



Final
evaluation

A Story of Impact and Hope



Three decades that
made a difference
for nature and people

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Introduction

MAVA was a family grant-making foundation based in Switzerland. We were founded in 1994 by Dr. Luc Hoffmann, a dedicated naturalist. His son, André Hoffmann, succeeded him as President in 2010. The focus of the MAVA Foundation was biodiversity conservation and sustainable economy, centred around four programmes: Coastal West Africa, the Mediterranean Basin, Switzerland, and Sustainable Economy.

Our approach was one of partnership and collaboration, both with the individuals and organisations we supported and with other funders.

MAVA transitioned through three distinct phases, from our early pioneering days to professionalisation to designing for impact.

Luc was involved in the early stages of several key global conservation organisations, including WWF, IUCN, BirdLife International, and Wetlands International, among many others. Our support to those organisations continued through all phases of our activity.

In 2015, we merged with Fondation Internationale du Banc d'Arguin (FIBA), another organisation created by Luc Hoffmann. The capacity and expertise we gained from uniting our organisations significantly strengthened our ability to work more closely with our partners, both in West Africa through our local office in Dakar, Senegal, and across the entire foundation.

In 2016, in anticipation of ending our grant-making in 2022, we began orchestrating major collaborations amongst our partners so they could work together on a jointly defined strategy. We also focussed on strengthening the capacity of conservation actors working at the individual, organisational, and community level.

Throughout the life of MAVA, we sought to live our four values: unifying, empowering, flexible, and persevering. These values complemented our mission and defined our spirit.

About this Review

In this document, we share some key achievements of the MAVA Foundation over three decades of funding conservation and sustainable economy initiatives. This is a rather monumental task given the breadth of our support, and we regret that we are unable to feature all the amazing work of our partners and their impressive achievements. Therefore, this review should be considered a representative sample of our activities rather than an exhaustive catalogue.

You can find more details in MAVA's many resources, including [learning products](#), [final evaluations of our Outcome Action Plans](#), and [final programme reviews](#).

This review is organised around the five main legacies of MAVA, drawn from an analysis of the 500+ stories submitted to us by our partners via the MAVA Memories project.

MAVA at a Glance

OUR MISSION

To conserve biodiversity for the benefit of people and nature by funding, mobilising, and strengthening our partners and the conservation community.

OUR VISION

We envisage a future where biodiversity flourishes, especially in the Mediterranean, coastal West Africa and Switzerland; the global economy supports human prosperity and a healthy planet; and the conservation community is thriving.

