Your invitation to back the Global Seagrass Challenge Fund

A global challenge, shaped by local action

Supporting people-centred seagrass conservation for a healthier ocean and a fairer future

PROJECT SEAGRASS ®

Vision & why this matters

Seagrass meadows are one of the planet's most important yet overlooked ecosystems. They protect coastlines, sustain fisheries, store carbon, and support the livelihoods and cultures of millions of people worldwide. Despite their immense value, seagrasses continue to disappear at alarming rates, and largely remain unseen, undervalued, and underfunded. Aligned with our ambition to Save the World's Seagrass, the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** exists to change this trajectory.

Our vision is a world where seagrass ecosystems are recognised, protected, and restored through **locally-led**, **evidence-based action**, ensuring benefits for both people and nature. By empowering individuals, communities, and organisations with the tools, knowledge, and resources they need, we are building a future where seagrass conservation is equitable, effective, and enduring.

This moment matters. Decisions made today will determine whether seagrass ecosystems continue to decline — or become a cornerstone of global biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods.

Enable
Strengthen
Implement

The global challenge

Across the globe, seagrass ecosystems face a convergence of pressures: coastal development, declining water quality, unsustainable fishing practices, and accelerating climate change. These challenges are compounded by limited public awareness, fragmented data, and insufficient support for locally grounded conservation action.

Yet, seagrass conservation is not only an ecological challenge but a social, cultural, and economic one. In many regions, seagrass meadows underpin **food security**, **cultural identity**, and **resilience for climate-vulnerable coastal communities**.

Addressing these interconnected challenges demands long-term investment in **people**, **partnerships**, and **evidence**, working across scales from local meadows to global policy.

Scientists have identified **six global challenges**, six priorities that need to be addressed if we are to conserve seagrass globally. The **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** seeks to address these challenges.

We envision an equitable **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** that promotes people-centred and evidence-based seagrass conservation through the empowerment of individuals, communities, and organisations to enhance their local environments, improve biodiversity, and build climate resilience. This, in turn, will lead to improved livelihoods, well-being, and opportunities for all.

Mapping and monitoring seagrass

Understanding local threats to target action

Balancing the needs of people and planet

Building the evidence to support action

Making seagrass visible

Conserving seagrass in a changing climate

Our evidence & track record

For over a decade, Project Seagrass has worked at the intersection of science, community empowerment, and conservation delivery, building one of the world's most credible and collaborative seagrass networks. We've played a key part in mobilising close to **$7 million** for seagrass research and conservation projects across the globe.

Our experience spans each of the six global seagrass challenges:

1. Making seagrass visible

2. Mapping and monitoring seagrass

3. Understanding local threats to target action

4. Balancing the needs of people and planet

5. Building the evidence to support action

6. Conserving seagrass in a changing climate

Challenge 1: Achieving societal recognition of seagrass importance

Why this matters

Seagrass meadows are among the most valuable ecosystems on the planet. They provide critical nursery habitat for fishery species, stabilise coastlines, build coastal climate resilience, and support biodiversity, including that which underpins coastal livelihoods, and contributes to human well-being. Despite their importance, seagrasses remain largely invisible in public discourse, policy priorities, and funding decision-making.

A lack of societal recognition directly contributes to continued loss and degradation of seagrass ecosystems. When the value of seagrass ecosystems, or the consequences of their loss are not understood, these habitats are overlooked, underrepresented, and excluded from conservation and coastal development planning, climate strategies, and conservation investments.

Achieving meaningful, long-term seagrass conservation, therefore, depends not only on scientific evidence, protection or restoration activity, but on building awareness, understanding, and stewardship across society. Education, early engagement, and locally relevant knowledge are essential foundations for behaviour change, policy support, decision-making, and sustained investment in seagrass ecosystems and their conservation.

Bajau children
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Our journey

We have made societal recognition a cornerstone of our seagrass conservation approach, working in close partnership with educators, scientists, local organisations, and communities to embed seagrass knowledge where it can have lasting impact.

Flagship examples of this work are through our partnerships in Indonesia and the Philippines, where we've co-developed and supported the delivery of a locally grounded education curriculums focused on seagrass ecosystems. In Indonesia, we co-designed a programme specifically for local schools, ensuring that learning was age-appropriate, engaging, and directly relevant to students' coastal environments.

