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## Article

# Rising from the Depths Network: A Challenge-Led Research Agenda for Marine Heritage and Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa

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**Abstract:** The Rising from the Depths (RftD) network aims to identify the ways in which Marine Cultural Heritage (MCH) can contribute to the sustainable development of coastal communities in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar. Although the coastal and marine heritage of eastern Africa is a valuable cultural and environmental resource, it remains largely unstudied and undervalued and is subject to significant threat from natural and anthropogenic processes of change. This paper outlines the aims of the RftD network and describes the co-creation of a challenge-led research and sustainability programme for the study of MCH in eastern Africa. Through funding 29 challenge-led research projects across these four Global South countries, the network is demonstrating how MCH can directly benefit East African communities and local economies through building identity and place-making, stimulating resource-centred alternative sources of income and livelihoods, and enhancing the value and impact of overseas aid in the marine sector. Overall, Rising from the Depths aims to illustrate that an integrated consideration of cultural heritage, rather than being a barrier to development, should be positioned as a central facet of the transformative development process if that development is to be ethical, inclusive and sustainable.

**Keywords:** Africa; Kenya; Tanzania; Mozambique; Madagascar; sustainable development; marine cultural heritage; maritime archaeology

## 1. Introduction

The Rising from the Depths network aims to identify in what ways the tangible submerged and coastal heritage of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar, and its associated intangible aspects, can stimulate ethical, inclusive and sustainable community development in the region. These four East African countries are among the economically poorest countries in the world and are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of geopolitical turmoil and environmental change. As with many parts of Africa, the region is subject to significant demographic change, with large-scale population movement towards its coastal cities. This movement is placing stress on the societal and infrastructural stability of these places. These countries are also the focus of global resource exploitation with

major offshore oil and gas discoveries driving international investment, and the associated development of super-ports to facilitate maritime trade. While port construction and offshore exploration of oil and gas deposits are bringing a degree of economic benefit to East Africa, these developments, along with activities such as underwater cabling, dredging, laying pipelines and underwater mining, are threatening the region's rich submerged and coastal heritage [1]. Environment and heritage resources are often poorly protected and regulated, and are coming under associated pressure from climate and environment change. In addition, while donor countries and investors profit from such developments, it is less clear how much of this profit trickles down to local communities, particularly those most at risk. Coastal communities in the region already face challenges caused by coastal erosion, dwindling fish resources and unsustainable fishing practices, exacerbated by external fishing fleets [2,3]. Infrastructure developments can intensify these problems: from increasing coastal erosion to developers grabbing land and forcing people to move. These societal and environmental pressures have also led to the emergence of violence in some communities - , most often perpetrated by young men - , with northern Mozambique and parts of the Kenyan coast witnessing recent violent conflict partly associated with radicalisation by religious extremists [4–6]. The fast pace of this change risks exposing already vulnerable coastal groups to greater risks of exploitation (from low pay to modern slavery) and insecurity (climate, food, health, shelter, land).

Against this background of profound and rapid change, it can be challenging to highlight the importance of cultural heritage. Yet the role of heritage, in the form of shared histories, place-making, traditions and livelihoods, can be crucial to the sustainability of communities in these areas. It is also a fundamental part of the establishment of quality of life, one of the key aims of the sustainable development goals identified by the UN [7]. Against this background, this paper outlines the research themes and challenges identified during the scoping phase of the Rising from the Depths network and maps out the projects funded so far to present a challenge-led agenda for Marine Cultural Heritage research in the region.

## 2. AHRC-GCRF Network Model: A New Way to Do Challenge-Led Research

Rising from the Depths (RftD) is a four-year interdisciplinary network project funded by the United Kingdom Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The GCRF is a £1.5 billion fund, drawn from the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, which was created in late 2015 to support research projects that use interdisciplinary academic expertise to address challenges faced by developing countries. GCRF projects establish equal partnerships between UK researchers and researchers in countries across the Global South to promote research which underpins the welfare and economic development of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) eligibility list. In order to become eligible for such funding, research must have a 'main objective which is directly and primarily relevant to the problems of developing countries' [8]. The network originally came together as a consortium of Global North and Global South universities at the instigation of the lead PI and Co-Is in order to develop an application for the fund. Through a subsequent programme of outreach and engagement led by university-based researchers, a broader network beyond academic was established involving government partners, NGOs and community groups.

RftD aims to identify how marine heritage research (and the data it produces) can be used to directly address fundamental developmental challenges faced by the ODA-recipient countries of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar. To achieve this, the RftD initiative has set out to:

1. Create an inclusive network of arts and humanities researchers, community groups, heritage professionals, NGOs, scientists, UN officials, government policy practitioners, coastal developers, offshore companies, overseas aid specialists, ICT specialists and artists drawn from the diverse components of coastal and marine heritage. It is intended that this network will exist beyond the funded project.

2. Build capacity to protect, utilise and enhance the potential of coastal and marine heritage. This is being done by supporting and enabling the work of heritage professionals in the region through workshops, skills training and directly funding research to engage in creative sustainable activities based around coastal and marine heritage.
3. Co-create and co-produce a Marine Cultural Heritage programme of activities and research, through consultation and collaboration with local communities, project partners and stakeholders, leading to the commissioning of a series of challenge-led co-produced research projects with clear pathways to produce sustainable benefits to the target communities and programme partners.

RftD received £1.8 million through the 'AHRC GCRF Area-Focused Network Plus Call' (launched in 2016) to support a four-year initiative originally intended to run from October 2017 to October 2021, although now extended to 2022 due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. The GCRF Network Plus funding model represents a new way of doing challenge-led research in Global South countries. Funding is allocated to a lead Research Organisation, based in the UK, to support a multi-institutional academic leadership team in building partnerships between academics, NGOs, policy makers and practitioners in both the Global North and South to co-create and carry out effective cross-cutting activities in a defined challenge area. A significant factor in the Network Plus model is that as well as co-creating and leading projects, researchers and organisations in the Global South can receive direct funding to carry out, manage and deliver initiatives, thereby helping to strengthen regional research expertise and capacity.

The RftD network is led by PI Jon Henderson based in Archaeology (University of Nottingham 2017–2020; University of Edinburgh 2020–present), supported by an interdisciplinary academic team of established, connected researchers from a further seven Higher Education institutions, all of whom have experience in leading large-scale projects in developing countries: Colin Breen, Environmental Science, Ulster University; Luciana Esteves, Coastal Change and Management, Bournemouth University; Annamaria La Chimia, Law and Development, University of Nottingham; Paul Lane, Biocultural Heritage and Deep History, University of Cambridge; Solange Macamo, Heritage Management, Eduardo Mondlane University; Garry Marvin, Anthropology, University of Roehampton; Stephanie Wynne-Jones, East African Archaeology, University of York.

As members of the academic team are not eligible under AHRC rules for funding from the network, academics based in East Africa were deliberately left out of the official academic team to ensure they could fully participate in and benefit from the funding stage. East African oversight in the co-creation and delivery of the network aims is key to the success of RftD, and to this end, Solange Macamo co-ordinates an East African Advisory Group with representatives from each country (Macamo, Mozambique; Ibrahim Busolo, Pwani University, Kenya; Emanuel Kessy, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Chantal Radimilahy, University of Antananarivo, Madagascar) to help co-ordinate national projects.