MAVA allocated

CHF 1.14 billion

since 1994 for about

1500 projects

implemented by more than

500 partners



UNIFYING



EMPOWERING

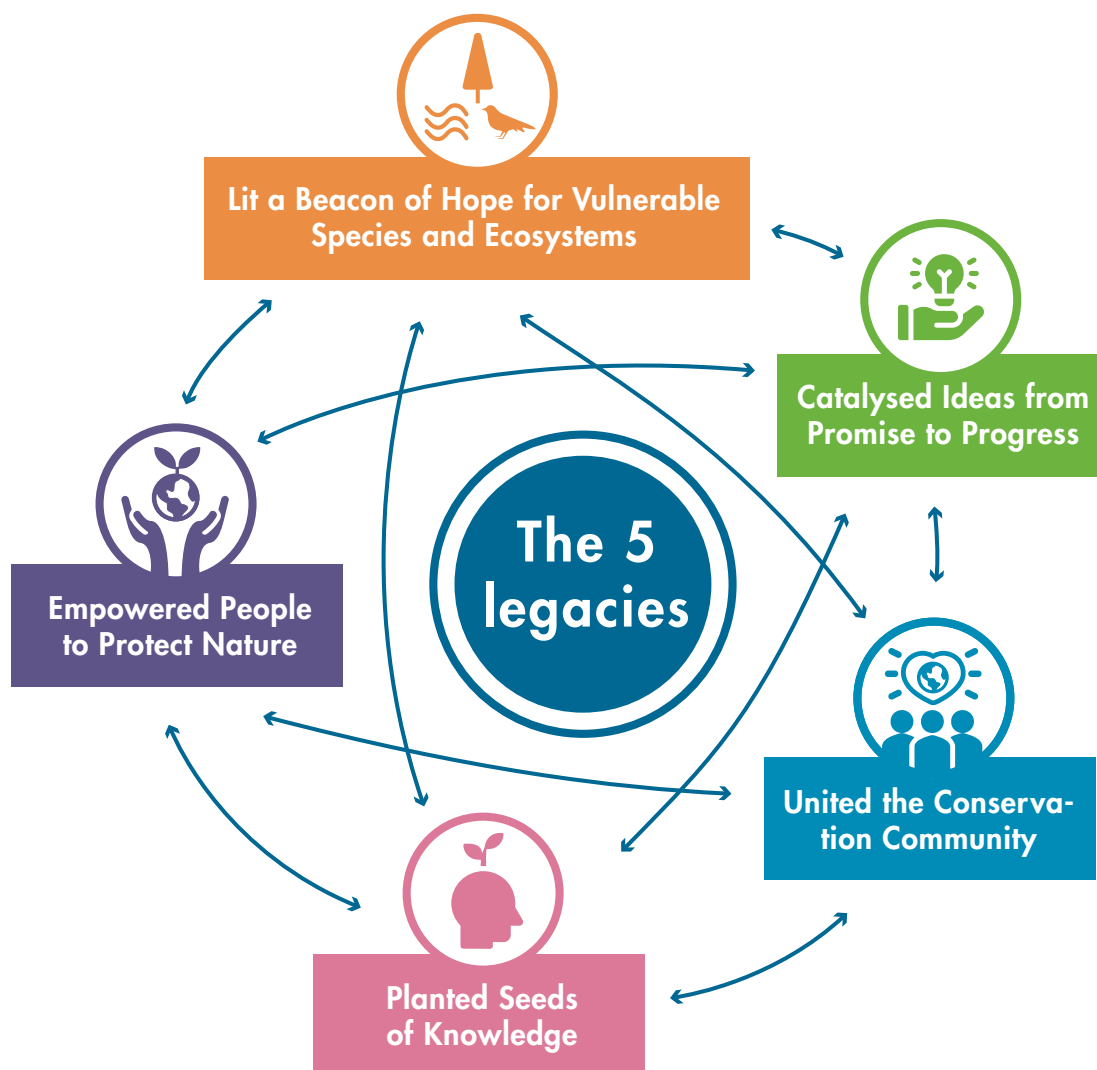


FLEXIBLE

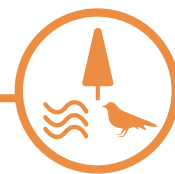


PERSEVERING

The 5 legacies of MAVA



1. We Lit a Beacon of Hope for Vulnerable Species and Ecosystems



How it started

From the start of the foundation, MAVA's support for species conservation and ecosystem protection focussed on emblematic species and iconic sites, particularly wetlands of international importance. Rather than being swayed by trendy topics, we concentrated on issues that were important regardless of popular appeal. We could be described as providing a "beacon of hope" for vulnerable species and ecosystems because we achieved some considerable successes, but there are still important challenges ahead.

For us, protecting ecosystems included the protection of five iconic sites that were of great interest to our founder, even well before MAVA was created. These sites included the Doñana (Spain), Camargue (France), Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), Prespa (Albania, North Macedonia, and Greece), and the Bijagos (Guinea Bissau). What began as a site-based approach evolved into a stronger ecosystem approach and building communities of actors.

Given our initial interest in wetlands, MAVA's early support for species conservation tended to focus on the conservation of birds, especially migratory water birds and integrated flyway connectivity, but our support extended well beyond that.

What we achieved

The protection status of the five iconic sites and other key ecosystems was improved through legislation, stronger management tools, and better governance. In West Africa, we supported the establishment of 15 marine protected areas. Our partnerships stewarded the establishment of fully and highly protected areas in the Mediterranean. The governance structures we helped establish for these protected areas included the representation of local communities or private landowners.



Targeting endangered species of birds and sea turtles, critically endangered species such as the Iberian Lynx, as well as other endemic species, led us to focus on protecting critical sites by conserving key habitats for those species. For example, to protect sea turtles, it was critical to monitor and reduce disturbance on nesting beaches in the Bijagos and on Boa Vista Island (Cabo Verde). These efforts ultimately reduced poaching and improved the conservation status of these two globally important sites for green and loggerhead turtles.