Our partnerships seek to strengthen students' connection to their local seagrass meadows and marine environment by combining classroom learning with interactive and experiential elements. By embedding seagrass education within formal curriculums, this work helps normalise seagrass as a vital and valued ecosystem, rather than an abstract or distant ecosystem and conservation issue.

Through our ongoing partnerships, we have:

- reached young people at a formative stage, supporting long-term environmental stewardship,

- strengthened local capacity for marine education, and

- created scalable models for integrating seagrass awareness into local education systems.

Our work demonstrates that, through trusted local partnerships, the translation of scientific understanding into accessible, impactful learning, is possible and is a hopeful step for the delivery of conservation outcomes.

Why this moment matters

Societal recognition is not a peripheral activity for conservation, but instead is a prerequisite for each of the challenges facing seagrass conservation. By investing in the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund**, your investment contributes to education and awareness, enabling:

- stronger community support for protection and restoration,

- a future of generations equipped to value and defend seagrass ecosystems, and

- improved policy alignment and political will.

Facing Challenge 1 provides the foundation upon which all other conservation outcomes depend.

Teaching children the importance of seagrass
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Challenge 2: Obtaining and maintaining information on seagrass status and condition

Why this matters

Effective seagrass conservation depends on accurate, up-to-date information on where seagrass occurs, how extensive it is, and what condition it is in. Yet across much of the world, seagrass data remain fragmented, outdated, or entirely absent. Without reliable baseline information and ongoing monitoring, declines can go unnoticed, recovery efforts cannot be targeted, and the impacts of management interventions cannot be evaluated.

The lack of consistent data also limits the ability of funders, decision makers, implementors, and conservation practitioners to prioritise action and allocate resources strategically and in ways that are responsive to local priorities. Seagrass meadows are dynamic systems, sensitive to local pressures such as water quality, fishing activity, and coastal development, as well as global stressors including climate change. Understanding how these pressures affect seagrass condition over time is essential for designing evidence-based conservation, and policy responses.

Obtaining and maintaining robust information on seagrass status and condition is, therefore, a fundamental requirement for conservation. Without it, conservation efforts risk being reactive, inefficient, or misdirected.
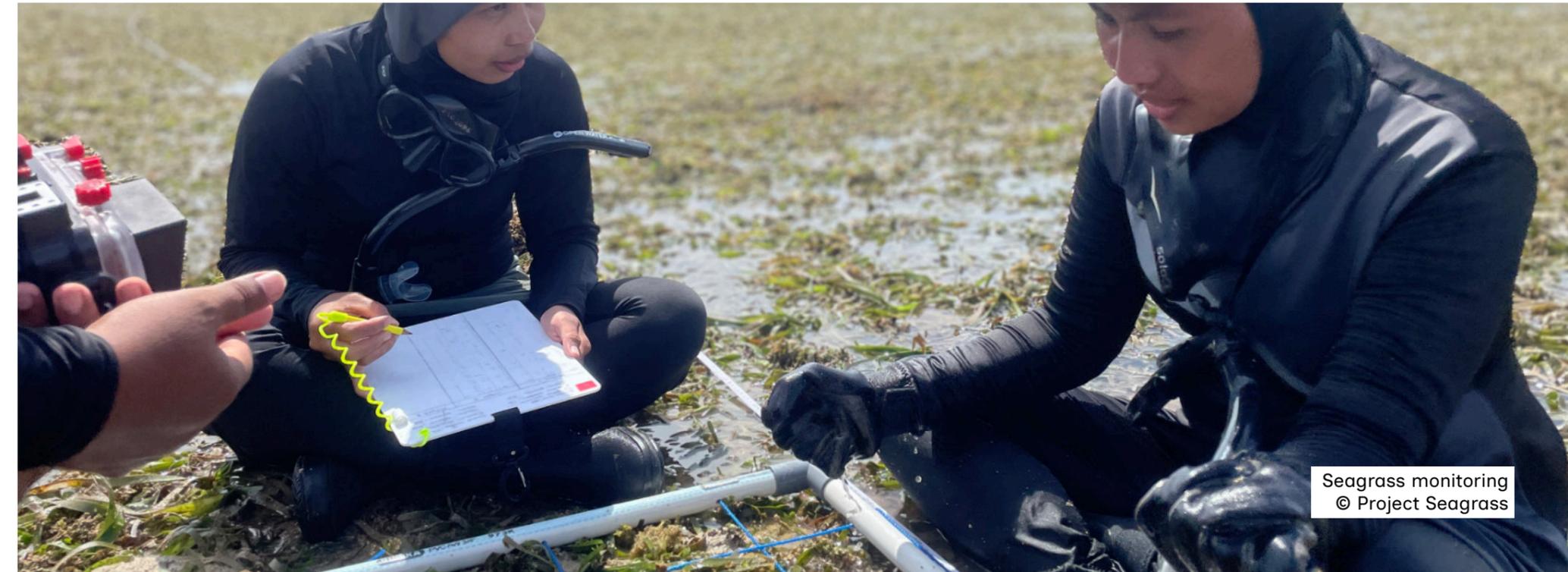
Seagrass monitoring training guides
© Project Seagrass