In order to deliver tangible, relevant outcomes, the network has been constructed to include a range of key non-academic partners in the UK and East Africa who act as gateways to community groups, industrial sectors and policy makers as well as facilitators and advocates of the project. Key 'gateway' partners include UNESCO, the Western Indian Ocean Maritime Science Association (WIOMSA), the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) and the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA). The Society for Underwater Technology offers access to the offshore oil and gas industries and provides additional agency through membership of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

### **3. Setting the Agenda: Marine Cultural Heritage in East Africa**

From the outset, the network was keen to avoid being overly prescriptive in terms of its approach to agenda setting. We were conscious that the majority of academic-led programmes have tended to be formulated in the Global North, and defined in terms of Western priorities and perspectives. Rather than develop an initial SWOT or LOGFRAME



analysis, we opted initially for a discursive-led approach, allowing for the full inclusion of the Southern 'voice', and co-production of the network agenda. The innovative approach that underpins the network lay in this initial formulation of a broad Theory of Change approach, followed by the generation and co-production of multiple series of autonomous Global South-led initiatives and project schemes. The recognition of heritage being a key driver of sustainable community development was the emergent consensus foundation principle, and agreed projects were then allowed full freedom to explore and develop this principle in their work. The first year was a data gathering and scoping year (October 2017–October 2018) designed to build the network, forge new collaborations and identify the immediate needs in each country through the consultation of a wide range of academic, community and marine stakeholder groups. Consultation meetings and events were carried out throughout Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique with academics at Higher Education Institutions, NGOs, government organisations and community groups (Figure 1). A UK consultation meeting with UK academics was held at the University of Roehampton in May 2018 to bring together the research themes identified in the African meetings and to identify potential input into them from the UK research community. Additional promotion of the network and the funding opportunities it offers was also undertaken at several international conferences and smaller meetings over the year, notably the 24th Society of Africanist Archaeologists Biennial Conference (Toronto, June 2018) and the 15th Panafrican Archaeological Congress (Rabat, September 2018).



**Figure 1.** Scoping meetings were held throughout 2018 with a wide range of academic, community and marine stakeholders including (from bottom right clockwise): academics and researchers based in the UK; UNESCO officials, NGOs and government representatives at a State Parties session in Paris; community leaders at the Ilha de Mozambique; the Bidi Wa Kasi women's group in Mida Creek, Kenya; ocean scientists at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute; lawyers from the Nairobi Law School; as well as school children in Kilwa, Tanzania (centre).

From the range of meetings and discussions held throughout the scoping year, it was obvious that a clear definition of Marine Cultural Heritage was needed and that its relevance to development activities in the coastal zone needed to be demonstrated not only to marine development stakeholders but also to heritage professionals and local communities. Too often it was found that marine or maritime heritage was viewed by

heritage practitioners, academics, developers and coastal communities alike through the very restrictive lens of heritage physically found in the sea with an emphasis on shipwrecks. A significant divergence between North and South perspectives also emerged. Engagement with academic practitioners in the North suggested the concept was primarily associated with the physical cultural heritage environment, a resource that was to be protected and managed. Engagement with Southern academics and communities suggested that they viewed marine heritage through a lived reality, of an environment that sustained life and carried significant meaning [9–11]. Heritage in the South was viewed as being less about the physical resource, but more associated with practice, place, belonging and meaning, echoing a similar dichotomy noted for terrestrial heritage in African contexts [12–16], and research on attitudes toward marine heritage in South Africa held by different constituencies [17].

Interdisciplinary discussions during the Rising from the Depths scoping meetings helped formulate a broad and inclusive view of Marine Cultural Heritage, where it is seen to encompass all past human action in the coastal and marine environment. We also recognise the importance of including contemporary activity and coastal living in this, an understanding that is inclusive of the belief systems and human–environment relationships that exist across the region. This wide-ranging conception of Marine Cultural Heritage is developed from Westerdahl’s 1992 definition of the maritime cultural landscape as the ‘human utilization of maritime space’, linking evidence from the land and sea together to embrace the totality of the potential space affected by human maritime action [18]. Westerdahl argued that this maritime space can be both physical and conceptual in that it ‘should include any hermeneutic kind of human relationship to the sea’ [19]. Building on the marine cultural landscape concept, all past human action on coasts as well as directly on the sea can be combined to constitute Marine Cultural Heritage (MCH). MCH therefore encompasses tangible remains such as shipwrecks, submerged settlements, coastal settlements, ports and harbours, maritime ecologies and geology as well as equally vital intangible components such as cultural practices, artistic and linguistic expressions, local skills and traditional and historical knowledge. The reach of MCH is similarly broad and includes its relationship to economic development, environmental management, social justice, education and identity. ‘Marine’ is the preferred adjective in RftD as it relates to all things pertaining to the sea and as such encompasses all activity associated with the oceans, while ‘maritime’ is usually used in a more restricted sense to refer to sea travel, shipping and exploration. Most importantly, ‘marine’ fits into the conceptual terminology used by ocean scientists, environmental managers and organisations and, crucially, coastal and offshore developers [20].

### *3.1. The Challenge*

The countries of eastern Africa are undergoing a period of profound change as the economy of the region gains momentum, driven by changing internal dynamics and by external interests [21]. The region’s marine zone is central to these developments with offshore exploration for oil and gas deposits driving investment, coupled with major financing of new and established ports to facilitate trade with the Gulf countries and the wider Indian Ocean. In addition to aid and investment from both the UK and other Western governments, China and Saudi Arabia are funding major infrastructural and development projects across the region [22]. While these developments have the potential to realise short-term economic, developmental and employment benefits, there has been little consideration of the impact of this work on the region’s submerged and coastal heritage or indeed the role heritage could play in the sustainable management of such work. The legislative framework has also not kept pace with the rapid expansion of infrastructural development and offshore exploration, despite some African coastal states, including Madagascar, having been early signatories of the United Nations 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Heritage [23].

At the same time, research in eastern Africa is continuing to reveal the extent of maritime cultures and traditions across the region as well as evidence for wider maritime activity that connected this coast to the broader Indian Ocean region [24–27]. Contemporary residents of much of Africa’s Indian Ocean coast, from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, are commonly referred to collectively as the Swahili, drawing on their shared language, history and aspects of a maritime culture which crosscuts modern national borders [28,29], although such nomenclature obscures considerable differences in terms of practices, status, history and origins [30–33]. To date, research on Swahili ‘heritage’ has focused either on the built heritage of the coastal belt, or on contemporary elements of intangible heritage such as dance, ritual practices and literature [34–40]. This draws together a wide chronological frame, from the early second millennium townscapes of ruined mosques, palaces and tombs [41], to the grand structures relating to Omani heritage of the 19th century onwards [42]. The islands of the Comores and Madagascar have long been part of the connected world created by maritime engagement here, although research has been limited to a few key sites [43–45]. Each are part of the long-term history of the coast, reflecting a vibrant urban tradition connected to both African and international networks. It can also be seen in less tangible aspects such as the heterodox Islamic tradition that reflects centuries of connection and conversion, and the input of multiple diasporic communities and schools of learning [46], although this is now under threat from a rise in fundamentalism [47–49].