Monk seals, one of the species most threatened with extinction, are a species conservation success story. With the long-term support we provided to CBD-Habitat, the population of monk seals in Cabo Blanco (Mauritania) grew from 100 individuals in 1998 to 350 today, making it the largest breeding colony of this species in the world. Building on this success, MAVA worked with four other donors (Fondation Prince Albert II, Fondation Segré, Fondation Sancta Devota, and Thalassa Foundation) to create the Monk Seal Alliance, providing continued funding to monk seal conservation across its entire range, including the Mediterranean basin and Madeira.

We were also involved in the reintroduction of the Przewalski's horse in Mongolia with the TAKH Association. Previously extinct in the wild, 140 horses now roam the steppes of the newly established Khomin Tal National Park, holding promise for the establishment of a viable population in the medium term.

Likewise we supported the successful reintroduction of osprey by Pro Pandion Association in Switzerland and elsewhere. 62 osprey were released in Switzerland between 2015 and 2020. Since then the proof of concept of this project in Switzerland allowed them scale the activity to several sites in France, with nascent collaborations in Senegal, Algeria, Greece, Spain, Norway and the UK. We practised an integrated approach to site and species conservati-



on, incorporating applied research, capacity building, awareness raising, and policy improvement. Linking ecosystem conservation priorities to specific sectors, such as infrastructure development, fisheries and resource exploitation, allowed us to address multiple threats with diverse groups of stakeholders.

In the Mediterranean and West Africa, BirdLife International took a regional approach to identifying areas with the highest rates of bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles. Methods to test and implement mitigation measures were developed with fishers in the Mediterranean, whose engagement was critical to promote the measures at scale.

MAYA's innovative Cultural Landscapes concept demonstrated the benefit of an integrated economic, social, and cultural approach to the long-term preservation of biodiverse landscapes. We applied this approach to projects in the mountains, islands, and forested lands of the Mediterranean.

MAYA also provided support to establish and/or strengthen thematic organisations dedicated to the conservation of iconic sites (e.g. Tour du Valat, Society for the Protection of Prespa, WWF Spain) and networks of marine protected areas, including the Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa (RAMPAN) and the Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Network (MedPAN).

To ensure our partners' achievements would be sustainable over the long term, we helped establish a dedicated trust fund for each of the five iconic sites: the Doñana Defense Fund, Pro Valat, the Banc d'Arguin and Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Trust Fund (BACo-MaB), the Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT), and BioGuinea Foundation. We worked with many other European public funding agencies as well, including KfW Development Bank, Agence Française de



Développement (AFD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM).

Beyond the iconic sites, we also invested in numerous other financial mechanisms to fund ecosystem conservation. Some examples include Blue Mooring established by BlueSeeds in Sardinia; payment for ecosystem services in the Montado Woodlands in Portugal led by Associação Natureza Portugal (ANP); labelling schemes such as the one set up by the Global Diversity Foundation in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco; and public-private partnerships such as the implementation of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in Guinea Bissau led by the Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP).

Food for Thought

In recent years, we supported our partners to develop monitoring tools and implement participatory adaptive management systems on specific themes. However, we learnt that systematically defining and including specific baselines in the monitoring tools would have helped to assess progress on species and ecosystem protection, including at the regional level.

Securing legal protection of key species and critical sites is indispensable for long-term impact. However, this often involves lengthy processes that rely heavily on national decision-makers. We learnt that it would have been even better to start work earlier and in a more strategic way with some governmental bodies and other relevant entities.



Some important issues, such as climate change, were not systematically addressed through specific strategies in MAVA funding. Although we never positioned ourselves as a climate funder, over time we became increasingly aware that the interventions we supported, particularly in wetlands conservation and marine protected areas, clearly contributed to the fight against climate change.

2. We Catalysed Ideas from Promise to Progress



How it started

A defining characteristic of MAVA was a willingness to back new ideas, unproven concepts, and fledgling organisations. Our focus was on potential, and we were willing to accept a significant degree of risk, often as the sole funder at the initial stage. Some early bets were nurtured, sometimes over many years and iterations. This approach applied to both new ideas and young organisations. MAVA's involvement often allowed space for a concept or approach to bear fruit, which then attracted other supporters.

