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Coral Reef Conservation For Blue Economy and Community-Based Sustainable Tourism in Pandanan Beach, North Lombok

I Wayan Bratayasa¹, Danu Satria Prayuda² , Uwi Martayadi³ 

^{1,2,3}Mataram Tourism Institute, Mataram, Indonesia

iwayanbratayasastp@gmail.com¹, danuipok1@gmail.com², uwimartayadistp@gmail.com³

ABSTRACT

This article examines a pioneering multi-stakeholder conservation initiative at Pandanan Beach, North Lombok, launched during the 2025 World Oceans and Coral Triangle Day celebrations. The project positions the rehabilitation of coral reefs and seagrass beds critical habitats for tropical fish diversity as the ecological cornerstone for developing a community-led blue economy and sustainable marine tourism model. Engaging the Malaka Village Government, the Pandanan Beach Community Group, BPSPL Denpasar (scientific partner), PLTU Mataram's CSR program (funder), and academics, the initiative implemented community-based coral transplantation, established ecological monitoring systems (Reef Check, Seagrass-Watch), and built local capacity in coastal resource management. This analysis explores how this collaborative framework not only advanced ecological restoration but also laid the foundation for a resilient, diversified local economy through integrated strategies: branding an "eco-destination," developing value-added marine products, designing a community-managed Marine Protected Area (MPA) financed by tourism fees, and implementing a participatory Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model. The findings demonstrate the synergistic linkage between restored ecosystems, multi-actor governance, and sustainable livelihoods, offering a replicable blueprint for coastal communities seeking to operationalize the blue economy..

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1. Introduction

Coral reefs and seagrass meadows rank among Earth's most biologically diverse, productive, and ecologically vital ecosystems. These marine powerhouses deliver indispensable services to humanity and the planet: they buffer coastlines from erosion and storms, sequester vast quantities of carbon, nurture globally significant fisheries, and underpin sustainable livelihoods through tourism and recreation. As the epicenter of the Coral Triangle – the global summit of marine biodiversity Indonesia bears a profound responsibility and opportunity in safeguarding these irreplaceable resources, which are fundamental to the ecological health of our oceans and the socio-economic resilience of millions in coastal communities.

Yet, these critical ecosystems face escalating anthropogenic assaults. Destructive fishing practices, pervasive coastal pollution, and the intensifying impacts of climate change – notably ocean warming, acidification, and sea-level rise – are driving widespread degradation at an alarming pace. Pandanan Beach, North Lombok, starkly embodies this crisis. Despite its exceptional natural beauty and significant potential as a sustainable ecotourism destination, the area is experiencing severe and accelerating decline in its coral reefs, seagrass beds, and

CONTACT Language Assistance  bjhtcr@balilanguageassistance.com

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associated marine habitats. This trajectory not only signifies ecological loss but also directly threatens the well-being of local communities dependent on these resources, demanding urgent, integrated, and scientifically informed conservation interventions.

Recognizing this imperative, a collaborative multi-stakeholder initiative was launched on 8 June 2025. This forum united key actors – including Indonesian governmental agencies (e.g., Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries), leading academic institutions, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of local community groups from Pandanan and surrounding areas, and environmental advocates – with the shared mission of halting and reversing the marine ecosystem degradation at Pandanan Beach. As a participant and keynote speaker in this initiative, the author presented "Coral Reef Conservation for Blue Economy and Community-Based Sustainable Tourism in Pandanan Beach," articulating a vision where robust ecological restoration forms the foundation for inclusive, long-term economic development rooted in marine stewardship and community empowerment.