Despite recent efforts to promote its research potential [50,51] and the long recognition of the Swahili as a ‘maritime’ culture [52], there has never been a coordinated multidisciplinary engagement with East Africa’s extraordinarily rich Marine Cultural Heritage (MCH), and in common with most other parts of the continent there has been limited local capacity to undertake research in this field and maximise MCH as a ‘public good’ [53]. This is unsurprising given that the potential and importance of MCH has not yet been fully realised anywhere in the world. Critically, MCH is under threat globally, and especially in the Western Indian Ocean, from natural forces and climate-driven coastal change as well as intensification in coastal and offshore development [54–57]. We are losing the resource before we have had a chance to harness its potential. Local capacity in eastern Africa to undertake such activity is limited and urgently needs enhancing through investment in research-based training, capacity development and public engagement.

The sea in East Africa is a connector, a facilitator of communications, a supplier of resources that sustain life, and an environment that is rooted in the belief systems of coastal peoples. For millennia, this coast has been embedded within broader political and socioeconomic domains, and has been a witness to multiple migrations, invasions, trading contacts and diverse colonial encounters [58–63]. Its port towns and cities were intrinsically connected to a wider mercantile maritime world, ensuring it became one of the most culturally dynamic and diverse regions throughout history. It was, and continues to be, a region of continuous transformation and subject to a variety of anthropogenic and natural drivers of change. East African counties currently have limited capacity to protect or explore their rich marine heritage, and as a result, the socioeconomic potential of heritage in the coastal and marine zone has yet to be realised.

### 3.2. Research Themes

Taking a holistic approach to marine heritage, the RftD network is focused on funding projects that integrate scholarship on eastern Africa’s coastal built heritage, underwater sites, environments, natural resources, legal structures, material practices and living traditions, bringing them into development conversations and resulting in an enhanced understanding of the region’s MCH. From the meetings carried out during the scoping year, a number of broad research themes were identified:

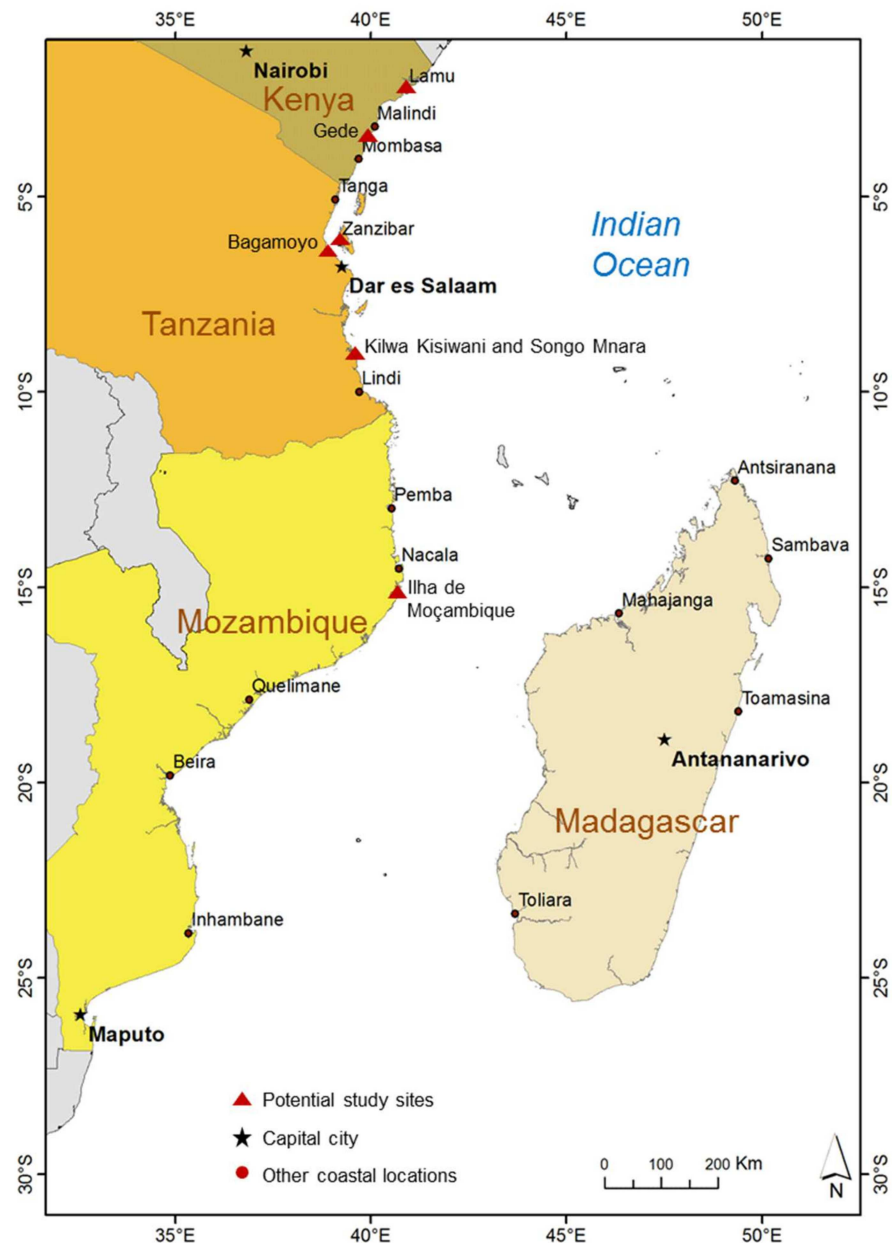
### 3.2.1. Uniting Terrestrial and Maritime Research

In the opening decades of the 20th century, the region's impressive stone towns began to be examined by Western explorers, and systematic archaeological work commenced in the 1950s [64,65]. The origins of these impressive sites, often consisting of many acres of ruined buildings, mosques and palaces, were initially ascribed to external founders from the Gulf and Middle Eastern regions, following the lines of dominant colonial thought at the time [66]. More rigorous research from the 1980s onwards readdressed these colonial-period narratives and developed more nuanced and informed understandings of the African cultural origins of these places and the emergence of what has become known as Swahili society [67–70]. Increasingly, these towns came to be seen as semi-autonomous entrepôts that were outward-looking towards the wider Indian Ocean region but were also bound to Africa through their trading connections and social relationships. This period of research also saw the start of a landscape-orientated approach to recognising the complex relationships these towns would have enjoyed with their terrestrial hinterland and marine forelands [71–74]. For the period before 1500 AD, archaeology provides the greatest source of information on contemporary society and the drivers of economic and landscape change. Historical records for the period tend to rely on often unreliable traveller accounts and later 18th and 19th century politically constructed histories [75]. The colonial period that followed, with Portuguese, Omani, French, German and British presence on the East African coast and offshore islands, resulted in a shifting social universe, an intensification of trade through coastal ports, caravan missions to the interior, and the establishment of a plantation economy on islands like Mauritius and Madagascar [76–79]. The Omani presence at Mombasa, and above all at Zanzibar, reshaped coastal society in important ways, but drew on the long history of Islamic, mercantile activity in the region [80,81].