The desire to search for answers and discover the unknown is in the genes of the Hoffmann family. Luc pursued it in his area of expertise and his family did the same in theirs. This curiosity for new ideas and experimentation combined well with MAVA's unusual capacity to take risks thanks to secure long-term funding.

What we achieved

Over the years we invested in many early ideas and rising stars. All were ambitious in their own way, whether in thematic or geographic scope, mindset, the socio-political intricacies of the local context, or, and probably most often, a mixture of all of these.

Support for early ideas

The re-emergence of the concept of the circular economy in Europe in the past decade prompted us to adopt it as a guiding approach of our Sustainable Economy programme, and to begin providing substantial support for young organisations in Europe. Successes at the European Union (EU) level provided fertile ground to apply some of our circular economy work in a new region. For example, we



supported the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to set up a new office and programme of work in China to help embed the circular economy concept in national planning.

While not a totally new concept, the intersection of culture and nature was a little-used tool for biodiversity conservation. In the early 2000s, the foundation was already supporting community conservation based on cultural traditions, for example, in the Bijagos Islands through our local partner, Tiniguena. In 2011, we decided to take this approach a step further and convened a group of actors interested in the link between nature and culture. This led to the creation of an alliance of six organisations – Doğa Derneği, Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA), Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), DiversEarth, Asociación Transhumancia y Naturaleza, and WWF North Africa – which later expanded to include others.

Early successes of the nature and culture approach include a rapid assessment of cultural conservation practices in the Mediterranean and the promotion of the benefits of mobile pastoralism for nature across the Mediterranean. The approach has gained momentum across the Mediterranean, with 46,000 people implementing cultural practices beneficial to biodiversity on 50,000 hectares of sustainably managed landscapes.

Support for rising stars

In many cases, MAVA's early support laid the groundwork for organisations to grow into strong and professional actors in their areas of expertise. For instance, our early support for Carbon Tracker, which created the concept of a carbon budget and stranded assets, allowed it to prove the concept, grow the organisation, and then replicate the approach with Fish Tracker and Planet Tracker.



We also supported the Luc Hoffmann Institute (LHI) from a start-up operated under the auspices of WWF International to a functioning independent entity. Although it took several iterations and a few years to find the right niche for the organisation, we were committed to it realising its potential. This long-term investment allowed the LHI, renamed Unearthodox, to grow into what is now an independent incubator for new ideas in conservation. Thanks to significant support from the Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, Unearthodox will carry on nurturing new ideas to fruition in the conservation space.

One of the most common pieces of feedback we received was how our early flexible funding allowed young organisations to find their way and grow to become major players in their field. Business for Nature and the Global Commons Alliance are two successful examples of our early support for potential rather than proven results. Notably, Business for Nature played a key role in rallying businesses to support the ratification of the Global Biodiversity Framework Agreement in 2022.

Food for Thought

With a few exceptions, most of the ideas we supported early on originated elsewhere. Given the success of those that we co-created, we could have engaged more in active idea creation.

Very few of our early bets failed. We believe we took a higher-than-average amount of risk, but we could and should have accepted even higher levels of risk and pushed the boundaries even further.

We encourage other funders to prioritise potential over risk and make courageous bets on early ideas and organisations. Based on our experience, the risk was worth taking and has paid off in above-average impact.

3. We United the Conservation Community



How it started

The MAVA Foundation believed in the power of many. Tackling conservation and sustainability challenges requires bringing together individual strengths backed by shared objectives. Building such aligned and collaborative communities of actors was one of MAVA's trademark approaches in which we invested considerable funding, attention, and time.

For us, uniting the conservation community meant facilitating and establishing connections, deepening existing ones, creating convening spaces, building coherent portfolios, and fostering diverse and inclusive alliances of civil society organisations, national and regional policy framework organisations, research and academia, and the private sector.

MAVA's founding family realised early on that lasting solutions can only be developed and implemented by working together. Collaboration became not only a core approach, but an organisational mindset of being and working. In our final strategic exercise, we recognised that convening partners around critical themes and joint missions was the best way to achieve meaningful results and magnify the foundation's impact by ensuring a lasting legacy.

