

blue ventures
beyond conservation

The community catalyst model

Sparking and sustaining locally led marine conservation





Making conservation make economic sense

Most marine conservation efforts fail. Declaring areas of ocean permanently off-limits to fishing all too often puts conservation at loggerheads with the needs of coastal communities, disenfranchising the people who depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. For many of the 1.4 billion people who live around our tropical coasts, forgoing fishing in protected areas represents too severe an economic sacrifice and too significant an opportunity cost.

Blue Ventures works with coastal communities to overcome this conservation commitment conundrum. We do this by introducing short-term closures of fishing grounds to boost catches, thus sparking and building enduring support for more ambitious management efforts that are led by communities, for communities. By returning meaningful economic benefits in timeframes that work for traditional fishers, our model inspires local leadership to protect marine biodiversity and improve food security.

Building lasting local support for marine conservation

Our journey to catalyse community conservation began more than a decade ago, in a remote corner of southwest Madagascar. Coastal communities in the region were concerned about the decline of their fisheries, so we supported one village to close a small part of their octopus fishing area for a few months, to see whether this might boost productivity.

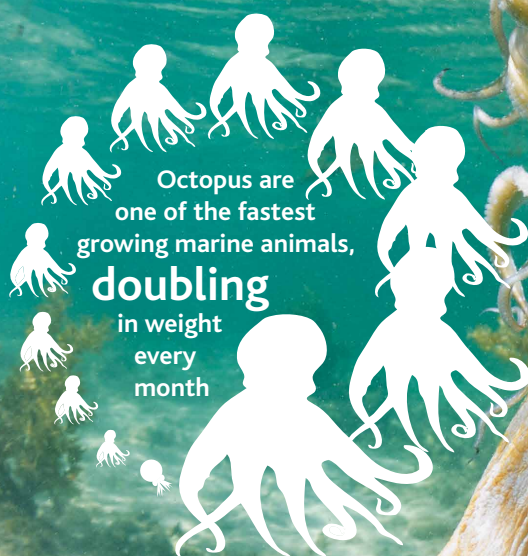
When the fishing ground reopened, communities saw dramatic increases in both octopus landings and fisher incomes. As news of this remarkable fishery boom spread, neighbouring communities started adopting this approach. Crucially, this sparked interest in more ambitious coastal management efforts, leading to the creation of the country's first locally managed marine area (LMMA), governed by a small network of fishing villages.

This use of short-term fishing ground closures as a point of entry for conservation has since gone viral along hundreds of kilometres of Madagascar's coastline, inspiring a grassroots marine management movement that has seen 65 LMMAs established to date, covering 11% of the island's seabed.

Short-term fishery closures increase catches and fisher incomes

Our research has shown that effectively managed short-term closures of octopus fishing grounds boost catches, increase fisher incomes, and build community engagement in broader marine management efforts.

We have analysed data from eight years of closures and found that **octopus landings increased by more than 700%** in the month following the lifting of a closure, **boosting the catch per fisher per day by almost 90%** over the same period. In the month after reopening, **village-level incomes more than doubled**, while communities experienced no significant loss of earnings during the closure period (Oliver et al, 2015).



“ Before we started doing octopus closures, we were only catching two or three octopus in a day, and some days we wouldn't catch any at all. When I was young we could catch eight, fifteen, even more, in a day. With the closures we make a small sacrifice, but we can still glean on other reefs, and after waiting we catch more octopus; the catch is good in the days after openings. I have more money for food and for my family. For these reasons, I want to continue with the octopus closures. ”

VELVETINE, 60 YEARS OLD, OCTOPUS GLEANER

Our impact

Our model has proven to be a transformative tool for engaging communities in marine management in Madagascar and beyond. It has informed new fisheries policy, and been applied to other fisheries (most recently mangrove crab and spiny lobster).

The approach has also been replicated by the neighbouring Mauritian island of Rodrigues (since 2012), and the Tanzanian island of Pemba (since 2015), with other countries and communities in preparation.

The grassroots movement inspired by this model has led to unprecedented national level support for marine conservation in Madagascar, with the President recently committing to triple the coverage of the country's marine protected areas, with a special emphasis on local governance.