Research on the immediate foreshore near Swahili sites has revealed a range of maritime adaptations around Kilwa, Songo Mnara and Bagamoyo in Tanzania, and Gede in Kenya [75,82–85] (Figure 2). A geophysical survey on the Zanzibar archipelago explored the shorelines of settlements and demonstrated the range of industry and activity associated with this zone [86]. On Madagascar, excavations on the coast have shown the long temporal depth of coastal resource exploitation here [87]. Preliminary underwater reconnaissance around Mombasa, Malindi and Kilwa has yielded some results, but the potential for shipwreck and underwater landscape archaeology has not yet been fully explored [1,25,88–91]. Only in Mozambique has underwater archaeology established a strong foothold, with the creation of an underwater archaeology centre at the fort on Ilha de Moçambique and year-round wreck recording and recovery in the waters offshore, and only after over a decade of exploitation of these wrecks as a source of 'treasure' [92]. To date, these efforts have focused on wrecks of the Portuguese period and afterwards, and no pre-15th century wrecks are known for certain on the eastern African coast [88].

There is thus a rich tradition of research on maritime societies in the region, and a long temporal depth to coastal settlement. Many of the studies which have explored the archaeology of Swahili towns, and adjacent landscapes, have focused on maritime resource utilisation and attempted to understand the relationship with the sea. Until recently, this was typically done using only terrestrial data; however, this is beginning to change with a recognition of the deep dependence of coastal communities on marine resources for subsistence and industry [60,93–98]. Rising from the Depths is funding projects that combine terrestrial and marine approaches which together will create an informed coastal perspective that will create a richer understanding of eastern African communities past and present. It is the intention that this integrated knowledge base will create a better understanding of shifting identities and place through time, promoting a clearer sense of the coastal landscape and the cultural histories of marine-oriented societies.





**Figure 2.** Map of the study area and sites mentioned in the text.

### 3.2.2. Understanding Human Interactions with the Sea

In addition to the narrative of maritime urbanism in this region, centred on the regional built cultural heritage, there are more immersive stories of how coastal dwellers have viewed and interacted with the sea, and used marine resources, over the millennia [99]. Anthropologists and ethnographers have long considered the relationship of Swahili communities with the sea. In some of the classic works of Swahili ethnography, ownership and control of the sea and of fishing are presented as one of the key resources to be managed by the Swahili elite [100,101]. Another body of research explores some of the social consequences of oceanic mobility in fashioning the nature of coastal culture [102,103]. Fishing communities, encompassing rural and scattered populations as well as town dwellers, retain repositories of traditional knowledge and practice, maintaining craft traditions that have developed over centuries [104–107]. Whilst the richness of their MCH requires analysis and record, these communities are currently amongst the poorest in the world and have yet to benefit from the growing national interest across the region in the Blue Economy [108–110]. We are conscious of the inadvertent fetishisation and over-

romanticisation of these communities, who do not represent living insights into medieval lifeways, but who are instead marginalised, and often lacking voice, in an increasingly hostile environment. In terms of heritage approaches, the simple preservation of ways of life is not an option and would only serve to fossilise them in poverty. That said, development often results in the erosion of cultural traditions and heritage. One of the biggest challenges facing the Rising from the Depths initiative will be balancing preservation and development. This is not easy and requires anthropological work alongside the co-creation and co-production of solutions with the communities themselves. To date, aid interventions have tended to be scientific and practical in approach, ignoring or underplaying cultural sensitivities and traditions [111–113]. The wider cultural concerns and context of arts and humanities-based approaches have a real value here in ensuring not only that solutions are identified but that they are accepted and supported by local communities [20].

There remains considerable scope for broader comparative study of different communities along the coast that aims to map and understand the nature of coastal and maritime livelihoods; the family and other social structures and networks relating to livelihoods; local knowledge, beliefs, experiences and engagements with the marine environment; the material and intangible practices of fishing and seafaring; recording of local awareness and understandings of, and relationships with, the cultural and natural heritage of the coast; and local attitudes to economic developments and development infrastructures, employing research methods that focus on long-term ethnographic participant observation [114–117]. This form of participatory research has been a core guiding principle of RftD-related research, with projects designed to listen to community concerns and explore mechanisms based around how these groups construct and negotiate their social, cultural and economic environments.

### 3.2.3. Maritime Mobility in the Past and Today

Maritime societies are characterised by mobility. Swahili cultural traditions communicate complex narratives of movement which are often used to underpin modern cultural identities [118,119]. Mobility associated with slavery has fundamentally reshaped societies across this region and continues to shape local identity discourse in many regions. In particular, the Mascarene islands, the Comorian archipelago and Madagascar were the setting for massive relocation and cultural hybridity during recent centuries due to the effects of European colonialism, a plantation economy and the slave raiding and trading that accompanied these [120,121]. Diasporic communities across the region have shaped society and bring cultural traditions of their own, from art to religion. In Zanzibar, Comorian immigrants are linked in particular to spirit possession rituals [122–126]. Likewise, migration and movement represent one of the key challenges facing contemporary society. Rising from the Depths research is stimulating new historical and archaeological analysis of past movement of peoples to, from and around the coastal zone: the drivers behind this movement are of particular interest, determining whether movement is voluntary or forced; economic, political or humanitarian; temporary or permanent.

Among the key issues that the humanities are well placed to explore is how different migrant communities and their hosts make use of the past to forge and sustain identities, and whether these are new, hybrid, diasporic or in some sense ‘original’ (i.e., framed in the cultural terms of the migrant’s homeland). The process of constructing place is deeply complex, and we are particularly interested in the mechanisms through which new arrivals construct a lineage of belonging, often fabricated through an intricate web of myth, histories, material culture and landscape. Understanding how migrant and host communities use both tangible and intangible aspects of the past in the constitution of ‘social trust’, ‘belonging’ and ‘distinction’ is fundamental to understanding why integration fails or succeeds and can offer more empathetic pathways to successful integration.



### 3.2.4. MCH in Environmental Science and Coastal Management

There are currently limited historical data on the human exploitation of marine resources, the scales of extraction, and the environmental legacies of such practices over the longue durée in the region [87,105,127–130]. Coastal management strategies and conservation projects rely on short-term baseline data that, at best, cover little more than a century, when observational records began to be collected. As a result, projects and strategies put into place are limited as they do not fully reflect ecosystem dynamics or the relative resilience of different species to the effects of both anthropogenic processes and those driven by long-term climatic and other environmental factors [131]. Equally, East Africa, which is highly vulnerable to future sea level rise, lacks adequate reconstructions of more recent sea level changes. There has been a degree of work done on late Holocene sea-level change, but this is often both contested and contradictory [132,133]. Understanding recent change is of fundamental importance to coastal communities, allowing them to plan and adapt to rapidly changing environments. Climatic and environmental change also has important implications for the ecological base of this region. Understanding the impact of this change is a crucial first step in the reconstruction of the human settlement and historical ecology of coastal regions, from which other research can follow. To begin to address such issues, *Rising from the Depths* has initiated new research on the long-term history of exploitation of marine and maritime resources, their environmental legacies and contemporary significance to local livelihoods. Not only are these studies providing enhanced understanding of the past exploitation of marine resources and ecosystems, but they are also providing insight into present and future use and management. RftD endorses a deep time approach to considering climatic and coastal change that considers how human groups responded to change over millennia and how this information can inform modern challenges [20,134–136].

