

Rebuilding tropical fisheries with coastal communities





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



500 million
people worldwide
are supported by
small-scale fisheries

The conservation commitment conundrum

Marine conservation efforts often fail when short-term costs are perceived to outweigh future benefits, which may be uncertain. All too often, forgoing fishing in protected areas represents a severe economic sacrifice for coastal communities, and the promised 'spill-over' benefits of marine protection can be slow to accrue. As a result, conservation goals are often at loggerheads with local needs, disenfranchising traditional resource users.

Reconciling the interests of the conservation and fishing sectors requires new approaches that overcome the opportunity costs of surrendering fishing in a protected area, in timeframes that work for communities. Our models work by demonstrating that fisheries management can yield meaningful economic benefits for communities and seafood buyers, in realistic timescales. Only by making this connection can marine conservation be sustained and scaled beyond its current limited scope.

A critical coastal resource

Traditional small-scale fisheries are critical to the livelihoods and food security of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. However, marine ecosystems and the fisheries they support are facing unprecedented pressures from overfishing and climate change. 90% of global fish stocks are either overfished or fully fished.

Experience from around the world shows that managing fisheries and marine resources works best when responsibility is placed in the hands of local communities. This is particularly true in low-income countries, where there is often limited central capacity and infrastructure for fisheries management and conservation.

We empower coastal communities to manage their own resources, developing rights-based fisheries management plans aiming to sustain local fisheries and safeguard marine biodiversity.

Temporary fishery closures

Effective fishery management measures don't always have to be large-scale or long-term. Periodic, short-term fishery closures targeted at key species during periods of rapid growth in their life cycles can boost productivity, resulting in bigger catches and bigger incomes for fishers.

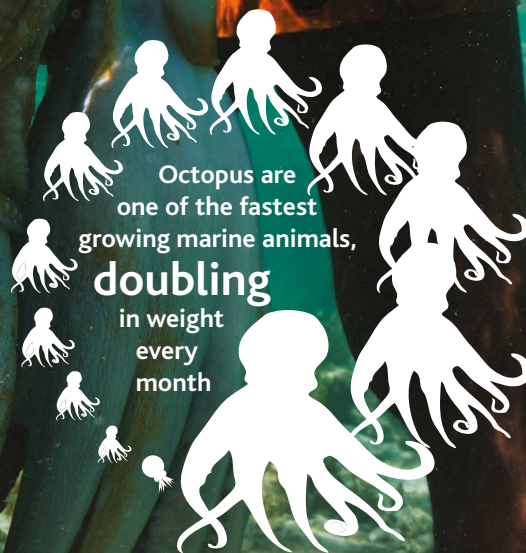
Octopus fisheries are a vitally important source of income for coastal communities throughout much of the western Indian Ocean, with the majority of catches sold and exported to overseas markets, predominantly in Europe.

In response to growing exploitation of octopus throughout this region, the past decade has seen a groundswell of grassroots efforts to improve the sustainability of stocks.

The short-term octopus fishery closure model involves periodic closures of a village's octopus gleaning grounds. At any given time, up to a quarter of a community's fishing area may be closed for around three months. This approach has been shown to result in dramatic increases in octopus landings and fisher incomes when closed areas are reopened to fishing (Oliver et al, 2015). It was first piloted in southern Madagascar in 2004, in collaboration with the *Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines* (IHSM) of the University of Toliara, the Ministry of Fisheries, seafood collection and export companies, and partner NGOs.

This model has since gone viral, inspiring a grassroots revolution in fisheries management which has seen more than 250 closures along the country's southern, western and northern coastlines to date. The approach benefits from broad support from the entire seafood supply chain, with fishers and buyers at pilot sites now contributing to the modest costs of establishing and managing the closures.

The success of this model has inspired new fisheries policy in Madagascar, and been replicated by the neighbouring Mauritian island of Rodrigues annually since 2012, and by communities on the Tanzanian island of Pemba in 2015.



