggling to receive governmental support (76). With the new government, there were heightened hopes for greater political

support and policy shifts. For instance, the collaborative making of the National Plan for Artisanal Fisheries ("Plano Nacional da Pesca Artesanal") was initially supported and welcomed by fishers' movements as a crucial step toward enhancing the sustainability and social inclusion of Brazil's artisanal fishing communities (77). The plan aimed to improve market access, secure fair pricing, and protect traditional knowledge. However, by mid-2024, progress was significantly undermined by budget cuts, stalling the initiative and putting its ambitious agenda on hold, much to the concern of the fishing communities that had high hopes for its implementation.

Through adapting their strategies to overcome obstacles, they have persisted in advocating for long-term changes. The ocean defenders maintain their momentum by fomenting community-led initiatives, fostering resilient networks at the national scale, and seeking international backing for their efforts from organizations such as the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers. Their ongoing efforts underscore the need for continued protection, resources, funding, and empowerment in decision-making processes, exemplifying the enduring struggle for marine conservation and social justice in Brazil.

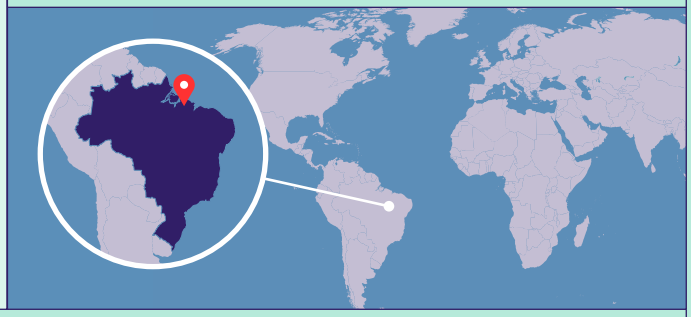


CASE STUDY 3

Brazil #2

LOCATION: Brazil

SCALE: Northeastern coast of Brazil



Fishers' Struggles During and After the 2019 Southwest Atlantic Oil Spill in Brazil

AUTHORS Gabriel Barros Gonçalves de Souza and Priscila Fabiana Macedo Lopes

Brazilian coastal small-scale fishing communities were hit by a large and ongoing oil spill from an unknown source between August 2019 and June 2020. Fishers were left without proper government assistance, so together with volunteers they mobilized to try to clean coastal environments themselves. Though the oil spill was an ecological and socioeconomic disaster that affected fisheries and tourism, it was never properly addressed or even fully investigated.

THREAT: Oil spill of unknown cause

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Legal and Policy Interventions; Awareness and Communication Campaigns; Public Protests and Demonstrations; Research and Documentation

Disaster struck the northeastern coast of Brazil in 2019 in the form of a major oil spill of unknown origin (78). This tropical region of Brazil is characterized by sandstone reefs, predominantly covered by algae, with occasional coral formations (79). Mangrove forests are also present, even in its arid and semi-arid areas (80). It is also the home of numerous small-scale fishing communities - and in the coastal states of the Brazilian Northeast alone, there are an estimated 164,000 fishers and gleaners (77). These small-scale fishing communities have occupied the same regions for centuries and kept many of their fishing traditions relatively unchanged. For example, small-scale fishers still use wind-propelled rafts or boats with very low mechanization.

Fishing represents much more than a commercial activity for these small-scale fishing communities; it is their way of life; and it contributes to the food security and well-being of their communities. And, yet, these communities are also historically poor and politically marginalized, often being excluded from decision-making processes (81,82).

Figure 2.5.1: **A fisher volunteering to clean the Pedra de Xaréu beach, Cabo de Santo Agostinho (Pernambuco, Brazil).**

CREDIT: Anderson Stevens

These coastal communities were particularly affected by the environmental and social impacts of the oil spill disaster - which started in August 2019 and continued until June 2020. The oil spill affected 11 Brazilian states (nine of them on the northeastern coast), 130 municipalities, and 1009 localities (78). This spill was the most extensive (2890 km) ever recorded in tropical oceans, reaching more than a hundred MPAs and impacting around 900,000 people (83). The environmental damage included contamination of reefs, seagrasses, sandy beaches, mangroves, benthic communities, turtles, seabirds, and other wildlife. As of today, except for provisioning services (e.g., fish for consumption) (84), it is still not fully known how ecosystem services were affected.

Figure 2.5.2:
Volunteer cleaning the Rio Vermelho beach, in Salvador (Bahia, Brazil).

CREDIT: Gabriel Barros

Social impacts have also been reported, though most remain anecdotal or not scientifically fully assessed. Local communities were afraid of consuming fish and seafood, which is the basis of their food security. Their income directly derived from the fish value chain was compromised because people (non-fishers) stopped buying fish, and middlemen lowered the prices even in areas not directly affected, arguing that there was no demand for fish. Communities lost, for months, all income provided by tourism, which also affected many fishers and their families, as fishers often diversify their income sources (e.g., by taking tourists to local reefs, renting houses, or owning small restaurants and businesses) or indirectly through the tourism value chain (e.g., fishers and family members who work in hotels, restaurants, and diving companies). The contamination of sites is likely to have affected culturally important places for leisure and nature connection.

At first, nothing was done by governments (78). However, local fishers' groups and communities organized and tried to bring attention to the issue through demonstrations and collective cleaning efforts. Some small protests were registered in different municipalities. The federal government only took its first action, a simple press release acknowledging the disaster, after a whole month had passed, primarily due to media pressure (85). But it was insufficient to address the scale of the slowly unfolding environmental disaster.

In the absence of coordinated government action, fishers and volunteers took matters into their own hands and worked together to remove the oil from the beaches, reefs, mangroves, and other coastal environments. Communities created collaborative networks to organize themselves, raise funds and also to pressure the government for action (85). In some places, such as the Extractive Reserve of Canavieiras, a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Bahia state that permits sustainable fishing, fishers went to the sea with their nets to try to prevent the oil from reaching their beaches (86). Most of these initiatives lacked proper safety gear and instruction, exposing people to hazards for months as government actions, when finally initiated, were always insufficient.

Eventually, the government provided a two-month emergency financial aid to fishers. Yet, by the end of 2019 and early 2020, many still reported not benefiting from it. Researchers and journalists recorded some testimonials to report immediate effects associated with the oil spill. Efforts by researchers and journalists were more intensive during the first five months following the spill, which corresponded to the most intense period of contamination, as the oil continued to wash ashore for some time. This engagement lost steam after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, fishers and volunteers succeeded in removing the large oil stains from the beaches, but as of mid-2024, there are still areas with oil that need to be properly cleaned, particularly in coral reefs and mangroves.

The level of social organization and activism varies across the communities. Some communities are well characterized by bonds of trust in well-structured associations and fishing colonies or in organizations within sustainable use MPAs. Yet, many fishers are immersed in various conflicts, ranging from internal disputes to conflicts with other activities (e.g., industrial fishery, oil industry, tourism, real estate speculation, recreational fishery, and even MPAs). Despite these challenges, many artisanal fishers recognize the need to protect the coasts to ensure resources for their fishing activity, which tends to be their main source of income, even if they are not full-time fishers. This is why various groups felt it was their right to be properly compensated financially for the damage caused by the oil spill, for their volunteer work, and for all the government inaction that compromised their livelihoods. However, after five years, only a few organizations are still fighting in the courts for legal reparation (e.g., the National Articulation of Women Fishers, the Fishers' Movement of Brazil, and the National Commission for the Strengthening of Coastal and Marine Extractivist Peoples) (87). The oil spill disaster, unfortunately, seems to have been forgotten by a large part of society.

From the fishers' perspective, their role in defending the ocean during the oil spill disaster reflected both short-term and long-term interests. In the short-term, fishers aimed to raise awareness about their situation as a group and sought compensation for the temporary loss of aspects that define their livelihoods. In the long-term, they expected their activities to be respected and protected by government actions. However, success in this case is unclear. Coastal ecosystems remain contaminated and largely depend on nature's own course for recovery. Fishers suffered income loss and potential adverse health consequences that were not properly compensated or addressed. The cause of the oil spill remains uncertain, though the initial range of hypotheses has been narrowed down to two main possibilities: either the oil was released (intentionally or accidentally) from vessels transiting near the Brazilian coast, or it originated from shipwrecks, whether recent or historic (88). While researchers continue to report the impacts of this disaster on fishing communities' food security, income, mental health, and leisure, the government treats it as a closed case, showing no further interest in finding the origin of the spill or taking additional action.

Figure 2.5.3: **Volunteers and municipal staff removing oil stains from Carneiros beach, in Tamandaré (Pernambuco, Brazil).**

CREDIT: Bruno Campos/JC

For fishing communities, this disaster represents another loss they must contend with, alongside other existing and imminent threats. In this scenario, legal support would be invaluable for fishers to continue their fight to protect the environment, their rights, and to seek compensation.

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CASE STUDY 4

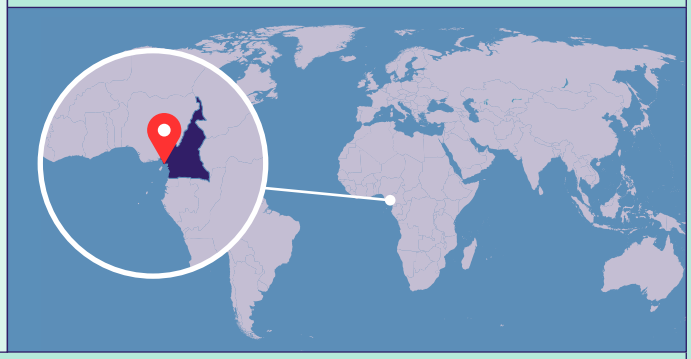
Cameroon

LOCATION: Limbe, Cameroon

SCALE: Local

"We're scared of the future":

Struggles Between Small-Scale Fishers and Foreign Industrial Trawlers in Limbe, Cameroon



AUTHORS Richard Nyiawung and Raymond Kwojori Ayilu

Marginalization and oppression are the common lived experiences of small-scale fish actors in Cameroon. The rapid expansion of industrial fishing is squeezing out local fishers and threatening small-scale fishing livelihoods, leaving many uncertain about their future. Foreign industrial trawlers are operating with impunity for transgressions while being protected by the government and military. This dynamic has led to constant conflicts between small-scale fishers and industrial vessels. Local small-scale fishers endeavor to voice their concerns whenever and to whomever they can but are restricted by the government from organizing and protesting for the environment and their rights.

THREAT: Fisheries, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fisheries

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protest and Demonstrations

The coastal city of Limbe, located in Cameroon's Southwest Region, has about 85000 people who are engaged in different livelihood activities. Major economic activities center around farming, fishing, and small informal businesses. There are also several government offices with employees recruited and paid by the government, including an office of the Ministry of Fisheries.

In Cameroon, fish is a major source of protein for most of the population, and marine capture fishing accounts for 83% of fish production (89). Fish accounts for about 40% of the protein intake of animal origin and 9.5% of total protein requirements in the country (28). In 2019, the fisheries sector contributed 3% of the country's US$39 billion gross domestic product (GDP). In Limbe, coastal small-scale fishing activities provide a unique identity for the city and its people. There are about 5000 people engaged in fisheries-related activities in the community, most of them living below the poverty line due to the distortion of the local small-scale fisheries (90). In fact, Limbe is one of the four main small-scale fishing landing sites in Cameroon, including Kribi, Mabanda, and Youpwe (90). The fish value chain is dominated by migrants from neighboring Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, and Benin who have lived and settled in Limbe for several generations. Although born and raised in Limbe, most migrants still have attachments to their country of origin through culture, visits, and investments (91). Fish harvesting is done mostly by men, while women dominate fish processing and fish trade.

There are several challenges impacting the livelihoods of fish actors in Limbe, such as the drastic reduction in fish catch volumes due to overfishing and the unfolding impacts of climate change (92). Most notably, there has been growing conflict between marginalized small-scale fish actors and foreign industrial vessels (93). Small-scale fish actors are gradually being squeezed out of the waters due to the expanding activities of industrial fishing fleets. This situation is exacerbated by the perceived preferential treatment these industrial operations receive from the Cameroonian military and government.

Figure 2.6.1: **Abandoned government Ministry of Fisheries office at the coast of Limbe. Rarely there are officials monitoring fishing activities in Limbe.**

CREDIT: Richard Nyiawung

But how did we get here? Fisheries in Cameroon are open to residents, meaning locals have direct access to harvest fish from the sea, and many coastal communities have depended on small-scale fisheries for decades. In an effort to generate revenue, the Cameroonian government began granting access to foreign industrial fishing fleets through various financial arrangements in the early 2000s (94). This policy shift has led to a dramatic increase in foreign industrial trawlers, primarily from China and other Asian countries, operating in territorial waters and nearshore areas off Limbe and other coastal communities. These operations are authorized by the government. Industrial trawlers in Cameroon are further emboldened to conduct unsustainable and illegal fishing practices without punishment because they bribe their way through government circles (89). This situation has come at a cost to the local small-scale fishers.

Cameroon's fishery management system has struggled to effectively regulate the expanded foreign fleet, resulting in a surge of IUU fishing activities (93), leading to resource depletion and conflicts between industrial and artisanal fishing sectors (91). Despite the clear challenges faced by small-scale fishers, the government has been slow to implement policies that protect these vulnerable actors. As a result, local fishing communities find themselves increasingly marginalized, struggling to compete with the industrial fleets for diminishing resources (94).

The issues In Limbe that have created conflicts between industrial and small-scale fishers include problems related to insufficient, ineffective, and unenforced zoning. Preferential access zones for small-scale fishers extend only three nautical miles from the coastline, which is considered inadequate compared to other countries like Ghana, where such zones are a bit more extensive at about six nautical miles (95). Industrial fleets are constantly entering into traditional fishing zones of small-scale fisheries, harvesting small juveniles, and destroying the fishery ecosystem. Also, industrial vessels damage the fishing gears of local fish actors, and there are no official channels for compensation or sanctioning due to poor governance. With the use of rudimentary fishing tools, local fish actors cannot compete with these industrial fleets, putting local fishery-related livelihoods at severe risk. In fact, fish catch volumes have drastically reduced due to industrial overfishing activities (89). A 66-year-old fisher in Limbe made the following assertion:

> *"... we are all scared there might be no fish here in Limbe in the future. The rate at which the industrial vessels are harvesting both big and small fish is serious. We have reported the matter several times to the government, but nothing has been done. We now have to spend longer time at sea just to get small fish to meet the cost and food for the family."*

Figure 2.6.2: **Idle fish boats in Limbe with fishers frustrated with the drastic reduction in fish catch over the years. As can be seen in the picture, the fishery system is also challenged by increasing plastic pollution along the coast.**

CREDIT: Richard Nyiawung

Finally, their transgressions into areas reserved for small-scale fishers go unpunished - they are operating with impunity as they wreak havoc on small-scale fisheries.

Direct confrontations between local fishers and industrial fleets have become frequent in Limbe, which have sometimes resulted in threats, attacks, and loss of life for small-scale fishers, a similar phenomenon which has been highlighted by the co-author of this article also in Ghana's waters (95). To mitigate such issues, the government has rather provided military support to these foreign vessels to ensure their protection and safe operations to the further detriment of local interests and rights.

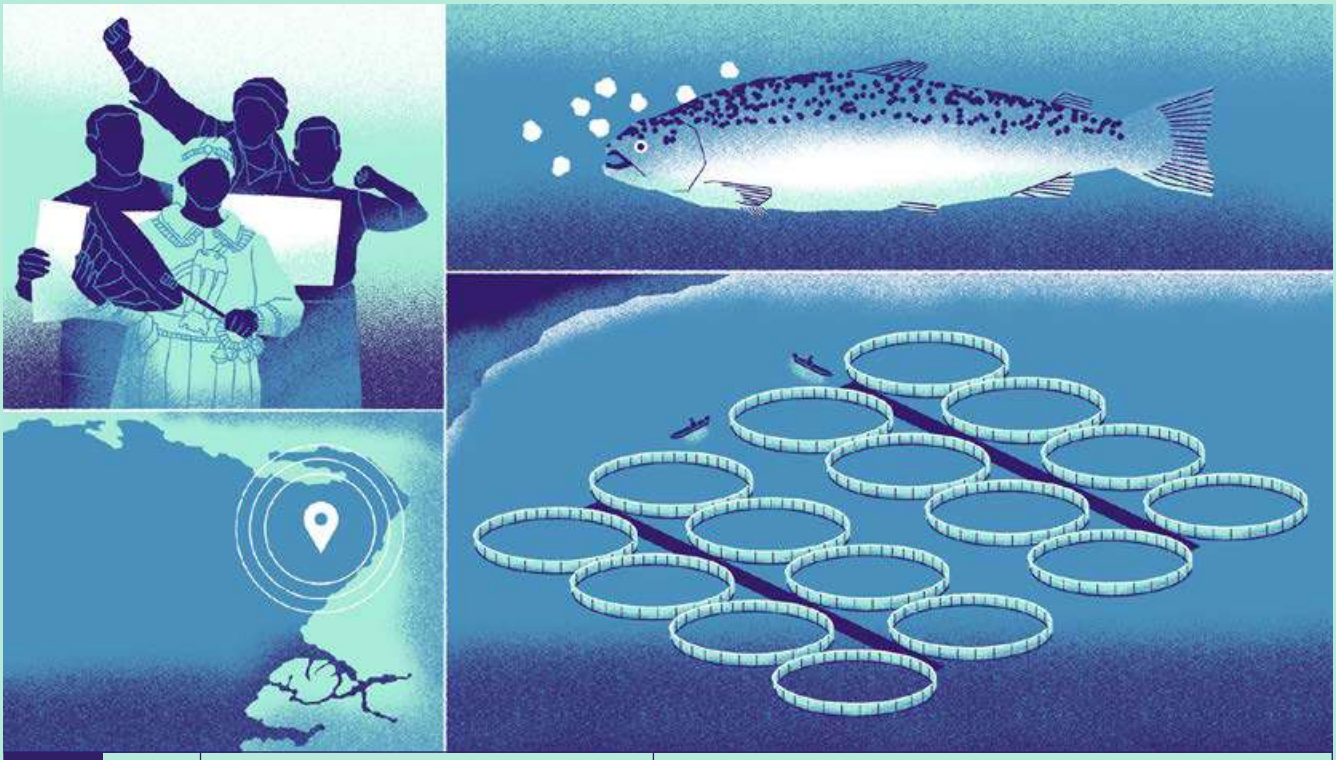
> *"... the Cameroon military men in those industrial boats freely open fire at any small boat they see approaching them. We have lost many of our fishers here in Limbe, who just wanted to know why their fishing nets were damaged or carried away by these industrial trawlers. Some of our husbands have been arrested and locked up in jail. They will arrest you, seize your boat and nets, and then lock you up. In fact, we have had to go to the prison on several occasions to bail them out" (43-year-old fishmonger Limbe).*

Marginalization and injustices against small-scale fish actors are common in most coastal communities in West and Central Africa (95). The pressure to generate revenue for the state through access agreements to foreign fleets constantly puts small-scale fishers at the losing end of the bargain in Cameroon. Operators of foreign industrial trawler fleets have more power and protection for their

operations in Cameroon waters than local fishers. They are operating with impunity - protected by government officials and the military - all while threatening and detaining local fishers, and there is also active destruction of fishing gear of local actors by the trawlers (96).

However, the ability of the local actors to organize and protest to defend the environment or rights is heavily restricted and punished by the Cameroonian government. Small-scale fishers fear being arrested by security officials if they dare raise their voices to speak publicly against the unsustainable fishing techniques used by foreign industrial trawlers (89). Due to the country's political regime, many civil society actors and human rights defenders end up in jail with very limited legal options or avenues to defend themselves (97). As small-scale fisheries in Limbe are dominated by migrants, their willingness to protest against the activities of these industrial fleets is limited further due to the risk it entails for their continuous economic activity in the country. So, while there is opposition to industrial fisheries among small-scale fisheries, there has been limited active social organization and mobilizations. On limited occasions, fishers mobilize as a group to voice their concerns to the regional government fisheries department to seek intervention and solutions to their struggles. These efforts are done besides expressing grievances to local officials during government engagements and voicing concerns to NGOs, development organizations, media, and researchers with the hope that their concerns will reach higher-level government officials. The government's approach to the issue has been characterized not only by a persistent lack of response but also by a consistent denial of corruption allegations and the ongoing provision of military protection for foreign trawler fishing vessels despite the mounting evidence (89).

In conclusion, there are many issues of oppression and struggles for small-scale fish actors in Cameroon, exacerbated by poor governance issues in the fisheries sector (92). With considerable interest by the government in generating revenue rather than supporting small-scale fisheries livelihoods and communities, opportunities for protest and fighting for human rights are restricted. However, the government and the industrial fisheries have a responsibility to change course. They must protect fisheries and the rights of small-scale fishers, provide opportunities for small-scale fishers to voice their legitimate concerns and participate in fisheries management, and allow political organizing and peaceful protest in the face of mounting threats from industrial fisheries. There is a need for dialogue and understanding between government and small-scale fish actors, with support from civil society and advocacy groups, to restore peace and order in the waters of Limbe.



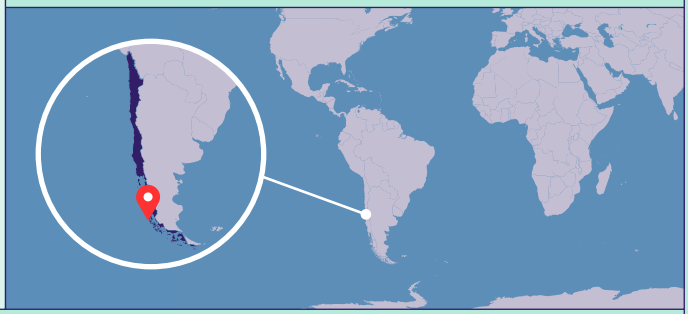
CASE STUDY 5

Chile

LOCATION: Los Lagos, Aysén and Magallanes Regions, Patagonia, Chile

SCALE: Subnational

The Struggle of Indigenous Peoples to Protect the Chilean Blue Patagonia



AUTHORS Francisco Araos, Florencia Diestre, Paulo Sousa, Aurelia Guasch, Valentina Cortinez and Wladimir Riquelme

In response to the environmental and social impacts caused by the salmon aquaculture industry in Chilean Blue Patagonia, local Indigenous communities are establishing "Espacios Costeros Marinos para Pueblos Originarios" (ECMPOs) to increase control over their territories in response to the environmental and social impacts caused by the salmon aquaculture industry in Chilean Blue Patagonia. ECMPOs allow them to protect the environment and their traditional livelihoods, as well as halt the expansion of salmon farms.

THREAT: Salmon aquaculture

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Legal and Policy Interventions, Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action, Research and Documentation, Monitoring and Enforcement, Formation of and Joining Social Movements.

Chilean Blue Patagonia is a large marine zone in the south of the country that is an area of rich biodiversity, productive fisheries, and home to Indigenous and local communities. Over the last 30 years, it has become a global center for development of the salmon and mytilus aquaculture industry. The salmon aquaculture industry produces substantial and well-documented environmental and social impacts, including marine and coastal pollution, nutrient loading and eutrophication, detrimental impacts on biodiversity, impacts on wild fish stocks, migration processes, social conflicts over allocation of space and natural resources, alteration of sacred places and cultural landscapes of Indigenous people, threats to food and livelihood security, among others (98—101). There are numerous Indigenous communities - including Mapuche-Huilliche, Kawéskar and Yagan ethnic groups - settled in the coastal zone of Patagonia, many of whom are shellfish divers and seaweed harvesters. We estimated that there are at least 4,600 Indigenous people directly related to the protection of Blue Patagonia. These communities depend directly on the sea for the exploitation of marine resources - algae, seafood and fish - to meet their cultural, subsistence, and livelihood needs.

Figure 2.7.1: Marine extractive practice at the Espacio Costero Marino Manihueico Huinay, Los Lagos Region.

CREDIT: Francisco Araos

To confront the ongoing threats from salmon aquaculture, Chilean Indigenous communities have been advocating for and establishing "Espacios Costeros Marinos para Pueblos Originarios" (ECMPO). ECMPO are an institutional tool (Law 20.249/2008, known as Lafkenche law) through which Indigenous communities can seek legal recognition of their historical, socio-cultural, and ecological relationships with the sea, their territories, and their reliance on natural resources (102). The law defines ECMPOs as "specific areas of the marine-coastal zone whose objective will be to safeguard the customary use of these spaces, in order to maintain the traditions and use of natural resources by the communities linked to the coast" (Article 3 Law 20.249). The establishment of the ECMPO have been the main strategy to contest the expansion and the impacts of salmon farms on local ecosystems, while also protecting their livelihoods, territories and rights (46,103). The legal process for the establishment of an ECMPO begins with the formal request, when Indigenous communities present their customary uses and the boundaries of the area. Then follows a long bureaucratic process with the anthropological accreditation of the uses, the geographic review of the area in search of overlapping territorial rights (for example with salmon farming concessions), and the elaboration of the management plan. This whole process should take 2.5 years, but it is taking about 7 years. The Indigenous communities have been advocating and waging legal battles to expedite the process, to ensure that the requested area is not reduced, and that applied uses are recognized. They have also employed various other tactics to resist the expansion of salmon farms and to promote ECMPOs, including legal and political advocacy with regional congress members and national governmental agencies, mass media campaigns, building national and international support networks, research and documentation in collaboration with universities and NGOs, monitoring and enforcement of the law, and joining other social movements, particularly fisherwomen's organizations.

