



TURNING TIDES

A facility supporting rights and tenure of  
coastal and shoreline communities

August 2024

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# Turning Tides Strategy to 2030

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Supporting rights and tenure of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples.

Turning Tides is an international, value-led, giving facility dedicated to supporting the tenure and rights of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples. Turning Tides is a project of the US non-profit 501(c) Tenure Facility Fund, which is a US, non-profit subsidiary of the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility.

Whilst our values, principles and commitment to partners are firm, our strategy is a living document that is subject to ongoing feedback, refinement and improvement with our partners.

To discuss or provide feedback on the draft strategy please reach out to us.

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## The Challenge

Strengthening and building the conditions for rights recognition and tenure security in ocean, coastal, and shoreline areas offer critical avenues toward equity and sustainability. Rights recognition and tenure security lead to more widespread and complete realization of human rights but also contribute to improved environmental stewardship, enhanced food and livelihood security, poverty reduction, and greater societal equity. These rights are integral to human rights and are recognized, at least on paper, by international governing standards, national constitutions, and legislative instruments.

Local communities, small-scale fishers, and Indigenous Peoples hold collective access, use, management, and governance rights that span oceans, coasts, lakes, rivers, and shorelines. The extent and influence of these tenure systems are vast, with coastal and shoreline communities at the front line of ocean and coastal change, small-scale fishers representing the largest group of ocean users, and Indigenous Peoples possessing enduring systems of custodianship. However, despite their importance, these tenure systems and associated rights are frequently overlooked, undermined, and even abused in practice. This is due to diversity, informal nature, and collective character, which distinguish them from individual private property or from nationally declared zones. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring the effective protection and implementation of these rights, which are fundamental to sustainable ocean and coastal management. By recognizing and strengthening these rights, we can create a more fair and sustainable approach to managing oceans, coasts, and shorelines, benefiting both local communities and the global ecosystem.

Greater recognition of these rights also required addressing funding trends. Currently, there is a striking lack of funding flowing to locally led efforts, and even few funds granted directly to local groups. What's more, the funding that does make it to frontline communities is almost always laced with power imbalances, come with a suite of rigid conditions and global north controls. Recent analysis shows >99% of philanthropic funding for coastal communities and small-scale fisheries is granted to large international NGOs in the global North. The same trend is reflected in international development aid and climate funding. This funding landscape has sustained, and exacerbated, the marginalization and disenfranchisement of local communities, small-scale fishers, and Indigenous Peoples. At their most benign, dominant funding models undermine local initiatives, hinder long term systemic change, and reinforce systemic inequities. At their worst, mainstream funding models can violate peoples' sovereignty and rights and propel violations of a myriad global conventions and treaties. There is growing recognition of the unequal power dynamics in international aid and philanthropy systems and the resulting harm this does to local communities as well as long-term goals.

*On paper, mainstream, well-funded, approaches to marine, coastal and shoreline conservation, development, and climate response now better recognize local communities and their rights. Yet, in practice local actors, their rights, and their systems of tenure are kept at the margins of investment, influence and action.*

Increasing the flow of funds directly to rights holders and/or under their control can more effectively enable their continued actions to secure rights and their crucial role in governance of coastal, shoreline, marine and aquatic systems. Advancing this agenda can only be done in partnerships that center the knowledge, agency, power, and rights of local communities, small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples - our partners. As interest in ocean and coastal spaces intensifies, the need to shift power dynamics, and support the voice and agency of our partners, is more critical than ever.

## Turning Tides' Approach

### Vision

Local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples fully experience their rights and agency in the allocation, use, conservation, management and development of coastal lands, shorelines, oceans, lakes, rivers, and associated resources - toward better environmental and societal outcomes.

### Goal

To develop, implement and champion new approaches to funding that center power with, and provide resources directly to local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, and the groups that legitimately serve them. With more appropriate and equitable resourcing and enabling policies, actors - across scales - can build rights recognition and conditions that ensure tenure security.

### What is tenure

In brief, tenure refers to the ways in which the law - and societies - define and regulate people's relationship and rights associated with land, oceans, coasts, waterways and resources. Whilst Western economics and law consider tenure as a bundle of rights, local and indigenous views of tenure are more holistic, embed rights with responsibilities, account for relationships between society and nature, and consider the past and the future. Intact tenure systems and enduring resource rights are associated with thriving communities, diverse cultures, inclusive economies, and effective environmental stewardship. When tenure and rights are inadvertently overlooked or deliberately ignored, both human and environmental wellbeing are reduced, and the opportunities for inclusive economies, environmental stewardship and genuinely locally led climate action are undermined. A future exploration of tenure is provided in the report "[Marine, Coastal and Shoreline Tenure](#)", and the sources it cites.

### The Situation to which we respond.

In many aquatic and coastal contexts, the diversity, informality and collective nature of rights and tenure has meant that they are inadvertently, or deliberately, overlooked, undermined, and even abused in practice. The failure to recognize rights and the insecurity of tenure leads to a race to exploit resources, undermines livelihoods, perpetuates and exacerbates historical marginalization, including gender and other identity-specific inequalities. Oceans, coasts, rivers, lakes, and shorelines are all the subject of escalating, powerful, and oftentimes competing interests - recognition of rights and centrality of gender-inclusive tenure systems are both urgent and critical for sustainable and equitable futures.

The governance and distribution of aid and philanthropy has sustained and exacerbated the marginalization and disenfranchisement of local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, including pronounced gender and identity-specific disparities. The current commonly used funding models make local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples *objects* (rather than *agents*) of conservation, resource management, climate response, and economic development.

## Change Pathways and Theory of Change

Self-determination, meaningful participation and locally led action become possible diverse rights of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples are recognized. To move toward secure tenure and recognized rights it is these peoples that must be centered in resourcing and actions - with direct funding and greater control in fund distribution. We engage with a diversity of partners - across multiple levels - who are affecting governance of oceans, coasts, rivers, lakes, climate responses, conservation and food systems.

We collaborate most closely with local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, Indigenous Peoples, and their representative groups and allies. Throughout these partnerships we pay particular attention to strategies that promote social inclusion and gender equity. We employ and support targeted strategies with women, non-elite and economically disadvantaged peoples. We collaborate with partners who support different social groups and peoples to improve their experiences, agency and power within established legal, economic and social systems. The work we support will lead to greater quality and accessibility of services for facilitation, negotiation, documentation, registration, conflict resolution, and remedy.

