South Africa



Organization: ABALOBI
Location: Western Cape Province, South Africa
Solution: Empowering fishers through supply chain tracking and direct connections with buyers
Factsheet Period: First round of UNDP AFCIA funding (16 months); Second round of UNDP AFCIA funding (12 months)



Traditional small-scale fishing vessels at the harbour in Struisbaai, one of ABALOBI's flagship communities. @ABALOBI

Small-scale fishers often lack access to essential infrastructure, technology and fair market opportunities, leaving them vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and systemic shocks. ABALOBI offers fishers access to training, technology, financial services, better cold storage and supply chain tracking. This empowers fishers to connect directly with buyers and boost their profits. Under a digital marketplace ('Fish With A Story'), traceability technology captures where catch has come from and tracks markets, directing fishers to higher price catches.

Key achievements

- Over 100,000 people were fed via the Food Security sales program, supporting household food security and restoring cultural exchange practices
- US$2 million revenue channeled directly into small-scale fishing communities through the market programme (skippers, crew, post-harvest workers, ops staff and pantry producers)
- Approximately 2,052 ABALOBI fishers registered with the digital marketplace, with 451 active users and 7,840 small-scale fisher beneficiaries across all programmes
- Launched Group Life Insurance Pilot, providing R20,000 cash payouts upon death to 42 participants (27 Post Harvest Quality Control workers and 15 staff)
- Launched the Sustainable Fisheries Support Programme in collaboration with Indalo Inclusive and WWF-SA, focusing on Business Acumen and Governance Mastery for Cooperatives. The programme is tailored for Small-Scale Fisheries Cooperatives and focuses on Business Acumen, Entrepreneurial Capacity Building and Governance Mastery—empowering fishers with the knowledge and mentorship needed to thrive within the green economy
- A total of 33,000+ conversations were facilitated via LOBI, a WhatsApp-based support bot, which continued to serve as a vital digital bridge between the organisation and small-scale fishers

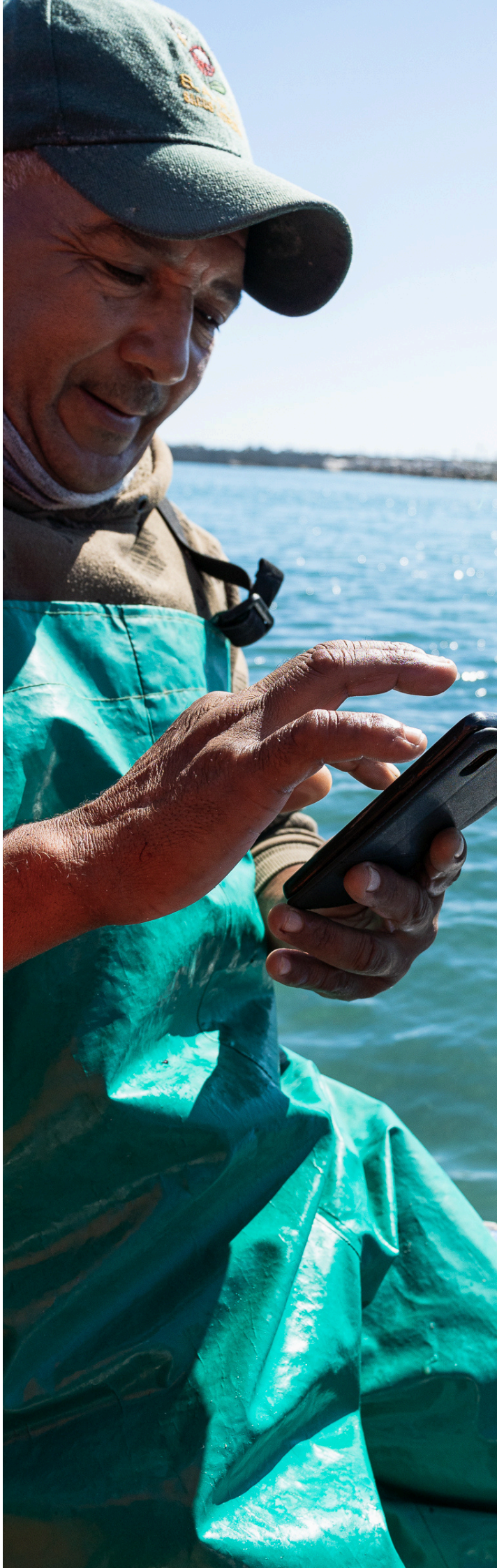


Innovation

- Promotes a community-driven model with over 60% of the team coming from fishing communities
- Draws on local expertise, promoting local ownership
- Engages 42 fishers as potential ABALOBI community representatives via LOBI, strengthening the pipeline for grassroots representation
- Enhances fish quality through advanced cold chain and processing techniques
- Provides tailored financial services for economic resilience
- Improves traceability and efficiency using blockchain technology and a mobile app
- Supports fishers in sustainably harvesting fish using traditional tools and techniquess

Adaptation benefits

- Enhanced fisher resilience to climate shocks
- Improved food security of fisher communities and increased financial stability
- Strengthened regional food security via expanded markets and distributor networks
- Increased ecological sustainability of market catch composition to 93%, resulting in healthier ecosystems due to reduced pressure on overfished species







Social impact

- Average of 75% food security status among market participant fishers after one year
- Formalization of women's roles within the fisheries sector, resulting in fairer pay, new job opportunities and 41% women representation among programme beneficiaries

Replication potential

- Fisher-owned collectives enabled to operate sustainably beyond ABALOBI's tech and marketplace support
- ICT solutions, co-designed with local fishers, aim for global replication in small-scale fisheries. These solutions have been tested across 12 countries in Africa, South America, Europe, Micronesia and the Western Indian Ocean region
- Increased demand for local fish, onboarding more fishers
- Integrated financial services link fishers with formal financial opportunities

Funding snapshot

- UNDP-AFCIA grant: US$235,000 (initial grant: $125,000; scaling grant: $110,000)

Investability	
Revenue per annum	Annual revenue of $380,000 (2023/24), with a 2025/26 revenue forecast of $1.1M, without charging fishers a fee to sell their catch on the marketplace platform A small logistics fee is levied on sales, which is covered by the buyer On average, 10 tonnes of seafood are sold per month (120 tonnes annually) through the ABALOBI marketplace
Sustaining criteria	ABALOBI expects to cross the profitability threshold with a projected Market Place profit of $207K, accelerating to $664K by FY2029/30, with positive unit economics of $1.36/kg
Financial innovation	In-house Business Cash Advance product; bespoke savings for fishers linked to digitial marketplace income; and a pilot life insurance project on offer to all registered South African fishers in Q1 2025

ADAPTATION FUND Climate Innovation Accelerator

ADAPTATION FUND

To read their story, visit UNDP-AFCIA
To watch their video, click here
To contact the organization, visit Abalobi