Figure 2.7.2:
Map of the area referred to as Chilean Blue Patagonia.

Elaborated by Zamir Bugueño

The central objectives of the ocean defenders have been the recognition of the Indigenous rights over marine resources, stopping the expansion and reducing the impacts of the salmon industry, and the promotion of territorial sovereignty and sustainable inclusive development. As a result of their efforts, over the years ECMPOs have increased in number and size in the region. Today, there are 80 ECMPO in Patagonia, covering around 2.5 million hectares (104).

Currently, the main outcome has been the slowed expansion of the salmon farms across Patagonia and the increased participation of Indigenous Peoples in the marine and coastal decision-making arenas. However, the resultant reconfiguration of power relations in ocean governance and control over coastal spaces has also created new conflicts with other stakeholder groups such as the artisanal fisheries unions, mytilus farmers and salmon companies (105). The private sector has confronted the ECMPO through a communication and lobbying campaign, developing a narrative framework of "ECMPO as a barrier to development" (106). Following the same strategy, fishermen's unions and local mytilus farmers are confronting Indigenous communities arguing the loss of their territorial rights, through political lobbying and media campaigns. There have also been smear campaigns against Indigenous leaders. Finally, the government has slowed down the ECMPO administrative process by limiting the implementation of the law and the congressman of Patagonia has promoted a reform to the Lafkenche law to reduce Indigenous rights.

The ocean defenders of Chilean Blue Patagonia are primarily from vulnerable groups, with lower socio-economic status and a high reliance on natural resources. Most of the leadership and organizers are Indigenous women who balance political activism with domestic caregiving responsibilities. Indigenous women have played a key role in the ECMPO process because most of the applicant organizations are recent, without a direct link to the ancestral systems of Indigenous organization, generally led by men. Likewise, many of the customary uses have been practiced by women, valuing their contribution to the local economy, food security, traditional health, and cosmologies.

The entire process is highly bureaucratic, requiring substantial technical expertise and financial resources, thus hindering the implementation of the ECMPO. Currently, these challenges are being addressed through the creation of networks and political alliances among the Indigenous communities, and with NGOs, local activists, and universities. Through these efforts, the ongoing establishment of ECMPOs has the potential to reorient past ocean governance architecture away from a focus on private ownership and profit, towards the promotion of participation, environmental safeguards, and social benefits for Indigenous Peoples.

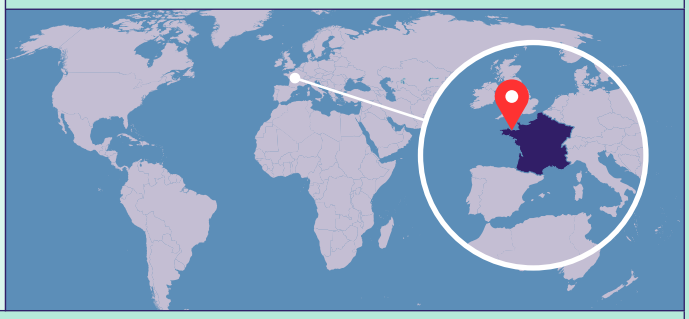
CASE STUDY

France

LOCATION: Saint Brieuc Bay, France

SCALE: Local

Small-Scale Fishers Protest an Offshore Wind Power Plant in Saint Brieuc Bay



AUTHORS Philippe Le Billon

The Bay of Saint Brieuc in Northwestern France is the site of a protracted conflict over an offshore wind power plant project, with local fishers and residents raising concerns about its impact on ecosystems and traditional fishing livelihoods. Despite protests and challenges, the project is moving forward, resulting in increased distrust among many opponents towards authorities and the wind energy company.

THREAT: Offshore wind power plant

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action, Public Protests and Demonstrations, Awareness and Communication Campaigns, Corporate Activism.

Renowned for its artisanal scallop fisheries and stunning coastal landscapes, the Bay of Saint Brieuc in Northwestern France has been the site of a major conflict over an offshore wind power plant project initiated in 2011. Most local fishers and many residents are eager to defend local ecosystems, traditional fishing livelihoods, and highly valued seascapes against the many impacts of the 465 Megawatts energy project. This is the first major industrial-scale project in the Bay of Saint Brieuc, the site of previous conflicts relating to management rules for the scallop fishery and the proliferation of 'green algae' blooms resulting from agricultural runoffs from pig farms (107). The region has a strong '*Breton*' identity, with small-scale fishing regarded as one of its most culturally and economically important livelihoods. Professional fishers and seasonal beach resort residents are generally better off than the local population in the region. The conflict gained a high political profile during the 2021 presidential race campaign, with several presidential candidates visiting the site and supporting affected communities.

Figure 2.8.1: Small-scale fishers protesting around the wind power plant drilling platform.

CREDIT: Philippe Le Billon

Concerns over the offshore wind power plant among local 'ocean defenders' have included fisheries closures during construction, additional restrictions during future operations, environmental harm related to noise, turbidity, wind blades, and high-voltage transmission lines, and the potential annual release of about 64 tons of aluminum-zinc anti-corrosion sacrificial anodes (108,109). Around 61 '*dérogations*' (impact exemptions) for protected species have been granted for the project (110). Defenders have also criticized the project for being initially conceived without adequate environmental assessment and prior consultation of local communities, for the questionable reputation of the project contractor, and for generating a large private rent at the expense of the public (111). As the project has progressed, local grievances have also included unrealized promises of employment and development of a wind turbine supply chain in the region, and the 'grabbing' of maritime domain from local communities - while mostly economically benefiting a private foreign company (i.e., the Spanish multinational electric utility company Iberdrola) and its shareholders (112—114).

Figure 2.8.2: **Small-scale fishers protesting around the wind power plant drilling platform.**

SOURCE: Radio France, Johan Moison, 2021

The defenders are mostly small-scale fishers and shellfish farmers, as well as environmentally-minded coastal residents, who are also concerned by a corporate 'ocean grab'. They have united through two main organizations. The first one (*Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins des Côtes d'Armor*) represents and defends the interests of about 800 maritime fishing professionals and mariculture farms in Côtes-d'Armor (115). Small-scale whelk and scallop fishing in the bay generates the highest economic return for fishers and employs about 650 fishers aboard 240 shellfish harvesting boats. Fisherfolks perceive themselves as dependent on a well-managed and high-value fishery with a very long history in the region (Interview 1). They are mostly seeking to defend the marine ecosystems on which the fisheries and their livelihoods depend (115). The second is a civil society organization *(Association Gardez les Caps*) founded in 2011 gathering about 700 local residents and fishers seeking the "preservation of the natural, marine and coastal environment of the bays of Saint-Brieuc and Saint-Malo, as well as the maintenance and harmonious development of its economic and cultural activities" (111). Coastal residents include a mix of permanent and summer residents, many of whom have come there seasonally for generations. Both fishers and residents are seeking to defend the landscape and the integrity of a territory combining ecosystems, fishing, and tourism. Both groups also seek to defend their voice in decisions made over the project (111). About 4000 people actively support the two organizations of fishers and residents, with protests amassing gatherings of between a dozen to 800 people. Protests have taken place in local towns and at project sites, with public mobilization being the strongest in Erquy, a major fishing port and tourism destination, and the closest point to the wind power plant where the power cable exits the ocean to connect to the power grid.

Although France is expected to have high-quality environmental governance and strong rule of law, there is a perception among defenders that laws and institutions are biased towards national and corporate priorities rather than local concerns (Personal communication, community leader). Security forces have been deployed and engaged in intimidation tactics and occasionally aggressive ways towards protesters, with the use of restrictive injunctions, tear gas, physical harm, as well as arrests and brief detentions (114). Several skirmishes have occurred between people opposing the projects and security forces, resulting in minor injuries. Several of the most pro-active fishermen have faced suspended prison sentences.

Overall, defenders were able to shift the initially positive outlook on the project among many people by providing more information on the project's impacts and mobilizing people through social media, mainstream media interviews, a wide range of communication tools (tagging, banners, stickers), and public meetings. They also raised the profile of the issue through engaging in some spectacular protests (e.g. burning tires, surrounding the drilling platform with dozens of small fishing boats). Pre-existing networks, especially among fishermen, environmental, and neighborhood associations, facilitated communication and mobilization efforts (116). Defenders succeeded in getting some of the technical and economic aspects of the project improved, but they did not stop it and concerns about the project remain while distrust towards authorities, the energy company and renewable energy projects has increased.

Figure 2.8.3:
Leaflet denouncing environmental impacts and effects on small-scale fishing.

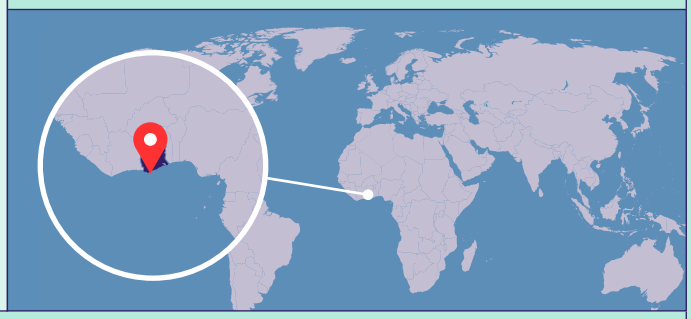
SOURCE: Association Gardez les Caps

CASE STUDY 7

Ghana

LOCATION: Ghana

SCALE: Regional



Blue Justice? Impacts of Oil Exploration on Small-Scale Fishers in Ghana

AUTHORS Isaac Nyameke, John Nyanko, and Jecob Nhyriba

In Ghana's Western region, over 150,000 small-scale fishers are struggling with the impact of offshore oil exploration, which has restricted their access to traditional fishing grounds. These regulations have drastically reduced their catch and income, deepening poverty, and food insecurity. Despite limited resources and influence, the communities have actively campaigned for their rights.

THREAT: Offshore oil exploration and drilling

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protests and Demonstrations, Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action, and Legal and Policy Interventions.

In Ghana's Western region, particularly around Cape Three Points, small-scale fishers and their communities are grappling with the profound impacts of offshore oil discovery, exploration, and drilling (117). The impacted coastline stretches about 202 km and is home to a population of more than 2 million people, the majority of whom are fishers and fish traders, including women, who make up 40% of the fishers' force, primarily working in processing and sales. Historically reliant on the ocean for their livelihoods, these communities are now confronting significant marginalization and exclusion from their traditional fishing grounds.

Figure 2.9.1: Fishermen returning from fishing to land their catch and sell.

CREDIT: Isaac Nyameke

Following the oil discovery in the early 2000s (118), the Ghanaian government introduced severe regulations that limited access to traditionally open and used fishing grounds. This move has adversely affected more than 150,000 people across 113 fishing communities (119). The resulting decline in fisheries production has drastically diminished the livelihoods and income of fishing communities. Predominantly living below the poverty line, these communities not only depend on fishing for their economic survival but also as a vital source of nutrition.

Before the oil discovery, fishers had unrestricted access to the coast, allowing them to fish freely at any location and time. This unrestricted access was crucial for their economic stability and community well-being. However, the new restrictions have led to increased food insecurity, poverty, and a significant loss of rights for the fishers. The restrictions have had a ripple effect, impacting not only the fishers but also their families, as the income from fishing is often used for essentials like education and healthcare (120,121).

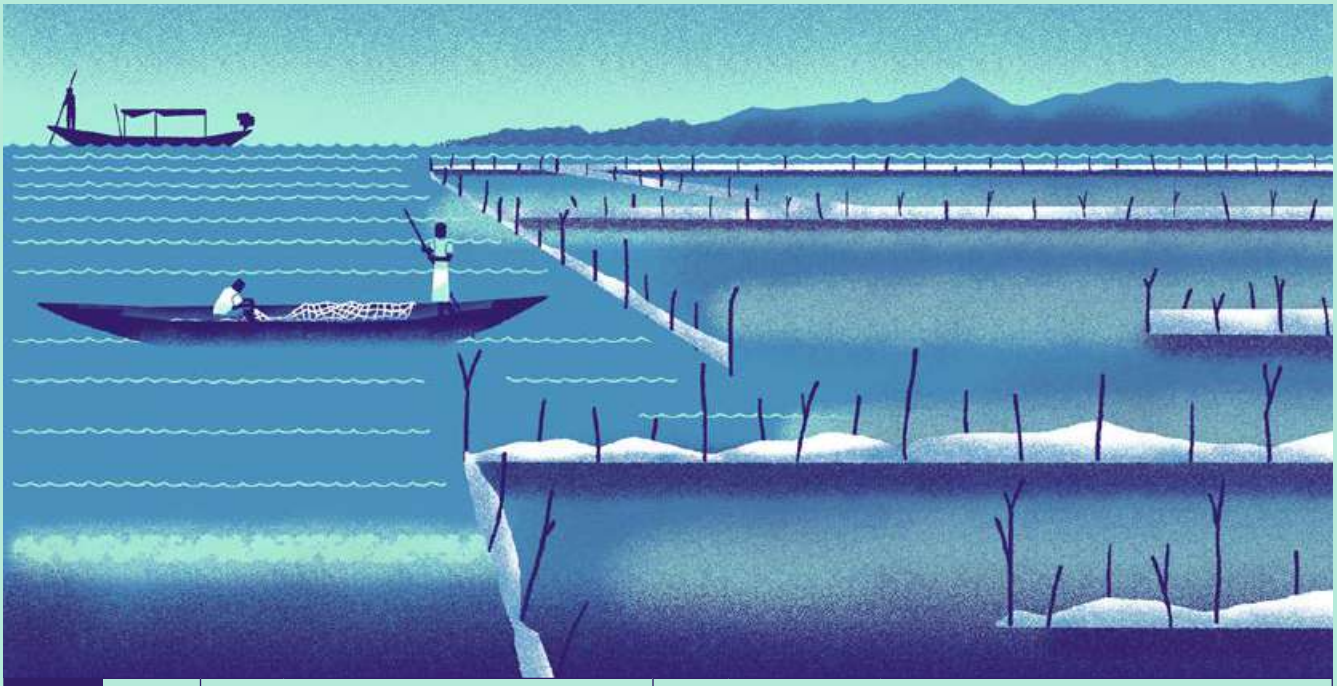
Figure 2.9.2: **Fishermen preparing their boats and equipment to go fishing.**

CREDIT: Isaac Nyameke

Despite their limited influence on national policy and lack of resources for legal battles, these communities have shown resilience. Community-based organizations, such as the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen, have emerged as acts of resistance (122). These organizations have led national campaigns, utilized social networks for advocacy, and organized demonstrations to raise awareness about their fight. Their efforts to negotiate with government agencies for changes in fishing regulations have seen some success, yet the primary goal of unrestricted fishing access remains elusive.

Fishers who defy these restrictions face severe consequences, including arrest and destruction of their equipment (123). Moreover, the government has accused fishers opposing offshore oil as influenced by the opposition political party, who are allegedly trying to discredit the current government. There is a pressing need for capacity building in advocacy and policy development to empower these fishers and enhance their ability to navigate and influence the complex legal and political landscape.

This situation illustrates the inherent complexities of pursuing a blue economy, emphasizing the urgent need for policies that balance economic development with the rights and welfare of local communities. Ghana's case underscores the need for a more inclusive and equitable approach to managing natural resources, ensuring that the voices and needs of local communities are heard and addressed in the pursuit of economic progress. Moving forward, a blue economy calls for local coastal communities to be included in the process and outcomes of marine spatial planning, especially when limited access is a potential outcome.



CASE STUDY 8

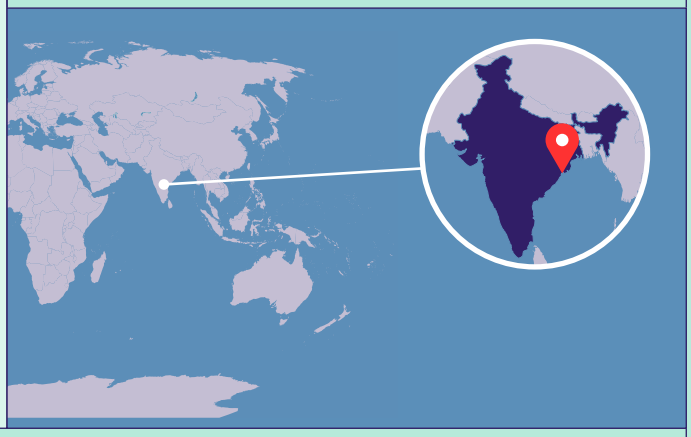
India

LOCATION: Chilika Lagoon, Bay of Bengal, India

SCALE: Regional

Resilience Amidst Turmoil:

The Ongoing Struggles of Chilika Lagoon's (India) Small-Scale Fishers Against Aquaculture and Sea Mouth Opening



AUTHORS Navya Vikraman Nair and Prateep Kumar Nayak

The Chilika Lagoon, located in eastern India, is a 1100 km² brackish water ecosystem that hosts a stunning array of ecosystems and species and is a vital resource for small-scale fishing communities. However, it faces disruption from shrimp aquaculture and an opening of the lagoon to the sea. These disruptions are directly affecting environmental dynamics, altering access rights, and impacting small-scale fishers.

THREAT: Aquaculture; Opening of sea mouth

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protests and Demonstrations, Research and Documentation, Legal and Policy Interventions

Chilika Lagoon, nestled on the east coast of India, is a sprawling brackish water ecosystem that spans over 1,100 km². It boasts a diverse array of habitats, including mangroves, seagrasses, sand flats, mudflats, and estuaries. This rich environment supports a multitude of species, some of which are threatened or endangered, such as the Irrawaddy dolphin and Olive Ridley turtle (124). The lagoon has been a vital resource for local communities for generations, providing sustenance, income, and a way of life.

Figure 2.10.1: Idle Small-Scale Fishing Boats in Chilika Lagoon.

CREDIT: Navya Vikraman

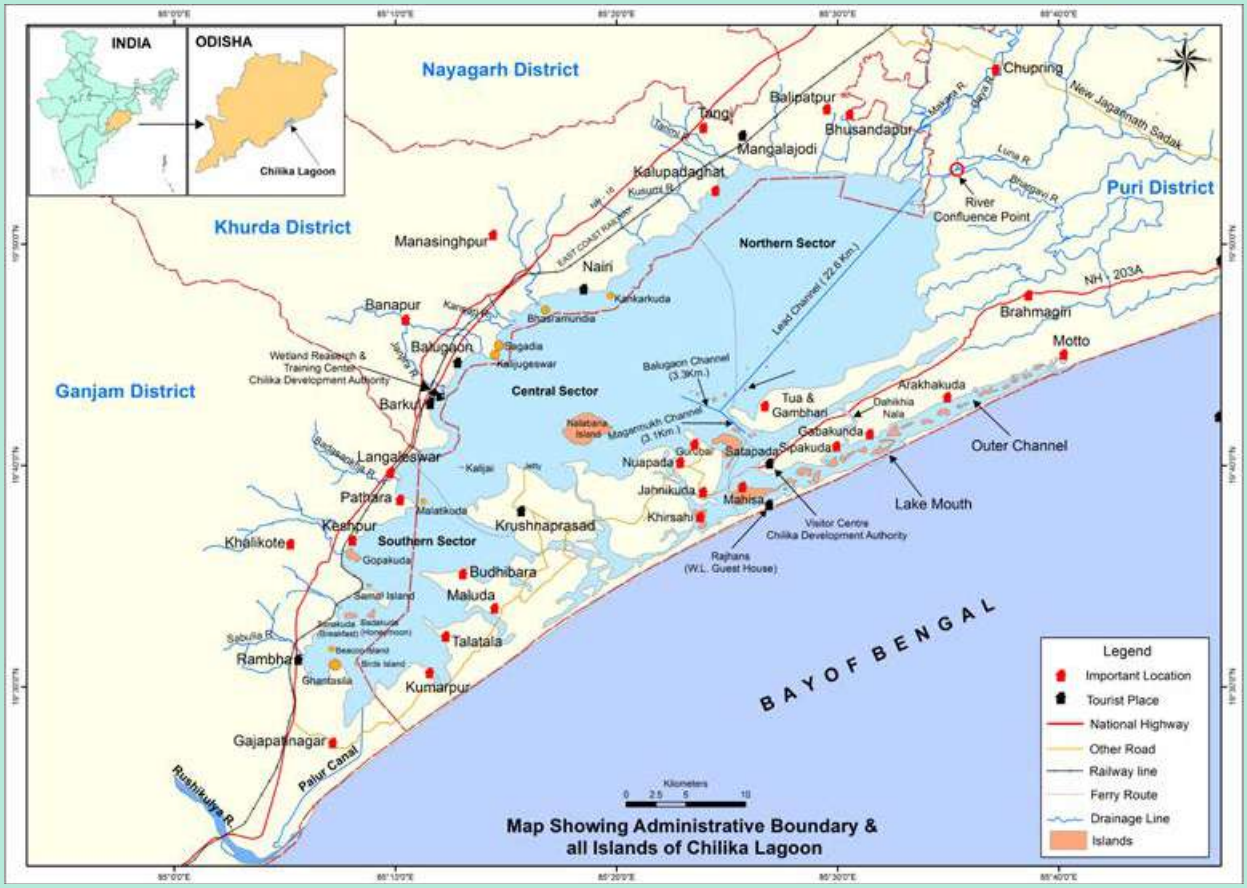
The lagoon has historically been crucial for the livelihoods of traditional small-scale fishers, spread across 152 villages. In 2009, the total population in these villages was 403,356, with fisher households accounting for 36% of them. These fishers are highly dependent on the lagoon for their livelihoods. Their dependency on the lagoon is multi-faceted:

- **Economic Dependence**: Fishing in the lagoon is the primary source of income for these communities. They rely on the diverse aquatic life in the lagoon for their livelihoods, including various fish species and other marine resources.
- **Cultural Significance**: Fishing is not merely an economic activity but also deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of these communities. It is a way of life passed down through generations, shaping their identity and social structure.
- **Nutritional Needs**: The fish and other resources from the lagoon serve as a significant protein source for the communities. Fishing directly contributes to their food security and nutritional well-being.

→ **Social Fabric**: The occupation of fishing is not just an individual pursuit but a communal activity. It binds the communities together, creating a social fabric that revolves around their shared dependence on the lagoon.

The ocean defenders, represented by the Small-Scale Fishers (SSF) of Chilika Lagoon, are a population highly reliant on the lagoon for their economic, cultural, nutritional, and social well-being. They represent a vital part of the Chilika Lagoon, emphasizing the human impact and the importance of preserving the lagoon's resources for their way of life. However, the lagoon's ecosystem and the livelihoods of these fishers are under threat due to the expansion of shrimp aquaculture and the artificial opening of the sea mouth.

Figure 2.10.2: A map of Chilika Lagoon's study area.



SOURCE: Chilika Development Authority

First, the shrimp aquaculture industry burgeoned in the Chilika Lagoon in the 1980s, lured by the promise of economic growth and with support from the government (125,126). Private shrimp farming corporations have increased competition for space and resources and left their mark on the environment. As these large-scale entities expand, traditional SSFs find themselves economically excluded from their once-abundant fishing grounds (127). The introduction of commercial shrimp farming has not only diminished the availability of aquatic resources but has also led to social marginalization.

SSF communities, deeply rooted in their fishing traditions, face alienation as their way of life is disrupted (128). This shift has resulted in class exploitation, where powerful corporations exploit the vulnerabilities of local fishers for economic gains, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and dependence. Politically disempowered, these SSF communities lack the influence to challenge the decisions favoring corporate interests (127). Moreover, the environmental impact of shrimp aquaculture over the lagoon is profound. Pollution from shrimp farms affects water quality, harming aquatic life and, consequently, the SSF's catch. This further disrupts the delicate ecological balance, leaving the community of ocean defenders with diminished resources and an uncertain future.

Second, the opening of a new sea mouth in 2001 radically altered the lagoon's hydrology and water quality (129,130). The objective of creating a sea mouth was to adjust salinity, and a side effect was increased fish production. However, the new sea mouth also unleashed a host of natural and human-made disturbances, wreaking havoc on the region's fragile biodiversity (128,129). Environmental impacts are far-reaching: water quality altered by chemical discharges, seagrasses have been lost, and indigenous species imperiled by invasive species and pathogens (128,129,131,132). Changes in governance enabled both aquaculture and opening of the sea mouth to alter the lagoon's biophysical and ecological processes (133—135).

The conflict at Chilika Lagoon is more than just an environmental concern; it represents a deep-rooted social tragedy. Local communities, particularly traditional fishing ones, are witnessing the erosion of their livelihoods, with dwindling fish stocks threatening their income and food security. These communities, previously secure in their way of life, are now faced with the challenges of a booming shrimp industry. This industry, largely controlled by external investors and government entities, deepens the divide, pushing smaller fishers and farmers to the margins. Tensions over rights and legalities not only strain community ties but also lead to widespread human rights violations. These encompass basic necessities such as access to food and water, labor rights, health conditions, and the rights of Indigenous People. While the conflict's reach spans the expansive ecosystem of the lagoon, its implications are deeply felt at the local level, primarily by those living in proximity to the lagoon. Amidst these dual crises, the resilience and tenacity of the local community shine through as they rally in defense of their rights and environment.

