

Blue Economy Pilot Project

Knowledge, Capacity Building and Resilience for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage



Image source: Man Fong Wong - Pexels

Connecting knowledge for coastal resilience
A four-country blue economy initiative

Context

Across coastal communities in Angola, Chile, Jamaica, and Portugal, the impacts of climate change are increasingly visible. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and biodiversity loss are affecting livelihoods, cultural heritage, and ecosystems. At the same time, responses remain fragmented. Scientific research, national public policy, and community knowledge do not always connect in ways that support effective and inclusive action.

About the initiative

The Blue Economy Pilot Project: Knowledge, Capacity Building and Resilience for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage seeks to address this gap. Led by the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO IESALC), in partnership with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and supported by Camões, I.P., the initiative brings together partners across four countries, as well as partners with global mandates.

It explores how higher education can help connect knowledge systems, strengthen cooperation, and support coastal communities in navigating climate change.



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Approach

The initiative is based on the understanding that sustainable solutions are more effective when different forms of knowledge are brought together. Higher education institutions play a central role by linking research, policy engagement, and community outreach. The project is structured around three interconnected dimensions:

- Scientific research: Exploring climate impacts and blue economy practices across the four countries
- Policy analysis: Examining regulatory frameworks and identifying opportunities to better align national strategies with local needs
- Community engagement: Integrating local practices, experiences, and knowledge systems to ensure inclusive and context-based responses

Collaboration across countries and sectors

The project is rooted in triangular cooperation, enabling exchange across countries and regions. It brings together universities, government institutions, civil society organizations, and communities in a collaborative process where different actors contribute their expertise and perspectives.



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From knowledge to action

A key focus of the initiative is translating knowledge into practical action. Partners are co-developing a toolkit to support knowledge, capacity building, and resilience in coastal areas. The toolkit includes adaptable resources such as workshops, digital learning materials, and community-based activities. This process is participatory, involving universities, public institutions, civil society organizations, and community actors to ensure that outputs are both evidence-based and grounded in local realities.



Image source: Shutterstock (ID: 93998455)

Inclusion and participation

The initiative promotes the active participation and leadership of:

- Youth
- Students
- Women

in shaping responses to climate resilience and the blue economy.

Towards an evolving model

The project connects research, policy, and community engagement to contribute to an approach to coastal sustainability that can be adapted in other contexts. It highlights the importance of inclusive partnerships, shared learning, and collaboration in addressing complex global challenges.

Key message

Building coastal resilience requires not only responding to immediate challenges, but also rethinking how knowledge is shared, how collaboration happens, and how solutions are developed.



Geographic Scope

Angola • Chile • Jamaica • Portugal

Lead partners

- UNESCO IESALC
- UNOSSC
- Camões, I.P.

Implementation partners

- Forum Oceano
- Global Student Forum
- ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon – Center for International Studies
- Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission
- Protect Our Planet
- Universidad Andrés Bello
- University of Namibe (UNINBE)
- University of Porto Faculdade de Letras (FLUP)

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