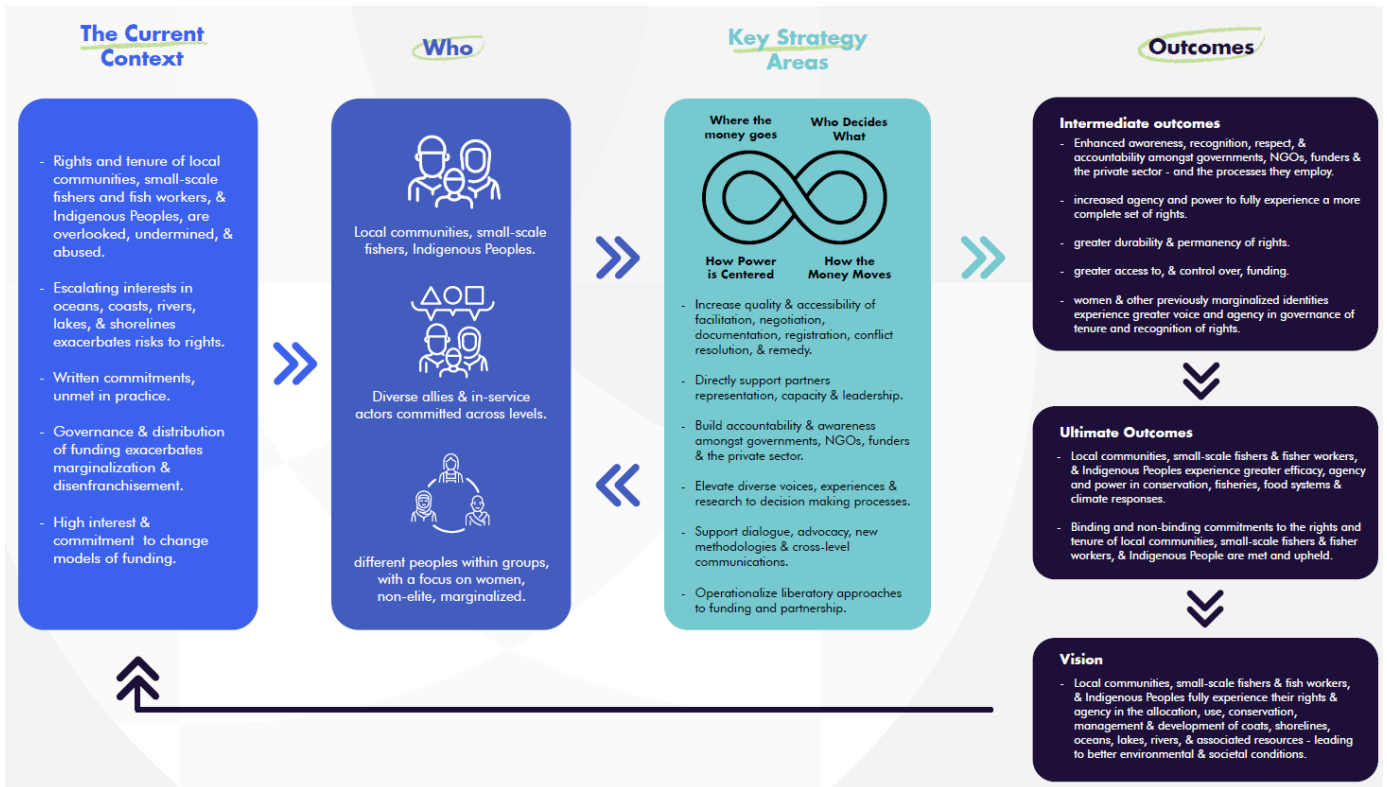
We support ongoing efforts to build accountability, respect and awareness amongst governments, NGOs, funders and the private sector, ensuring rights recognition and tenure sensitivity in the policies and processes they employ. We support work that evaluates and diversifies the values and knowledge systems that are influencing these decision makers. We support work that changes and/or challenges (including via strategic litigation) inequitable or unjust legal, economic and social conditions, processes or policies that are undermining tenure security and rights in the governance of oceans, coasts, lakes, shorelines, and other aquatic systems.

### Expected Outcomes

We will know we have succeeded when there is higher awareness, recognition, respect and accountability to local communities', small-scale fisher and fish workers', and Indigenous Peoples' diverse rights and tenure systems associated with marine, inland waters, coastal, shoreline and aquatic systems. Local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers and Indigenous Peoples experience greater tenure security, a more complete set of rights, increased agency and power to fully experience their rights, and greater durability and permanency of their rights. Rights and tenure systems are upheld and centered in conservation, fisheries, food systems, climate and development initiatives, processes, actions and outcomes. Women and other marginalized identities within communities experience more voice and influence in enacting their rights. We will know we have succeeded when local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, and their allies, experience greater access to appropriate funding.

### Ultimate Impacts

Tenure and associated rights of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers and Indigenous Peoples are recognized and upheld by governance processes and actors. Women and people of diverse identities within rights holding groups similarly experience the recognition and security of their tenure and rights, and associated opportunities. Local communities, small-scale fishers, fisher workers, and Indigenous Peoples experience and contribute toward more secure livelihoods and inclusive economies, more effective management of environments and resources, and improved responses to climate change, multi-generational protection of cultural assets and practices, and more inclusive and sustainable food systems.



**Figure 1. Turning Tides' Change Pathways (or Theory of Change) which reflect how we believe (based on evidence and consultations) our contributions and collaborations with partners will lead to greater tenure security, rights recognition, and a more equitable funding landscape.**

## Core Values

### **1. Center power with partners (i.e., Local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, and the groups that legitimately serve and support them)**

Ensure the power to make decisions about strategic direction and distribution of resources sits with partners and communities who are closer to the issues that need to be addressed. Recognize the intersectional inequalities- racial, gender, customary, economic, and political- in the operating space, and actively work to change practices and behaviors that perpetuate harm.

### **2. Uphold lived experience and diverse knowledge.**

Recognize the deep understanding of root causes and solutions that comes from lived experience and utilize all forms of knowledge. Recognize and support actions respectful of context specificity. Create learning environments that respect and benefit from all forms of knowledge on an equal plane.

### **3. Base our work on trust, responsiveness and service.**

Prioritize healthy, open, honest relationships; listen and learn from all partners; intentionally design open feedback channels and respond in a prompt manner with appropriate actions; carry the administrative burden of grantmaking. Ensure all aspects of our work are culturally sensitive and demand driven.