A scaleable solution to a global problem

The unprecedented challenges facing small-scale fisheries and marine biodiversity are not limited to Madagascar and the Western Indian Ocean. Almost 1.4 billion people, mostly in developing countries, live in communities bordering tropical seas. This coastal population is expected to grow by 45% to 1.95 billion people by 2050. Developing nations are home to at least 97% of the world's fishers. These fisheries are a lifeline for families and economies, and underpin food security for entire nations.

So far our work has impacted the lives of more than 150,000 coastal people, but this is just the beginning. In collaboration with our many partners, our goal is to engage three million people in tropical coastal communities with this model by 2020. We believe that this is the scale required to drive systemic change, by creating a new paradigm in which marine conservation works for – rather than against – fishing communities.





We rebuild tropical fisheries with coastal communities

Blue Ventures works with coastal communities to develop transformative approaches for catalysing and sustaining locally led marine conservation.

We work in places where the ocean is vital to local cultures and economies, and are committed to protecting marine biodiversity in ways that benefit coastal people. Our conservation models are designed to demonstrate that effective management improves food security and makes economic sense.

Over the past decade, our innovations have guided national fisheries policy and been replicated by communities, NGOs, businesses, donors and government agencies along thousands of kilometres of coastline. So far our work has impacted the lives of more than 150,000 coastal people.

Working holistically

Blue Ventures recognises that improving fisheries management alone is not enough to overcome the numerous and interrelated drivers of marine environmental degradation.

Our programmes in Madagascar encompass locally led marine conservation, sustainable fisheries management, community-based aquaculture and ecotourism businesses, educational scholarships and reproductive health services.

This integrated approach addresses the interconnected challenges of poor health, unmet family planning needs, environmental degradation and food insecurity in a holistic way. It enables communities to manage their resources sustainably, both now and for the future.



Communities first

Above all, we listen to community needs, responding in a sensitive and pragmatic way for lasting benefits.



Passion & belief

Our mission is urgent and critical, we believe that our models work, and we are determined to get the job done.



Valued people & effective teams

We work in diverse and inclusive teams where all members have a voice and influence. We are effective because our work is integrated across teams and projects.



Innovation & courage

We are resourceful and creative. We are prepared to take risks and challenge broken paradigms.



Openness & humility

We are an open source social enterprise. We work in a transparent and collaborative way to pass on what we learn to others who share our vision and passion.



Grounded in evidence

We have high standards and are not afraid to be self-critical. If we see that something doesn't work, we change tack until we're on the right course.

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THE ST ANDREWS PRIZE
FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
Investec
Asset Management



EXCELL

THE
BUCKMINSTER
FULLER
CHALLENGE



Winner, Buckminster
Fuller Challenge, 2011

For work to protect
marine resources and
improve the livelihoods of
poor coastal communities
in Madagascar.



Observer Ethical Awards,
runner-up 2010.

Blue Ventures was commended
for creating the Indian Ocean's
first replicable blueprint for
community-centred marine and
coastal conservation planning.



Condé Nast Traveler
Environmental Award, 2009
For two decades, Condé
Nast Traveler has been
honouring environmental
visionaries around the
world who have found
innovative solutions to
seemingly intractable
problems.



Responsible Tourism
Awards 2004: highly
commended for
"Best in a Marine
Environment"



Responsible Tourism
Awards 2006: highly
commended for
"Best Volunteering
Organisation"



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Responsible
Tourism Awards
2010: Winner
for "Best
volunteering
organisation"



Ashoka &
National
Geographic
Geotourism
Challenge 2008:
finalist



Changemakers
& National
Geographic
Geotourism
Challenge 2010:
finalist



United Nations
SEED Award
2005: winner,
"Madagascar's
first experimental
community-run
MPA"



Entrepreneur
Young Brits 2005
& 2006: highly
commended,
"Social and
Environment"



United Nations
Development
Programme Equator
Prize 2006: The Village
of Andavadoaka,
winner (in partnership)



Skal Ecotourism
Awards 2006:
Winner, "General
Countryside"