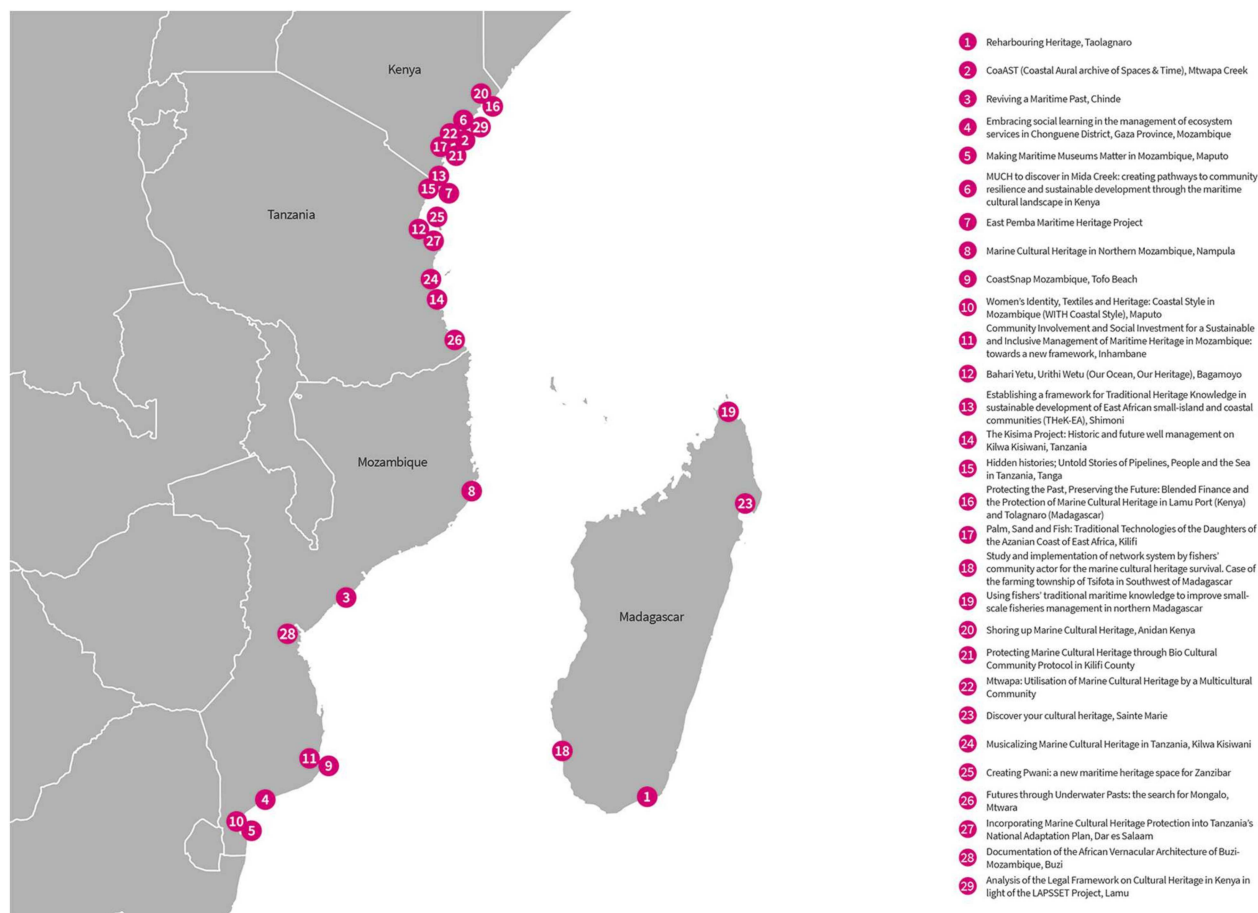
### 3.2.5. MCH in Law, Rights and Development

Although there has been work on cultural heritage and the intersection between aid and development more generally, there has been limited consideration of the potential of MCH's social and economic value and of marine heritage as a means for development and the key issue of the relationship between aid and MCH. Knowledge of the past can inform development aid policy, modern development projects (coastal and offshore) and coastal management strategies. Indeed, access to cultural heritage is considered a fundamental human right [137] and therefore should be safeguarded in infrastructure development projects (particularly when they are aid-funded). While discussions around broader legal issues and the protection of cultural heritage are emerging, these have so far been focused on the linkages between investments and international trade law and heritage more generally and human rights—exploring the question of why cultural heritage is to be regarded as a human right and how international trade and investment law can be used to 'support and promote' cultural heritage, with little or no consideration of the impact of aid-financed or public–private partnership financing as means to realise and promote sustainable development. In terms of the link to MCH, it is virtually non-existent with legal approaches focusing only on individual states' obligations under international and national law to protect the resource and, in particular, to prevent commercial exploitation of submerged sites [138–141]. The RftD initiative is innovative in that it will directly make the link between aid obligations and MCH in an attempt to increase the effectiveness and enhance the resilience of aid projects through creating long-term benefits that go beyond the life-cycle of development projects, directly influencing the practices of states and other stakeholders such as multilateral development banks, aid agencies and NGOs. Additionally, the integration of a rights-based approach towards heritage management and community development across the region will further strengthen these coastal communities in terms of their ability to protect themselves and their natural capital against unregulated and illegal development. RftD is working to map the law in these areas (understanding what laws apply and how they have been interpreted via case law,

and what mechanisms of democratic participation are envisaged, i.e., what mechanisms are available for communities to participate in governments' decisions, to be heard, and to claim rights) and to develop a series of legal toolkits that will equip these communities to better understand threats and build resilience. Ultimately, this is done to enhance the capacity of communities around coastal sites to better understand the risks and consequences of new developments in the area and to engage effectively with government and private actors, through a democratic process.

### 3.3. Funding

Following the scoping of the major challenges in the region, three funding calls were made between September 2018 and October 2019 resulting in the commissioning of a diverse programme of MCH-orientated research across Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and Mozambique (Figure 3). The first two funding calls were open and considered any project that was relevant to, or dealt with MCH in eastern Africa, as long as they were collaborative, co-produced and challenge-led, and, most importantly, had a clear aim to produce economic, cultural and/or social benefits for coastal communities in the region. Applications were assessed through independent expert peer review following standard UK funding board procedures concerning confidentiality and conflicts of interest. The assessment panels were comprised of members of the RftD network core academic institutions and external project partners, and included overseas and non-academic reviewers. Applications that were unsuccessful in the first call were provided with feedback and encouraged to re-submit to the second call (a number of revised applications were successful following this route). Organisations eligible for funding included universities, government institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), and teams could include partners from business and industry. According to the GCRF funding model, project teams in the first two calls could be composed of a Principal Investigator (responsible for the leadership of the project) and up to three Co-Investigators from eligible institutions and organisations in the UK and East Africa. These investigators had to include at least one researcher from Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and/or Mozambique and at least one from the UK with projects being led by Principal Investigators from either East Africa or the UK. GCRF network projects represent a new way of allocating research funding as organisations in the region can be directly funded and lead research programmes. Whatever the composition of the team, at least 50% of costs have to be allocated to East African countries involved to meet UK Overseas Development Aid requirements for direct benefit. In consultation with the AHRC, for the third and final call the requirement for a UK partner was removed to allow the network to support projects conceived and directed entirely by East African organisations—an agreement which has been of some considerable additional benefit in the light of the international travel restrictions imposed following the start of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, aside from being a more equitable approach to allocating research funding specifically aimed at enhancing in-country scientific capacities. As well as funding new stand-alone projects, the final call also provided opportunities for projects that could help disseminate the wider aims of the network (the importance and utility of MCH in eastern Africa) and that enhanced or created links between the existing project portfolio with a view towards future sustainability of the initiative.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of projects funded through Rising from the Depths.