### **4. Prioritize transparency & accountability.**

Commit to transparency and shared accountability in all aspects of the work. Discuss power dynamics openly throughout the process of building relationships and collaboration. Co-design strategies and theories of change in ways that are transparent; agree on how success will be measured and how different actors will be held to account.

### **5. Foster solidarity and protect civic spaces.**

Acknowledge that a strong civil society- made up of leaders, organizations, networks and movements- is central to advancing our collective goals. Recognize the role and power of the philanthropic and aid field on civic spaces and be an advocate for best practices.

### **6. Prioritize and plan for self-determination and independence.**

Acknowledge that two-way independence is necessary for true empowerment. We commit to limiting the undue influence of external ideologies and priorities on partners and governance systems, and work with partners from the outset to equitably build economic and operational independence.

### **7. Commit to humility and reflexivity.**

Acknowledge that our partners have long histories of working toward the more complete recognition of their rights and their tenure systems. Play a part in supporting those efforts but do not take over ongoing processes. Recognize the need to continually reflect upon operations - including in partnerships - to be effective, respectful and open to multiple ways of knowing and working.



## Guiding Principles

### 1. Make giving more proximate

We center power with our partners by building culturally sensitive governance structures in countries or regions responsible for co-design of strategy and funding decisions. We provide simple, flexible and long-term funding, and ensure small and local groups (particularly those led by or serving marginalized communities) experience greater access to resources.

### 2. Focus end support on partners.

We will always work to directly fund organizations and intermediaries that represent and serve our partners. We will invest in local leaders, organizations and networks with the legitimacy to represent our partners.

### 3. Embrace co-design and decision-making.

Our grantmaking will be rooted in the lived experiences of our partners and the depth of their knowledge and commitments. We will create the institutional structures and processes that allow for co-development of strategies and Theories of Change, as well as allow partners the ability to nominate and select grantees and other contracted support entities. We will fund programs co-designed with those we aim to serve.

### 4. Embrace equitable grantmaking principles.

Our grantmaking will place trust in partners supporting their agency to reach their goals. We will do this through flexible, multi-year and general operating grants, with low administrative burden. We will reduce and carry administration and (as appropriate) progress tracking. We will ensure all essential materials and meetings are available in the languages spoken by our partners.

### 5. Consider a diversity of end recipients.

Our end recipients will include regional, national and local nonprofits; for-profit, and other entities such as fishing cooperatives; informal groups such as youth groups, women's groups, and other related movements; and individuals. We will adjust our grantmaking to meet the needs of end recipients.

### 6. Recognize diversity within groups.

We prioritize gender and social inclusion in culturally appropriate ways. We recognize inter and intra group differences in power, experience, and perspectives, and commit that we, and our partners, come prepared with skills and resources for diplomacy to support negotiation and conflict resolution.

### 7. Provide services/resources beyond the check.

We will work to provide integrated social, moral, intellectual, reputation and financial support to our partners. Support will be provided at several levels, determined by local circumstances, and will include working hand in hand with partners to support knowledge and learning, storytelling, capacity development, connecting with donors, and more.

### 8. Ensure we can rapidly respond to acute needs.

We will create the structure and process to be able to make rapid response grants designed to quickly address urgent needs and strategic opportunities. We will embrace flexibility in our grantmaking, supporting partners in monitoring, evaluating and adapting to changes.

### 9. Approach our grantmaking with a holistic, or systems level, view.

Ensure we approach this work within the full spectrum of how local communities exercise their rights and their associated needs. We will support various efforts related to the wellbeing of our partners, based on what our partner groups feel is necessary to reach shared end goals. We will invest in regional and local movements and networks, localized capacity strengthening initiatives, and efforts to protect civic space.

## Contributing to the Ocean of Essential Support

We recognize that local communities, small-scale fishers, fisher workers, and Indigenous Peoples consider direct funding as being instrumental to self-determination. The land and forest space has been building the infrastructure to support direct, or at least more proximate, funding toward Indigenous Peoples and communities in defense of their lands and territories for close to a decade. Many large institutions, including CLUA, Forests for People and Climate (comprised of several large funders), Nia Tero, the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility, and the Rights and Resources Initiative, among others, are committing hundreds of millions of dollars - whilst actively working to reach fundraising targets into the billions of dollars - for the protection of Indigenous lands and tenure rights.

In comparison, this same effort in the oceans and coastal funding space is nascent. There are a few small donors that focus their giving directly to coastal and shoreline communities and marine tenure rights, and a handful of larger donors that include grants to local communities, small-scale fisher and Indigenous Peoples' organizations. There are a couple other funds designed to funnel resources and support to local organizations associated with coastal communities (Synchronicity Earth's Neptune Fund and the proposed Blue Venture's Frontline Community Fund). Combined, these efforts reach into the tens of millions of dollars. This is not insignificant, but this total is far below what is most likely needed to reach critical mass and have true impact across the globe. Rather than illustrating duplication or competition, the funding and momentum of the *whole* is a necessity. In this ecosystem Turning Tides not only provides a source of direct funding, but also provides a powerful exemplar - a demonstration of liberatory approaches that move away from *support for*, and toward *centering power with* local communities, small-scale fishers, fisher workers and Indigenous Peoples.

Turning Tides also recognizes and shares space with a range of Indigenous-led, participatory and otherwise 'emancipated' funding mechanisms that meet a suite of governing principles that ensure agency, voice and decisions lie with those accessing funds. These mechanisms are not controlled from the normal epicenters of power. They enable open, transparent, and democratic decision-making processes, and simultaneously ensure transparency and responsible use of funding.

With careful coordination and open communication Turning Tides can play an additive role within this more equitable and emancipated funding landscape. Whilst we have much to learn from established groups, we can in turn potentially draw in and influence new funders about tenure, rights concerns and pathways toward tenure security. Turning Tides can also highlight the broader set of potential grantees than funders are currently considering.

However, we also recognize that there can potentially be overlap between funds sought and partners engaged. It would be counter to Turning Tides' stated aims, values and principles if our operations and relationships got in the way of, or inadvertently competed with, the good work of other legitimate and established mechanisms. For this reason we have drafted (note that co-design and refinement are ongoing) [a set of principles and communication strategies](#) to ensure Turning Tides' plays a role that recognizes, coordinates and/or defers to existing Indigenous-led, participatory and otherwise 'emancipated' funding mechanisms, and works in ways that complement and support their efforts.