The funding capacity, convening power, credibility, and neutrality of the foundation were critical to the successful development of alliances. These were developed early on with support for regional frameworks, such as the Partenariat Régional pour la Conservation de la zone Côtière et Marine en Afrique de l'Ouest (PRCM) and the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative and, in the final years, with the development of Outcome Action Plans.



What we achieved

We are proud to have contributed to the development of thematic networks of practitioners, as well as strategic partnerships tailored around the themes of our 2016–2022 Outcome Action Plans. Such partnerships have the power to structure a community of actors by reinforcing the impact of joint action, lowering implementation costs, overlap and competition, and delivering more holistic results through the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders.

We consider the development of donor joint ventures and collaborations another major contribution of MAVA. Beyond increasing funding capacity, as we did with the Plastic Solutions Fund together with the Oak Foundation and many others, fostering the convergence of donor goals and strategies can attract attention to specific regions, as with the Blue Action Fund in West Africa. Donor collaborations helped to shine a light on the issues we supported, such as wetlands, when we co-created the Donor Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems (DIMFE) with the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation.

A noteworthy characteristic of MAVA's Outcome Action Plan partnerships is that they included institutional players, from the regional Abidjan and Barcelona Conventions to a national marine protected areas agency in Senegal, to local municipalities in Morocco's Atlas Mountains.

Alliances that included both civil society and institutional stakeholders enhanced efficiency because they accelerated the uptake of solutions by decision-makers. Equally, the inclusion of research and academic institutions provided the scientific basis to back and facilitate sound decision-making and targeted action.



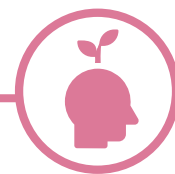
With Circular Economy Switzerland, we facilitated the creation of a movement, bringing together a wide circle of aligned organisations (Impact Hub and Sanu Durabilitas, amongst others) for learning and communication. This coalition was able to insert the concept of the circular economy into mainstream public discourse in Switzerland.

Food for Thought

While there were benefits to supporting collaborations and partnerships with different types of organisations, the impact could be amplified by rallying additional partners from outside the conservation sector. For example, by working more with impact investors and the private sector to develop new financial mechanisms as alternatives to project funding.

Building collaborations is a lengthy process. The payoff of strong coalitions comes over the medium to long term and requires patient investment. Despite early successes and our optimism for the future of these partnerships, our limited time frame meant we were not able to get the model right (through an iterative process) and see it play out over time. However, the bonds that were created in the conservation community have laid the groundwork to build on and scale up our impact.

4. We Planted Seeds of Knowledge



How it started

MAVA supported knowledge creation in both academic and non-academic ways. We also supported our partners to raise the profile of local conservation issues and help communities, decision-makers, and the wider public understand the value and importance of safeguarding their natural heritage. Our support for research and awareness raising was always with a view to catalyse action.

Our founder Luc was a strong believer in supporting science and was known to encourage and support young scientists both technically and financially. This ethos carried through to how MAVA operated, with a focus on nurturing those who created knowledge for action, whether in a formal academic setting or otherwise, and providing active support for innovation.

The Tour du Valat research institute is an inextricable part of our history. Established by Luc as a research station and later funded in part by MAVA, it continues to be instrumental in generating knowledge on wetlands that is applied on the ground and showcasing nature-based solutions.

Awareness raising has been an integral part of conservation initiatives, particularly those led by NGOs, which have been MAVA's strongest pillar of conservation support.

What we achieved

MAVA supported the development of baselines on the status of species and ecosystems to monitor changes to threats and the impact of conservation. One example is the initial mapping of important seagrass beds in seven West African countries, which are now

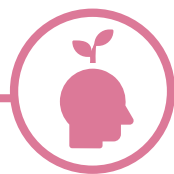


included in the global map of seagrass distribution. Another major reference was created by the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) survey initiative, the first-ever simultaneous estimation of dolphin, whales and other larger species, such as sea turtles and sharks, across the Mediterranean Sea. On a global scale, we supported improvements to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and the initial development of the Red List of Endangered Ecosystems.