This article investigates the integrated coastal management initiative at Pandanan Beach, centering on coral reef and seagrass conservation as the foundation for a community-led blue economy. Specifically, it aims to: 1. Interrogate the structure, dynamics, and effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder governance model underpinning the project; 2. Assess the early-stage ecological outcomes of restoration efforts (coral reefs, seagrass beds) and identify key implementation challenges; and 3. Evaluate the viability, enabling factors, and barriers in scaling the community-based blue economy framework, particularly its sustainable marine tourism component and linked livelihood streams. Synthesizing empirical data from participatory observation, stakeholder interviews, and field documentation, the study provides actionable insights into operationalizing conservation-driven economic development. Consequently, it advances the discourse on translating sustainability principles into tangible strategies for enhancing marine ecosystem resilience and fostering equitable community prosperity in coastal settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ecological Restoration through Collaborative Governance and Sustainable Economies

The intertwined crises of ecological degradation demand responses that transcend disciplinary boundaries and fragmented approaches. This narrative synthesizes four critical conceptual pillars: ecological degradation and restoration, multi-stakeholder collaboration and governance, blue economy and community-based sustainable tourism (CBST), and foundational cross-cutting concepts to construct a framework for understanding and fostering resilient socio-ecological systems, particularly in vulnerable coastal and marine contexts (Subadra, 2024).

A. Ecological Degradation and Restoration:

The starting point is the stark reality of ecological degradation – the pervasive decline in ecosystem structure, function, and biodiversity driven by anthropogenic pressures like pollution, overexploitation, habitat destruction, and climate change (MEA, 2005). This degradation erodes ecosystem services vital for human well-being and planetary health. Ecological Restoration emerges as the deliberate process of assisting the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed (SER, 2004). Restoration Ecology provides the scientific foundation, emphasizing the need to understand ecosystem dynamics, successional pathways, and reference conditions (Higgs, 2003). Resilience Theory (Holling, 1973; Folke et al., 2004) is crucial here, framing restoration not as a return to a static past, but as enhancing an ecosystem's capacity to absorb disturbances, reorganize, and maintain essential functions in the face of ongoing change. Degradation signifies a loss of resilience; restoration aims to rebuild it. However, restoration success is contingent on addressing the underlying socio-economic drivers of degradation.

B. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Governance

Addressing complex socio-ecological challenges like degradation and enabling effective restoration requires sophisticated governance beyond top-down mandates. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration (MSC) is essential, recognizing that diverse actors – local communities, government agencies (local, regional, national), NGOs, scientists, private sector entities (tourism operators, fisheries,

etc.) – hold different knowledge, interests, resources, and stakes in ecosystem health. Governance Theory, particularly Polycentric Governance (Ostrom, 2010), offers a powerful lens. It posits that effective management of complex common-pool resources often involves multiple, overlapping centers of decision-making operating at different scales, fostering adaptability and learning. Collaborative Governance frameworks (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012) provide practical models, emphasizing principles like face-to-face dialogue, trust building, shared motivation, clear process design, and facilitative leadership. Successful MSC for restoration and sustainable management necessitates navigating power imbalances, building social capital, fostering Social Learning (where stakeholders learn together through interaction and shared experiences), and establishing legitimate institutions capable of collective decision-making and conflict resolution.

C. Blue Economy and Community-Based Sustainable Tourism

The Blue Economy concept envisions the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ocean ecosystem health (World Bank, 2017). It moves beyond mere resource extraction towards holistic management integrating conservation, sustainable production (e.g., mariculture, renewable energy), and equitable benefit-sharing. Crucially, it must be distinguished from purely ocean-based economic growth ("Blue Growth"), emphasizing sustainability and equity as core principles. Community-Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) represents a vital strand within a sustainable Blue Economy. Grounded in principles of Community Development and Participatory Approaches, CBST explicitly seeks to empower local communities, ensure they retain control and derive significant benefits from tourism, minimize environmental impacts, and foster cultural preservation (Manyara & Jones, 2007). It aligns with the concept of Embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985; Polanyi, 1944), arguing that economic activities (like tourism) should be deeply integrated into, and regulated by, the social and environmental contexts in which they occur, rather than operating solely by market logic. CBST, when implemented effectively, can generate local revenue supporting restoration efforts, incentivize conservation through direct community benefits, and raise environmental awareness among visitors.