## What We Support

Through scoping and consultations with groups serving, or directly representing, local communities, small-scale fishers and/or Indigenous Peoples we have identified barriers and pathways to moving from rights erosion and tenure insecurity to right recognition and tenure security. Through our legal analysis, climate analysis, and consultations, we have begun to understand the levers necessary to affect change. Turning Tides' investments will be designed to support the conditions and processes necessary to move from rights and tenure insecurity toward tenure security and full recognition of rights, while still being in service to and driven by our partners. The levers we have identified to affect this change include:

- Increase tenure literacy amongst decision makers and power brokers, whilst also ensuring local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers and Indigenous Peoples have access to accurate information about their rights.
- Mapping and/or registration and/or titling of lands, waters and resources under tenure
- Activation of management and governance rights in ways that enhance tenure security.
- Support proper representation and leadership in policy formation, evaluations, or other decision-making processes that implicate tenure and associated rights of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers and/or Indigenous Peoples.
- Ensure necessary legal representation and equitable inclusion in (e.g., marine spatial, development, climate mitigation/adaptation) planning processes.
- Support access to mediation or conflict resolution resources and services to navigate toward more equitable and more secure tenure
- Support access to negotiation services and accurate data to support fair and proper recognition of tenure
- Develop or provide technical, legal and fiscal capacity to partners in ways that support the attainment of their goals. Including, but not limited to strategic litigations related to rights abuses and illegal processes.
- Generate and amplify diverse knowledge that increased understanding, awareness and security of tenure

Turning Tides will not be limited to investments in the above categories only. We will approach our support holistically, providing funding for work identified by partners as necessary and critical in their efforts to move from tenure and rights insecurity to tenure security and to a more complete and enduring recognition of rights.

## Our Five Funds

Turning Tides will engage in re-granting as the core body of work designed to directly support local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, their representative institutions, and the groups they choose to provide services and support. Grantmaking will be designed to connect grassroots groups, networks and individuals to financial resources that were otherwise inaccessible. Turning Tides will employ a mix of tools to deploy financial resources, including multi-year, general operating support grants, programmatic grants, contracts, and scholarships, among others. We have five funds.

### 1. Grassroots

Most of our resources are deployed through the grassroots fund. Grassroots funding strategies are co-developed, aligned with Turning Tides' Change Pathways, and are designed to support on-the-ground efforts and opportunities to move toward tenure security. Distribution of these funds is informed and directed through regional advisory processes or groups that co-design strategies with Turning Tides' partner liaison staff.

### 2. Civic Space and Capacity Strengthening

In line with this value and guiding principle, and in further support to our Change Pathways, this fund has three interrelated elements; foster solidarity, invest in the strength of our partners, support safe civic spaces. Our staff will work in close collaboration with partners to identify needs and craft appropriate responses. Grant decisions are made by regional advisory groups, and/or the Steering Committee.

### 3. Global

The global fund helps ensure the voices, concerns and actions of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples are better represented and reflected in global decision-making processes and policies. The strategic direction and grant making decisions for this fund sits with the Steering Committee.

#### 4. Rapid Response

This fund addresses urgent needs and strategic opportunities. This could include supporting stand-alone opportunities outside of the Facility's geographic scope, quickly responding to an emerging need such as travel, or rapidly mobilizing funds to contribute to safety and security of our partners in the face of emergent threats. Grant decisions are made by the Turning Tides team, according to a set of principles approved by the Steering Committee. This fund takes guidance from the Rights and Resources Initiative's [Strategic Response Mechanism](#)).

#### 5. Knowledge and Learning

Turning Tides will support learning processes and knowledge mobilization that raises awareness, builds accountability and results in improved practices amongst governments, NGOs, funders and the private sector. Our aim is to ensure rights recognition and tenure security are centered in the policies that direct these actors, the processes they employ, and the information exchanged amongst them. We will also support work that evaluates, and actively diversifies the values and knowledge systems that are influencing decision makers.

### Support beyond the check

We recognize that organizations often experience needs beyond financial support. We will work to extend Turning Tides' support and resources beyond the grantmaking dollars that are distributed. We will develop an integrated use of social, moral, intellectual, reputational and financial supports available to local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples. We expect that service support will be provided directly by Turning Tides staff and will also be contracted out depending on the need and context. Below is a list of other supports and services we can provide.

- Facilitate direct access to other funders.
- Support network building, connecting across partners.
- Monitoring and evaluation support
- Strategic communications/advocacy support to elevate partner voice.
- Knowledge and learning support to support advocacy, upward rights literacy and build better evidence of pathways to and from tenure security.

### Multi-scale and geographic approach

Policies, legislation, institutions and practices exist at regional and global levels that shape the system which affects local conditions and actions. These system characteristics affect experiences related to climate change, food security, natural environments and biodiversity, gender equity, and human rights. In practice, systems may be enabling, e.g., helping local communities to argue for their cause and support their rights claims, or provide them with tools that can enhance their capacity to secure tenure rights. Or the system might be disabling and disempowering.

For this reason, Turning Tides is committed to a multi-scale approach, with carefully designed support at the global level ensuring strong connections with the local level. Our work will focus on influencing global policy frameworks – and the funding that often comes with them, including for the local level – to create a more enabling environment (i.e., more sensitive to the needs and capabilities of coastal and inshore communities and cognizant of how secure tenure rights foster sustainable development).

Ultimately, it is how tenure security and rights are experienced by different individuals and communities that matters. The pathway toward local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers and Indigenous Peoples experiencing their rights more fully also required that they themselves that must also experience more direct funding and greater control of resourcing. For this reason, a large focus of Turning Tides' grant making (and indeed the largest fund in terms of dollars) will be to the grassroots.

It is necessary that Turning Tides invest across regional, national and local levels in ways that mutually reinforce rights recognition. However, it will not be possible to center power with partners and make giving as proximate as possible in all coastal areas around the globe. Turning Tides is taking a deliberately slow approach to building out our geographic portfolios, matching our pace with our capacity and co-development processes. We will increase our grassroots grantmaking over time, starting with two to three sub-regional geographies of focus in 2024 (Africa, Latin America, Asia and Southeast Asia), building to four or five by 2065 and up to 10 sub-regional geographies of focus by 2030. We will evaluate and refine our geographic focus by examining;

### **1. State of reliance, urgency and opportunity**

Utilizing qualitative and quantitative regional and country-level data, we attempt to understand the urgency and the scale of impact of improved tenure security, and conditions that might enable (or disenable) such actions. For this work, we utilized 11 published datasets that illustrate different countries' (1) reliance on coastal and marine resources for livelihoods and food security, (2) capacity or political orientation towards civil society freedoms and rights of coastal communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples, and (3) pressures and exposure along coastal lands and seas.