Over the three calls, the full network project budget of £800,000 has been allocated, and 29 projects have been funded ranging in size from small (£1000–£5000), medium (£5000–£30,000) to large (£30,000–£100,000) projects. A diverse programme of MCH-orientated research has been commissioned spanning a range of disciplines including archaeology (maritime and terrestrial), anthropology, coastal management, cultural heritage, digital humanities, development law, environmental science, ocean science, museum studies, natural history and visual arts.

Despite their different approaches and aims, all of these projects share the view of MCH as a resource that can inform solutions to present day challenges from the top-down and the bottom-up. Bottom-up projects co-created by community groups included *Much to discover in Mida Creek: creating pathways to community resilience and sustainable development through the maritime cultural landscape in Kenya* (PI Caesar Bitu, National Museum of Kenya). Here a local women's group *Bidi Wa Kasi* worked with the National Museum to develop a series of sustainable industries using the area's natural heritage and cultural capital. At the other end of the scale, top-down projects such as *Analysis of the legal framework on cultural heritage in Kenya in light of the LAPSET project (Oil pipeline and refinery)* (PI Alfred Nyanhoka, University of Nairobi) and *Incorporating Marine Cultural Heritage protection into Tanzania's National Adaptation Plan* (PI Hayley Roberts, Bangor University) are engaging at the national government and international level through considering relevant development law and policies.

The role of MCH in coastal infrastructural development is examined in projects such as *Hidden Histories; untold stories of pipelines, people and the sea in Tanzania* (PI Thembi Mutch, University of Sussex) and *Protecting the Past, Preserving the Future: blended finance and the protection of Marine Cultural Heritage in Lamu Port (Kenya) and Tolagnaro (Madagascar)* (PI Daria Davitti, University of Nottingham). Indigenous knowledge of marine resources is

being harnessed in projects such as *Using fishers' traditional maritime knowledge to improve small-scale fisheries management in northern Madagascar* (PI Lalarisoa Rakotoarimino, C3 Madagascar) and *Palm, Sand and Fish: traditional technologies of the daughters of the Azanian Coast* (PIs Freda Nkirote and Joy M'Mbogori, British Institute in Eastern Africa). Other projects such as *CoastSnap Mozambique* (PI Cari Ballesteros, University of Bournemouth) and *The Kisima Project: historic and future well management on Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania* (PI Edward Pollard, University of Dar es Salaam) are considering how MCH can inform coastal management strategies and use data on past landscape use to mitigate against the effects of climate change.

Arts-based approaches include *Musicalizing Marine Cultural Heritage in Tanzania* (PI Elgidius Ichumbaki, University of Dar es Salaam) and *Women's Identity, Heritage and Textiles: coastal style in Mozambique* (WITH Coastal Style) (PI Sarah Worden, National Museums of Scotland). *Reharbouring Heritage, Madagascar* (PI Jonathan Skinner, Roehampton UK) is examining MCH as a living resource which can highlight challenges, inform fishing practices and build community resilience through developing sustainable livelihoods with vulnerable Antanosy coastal communities in southeast Madagascar. The approach included holding a Festival of the Sea in Sainte Luce in June 2019, which was co-organised and attended by over 2000 local people (Figure 4). The festival used methods such as dancing, music, films and puppet shows to engage communities on the sustainable development goals as well as consider issues surrounding food security and existing tensions between traditional and modern lobster fishery management.



**Figure 4.** Festival of the Sea at Sainte Luce, Madagascar, in June 2019 attended by over 2000 local people.

#### 4. Consolidation and Impact

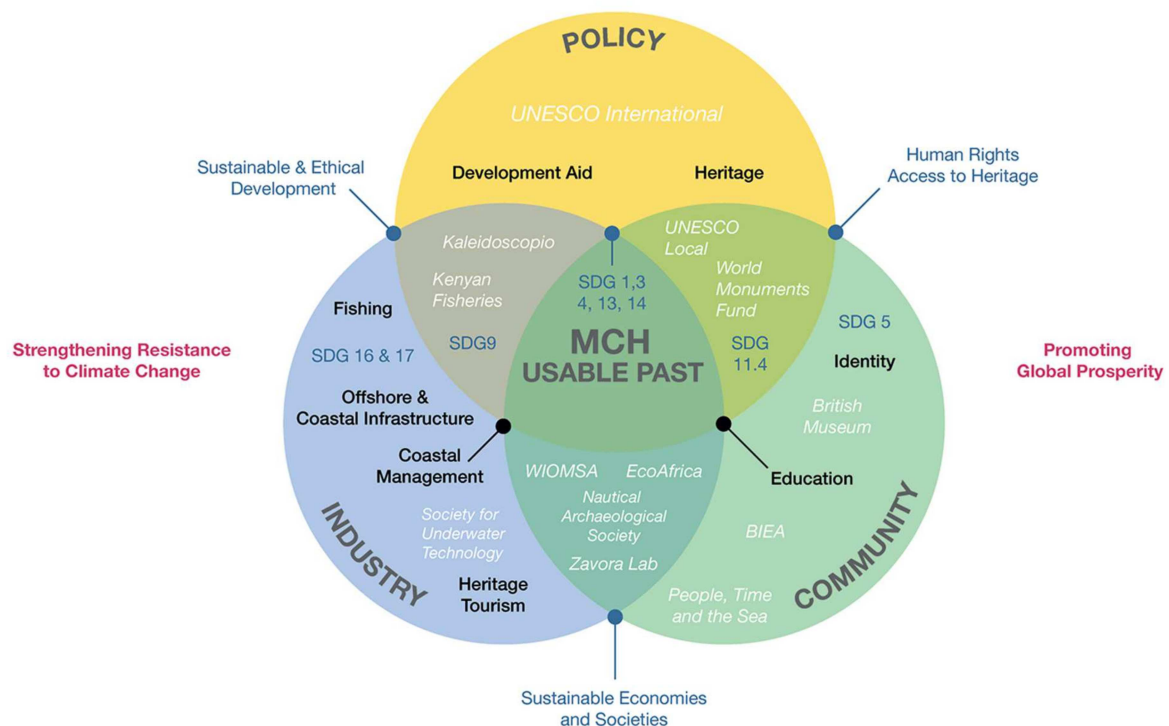
As the 29 Innovation Projects are brought to completion throughout 2021, the various results and outputs will be drawn together and communicated throughout a dissemination period (from 2021 to 2022) to present, for the first time, an integrated multidisciplinary vision of how MCH can act as a driver for social, cultural and economic change. Taken as a whole, the projects bring together heritage specialists with a range of communities—government officials, policy makers, ocean scientists, artists, transmedia specialists, tourism industry professionals, international development lawyers and environmental managers



as well as NGOs and local communities themselves—to unlock the social and economic value of MCH in the region.