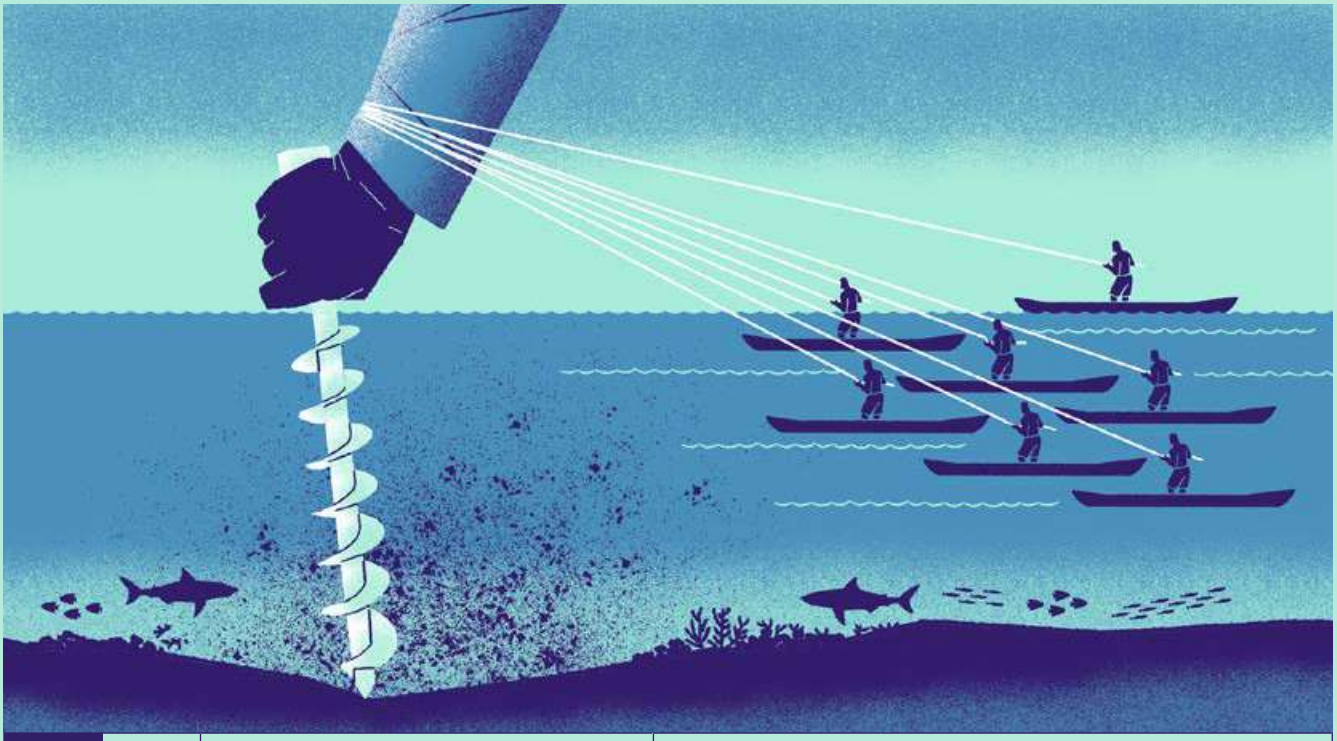
Within this context, the community of SSFs has led multiple advocacy efforts as proof of their courageous actions and enduring hope, as they vehemently push back against the encroachments on their way of life and the lagoon's ecological balance. Organizing themselves into cohesive groups, these defenders have raised their voices on multiple fronts. They have engaged in legal battles, challenging the powerful shrimp farming corporations in courts of law, standing up for their rights to the lagoon's resources. In the early 1990s, the Chilika Lagoon bore witness to a powerful counter-movement led by the Chilika Bachao Andolan (CBA) or Save Chilika Movement against aggressive capitalist development (136). Fisher groups, bolstered by their Primary Fishermen Cooperative Societies (PFCS), joined hands with civil society organizations (137). By invoking the moral economy of the fishers and constitutional provisions of social and environmental justice, they vehemently protested against the Odisha government's decision to implement sweeping changes in the existing access regimes of the lagoon, handing over substantial parts to private investors for shrimp cultivation (125). In September 1991, the fishermen initiated their protest against the implementation of the proposed integrated shrimp

farm project by Chilika Aquatic Farm, a joint venture involving OMCAD from the government of Orissa and Tata (124). This movement forced an influential Indian corporate house to withdraw from the project in 1993. The Supreme Court of India, in 1996, further bolstered their cause by issuing a verdict banning aquaculture activities in the lagoon (136,138).

Another example of their resistance efforts is that SSF vehemently protested against the Odisha government's decision to implement drastic changes in the lagoon's access regimes, allowing private investors to take over parts of the lagoon for shrimp cultivation (125). Due to the support of intellectuals and environmentalists who joined the protest, highlighting the environmental consequences by referencing the Ramsar Convention and CRZ7 (Coastal Regulation Zone) Notification, the movement evolved into an environmental protection initiative (124). Throughout the course of the movement, intellectuals, both national and international, as well as environmental groups, stood in solidarity, infusing fresh vigor into the cause. The project faced formidable opposition, compelling Tata to abandon their plans (138).

Another example of resistance efforts took place in March of 1999, when fishermen in Chilika launched the 'Do or Die Movement' against shrimp farming in the lagoon and presented nine demands, including the demolition of shrimp enclosures (gheris) by April 15, 1999 (139). When the government took no action, the fishermen themselves tore down around 1,500 acres of shrimp gheris by April 24, 1999. They further protested by blocking the national highway for five hours on May 27, 1999. The movement escalated on May 29, 1999, with fishermen demolishing 11 shrimp gheris covering 1,000 acres in various locations (139). During this action, police arrested fisher leaders. Later that night, a confrontation between the fishermen and the police ensued, resulting in police firing and the tragic loss of four lives (124,139). Consequently, the government of Orissa suspended shrimp farming leases in Chilika in June 1999 (139). However, despite the ban, illegal and unauthorized shrimp cultivation continues in the lake, orchestrated by criminal elements. The persistence of illegal shrimp aquaculture, facilitated by a compromised fisheries control system, posed continuous threats. In the face of these challenges, through collective organization, legal battles, and unyielding resolve, SSFs continued to fight for their rights and the preservation of their ecological heritage.

Chilika Lagoon stands as a symbol of both beauty and struggle. Its decline mirrors a global dilemma of balancing economic development, ecological preservation, and social justice. The small-scale fishers and local communities on its shores are tasked with safeguarding not just the lagoon's biodiversity but also the essence of life for the communities that call it home. Their fight is not just for Chilika; it's a battle that is echoing in communities along the world's coasts and oceans.



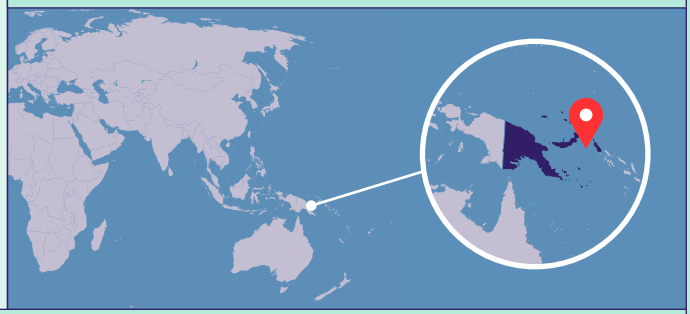
CASE STUDY

Papua New Guinea

LOCATION: Papua New Guinea

The Alliance of Solwara Warriors' Resistance Against Deep Sea Mining in Papua New Guinea

SCALE: National



AUTHORS John Childs

The Alliance of Solwara Warriors (ASW) in Papua New Guinea (PNG) embodies resistance, resilience, education, and coalition building against deep sea mining (DSM). ASW unites coastal communities across 6 PNG provinces and various groups to combat DSM threats. Key concerns relate to a severing of spiritual and cultural connections to the ocean, impacts on livelihoods, and questions around the effects of any potential noise and chemical pollution from DSM activity on the marine environment and life. ASW resolves to not stop until a permanent ban on deep sea mining is achieved for PNG.

THREAT: Deep sea mining

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action, Public Protests and Demonstrations, Awareness and Communication Campaigns.

The formation and actions of the Alliance of Solwara Warriors (ASW) in Papua New Guinea (PNG) are a story of resistance, resilience, education, and coalition building in the face of attempts to begin deep sea mining (DSM) in the region. Since 2009, ASW has been campaigning at both local and national scales to call for a ban on DSM in PNG and across the Pacific. This network of ocean defenders connects coastal communities in 6 different provinces across PNG, including New Ireland Province, East New Britain, Madang, and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. It has become a vibrant and dynamic movement comprised of national and local non-government organizations, community-based organizations, academics, and religious groups.

Figure 2.11.1: **A shark caller's boat. The coastline in New Ireland Province, PNG is home to one of the last surviving traditions of 'shark calling', in which people communicate with sharks through ritual and song before catching them by hand.**

CREDIT: John Childs

DSM presents a grave threat to both the culture and livelihoods of communities across Melanesia and Polynesia, and ASW has united with other leading groups in the region who have together called for an end to all deep sea mining in the Pacific (140). Key concerns and issues relate to a severing of spiritual connections to the ocean, and questions around potential effects of noise and chemical pollution from DSM activity on the marine environment and life (141,142). More locally, along the coastline of New Ireland Province, PNG, there is great unease and resistance to the impact on traditional practices such as 'shark calling'. This area is home to one of the last surviving traditions of 'shark calling', in which people communicate with sharks through ritual and song before catching them by hand. DSM is perceived to be an existential threat to its continuation.

Historically, the catalyst for action was the allocation of an operating license to commercially mine the deep seabed for the first time globally. The so-called 'Solwara 1' project (Solwara means 'ocean' — literally 'sea water' in Tok Pisin) was granted to Canadian firm Nautilus Minerals by the PNG government in 2011. A key aspect of this decision was a theme well understood by those facing social and environmental justice worldwide — the lack of free, prior, and informed consent including inadequate information about the project and its aims. As a direct result, ASW initiated and has maintained a national campaign of education, advocacy, and outreach work which has helped to build both local and national community and public understanding of the issues facing DSM. This work has been going on for over a decade and is set to continue.

Figure 2.11.2: **The Duke of York Islands, Papua New Guinea is one of the nearest communities to the proposed DSM site.**

CREDIT: John Childs

ASW has achieved much in its ongoing struggle against the advent of DSM in the region. Most notably, in 2019 Nautilus Minerals faced bankruptcy and eventual liquidation through a combination of sustained community opposition and financial unsustainability brought on by the withdrawal of key investors from the firm (143). This marked a significant victory for ASW at the time, yet it was not without cost and did not mark the end of the struggle. For one thing, the PNG government itself was reported to have lost more than AUD$150 million (144), money that for members of ASW should have been invested in the country's underfunded healthcare and education systems.

Moreover, the ongoing threat of DSM activity in the region remains. A recent announcement in parliament has suggested that Nautilus Minerals is planning to return to PNG, having been remodeled as a subsidiary to a new company Deep Sea Mining Finance Ltd, and plans to eventually extract from the deep seabed remain in place (145). In the face of this, and the associated marginalization of affected communities from the policy process, ASW's resolve is clear: the fight is not over until all deep-sea licenses are canceled in the Bismarck Sea and in geographies further afield. Politically, the aim is to insist that the PNG government enacts a permanent ban on DSM and uses this precedent to call for a moratorium on DSM at the International Seabed Authority (140), the regulator of the deep seabed in the area outside of national jurisdiction.

It is unlikely that ASW will be able to do this alone. The network is made up of communities across PNG, many of whom depend on small-scale fishing for their livelihoods. In the face of state-corporate policy interactions that fail to involve such people in meaningful ways, a narrative that is already echoing around the Pacific region. As such, ASW is continuing to build its network across the region and internationally, across what Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) calls a 'sea of islands'. They have already forged connections with partners from Fiji, Tonga, and Cook Islands, taking part in a People's Summit for Climate Justice session at COP26 to argue that 'deep sea mining is no answer to the climate crisis' (146). They stand as ocean defenders of the Pacific Blue Line (2023), a Pacific regional effort calling for a ban on deep-sea mining.

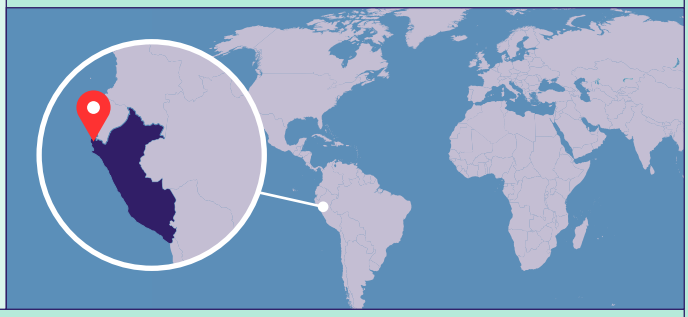
CASE STUDY 10

Peru

LOCATION: Regions of Tumbes and Piura, Peru

SCALE: Sub-national

Small-Scale Fishers Fight Against Illegal Industrial Fishing in Northern Peru



AUTHORS Rocío López de la Lama and Santiago de la Puente

Small-scale fishers in northern Peru are facing significant challenges due to illegal industrial fishing within the protected 5-mile zone. Despite local fishers' advocacy for stronger enforcement of this area, as well as calls for the establishment of a Marine Protected area (MPA), progress has been hindered by political instability, corruption, and the influence of oil companies. Effective political will, alongside external support, is crucial to enforcing regulations, establishing the MPA, and safeguarding both marine ecosystems and the rights and livelihoods of small-scale fishers.

THREAT: Illegal industrial fishing

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protests and Demonstrations; Awareness and Communication Campaigns, Monitoring and Enforcement.

The regions of Tumbes and Piura, in northern Peru, are important suppliers of seafood for direct human consumption nationwide (148). However, the presence of illegal industrial fishers is negatively impacting fish abundance as unsustainable fishing practices are taking place (149). These illegal industrial fisheries are not only using non-selective fishing gear but also fishing within the first five nautical miles (5-miles). Illegal fishing is mainly done through purse seiners and trawlers, both forbidden within the 5-miles (150). This is happening despite the fact that the 5-miles have been legally protected for 30 years (PRODUCE 017-92-PE), prohibiting any type of industrial fishing as it is a critical nursery area for many marine species (151) and is a designated area for artisanal or small-scale fishers (PRODUCE 017-92-PE). The situation is getting worse due to the ongoing political instability and widespread corruption in the country (Interview 1).

Figure 2.12.1: Traditional artisanal sail boat from Los Organos community in Piura, Peru.

CREDIT: Rocío López de la Lama

The area is highly biodiverse and productive, as it is where the warm Equatorial current mixes with the cold Humboldt current (152). Because of this, many migratory species such as blue whales and shark whales also use this area as feeding grounds. Thus, not only is it an ideal place for fishing but also for tourism and recreational fishing. The area is home to and used by thousands of local small-scale fishers, who have a long and strong cultural relationship with the ocean (153). Cultural practices include using low-impact and sustainable fishing gear, such as hook and line while sailing in traditional fishing vessels (154). Thus, illegal fishing practices taking place in the 5-miles are critical as it directly impacts fishers and impacts marine ecosystems through non-selective fishing gear and catching juvenile fish

(155) and subsequently the livelihoods of small-scale fishers (156). Artisanal fishers have reported decreasing catches and size of fish and struggling increasingly to catch adequate fish for a viable livelihood (149,150).

Figure 2.12.2:
Map of the proposed areas (highlighted in dark blue) for the MPA Mar Tropical de Grau.

RESERVA NACIONAL MAR TROPICAL DE GRAU

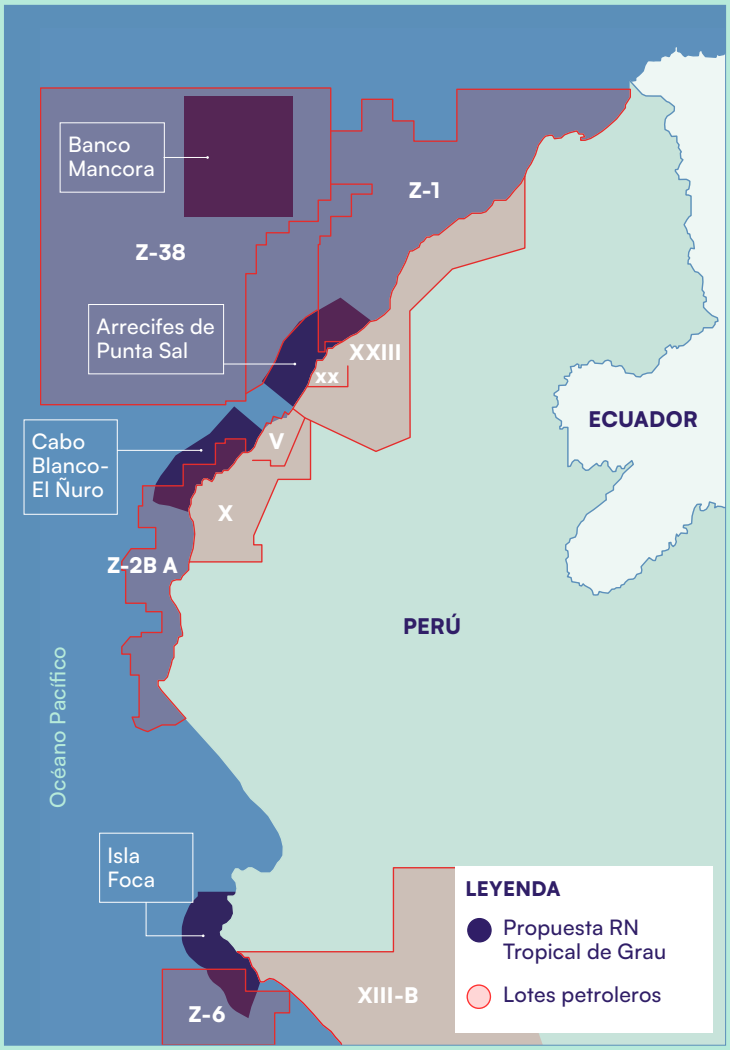
Sectores	Superficie (Ha)
Arrecifes de Punta Sal	18 435.10
Banco Mancora	51 776.48
Cabo Blanco-El Ñuro	16 618.66
Isla Foca	28 845.65
TOTAL	**115 675.89**

Map elaborated by SERNANP, Peru

Because of the negative impacts experienced by fishers, three communities have self-organized to seek and demand protection for their fishing grounds via the creation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) (Interview 2). MPAs in Peru allow natural resource users with pre-existing rights, in this case artisanal fishers, to continue catching fish and seafood in allowed areas following MPA zoning (Law No. 26834). These communities are seeking the implementation of an MPA despite the fact that the 5-miles are already legally protected, as current legal enforcement is deficient at best (151), and they feel it would provide an additional layer of protection. The communities include Cabo Blanco, El Nuro, and Los Organos. Since 2016 they have raised awareness through multiple events, such as organizing online petitions, going to Congress to advocate for the creation of the MPA, organizing public marathons, and being spokespeople at different events organized by NGOs, all with little success. Unfortunately, their activism and efforts to create the MPA and defend the ocean have had one impact: increasing small-scale fishers' vulnerability (150). It was only a few years ago when fishers would actively report any suspicious activity or vessel fishing within the 5-miles, taking videos and pictures to share with corresponding authorities to support surveillance and enforcement efforts (Interview 2). However, small-scale fishers are now afraid to do such activities as illegal fishers have gained political power, using current laws in their favor or directly threatening those who oppose them (Interview 1) (157).

Illegal fishers have gained power as a tangential benefit of the oil sector lobby (Interview 1). The proposed MPA area would be adjacent to an ongoing offshore oil extraction concession. Thus, oil companies are actively lobbying against the creation of the MPA because they fear this would somehow affect their pre-existing rights (152). However, there is no legal basis for such concerns, and different environmental experts have given statements that this would not be the case (158). Nevertheless, this lobby is quite strong and so far, has limited any potential wins for small-scale fishers and the MPA. This scenario has benefited illegal fishers, as small-scale fishers have no governmental authorities that are willing to back them up, besides the Ministry of Environment, which has little political power. Because of this, fishers are now afraid of reporting illegal activities for fear of repercussions. For instance, one small-scale fisher was unfairly imprisoned over a bogus charge of him being the owner-operator of an illegal trawler that was fishing within the 5-miles (Interview 1). Other fishers received serious death threats for their support of the MPA back in 2022 (interview 2).

Figure 2.12.3:
Overlap between MPA and oil concessions.



SOURCE: Ojo Publico, 2020

The current political scenario in Peru has led NGOs to become the new advocates for the MPA (152). However, little has happened in favor of either fishers' rights to the 5 nautical mile zone or the creation of the MPA. Thus, if nothing changes, illegal fishing operations will continue to threaten the sustainability of small-scale fishing practices and marine ecosystems in the area, while also affecting millions of coastal citizens that rely on seafood for their food security (149).

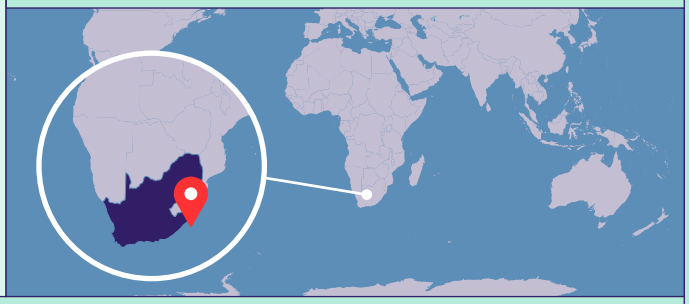
Political will and support are needed to create the MPA and enforce regulations to stop illegal fishing within the 5-miles. International support here is key, as national authorities are not fulfilling their legal obligations to enforce regulations against illegal industrial fishing in artisanal fishing zones, increase the coverage of marine protected areas in the country, and safeguard marine and coastal ecosystems. Moreover, small-scale fishers need external support to continue to defend their rights and protect their traditional fishing grounds for the benefit of current and future generations.

CASE STUDY 11

South Africa

LOCATION: South Africa

SCALE: National



Ocean-Defending Small-Scale Fishers in South Africa say NO to Seismic Surveys

AUTHORS Taryn Pereira

As part of their blue economy strategy, the South African government has granted exploration permits covering 98% of the country's EEZ. Small-scale fishers and their partners in South Africa have achieved two successful court cases in 2022, halting seismic surveys by multinational companies exploring for oil and gas. Small-scale fishers have led a strategic resistance, asserting their identity as ocean defenders, and defending their rights, livelihoods, and marine ecosystems.

THREAT: Oil and gas exploration

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Public Protests and Demonstrations; Research and Documentation; Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action; Awareness and Communication Campaigns; Legal and Policy Interventions; Formation of and Joining Social Movements.

In South Africa, the collective efforts of ocean-defending small-scale fishers and their social partners led to two successful court cases in 2022, to stop multinational companies from conducting seismic surveys for oil and gas.

The push for developing offshore oil and gas production in South Africa's deep sea, under the banner of the blue economy strategy 'Operation Phakisa', has led to the South African government granting exploration permits covering 98% of South Africa's Exclusive Economic Zone (159). As small-scale fishers and their social partners in community-based organizations, universities, and NGOs became aware of specific seismic surveys about to commence in late 2021 / early 2022, with little to no public consultation regarding these surveys, they launched a broad and strategic resistance. This included large public demonstrations on beaches and outside Shell petrol stations around the country (160); communications (161), story-telling (162), and advocacy (163) aimed at raising public awareness; letters and petitions (164); and ultimately legal action.

Figure 2.13.1: Sinegugu Zukulu and Ntsindiso Nongcavu, applicants in the case against Shell's Wild Coast seismic survey, Gqeberha High Court, May 2022.

CREDIT: Taryn Pereira

The resistance efforts in 2021/ 2022 were focused specifically on two permits granted by the government for conducting seismic surveys to explore oil and gas without the due prior consultation of local communities. Small-scale fishers were at the heart of both of these successful campaigns, as they strongly asserted their identity as ocean defenders whose rights — related to participation, livelihoods, and cultural and customary relationships — had been violated in the granting of these exploration permits. They also voiced deep concerns about the impacts of seismic blasting on plankton, fish, whales, birds, and other marine life with whom fisherfolk share the ocean. An underlying worry was about the potential future impacts of oil extraction, processing activities and potential spills in the region on ocean health, fish populations, fisheries dependent livelihoods and human health. Furthermore, they raised concerns about the continued exploitation of fossil fuels at a time when fishers are already observing the worrying impacts of climate change on both ocean ecosystems and coastal communities.

The first case took place along the Eastern 'Wild Coast' of South Africa. Here, small-scale fishers learned in November 2021 that a company called Impact Africa, in partnership with Royal Dutch Shell, was about to start a large-scale seismic survey, without any meaningful consultation of the people living along that coastline. With support from human rights lawyers, researchers, and civil society partners, applicants from fishing communities along this stretch of coastline launched legal proceedings against South Africa's Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, Impact Africa, and Shell. These legal proceedings had the intent to get an urgent interdict and then revoke the exploration permit entirely. The founding affidavit in this case, containing the statements of Mr. Sinegugu Zukulu and other community-based ocean defenders and small-scale fishers, expresses the 'ocean defender' identity of these applicants very clearly:

> *"The Wild Coast is a place of stunning natural beauty. Unlike other coastal stretches in South Africa, Indigenous People have maintained continuous possession of this land despite waves of colonial and Apartheid aggression. This is no accident. Our ancestors' blood was spilled protecting our land and sea. We now feel a sense of duty to protect our land and sea for future generations, as well as for the benefit of the planet.*
>
> *Our land and sea are central to our livelihoods and our way of life. Over generations we have conserved them, and they have conserved us....*
>
> *Multinational corporations now wish to blast our sea every ten seconds for five months with air gun bursts between 220 and 250 decibels — louder than a jet plane taking off — that will be heard underwater more than 100 kilometers away. They want to do this for one reason — to look for oil and gas that they can profit from while worsening the planet's climate crisis... " (55).*

The judges, in this case, found in favor of the community applicants, first granting an urgent interdict to stop the seismic survey from commencing until the full case was heard, and then ultimately setting aside Shell and Impact Africa's exploration permit entirely (165). Shell is appealing that judgment, with a court date expected sometime in late 2023. The judges affirmed the role of the applicants as custodians of the ocean (166). They recognized their cultural, customary, and livelihood rights, as well as finding that their right to be consulted had been violated.