### **2. Capacity and readiness for investment**

Through our regional consultations, we built an initial understanding of the current state of work on tenure rights and the infrastructure designed to support that work. This includes the existence, reach and capacity of organizations and networks designed to support rights holders in a specific region or country. This also includes Turning Tides' capacity, including our ability to meaningfully manage grantmaking and collaborative relationships in a region.

### **3. Potential for strategic collaboration**

Looking at others working in a region, we evaluated where Turning Tides' approach and resources could amplify ongoing work in a region. This includes with global partners, i.e., the Land and Forest Tenure Facility, or with other donors, organizations or governments.

### **4. Ability to implement work in line with our Change Pathways and values.**

Based on the factors above, we will clarify the added value of Turning Tides in a region. Our ability to bring additive value to ongoing work, through a commitment to our Change Pathways and our values, will underpin our decision on whether to work in a specific place.

## **Potential Partners**

Turning Tides will provide services and resources directly to local communities, small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, and the groups and allies that directly serve them, in their efforts to secure and assert their rights to coastal, marine, shoreline and other aquatic spaces and resources. The Facility is designed to 'even the playing field' between our partners and other, more powerful groups (such as governments, businesses and international nonprofits). As such, we will target funding to those institutions, groups and networks that legitimately represent and work in service to our partners. To ensure that our work responds to and prioritizes women's tenure rights and goals of equity, we will collaborate with partners who demonstrate strong commitment to gender equity in their internal and external structures and work.

It is likely we will partner with a diverse range of intermediary mechanisms and end recipients. When funding and services need to go through intermediaries, we will turn to our partners to make the decisions regarding who operates as their intermediary and we will then apply a set of assessment criteria and benchmarks to ensure the relevance, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of intermediaries, in collaboration with our partners. We will support international institutions- such as research institutions, legal support, or communication and advocacy support - only when directed by our Steering Committee, Regional Advisory Groups or local partners. We will not, unless directly requested by our partners, grant to international nonprofit organizations based in the Global North.

## Fiscal and Legal Status

Turning Tides envisions scaling its work overtime and starting its grantmaking and service provision whilst under a fiscal sponsorship relationship with the Land and Forest Tenure Facility (henceforth Tenure Facility). The [fiscal sponsorship agreement](#) and a companion [social contract](#) commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

The Tenure Facility supports land and forest tenure of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It recently finished its registration in the US. The purpose, per Tenure Facility Board decision, was to secure its own tax-exempt status in the US (501 c 3 IRS), for ease in receiving additional U.S. philanthropic funds and to expand its learning on flexible, direct Indigenous Peoples and local communities grantmaking. Turning Tides and the Tenure Facility recognize there is mutual value in a fiscal sponsorship arrangement. This would meet Turning Tides' immediate need to establish a tested system of medium-to-large, direct grantmaking to Indigenous Peoples and local communities' organizations and alliances. It enables Tenure Facility to expand systems for flexible grantmaking using non-profit U.S. 501c3 regulations. It further opens opportunities for joint Tenure Facility-Turning Tides learning in realizing a comprehensive approach to community rights recognizing aquatic/terrestrial systems connectivity.

Entering a fiscal sponsorship relationship solidifies a deep and collaborative working relationship between Turning Tides and the Tenure Facility. This is a first step toward exploring how closely the two initiatives can/should work in the future and allows the institutions to develop an understanding of what best serves our collective partners and the field. The entities would enter this fiscal sponsorship relationship with a commitment toward building a partnership, while remaining flexible to following the path that best supports both institutions in meeting their long-term visions and goals, providing for an exit provision to allow for spin-off if determined by both parties.

## Governance

Putting our values and principles into action is logistically challenging, presenting legal, fiscal and management challenges. If we design robust and representative governance structures, we will not solve these challenges, but it will create the foundational piece through which we live our values. Governance structures will be created to ensure the power for decision-making is as close to our end partners as possible. We will embody a liberatory grantmaking approach to our work, building off successful models currently being implemented by other philanthropies and re-granting facilities. As a starting point for deeper design, the Facility is exploring a multi-tier governance structure.

Governance is spearheaded by the Steering Committee ([Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee of Turning Tides](#)) who are responsible for setting the strategic direction. The Steering Committee are also responsible for nominating and approving grants at the global level and from the Rapid Response and Knowledge and Learning Funds or creating proxy structures. The Steering Committee provides robust accountability, ensuring the design and implementation directly supports the interests of tenure rights holders—Indigenous Peoples, coastal communities, and small-scale fishers and other users. The Steering Committee has governed the initiative since the first months of its inception and is critical to the legitimacy and efficacy of the Facility, serving as one key governance attribute. The technical team remains responsive and accountable to the Steering Committee, which provides guidance to strategy and decision making.

The Steering Committee is comprised of seven individuals who hold highly relevant expertise (in social justice, environmental justice, food security and food sovereignty, marine and coastal tenure, co-management, area-based management, resource competition, urban planning, and/or human rights law) that they can draw on when providing advice and direction to the Facility. These individuals also hold leadership positions in groups that represent the interests of marine and coastal tenure rights holders, and so have the capacity to engage in, and/or draw from consultative processes with their constituents



and, when appropriate and specified, can represent these views and knowledge when providing advice and direction to the Initiative.

Turning Tides will look to create regional, national or even local **advisory committees** or panels that are responsible for guiding the co-creation of grassroots strategies and making grantmaking and service provision decisions. The level at which these committees work (regional, national, local) will depend on the context of the place in which we are working. Establishing the governance structures or the processes that support co-design, and decision-making is fundamental to ensure we create a global giving facility that centers power with those it is designed to serve.

## Human Resources

A small team of dedicated staff supports a global Steering Committee; fundraising; management of global level grantmaking, service provision, and the rapid response fund; thought partnership; philanthropic and sector advocacy work; communications services; and proactive and responsive research collaborations. Turning Tides is currently led through a co-leadership model, with the intention of commencing a Director recruitment process late 2025 (under the direction of the Steering Committee). The Turning Tides team interact with each other remotely, allowing the partner liaison staff members based in-regional support. Partner Liaison staff support facilitation of regional advisory groups and/or processes leading to co-design strategies and decision-making. Partner Liaison staff provide on the ground capacity building/service provision; management, planning and budgetary support to partners; liaise with partner-selected intermediaries; ensuring local information is used to underpin relationships and strategies; and carry out all necessary in-country legal and fiscal compliance.