98% of landed octopus caught in southwest Madagascar is sold immediately to commercial buyers

From reefs to mangroves

Adoption of this locally led approach to fisheries management continues to grow each year in Madagascar and beyond. The model has been adapted to other small-scale invertebrate fisheries, including mangrove crab in western Madagascar and spiny lobster on the southeast coast.

Following the success of fisheries management experiences from Madagascar and Mauritius over the past decade, we are now working to support communities, NGOs and fisheries partners to replicate this model throughout the region including in Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique and the Comoros.

Catalysing conservation

Temporary fishery closures are a powerful management tool that can demonstrate the economic benefits of sustainable fisheries management rapidly, to fishers and seafood buyers alike. By producing tangible benefits to coastal communities, this approach can build robust support for broader marine management initiatives.

Importantly, these closures are providing the catalyst for encouraging community engagement in ambitious marine conservation efforts, including the creation of permanent marine reserves, now established at a number of sites by communities in parallel with temporary fisheries closures to form locally managed marine areas (LMMAs).



250+

community-led temporary
fishery closures held in
Madagascar to date

65 LMMAs in Madagascar

>11,000km²

11% of Madagascar's
continental shelf



Empowering women

Octopus fishing is particularly important for women in Madagascar, who are able to glean on reef flats by foot using simple spears, yet rarely have the opportunity to participate in fisheries management meetings and formal decision-making processes.

We are working with local women's associations to address skills and training needs to enable women to become more active in fisheries management.

These women's groups also provide an ideal setting for discussing community health and reproductive rights issues as part of our holistic Population-Health-Environment (PHE) approach.



“Octopus gleaning is my livelihood. Fish stocks are decreasing but thanks to the reserves we are able to protect marine life, and there are more octopus now. If it wasn't for the reserves, there wouldn't be anything left for future generations, for our children.”

SOMBY, 24, MARRIED WITH THREE CHILDREN

Towards eco-certification

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) eco-label guarantees that a fishery is managed sustainably. This implies that the stock is not in decline, the fishery has no negative impacts on the environment, and an adequate management system is in place.

MSC eco-certification of the octopus fishery of southwest Madagascar would attract international interest in this fishery, further strengthen sustainable management practices, and potentially generate larger economic benefits for fishers and exporters.

The octopus fishery of southwest Madagascar has undergone a pre-assessment for MSC certification and is currently implementing a Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) to reach the standards required to apply for full certification as a sustainable fishery. This FIP involves all stakeholders (fishers, the IHSM of the University of Toliara, the Ministry of Fisheries, seafood collection and export companies, and partner NGOs) working together to improve the fishery.

These partners meet quarterly, as the *Comité de Gestion de la Pêche aux Poulpes* (CGP) platform in the regional capital of Toliara, to take all decisions necessary for the proper management of the fishery.

Championing fairer fishing

We work on behalf of traditional fishing communities to promote a rights-based approach to fisheries management.

We advocate for fairer, healthier and more sustainable fisheries, to benefit marine life and the hundreds of millions of coastal people that depend on fishing.

Our research has demonstrated the critical role that small-scale fisheries play in underpinning the livelihoods and food security of some of the world's poorest communities (Barnes-Mauthe et al, 2013). Our analyses of EU fisheries agreements in the Indian Ocean have drawn global attention to the need for a more equitable basis for north-south industrial fisheries agreements (Le Manach et al, 2012).

We are working with the MSC to help small-scale fishery managers in the developing world introduce fisheries improvement projects, bringing market incentives for sustainable fishing to some of the hardest to reach coastal communities. We are also working with the Sea Around Us project to help governments develop strategies to improve awareness of the importance of small-scale fisheries.



EU countries pay
<3% of the landed
value of catches to
access Madagascar's
fishing grounds





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.

blue ventures

beyond conservation

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



For further information or to discuss partnership opportunities, please contact:



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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 in a Marine Environment"



Responsible Tourism Awards 2007: highly commended for "Best in a Marine Environment"



Responsible Tourism Awards 2008: highly commended for "Best in a Marine Environment"



Responsible Tourism Awards 2009: highly commended for "Best in a marine environment"



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 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"