Figure 2.13.2: **Small-scale fishers and their supporters celebrate upon receiving the news that Shell's permit to conduct a seismic survey on the Wild Coast had been set aside by the Makhanda High Court, in September 2022.**

CREDIT: Taryn Pereira

At the very same time as Wild Coast fishers were celebrating their first victory in securing an interdict to stop Shell's seismic survey, news broke of another seismic survey about to begin. In early 2022 small-scale fishers on the West Coast got the disturbing news that an Australian company called 'Searcher Geodata' was about to start a seismic survey along their coastline. The public interest that had been galvanized around the Wild Coast Shell case now turned its attention towards the Searcher West Coast case. Again, it was the deep intergenerational knowledge and guardianship of small-scale fishers, particularly West Coast snoek fishers, that guided and strengthened the collective response to this case.

Below is an extract from the founding affidavit submitted by Mr. Christian Adams and others in the case that West Coast small-scale fishers brought against the South African government and Searcher:

> *"The fishers with whom I fish have a deep knowledge of the ocean ecosystem. I know that like me, this knowledge has been passed down over several generations of fishers. We know the sea in so many ways: we can tell what fish will be available by looking at the sky, by smelling the wind, by feeling the wind against our faces. We know this West Coast and the way that the sea and the weather interact here as if it was part of us... This traditional knowledge is part*

of our culture, it is who we are. We did not learn this knowledge at university but as a culture, the West Coast traditional fishers hold the knowledge of generations of ocean guardians...

We are witnessing the impact of large-scale industrial developments along our coast and increasingly, in our waters. We believe that this will have a lasting negative impact on our fish stocks that we depend on for our food and livelihoods. We know that our snoek will be impacted by seismic noise, and it will alter the course of the snoek...

Not only does this pose a risk to the actual catching of our fish, but it poses a risk to our culture and who we are as fishers of the West Coast. Our ability to feed our families and our communities, to extend a helping hand to our neighbors who are struggling, depends on us having a good catch. If we cannot continue this custom, it will impact not only the physical health of our communities but also the social fabric and customs that makeup who we are as a people. For this reason, we do not understand why our government is giving permits that will impact our way of life and our livelihoods negatively and we do not understand why we are not consulted about this." (54).

An interdict was granted by the Western Cape High Court in March 2022, leading Searcher Geodata to call off their proposed seismic survey and leave South African waters (54). In early 2023, Searcher re-applied and was granted environmental authorization to carry out a seismic survey on the West Coast (167). There is an appeal process underway, and a decision regarding these appeals is still pending (168).

The success of these ocean defenders has been met with polarizing discourse from the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, who has said that environmental activists resisting oil and gas are 'CIA funded' or 'foreign-funded agents' blocking economic development (169,170), and intent on 'apartheid and colonialism of a special type' (171). There have been worrying reports of more directly threatening statements being made to communities warning them that if they continue to resist developments including oil and gas exploration they may get hurt or killed (172). This should be taken extremely seriously in the context of the assassinations and other physical threats against environmental human rights defenders in South Africa (173,174). Energy companies have adjusted their tactics to ensure they are able to show greater evidence of 'consultation', despite continuing to ignore or undermine the voices of ocean defenders and are still intent on overturning the courts' decisions against them. The struggle is far from over. However, small-scale fishers and their networks continue to monitor and respond to oil and gas exploration and production, including by Total, Shell, and other multinationals (175).

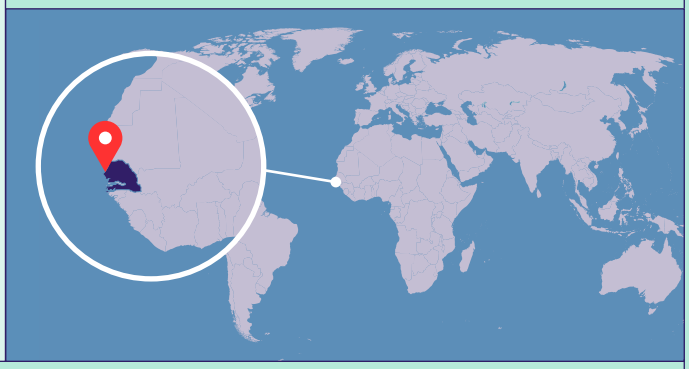
As one can see in the affidavit extracts, small-scale fishers have a strong identity as ocean defenders, applied powerfully in both of these cases to resist large-scale, non-consultative, and ocean-threatening activities. Building international solidarity between ocean-defending small-scale fishers and their allies standing up to Big Oil and Gas should be pursued.

CASE STUDY 12

Senegal

LOCATION: Langue de Barbarie, Senegal

SCALE: Local



Diambari Sine:

Women's Fish Processing Organization Leads the Resistance Against Industrial Fisheries and Fishmeal Factories in Senegal

AUTHORS Aliou Sall

In Senegal women are central in marketing and processing fishing catches, mainly coastal small pelagics. Despite gaining social status and financial autonomy through this, they face challenges from industrial overfishing and fishmeal production, depleting crucial sardinella stocks. Women-led groups like Diambari sine advocate for sustainable fishing and resist detrimental industrial activities, striving to preserve their maritime culture and ensure sustainable fisheries management.

THREAT: Industrial fisheries, Aquaculture

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Creating Organizations and Networks for Collective Action, Awareness and Communication Campaigns, Public Protests and Demonstrations, Formation of and Joining Social Movements

Women are the main stakeholders in the marketing and artisanal processing of the small-scale fishing catches in the community of Langue de Barbarie (Senegal). Coastal small-scale pelagic fisheries account for around 70% of landings in coastal communities in Senegal (176,177). As such, small-scale pelagic fisheries in this community not only create jobs and generate income, but also contribute to food security, and are the foundation of social and cultural wellbeing. For example, the consumption of processed small pelagic is deeply rooted in the culinary traditions of Senegalese and West African populations.

Women in this community have succeeded over time in acquiring certain notoriety and social status with the place they have occupied for generations in the value chain (178). This has been possible thanks to their intergenerational control of two strategic segments of the value chain: fresh produce marketing, as well as artisanal processing using local traditional technologies, passed down from mother to daughter, and the marketing of these products. The various techniques include salting and drying, brining followed by salting and drying, braising then salting and drying, and boiling before salting and drying. To a lesser extent, smoking is also used.

Over the years, thanks to endogenous savings and mutual credit mechanisms on one hand, and reciprocal solidarity networks on the other, women have managed to build up their own financial capital. Due to this financial capital, women can avoid the usurious rates charged by conventional banks when taking loans. In this way, they are recognized as the main players who have enabled small-scale fishing to continue over time — by intervening before and after the act of fishing, which men mainly carry out. Upstream, in the absence of a formal system willing to finance small-scale fishing, it is the women who provide the necessary credit to the fishermen to pre-finance their fishing trips. Downstream, they are responsible for adding value to the catches through marketing and processing.

Figure 2.14.1: **This photograph illustrates how the community, a leading national provider of processed fish, is intricately tied to the marine ecosystem for both livelihood and cultural identity. It highlights the community's profound reliance on marine resources and the intangible, non-monetary values they attribute to fishing activities.**

CREDIT: Aliou Sall

However, the prospects for pelagic small-scale fisheries have become increasingly bleak under the combined effects of two factors.

Firstly, there is the issue of the overcapacity of foreign industrial fishing fleets, which has endangered stocks of small pelagic fish, particularly sardinella (*Sardinella aurita*). This species is crucial for small-scale fisheries. This situation is the result of the signing of fishing agreements with foreign companies as early as 1996 (179). European distant water fleets have been the main contributors to this overcapacity. In the last three to four years, Chinese distant water fleets have also become significant contributors (180).

Secondly, the impact of industrial fleets targeting small pelagic fish is significant, particularly as these fish are processed into fishmeal for international markets in aquaculture and animal feed (181,182). Notably, there is considerable vertical integration within this sector by Chinese entities. Chinese-owned fishing boats are often the suppliers for Chinese-owned fishmeal factories, creating a tightly controlled supply chain (181,183).

Due to the aforementioned current unsustainable practices, which are exemplary of the ongoing poor governance of fisheries in Senegal (178), this has led to an unprecedented social crisis because of a dramatic fall in catches. As early as the 90s, there was a drop in yields from seine canoes specializing in small pelagic fish (184). Sardinella, the emblematic species among small coastal pelagic, is becoming increasingly rare. Over the last three years, the community has seen some of the worst fishing seasons for this species, with fishermen going out for days on end without being able to recover the costs of their fishing trips. For women, this means a shortage, or even an absence, of raw materials, leading either to a reduction in their activities, or to a temporary switch to other activities in order to secure a minimum income. This crisis in small pelagic fisheries is gradually spreading throughout the country — threatening men's livelihoods in small-scale fisheries, women's financial independence, as well as local food security.

Figure 2.14.2: **A demonstration of the rudimentary means women use, in the absence of appropriate infrastructure for the processing sector.**

CREDIT: Aliou Sall

Diambari sine, a local women-led organization, is taking a stand against these problems. The organization has about 600 members of all ages (185). The organization is mostly active in political advocacy and trying to influence policies, which they do through organizing protests and addressing their grievances with public authorities on major occasions (such as International Women's Day, World Fisheries Day, World Environment Day, or World Oceans Day). However, due to their lack of time, financing, and capacity, most of their actions are carried out in partnership with partner NGOs and other fisheries umbrella organizations such as REFEPAS, which is the national network of women processors in Senegal.

On Women's Day, 8 March 2023, in collaboration with REFEPAS and with the support of local and international NGOs, Diambari sine organized a public demonstration on the beach of their community. Holding placards, they denounced the fishing agreements between the national government and international fishing companies and the granting of licenses to industrial fishers for small pelagics to be used in the manufacturing of fishmeal. On this occasion, they also expressed their great concern for their future and the future of younger generations in the face of the danger represented by the exploitation of gas in an area not far from their community.

The women's demands and policy objectives for fisheries reform are twofold. First, they are demanding recognition and safeguarding of their human and traditional rights to continue to depend on (and thus to access) marine resources and coastal zones that are fundamental for their livelihoods and food security. In this way, they are seeking to preserve their maritime identity and the unique culture of the small-scale fishing and processing sector. Indeed, they are advocating for blue justice in the context of small-scale fisheries (42,186). Second, they are demanding respect for marine ecosystems and their sustainable management by questioning the poor governance that promotes industrial fisheries and fishmeal factories in a context of resource depletion, which further endangers the pelagic stocks on which small-scale fisheries rely on. In particular, they are seeking to ban pelagic trawling and the closure of fishmeal factories.

Figure 2.14.3: **From an early age, little children begin to mimic the gestures of adults as dugout canoes are hauled up on the riverbank. An illustration of the fact that fishing is an integral part of a socio-historical morphology.**

CREDIT: Aliou Sall

Regarding their aim to influence the fisheries policies decision-making process, given the considerable financial clout of industrial fishing companies, the results are still far from their aims. The financial power of industrial fishing, which has its own lobbying networks, is the source of the constraints encountered in achieving its objectives. In this context, the adage "divide and conquer" is one of the strategies used to break the momentum of such small-scale fishers' organizations and social movements.

Moreover, the fishing agreements, a key issue on Diambari sine's agenda and a national concern, have been mired in controversy. Senegalese representatives working on behalf of Russian and Chinese ship owners have reportedly employed corrupt practices and influence to promote a narrative favoring these foreign entities in pelagic fisheries. Indeed, a so-called union of industrial sailors has emerged

from the industrial port, backed by wholesalers with exclusive rights to catches by Russian and Chinese vessels of pelagic fish. This group, allegedly supported by unscrupulous journalists, has formed a network to defend the involvement of these foreign nations in pelagic fisheries. Their main arguments are that industrial fisheries generate employment and contribute to food security since part of the catch is sold locally.

In conclusion, the issues that these women are engaged in and are actively denouncing are highly political. Diambari sine and their allies are fighting against financially powerful political actors and well-entrenched lobbies. Public visibility and external support are crucial for the success of their campaign. Although their struggle may be long, their steadfast commitment and strong sense of justice have the potential to persist and make a significant impact.

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CASE STUDY 13 Turkey

LOCATION: Istanbul, Turkey

SCALE: National

Advocating for Small-Scale Fishers' Rights and Sustainable Marine Ecosystems in Türkiye:

The Association of Istanbul Fishing Cooperatives (Istanbul Birlik)

AUTHORS Pinar Ertör-Akyazi and Irmak Ertör

Overfishing and the overcapacity of the industrial fishing fleet are putting immense pressure on marine ecosystems and fishers' livelihoods in Türkiye. In response, small-scale fishing cooperatives in Istanbul, organized under Istanbul Birlik, are rising against this threat. They are working to build an alternative economic model to protect small-scale fishers' fish, seas, identity, and livelihoods.

THREAT: Industrial fisheries, Fishmeal Industry

RESISTANCE EFFORTS: Legal and Policy Interventions, Awareness and Communication Campaigns, Research and Documentation, Formation of and Joining Social Movements

Türkiye is surrounded by the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Since the 1970s, the overcapacity of the large-scale industrial fishing fleet in Turkish fisheries has been building up, supported by government subsidies and investment in infrastructure such as large fishing harbors. The Mediterranean and the Black Sea have the second most overfished stocks globally (187). Marine catches in Turkish fisheries increased rapidly from the 1970s onwards, peaking in the mid-1990s, followed by a sharp decline and stagnation thereafter. Additional pressures such as climate change, marine pollution, invasive species, illegal fishing, and urban development along coastal areas have further undermined the sustainability of fisheries in these seas. Over the last 20 years, while overall fishing efforts have increased, average catches have fallen significantly (188). Fish stocks in the seas surrounding Türkiye show signs of depletion, with declines in the mean trophic level of the catch since the mid-2010s, indicating a shift from larger predators to smaller prey species (188,189). In the Sea of Marmara, at least 22 fish species have become commercially extinct over the last 50 years (190).

Figure 2.15.1: Small-scale fishing vessels in Üsküdar Fishing Coop, Istanbul.

CREDIT: Pinar Ertör-Akyazi

Turkish fisheries have the largest fleet size in the Mediterranean region. While 90% of the fishing vessels in Türkiye are under 12 meters and classified as small-scale, the remainder belong to the industrial fleet, which is equipped with advanced technological equipment such as radars, fish finders, and GPS devices (191). Industrial fishers and small-scale fishers often compete for fishing grounds in the seas around Istanbul. Although small-scale fishers constitute the majority of fishing vessels in Türkiye, their share of total catches amounts to only 10 percent (192), and their catches have been steadily declining.

The following statements (47) reveal the challenges faced by the small-scale fishers in Türkiye:

> *"Our house is on fire. We have no other choice but to teach everyone about sustainable fisheries before the fish are gone forever. We need to give the fish the opportunity of laying eggs at least once in its lifetime." (Head of Istanbul Birlik, 2016)*
>
> *"In the past, being a small-scale fisher was a prestigious job, but now, no parent would allow their children to marry a small-scale fisher. The younger generations do not want to become fishers anymore due to economic difficulties." (Small-scale fisher from Istanbul Birlik, 2016)*
>
> *"The fisher must be able to run his/her own business. Our job is not respected, not among citizens, not among policymakers, especially not in banks. We are seen as second-class [inferior] citizens. The consumers do not respect us either." (Small-scale fisher from Istanbul Birlik, 2019)*
>
> *"We cannot marketize the fish we are catching, although this is the responsibility of the cooperatives. Our proposal [of opening up direct sales shops in urban districts of Istanbul] will rely on sustainable [small-scale] fisheries. This proposal will increase [ex-vessel] prices that fishers receive by about 25%, and the annual profit distribution will further improve fishers' livelihoods at around 10% [increase in profit]. Eliminating middlemen will break the debt cycle. The new system will create employment for the families of fishers, especially women and the younger generation." (Head of Istanbul Birlik, 2018)*

Small-scale fishers are experiencing decreasing fish stocks and worsening economic conditions while contending with the strong political and economic power of industrial fisheries and intermediaries in the supply chain. Their interests are not adequately incorporated into the decision-making processes of central governments, which primarily consider and act in line with the interests of industrial fishers. For instance, while small-scale fishers' organizations are 'consulted' in fishery notification meetings, their concerns are often not reflected in the final fisheries policies (47). Central government's view coastal small-scale fishing as backward and do not prioritize it, as it is not a main contributor to the country's economic growth (191). Additional challenges include a general lack of awareness about marine issues and fishing culture among the public, the low level of education among fishers, and the reluctance of younger generations to work in the small-scale coastal fishing sector. These difficulties further hinder small-scale fishers in defending their seas and livelihoods.

Figure 2.15.2: **WFFP Coordination Meeting held in Istanbul, organized by Istanbul Birlik in 2023.**

SOURCE: Facebook account of Istanbul Birlik

Since the 1950s, government authorities in Türkiye have supported the establishment of fishing cooperatives by offering incentives such as cheaper loans. Consequently, the number of fishing cooperatives increased in the following decades. However, many of these cooperatives have struggled to operate effectively and support their members due to issues like corruption among cooperative heads and a lack of solidarity culture among members (191).

Istanbul Birlik has recently been an exception. Founded in 1980 as a regional association of fishing cooperatives in Istanbul, *Istanbul Birlik* is now comprised of 36 fishing cooperatives from Istanbul with about 2,500 fisher members. However, it was only after 2011, when the current president was elected, that things changed for the better and it became an effective organization. The changing leadership provided a new vision for representing the interests of small-scale fishers in Istanbul. In the face of the aforementioned economic, social, and environmental pressures, Istanbul Birlik leaders started to make huge efforts to resist the threat posed by industrial fisheries and defend their fisher identity, reclaim their rights as fishers and livelihoods, and advocate for marine sustainability.

As one of the few European members actively engaged in the global small-scale fisheries movement, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), Istanbul Birlik has fostered strong connections with La Via Campesina and various transnational food sovereignty platforms. Positioned at the nexus of local, national, and international efforts, Istanbul Birlik is dedicated to advancing equitable and sustainable

fisheries practices. Collaborating closely with environmental NGOs and marine scientists, Istanbul Birlik fishers frequently journey to Ankara, Türkiye's capital, where they engage with key decision-makers in the central government. Additionally, Istanbul Birlik conducts annual capacity-building workshops designed to educate fishers on a range of crucial topics, including marine sustainability, responsible fishing techniques, cooperative financial management, legal considerations linked to cooperatives, solidarity economy principles, and leadership development. Among the short-to mid-term objectives of Istanbul Birlik's ocean defenders are the elimination of intermediaries in the supply chain, establishment of direct sales outlets for urban consumers in Istanbul to circumvent middlemen, ensuring fair and decent incomes for fisher members, enhancing awareness among Istanbul residents and civil society, preserving the cultural heritage of small-scale fishing, and bolstering the capacity of fishing cooperatives across Istanbul and Türkiye.

Achieving direct positive outcomes in terms of the sustainability of fisheries has been challenging due to the strong opposition and vested economic interests of industrial fishers and intermediaries. However, their advocacy and resistance efforts have contributed to the self-organization of small-scale fishers in Istanbul and made the policymakers acknowledge the presence and importance of small-scale coastal fisheries in Istanbul and Türkiye. Despite this, making the importance of small-scale fisheries and their rights visible to the larger society remains difficult. Small-scale fishers in Türkiye are still very vulnerable, as they are in many other coastal regions globally. Given the authoritarian political climate that easily excludes and marginalizes economically weak ocean defenders in Istanbul, even the small gains to protect small-scale fisher interests and marine sustainability are important successes. Below, we discuss some of the most visible activism efforts of Istanbul Birlik and their successful collaboration with other ocean defenders from civil society.

Among the most visible political activism efforts of Istanbul Birlik are two campaigns to protect culturally, economically, and ecologically significant fish species. The first campaign aimed at the sustainable fishing of the blue fish (tr. lüfer, *Pomatomus saltatrix*) and was highly visible in Turkish fisheries history. It involved collaboration with NGOs such as Slow Food and Greenpeace, as well as restaurant chefs, food activists, artists, journalists, and academics (193). This campaign raised public awareness about the suitable catch size of species like blue fish and mullets, sustainable and unsustainable fishing practices, and the various fisheries actors. Protests against illegal trawl fishing at night in the Bosphorus, led by Greenpeace and supported by Istanbul Birlik and the media, were also part of this effort.

The second campaign, named "Protect the Torik (bonito) Campaign," was initiated by Istanbul Birlik but was disrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak. It resumed in the spring of 2021, though it did not receive the same level of public attention. Despite this, the campaign increased Birlik's visibility and strengthened alliances with civil society, universities, and municipalities, contributing to individual and community recognition, as well as fisher rights and identity (ibid.). However, due to the current authoritarian political climate in the country, organizing visible protests on the streets or at sea is challenging. Consequently, fishers within Istanbul Birlik are reclaiming their rights through other legal means, such as writing official complaint letters and participating in national regulatory meetings.

Figure 2.15.3: **The small cafeteria and gathering space of small-scale fishers in Beykoz Cooperative, Istanbul.**

CREDIT: Pınar Ertör-Akyazı

With a long-term vision, Istanbul Birlik has actively enhanced its political agency and fostered national and international alliances. These efforts, while not yielding immediate gains, are underscored by close collaborations with universities, academics, and international food sovereignty platforms like WFFP and Nyeleni (194). A significant achievement in their advocacy was successfully halting a legislative change that threatened their control over fishing harbors, crucial for their economic stability through income from boats and harbor management (195). This success has preserved their autonomy over the harbors (authors' interview with the head of Istanbul Birlik, 2023). Additionally, Istanbul Birlik plans to launch a project to establish Co-op Shops across various districts of Istanbul. These shops will enable fishers and cooperative members to directly sell fresh and cooked fish to urban consumers, bypassing middlemen (196). By eliminating intermediaries, fishers stand to increase their income by 30% and create employment opportunities for their families, particularly benefiting women and younger generations (193).

In sum, the strategies adopted by Istanbul Birlik fishers open up new spaces for political contestation for small-scale fishers in Istanbul as they struggle to sustain their livelihoods and fisher identity and culture, both of which depend on sustaining marine ecosystems in the seas surrounding Istanbul. Istanbul Birlik's alliance with marine scientists, civil society, and transnational movements provides small-scale fishers in Istanbul with an additional source of inspiration in terms of resistance, and advocacy for fisher rights. Istanbul Birlik is the most politically active regional association in Türkiye forming part of the national SÜRKOOP (The Central Association of Regional Fishing Cooperatives in Türkiye), which enables them to become a stronger social actor with their social and ecological justice demands.

Becoming more visible with national and international alliances makes them better heard by national decision-makers as well as municipal authorities with which they have positive collaborations, especially for valuing local fresh fish and direct sale mechanisms. These collaborations and political activism continue even in a complex and challenging political environment in Türkiye, which still gives hope for sustained marine ecosystems and decent livelihoods for small-scale fishers.

CHAPTER 3

Murders of Ocean Defenders

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3.1 Hidden Beneath the Waves

Every day, ordinary people speak out to protect their land and the environment from harms. But being a defender does not come without personal sacrifice. Across the world, land and environmental defenders are subjected to a broad range of attacks — from violent attacks and abduction to criminalization and threats. Some pay with their lives and are brutally murdered. Reprisals aim to silence them and the work they do.

For the past 12 years, Global Witness has documented and denounced the murders of defenders, and the threats they face for protecting their homes, livelihoods, cultures, and the natural world (197). Since 2012, over 2,000 defenders have been murdered for protecting the planet, with 196 defenders killed in 2023 — almost four murders per week (198). This is happening across every region of the world and across a range of sectors from mining and agribusiness to renewables.

Year after year, the majority of murders are concentrated in Latin America — 85% of cases in 2023. Killings were concentrated in four key countries that accounted for more than 70% of murders last year: Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico. Colombia is the world's deadliest country for land and environmental defenders, with 79 murdered in 2023 — the highest annual total for any country documented by Global Witness since 2012 (197).

The Philippines continues to be the most dangerous country in Asia for attacks — with 17 defenders murdered in 2023. In addition, five cases were recorded in India and three in Indonesia last year. In Africa, two defenders were murdered in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one in Rwanda and one in Ghana in 2023 (198). While killings in these regions may appear lower, this is likely an underestimate due to restricted access to information, ongoing conflict, and limitations on civic freedoms, all of which hinder communities' ability to speak out and stifle reporting on retaliations.

Whilst murder is a common strategy for silencing defenders and is unquestionably the most brutal, they often occur alongside wider retaliations ranging from violence, intimidation, smear campaigns and criminalization. Across Asia, Global Witness has reported seven enforced disappearances in the Philippines, with the trend appearing to extend to other countries in 2024 (198). The abduction of land and environmental defenders in Southeast Asia has emerged as a critical issue, reflecting broader systemic efforts by power holders to suppress dissent and maintain control over land and resources. Mexico has also experienced a significant number of enforced disappearances (198).