D. Cross-Cutting and Foundational Concepts

Underpinning and permeating the other three pillars are essential cross-cutting concepts:

1. **Sustainability & Sustainable Development:** The overarching goal, defined classically as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). This necessitates balancing ecological integrity, economic viability, and social equity (the "triple bottom line"). Critical Sustainability Studies remind us to interrogate power relations and potential trade-offs inherent in sustainability discourses (Lele, 1991).
2. **Resilience (Socio-Ecological):** Extending beyond ecological resilience, this concept emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and ecological systems (Berkes & Folke, 1998; Folke et al., 2010). Building socio-ecological resilience is central to both restoration success and sustainable Blue Economy/CBST initiatives, enabling systems to adapt and transform in response to shocks and stresses.
3. **Environmental Justice & Equity:** Fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, meaningful participation in decision-making, and recognition of diverse values and identities are paramount (Schlosberg, 2013). Restoration projects and Blue Economy/CBST ventures must explicitly address potential inequities, ensuring marginalized communities are not further disadvantaged and actively benefit (Procedural, Distributive, and Recognition Justice).
4. **Systems Thinking:** Understanding complex problems like degradation requires viewing socio-ecological systems as interconnected wholes, where interventions in one area have ripple effects elsewhere (Meadows, 2008). This holistic perspective is vital for designing integrated restoration-collaboration-economy strategies.
5. **Livelihoods & Well-being:** Ultimately, initiatives must contribute to improving human well-being, particularly for vulnerable coastal populations. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999) helps analyze how different types of capital (natural, social,

human, physical, financial) are accessed and utilized, ensuring Blue Economy and CBST genuinely enhance community resilience and prosperity.

The path towards ecological recovery and sustainable futures is not linear but requires weaving together these conceptual threads. Ecological degradation creates the urgent imperative for restoration, guided by ecological science and aiming to rebuild resilience. However, successful, lasting restoration is impossible without effective governance. Polycentric, collaborative governance structures, facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration, are essential for pooling knowledge, resources, and legitimacy, navigating conflicts, and ensuring equitable decision-making that addresses root causes.

This collaborative governance must actively shape economic activities towards sustainability. A genuinely sustainable Blue Economy, moving beyond exploitative "Blue Growth," provides the economic context. Within this, Community-Based Sustainable Tourism emerges as a crucial strategy, embodying embeddedness by rooting economic activity within local social and ecological constraints and opportunities. CBST, driven by and benefiting communities, can generate vital resources and incentives directly supporting restoration efforts and broader conservation goals, creating a virtuous cycle.

Throughout this entire process, cross-cutting concepts provide the essential foundation and ethical compass. Sustainability is the overarching aim. Socio-ecological resilience is the desired outcome state. Environmental justice and equity are non-negotiable principles ensuring fairness. Systems thinking provides the necessary holistic perspective. A focus on livelihoods and well-being grounds all efforts in human outcomes. Therefore, restoring degraded ecosystems, particularly in complex coastal zones, requires more than technical ecological interventions. It demands the co-creation of collaborative governance frameworks that empower diverse stakeholders. These frameworks must then actively foster sustainable economic pathways, like equitable Blue Economy initiatives and genuine CBST, that align economic incentives with ecological health and community prosperity. All these endeavors are bound together and guided by the foundational principles of sustainability, resilience, justice, systems thinking, and human well-being. This integrated narrative provides a robust theoretical and practical framework for navigating the complex challenges of socio-ecological renewal.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of multi-stakeholder collaboration, ecological restoration efforts, and the development of a community-based blue economy at Pandanan Beach, North Lombok. The research was grounded in a descriptive-analytical approach, which enabled a nuanced understanding of social processes, environmental interventions, and community perspectives within their natural context (Subadra, 2025). The study was based on a combination of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through participatory observation, unstructured interviews, and a focus group discussion (FGD), while secondary data were derived from activity reports, field documentation, and relevant policy documents associated with the World Oceans Day and Coral Triangle Day event held on 8 June 2025 in Lombok.

The researcher actively participated in the event as both a keynote speaker and an observer, engaging with stakeholders during restoration activities, knowledge-sharing sessions, and community exhibitions. This method allowed for real-time observation of stakeholder interactions, decision-making processes, and community involvement in the conservation and tourism planning activities. Additionally, unstructured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample of local community members, conservation volunteers, tourism operators, government representatives, and NGO staff. These interviews aimed to capture diverse viewpoints on the challenges and opportunities related to coral reef and seagrass restoration, blue economy initiatives, and sustainable tourism development. The open-ended nature of the interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences and insights in their own terms.