Our journey

Through collaborative, multi-scale approaches that combine scientific rigour with local engagement, our ongoing partnerships across the globe facilitate the generation, coordination, and maintenance of high-quality seagrass data.

Working with partners across the Western Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean we have supported field-based assessments of seagrass meadows and their associated fish, invertebrate and megafauna assemblages; species crucial to food security, livelihoods, and cultural importance. These assessments have also provided critical insights into seagrass extent, species composition, indicators of condition, and the role of seagrass meadows as habitat for ecologically and economically important species and charismatic megafauna.

The collection, integration, and sharing of data have helped to:

- establish baseline conditions against which future change can be measured,
- strengthen understanding of seagrass–fisheries linkages, and
- inform locally relevant management and conservation planning.

Complementing these site-based endeavours, we also lead the development of **SeagrassSpotter**, a global citizen science initiative designed to address large-scale data gaps in seagrass mapping and monitoring. SeagrassSpotter enables community members, practitioners, and ocean users everywhere to contribute georeferenced observations of

Seagrass monitoring
© Project Seagrass

seagrass presence and condition, significantly expanding data coverage in regions where formal monitoring is limited or absent.

The development and dissemination of **SeagrassSpotter** has, to date:

- enabled cost-effective, scalable seagrass mapping at global and regional scales,

- increased local engagement in seagrass monitoring and stewardship, and

- generated open, usable datasets that support research, planning, and advocacy.

Working in partnership with local and international organisations underpins conservation action at multiple scales by enabling the generation, collation, and analysis of data, ranging from detailed ecological assessments to global data mobilisation.