Criminalization is now the most common tactic used to silence defenders globally (199). In Europe and North America, defenders are facing increasingly difficult situations as they exercise the right to protest — leading to greater criminalization. Laws limiting climate protests have also been spreading in the US, EU and UK allowing harsher penalties to be imposed on activists. The effects of this can, for example, be seen in the UK with a growing number of environmental protesters being handed jail time — with more than 100 protesters imprisoned in 2022 alone.

There is also continued evidence that Indigenous and marginalized communities of defenders face a disproportionate number of attacks. Globally, Indigenous Peoples (85) and Afro descendants (12) were the most targeted — despite making up just 6% of the world's population (200). Many communities have been disproportionately affected by armed conflicts, land disputes, and human rights violations exacerbated by state neglect and political and economic marginalization. The impacts of reprisals ripple across families, communities, and movements. In some cases, the relatives of activists are targeted or caught up in violence. Though these cases of lethal attacks are less common, a third of these attacks in 2023 were against women relatives (198).

The reasons for the killings vary, but the scramble for control over land, territory and access to resources are key drivers of the violence. In the countries with the most lethal attacks, this struggle combines with widespread corruption and impunity to leave defenders vulnerable, as governments fail to safeguard rights, deliver justice, or hold harmful actors accountable. In Colombia, only 5.2% of the killings of human rights defenders have been legally resolved (201). In Mexico, 90% of those attacking human rights defenders have never been brought to justice (202). It is a similar picture across the world. The worsening climate crisis and the ever-increasing demand for food, fuel and minerals will likely intensify the pressure on our planet — and those who risk their lives to defend it.

The data is shocking. Occasionally killings of land and environmental defenders make the national news. A handful may make headlines around the world. But the available data likely only reveals a part of the picture, and it is certain that many attacks go unreported. This is true for those on land but also for those protecting our oceans.

Just as on land, rapacious corporate interests and failures of governance combine to endanger our planet's oceans. And just like on land, people whose lives and livelihoods depend on the ocean play a frontline role in safeguarding biodiversity and combating the climate crisis. However, with ocean ecosystems — and the role oceans play in planetary health — being less visible than their terrestrial counterparts. This chapter highlights how the vital work of 'ocean defenders' often goes unacknowledged, explores possible reasons for this black hole, and proposes a path for how we can begin to address it.

3.2 Stories from the Depths: The Cost of Protecting the World's Oceans

Covering 70% of the planet's surface, oceans provide food security and essential resources for billions of people. They are sites of immense importance to cultures and traditions of coastal communities worldwide. They absorb human-caused carbon dioxide and excess heat. And they are also the world's largest carbon sinks significantly mitigating the impact of climate change. As a result, there is an undercurrent of people, communities and experts working to protect them.

They are ocean defenders. But they won't receive the urgent support they need— and their attackers brought to justice — if we do not acknowledge the vital role, they play protecting coastal and marine ecosystems from some of the gravest threats: overfishing, environmental destruction, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Overfishing threatens biodiversity in many parts of the world — endangering the livelihoods and food security of billions of people especially coastal communities. Protecting these marine environments from unchecked exploitation are the communities and individuals who rely on them — sometimes at a deadly cost. In 2021, five fisherfolk were killed after brutal police raid in Nasugbu, the Philippines. Amongst them were Ariel Evangelista and his wife, Ana Maria 'Chai' Lemita-Evangelista, who were concerned about efforts to privatize Nasugbu's communal fishing waters and the displacement of local fishing communities (203). Global Witness has documented the murders of 11 defenders working to protect their communal fishing activities since 2012.

Alongside fishing, the catastrophic effects of pollution from oil and chemical spills, climate change, urban and agricultural run-off, industrial activities, and wastewater threaten marine life and ocean ecosystems around the globe. Offshore oil and chemical spills attributed to tankers, rigs, wells, and offshore platforms have severe social, economic, and environmental impacts that stretch from the deepest seas to the coastlines. On South Africa's Wild Coast, Indigenous People are standing up to the might of multinational oil companies seeking to exploit their ancestral fishing grounds for climate-heating fossil fuels. Indigenous activist and recent Goldman Prize winner Nonhle Mbuthuma stopped destructive seismic testing for oil and gas by asserting the rights of the local community to protect their coastline and its rich marine life. But her work to protect the planet has also led to death threats, brutality, criminalization, and harassment (198).

Pollution is also a major concern for communities in Quintero-Puchuncaví, Chile, where industries have been dumping toxic waste in the water for decades. In 2018, ocean and environmental defender, Alejandro Castro was found dead a day after anti-pollution demonstrations. Police initially attributed Alejandro's death to suicide, despite serious doubts raised by his family and environmental campaigning groups (204).

It is not just coastal communities who face increased violence after speaking out. Some work to protect the seas as lawyers, journalists or as fisheries observers. Since 2009, at least one observer has disappeared or died under suspicious circumstances while underway every year. Keith Davis disappeared at sea in 2015. He was hundreds of miles off the coast of Ecuador, working as a professional observer. He was monitoring tuna fishing practices aboard the Taiwanese-owned vessel Victoria 168, when he disappeared. His body has never been found (205). Global Witness has documented the murder of four fisheries observers between 2012 and 2022.

Ocean conservationists working to protect these creatures have also faced violence. Jairo Mora Sandoval and four foreign volunteers were abducted at Moín beach in Costa Rica in 2013. They were on a mission to protect the eggs of leatherback sea turtles from poachers. The volunteers managed to escape, but not before being sexually assaulted by their assailants. Jairo Mora was found the next morning, naked, handcuffed, beaten, and dead. Even before his death, he had been threatened at gunpoint for fighting the escalating egg-poaching trade in Costa Rica (10).

3.3 A Wave of Change: Increasing Documentation of the Deaths and Murders of these Invisible Heroes

Courageous individuals, groups and communities are coming together all over the world to take action to protect the oceans. There is also disturbing evidence from all around the world that ocean defenders are facing threats and being murdered. Yet, the stories that we share here are likely just a drop in the ocean. Global Witness and other organizations' documentation of the scale and scope of the issue is limited. Defenders protecting our marine environments face the same risks as environmental and land activists everywhere. Yet the vital work of ocean defenders often remains hidden from view.

There are numerous reasons why this may be the case. The disenfranchisement of coastal populations — often subject to state neglect and political and economic marginalization — increases vulnerability to violence and higher levels of impunity. As with defenders more broadly, location may also play a factor. Sites of struggle are often remote, far from urban centers. As a result, coastal communities may be more vulnerable to tactics to intimidate and silence. This is certainly true for ocean defenders who do their work out at sea. Not only are they isolated, but attacks against them are often outside of clear legal jurisdictions impeding investigations and justice.

Greater recognition of the need to sustain the world's oceans is also vital and with it, greater attention on the role and unique challenges that the communities and people working to protect them face.

Until then, defenders globally will continue to be excluded from the global policy, legal and law-enforcement measures needed to protect them. This must urgently change!

Global Witness is committed to ocean defenders worldwide. Through doing so, we aim to exert pressure on states, institutions, and companies to take action to protect ocean defenders. Governments must bring those who commit crimes against them to justice. The tragic stories of the deaths and murders of ocean defenders must be told — the fight to defend the health of the oceans is a fight for us all.

CHAPTER 4

Non-Lethal Attacks on Ocean Defenders

AUTHORS
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4.1 Introduction

Environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) worldwide experience both lethal and non-lethal violence as a result of their work to defend and protect land, territories, and natural resources (206). Non-lethal attacks can be used to intimidate EHRDs, their families and communities, convincing them to give up their human rights defense work. Such violence can have a broader chilling effect on common efforts to organize and mobilize for the protection of the environment and human rights, negatively impacting the social fabrics that have been constructed to protect communities. Non-lethal attacks, likewise, are often precursors to the killings of these defenders, which have been widely documented in recent years. Data on non-lethal attacks can thus provide insight into a crucial, sometimes small window of time where interventions may be especially critical to avoid escalation (207).

The ALLIED Data Working Group (DWG) is composed of national, regional and global organizations that collect data on attacks against EHRDs. The group forms part of the broader Alliance for Indigenous, Environmental and Land Defenders (ALLIED), a global network of civil society actors that drives multi-stakeholder action and systemic change in the recognition, support, and protection of defenders. Formed in 2018, the DWG aims to reduce fragmentation of data and to create an integrated, global consolidated database of lethal and non-lethal attacks faced specifically by Indigenous, Land and Environmental Defenders (ILEDs). By combining data coming from diverse sources, including local organizations that work more closely with communities, the DWG is able to capture a greater number

of non-lethal attacks that are difficult to verify through global reporting mechanisms. The group intends for the data to inform stronger protection protocols, while pushing for governments to monitor the situation of defenders and ensure their protection. Likewise, the group intends to hold businesses accountable while urging them to put in place appropriate safeguards for defenders, collectives, and communities, and calls for broad support to civil society actors who are addressing root causes of these threats and attacks.

The DWG's consolidated global database is comprised of data collected at different levels — i.e., local, national, regional, and global - collated into a common template. The template was developed by the DWG through a participatory process that identified priority common fields for data collection, including priority types of non-lethal attacks — i.e., arbitrary detention, beatings or physical injury, death penalty, defamation and smear campaigns, destruction or theft of property, displacement, eviction, forced/enforced disappearance, imprisonment, judicial harassment, kidnapping, sexual violence, threats, and torture (Box 4.1) - as well as killings. These definitions below are taken from varying sources including the UN, WHO, international data collecting organizations and international law.

Box 4.1 Types of attacks against environmental and ocean defenders

ARBITRARY DETENTION
Any arrest or detention not in accordance with national laws, because it is not properly based on grounds established by law or does not conform to the procedures established by law or is otherwise deemed arbitrary in the sense of being inappropriate, unjust, unreasonable, or unnecessary in the circumstances, and motivated by the victim, or someone associated with the victim (208).

BEATINGS AND PHYSICAL INJURY
A physical assault on a person, with or without weapons. There is an intent to cause pain and/or physical harm.

DEATH PENALTY
The death penalty, also known as capital punishment, is the practice of executing someone as punishment for a specific crime after a proper legal trial.

DEFAMATION OR SMEAR CAMPAIGNS
A remark, action, or communication that aims to tarnish the reputation, credibility, legitimacy, and otherwise stigmatize the ILED in the eyes of the general public, as well as possible allies. Social media and traditional media are commonly used platforms for defamation campaigns. Terms such as "smear campaign" and "red tagging" could be considered synonyms of defamation.

DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY
Unlawful and/or deliberate destruction of homes, schools, businesses, agricultural land, sites of cultural significance, etc. (209).

DISPLACEMENT
Displacement occurs when a person or persons are "forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters" (210).

EVICTION
The permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of and access to appropriate forms of legal or other protection (211).

FORCED/ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE
The arrest, detention, abduction, or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law (212).

FORCIBLE ENTRY
Raids or break-ins at offices, land, or private property — this may lead to a separate attack of theft — and as defined by Frontline Defenders may "include raids and searches carried out by law enforcement agents. While they may be lawful, when carried out in compliance with relevant regulations, they are in most cases linked to instances of judicial harassment (213).

HARASSMENT
Unwanted behavior that you find offensive. The unwanted behavior must have the purpose or effect of violating your dignity, or creating a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment for you (214).

INTIMIDATION
An act or course of conduct directed at a specific person to cause that person to fear or apprehend fear. Usually, an individual intimidates others by deterring or coercing them to take an action they do not want to take (215).

IMPRISONMENT
As a result of a criminal procedure, enforcement of a sentence of deprivation of liberty, such as in a prison, labor camp, "rehabilitation" camp or psychiatric institute (216).

JUDICIAL HARASSMENT
Can include the following: charging LED with crimes for acts that are part of the defense of rights (e.g. fines on blocking traffic, bringing charges of libel or defamation for publicly reporting violations and accusing officials); enforcing legal prohibitions on the promotion of certain rights (such as sexual or reproductive rights); applying broadly-defined or ambiguous offenses in criminal codes to specific ILED actions; restriction of legal guarantees (for example, against arrest without a warrant); arrest warrants that remain in force for many years; restrictions on freedom of movement (such as prohibitions on leaving the country); and tactics to delay criminal procedures. SLAPP suits are an example of judicial harassment.

KIDNAPPINGS
Unlawful detainment and taking away and/or confining of a person or persons against their will (including through the use of force, threat, fraud or enticement) (209). Any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure or to continue to detain a hostage in order to compel a State, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage (217).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE
Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts of trafficking, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to, home and work (218).

THEFT OF PROPERTY
Unlawfully taking or obtaining property with the use of force or threat of force against a person with intent to permanently or temporarily withhold it from a person or organization (7).

THREATS
Any type of threatening behavior if it is believed that the threat (other than a death threat) could be enacted (219).

TORTURE
Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity (209).

The methods and processes developed by the DWG gives priority to the work being done by local data collectors, ensuring they are visible in the reporting process and that their roles — often putting themselves at risk to document the situation of defenders — is recognized. The data the group collects is, however, the tip of the iceberg in terms of the attacks that the defenders are facing, as many go unpublished and will be difficult for data collectors to document and verify. There are also heavily underrepresented regions of the world in the data set due to a lack of public information and data collectors in certain countries. The group also recognizes that killings are often the most visible form

of attack against defenders, yet non-lethal attacks go under the radar and are not systematically documented. However, despite the challenges, the data the group has collected has helped to shed light on the reality of the situation of ILEDs, providing case studies and examples of the types of attacks they are often victims of across the world as they defend our shared planet. This section of the report examines what the consolidated database can tell us about non-lethal attacks against ocean defenders.

4.2 What Can the Consolidated Database Tell Us About Ocean Defenders?

The global consolidated database has gone through two iterations, covering data collected in five pilot countries (Colombia, Mexico, Philippines, Kenya, and Guatemala) during 2020 and 2021. In 2022 the DWG released their first report Uncovering the Hidden Iceberg consolidated from ten different data collecting organizations in a pilot phase that reported 536 non-lethal attacks against ILEDs during 2020 (206). The following year the second report was released that focused on Colombia and the Philippines and reported on the year 2021 (220). This documented 1297 non-lethal attacks against individuals, groups, and communities in Colombia and 240 in the Philippines. This was then followed by a Guatemala focused analysis, which documented at least 223 non-lethal attacks for 2021 (221).

As the project evolves the DWG is beginning to expand its scope to a more global focus, working with new and existing data collectors in underrepresented regions and with organizations, who may not typically identify the information they have as data. It is within this context that the analysis of ocean defenders took place — a context in which the DWG is also beginning to ask more of the consolidated database. Based on the fields and categories included in the template, and the fact that all the countries in the databased are situated on the ocean, it was clear that the database would have something to say about defenders protecting their right to subsist through the sea and confronting threats due to governments and private interests developing and claiming coastlines and areas of the ocean.

First, incidents related to the defense of the ocean came up for the Philippines and Colombia and totaled ten cases for both 2020 and 2021 (Box 4.2). The database shows that Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, their organizations and advocates continue to condemn these attacks on their livelihood and homes.

Box 4.2 Cases of attacks of ocean defenders from the Philippines and Colombia

IN THE PHILIPPINES,

where most of our documented attacks come from, the Fisherfolk organization, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), has spoken out about the displacement and eviction of fisherfolk due to coastal redevelopment. This has led to red-tagging (a governmental practice that accuses human rights defenders and government critics of being communist sympathizers) of those who speak out against the impacts of coastal development and the anti-fisherfolk policies that benefit private businesses and local governments.

IN COLOMBIA,

those defending artisanal fishing rights and ancestral territories on their coastlines are fighting for the right to subsist in the face of damages caused by the oil and gas industry and to retain their cultural identity due to loss of territory. One case in particular highlights the construction of a coastguard base by the National Navy on a conservation property that displaced the community and now means they cannot dock their boats and have had their mobility curbed.

Second, the database has fields relating to fishing, fisheries, water, and energy. We searched the database for all cases where the ILED was protecting water or fishing as these were the most relevant categories for this investigation. Although none of the incidents that mentioned water related to ocean defense, with rivers, forests and urban water access being the primary focus for these defenders. When the ILED was defending fisheries, the opposite was true, it was always related to the ocean, and these incidents also referred to impacts on biodiversity, subsistence, livelihood, and territory.

Third, the database contained information on the organization and community of the defender, and this included fishing communities and fisherfolk organizations. In total, for 2020, four cases related to fisherfolk in Philippines and one case referred to the leader of fishing organization in Colombia. For 2021, the database documented three cases against fisherfolk from the Philippines and two cases related to an artisanal fishing community and a fishing cooperative in Colombia where the attacks were directed towards people from Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Other communities and organizations might also have focused on defending the oceans, but it was impossible to parse this out.

Fourth, the types of attacks faced by these ocean defenders and or their communities included the following: displacement, smear campaigns/defamation, eviction, destruction of property, beatings and physical injury, theft, threats (over the phone), and judicial harassment.

There is certain modus operandi that emerge out of different contexts and patterns that arise regionally. We can identify that in the Philippines, smear campaigns and defamation, i.e. red-tagging, often accompany other types of non-lethal attacks and precede lethal violence. In the context of ocean defense, fisherfolk and their organizations are being targeted for opposing anti-fisherfolk policies imposed by local-government officials. This also leads to judicial harassment with alleged planted evidence and trumped-up charges and in one of the identified cases against a member of the fisherfolk community, defamation/smear campaign and judicial harassment, i.e. criminalization, came hand in

hand. Additionally, destruction of property also accompanied an incident of displacement against fisherfolk in the Philippines. Sources relating to this incident state that this is not uncommon. This is supported by an incident of eviction enacted by private actors, which was accompanied by beatings and physical injury and theft. These non-lethal attacks primarily relate to land reclamation projects looking to redevelop coastal areas, which impact biodiversity, access to and quality of water, as well as livelihoods.

In Colombia it is notable that many non-lethal attacks, in the form of threats and death threats, come through the circulation of pamphlets, posts on social media and direct messages and calls to the defenders themselves. In one of the cases identified, a Colombian woman ocean defender was the recipient of these types of messages and calls in the face of promoting responsible fishing to support biodiversity and coastal tourism involving community participation. In other cases, just as in the Philippines, land conversion of coastlines led to attacks, including killings. Artisanal fisherpeople and Indigenous Peoples in the region are looking to reclaim their territories from the Colombian State and associated actors e.g. the Navy, whilst confronting the energy sector in the form of the hydrocarbon industry.

Fifth, the sectors implicated in the incidents of non-lethal attacks against ocean defenders (when this information was included in the original datasets) were construction in three cases in combination with real estate in one case for 2020, as well as oil and gas in one case during 2021. The database has the potential to record an overall sector, such as construction or infrastructure as well as the sub-sector, real estate or roads or airport etc. Most cases discussed here related to government-led development projects: re-development, tourism or in Colombia, the building of a coastguard base.

Finally, the perpetrators of attacks against ocean defenders were the armed forces, the police, private security guards, the judiciary and local government officials. It was decided by members of the DWG when developing the database that perpetrator fields would be kept general for security and privacy purposes. However, it is clear that when the sectors implicated in these non-lethal attacks and the overall drivers of this violence are considered, those identified here as perpetrators are potentially not the authors of these aggressions. Having said this, in the Philippines the armed forces or police were involved in most attacks against ocean defenders, which speaks to the strategies of the State. In another instance it was private security guards who perpetrated the violence during an eviction.

In Colombia the story is similar, with the police implicated in violence during the repression of protests, for example. The judiciary are also marked as perpetrators here due to lack of prior consultation and denial of territorial autonomy based on the apparent necessity for government intervention.

4.3 Conclusion

Overall, the data on non-lethal attacks against ocean defenders is quite limited in presenting the true scope of the attacks that they are experiencing globally. There is more information available about land defenders, however, we are aware that the documentation efforts represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of attacks, meaning a full picture of the extent of attacks against defenders is still not completely understood. There are huge data gaps that need to be filled. First, there is a need to expand the database to other countries and geographies that are not currently covered. Second, it is important to increase the recognition of ocean defenders as environmental defenders, including among those of us who collect and instrumentalize data on ILEDs so that non-lethal threats to ocean defenders are better captured and documented.

To ensure that the threats against those defending oceans are thoroughly documented and well understood, it is important that States fulfil their responsibility to report on non-lethal as well as lethal attacks defenders are experiencing and draw knowledge from grassroot defenders and data collectors who have more precise knowledge of their territories. Sustainable Development Goal 16.10.1 calls on States to report all forms of violence against HRDs, lethal and non-lethal. Although not compulsory, these methods have been endorsed by UN states and the OHCHR compiles and publishes this data as custodian.

From a base of solid evidence, such as that being developed by the ALLIED Data Working Group, protection mechanisms can be designed to respond to the risk the defender is experiencing, meaning the measure will be more likely to ensure their protection. Protection measures need to be culturally and territorially appropriate and always designed in conjunction with the defender and their communities. Mechanisms that provide individualized protection often fall short as they fail to take into consideration the community dimension within which the defender works and lives. Non-lethal attacks are experienced by individuals as well as collectives and communities, thus underlining the importance of considering a collective dimension to protection.

CHAPTER 5

Role of Allied Organizations in Supporting Ocean Defenders

AUTHORS
Rocío López de la Lama, Nathan J. Bennett & Philippe Le Billon

5.1 Introduction

Ocean defenders are individuals, groups or communities who mobilize, advocate or take action to protect the marine environment, their coastal and oceanic territories, and associated human rights against existential threats (45). Often, these defenders belong to economically, socially and politically marginalized communities and groups who are already vulnerable to environmental hazards, making it crucial that they receive support to ensure the success of their resistance efforts (36,222). Government authorities and businesses have a duty to respect and protect the human rights of environmental and ocean defenders (5,10,223). Additionally, the conservation community is increasingly acknowledging the intersection of human rights and conservation, including the need to recognize and safeguard the efforts of local defenders of marine and coastal environments (38,224). Support can also come from allied civil society organizations, including legal non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, the media, academic and human rights institutions (211,225).

Insights from the broader literature on environmental defenders are valuable for understanding how to support ocean defenders (211,225). The level of threats faced by these defenders varies depending on factors such as the country context, economic activities, and social identity (3,11,226). Thus, tailoring personal safety and security mechanisms to the local context, profile of communities and defenders,

and their context is crucial, as it can significantly impact the prevention of both non-lethal and lethal attacks on defenders, their families, and communities (7,227,228). Additionally, providing training and capacity building opportunities that equip communities with knowledge and skills for their resistance efforts is important. Some groups may need support for social organizing and proactive advocacy, while others might require assistance with environmental impact assessments, consultation processes, or legal proceedings, among other activities (229).

Coastal communities depend heavily on healthy ecosystems for their livelihoods, food security, cultural practices and identities, and overall well-being. However, mounting pressures from unchecked development of ocean economy activities under the guise of the 'blue economy' is undermining environmental sustainability and human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable ocean, in many places around the world (14,16,33). Local communities and groups are often left on their own to fight against these incursions that negatively affect their marine environments, territories, and human rights. Unfortunately, due to limited visibility or perceptions of environmental and governmental organizations that view these communities as threats to local ecosystems, many ocean defenders receive insufficient support from both governments and civil society organizations (41,45). Furthermore, civil society organizations often focus on promoting marine conservation, responsible small-scale fishing, or local community development, rarely adopting a comprehensive approach that considers human rights and the well-being of coastal communities (230—234).

This chapter provides recommendations and strategies for allied organizations to effectively support ocean defenders. To better understand the needs of ocean defenders and the role of allied organizations, we conducted semi-structured interviews with ocean defenders and allied organizations between February and April 2024. We interviewed eleven ocean defenders from nine countries, including three from Africa, two from Europe, one from Oceania, and five from South America. These interviews explored the threats ocean defenders face for their resistance efforts, their experience of working with allied organizations, desired and needed support mechanisms, and their reflections on future collaborations with allied organizations. Additionally, we interviewed representatives from thirty allied organizations - including grassroots networks, funders, legal non-profit organizations, NGOs and INGOs, the media, academic and human rights institutions - to capture perspectives from local, national, and regional levels across Africa, Asia, South America, Europe, and international entities (Table 5.1). These interviews focused on the profile and role of each organization, the support strategies they implement, collaborative relationships with local partners, reflections on engaging local communities and perceived effectiveness in supporting ocean defenders.

Ocean defenders and allied organizations shared their experiences of living, advocating, and working in challenging contexts. The results and inferences presented in this chapter are derived from these interviews. To ensure the personal safety of those interviewed, we will only provide a general profile of our interviewees and quotes presented in this report are anonymized.

Table 5.1 Number, regions and types of ocean defenders and allied organizations that were interviewed

GROUP	AFRICA	ASIA	SOUTH AMERICA	EUROPE	OCEANIA	INTERNATIONAL	TOTAL
Ocean Defenders							
Small-scale fishers	1		3	2			6
Indigenous representatives			2		1		3
Women representatives	2						2
Allied organizations							
Grassroots networks	1	1	1	1	1	2	7
Funders						2	2
Legal Non-Profit Organizations	2		2			2	6
NGOs and INGOs	1	1	3	1		1	7
University researchers, and networks of academics	1					2	3
Human rights institutions			1			2	3
Journalists						2	2

5.2 Ocean Defenders' Experiences, Challenges and Needs

This section reports on ocean defenders' perspectives on threats to coastal communities, the challenges being experienced by ocean defenders, and the needs of ocean defenders to strengthen their mobilization and resistance efforts.

