Rebuilding tropical fisheries with coastal communities
Blue Ventures today and tomorrow

“A model for everyone working to conserve the natural life-support systems of our troubled planet.”

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH
We rebuild tropical fisheries with coastal communities

Blue Ventures develops locally led approaches to marine conservation that benefit people and nature alike. By listening and responding to basic human needs, we design our models to catalyse and sustain marine conservation, unlocking the potential of coastal communities to manage their resources. We work in places where the ocean is vital to local cultures and economies, and are committed to advancing the rights of small-scale fishers throughout the coastal tropics.

500 million people worldwide depend on small-scale fisheries

>1 billion people worldwide rely on fish as a source of protein

90% of global fish stocks are either overfished or fully fished
Making marine conservation make sense

The need for effective marine conservation has never been greater. Yet time and again, conservation efforts break down because they are misaligned with the needs of coastal communities who depend on the sea for their survival.

Blue Ventures is dedicated to bridging the gap between communities and conservation by developing marine management models that yield rapid economic benefits for people, showing that effective conservation is in everyone’s interest.

We recognise the inextricable links between environmental degradation, food insecurity, lack of alternative livelihoods, poor health, unmet family planning needs, limited education, inadequate human rights and vulnerability to climate change. In response to these interconnected challenges, we have developed an effective approach integrating marine conservation with community health services and coastal livelihood initiatives.

We work from the grassroots, placing responsibility for fisheries management in the hands of local communities. This is particularly necessary in low-income countries, where there is often limited central capacity and infrastructure for marine management.

Our work plays a critical role in rebuilding coastal fisheries, empowering communities with the means to safeguard their futures, improving food security and building resilience to climate change whilst reversing marine biodiversity loss.
Our story started in 2003, surveying coral reefs in the Mozambique channel. Coastal communities in southern Madagascar were concerned about the decline of their fisheries, so we supported one village to close off a small section of its octopus fishing grounds for a few months to boost productivity. When the fishery was reopened, communities experienced a huge increase in octopus landings and fisher incomes.

As news of this remarkable fishery boom spread, neighbouring communities started copying the approach. Crucially, this sparked interest in more ambitious coastal management efforts, enabling us to create the country’s first locally managed marine area (LMMA) governed by a small network of fishing villages in 2006.

Since then, this temporary fishery closure model has been adopted along thousands of kilometres of Madagascar’s coastline, spawning a grassroots marine conservation revolution with >70 more LMMAs established to date. Today, 17.7% of the island’s seabed is managed by communities, for communities.

Our work is about much more than octopus. These experiences have guided our journey searching for new approaches to demonstrate that marine conservation can be in everyone’s interest, and that taking less from our ocean can give us much much more.
Innovation

Our strategy is to develop, scale and share high-impact models for marine conservation and fisheries management.

We have a proven track record of innovating transformative approaches for catalysing and sustaining locally led marine management. Our organisational culture is naturally dynamic and entrepreneurial, listening and responding to the needs of our partner communities, and reaching across the silos that typically constrain conservation practice.

We develop models from pilot through to proof of concept and subsequent replication, and pride ourselves on our ability to adapt and learn through prioritising feedback from our partner communities. We liken this strategy to the expanding spiralled chambers of a Nautilus shell, with programmes growing in scale through successive phases.

We currently manage a diverse portfolio of models across six core conservation programmes: temporary fishery closures; payment for mangrove ecosystem services; aquaculture enterprises; community-based reproductive health service delivery; education; and ecotourism businesses.

“Blue Ventures is uniquely positioned to drive innovation in the marine conservation sector. We have demonstrated that the right incentives can mobilise rather than alienate coastal communities, giving us new tools to scale and sustain marine conservation efforts.”

DR ALASDAIR HARRIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BLUE VENTURES
Achieving impact

We’re always learning. At every stage, we monitor and evaluate the impact and sustainability of our work in order to refine our models, and ensure cost effectiveness and scalability.

We’ve created the largest locally managed marine protected areas in the Indian Ocean, proven new models for community-led fisheries management, built sustainable aquaculture businesses, and developed effective, replicable approaches for integrating community health services with marine conservation. Our award-winning ecotourism social enterprise provides year-round sustainability and match funding to enhance the impact and stability of our field programmes.

Our models have guided national fisheries policy and been replicated by fishing communities, NGOs, businesses, donors and governments worldwide. So far our work has impacted the lives of over 240,000 coastal people.

Supporting partners

Once we’ve developed an effective model for catalysing or enhancing local marine protection, we collaborate with like-minded organisations to apply and adapt this approach in new geographies. We offer toolkits, training, technical advice, mentoring and learning exchanges to support our partners through every step of the process.

Whether it’s how to organise a temporary fishery closure to catalyse community engagement in marine conservation, or how to integrate reproductive health services with such initiatives to enhance women’s participation in environmental management efforts, we’re dedicated to supporting our partners to build on our experiences.
Supporting our pathway to scale

Our efforts to refine and drive adoption of these conservation catalyst models are growing exponentially, with over 200 staff positioned to support development and replication of our models worldwide. However, we’re currently seeking to build our core capacity in three key areas:

- **Programme development** to sustain our innovative models in the early stages of research and development
- **Monitoring and evaluation** to measure and demonstrate the impact of our models
- **Outreach** to drive and support the adoption of our models among partners; our **ultimate pathway to scale**

We’re looking for new strategic partners to support this growth. By investing in our work to help us achieve our fullest potential, strategic partners play a crucial role in driving progress towards our vision: reaching at least three million people across the world’s tropical coastal regions by 2020.
For further information or to discuss partnership opportunities please contact:

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