Furthermore, an FGD was organised with key tourism stakeholders, including village tourism managers (pokdarwis), homestay owners, guides, and local tourism entrepreneurs, to elicit collective perspectives on the integration of marine conservation with sustainable tourism

development. The discussion also explored stakeholder perceptions of environmental challenges, governance arrangements, and strategies for visitor management and economic viability. This method facilitated the identification of shared values, contested issues, and collaborative opportunities.

All qualitative data were analysed thematically using a descriptive-analytical framework. Transcripts and field notes were reviewed and coded to identify patterns related to ecological restoration practices, governance models, stakeholder dynamics, and socio-economic outcomes. Analytical categories were aligned with the study's three main objectives, enabling a systematic examination of the relationships between conservation efforts, stakeholder collaboration, and community-based blue economy potential. In addition, ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all interview and FGD participants, and confidentiality was maintained. The study adhered to principles of respectful engagement with local communities and stakeholders, recognising their rights, knowledge, and contributions to the conservation initiative (Subadra, 2025).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Blue Economy Potential and Sustainable Tourism

The case of Pandanan Beach offers a robust empirical example of how locally led ecological restoration can become the cornerstone of a resilient and inclusive blue economy. Rather than being framed solely as a conservation initiative, the project demonstrates how marine habitat rehabilitation particularly coral reefs and seagrass beds serve as strategic infrastructure for sustainable marine ecotourism. These restored ecosystems are not only ecological assets but also the very foundation for core tourism activities such as snorkeling, diving, and educational tours. This repositions conservation from a perceived constraint into a productive and regenerative economic strategy, reinforcing the idea that environmental stewardship and livelihood development are inherently synergistic.

Figure 1. World Ocean Day Activity



Central to the success of this initiative is the operationalisation of multi-stakeholder collaboration. The Malaka Village Government provides governance and policy alignment, while the Pandanan Beach Community Group, led by Mr. Syukur, ensures grassroots implementation and community mobilisation. BPSPL Denpasar contributes scientific validation, and PLTU Matasar supports the initiative through its CSR programmes. Additionally, academic actors play a critical role in knowledge transfer and framework development. This form of polycentric governance enables diverse actors to contribute without redundancy, ensuring efficient coordination and local agency.

The project also exemplifies economic diversification within the blue economy framework. While sustainable marine ecotourism serves as the primary income driver, it is complemented by innovative mechanisms such as community-managed marine protected area (MPA) financing through user fees. This establishes a self-sustaining financial loop where tourism revenues fund conservation. Additionally, the development of value-added marine products—such as dried

seaweed and artisanal fisheries—reduces dependency on tourism and expands livelihood options. The deliberate branding of the area as “Pandanan Eco-Destination” enhances market visibility and facilitates the capture of economic value associated with its unique ecological and cultural attributes.

Community-based tourism (CBT) further enhances local empowerment. By offering diversified tourism products such as eco-homestays, guided reef walks, and cultural experiences (e.g., traditional boat-building and weaving), the initiative creates multiple points of engagement for tourists while showcasing local heritage. Capacity-building programmes in hospitality, visitor management, and environmental interpretation have equipped community members with critical skills, improving service quality and employability. More importantly, the model ensures that the economic benefits remain within the community, reinforcing the notion that conservation can actively support rather than compete with livelihoods.

Figure 2. Focus Group Discussion



To ensure long-term sustainability, the project integrates embedded ecological and social safeguards. The use of scientific monitoring protocols such as Reef Check and Seagrass-Watch ensures that tourism development remains within the bounds of ecological carrying capacity. Operational tools, including visitor codes of conduct, zoning regulations, and carrying capacity planning, are systematically applied to manage tourism flow and mitigate degradation. These measures are implemented proactively, not reactively, reinforcing the project's commitment to sustainability from the outset. In synthesis, the Pandanan Beach initiative illustrates a model of integrated sustainability in which ecological restoration, community empowerment, and economic diversification are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The project serves as a living example of how a locally governed blue economy can align with the goals of sustainable tourism and community development.