5.2.1 Threats to Coastal Communities

Ocean defenders actively resist and mobilize against various **threats** posed by ocean economy activities in their communities and countries. The threats mentioned during the interviews included illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, industrial fishing, marine and coastal pollution, criminal activities (such as illegal drug trade), offshore oil extraction, renewable energy projects, conservation initiatives (e.g., marine protected areas), coastal development projects, land dispossession, militarization of coastal areas, invasive species, and climate change. These threats are widespread, often cumulative, and in some cases, their impacts remain "invisible," going unreported beyond the immediate locale. The following quotes from Ocean Defenders illustrate several of these threats.

One ocean defender, for example, describes the threat of industrial fishing of pelagic fish by foreign fleets for fishmeal production as follows:

Ocean defender, Gambia

> *"The biggest threat we have is this foreign company that is trying to take our livelihoods from us. It is a fishmeal factory owned by an individual Chinese, which is supported by the Gambia government and the Chinese government. So, this factory is very powerful. They have a lot of money (...) Gambia is a poor country that depends heavily on small pelagic fish as it is very cheap and affordable (...) So, this fish is very important because it's almost the only source of protein for Gambians (...) What they do is they finance fishermen, many of whom supply them come from Senegal... So, they will give them the machines, the fishing nets, and some other money to support them. When these people catch fish, the first consideration will not be the poor people but the factory. So, the majority of the fish that is landing goes straight to the factory, not into the community (...) So the community is struggling to have fish. Fish have become very expensive, very little fish is now available to us. A lot of people cannot buy it anymore."*

Another interviewee discusses the militarization of an island under the pretext of increased criminal activities:

Ocean defender, Colombia

> *"Well, the organization [of small-scale fishers] was consolidated through a process of social mobilization after a climatic event led to the establishment of a coast guard base. Initially, the focus was on resisting the militarization of environmentally strategic areas and challenging the concept of sovereignty that excluded communities. Currently, the organization is fighting against industrial fishing, illegal fishing, and fishing with unauthorized personnel in the region. (...) This situation is indeed concerning, as it is driven by a prejudice related to the need for more [military] bases or physical institutions for control. However, there is no real control over what happens at sea.*

These stigmatizations, which lead to quicker militarization in areas like ours, are fueled by issues such as drug trafficking and violence—not only here but also in other parts of the Caribbean."

An ocean defender from Peru bemoans the aftermath of an oil spill where the responsible company neglected its remediation duties:

Ocean defender, Peru

"Repsol has not cleaned anything, has not done anything. They waste money hiring vessels for monitoring, but every time the sea moves, the sediments from the seabed are stirred up, releasing oil that floats to the surface. This will always happen, and it is very frustrating for us. As fishermen, we had managed to clean the beaches and the seabed, which took a lot of effort to raise awareness among people [...] So when Repsol did this, it felt like they were telling us that they can do whatever they want only because they have money and power."

5.2.2 Challenges Affecting Ocean Defenders Efforts

The context in which ocean defenders operate presents numerous **challenges** to their efforts to defend and protect their communities and livelihoods, which largely rely on healthy marine and coastal ecosystems. Firstly, at the community level, challenges related to social organization, human capacities, and necessary resources limit their resistance efforts. Secondly, coastal communities often live in vulnerable conditions, with poverty exacerbated by climate change impacts, reducing their ability to allocate sufficient time and resources for social organization and resistance. Thirdly, ocean defenders' needs and voices are often marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes due to limited political support from national, regional, and local governments.

Many of the threats faced by ocean defenders are due to government support for national and international businesses, and for broader economic development agendas. Governmental support can stem from a focus on economic development for the country or, as ocean defenders often mention, because of corruption and irregular governance processes. According to defenders' testimonies, governments prioritize financial profits over the environment and local well-being, aligning with the private sector to push for infrastructure and other development projects that negatively impact coastal communities.

A small-scale fisher from Turkey, for example, recognizes the preference and support of the government for industrial fisheries over small-scale fishers:

Ocean defender, Turkey

"Almost everything is a threat to what we have to face and experience. Our main threat is industrial fishing (...) Industrial fishing is the sector that wants to get the most profit without leaving anything to small-scale fisheries. We also have to deal with the government and ministry, as fishing policies many times favor industrial fishing and threaten small-scale fisheries."

Ocean defenders and allied organizations also recognize that these threats are likely to increase due to the growing pressure of a "blue economy" and "blue growth" agendas in many places around the world. As governments open the door to development of the ocean economy, this is leading to coastal communities having to face more than one threatening economic activity at the same time:

Legal non-profit organization, Belgium-based

"Now we are realizing that ...fishing agreements are only a small part, but that the fishing itself is only a small part of the problem [that coastal communities face]. In the last years, we have seen that fishing communities are very much affected by the blue economy or the boom of blue economies. So, everything that goes under that, which includes tourism, oil and gas exploitation... all these kinds of economic activities that are part of the blue economy... I don't know whether they get support from the local government, but at least they do what they want. So, the government is not taking any action against them, and that's really having a detrimental impact on small-scale fishing communities. So that's a big threat"

During the interviews, ocean defenders discuss how businesses often take advantage of the precarious situation coastal communities are in. They employ unethical tactics to promote division within these communities regarding their stance on proposed or ongoing economic activities. Defenders mentioned several tactics used by companies, often in collaboration with or supported by government authorities. These tactics include creating and circulating fake news to divide local communities, promising job opportunities and other social benefits without accountability, and labeling defenders as anti-development or terrorists for opposing economic projects. A key leverage point that businesses exploit is providing employment to some community members to encourage economic development, securing a base of support for their activities at the local and national levels.

The following interview quotes illustrate different unethical tactics employed by businesses (salmon aquaculture, fishmeal processing, and coastal development) to weaken the resistance efforts of coastal communities:

Grassroots network representative, Chile

"They are paying 500,000 pesos [~ USD 525] to pose as fishermen so that, through the union, they can become part of the ECMPO [Indigenous marine areas of Chile] and disrupt the process. Last week, the salmon farmers also wanted to join the ECMPO, and they have been accepted. Now that they are part of it, they are asking for all the information—traditional knowledge, types of customary uses, names of the leaders. As a result, the leaders now have to write letters stating that they reject everything and do not want to provide any information."

Ocean defender, Gambia

"A lot of bribery and corruption took place when the Chinese factory came here. They went door to door of the influential people in the village... only talking to the old people who haven't gone to school and gave them empty promises... which are not even written. It is all a verbal agreement with the factory. So, when they gave this land to the Chinese, they allowed the factory here all for free. The land they occupy is more than a hundred meters [wide] in size and is all for free. They didn't pay $1 a day. And they gave them those places regardless of the fact that those areas are where the women used to dry the fish. Those were their areas and they removed them."

Ocean defender, Peru

"When a fancy housing project was being built on a nearby beach, I was one of the people who strongly protested. Honestly, those houses are on fragile coastal ecosystems, and building there was not appropriate. One day, one of the owners called me and said they wanted to meet with me. He said they had already spoken with one of my fellow fishers, and we would meet and have some tea. I told him, 'You don't need to meet with me; I'm not the president of the association anymore...if you want to meet with me, it should be in public. I don't need to go to your house.' He was trying to arrange a meeting so that from the moment I sat down, he would start negotiating to silence me. Despite this, I continued to hold my ground and criticize them. I've always stood firm."

When ocean defender communities resist government pressure and the aforementioned divide-and-conquer tactics, governments and businesses often resort to more aggressive strategies. In seven out of the nine countries where ocean defenders were interviewed, there were mentions of harassment, physical violence towards defenders, property damage, unjustified imprisonment, and death threats. Allied organizations also reported attacks and assassinations of ocean defenders in the different contexts they are located in. Europe was the only region without reference to non-lethal or lethal attacks.

One interviewee described the pressure on and non-lethal attacks against coastal communities who are opposing offshore oil and gas projects in South Africa:

Legal non-profit organization, South Africa-based

"Regarding oil and gas, we are witnessing increasing pressure on coastal communities to accept or agree to so-called development projects. These projects often promise potential jobs and some form of community development. However, this model of development contradicts the traditional ways in which these communities have lived (...) Companies and government officials often use aggressive and sometimes violent tactics to push these projects through. This pressure manifests as internal conflicts, intimidation, and even assassination. Community members who oppose these projects face increasing threats to their lives and livelihoods from oil and gas companies, their own communities, and government officials. As the push for more oil and gas development continues, it becomes increasingly difficult for environmental defenders, ocean defenders, and communities to oppose these projects due to the escalating threats they face."

In an interview about coastal community resistance efforts against coastal development projects in the Philippines, a representative of a grassroots network describes how the state uses criminalization to delegitimize and silence ocean defenders:

Grassroot network representative, Philippines

"Ocean defenders often face state-sponsored harassment and attacks. When coastal communities actively organize to protect their resources, both local and national governments frequently label them as rebels. This practice, known as red-tagging, has escalated to "terror tagging," where the government can simply accuse defenders of being terrorists. Despite this, we remain committed to our legitimate campaign to protect the basic rights of the people and fisherfolk. We confront these challenges through mass movements, relying on the strength of our community's collective efforts. Remaining silent after being red-tagged would mean conceding to the government's goal of silencing us. Therefore, we continue our struggle with extra caution, confronting these issues politically while staying vigilant."

5.2.3 Needs of Ocean Defenders

In the context of growing pressure from the ocean economy and the ongoing marginalization of coastal communities, small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples by national governments, interviews with ocean defenders highlighted several key needs to enhance and strengthen their resistance and mobilization efforts:

1. **Community-defined visions and priorities:** To guide their efforts towards a common goal, ocean defenders need time, capacity, and safe spaces and time to establish a collective vision together and for the community. This vision has the potential to guide their resistance efforts and foster unity in the community.

2. **An understanding of the issues they are facing:** Coastal communities need to fully understand the development pressures they are facing and the political scenario they are in. This includes who the proponents are, the potential environmental and social impacts of development projects, national legal frameworks, and policies, required participation and approval processes, the extent of their rights, and risks of reprisal or repression.

3. **Understanding opportunities for action and resource needs:** Ocean defenders could use guidance on finding effective allies, on the potential types and courses of action to resist pressures and threats, and capacity building around the resources, knowledge, and skills they need to strengthen their ability to organize and advocate effectively.

4. **Legal expertise and advice:** Closely linked to the previous need, the fight to protect livelihoods, nature, and rights often translates into legal actions at the national, regional, or international level. For these actions to be successful, defenders require legal expertise to determine the most appropriate legal strategies, and remedial actions or compensation mechanisms to pursue.

5. **Scientific research:** Close collaboration with national and international researchers was a key need mentioned by several ocean defenders - as information is important for communication campaigns, negotiations, and legal proceedings. For example, environmental and social impact assessments are useful both before project implementation for advocacy and afterwards to negotiate or argue for compensation. Research support might also document historical use and marine tenure, the extent and quality of participation and consent processes, or threats to and attacks against ocean defenders.

6. **Funding and financial management support:** Funds are essential for supporting the resistance efforts of ocean defenders, as well as for making possible the actions implemented by allied organizations. However, three ocean defenders explicitly mentioned that funds should not go directly to their local associations as a way to reduce potential risks of intra-community tensions. Rather, having funds managed by an allied organization with adequate capacity and safeguards for the priority areas the community decides would ensure that all funds are managed in a fiscally responsible manner and used wisely.

7. **Safety and security measures:** Coastal communities often face political marginalization and criminalization, and they are vulnerable to lethal and non-lethal attacks. These attacks are rarely prosecuted, creating a sense of impunity for perpetrators. In this context, having safety and security protocols in place is essential for preventing or effectively responding in crisis scenarios. These measures must consider not only the individuals at risk but also their families and communities, ensuring everyone's safety when implementing strategies.

8. **International attention and support:** International attention is crucial for highlighting the risks and threats faced by ocean defenders and for pressuring national governments and the private sector to ensure their well-being and respect for human rights. Coverage by the international press and documentation by international human rights organizations and mechanisms (e.g., UN Special Rapporteurs) can be pivotal. These efforts can significantly elevate the profile of the challenges faced by ocean defenders and the human rights issues in countries with weak governance and high corruption.

The needs identified here underscore the crucial role that allied organizations and supportive networks play in supporting ocean defenders. Many of the interviewed defenders recognized that these organizations have been instrumental in the success of their resistance efforts. The following two quotes illustrate the key role that allied organizations have played:

Ocean defender, Greece

"I don't know if you know them... They do activities here...for the environment. And they are the first supporters we had from the very first moment. They are helping us, not so much with money, but you know with knowledge, publicity, and all this because we are fishermen and this is quite difficult for us to deal with...deal with authorities, deal with the media... They are very important to us; they are important because we don't know anything about these issues."

Ocean Defender, Gambia

"When we started this campaign, we came to realize that we cannot do this alone, more especially when we were arrested. (...) we cannot achieve what we want only by ourselves. So, we have our Facebook page and we started sharing information. So, we came in contact with Greenpeace Africa, it was the first organization to contact us, and we have been working with them for four years now. ...they help us build our capacity. How can we protest? How can we peacefully campaign against this matter? That's how they train us".

Box 5.1 Networks, collective action, and supporting NGOs

Based on cases available from the EJAtlas database on 9 August 2024, out of 846 conflicts involving fishers, →

110 (13%) **were assessed as 'successful' for defenders,**

while

470 (56%) **were 'not successful'**

the rest being assessed

266 (31%) **as 'not sure'**

The level of success was slightly higher when defenders developed a network/collective action as a mobilizing form or when national and international NGOs were involved.

Despite some presence, all interviewed ocean defenders agreed that the current on-the-ground support from such organizations is severely limited and inadequate. In some coastal communities, support is entirely absent. As one ocean defender from Senegal noted, "We don't have any support from any NGOs, from any university, or any other institution." Defenders from Senegal, in particular, expressed feeling isolated and vulnerable to the external threats they face, especially those linked to land dispossession.

5.3 Allied organizations' strategies, challenges, and needs

This section focuses on the strategies employed by allied organizations to support ocean defenders, as well as the challenges that they experience and needs that they have to be able to support ocean defenders adequately and effectively.

5.3.1 Strategies Currently Employed by Allied Organizations

Allied organizations can be grouped into seven categories: grassroots networks, funders, legal non-profit organizations, human rights institutions, national NGOs and INGOs, university researchers and networks of academics, and media. Each category plays a specific role and employs distinct strategies to support coastal communities. The support mechanisms offered by these organizations are shaped by their institutional agendas, skills, capacities, and financial resources. Table 5.2 provides a detailed description of the types of support each category offers, as identified from the interviews.

Table 5.2 Types of support strategies that allied organizations provide are identified through interviews with allied organizations and ocean defenders

CATEGORY OF ALLIED ORGANIZATION	TYPES OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES
Grassroots networks - national and international	→ Creating networks for sharing, learning, and solidarity. → Building capacity among local communities. → Generating learning and exchange spaces. → Leveraging political power to increase the visibility of local demands to the government. → Providing funds for specific needs at the local level. → Amplifying local stories on national and international platforms.
Funders	→ Providing direct funding support to local organizations or associations. → Building capacity of organizations to manage funds. → Investing in key activities to strengthen community capacities and mobilization efforts. → Providing indirect support through funding the activities of allied organizations (e.g., legal costs). → Facilitating access to decision-making spaces for local communities that are typically inaccessible to them.
Legal Non-Profit Organizations	→ Providing advice on appropriate legal avenues to pursue and arguments to make. → Offering training on legal issues and human rights. → Defending communities, groups, organizations, or individuals in court or other legal processes. → Supporting the efforts of and protecting community lawyers who are threatened due to their involvement.
Human rights institutions - national and international	→ Working to bring human rights language and obligations into national and international ocean governance frameworks and institutions. → Ensuring the implementation of international recommendations at the national level. → Documenting cases of human rights violations in the ocean context. → Building the capacity of national human rights institutions pertaining to coastal communities.
NGOs - Marine and coastal conservation, and fisheries focused at national and international level	→ Supporting local organizational strengthening, advocacy efforts, leadership, and capacity building. → Providing funds or hiring experts to conduct research that will generate key information to support advocacy, protection of rights, or safeguard defenders. → Increasing the visibility of ocean defenders in national and international policy deliberations and processes.

CATEGORY OF ALLIED ORGANIZATION	TYPES OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES
University researchers, and networks of academics	→ Convening and facilitating learning and solidarity networks involving ocean defenders and allied organizations. → Providing advice and expertise to the community when contacted due to urgent needs or crises. → Conducting research and disseminating results based on identified needs. → Acting as expert witnesses in legal battles and court cases. → Doing advocacy work in collaboration with or on behalf of coastal communities.
Media - Local, national, and international	→ Documenting instances of human rights violations and environmental disasters. → Highlighting local communities' efforts to steward and protect marine ecosystems and fisheries, their territories and livelihoods, and human rights. → Chronicling violence against and assassinations of ocean defenders.

Allied organizations bring unique perspectives and face distinct challenges in supporting ocean defenders. For instance, grassroots networks, formed by local actors connected on a broader scale, are deeply embedded in local realities and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences (102,235). Our interviews include networks of small-scale fishers organized into associations, cooperatives, and federations, as well as networks of women and Indigenous Peoples. Representatives from these networks reported facing similar threats and obstacles as local ocean defenders. However, when well-organized, they can leverage political power more effectively and safely than individuals or single communities. This is illustrated in the following quote where a network leader recognizes that as a cooperative, small-scale fishers in Turkey have gained political power compared to previous years:

Ocean defender and grassroots network leader, Turkey

"One of our main activities is the yearly annual workshop, where all cooperatives meet. We have about 34 to 38 cooperatives that form part of our network. Here we discuss the governance problems we face, and also organize educational activities (...) In Turkey doing demonstrations is kind of a luxury right now, but as a cooperative (...) we always either write official complaint letters or participate in meetings with municipal authorities, regional authorities, or national authorities. We are considered an important actor here, and now we have a stronger possibility to achieve change compared to 15 years ago."

Funders can provide critical financial resources to support defenders and organizations' resistance efforts, as well as their safety and security needs. However, intermediary organizations, which play a crucial role in enabling direct funding to ocean defenders and allied organizations, are limited by the lack of recognition from their donors regarding the vital role ocean defenders play in marine and coastal conservation and sustainable development. This challenge also extends to donors who rely on co-funding mechanisms, as their partners may not fully acknowledge or support the unique contributions and needs of these defenders.

Legal non-profit organizations can provide legal training, advice, and assistance to coastal communities, as well as support and protection for the lawyers working on the ground. There is a significant need for this type of organization among ocean defender communities and their diverse allies. However, due to the lengthy and costly nature of legal processes, these organizations often face budget constraints and are unable to meet the extensive and growing demands of ocean defenders in many areas.

The following lawyer from a legal non-profit organization, based in South Africa, shares their challenges quite clearly:

Lawyer for allied organization, South Africa

"There's also the challenge of funding. You know, we can't unfortunately help everybody because of our funding constraints and organizational capacity. There are so many communities, you know, South Africa has a huge coastal community, and we try to work in the coastal provinces, which are Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. But, you know, there's only so much we can do in terms of helping them move things forward. And also, we can't take everything to court as well because...I mean, we would like to because all the applications for oil and gas drilling are getting authorized. But going to court and doing all the required documentation is a very expensive process."

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are crucial allies due to their legal mandate to uphold human rights. Yet, they often face financial constraints and lack specific knowledge about coastal and marine environments, which can lead to them overlooking issues in these areas. International human rights institutions can support and strengthen the capacities of NHRIs and bring international attention to human rights issues when national governments are hesitant to act.

NGOs and ENGOs that focus on coastal and marine-related issues, among other topics, can bring highly trained expertise and resources to areas with little governmental support. However, these organizations may hesitate to engage in highly politicized conflicts due to concerns about jeopardizing their relationships with government authorities. While NGOs should not place their own staff at risk, they do have a responsibility to advocate for safe civic spaces where environmental organizations and advocates can organize, express their opinions, and participate in environmental decisions.

Researchers and universities, often having long-term and collaborative research projects with ocean defenders, are among their closest allies. Some interviewed researchers mentioned being the first ones ocean defenders call for support in times of crisis. However, researchers typically have limited resources and funding, restricting their ability to offer support beyond their research, time, and facilitation skills which can be used to convene and facilitate networks.

As the following quote demonstrates, academic networks can support ocean defenders in different ways that go beyond research:

Academic network, South Africa

"So, asking questions about how the work of academics can be most useful for and used by community-based activists (...) really crystallized [our mission] around small-scale fishers, their communities and their struggles for social and environmental justice. (...) We meet as a network to think together and reflect together and debrief together about a sort of support and accompaniment role that we are trying to play in solidarity with fishers. But then one of the things we also do is to sort of convene other networks. (...) So we will often convene and coordinate groups of civil society organizations, fishing communities, researchers, and policymakers to come together around certain issues."

Finally, covering issues related to ocean defenders and ocean economy activities is of great interest to the public, according to interviewed journalists. However, understanding the complexity of these issues and ensuring the safety of both local contributors and journalists is essential. Due to the increasing pressure for access to natural resources due to the growing ocean economy, one interviewed journalist discussed how it is becoming increasingly difficult to document ocean defender issues in Latin America and expressed concerns about future prospects. In the following quote, the journalist specifically reflects on the current situation in Ecuador:

Journalist for an international conservation media, Chilean office

"Watching Ecuador right now is very complicated because...doing reporting there is very difficult; journalists can't go for safety reasons, no one wants to speak on the record, so it is very complicated. It's very hard to see what's happening there, but evidently, with all the violence that Ecuador has experienced recently, well, and in fact, there was a massacre in a town in northern Ecuador last year. It's believed that this massacre happened due to rivalries between gangs, as a kind of revenge by one of these mafias because one of the groups had reached agreements with the fishermen. In retaliation, the other group eliminated an unknown number of people. So, it does have to do with a territorial problem, an issue of control, because fishermen continue to be victims since drugs continue to be exported by the sea".

5.3.2 Challenges Faced by Allied Organizations

Allied organizations encounter various challenges and limitations that hinder their ability to collaborate with ocean defenders consistently and effectively. A major concern arises when ocean defenders are involved in direct confrontations or violent conflicts with corporations and government authorities, or when there is a high risk of violence. Their resultant reluctance of allied organizations to engage is often influenced by their own past or ongoing experiences with safety and security risks.

Out of the 30 interviews conducted, 12 (40%) mentioned being victims of criminalization and government harassment that impacted their on-the-ground operations. These challenges, combined with unstable political and social contexts, threaten the safety and integrity of their teams and the community members they support. In such situations, allied organizations often limit their support to indirect forms of aid, such as offering organizational resources or engaging in discreet advocacy through media or behind-the-scenes discussions with government authorities.

In the following quote, an interviewee describes safety and security is a major concern for organizations when they working to support communities who are protesting against powerful actors:

INGO, UK-based

"There are real risks of working with these communities. There are risks of personal safety and security every day. It's my number one responsibility, make sure nobody gets murdered, hurt, killed, and that's tough. And... working on the water can be difficult, working on land can be difficult and there are threats all the time. And you're arguing against powerful people very often. So that is absolutely real."

There are also safety concerns related to illegal or criminal groups in some places. A representative of an international NGO working in Colombia, for example, mentions the concerns they have for team safety due to drug trafficking - an activity that intersects with fisheries - in the region:

INGO, Colombia office

"One of the main limitations has been drug trafficking. (...) This part of the coastline is a very important area for coca cultivation and its export through maritime transport. So, we have to deal with this issue, and depending on the political processes we are involved in, it either intensifies or slightly reduces the risk, but it remains a constant threat. (...) This has implications for how we will work there and the issues we will address. There are areas where we cannot enter and areas that cannot be monitored."

One of the interviewed ocean defenders described the limited support they received from their main allied organization when they needed it most. The ocean defender attributed the NGO's limited involvement to their fear of repercussions from the national government. This situation occurred in Peru during a severe oil spill:

Ocean defender, Peru

"The NGO advised us, but they could not participate in the meetings we had with the company and government authorities... They were afraid that later in their professional careers, none of these authorities would hire them. So, they backed off a little... just advising us on how best to participate in those meetings."

Financial challenges are common among allied organizations as limited and restricted resources were mentioned by 47% of them (n=14). This limitation was mainly mentioned by national and local organizations, compared to international ones that have a structure in place to raise and secure funding. Funding problems for supporting ocean defenders are widespread across the world. For instance, the president of a Greek marine conservation NGO mentioned:

Marine conservation NGO, Greece

"Fundraising is our number one challenge because it's never easy. We're talking about companies who want to be linked with something that they can advertise and look sexy and have fantastic numbers and indicators... This is not always the need here. The need may be something more qualitative rather than quantitative. So, we need to make sure that we present our stories, the cases we need to defend, we try to defend it in a way that makes sense for this kind of audience, who just wants to read numbers. And at the same time, also to share it with donors who are sophisticated enough, individual donors who

are sophisticated enough to understand, you know, how important it is sometimes to fund something that you cannot advertise. So fundraising is always challenging because we literally need money for things that may be not visible."

Allocation and prioritization of funds was also a concern among interviewed funders. Funders who work with ocean defenders recognize that the funding community often follows restrictive rules, bureaucratic processes, and top-down budgeting allocations, that is not based on an understanding of the importance of working with coastal communities. Interviewees emphasized that funding relationship building spaces and capacity development activities are among the main issues needing urgent attention from both funders and allied organizations. As one spokesperson for a major foundation shared:

Allied Organization, Funder, Swiss

"The limiting variable is not the community, it's really the system that they have to engage with...things according to the latest trend, instead of realizing that, you know, communities experience all the challenges, all at once sometimes. They are working on environment, gender, human rights, everything at once and they don't want to have to apply to 50 million grants, each for a little slice of their strategy. I mean, it's the world that they engage with, that's the problem, not them. And fighting against that mindset is the biggest challenge for me. But like I said, it's the perception of what the challenges [are that] is flawed in philanthropic circles, because the perception is that, oh, they're small and they're not organized and that is not it."