Often, preliminary research was indispensable to providing conservation guidance. With MAVA's support, WWF Switzerland identified the most important remaining natural rivers in the country so that attention could be focussed on preserving these "river pearls". Likewise, the development of the Wetland Index by Wetland-based Solutions, a coalition of partners we nurtured to work on coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean, provides a basis for prioritising wetland restoration at the regional level.

Tailored research was often needed to develop or apply conservation measures. For example, research on sea turtle migration patterns in West Africa identified Banc d'Arguin as a globally important green turtle feeding site and led us to add that site to the field programme. In the case of bycatch reduction in the Mediterranean, trials of preventive measures by local fishers were necessary to select those that would be most effective, readily accepted, and implemented by fishing communities.

When the field was completely new to us, we funded cutting-edge research, such as how to integrate nature performance in sovereign debt markets or identify the economic potential of solutions and a roadmap for a new plastics economy.



This is where think tanks came to play an important role. For example, in Switzerland, early support for reflection on agricultural policy allowed Vision Landwirtschaft to generate a wealth of knowledge and insights that fed into the policy debate on agricultural subsidies and overall policy. In the international arena, we supported Chatham House to develop thought leadership on natural resource trade and use, bringing planetary limits into the geostrategic agenda.

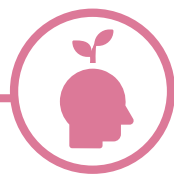
MAVA encouraged field research and sought to build the capacity of local researchers to develop ownership of the projects and avoid overreliance on scientists from outside the region. Strong preference was given to national postgraduate fellows and community researchers hired for the projects we supported in West Africa and the Mediterranean.

Innovative techniques were used by our partners to raise public awareness. For instance, in Cabo Verde, partners developed new technologies such as apps and games, and local celebrities and artists were actively involved in public awareness-raising activities.

Food for Thought

We believed that good conservation needs to be based on good science, and that good science requires investment and patience. However, that did not mean we needed to wait for the science to be perfect before we acted. We saw the connection between research and action as an iterative learning process.

There is an art to knowing when we have enough knowledge to act. We tried to avoid the danger of research without end and pushed to ensure that research always led to action on the ground. However,



we also learnt that researchers are very rarely the ones to turn their findings into field action or lead advocacy work. Often, it is more effective to hand over implementation to actors with different roles and skills.

With the Outcome Action Plans, research from one partner served the needs of the overall strategy and plan. Defining clearly from the beginning how the knowledge would be used and by whom significantly increased the effectiveness and potential impact of funded research.

The same was true of awareness raising. It is one thing to make others aware of conservation issues and quite another to incite them to act. We sometimes fell into the trap of believing that raising awareness was enough. However, it should simply be the first step in advocating for action, and this requires the right kind of expertise and resources.

5. We Empowered People to Protect Nature



How it started

The success or failure of conservation action often comes down to individuals with a vision and their ability to generate energy and drive action. Enhancing the technical competence and soft skills of these individuals will greatly increase the chances of success, but only in the right enabling environment. The MAVA Foundation saw the individual and the organisation as one unit that needed to be understood and supported together. To get the best results from our funding, we invested not only in conservation activities, but also in capacity building, organisational development, and leadership development.

Both Luc and his children recognised the importance of supporting promising individuals and organisations. Capacity building and organisational development were therefore a core focus from the beginning. For example, Luc and his son André were early supporters of building up WWF Greece from a start-up to a high-performing national NGO.

As we prepared for our final phase of funding, we decided to invest much more intentionally and significantly in capacity building, organisational development, and leadership development. The merger of MAVA and FIBA introduced key skills that allowed us to create a dedicated programme for these efforts.

What we achieved

We wanted to be a partner as much as a funder. Instead of imposing our approach, we built on our trusted relationships and listened to what our partners said they needed most. We adopted a steady, supportive attitude and accompanied our partners through discussi-



on, advice, peer support, and on-the-job training. The projects we funded consistently included specific budgets for capacity building or organisational development.

In 2016, we established a dedicated programme of work for organisational development. We built holistic, long-term partnerships with over 20 key partners to ensure they were robust enough to continue delivering conservation activities after MAVA closed.