A Marine Cultural Heritage outlook (prioritising human interaction with the sea in all its diversity) sits at the centre of the Rising for the Depths network and provides a conceptual framework that unites, stimulates and informs sustainable activities and development approaches in the coastal and marine zone (Figure 5). Like the sea itself, MCH is a connector that links and gives context to heritage tourism, economic initiatives, coastal management, infrastructure work, sustainable fishing, legal approaches and governance. These are practices carried out by people in the present, building on the practice of the past.

It is anticipated that the project will deliver impacts across the following three main primary stakeholder groups.



**Figure 5.** A diagram illustrating the RftD vision of MCH informing and linking activity across policy, industry and community groups in the marine zone. The position of project partners in the network structure and the relationship of activities to the SDGs is also shown.

#### 4.1. Community

Coastal communities are struggling to retain their cultural identities, place and control over their common assets in the face of rapidly expanding development, contributing to their lack of ‘voice’ in important political, economic and cultural decisions affecting their lives. Cultural heritage can play a vital role in redressing this, supporting individuals and communities to convey identities and values, foster social inclusion and sense of belonging and promote cohesion and community strength [142], especially when backed by community-driven development of biocultural protocols [143].

#### 4.2. Industry

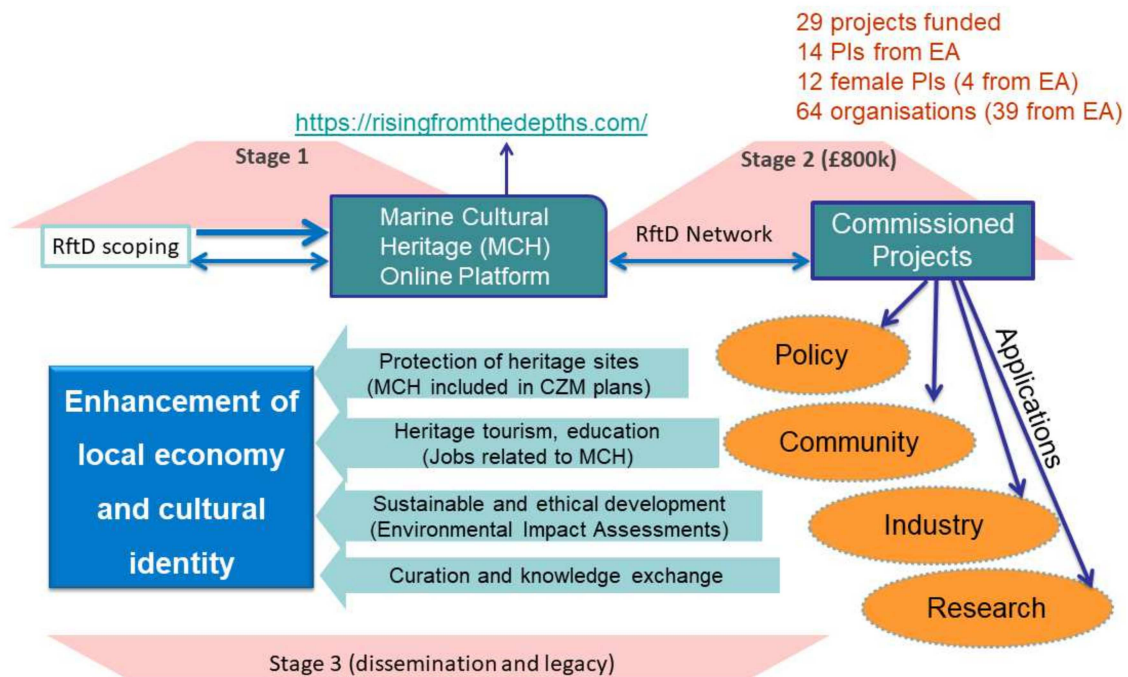
Offshore oil and gas extraction is rapidly developing across East Africa, a key part of regional economic growth plans, and the focus of significant amounts of overseas aid. Despite this, knowledge of MCH as an economic and cultural resource is missing from debates about the sustainable development of coastal and marine environments in East Africa. Rising from the Depths will provide a deep time perspective through data sets relating to sea level change and human responses to climatic change over millennia

resulting in stronger coastal resilience planning and the development of integrated Coastal Zone Management plans that will protect eastern African communities and their associated heritage and environmental assets. Such deep time datasets can also be used to guide ecological restoration. Rising from the Depths activity will also stimulate growth in heritage tourism initiatives and biocultural heritage services. At present, MCH is not part of strategies aimed at developing the sustainable tourist industry in coastal East Africa, which focuses almost entirely on natural resources like wildlife and coral reefs.

#### 4.3. Policy

MCH is not currently part of the international, national or local development policy landscape, leading to environmental degradation and economic underuse. Rising from the Depths will inform local and national approaches to coastal management, sustainable tourism, and public access to MCH. The network will also consider, for the first time, the benefits of including MCH in development aid and private investment agreements in an East Africa context—both in terms of right to access and the obligation to protect MCH. This will lead to more effective policies that articulate the value of MCH as a human right, an economic asset, and an integral part of community and individual identity building. The outcomes of improved, interconnected international, national and local policy will be an increase in the cultural and economic value of East Africa’s heritage, and an enhanced role for it in local and national economic growth strategies. Direct beneficiaries will be UNESCO and government officials, heritage professionals, aid specialists and NGOs dealing with aid in the region.

The Rising from the Depths network has been designed to deliver collaborative and co-produced, challenge-led research in eastern Africa with a clear route to impact designed into both the overall programme and as a set of criteria for the outputs of the Innovative Project awards (Figure 6). Activity is underpinned by an agile ‘Theory of Change’ methodology [144,145] that starts with SDG-aligned challenge areas, and mobilises the expertise and comprehensive international network of the core investigator team, and the project, to design activity that will deliver against those challenges.



**Figure 6.** The Rising from the Depths impact framework. Available online: <https://risingfromthedepths.com/>, (accessed on 17 June 2021).



In line with the GCRF Enabling Change agenda, the work of Rising from the Depths addresses development challenges, strengthens and empowers local researchers, and contributes directly to the sustainable and inclusive prosperity of coastal communities in Eastern Africa. The multidisciplinary, cross-sector, community-driven programme is proactively designed to deliver a step change in how community, policy and industry realise cultural, social and economic value from MCH.