Why this moment matters

Robust data systems are the backbone of effective seagrass conservation. By investing in the Global Seagrass Challenge Fund, your support can facilitate:
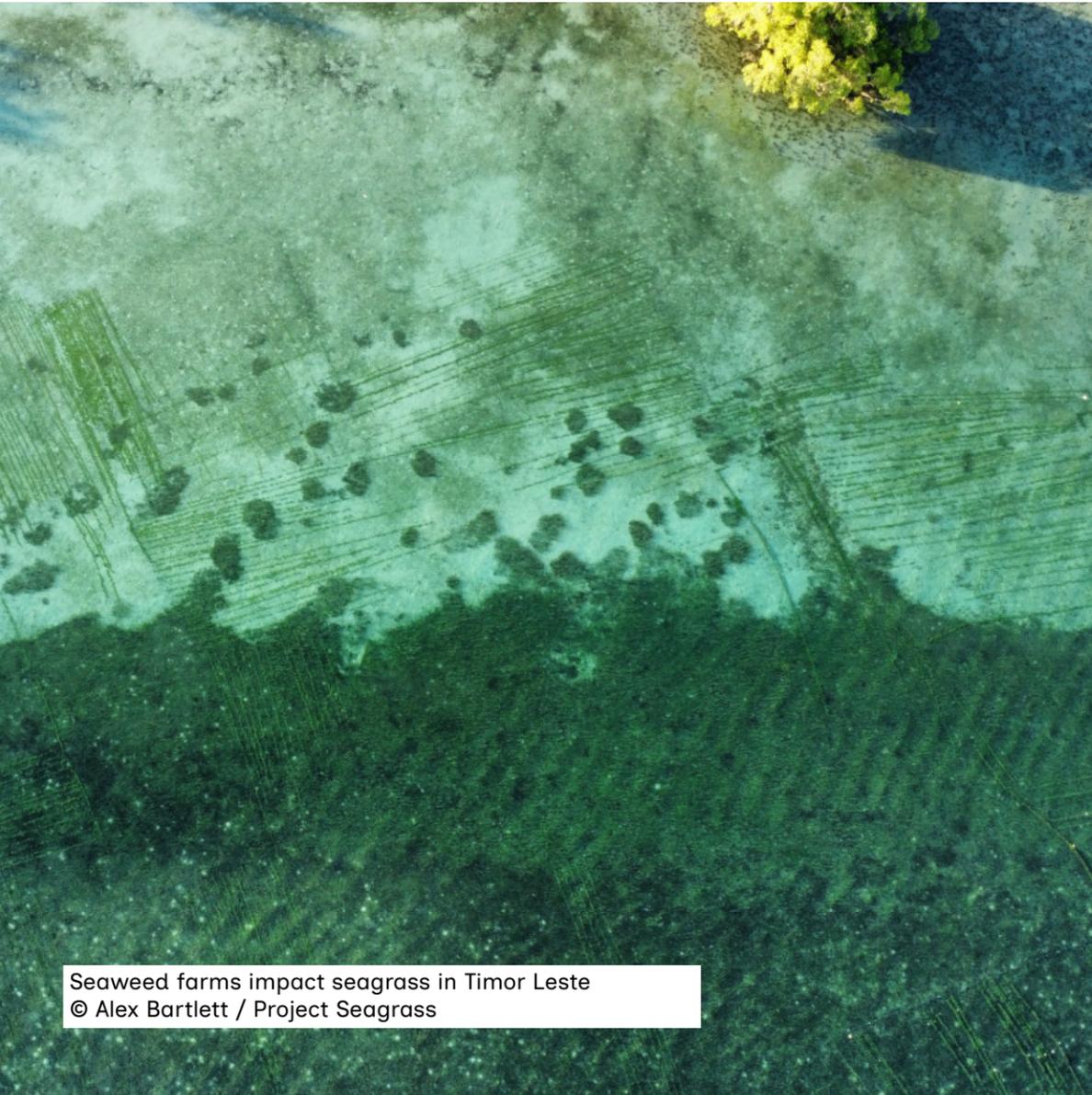
- evidence-based decision-making and prioritisation,

- improved targeting of conservation investments, and

- stronger learning both locally and globally.

By combining scientific assessments with innovative citizen science approaches, our partnerships are building the knowledge infrastructure needed to safeguard seagrass ecosystems in the long term.

Drone mapping seagrass in Myanmar
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Challenge 3: Identifying threatening activities at local scales to better target management action

Seaweed farms impact seagrass in Timor Leste
© Alex Bartlett / Project Seagrass

Why this matters

Seagrass loss and degradation are driven by a complex mix of local, regional, and global pressures, but the most immediate and manageable threats often occur at local scales. Activities such as land-based runoff, sedimentation, unsustainable fishing practices, and poorly planned coastal development can rapidly degrade seagrass meadows if left unaddressed. Yet these pressures vary significantly from place to place, even between neighbouring meadows.

Without a clear understanding of locally specific threats, management actions risk being poorly targeted or ineffective. Generic solutions rarely succeed in complex social–ecological systems, where conservation outcomes depend on combinations of, for example, local behaviours, governance structures, and environmental conditions. Identifying threatening activities at a local level is, therefore, essential for designing management interventions that are realistic, locally supported, and capable of delivering long-term measurable impact.

Addressing Challenge 3 is central to moving from a broad conservation ambition to practical, actualised, on-the-ground action that addresses the local drivers of seagrass decline.

Our journey

Supporting locally led threat identification processes that place community knowledge and partner expertise at the centre of conservation planning are central to the Global Seagrass Challenge Fund and our emerging conservation strategy.