In terms of institutional challenges, a notable issue is the tension between the agendas and priorities of the headquarters of large international NGOs and the realities faced by their national and local offices. This was mentioned by three out of the four interviewed representatives from large international NGOs. Time and budget allocations for local priorities, emergencies, and urgent issues are often restricted by international NGOs' headquarters, which may not fully understand or consider local nuances or account for the need for flexibility in their global strategies, programs, and planning processes. And yet, this attention to the local context is critical because many coastal communities need to satisfy basic needs and ensure human rights before addressing other issues like sustainability, conservation, or co-management schemes.

The tension between the realities of a national office and the mandate of an international organization on how best to work with coastal communities is exemplified in this quote:

INGO, Madagascar-office

"I will answer this as a personal answer, not as the INGO I work for. In my opinion, the main challenge is patience and timing, as we are trying to respond to a complex situation, not one complex issue, not a single issue. When we talk about fisheries, there are a lot of factors that we need to consider. And it takes time to overcome all of the challenges... and during that period, if we do not know how to interact and onboard the community, it is likely that the action will not be undertaken as expected. So, this timing and this patience is very important when we work with coastal communities, because there are a lot of factors. However, this is not something that external organizations usually consider or understand properly."

Finally, inadequate governance, lack of transparency, and corruption at the national level, along with systemic discrimination and marginalization of coastal communities, were identified as key challenges hindering the efforts of allied organizations (n=10). These issues result in a lack of access to crucial data for decision-making, unresponsive government authorities, frequent changes in government personnel, and defamation from state authorities. Such conditions directly threaten the success and sustainability of policy-level actions, which are essential for achieving the long-term changes needed to protect and respect human rights and ocean defenders.

Importance of taking corruption into account when defining support strategies is demonstrated by this quote:

INGO, UK-based

"So, I think one of the big ones, as I mentioned earlier, is corruption because it kills, it destroys everything. And people again, they don't like saying this, but in a country like Liberia, corruption, small C, and very big C is written through society. I'm not being judgmental there; I am acknowledging something that I have seen again and again. So, you will find people who are coming for employment to us saying, listen, if you give me the job, I will give you X or Y or do this or that. In a small way, that's a corrupt practice. And, you know, we will see at the same time a minister that is taking money to give a license to a foreign fishing vessel to fish illegally. That is corruption. And I think that's a real challenge."

5.3.3 Identified Needs of Allied Organizations

From the interviews with allied organizations, there are five key needs that allied organizations need to overcome in order to support ocean defenders adequately and effectively. These are summarized as follows:

1. **Safety and security of teams:**
Many allied organizations need to develop strategies that ensure safety and security of their teams and the community members they support by implementing robust protection measures and contingency plans.

2. **Sufficient, sustainable, and flexible funding:**
Allied organizations need to secure sufficient long-term funding for core activities that align with their central mandate, but with adequate flexibility to allow them to allocate resources in ways that best suit their needs and those of the coastal communities they support. Funding arrangements should be based on trust and must allow allied organizations to address the unique realities, needs, and aspirations of ocean defenders, and potential threats that may arise.

3. **Alliance and network building:**
Due to the complexity and scale of the issues that coastal communities face, allied organizations need to foster strong alliances and networks, both locally and internationally, with a wide range of organizations, to enhance their advocacy efforts and amplify their voices.

4. **Reconciliation of national and international agendas:**
There is the need for reconciliation of national and international agendas for national and international NGOs working in coastal communities. Local offices need more autonomy to address urgent issues and satisfy basic needs before tackling broader goals like sustainability or conservation.

5. **Capacity to work in challenging political contexts:**
Allied organizations need to address and account for corruption, lack of transparency and irregular processes within the countries they operate. This involves not only understanding the issue at hand but the broader system dynamics that allow corrupt, informal, and illegal practices to unfold. By doing so, organizations can propose specific strategies for different governmental authorities, across different governance levels, to ensure long-term impacts of their initiatives. Securing strategic alliances with key governmental figures is also crucial for advancing efforts to support and protect ocean defenders.

5.4 Recommendations

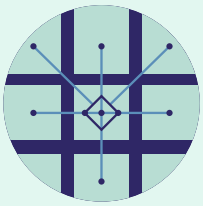
Despite the threats, challenges, and needs that ocean defenders face, these communities, groups, and individuals continue to demonstrate agency and commitment in initiating resistance efforts. Allied organizations recognize the importance of learning from and working alongside coastal communities, embracing a collaborative rather than a top-down approach. Successful collaboration and partnership with ocean defenders depend on building and maintaining relationships based on trust and mutual respect. However, as pressure from ocean economy activities increases, jeopardizing coastal communities' well-being, expanding the scope and scale of support from allied organizations will become a crucial factor.

This research revealed that allied organizations are providing an array of different support strategies to ocean defenders. These support strategies fall into six main categories: creating and supporting solidarity networks, capacity development, legal support, advocacy and increasing visibility, financial support, facilitation and mediation, and research and documentation (Table 5.3). The primary challenge for both allied organizations and ocean defenders is the limited and restricted availability of funds necessary to activate these support strategies. Therefore, our main recommendation is that the funding community urgently needs to acknowledge the high prevalence of human rights issues in the ocean and the importance of ocean defenders in protecting the ocean environment and related human rights. In general, greater funding needs to be allocated to the promotion and protection of human rights in the ocean. More specifically, greater funding needs to be allocated to supporting and safeguarding ocean defenders, including through expanding the on-the-ground presence and activities of allied organizations. Additionally, the restrictions and guidelines for accessing and managing these funds need rethinking to ensure adequate flexibility, as do the types of support strategies funders are willing to invest in. For example, networking opportunities and learning exchanges at both the community level and between communities have significant potential to foster change, yet these activities are seldom funded as impacts are not immediately visible or quantifiable.

Table 5.3 **Description of different categories of support strategies provided by allied organizations to coastal communities**

SUPPORT STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
1. Creating and supporting solidarity networks	Foster collaboration and exchange among and between communities of ocean defenders to amplify their voices, enhance learning, and build collective advocacy efforts.
2. Capacity development	Empower local communities by strengthening their organizational, legal, and advocacy skills, and providing the necessary support to enhance their resilience and autonomy.
3. Legal support	Provide local communities with access to legal advice, representation, and support for their advocacy efforts, as well as facilitating or demanding safety and security protocols when needed.
4. Advocacy and facilitation	Leverage political influence to raise the visibility of local communities' demands, facilitate their participation in decision-making spaces, and advocate for human rights and sustainable management in the ocean space.
5. Financial support	Offer both direct and indirect financial support to local coastal communities and allied organizations to strengthen their resistance efforts and increase impact.
6. Increasing visibility	Amplify the experiences, challenges, and struggles of ocean defenders at national and international levels.
7. Research and documentation	Research and document human rights abuses, social and environmental impacts, and violence against defenders to support advocacy and legal protection for affected communities.

If funding increases and requirements change, the different allied organizations might be able to expand their roles beyond those identified in Table 5.2 in the following ways:



Grassroots networks:

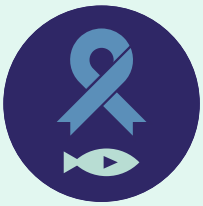
- Develop and implement safety and security mechanisms that can be activated for individuals or communities in a timely manner.
- Support exchange of knowledge and experiences among members of different communities as a way to strengthen social capital.
- Seek collaborations and partnerships with other organizations, including civil society organizations, academics, and government bodies, to maximize impact.

Legal non-profit organizations:

- Monitor accountability of governments and businesses and gather evidence of failure to uphold human rights.
- Offer training and recommendations to academics and practitioners on conducting research that can serve as effective evidence in court.
- Increase capacity to provide on-the-ground support to defenders, their communities, and other allied organizations (i.e., legal advice and training), and pursue legal cases as needed.

National and international human rights institutions:

- Establish rapid reporting and response mechanisms for imminent threats in coastal communities, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale fishers.
- Hold responsible parties accountable for human rights violations at the national and international levels.
- Work to address systemic barriers such as corruption and discrimination that hinder effective human rights protection and policy implementation.
- Continue working to bring human rights language and obligations into national and international ocean governance frameworks and institutions.



National and international NGOs:

- Advocate for the maintenance of safe civic space that enables environmental organizations, democratic processes, and participatory environmental decision-making.
- Promote respect and protection of human rights related to a clean, healthy, and sustainable ocean, and the rights of ocean defenders.
- Contribute to the identification of those responsible or associated with human rights violations in a strategic and effective way.
- Improve alignment between the priorities of headquarters and local offices of INGOs, giving more autonomy to local offices to address urgent issues and local needs as required.
- Support legal interventions by ocean defenders that seek to protect the ocean environment and related human rights.

Academia and researchers:

- Collaborate with oceans defenders in co-developing research projects that meet community identified needs.
- Facilitate access to experts, government authorities, and decision-makers to help ocean defenders address pressing challenges.
- Conduct research that supports the advocacy, communications, and legal efforts of ocean defenders, and that can provide the evidentiary basis for policies to protect the ocean environment, human rights and ocean defenders.
- Continue to build, convene, and coordinate networks involving civil society organizations, coastal communities and small-scale fishers, and government representatives to collaboratively address issues and foster solutions.

Media:

- Investigate and identify perpetrators, whether individuals, companies, or government representatives, driving conflicts and inflicting social and environmental harms in coastal and marine settings.
- Use media platforms to document and amplify the efforts of coastal communities to protect their ecosystems and livelihoods, highlighting both successes and challenges faced by these communities.
- Provide coastal communities with access to news and information related to the issues they are experiencing in appropriate languages and formats, enabling them to benefit from and use the documentation.

Finally, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions for supporting ocean defenders. When selecting the best support strategies, it is crucial to consider the specific threats, impacts, contexts, risks, and needs of both the defenders and their communities. The complexity of the threats and acts of repression can result in various forms of injustice and human rights violations. The political and social contexts may vary in terms of stability and level of risk, necessitating a tailored assessment for each community. Ocean defenders also face varying degrees of personal vulnerability, including physical, mental, and social challenges, which can be influenced by factors such as gender, age, race, livelihood, and socio-economic status (236,237). These factors must be considered to ensure appropriate and effective support strategies are implemented.

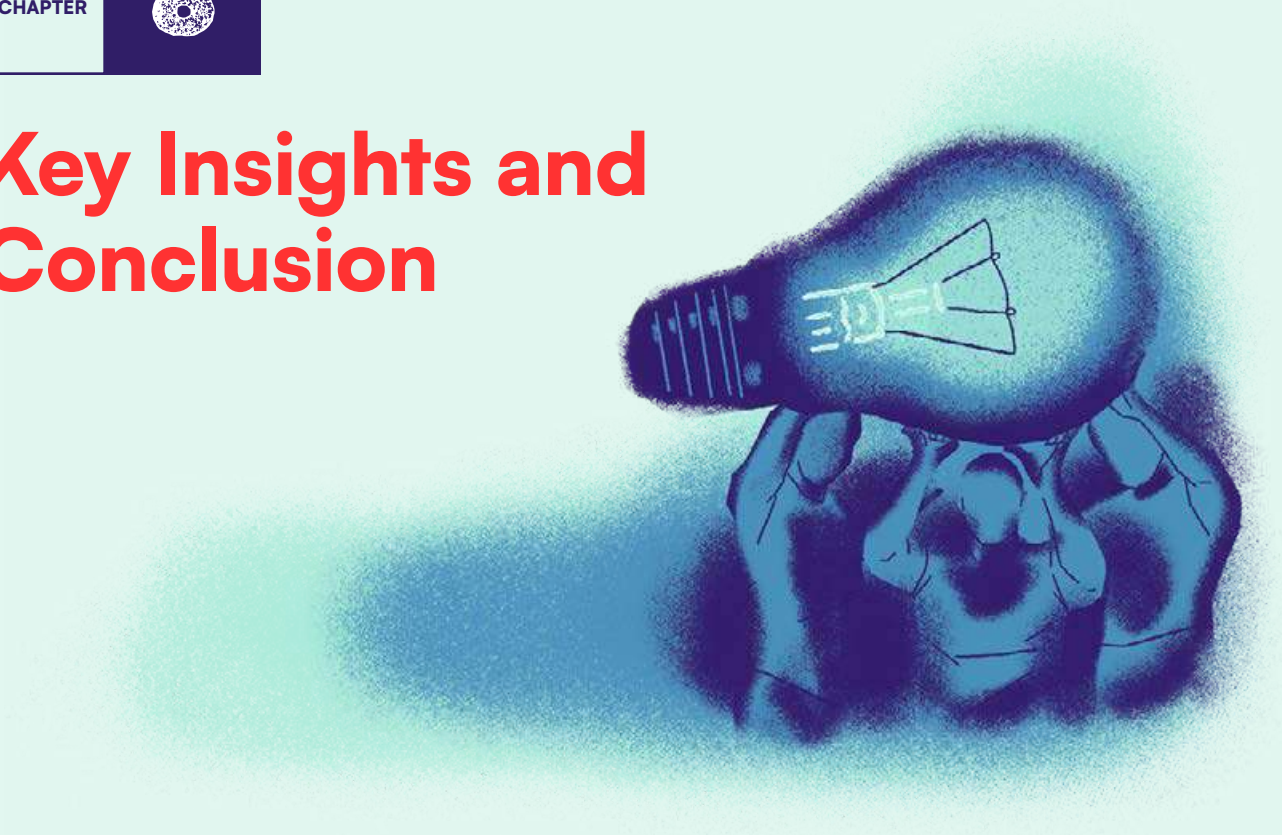
5.5 Conclusions

In the context of the ocean economy, where businesses and governments often overlook the environment and the human rights of coastal communities, the support of allied organizations can be crucial to the resistance efforts and safety of ocean defenders. Allied organizations can focus on building local capacity, augmenting advocacy and communications efforts, backing legal efforts, conducting research, and providing resources to reinforce the agency and enhance the actions of coastal communities. Furthermore, fostering collaboration and partnerships among allied organizations and with ocean defenders is vital for protecting human rights in marine and coastal environments. Strengthening grassroots networks — including cooperatives, associations, and federations of small-scale fishers, women, Indigenous Peoples, and youth — can increase local capacity to effectively address the complex challenges faced by ocean defenders. International organizations can help to amplify the voices and narratives of ocean defenders, raising the profile of the issues they are facing on a broader stage. Funders must play a pivotal role by prioritizing funding for human rights and ocean defenders. Without increased funding to support a diverse range of activities, many of these recommendations and strategies will remain challenging to realize.

Ocean defenders face different threats and operate in diverse governance contexts with varying levels of risk. Thus, it is essential that any strategies used to support ocean defenders center their voices and needs, ensuring they are at the forefront of discussions about the ocean economy, the marine and coastal environment, their territories, their rights, and their safety.

CHAPTER 6

Key Insights and Conclusion



The Ocean Defenders Project aims to increase knowledge of, raise awareness of, and bring greater support to ocean defenders. This report brings together some initial insights from the project on ocean defenders worldwide, including the types of threats they are facing, the resistance activities they are pursuing, and the non-lethal acts of repression and the lethal attacks that they are experiencing. It also delves into the role of allied organizations in supporting ocean defenders. The materials presented in this report and other research and engagement activities of The Ocean Defenders Project offer the following key insights:

1.

Human rights violations related to ocean economy development are on the rise.

The ocean economy is experiencing a period of rapid growth, including the intensification of current economic activities, expansion into new geographies and areas of the ocean, and the emergence of new ocean industries. As a result of this growth, coastal communities and populations are experiencing numerous negative environmental and social impacts from activities of the ocean economy. In many places, this is leading to violations of substantive human rights - including rights to a healthy ocean environment, food, livelihoods, health, security, and life. Groups who are highly dependent on marine resources and who are socially, economically or politically marginalized can be more vulnerable to these human rights impacts. The marine territories, as well as the collective tenure and access rights, of Indigenous Peoples small-scale fishers are often at stake. Furthermore, coastal communities and populations are often not being adequately informed about, included in decision-making processes related to, or consenting to emerging activities that will impact the environment or their lives.

2.

Around the world, ocean defenders are actively defending the ocean environment and human rights.

Conflicts between coastal communities and ocean economy projects are ubiquitous across different social, economic, and political contexts. In the face of mounting global threats from the growth of the ocean economy, ocean defenders are being forced into reactive mode. Instead of focusing on stewarding marine territories, environments and resources based on local knowledge and governance processes, coastal communities, groups and individuals are having to organize, advocate, and take action to protect the ocean environment, their territories, and their human rights. Ocean defenders include small-scale fishers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and broader civil society networks. They use diverse tactics to resist threats from the ocean economy - including legal and policy interventions, creating organizations and networks, awareness and communications campaigns, public protests and demonstrations, research and documentation, monitoring and enforcement, joining social movements, reinforcing their own livelihood activities or alternatives. They can also engage in disruptive, violent, and illegal activities to impede threatening developments and raise the profile of their cause. Finally, while the emphasis in the media and in the conservation community is often on individual environmental defenders, these results highlight the collective nature of mobilizations and efforts by ocean defenders to protect the ocean and safeguard their rights.

3.

While ocean defenders operate in diverse governance contexts, there is evidence of widespread repression and a worrying number of murders.

All people must be secure in their right to gather, organize and peacefully protest for the protection of the ocean environment and human rights. Yet, civic space is closing for those who would organize, mobilize and speak on behalf of the ocean environment and related human rights in many places around the world. Ocean defenders are experiencing non-lethal attacks including political marginalization, threats and harassment, repression and silencing, delegitimization and denigration, arrests and imprisonment, physical violence, generation of social division and conflict, damage to property, criminalization, economic marginalization, and lawsuits. There is also evidence that ocean defenders are being murdered at a worrying rate. The stakes are high, socially, economically and physically, for ocean defenders, their families, and their communities. It appears that perpetrators of repression and violent acts against ocean defenders are acting with impunity. There is very little evidence that they are being held to account across the case studies. Moreover, the repressive and violent context in which many ocean defenders operate means that individual and collective safety is a key issue.

4.

Research on ocean defenders is nascent, and there is still much to know and learn.

A limited and incomplete understanding of the situations facing and lived experiences of ocean defenders undermines our ability to take effective action to support and safeguard them. For example, there is a need to better understand: the drivers behind threatening ocean development activities; the impacts of ocean governance frameworks on human rights and ocean defenders; the level of recognition of human rights within ocean governance frameworks; the extent to which human rights are respected in the planning and implementation of different types of ocean development, conservation and management activities; whether government and businesses in the ocean economy are complying with their obligations and responsibilities to protect human rights and safeguard ocean defenders; and, how safe different national governance contexts are for ocean defenders. Furthermore, ocean defenders are diverse as are the contexts where they operate. This report contains narratives and analysis of a limited number of case studies - leaving significant gaps in our understanding of their struggles and the repression and violence they are facing. It is exceedingly important that we learn more about the different situations being experienced by ocean defenders around the world - so that we can develop a solid evidence base and informed strategies to support their efforts. Documenting a larger number of case studies would also allow for a deeper and more systematic analysis of factors affecting risk levels and chance of success for ocean defenders.

5.

Significant gaps exist in the data regarding lethal and non-lethal attacks on ocean defenders.

Various organizations and groups are engaged in the important, challenging and ongoing work of documenting both lethal and non-lethal attacks against environmental defenders. For various reasons, past data collection efforts have mostly focused on repression of and attacks on defenders of terrestrial and freshwater environments. And yet, there is a growing body of anecdotal evidence that ocean defenders in all parts of the world are experiencing similar issues. The number of acts of repression and murders present in our limited number of case studies also hints at a much broader problem, especially if one considers the sheer number of coastal communities worldwide who are facing and resisting threatening ocean development activities. As this report highlights, it is recognized that there are serious gaps in the data on murders of and non-lethal attacks on ocean defenders. There is a pressing need to fill these data gaps to better understand the scale of the issue, hotspot geographies, problematic sectors, and the characteristics of perpetrators

6.

Governments and the private sector must do more to meet their obligations and responsibilities to protect human rights, including the rights of ocean defenders.

Under international human rights law, states have an obligation, and the private sector has a responsibility to protect human rights - including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment - and to safeguard the rights of ocean defenders. Yet, it is clear that government and private sector actors are not doing enough in the context of the growing ocean economy. Governments must establish adequate laws, policies and institutions to protect the marine environment and human rights, ensure there is effective monitoring and enforcement of environmental and human rights standards, and provide access to justice and effective remedy for violations. Businesses must establish and communicate a commitment to and procedures for human rights, carry out due diligence processes to identify and address adverse impacts on human rights, and provide or participate in grievance mechanisms and processes to remedy and compensate adverse impacts. Both governments and the private sector have a responsibility to strengthen procedural rights - including the right to participation, information, and access to justice - as the foundation for the protection of the ocean environment and human rights. Special consideration must also be given to the distinct rights of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers, which are related to their historical and ongoing relationships with and reliance on coastal and marine areas and resources, and of vulnerable groups (e.g., women, children, elderly persons). Finally, all people must have the right to safely gather, organize and advocate for a sustainable ocean and their human rights. States must therefore create an enabling environment for and safeguard ocean defenders - including through ensuring freedom of assembly and peaceful protest, and adopting laws and policies that protect human rights defenders and environmental defenders. Ocean defenders should not only be free to operate without harassment, threats and violence, their work should be encouraged and celebrated.

7.

Ocean defenders need more direct support and safe spaces to reinforce their agency and sustain their efforts.

To safely resist the threats they are facing from harmful ocean economy activities, coastal communities urgently need the ability to participate in ocean governance processes and the capacity to organize, advocate and protest. However, ocean defenders have varying levels of capacity and operate in very diverse political and governance contexts. Thus, they have various needs in order to enhance and strengthen their capacity for mobilization and resistance - including with setting visions, understanding threats, finding allies, considering resistance options, resourcing their efforts, and connecting with other communities in similar situations. Ocean defenders need direct support in the form of legal expertise and advice, scientific research, funding and financial management, and safety and security measures. In contexts where there is a high level of risk, having security mechanisms and protocols in place is paramount to ensure the safety of individual ocean defenders, as well as their families and communities. Safe and neutral spaces away from communities are needed in moments of crisis, but also so that ocean defenders can engage with and learn from others in similar situations, get training, find reprieve, rest, and recharge.

8.

Allied organizations can play an important role in supporting and safeguarding ocean defenders.

The efforts of ocean defenders are often supported by various allied organizations, including grassroots networks, funders, legal non-profit organizations, human rights institutions, NGOs, university researchers, and the media, operating nationally or internationally. Allied organizations can engage in a broad range of actions to support ocean defenders, which fall into six main categories: capacity development, legal support, advocacy and visibility, financial support, facilitation and mediation, and documentation. International organizations can help to bring attention to the threats and risks faced by ocean defenders, and to pressure governments and the private sector to respect human rights and safeguard ocean defenders. Unfortunately, many ocean defenders are not getting adequate support from allied organizations. The scale of the issues does not match the scope of organizational support available. Furthermore, many allied organizations have struggles of their own. There are five key needs that allied organizations need to overcome to be able to adequately support ocean defenders - these are related to safety and security of their teams, sustainable and flexible financing, alliance and network building, flexibility of organizational agendas, and working in challenging political contexts.

9.

Efforts to support ocean defenders must be fit to context, and center their voices and needs.

Ocean defenders operate in diverse contexts with different levels of political marginalization and repression. It is essential that any actions to support ocean defenders center their voices and needs, ensuring they are at the forefront of determining when, where and how to support them. This is particularly important to ensure that ocean defenders, as well as their families and their communities, are not put at further risk. Organizations working to support ocean defenders will need to facilitate careful collaborations, build trusting relationships, listen thoroughly, assess risks, and consider implications of actions.

Globally, ocean defenders are protecting marine and coastal environments, their livelihoods and territories, and human rights against threats from the growing ocean economy. They are using diverse tactics to resist these harmful incursions. Yet, they are often experiencing repression and violence perpetuated by states and the private sector, including in some cases through lethal attacks. Currently, there is insufficient attention to the situation of ocean defenders, there are huge gaps in our knowledge, and they are not receiving adequate support. This must urgently change. States and private sector actors must work diligently to respect and protect human rights, and to safeguard ocean defenders. Allied organizations must do all that they can to support the advocacy efforts and safety of ocean defenders. Society, as a whole, also needs to recognize and support the struggles of those bearing the costs of an expanding ocean economy. Ocean defenders are at the forefront of efforts to protect our ocean. It is our collective responsibility to do all that we can to ensure that ocean defenders are encouraged, are supported, and are safe.

CHAPTER 7

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CHAPTER 8

Appendices

Appendix A: Case Study Selection Criteria and Analytical Framework

Selection Criteria for Case Studies

1. **Identify Ocean Defenders:** Focus on rights holders, resource users, and local communities.
2. **Focus on Collectives:** Emphasize collectives over individuals.
3. **Prioritize Proactive Defenders:** Highlight proactive defenders, not only those who have been killed or harmed because of their resistance efforts.
4. **Spotlight on Blue Acceleration and Ocean Economy:** Address issues related to blue acceleration and the ocean economy.
5. **Represent Variety of Contexts and Scales:** Include a range of contexts, scales, threats, and types of engagements.
6. **Select Diverse Groups:** Representation of diverse social groups, including small-scale fisheries (SSF), Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth.
7. **Ensure Global Representation:** Aim for global representation to understand similarities and differences across regions.
8. **Ensure Depth of Knowledge and Supporting Evidence:** Must have substantial available knowledge and supporting evidence.

