

# 30 x 30 and traditional fishing communities

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The best way to protect nature is to protect the human rights of those who live among it and depend upon it.



**7.6%** global ocean protected

**3x Africa** size of new ocean areas needed to meet 30% target

**Zero** Aichi protection targets met

## Background

30 x 30 is an ambitious new goal to protect 30% of the planet by 2030. Large nonprofits and governments all over the world have endorsed it. The G7 group of wealthy nations has backed it. When the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity meet in China in 2022 to discuss the future of conservation, it is 30x30 that is likely to top their agendas.

If enacted, 30x30 would be the most extensive aquatic governance project in human history – requiring an additional area of ocean that is almost three times larger than Africa<sup>1</sup>. Such an unprecedented scaling of conservation efforts brings several challenges, opportunities and trade-offs that will need thorough consideration by coastal states. There are enormous practical difficulties in putting 30x30 into practice effectively and potentially widespread negative consequences to local communities and Indigenous peoples from doing so.

Blue Ventures is a conservation organisation. We recognise the critical importance of increasing ocean protection. And we believe that conservation led by communities, for communities, is the only viable pathway to protection of our coastal seas at scale.

## Key opportunities

### 1. Properly protected areas are a cornerstone of conservation and sustainable fisheries

When properly managed and funded, protected areas can create win-wins for people and nature alike, replenishing fisheries and strengthening local livelihoods <sup>2</sup>. They are one of the most valuable tools we have to combat climate breakdown, coastal poverty and the damaging effects of industrial fishing. We urgently need more of them, and we urgently need to make sure existing areas live up to their promise. A 30x30 anchored in community-led conservation offers an unparalleled opportunity to achieve this.

### 2. Most nature exists where local communities and Indigenous peoples live

Local communities and Indigenous peoples manage or hold tenure over lands containing 80% of the world's biodiversity <sup>3</sup>. Along tropical coastlines, they govern or oversee areas of seabed covering tens of thousands of square kilometres <sup>4</sup>. They have often proved to be better stewards of these lands and fishing grounds than governments <sup>5,6</sup>.

### 3. A Paris moment for nature

Biodiversity loss and climate change are two sides of an unevenly weighted coin. We need to address both crises urgently, but climate change has historically received significantly more attention and financing, even more so since the 2015 Paris Agreement <sup>7</sup>. 30x30 offers the chance to create a "Paris moment" for nature, rallying the world around a simple, clear target, and dramatically increasing funding and support for conservation efforts.

### 4. Appetite for change

While the conservation sector has historically been linked with human rights abuses, recent decades have seen a broader move away from exclusionary conservation in favour of participatory approaches. Though far from universal, effective and scalable models of community-based conservation do exist and are becoming more common. These are one of the key ways of securing rights, enriching local livelihoods and sustaining a healthy planet for generations to come.

## Key challenges

### 1. An ugly past

Over the last century, millions of people have been forced from their lands and fishing grounds in the name of conservation, often violently<sup>8</sup>. The pace of expulsion has slowed in recent years as conservationists have started to appreciate that Indigenous peoples and local communities can be their allies rather than adversaries, but conservation refugees continue to be created<sup>9</sup>. The “no people allowed” baggage of traditional fortress conservation is hard to shed, and as such, any attempt to highly or fully protect 30% of the planet risks more of the same: more violations of fundamental human rights, more conflict, more violence, with these impacts falling disproportionately on those who are the most marginalised and least responsible for the biodiversity crisis.

### 2. A poor track record

30x30 isn't the first global plan to save nature. In 2011, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed on 20 nature protection targets, covering everything from tackling pollution to protecting coral reefs. That plan was a complete failure: none of the targets were met, and only six were partially achieved. In the rush to create more protected areas, speed trumped quality. Many of the protected areas established are paper parks, and lack the financing, management, local engagement and enforcement they need to deliver the promised biological and societal benefits.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Different views on 30%

30x30 means different things to different people. The Campaign for Nature, leading the 30x30 initiative, suggests that all conservation efforts should have outcomes that are at least equivalent to highly or fully protected areas. However, many of the international conservation NGOs and governments supportive of 30x30 have differing views, with some calling for *complete bans on fishing in all protected areas*<sup>\*</sup>. This latter view is stricter and likely to lead to more negative outcomes for Indigenous peoples and local communities.

### 4. No seat at the international table

Indigenous peoples and local communities are not recognised as parties to the CBD. They're allowed to attend the talks, but only as observers, without voting rights. Yet 30x30 stands no chance of success without widespread support from these communities, and may be actively harmful to them.