Through collaboration with a local Indonesian team, we supported participatory stakeholder focus groups to identify the primary threats to local seagrass meadows, including sedimentation linked to land-use change. These participatory processes informed the co-design of conservation action plans that were both ecologically robust and socially and culturally appropriate. A key outcome of this work was the identification of riparian vegetation restoration as a priority intervention to enhance seagrass ecosystem resilience and support recovery, while also supporting local landowners with new income streams from planted fruit trees.

More broadly, we regularly convene or facilitate partner-led, multi-stakeholder workshops across the regions we work. These regional gatherings, including a dedicated workshop in Indonesia in 2017 with partners from across Southeast Asia, bring together practitioners, researchers, natural resource managers, Indigenous peoples and local organisations to identify seagrass-specific threats and co-create context appropriate conservation plans and solutions. These workshops provide structured spaces for shared learning and collective problem-solving, strengthening regional understanding of threat pathways and management needs for seagrass ecosystems.

Recently, a regional workshop we hosted in 2025 focused on identifying key threats and conservation priorities for

Tree nursery for riparian restoration
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

organisations working on-the-ground across Southeast Asia. This event functioned as a knowledge exchange hub, enabling partners to share experiences, align approaches, and build a common understanding of regional challenges while recognising local variation.

Through this work, these partnerships have:

- enabled locally specific threat identification to inform targeted management,

- supported co-designed conservation planning rooted in community and partner knowledge, and

- strengthened regional collaboration and shared learning among practitioners.

Why this moment matters

By investing in understanding local threats and their drivers, your funding of the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** supports:

- management actions that are locally relevant (and more likely to succeed!),

- stronger partner capacity to diagnose problems and design solutions, and

- more efficient and effective use of conservation resources.

Through identification of local threats, conservation interventions can be grounded in reality, increasing their durability and impact across diverse social and ecological contexts.

Coastal development damaging seagrass in Indonesia
© Alex Bartlett / Project Seagrass

Challenge 4: Balancing the needs of people and planet

Why this matters

Seagrass conservation does not occur in isolation from human needs. In coastal regions globally, seagrass meadows underpin food security, livelihoods, and cultural practices, particularly for small-scale and artisanal fishing communities. Sustainable development initiatives and conservation actions that fail to account for these dependencies risk unintended consequences, loss of local support, or inequitable outcomes.

Balancing the needs of people and planet requires a deep understanding of how communities interact with and value seagrass ecosystems, including patterns of resource use, cultural significance, economic drivers, and vulnerability to environmental change. We believe that integrating social, cultural, and economic data into conservation planning is essential for designing interventions that support both ecosystem health and human well-being.

Addressing this challenge is critical, and by doing so ensures that seagrass conservation is not only environmentally effective, but socially just, equitable, and resilient.

Women prepare seagrass catch, Sri Lanka
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Our journey

Working in partnership with institutions, local organisations, and networks across the three continents, we've sought to support our partners to better understand the social and economic dimensions of seagrass-dependent systems. This has included assessing drivers of food security and poverty, as well as conducting livelihoods, catch and landing, and market surveys linked to seagrass-associated fisheries and resources.

A core element of this work is capacity building, with partner organisations often requesting and welcoming training in the design and delivery of socio-economic and ecological assessment techniques. Training that enables them to implement these techniques independently. In doing so, our ongoing partnerships have sought to strengthen local ownership of data and ensure that findings can be integrated into ongoing management and advocacy efforts.

In parallel, we've formed partnerships which support stakeholder engagement, by working with recreational fishing guides to better understand how seagrass and fisheries are changing over time. Through this process, we've explored award winning novel methods to help the tracking and interpretation of changes in data-limited and data-poor fisheries, fostering shared understanding and building trust between resource managers, conservation practitioners, and resource users.

Working with partners to build their capacity in seagrass social-ecological systems assessments, we consistently contribute to:

· integrated social and ecological data to inform conservation decision-making,

· strengthened partner capacity to assess livelihoods and food security impacts, and

· constructive engagement and monitoring with stakeholders whose livelihoods depend on healthy seagrass ecosystems.

An artisanal fisher in Indonesia
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Why this moment matters

Our decades of experience show that conservation outcomes are strongest when human needs are also explicitly considered and addressed.

By funding the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund**, you help enable:

· conservation strategies that are socially inclusive and locally supported,

· reduced conflict between conservation goals and human wellbeing, and

· more durable outcomes that align ecosystem recovery with human well-being.