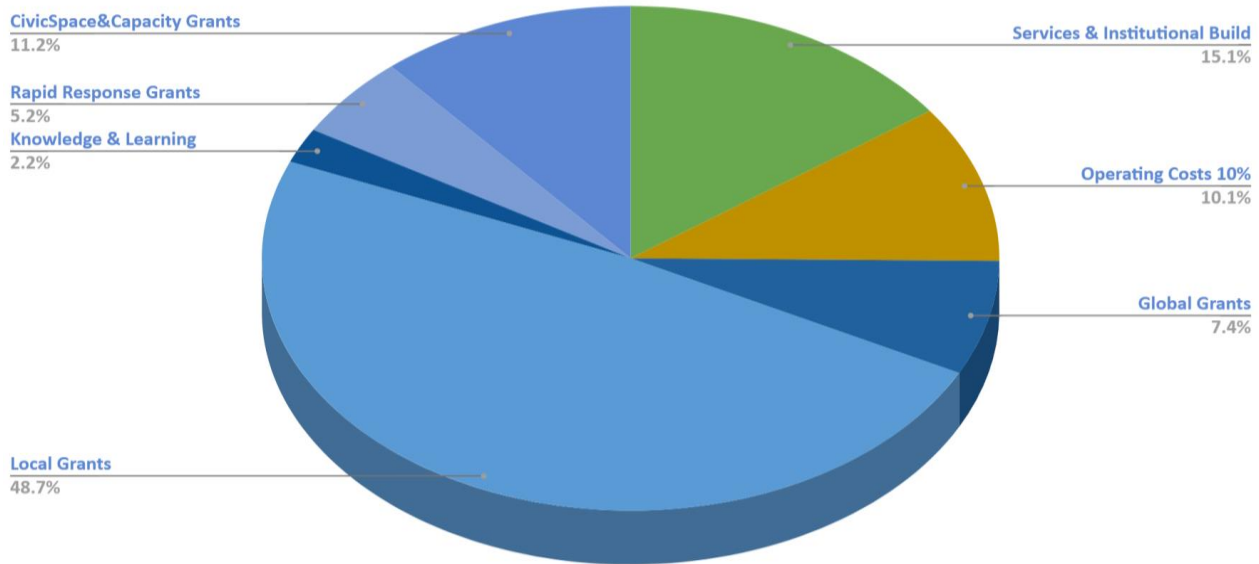
## Budget breakdown and growth trajectory

Turning Tides has an aspirational goal of deploying \$100M annually directly to local communities around the globe. During our scoping process, we found that in 2020, approximately \$100M directly targeted small-scale fishery and coastal community-based *projects*. Next to none of that went directly to local or even national organizations- it went through, or the work was implemented by international NGOs based in the U.S. or Europe. If we successfully reach our target- or incentivize others to change their giving practices, resulting in of \$100M flowing directly to coastal communities, then dollars designed to level the playing field- support the agency and power of those we intend to serve- would sit toe to toe with giving in the coastal and small-scale fisheries space. This is a powerful shift in how we do this work, shifting power dynamics in this space and influencing the broader field.

The journey to \$100M will take time, and perhaps remain forever aspirational, and in the meantime the Facility is building toward full operating capacity with an annual institutional budget of US\$30M. We’ve reached this number, and associated budget categories, based on our learning sessions with the Tenure Facility as well as sense-checked this budget using a bottom-up approach - with the preparation of preliminary investment portfolios. We believe that moving \$30M per year is both feasible and needed to have an impact in this space and to truly shift the needle. The table illustrates budget growth to 2030, and the figure below represents the breakdown of our annual budget at the scale of US\$30M per year.

**Table 1. The estimated projected budget of Turning Tides to 2030.**

	Transition (Q3/4 2024)	Year 1 (2025)	Year 2 (2025)	Year 3 (2027)	Year 4 (2028)	Year 5 (2029)	Year 6 (2030)
Fiscal Sponsorship fees (10%)	\$165,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$3,000,000
Devolved Governance and Grants to partners	\$639,500	\$2,928,725	\$6,694,700	\$11,150,950	\$15,005,350	\$18,764,375	\$22,512,200
Direct Support Services and Institutional Build	\$846,825	\$1,571,275	\$2,305,300	\$2,349,050	\$2,994,650	\$3,735,625	\$4,487,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,651,325</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>	<b>\$15,000,000</b>	<b>\$20,000,000</b>	<b>\$25,000,000</b>	<b>\$30,000,000</b>



**Figure 2** The budget breakdown of Tides Turning at the scale of US\$ 30M a year. All blue components are direct grants spread across five types of grantmaking; (1) Regional Grants (including national and local level granting) (2) Global Grants, (3) Civic Space and Capacity Grants, (4) Rapid Response Grants, (5) Knowledge and Learning Grants

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

### Milestones to 2030

By 2030 we anticipate turning Tides will be operating at ‘full capacity’. This pathway (Table 1) is ambitious, but also paced to ensure we are responsible and accountable to our partners and our values. These milestones are focused on institutional capacity to responsibly support the decentralized governance and fair and effective distribution of funds in ways that lead to rights recognition, tenure security and the resultant outcomes to environmental stewardship, livelihoods and food security. The development of milestones and quantitative measures of reach and impact are in development - and will be introduced as milestones in 2026.