An example is the comprehensive support provided to the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF), which included strengthening governance, management, and positioning. This support enabled the VCF to develop into a professional NGO that was better equipped to play a key role in vulture conservation across Europe and beyond.

Projecto Vitó in Cabo Verde also received holistic organisational development support from MAVA, which helped transform this young organisation into a well-known and recognised frontline player in conservation in the country and region.

As there was a practical limit to the number of partners we could directly accompany, we entrusted BirdLife International, an organisation experienced in providing organisational development support to its partner organisations, to extend this support to about 30 partners we had in common. Some of these include the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), Association Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO) in Tunisia and Biosfera in Cabo Verde.

Another way we expanded our reach was by supporting existing small grants mechanisms. We did this with the Programmes de Petites Initiatives (PPI), which were small grants programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa that provided institutional and technical support to over 200 emerging civil society organisations. Both were



co-funded by the FFEM and run by IUCN. This approach was praised by beneficiaries of the programmes and country officials where they were implemented.

Additional capacity support was provided via small grant programmes, such as the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in the Mediterranean and Cabo Verde.

We invested time and resources creating an organisational development community of practice, which now works under the umbrella of Philea, the Philanthropy Europe Association. This has helped to communicate the tangible benefits of investing in organisational development and promoting the use of it in funding practices more broadly.

Capacity building

In terms of targeted capacity building, one example of online training we supported was the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Protected Areas Management run by the IUCN Programme on African Protected Areas & Conservation (IUCN PAPACO). Nearly 90,000 people have taken the courses offered by PAPACO and nearly 9,000 certificates have been awarded. Non-Profit Fundraising Essentials was another course that was developed by the Acumen Academy with our involvement and has been attended by 13,000 people. This course will remain a resource for practitioners long after MAVA has closed.

We supported the Tropical Biology Association to convert their training materials into an online or hybrid format to extend its reach. This resulted in hundreds of new participants having access to essential skills training for conservationists around the world.



Through an innovative collaboration between two of our partners, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the African Leadership University (ALU), we supported the integration of circular economy principles across the entire ALU curriculum. ALU's ambitious goal is to train 3 million African leaders by 2035, which means this new curriculum can impact a huge number of future leaders. We also supported the integration of other key topics in academic curricula in West Africa, such as seagrass conservation and environmental risk management related to offshore oil and gas activities.

At the grassroots level and in the field, we have continuously invested in building the capacity of conservation stakeholders. This support was provided directly through projects with a dedicated line of work, and by supporting units that specialised in capacity building within the programmes of international partners, such as the Tour du Valat or EuroNatur. We also promoted and supported peer learning on common issues facing our partners, particularly local communities and protected areas managers. Exchange and study visits turned out to be powerful tools for sharing experiences and best practices.

Leadership development

In our final phase, we added an emphasis on leadership development. This was part of our closing strategy, which aimed to nurture the leaders needed to lead the conservation movement into the future. We co-designed an innovative multigenerational programme with Common Purpose and Mowgli Mentoring to create the MAVA Leaders for Nature Academy. Over 200 people benefitted from the programmes run jointly by these partners. By all reports, participants have greatly appreciated this programme, with some finding it life changing.

With the MAVA Leaders for Nature Academy and other leadership



initiatives, we have helped to enhance the leadership skills and personal resilience of a cohort of leaders we hope will inspire and empower others, creating a ripple effect. EuroNatur has already taken up the torch and created its own version of the Academy dedicated to Mediterranean NGOs.

Food for Thought

We found that although they are difficult to conduct, prior needs assessments for capacity building and robust monitoring and evaluation helped build a significantly stronger case for the benefits of this approach.

Although it is not always feasible to have baseline assessments, we found it is still worth investing in capacity building initiatives.

When delegating organisational development support to other organisations, it is worth investing time upfront in creating a common understanding of what partner organisations need to be successful.

Lessons Learnt

In Our Journey in Philanthropy, we explored key lessons in philanthropy. These are summarised below.



INVEST IN COLLABORATION

Investing in joint planning, shared learning, and collective action can help bring different actors together, identify common interests, and build a shared vision – to achieve more collectively than is possible individually.



CAPITALISE ON PARTNER KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

Tapping into the knowledge and technical expertise of partners and implementing organisations can help you make smart funding decisions.