Analytical Framework for Case Studies

The following questions were explored by collaborators to analyze each of the case studies.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT (WHAT / WHERE)

1. Name of case study	Name proposed for the case study.
2. Name of ocean defenders' movement	What is the name of the ocean defender's individual, group, or movement? How do they self-identify?
3. Location	What is the location of the conflict?
4. Issue/Conflict	What is the issue driving the conflict? Is it an ongoing threat or a past initiative / event / disaster that people are defending against?
5. Promoter	What group(s) or organization(s) is/are promoting the project or initiative that is creating the conflict? (e.g., government, private sector, etc.)
6. Impacts of issue/ Conflict	What are the environmental impacts of the issue/conflict? (e.g., on ocean health, marine ecosystems, coastal habitats, species, resource productivity, ecosystem services, etc.)
7. Impacts of issue/ Conflict	What are the social impacts of the issue/conflict (e.g., on local communities, on society, on human rights, on wellbeing)?
8. Scale	What are the spatial and social scales of the issue? How many people are impacted?
9. Geographical and environmental context	What are the seascape features like where the conflict is taking place? (For example, is it an island, inlet, bay, archipelago, coastal area, open sea, etc.?). What are the main types of ecosystems, habitats, or species that are in the area affected by the issue? Are there any environmental features that defenders are particularly connected to or worried about protecting?
10. Social, economic, political, governance context	What are the characteristics of the social (e.g., type of community, cohesion, livelihoods), economic (e.g., level of wealth, poverty, equity), political (e.g., stability, corruption, etc.), and governance (e.g., laws, policies, rights) context where the issue/conflict is occurring? What are the characteristics of the place and the profile of the local people?
11. Governance context for rights defenders	How friendly is the national governance context for environmental and human rights defenders?

B. DEFENDERS (WHO / WHAT)	
12. Group identity	What is the identity of the ocean defenders? What is their group identity? How do they perceive themselves?
13. Social and demographic characteristics	What are the social and demographic characteristics of the ocean defenders? (e.g., socio-economic status, livelihoods, genders, ages, etc.). [Any distinctive characteristics differentiating ocean defenders from people in the community who are not participating?]
14. Size of Group	How large is the group of ocean defenders? (e.g., 1-10000, broader networks here?)
15. In Defense Of	What are the ocean defenders seeking to defend? (e.g., voice, rights, territories, environment) What aspects of the marine and coastal environment are they seeking to defend?
16. Motivations	What are the motivations behind their defense and resistance activities? (e.g., visions, hopes, statement of aims, etc.)
17. Level of unity	How might the level of unity (between groups / across generations) in the local community around the issue be characterized? How are differing views and values pertaining to support towards the issue taken into account?
C. DEFENSE (HOW/WHEN)	
18. History	What is the history of the threat, social struggle, and mobilization efforts?
19. Scale	What is the geographical scale of the response / mobilization efforts by ocean defenders?
20. Temporal Dimension	How long has the threat and/or mobilization efforts been going on for? What is the current status?
21. Resistance - Approaches, actions and activities	What specific approaches, actions, and activities have ocean defenders used to mobilize and resist against threats? (incl. protests and demonstrations, research and documentation, communication campaigns, creating organizations and networks, legal and policy interventions, monitoring and enforcement, corporate activism, social movements, illegal actions, etc.)
22. Desired short-term effects and long-term objectives	What specific short-term effects or changes were the ocean defenders seeking to produce with these resistance approaches, actions, and activities? (e.g., Raising awareness, building capacity, shifting mindsets, creating supportive networks, changing the law) What were the long-term objectives or outcomes that they were hoping to achieve?
23. Social mobilization	How did the ocean defenders mobilize societal and political support for their cause? (e.g., communication channels, social networks)
24. Enablers	What enabling conditions or supports are available for the efforts of ocean defenders?

25. Barriers	What are the challenges to or barriers to the efforts of ocean defenders?
26. Sustain efforts	How have ocean defenders been able to sustain their efforts over time?
27. Changes / Adaptation	How has the movement adapted their efforts over time to overcome barriers or better achieve their objectives?
D. OUTCOME (WHAT THEN / NEXT)	
28. Effects/ consequences	What have been the effects or consequences of the resistance efforts? What has been achieved so far? How effective have different actions and activities been at producing desired effects?
29. Success/failure	How successful overall have the efforts and struggles of ocean defenders been at achieving their objectives or other positive outcomes? Where on the continuum between success and failure are the efforts and struggles of the ocean defenders in this case study so far? What does that success or failure look like - e.g., for them, for their communities, for the environment, for the situation, for the broader governance context?
30. Receptiveness	How receptive have governments and the private sector been to the efforts and message of ocean defenders? What evidence can you provide for this?
31. Counter Efforts	What strategies have been or are being used by the private sector and/or governments to counter resistance efforts by ocean defenders (e.g., criminalizing, silencing, threats, murders, etc.)?
32. Supports	What continued or additional supports are needed in this context to enable the efforts of and safeguard ocean defenders?
E. OTHER	
33. Bias/Positionality/ Expertise/ Reflexivity	What is your position, relation, and level of expertise in relation to this case-study? Do you have any potential biases towards it that we should know? Reflections and ethical considerations in the writing of the case study.
34. Additional comments	Do you have any additional comments about the case study that you think is pertinent?
LIST OF REFERENCES	
35. References and sources	What references and other sources of information are available to support the case study? Please provide all sources.

Appendix B: Reference Materials Related to Environmental and Ocean Defenders

Below is a list of reference materials related to environmental and ocean defenders organized under the following categories: 1) organizations, 2) networks, 3) initiatives, 4) guidelines, 5) laws and policies, 6) opportunity funds for defenders, 7) support mechanisms, 8) reports, 9) research initiatives and networks, and 10) training and resources.

A.1 Organizations

1.	**Protecting the Right to a Healthy Environment in Latin America AIDA** → https://aida-americas.org/en	AIDA works to protect the environment and human rights in the Americas through legal advocacy and scientific expertise.
2.	**ALLIED - Alliance for Land, Indigenous, and Environmental Defenders** → https://allied-global.org/	Allied Global focuses on empowering marginalized communities worldwide through human rights advocacy, legal support, and capacity-building initiatives.
3.	**Amnesty International** → https://www.amnesty.org/en/	Global movement of millions of people demanding human rights for all, through research, advocacy, and campaigning.
4.	**Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)** → https://aippnet.org/	AIPP advocates for the rights of Indigenous Peoples across Asia through capacity-building, advocacy, and networking.
5.	**Business and Human Rights Resource Centre** → https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/	The center tracks the human rights impacts of over 10,000 companies worldwide, providing information and advocacy to promote corporate accountability and transparency.
6.	**Civil Rights Defenders** → https://crd.org/	Civil Rights Defenders works globally to support human rights defenders and promote civil and political rights through advocacy, legal support, and capacity-building initiatives.
7.	**DefendDefenders** → https://defenddefenders.org/	Defend Defenders organization works to protect and support human rights defenders in the East and Horn of Africa through advocacy, capacity building, and emergency support.

8.	**EarthRights International** → https://earthrights.org/	EarthRights International combines the power of law and the power of people to defend human and environmental rights against abuses by governments and corporations.
9.	**Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide ELAW** → https://elaw.org/	ELAW supports environmental advocates globally by providing legal and scientific resources to protect ecosystems and communities.
10.	**Freedom House** → https://freedomhouse.org/	Independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world through research, advocacy, and support for human rights defenders.
11.	**Friends of Earth International** → https://www.foei.org/	Friends of Earth International is an organization that campaigns for environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights through sustainable solutions and grassroots activism.
12.	**Front Line Defenders** → https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en	Front Line Defenders is an organization that protects and supports human rights defenders at risk by providing them with training, advocacy, and emergency assistance.
13.	**Global Witness** → https://www.globalwitness.org/en/	Global Witness investigates and campaigns against environmental and human rights abuses driven by the exploitation of natural resources and corruption.
14.	**Human Rights Watch (HRW)** → https://www.hrw.org/	Human Rights Watch investigates and reports on human rights abuses worldwide, advocating for policy changes and justice for victims.
15.	**Protection International** → https://www.protectioninternational.org/	Protection International empowers human rights defenders worldwide by providing security management tools, advocacy, and training to enhance their safety and effectiveness.

16.	**Thin Green Line Foundation** → https://thingreenline.org.au/	Thin Green Line Foundation protects nature's protectors by providing support and advocacy for rangers on the frontlines of conservation efforts globally.
17.	**Somos Defensores** → https://somosdefensores.org/	Somos Defensores is a Colombian program that aims to protect and support human rights defenders through monitoring, reporting, and strategic communication, promoting their critical role in fostering democracy and peace.
18.	**Article 19** → https://www.article19.org/	Article 19 is an international think-do organization that promotes the freedom of expression movement locally and globally to ensure all people realize the power of their voices.

A.2 Networks

1.	**AfricanDefenders, Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network** → https://africandefenders.org/	AfricanDefenders is a network that protects and supports human rights defenders across Africa through advocacy, capacity-building, and emergency assistance.
2.	**Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders** → https://biz-net.org/	BizNet promotes corporate responsibility and sustainability through collaboration, research, and advocacy within the business sector.
3.	**Coastal Justice Network** → https://coastaljusticenetwork.co.za/	Coastal Justice Network advocates for the rights and protection of coastal communities in South Africa through legal support, research, and collaborative action.
4.	**Forum Asia** → https://forum-asia.org/	Forum-Asia is a network of human rights organizations working to promote and protect human rights in Asia through collaboration, capacity-building, and advocacy.
5.	**Grassroots Justice Network** → https://grassrootsjusticenetwork.org/	Grassroots Justice Network connects organizations worldwide to enhance access to justice through community-based legal empowerment and advocacy efforts.
6.	**IM-Defensoras** → https://im-defensoras.org/en/	IM-Defensoras is a network that supports women human rights defenders in Mesoamerica through protection, advocacy, and capacity-building efforts.

A.3 Initiatives

1.	**Voices for Just Climate Action** → https://voicesforjustclimateaction.org/	Amplifies locally led climate solutions to foster sustainable, just, and inclusive societies by connecting global and local voices from diverse civil society organizations.
2.	**The Access Initiative** → https://accessinitiative.org/	Promotes environmental democracy by advocating for access to information, public participation, and justice in environmental matters worldwide.
3.	**Investor Alliance for Human Rights** → https://investorsforhumanrights.org/	Mobilizes investors to support and respect human rights in their investment decisions, fostering responsible business practices globally.
4.	**UNEP Environmental Rights initiative** → https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/advancing-environmental-rights/what-1	Advances environmental rights through legal frameworks and governance systems, ensuring the protection of natural resources and human well-being.
5.	**Zero Tolerance Initiative** → https://www.zerotoleranceinitiative.org/	Fights against human rights abuses in the conservation sector, advocating for zero tolerance towards violence and discrimination against Indigenous peoples and local communities.

A.4 Guidelines

1.	**Workbook on Security by Front Line Defenders** → https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/workbook-security	This workbook offers a comprehensive guide for human rights defenders to develop and implement security plans tailored to their specific risks and vulnerabilities.
2.	**Security and Protection of Earth Rights Defenders:** Facilitation Toolkit by EarthRights International → https://earthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/Security-Protection-of-Earth-Rights-Defenders-Facilitation-Toolkit-EN.pdf	The toolkit provides practical strategies and tools to enhance the security and protection of individuals advocating for environmental and human rights.

3.	**Collective Protection Resources.** Resources for community-led strategies for collective protection and violence prevention by Zero Tolerance Initiative → https://collective-protection.info/info/	A set of resources that focus on collective strategies for enhancing the safety and security of human rights defenders working in high-risk environments.
4.	**Protection Manuals by Protection International** → https://www.protectioninternational.org/tools/protection-manuals/	A set of manuals that offer detailed guidance on various safety and security aspects for human rights defenders, including practical advice and best practices.
5.	**A human rights defender toolkit for promoting business respect for human rights by the International Service for Human Rights** → https://ishr.ch/defenders-toolbox/resources/new-toolkit-aims-foster-positive-engagement-between-human-rights-defenders-and-business/	ISHR Toolkit aims to foster positive engagement between human rights defenders and businesses, promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.
6.	**A Community Action toolkit:** A Roadmap for Using Environmental Rights to Fight Pollution by World Resources Institute → https://www.wri.org/research/community-action-toolkit-roadmap-using-environmental-rights-fight-pollution	This toolkit provides a roadmap for using environmental rights to combat pollution and protect communities from environmental harm.
7.	**Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner** → https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf	This document outlines the responsibilities of businesses and states in preventing and addressing human rights abuses related to business activities.
8.	**Respect free, prior, and informed consent. Practical guide for governments, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities in relation to land acquisition by FAO** → https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d56dd997-62f2-4f5f-bf47-f28b5da6ac35/content	This guide outlines the Food and Agriculture Organization's commitment to respecting and promoting the rights and well-being of indigenous and tribal peoples in agricultural and environmental practices.
9.	**OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct by OECD** → https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/mneguidelines/	These guidelines provide comprehensive recommendations for responsible business conduct in areas such as human rights, labor rights, environment, and anti-corruption.

10.	**Performance Standard 7 - Indigenous Peoples by International Finance Corporation from the World Bank Group** → https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2012/ifc-performance-standard-7	This performance standard focuses on ensuring that development projects respect the rights and culture of Indigenous Peoples, including their participation in project benefits.
11.	**Safeguarding human rights defenders. A practical guide for investors by Investor Alliance for Human Rights, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, and the International Service for Human Rights** → https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/safeguarding_human_rights_defenders_practical_guidance_for_investors_final_4-28-20.pdf	This guide provides investors with strategies to protect human rights defenders and integrate human rights considerations into their investment decisions.
12.	**Human Rights Due Diligence & Impact Assessment by Business & Human Rights Resource Centre** → https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/big-issues/un-guiding-principles-on-business-human-rights/human-rights-due-diligence-impact-assessment/	Offers tools and guidance for businesses to assess and address the human rights impacts of their operations in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
13.	**The Earth Defenders Toolkit by Digital Democracy** → https://www.earthdefenderstoolkit.com/	This toolkit includes resources and tools for environmental and human rights defenders to enhance their safety, security, and advocacy efforts.
14.	**Guidelines for U.S. Diplomatic Mission Support to Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders by the Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the U.S. Department of State** → https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Human-Rights-Defenders-Guidance.pdf	These guidelines offer practical advice for U.S. embassies and consulates to support and protect human rights defenders worldwide.
15.	**The Land Rights Standard by Rights + Resources** → https://rightsandresources.org/land-rights-standard/	The standard sets forth principles and guidelines to secure land rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, promoting sustainable and equitable development.

A.5 Laws and Policies

1.	**Aarhus Convention** → https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/aarhus-convention/text	The convention establishes a number of rights for individuals and civil society organizations with regard to the environment. It provides for access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice.
2.	**Escazu Agreement - Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean** → https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement	The treaty aims to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.
3.	**ILO Convention C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989)** → https://www.ilo.org/publications/c169-indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-convention-1989	International treaty that aims to protect the rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples. It acknowledges their rights to land, cultural preservation, self-governance, and participation in decision-making processes that affect them. It is a legally binding instrument and has been ratified by numerous countries.
4.	**United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007)** → https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf	Landmark document that establishes the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. It affirms their rights to self-determination, land, language, culture, and traditional knowledge. Though non-binding, it serves as an international standard, urging governments to respect and uphold Indigenous rights.
5.	**The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment (UN Doc. A/RES/76/300) (2024)** → https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en&v=pdf	UN resolution that formally recognizes a universal human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. It underscores the importance of a healthy environment to the dignity and well-being of individuals and calls on states to adopt policies that mitigate environmental harm, address climate change, and promote sustainable practices.
6.	**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** → https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights	Foundational document that outlines basic rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled, including rights to life, liberty, equality, and freedom from discrimination.
7.	**UNEP Promoting Greater Protection for Environmental Defenders Policy (2018)** → https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/advancing-environmental-rights/uneps?_ga=2.96309340.1792890834.1720168002-943603202.1720168001	Policy that aims to protect individuals and groups who advocate for environmental rights. It acknowledges the risks faced by environmental defenders, such as harassment and violence, and calls for stronger protections, legal support, and recognition of their contributions to environmental justice.

8.	**IUCN Resolution 039 - Protecting environmental human and People's rights defenders and whistleblowers (2016)** → https://www.iucncongress2020.org/motion/039	Resolution that seeks to safeguard environmental and human rights defenders, as well as whistleblowers, who expose environmental harms. It emphasizes legal protections, supportive networks, and an international commitment to prevent retaliation against those protecting the environment.
9.	**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (A/HRC/RES/39/12) (2018)** → https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1634704?ln=ru&v=pdf	UN declaration that promotes the rights of peasants and rural workers, affirming their rights to land, natural resources, food security, fair wages, and participation in decision-making. It seeks to protect rural communities from discrimination, forced displacement, and environmental degradation, advocating for equitable treatment and sustainable rural development.

A.6 Opportunity Funds for Defenders

1.	**African Environmental Defenders - A Natural Justice Initiative** → https://envirodefenders.africa/	International The African Environmental Defenders initiative, supported by Natural Justice, the International Land Coalition, and other partners, focuses on protecting African communities and ecosystems from harmful industrial development by offering legal support and emergency funding to environmental defenders facing threats.
2.	**Environmental Defenders Collaborative** → https://www.defenderscollaborative.org/	The Environmental Defenders Collaborative (EDC) supports frontline communities and ally networks in Africa, Asia, and Latin America by providing grants to activists defending their rights to land, livelihoods, and culture against violence, repression, and destructive industries.
3.	**The European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism** → https://protectdefenders.eu/	ProtectDefenders.eu is a European Union-funded mechanism dedicated to protecting human rights defenders at high risk worldwide, providing emergency support, temporary relocation, capacity-building, and advocacy efforts to ensure their safety and empower their work.
4.	**The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund** → https://www.csolifeline.org/	The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund provides emergency financial assistance to civil society organizations (CSOs) under threat or attack and offers rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants to support CSOs in addressing threats against civic space.

A.7 Support Mechanisms

1.	**UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** → https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage	OHCHR is the leading United Nations entity for promoting and protecting all human rights worldwide, providing support for human rights monitoring, advocacy, and capacity-building. It includes the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to a Healthy Environment, and Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention.
2.	**Environmental Legal Protection - Legal Assistance and Resources for Environmental Defenders** → https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage	This platform offers access to information on multilateral environmental agreements, including their legal texts, decisions, national reports, and other documents, facilitating better understanding and implementation of environmental laws globally.
3.	**Access Now** → https://www.accessnow.org/	Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of people and communities at risk, offering direct technical support, advocacy, and grants to promote human rights in the digital age.
4.	**Environmental Defender Law Center (EDLC)** → https://edlc.org/	EDLC provides legal and technical assistance to grassroots organizations and communities in the Global South to defend their environmental and human rights.
5.	**Center for International Law (CIEL)** → https://www.ciel.org/	CIEL uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society.
6.	**Civil Rights Defenders (CRD)** → https://crd.org/our-work/	CRD works globally to support human rights defenders and promote civil and political rights through advocacy, legal support, and capacity-building initiatives.
7.	**Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR)** → https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/	IAHCR promotes and protects human rights in the Americas through monitoring, advocacy, and legal action.
8.	**ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)** → https://aichr.org/	AICHR aims to promote and protect human rights among ASEAN member states through dialogue, cooperation, and capacity-building.

9.	**African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)** → https://achpr.au.int/home	ACHPR safeguards human rights and fundamental freedoms across Africa through promotion, protection, and monitoring mechanisms.
10.	**European Court of Human Rights** → https://www.echr.coe.int/home	This European court ensures the enforcement of the European Convention on Human Rights through judicial decisions and legal interpretations.
11.	**European Commissioner for Human Rights** → https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/the-commissioner	The Council promotes awareness, monitors human rights issues, and provides recommendations to member states of the Council of Europe to uphold human rights standards.
12.	**Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** → https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-home	UPR is a unique process under the UN Human Rights Council that involves a regular review of the human rights records of all UN member states to improve human rights conditions worldwide.

A.8 Reports

1.	**ALLIED. (2021).** Supporting Environmental Human Rights Defenders: Developing New Guidance for Donors and Civil Society Organizations. → https://www.universal-rights.org/urg-policy-reports/supporting-environmental-human-rights-defenders-developing-new-guidance-for-donors-and-civil-society-organisations-2/	This report offers new guidance for donors and civil society organizations on how to effectively support environmental human rights defenders, emphasizing the importance of tailored, context-specific approaches.
2.	**International Independent Tribunal on Blue Economy. (2020).** International Tribunal on the Impact of Blue Economy in Indian Ocean Countries. Verdicts of the Six Tribunal Series held between August 2020 - February 2021. → http://blueeconomytribunal.org/wp-content/uploads/International-Tribunals-Report-on-BE.pdf	This report assesses the environmental and human rights impacts of blue economy projects, providing recommendations for more sustainable and equitable practices.
3.	**IWGIA. (2018).** Defending the Defenders. → https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/306-briefings/3295-outcome-document-defending-the-defenders.html	This document outlines the challenges faced by Indigenous human rights defenders and presents strategies for enhancing their protection and support.

4.	**Front Line Defenders. (2022).** Global Analysis 2022. → https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/	This report provides an overview of the threats, attacks, and killings faced by human rights defenders worldwide, highlighting regional trends and urgent cases.
5.	**Global Witness. (2019).** Standing Firm. → https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/standing-firm/	The present report details the increasing violence faced by environmental activists worldwide, highlighting the urgent need for better protection and accountability to safeguard those defending their lands and the environment.
6.	**Global Witness. (2020).** Responsible Sourcing: The Business Case for Protecting Land and Environmental Defenders and Indigenous Communities' Rights to Land And Resources. → https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/responsible-sourcing/	This report examines the role of companies in contributing to environmental and human rights abuses, urging them to adopt more responsible sourcing practices.
7.	**Global Witness. (2021).** Last Line of Defense. → https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/last-line-defence/	This report documents the increasing threats and violence against environmental and land defenders, emphasizing the critical need for their protection.
8.	**Knox, J. H. (2017).** Environmental Human Rights Defenders: A global crisis. Universal Rights Group. → https://www.universal-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EHRDs.pdf	This report highlights the increasing threats and challenges faced by environmental human rights defenders worldwide, emphasizing the urgent need for enhanced protection and support mechanisms.
9.	**Larsen, P. B. (2020).** Conservation NGOs at risk. The Environmental Governance and Territorial Development Institute, University of Geneva. → https://www.unige.ch/gedt/files/7616/4621/6157/LarsenConservationNGOsAtRisk.pdf	The report discusses the risks faced by conservation NGOs, analyzing how political, economic, and social factors threaten their operations and effectiveness in protecting biodiversity.
10.	**Universal Rights Group. (2024).** Understanding human rights related to the environment: Exploring their scope and implications. → https://www.universal-rights.org/urg-policy-reports/understanding-human-rights-related-to-the-environment-exploring-their-scope-and-implications/	This report explores the scope and implications of human rights related to the environment, providing a comprehensive analysis of their significance and the need for integrated approaches to environmental protection and human rights.

11.	**UNDP, UNEP, and UNHCHR (2023).** What is the right to a healthy environment? → https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-01/UNDP-UNEP-UNHCHR-What-is-the-Right-to-a-Healthy-Environment.pdf	This report explains the concept of the right to a healthy environment, its legal foundations, and its significance in promoting sustainable development and human well-being.

A.9 Research Initiatives and Networks

1.	**One Ocean Hub** → https://oneoceanhub.org/	This hub fosters collaborative research and innovation to promote the sustainable use and governance of the ocean, ensuring the protection of marine ecosystems and the rights of coastal communities.
2.	**EJ Atlas** → https://ejatlas.org/	The Environmental Justice Atlas (EJAtlas) documents and maps environmental conflicts worldwide, providing data and insights to support communities fighting for environmental justice.
3.	**Programa Austral Patagonia, Universidad Austral de Chile** → https://programaaustralpatagonia.cl/en/	This university program focuses on the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in Patagonia through research, education, and community engagement.
4.	**Contested Ports** → https://www.contestedports.com/	This is a collaborative platform that documents conflicts between people and ports worldwide. It highlights community resistance strategies and is a hub to share resources that deepen critical engagement with the unsustainable effects of maritime logistics

A.10 Training and Resources

1.	**Resources for Advocates, legal and scientific resources. By Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW)** → https://elaw.org/resources	
2.	**Trainings offered by EarthRights International** → https://earthrights.org/trainings-and-networks/	

3.	**Natalia Project - A security alarm system for human rights defenders. By Civil Rights Defenders.** → https://crd.org/nataliaproject/
4.	**List of training resources and education by Grassroots Justice Network.** → https://grassrootsjusticenetwork.org/learn/resources/
5.	**Video. Ocean Defenders: capturing evidence to crack down on illegal fishing in Senegalese waters. Published by Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF).** → https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec6PLkde-c0
6.	**Video. Time to protect environmental rights defenders! Published by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders.** → https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVYZgraKBYE
7.	**Video. China's slave fishermen and the companies allegedly exploiting Uyghur labor. Published by Al Jazeera English.** → https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ns-rd-k2j7k

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