Seagrass conservation that delivers benefits for both people and nature also contributes to supporting the long-term local stewardship of seagrass meadows.

A young girl prepares parrotfish in Indonesia
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Challenge 5: Generating scientific research to support conservation actions

Why this matters

Sound conservation action must be underpinned by robust scientific evidence. Without credible data, conservation actions risk lacking legitimacy, failing to achieve desired outcomes, resulting in unintended consequences, or simply being difficult to justify.

Many organisations working on the ground recognise the importance of evidence to underpin conservation decision-making, whether a scientific article to present to policy makers, or visual data to engage communities. Yet organisations, teams, and individuals, face numerous and diverse barriers to accessing and generating evidence. Barriers can include, but are not limited to, technical capacity, equipment, methodological support, or funding availability. Bridging these spaces between science and practice are essential for promoting, supporting, and scaling up effective seagrass conservation.

A local partner conducts interviews with local households
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Our journey

Recognising that many partners seek to demonstrate and evidence the outcomes of their conservation actions, over the last 12 years, we've focused on building practical research capacity alongside data collection, analysis, and reporting to inform conservation decision-making.

A key element of this work has been supporting partners to develop and implement Baited Remote Underwater Video systems. These non-extractive tools enable monitoring of fish communities associated with seagrass meadows, generating robust evidence of biodiversity value and conservation impact, while also developing video resources that are vital for stakeholder engagement. Through partnerships across the global ocean this work has supported locally led seagrass and fish surveys that directly inform tailored conservation planning and evaluation.

Alongside applied monitoring, we have partnered with a wide network of organisations to deliver complementary research that strengthens the global evidence base for seagrass conservation. This research spans investigations into the micronutrient value of seagrass-associated fish species and their contribution to human nutrition and wellbeing; evaluations of the unintended social and ecological consequences of sustainable development projects (on seagrass social-ecological systems); assessments of seed-based restoration planting techniques; reviews of impact of seaweed farming on seagrass meadows; and the creation of the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit, an open-access online toolkit designed to support others in conducting their own rigorous, high-quality research.

Baited Remote Underwater Video
© Project Seagrass

Through training, methodological guidance, and ongoing technical support, we have supported partners to:

• design scientifically robust monitoring and evaluation programmes,

• generate credible evidence to underpin conservation decisions, and

• strengthen the link between scientific evidence and on-the-ground action.

Why this moment matters

Working across our partnerships, we have strengthened our ability to translate scientific methods into accessible, field-ready tools for conservation. Funding the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** will support our partners in developing:

• stronger evidence for the need for, and the effectiveness of, seagrass conservation,

• increased credibility and trust across diverse decision-making and implementation contexts, and

• evidence-led learning and adaptation.

Strengthening the scientific foundation of seagrass conservation helps to ensure that actions are informed by evidence.

A dugong amongst seagrass
© Alex Bartlett / Project Seagrass

Challenge 6: Delivering conservation action in an era of climate change

Why this matters

Climate change is intensifying pressures on seagrass ecosystems through rising temperatures, sea-level rise, increased storm frequency, and shifting ecological conditions. At the same time, seagrass meadows are increasingly recognised for their role in climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly through carbon sequestration and coastal protection.

Conservation action in this context must be climate-informed, forward-looking, and resilient in the face of uncertainty. Conservation efforts, in particular restoration, requires careful design to ensure that action is viable under future climate conditions and contribute meaningfully to ecosystem recovery and climate goals.

Seagrass seeds, Sri Lanka
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Our journey

In light of a changing climate, partners globally have come together to build capacity in one another on the design, implementation, and delivery of conservation projects. Sharing knowledge and experiences, we've learnt that partners inform each other of the appropriateness, ecological relevance, scale, and alignment with long-term resilience objectives of conservation and restoration projects.

A central component of this work has been evidencing seagrass restoration efforts across the globe. By supporting consistent monitoring and documentation of restoration design and outcomes, the network of partnerships we've forged have helped create a growing body of evidence on what works, what does not work, where, and under what conditions. Last year, we built the first global, open-access evidence platform for seagrass restoration, enabling climate-informed design based on real-world performance across diverse social, economic, environmental contexts. Through, **SeagrassRestorer**, a UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration endorsed platform, the global seagrass community is uniquely positioned to support partners in designing and delivering restoration projects that are grounded in evidence and adapted to local and climatic contexts.