4.2. Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite its considerable achievements, the Pandanan Beach initiative faces several challenges that must be addressed to ensure its long-term viability. One critical issue lies in maintaining the ecological health of restored marine habitats amid increasing tourism pressures. Although the project has embedded safeguards, consistent implementation and adaptive management are required to cope with changing environmental conditions and fluctuating tourist volumes. Climate change-induced stressors such as ocean warming and coral bleaching also pose long-term threats that may undermine ecological and economic gains.

The financial sustainability of the initiative, while promising, remains vulnerable to external shocks, such as global pandemics or economic downturns that can drastically reduce tourist arrivals. Although the development of alternative livelihoods—such as seaweed farming and artisanal fisheries—provides some buffer, further diversification and innovation in financing mechanisms (e.g., blue carbon credits or conservation trust funds) could enhance resilience. Moreover, while the introduction of MPA user fees represents a pioneering step toward self-

financed conservation, its scalability and acceptance among visitors require ongoing community dialogue and regulatory support.

Institutionally, the long-term coherence of the multi-stakeholder governance model could be tested by shifts in leadership, policy changes, or funding interruptions. Ensuring institutional memory, robust legal frameworks, and inter-agency coordination is essential to preserving the collaborative dynamics that underpin the initiative's success. Moreover, continued support for community capacity building is necessary to avoid stagnation or overreliance on external actors, particularly as the tourism offering becomes more sophisticated and competition intensifies.

From a market perspective, the branding and positioning of Pandanan as an eco-destination need to be continuously refined to maintain relevance and attract a quality-driven tourism segment. Digital marketing strategies, visitor experience innovation, and alignment with broader regional tourism circuits could enhance visibility and market share. However, this must be balanced against the risk of overexposure, which could compromise the community's control over tourism development and threaten ecological integrity.

The project holds significant potential as a replicable model for other coastal communities seeking to transition toward a sustainable blue economy. Its lessons in stakeholder synergy, ecological-economic alignment, and community ownership offer a practical framework for inclusive and regenerative marine development. To scale this model, further research, documentation, and policy advocacy are needed to influence national and regional frameworks, ensuring that community-led approaches are supported, resourced, and integrated into broader blue economy strategies. In conclusion, while Pandanan Beach demonstrates strong foundational elements for a thriving blue economy enterprise, sustaining and scaling these achievements will require ongoing adaptation, investment, and institutional support. The balance between ecological integrity, economic viability, and social equity remains delicate but achievable through the initiative's integrated and participatory approach. The future of Pandanan and similar coastal initiatives depends on continued vigilance, innovation, and commitment to truly inclusive sustainability.

5. Conclusion

The coral reef conservation initiative at Pandanan Beach commemorated during World Oceans Day and Coral Triangle Day on June 8, 2025 demonstrates a promising and replicable model of multi-stakeholder collaboration in coastal ecosystem protection. The active participation of the local community, supported by government agencies, technical institutions, the private sector, and academics, illustrates that marine conservation can be effectively integrated with local economic development through a blue economy and community-based sustainable tourism (CBT) approach. This synergy between ecological stewardship and economic opportunity highlights the potential for conservation efforts to simultaneously safeguard biodiversity and enhance community welfare.

The findings reinforce that restored coral reefs and seagrass beds serve not only ecological functions but also become productive assets for sustainable marine tourism. Anchored in CBT principles, the initiative fosters local ownership, capacity-building, and inclusive benefit-sharing. Polycentric governance where multiple stakeholders contribute distinct yet complementary resources and expertise has emerged as a critical enabler for the project's early success.

Moreover, the initiative incorporates essential elements of sustainability such as scientific monitoring, visitor management, and diversified income streams, reducing environmental pressures and enhancing community resilience. These attributes position the project as a practical example of how blue economy principles can be localised and operationalised at the community level.

The future of the Pandanan Beach initiative will depend on sustained collaboration, institutional support, and adaptive management. Nevertheless, it offers valuable insights for similar coastal regions seeking integrated, community-led pathways to conservation and development—anchored in ecological integrity, social inclusiveness, and long-term economic viability.

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