**Table 2. Turning Tides milestones to 2030**

Transition (Q3/4 2024)	Year 1 (2025)	Year 2 (2025)	Year 3 (2027)	Year 4 (2028)	Year 5 (2029)	Year 6 (2030)
<p>Launched with new identity.</p> <p>Operating under fiscal sponsorship</p> <p>Grantmaking commences.</p> <p>Preliminary quantitative targets established.</p> <p>US\$40M commitment secured</p>	<p>2 decentralized governance/advisory structures operational</p> <p>Grantmaking commenced from all 5 funds.</p> <p>Pilot learnings incorporated into structures/processes.</p> <p>Quantitative targets reviewed and approved</p>	<p>Grantmaking and service provision structures refined based on pilots.</p> <p>Grantmaking from all grant buckets occurring, and at least 5 country programs operating.</p> <p>\$50M in funds or commitments secured</p>	<p>Grantmaking and service provision structures fully operational for 10M grants</p> <p>Systems support philanthropy and public funds.</p> <p>Standalone entity assessment complete</p>	<p>Renegotiated fiscal sponsorship arrangement or launch as standalone entity.</p> <p>\$70M in commitments secured</p>	<p>Grantmaking &amp; service provision structures stable ready for 30M per year</p> <p>5-year strategy (2030-2035) co-developed with partners</p>	<p>75% grant target reached.</p> <p>5-year strategy (2030-2035) launched</p> <p>US\$100M commitments for 2030 &amp; beyond strategy implementation</p>



## Risks and Risk Mitigation

- Risk 1 – Loss of key leadership staff  
Likelihood: Low (short term), moderate (medium term)  
Potential impact: Slowed progress, loss of trust with partners, lag to build trust and relationships.  
Mitigation Strategy: Turning Tides will continue to invest in the collective leadership capacity across staff and Steering Committee, and by documenting and institutionalizing values and processes.
- Risk 2 – Creating systems to meet both partner needs, and fiscal and legal requirements is more complex than anticipated.  
Likelihood: Moderate  
Potential impact: Grantmaking is delayed, the Facility is unable to reach its desired level of flexibility and support for partners.  
Mitigation Strategy – the Tenure Facility partnership offers substantial opportunities to borrow, adapt and/or create bespoke systems that meet both needs.
- Risk 3 - Following liberatory practices leads to misuse of funds or conflict of interest.  
Likelihood: Low  
Potential impact: This is more a perceived risk than a real threat (but we note we also need to manage that perception).  
Mitigation strategy: We will employ a relational approach where we work in ways we can bring other appropriate safeguards and supports.
- Risk 4: Funders fail to adjust funding practices toward equity, justice, and inclusion.  
Likelihood: Moderate for some funders, but low likelihood this risk applies to all funders  
Potential impact: High resource and time demands on fund raising translate to reduced capacity to regrant.  
Mitigation strategy: Turning Tides will continue to increase accountability of funders to human rights, tenure rights and other social commitments, and a new tier of partners.
- Risk 5: Progress toward tenure security stalls and slows due to government resistance and bureaucratic inertia.  
Likelihood: High, in a very few contexts  
Potential impact: Funders and partners lose trust and momentum in the process.  
Mitigation Strategy: Invest proportionally more in places with moderate to high enabling political conditions.
- Risk 6: Partner capacity is insufficient to meet grant requirements.  
Likelihood: Moderate  
Potential impact: Funders and partners lose trust in the process, and the project fails to meet values, and/or scale of intended impacts.  
Mitigation Strategy: Develop portfolios of potential investment, and develop processes and mechanisms appropriate for low-administrative-capacity partners and concurrently strengthen capacities.

## The Genesis of Turning Tides

Local communities, small-scale fishers, and Indigenous Peoples, and their respective movements and groups, have appealed for more direct and emancipated funding in support of self-determined development, conservation and climate response. Turning Tides is the result of an extensive, moderately paced process that was undertaken to understand the landscape of funding, capacities, needs, and opportunities in relation to better recognized rights and strengthened tenure of local communities, small-scale fishers and fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples. This process was undertaken through a two-year, four stage project called the “Marine Tenure Initiative” which was undertaken under the fiscal sponsorship of Meridian Institute. It was undertaken by a small team of consultants who worked under the direction of a Steering Committee. The express purpose of the Marine Tenure Initiative was to scope, consult, pilot, and co-design fit for purpose institutional responses to support tenure security, rights recognition and more equitable funding.

### Funding support

The Marine Tenure Initiative began June 2022 and was completed June 2024. The initiative was first funded by Oak Foundation, but soon garnered the interest and fiscal support of Synchronicity Earth, Ocean Kind, ICONIQ Ocean Co-Lab, Walton Family Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Each of these funders expressed values alignment in terms of localizing funding and appropriately centering rights holders in the governance of oceans, coasts and aquatic environments. The preliminary findings from scoping research, the early view of the proposed approach to liberatory grantmaking, and the tentative proposition for a new Facility were shared at a [meeting of funders in New York, May 2023](#). Due to alignment of goals and values other funders signaled commitment to a future Facility - should that be a proposition supported through the consultation process - that was underway at the time. At the end of the 2 year Marine Tenure Initiative five funders had committed in order of US\$33 million toward the ultimate institutional response that was designed - a new value-led, giving facility called Turning Tides.

### Governance

Amongst the first actions of the Marine Tenure Initiative was to set up a Steering Committee in October 2022. The Steering Committee was composed of 6-7 members and worked under the [Terms of Reference 2022-2024](#). Each member ([see profiles](#)) held substantial experience in human rights, coastal, marine and shoreline tenure, inclusive governance, and social justice. The Steering Committee provided another means of strategic direction and accountability to our values, and was one mechanism in place to ensure the enquiries and learning were appropriately attuned and responsive to the interests of local communities, small-scale fishers, fish workers, and Indigenous Peoples. At the close of the Marine Tenure Initiative, a new Terms of Reference was drafted to suit the new institutional arrangements, and new members were sought for providing strategic direction to Turning Tides.

### Scoping Research

As a first step the Marine Tenure Initiative delivered (and later published) a comprehensive report on “[Marine, Coastal and Shoreline Tenure](#)”. Through desktop review and expert consultation, the research scoped tenure rights and regimes from legal, climate, outcomes and funding aspects. Whilst the report was focused on aquatic systems, the report also drew insights from the land and forest tenure space. Whilst part of the report illustrated the diversity of tenure and rights, it also provided a valuable synthesis, including the evidence of outcomes that arise from tenure security or tenure insecurity. The report also identified the attributes of secure or insecure tenure, and the factors that lead to greater or lesser tenure security. These factors and attributes were particularly useful in articulating the pathways for support and change toward greater tenure security (now reflected in the Turning Tides pathways to change).

## Distilling Values and Principles

Our values and principles were built from what we were hearing through consultation from our potential partners, in discussion with the Steering Committee, and from established practices of liberatory approaches to grantmaking. A draft of values and principles were presented to partners and refined to ensure they met the vision we collectively hold for the institution. Since that time, the values and principles have been at the heart of the work to build Turning Tides, guiding our decisions, interactions with partners, approach to our work and more. They are foundational to the institution that has grown out of the Marine Tenure Initiative.