This collective work through **SeagrassRestorer** has:

- transformed fragmented restoration efforts into a global, climate-relevant evidence base,

- embedded climate risk and resilience into restoration design and decision-making, and,

- empowered practitioners worldwide to deliver conservation action fit for a changing climate.

Why this moment matters

Conservation in a changing climate requires a combination of research, knowledge sharing, action, and learning. Funding the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund**, your investment enables:

- positioning of seagrass meadows as critical nature-based solutions for both climate mitigation and adaptation in global conservation discourse, and

- scalable solutions informed by global evidence and local practice.

Investment into the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** contributes to conservation remaining effective and relevant in the face of accelerating climate change.

SeagrassRestorer

An artisanal fisher collects sea urchins in seagrass
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

Our approach

The **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** is a **collaborative**, **co-developed** funding and support mechanism designed to unlock locally-led seagrass conservation worldwide.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all model, the Fund responds to partners, recognising that capacity, readiness, and ambition differ across contexts. Our approach is **people-centred**, **science-led**, **equitable**, and **optimistic**, guided by long-term relationships rather than short-term funding cycles.

The Fund operates through regional hubs, focused on priority marine realms including the Tropical Atlantic, Western Indo-Pacific, Central Indo-Pacific, and Tropical Eastern Indo-Pacific; regions of global significance for biodiversity, supporting food security, and climate resilience.

The three pathways model

The **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** supports individuals, communities, and organisations through three flexible and connected pathways:

Enable

Preparing people to lead seagrass conservation

Enable supports early-stage individuals and organisations to build confidence, skills, and readiness — on their own terms. Through mentoring, training, and proposal support, we remove barriers to participation and access to finance. For Indigenous-led partners, this pathway explicitly supports self-determined readiness on Country and Sea Country.

Strengthen

Building capability through action and learning

Strengthen provides seed funding, technical mentoring, and training to support partners as they deliver early conservation initiatives. Emphasising learning-by-doing, this pathway builds robust local evidence, strengthens organisational confidence, and supports repeatable growth as capacity increases.

Implement

Delivering measurable impact at scale

Implement accelerates on-the-ground conservation, restoration, management, and education initiatives that are ready to act. Through staged funding and tailored mentoring, experienced partners are supported to deliver durable outcomes grounded in science and local priorities.

Strengthen

Enable

Implement

Seagrass at low tide
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

The investment opportunity

The **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** offers funders like you a credible, high-impact opportunity to drive transformational change for one of the planet's most important ecosystems. By investing in the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** you will:

- **enable locally-led solutions with global relevance,**

- **support strong international partnerships grounded in scientific excellence,**

- **deliver meaningful biodiversity, climate, and social outcomes,**

- **build long-term capacity rather than short-term projects, and**

- **contribute to climate resilience, food security, and sustainable livelihoods.**

As a donor to the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund**, you join a committed collective responding to the most pressing challenges facing seagrass conservation worldwide.

Together, we are creating the conditions for seagrass ecosystems — and the communities that depend on them — to thrive now and for future generations.

£50 million

Women collect invertebrates in seagrass at low tide, Indonesia
© Benjamin Jones / Project Seagrass

The Goal

The **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** is seeks to mobilise **£50 million** to catalyse a step-change in global seagrass conservation by **2030 and beyond.**

This investment enables a coordinated portfolio of locally-led initiatives across priority regions, focused on protecting, restoring, and sustaining seagrass meadows where they matter most for climate, biodiversity, and coastal communities.

By 2030, the **Global Seagrass Challenge Fund** aims to:

· support 20–50 locally-led seagrass initiatives across the globe,

· safeguard and restore seagrass meadows,

· strengthen long-term capacity, and

· generate scalable models for seagrass conservation that can be replicated globally.

This is not a collection of short-term projects. Instead, it is a strategic, long-term investment in the systems, partnerships, and leadership required to reverse seagrass loss at scale.

So, are you ready to back the Global Seagrass Challenge Fund?

Get in touch to find out more.

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