



# Wealth of the Oceans

## Blue Ventures, Madagascar

### Challenge

Tropical coastal ecosystems are the home and livelihood of hundreds of millions of people around the world. The effects of climate change on coastal ecosystems, such as coral bleaching, destruction from storms, and erosion from heavy rain, can harm these livelihoods. In the coastal regions of Madagascar, people rely heavily on fishing for their daily food and income. Blue Ventures aims to strengthen the resiliency of coastal ecosystems and communities in Madagascar and Belize through marine conservation initiatives and socio-economic programs that help local fishermen to respond and adapt to actual and anticipated climatic effects.

### Business Model

Blue Ventures generates a considerable amount of revenue through Blue Ventures Expeditions (BVE), the business arm of the social enterprise. Volunteer diving expeditions run for 6-weeks and approximately USD 3,400. Around 75 volunteers per year have participated so far. The volunteer expeditions are marketed through the website and through google ads as well as university newsletters. The participating volunteers learn to dive, and conduct coral reef and fish monitoring. The data is used to inform local marine management about ecological changes due to climatic and anthropogenic stressors. Revenue from these expeditions contributes financial support to Blue Ventures Conservation (BVC), the charity arm of the social enterprise. Programmes within BVC focus not only on marine conservation, but also provide access to sexual and reproductive health care, scholarships for formal education, and introduce supplemental income opportunities to local communities.

Blue Ventures has supported 25 fishing communities in establishing the Indian Ocean's largest locally managed marine area (LMMA) along the southwest coast of Madagascar. In this area, people depend on fishing and reef gleaning for at least 85 % of their income. The LMMA called 'Velondriake' ('to live with the sea' in the local dialect) enables these communities to have management control over

the use of local marine and coastal resources. Governed by traditional village laws banning destructive fishing practices such as poison fishing and beach seining, the LMMA has proven to be effective in conserving marine ecosystems and benefits over 7,000 people.

### Partners

Blue Ventures is a not-for profit social enterprise founded in 2002 with headquarters in London, UK. Based on marine ecotourism, it works with isolated coastal communities to conserve threatened marine ecosystems, increase human wellbeing, and develop sustainable economic activities. In addition to revenues from its own ecotourism programmes, Blue Ventures receives funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Norwegian Development Agency NorgesVel, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Velondriake Association is governed through dina village – laws legalized by the state. Velondriake consists of 3 geographical regions. Each is run by an elected management body responsible for coastal management decision-making and enforcement within the LMMA. The three regional bodies are supervised by an elected management committee, which guides administration and stewardship of the protected area.

Other partners include Madagascar National Parks, the Marine Institute of Madagascar (IHSM), Population Services International (PSI), Marie Stopes International (MSI), and international environmental organizations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and Conservation International (CI).

On behalf of

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## Benefits

Blue Ventures fosters holistic adaptation to climate change by combining conservation and poverty alleviation efforts. LMMA activities are managed and supervised by local community representatives, and have resulted in clear economic and ecological benefits. Temporary octopus closures, for example, boost mean earnings by over USD 1,100 per village. Closures significantly increase the molluscs' weight while not harming octopus populations. Fishers also farm seaweed and sea cucumbers, which have, to date, brought in over USD 3,000 to participating households. The products are sold to a local exporter who can ensure a stable and frequent purchase.

The bans on destructive fishing practices have resulted in noticeably increased fish stocks in the area, which contribute to local income and food security. Blue Ventures also seeks to improve access to family planning and community health services, so that women and families can benefit from better health. In addition, Blue Ventures

has funded over 700 children to attend a local private school (at a cost of over USD 30,000 to date), and is expanding to include after-school mentoring. Education can open doors to occupations less dependent on tenuous natural resources and can result in higher incomes.

Blue Ventures also has plans to build a community Ecolodge, with profits going to support local conservation and development activities. The lodge will also serve as a training base for volunteers, housing and office space for staff, as well as a community meeting room for the Velondriake committee.

The success of Velondriake, and other programmes, has garnered attention from visiting fishers and conservation practitioners from other places in Madagascar, as well as from Mauritius, Kenya, Comoros, Tanzania and the Seychelles, who want to learn about community-led marine conservation from the fishing communities directly.

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