More specifically, it aligns with the UN sustainable development goals in the following ways: helping to alleviate poverty through identifying the economic potential of MCH (SDG 1); providing free-to-access opportunities for people—through individual project activity and the RftD website resources—to engage with cultural heritage and therefore help promote wellbeing (SDG 3); ensuring it is open access, free-to-all and sustainable beyond the funding period to promote free and lifelong access to educational resources (SDG4); through grass-roots work with existing community groups, individuals and NGOs, the network has actively engaged women and children as co-designers and implementers of research projects, thereby helping to promote equal gender opportunities (SDG5). A second strand of alignment relates more specifically to resources, their protection and use: as well as protecting the ‘world’s cultural and natural heritage’ (SDG 11.4) RftD supports ‘the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of tourism’ (SDG14.7); it promotes ethical development through scoping the potential role of MCH in overseas aid marine infrastructure and offshore industry projects (SDGs 16 and 17). This will allow benefits to still be created after projects have finished, building resilience into those activities and ultimately help to enhance the effectiveness of overseas aid (SDG 9).

#### 4.4. Legacy

It is the intention of the network that it leaves a strong and sustainable legacy extending beyond the initial funding period, with a number of the Innovation Projects expected to seed new activity and funding (each Innovation Project was required to submit a 5-year sustainability plan at the application stage). While we recognise the concept of sustainability in this instance is complex, and to a certain extent intangible, we have established a number of principles around this. Centred on the three pillars of sustainability—environment, society and economy—we have identified three linked strands to our networks approach. Legacy environmental sustainability will be centred on a marine cultural resource that is better understood, better managed and celebrated. From a societal perspective, future capacity will be enhanced through an open access information resource, supporting policy makers, researchers and communities. Capacity development will be further enhanced through the members of the advanced doctoral researcher network who will take project learning back to their workplaces in Africa. A sustainable economic legacy is also being realised through the community heritage development projects that are developing both a lasting activity and infrastructural base during this project phase. Further, this network is not seen as a finite process, but instead as an embryonic and dynamic entity that will continue to innovate, partner and develop sustainable strategies for coastal communities across this region, building on the wealth of regionally based research expertise accumulated over the course of the funding period.

In order to measure the success or otherwise of this project, we avoided overly prescriptive Key Performance Indicators in the first instance. The rationale behind this lay in the range and diversity of project types, the ability to be reflexive in terms of varying financial support for particular projects, and through our interest in the exploration of integrated approaches towards identifying good existing and innovative practice. A robust evaluation framework was established to query project development and success, delivered through a formal quantitative and qualitative approach. More specifically, this was centred on the perceived ideal delivery of a series of outcomes structured under three headings. In terms of each project, the rationale and outcomes centred on MCH being:

- Understood, identified, managed and protected;

- Utilised to create social, cultural and economic opportunities.

In terms of delivering more sustainable community development, each project had to identify and implement ways by which MCH could support and enhance place-making, as well as delivering programmes of community stewardship. From a policy and industry perspective, projects had to include an element of capacity development, although this varies from project to project. Additionally, a number of projects were charged with delivering robust policy development and the implementation of best practice in terms of sustainable environmental and heritage management. Finally, in terms of the participants, it was expected that they would develop a new skill, expertise, or knowledge set around MCH, as well as developing an enhanced value set around the heritage resource. Additionally, each project had to meet co-production and co-creation guidelines, and be people-centred while balancing the needs of the environment.

Through the collation of the results of the commissioned Innovation Projects and the preparation of overview reports and policy statements, the network will create a significant online resource which will be free to access [146]. Engagement activity in the dissemination year (2021–2022) will be structured through targeted interventions with the three identified key stakeholder groups (community, policy, industry) using key project partners such as UNESCO, WIOMSA and the Society for Underwater Technology as facilitators. Workshops with practitioners and policy makers will stimulate the creation of guidelines for local and national authorities and policy makers on how existing frameworks can be strengthened to strategically place MCH at the heart of coastal and marine development in eastern Africa, including its role in the aid implementation process.

Rising from the Depths is also training a cohort of Ph.D. researchers from East Africa. Ten international doctoral studentships have been funded by the participating UK universities covering MCH topics in archaeology, anthropology, heritage, law, development, coastal management and environmental science. As a cohort due to finish in 2021, these researchers will collectively form a next generation of MCH-aware practitioners in the region. This is done in recognition that one of the major challenges facing MCH is capacity development. It is anticipated that this highly skilled doctoral-level cohort will return to East Africa to take leading roles in government and academic institutions and work towards further embedding MCH practice across the region. The project is particularly conscious of the broader need to support scholarship across eastern Africa, achieved by collaborations through our innovation projects, PhD scholarships, academic outputs and open access resources accessible through project partners such as UNESCO.

By making East Africa's MCH accessible to the wider public, both within the selected countries and globally (through the Rising from the Depths online platform), this project will have a direct impact on promoting heritage tourism and as well as on the sustainable development of maritime archaeological sites and community activity around, or based on, those sites and MCH more widely. The project will deliver a step change in the ways in which the public accesses and experiences MCH in East Africa, as well as the ways that heritage is researched and managed. It will create methodologies and practices that will have relevance to the management of MCH in other Global South contexts. It has developed a strategic partnership with the Honor Frost Foundation to work collaboratively outside of eastern Africa into the Mediterranean region. This alliance widens the scope of the initial project and will extend its methodologies to the countries of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Cyprus.

## 5. Conclusions

At the core of RftD is the concept that upscaling MCH awareness and research capacity will create new social and economic opportunities that will, in turn, ensure the protection and preservation of MCH. By ensuring strong participatory local voices in the co-creation of the network and the projects it has funded, RftD actively brings the past and the present together to dynamically explore the relationship between MCH and sustainable

development from a wide variety of perspectives, from local employment and small business opportunities to mitigating against the effects of coastal climate change.

As a group, the 29 projects funded throughout the region will create a connected knowledge base of cross-disciplinary research, capacity building, policy development and public engagement, which will link eastern Africa's MCH more overtly to a) the development of biocultural heritage industries in the region and b) meeting key components of the UN's sustainable development goals, in a manner that builds on cultural values, creativity, artistic expressions, local environmental understanding and indigenous knowledges and practices. As a group, the multidisciplinary, cross-sector, community-driven projects of the RftD network will deliver a step change in how communities, government organisations, NGOs, developers and marine industry stakeholders realise cultural, social and economic value from MCH. The projects will also lay the foundations for future interdisciplinary research, whilst simultaneously tackling key development issues such as poverty reduction through the development of sustainable economies.

RftD firmly believes that both the heritage resource and heritage-based practice can contribute to developing positive social change—past human activity and practice in the marine zone can, and should, inform future practice. Aside from the generation of new data that will contribute to the field of African archaeology, the project will demonstrate the potential of marine-orientated research more widely, fully establishing it as a key field in understanding human culture, contributing to mainstream archaeological issues (e.g., cultural change and identities) as well as addressing contemporary issues (e.g., private and aid-driven investment in the marine and coastal sectors). The nations of coastal East Africa have aspirations to transform themselves into a thriving maritime gateway of trade and investment. The past has an active role in not only informing this development but in helping to drive it while also creating and facilitating stronger, more adaptable and informed coastal communities to play a major part in the process. Ultimately, this network will be judged on the success, or otherwise, of its autonomous project-based approach. If this work strengthens regional research capacity in the field and contributes to the development of stronger coastal communities, while promoting a better appreciated and more sustainable use of the marine environment, then our approach will have been worthwhile.

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