<sup>\*</sup> E.g <https://www.oceanunite.org/30-x-30/>

## Our position

**Blue Ventures believes that the best way to protect nature is to protect the human rights of those who live among it and depend upon it.** The draft Global Biodiversity Framework – with its 30x30 target – calls for transformational change but is light on the specifics of how this might be achieved. For 30x30 to be equitable, effective and successful, it is critical to enact the following eight commitments.

### Defend the rights of communities

#### 1. Secure tenure for all

Recognise and respect the title, tenure, access, and resource rights to land and ocean. Adhere to and uphold international agreements and norms, including the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

#### 2. A chance to say no

Recognise that Free, Prior and Informed Consent means respecting the rights of communities and Indigenous peoples to *not* participate in the 30x30 process and *not* have their territories designated as OECMs or protected areas.

#### 3. A global commitment to justice

Explicitly commit within the Framework to ensuring that the burdens and benefits arising from protection are shared justly and equitably, so that the earth's most vulnerable people are not disproportionately afflicted. Recognise and protect human rights in general as well as the specific rights of particular groups such as women and youth.

#### 4. Transparency and accountability

For protected areas where there is a high degree of government involvement and a strict level of protection, establish open and robust grievance mechanisms to resolve tenure disputes and ensure community voices are heard and elevated at the international level. Require robust, internationally recognised human rights safeguards and accountability mechanisms. Require protected area authorities to report publicly on these dimensions and tie continued funding to performance.

## Champion community-led conservation

We must explicitly recognise Indigenous peoples and local communities as primary decision makers in conservation efforts. We must develop a robust monitoring framework that includes fine-grain human rights-focused indicators. Our overarching vision needs to be long-term sustainable solutions that balance prosperity and protection, benefiting people and nature alike.

### 5. 100% community stewardship of near-shore waters

Billions of people live along tropical coastlines. Their waters make up 6% of the world's oceans yet support far more species than those further offshore. Ensure that Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs) are the default mechanisms for conservation in these waters and network them together – ecologically and socially – to maximise benefits for people and nature alike. Strive to make 30% of individual areas highly protected, particularly where they cover key habitats. Recognise that conservation is about less destruction as well as more protection – establish community-driven exclusion zones across all suitable areas of coastal waters to help counteract threats like destructive industrial fishing.

### 6. More innovative, community funding

Develop and implement sustainable & flexible long-term funding for community-based initiatives like LMMAs and OECMs at regional and national levels. Make use of innovative approaches to channel funds directly to local organisations and community associations. Recognise the potential of LMMAs and OECMS to achieve lasting conservation outcomes, but also the reality that they don't always work and are not ambitious enough. Tie funding to performance.

### 7. Simpler legal frameworks

Streamline and simplify legal frameworks at national levels for community-based initiatives like LMMAs and share best practice globally through learning networks.

### 8. Better small-scale fisheries management and data

Transform access to information and empower communities to adaptively manage and rebuild their fisheries through digital data collection, analysis and reporting. Increase ambition and support for basic skills, training and market information to reduce spoilage and losses, improve quality and earn fairer prices.

Ultimately, 30x30 is unrivalled opportunity to halt biodiversity loss, safeguard human rights, and put the world's oceans on a pathway to sustainability. But it can only succeed if it emphasises the primacy of human rights, and puts communities first. Only a community-led 30x30 can ensure the fundamental rights aren't extinguished and equity

isn't undermined in the rush to deliver the additional conservation our ocean so badly needs. Only a community-led 30x30 can benefit people and nature alike, delivering sustainable fisheries, vibrant oceans, and improved food security for over a billion people.

## References

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## Find out more

Blue Ventures is a marine conservation organisation that puts people first. We support coastal fishers in remote and rural communities to rebuild fisheries, restore ocean life and build lasting pathways to prosperity.

Our work began two decades ago in Madagascar's remote coastal communities and is growing globally.

Across a dozen countries, we're partnering with traditional fishers and community organisations to design, scale, strengthen and sustain fisheries management and conservation at the community level.

We bring partners together in networks to advocate for reform, and share tools and best practices to support fishing communities across the globe.

To learn more about our advocacy work, visit

[blueventures.org/advocacy](https://blueventures.org/advocacy)

You can email us at [info@blueventures.org](mailto:info@blueventures.org). We'll get back to you within 48 hours, but if you don't hear from us, please give us a call on +44 (0)117 3144 661

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