## Consultation

The Marine Tenure Initiative's Partner Liaisons (based in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania) led a consultation process hearing experiences, views, perspectives and direct advice from groups and individuals working at global, regional, national and local levels. Over 100 hours of consultations were conducted. Consultations also included observation and facilitation of key events where tenure, rights, ocean governance and emancipated grant making were being discussed. The method, coverage and findings were published as "[Support toward secure tenure and rights recognition: A report on the consultation phase of the Marine Tenure Initiative](#)" (available in English, French, Spanish and Indonesian). The report includes a highly summarized list of stakeholder needs, approaches and preferences - in terms of grants, but also including pragmatic and preferred mechanics of grants, decision making and representation. This phase also led to a database of potential partners and portfolios of investments - which challenge the view that funds can only be moved through large NGOs, and instead illustrate the absorptive capacity and readiness of a diversity of partners that have been overlooked. These reflections were central to the design of Turning Tides' structures and processes. Whilst the "consultation phase" was complete under the Marine Tenure Initiative, the centrality of consultation, learning and adjustment is an ongoing commitment of Turning Tides.

## Piloting

Through the consultation phase, the Marine Tenure Initiative identified a total of 24 potential pilot projects and associated partners who were interested in collaboration. Using simple criteria of Steering Committee selected 7 to proceed (listed below) to a total value of US\$585 000. The [approach to pilots](#) was to test and refine the structures and processes that were being developed for Turning Tides. There are three overarching areas of learning are grantmaking processes, building mutual trust and accountability, providing support beyond the check. These 7 pilots continue under Turning Tides and are key in influencing institutional design.

- Improving legal services & literacy with women toward tenure rights, Bangladesh
- Securing blue carbon ecosystems, sustainable fisheries & climate change adaptation for fishers, Bangladesh
- Building inclusive marine spatial planning, carbon credit & taxation practices, Thailand
- Enacting management rights to secure tenure, Langkai & Lanjukang Islands, Indonesia
- Towards tenure reform for Indigenous territories & local community territories & local community managed areas, Indonesia
- Securing land tenure rights of women, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, the Gambia
- Advancing the defense of Garifuna Ancestral Rights in the Honduras, Caribbean

## Our approach to grantmaking

Despite good intentions, philanthropy can inadvertently perpetuate historical injustices and inequality. This has meant that, historically, aid and philanthropy have been delivered with strong top-down controls, shaped by foreign ideologies, and in ways that stay inaccessible to grassroots groups. Throughout our process of scoping (extensive reading, attentive listening, and reflection), planning, and consulting leading up to the launch of Turning Tides, we heard from diverse voices advocating for philanthropy's reform.

Informed by this journey, our values formed in alignment with the progressive movement challenging traditional philanthropic norms, rooted in social justice and liberation principles of equity, inclusivity, trust, and power sharing. As a result, Turning Tides will prioritize shared decision-making in strategic development and grant-making to foster trust-based, equitable partnerships. Tailoring application and reporting formats to meet the specific needs and preferences of our grantee partners is central to our approach. Beyond financial support, we provide holistic, non-financial assistance to ensure sustainable impact and foster collaborative relationships within our communities. Internally, we foster a culture of collaboration, continuous learning, and a service-oriented mindset. Through these efforts, we contribute to a broader movement for social justice, recognizing our role in a collective journey toward positive change.

## **Institutional structure**

From the outset the leadership considered the necessity and form for a new institution to be an open question. During the scoping process, four potential scenarios were explored and discussed; (1) set up or strengthen a program of an existing facility or organization, (2) create a single, bespoke, relatively autonomous institution, (3) create regional hubs, (4) create national foundations. The proposed options for Turning Tides were determined through integrative discussion between technical team, the Steering Committee, and other global and regional funding and technical organizations operating in the ecosystem. At the end of this deliberation and discussion the strongest proposition was to create a single, bespoke, and relatively autonomous institution - which would borrow tenants from multiple structures. Nonetheless, to allow for a smoother progression and earlier readiness for grant making, the use of a fiscal sponsor was necessary and favored. Turning Tides

## **Institutional hosting**

The Marine Tenure Initiative was a project implemented under fiscal sponsorship of The Meridian Institute. The sponsorship focused on formal legal and financial governance, and did not, in any way, influence the direction of the Marine Tenure Initiative, or the outcomes and direction of Turning Tides. The arrangement was highly effective for the initial scoping and design work undertaken by the Initiative. Nonetheless, sponsorship with Meridian Institute was not a suitable fit for Turning Tides - given the growth trajectory and need to regularly regrant. Under the initiative the potential of launching as an independent entity was explored, as were the fiscal sponsorship arrangements of five different fiscal sponsors.

Based on value alignment, service provision and potential for enhanced impact, the Marine Tenure Initiative team and Steering Committee decided that fiscal sponsorship with the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility was most favorable. The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility were establishing a non-profit US 501(c)3 subsidiary - and this was deemed by all to be the more appropriate fiscal sponsor (i.e., supporting their finances and operations) for the emerging Turning Tides. The [fiscal sponsorship agreement](#) and a companion [social contract](#) were finalized February 2024, and commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024. The partnership was celebrated with a joint meeting between the Tenure Facility Board and the Marine Tenure Initiative Steering Committee in June 2024. The relationships is well described in this [article published by the Tenure Facility](#). For legal purposes the relationship is expressed as follows - Turning Tides is a project of the US non-profit 501(c) Tenure Facility Fund, which is a US, non-profit subsidiary of the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility. Through this fiscal sponsorship, both organizations will run autonomously while having the opportunity to explore collaboration and partnership. The partnership aims to use established systems and knowledge while allowing Turning Tides the freedom to tailor and co-design grant-making and services for their distinct set of partners.

## **Launch of Turning Tides**

On the 15th of June, Turning Tides was launched in La Ceiba, a small town on the northern shores of Honduras where the rainforest meets the sea. Those who attended were generously hosted by Larecoturh, the Garifuna Peoples of Sambo Creek and East End, and La Ceiba municipality. In addition to our hosts, the event was attended by the Steering Committee, board members of the Tenure Facilities, two funders

and several re-granting organizations working with local communities and/or Indigenous Peoples globally. A recording of the event can be [viewed here](#).



**Figure 3 Presenters at the launch of Turning Tides  
15<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in La Ceiba, Honduras**





TURNING TIDES

A facility supporting rights and tenure of  
coastal and shoreline communities

Whilst our values, principles and commitment to partners are firm, our strategy is a living document that is subject to ongoing feedback, refinement and improvement with our partners.

To discuss or provide feedback to the draft strategy please reach out to us.

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