TAKE EVEN MORE RISKS

Going outside comfort zones and taking even more risks can pay dividends in bringing about positive change.



STAY TRUE TO YOUR ROOTS AND GROW YOUR BRANCHES

Consistently investing in specific themes, topics, and regions can help build partner networks, trusting relationships, and deep understanding of issues that all contribute to more effective conservation.



BE FLEXIBLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF PARTNERS

Be flexible to make things as easy as possible for your partners, and be clear on where the limits are.



BE AN OCTOPUS!

Providing holistic project support that goes beyond grant-making can increase partner impact and contribute to their sustainability.



BE BOLD AND ACT SYSTEMICALLY

Taking a systems approach entails supporting a range of initiatives that use different methods and partners to achieve results.



AIM TO PUT YOURSELF OUT OF BUSINESS

Investing for sustainability and securing sustainable financing can reduce dependence on philanthropic funding.

Conclusions

The closing of MAVA prompted an interesting and fulfilling exercise that allowed us to take stock of just how much was accomplished with our support over the years. Even members of our team most closely involved in the day-to-day work of grant-making and partner support gained insights from pausing to reflect on our journey. This document is a product of that reflection.

As we closed our doors, and as there will be no MAVA 2.0, we felt a swirl of emotions. Among those are a sense of pride and a desire to celebrate how far we have come, together with our partners.

Our legacy is clear: protecting critical species and ecosystems, building a strong community of conservation actors, nurturing new ideas, fostering knowledge, and empowering people to act for nature.

Our work coincided with a time when the world woke up to the emergency of biodiversity and the role of the economy in addressing it. While we were an early funder acknowledging this link, we were accompanied by, and rode the wave of, a major shift in attitude amongst many actors.

We leave behind substantive achievements that we hope others will build on. Our hope is that we have nourished the field and planted seeds that will bear fruit over time. Empowered individuals and strong organisations have the potential to make a lasting difference.

From the start, people have been at the centre of MAVA's approach. Now that we have closed, we count on these individuals and the conservation community to continue our shared good work. We feel reassured that this community is equipped to address major conservation challenges and can rise to the challenge with a clear vision and diverse perspectives gained during our journey together. We are certain that they will build on our shared accomplishments and evolve to respond to emerging issues. We are also confident that our legacy is in good hands to face the many challenges that remain.

Act as if you were closing: reflections from our final phase

Even if you are not closing, adopting the mindset required to sunset a foundation can be beneficial. The reality of closing spurred some important reflections that could be useful for others, too.

- **Focus.** Faced with a limited time frame, we narrowed our priorities and rallied a community of actors around them. This outcome-focused and collaborative approach laid the groundwork for impact at scale.
- **Invest in sustainability.** Closing made us preoccupied with the sustainability of the work we supported. We focussed on locking in successes and building coalitions to carry the work into the future.
- **Build individual and organisational capacity.** We dedicated a programme of work to ensuring our partners were prepared for the future. We learnt that a targeted programme with funding enables partners to focus on capacity building, which is often neglected because it is perceived as unaffordable for partners and a low priority for funders.
- **Make friends with other donors.** We have been gratified by the number of donors actively seeking to carry on the work we will no longer be able to support. In a way, we de-risked the investment, allowing other funders to have a high degree of confidence that they can fund new partners or themes.
- **Communicate partner successes.** For most of our history, MAVA had a very discreet communications strategy about the results of our investments. Although we placed more emphasis on communications in later years, we could have been even more proactive in showcasing our partners' achievements, giving them more visibility and fostering mutual learning.

Key information will be available on [MAVA's legacy website](#) for years to come. Please feel free to explore it for more information.

Our Gratitude

On behalf of the entire MAVA team, we are deeply indebted to all the people who travelled on this journey with us, sharing their passion and dedication to protect nature for the benefit of the planet.

We have been inspired by this conservation community and by all MAVA's friends, including the partners we supported and other philanthropic actors. We learnt a lot on this journey with you.

Together, we did something that we feel was meaningful. Words cannot express our gratitude to Luc Hoffmann, his children and grandchildren, for their commitment and trust that allowed us to shape a powerful foundation dedicated to people and nature.

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