



Thriving
FISHERS

Thriving
OCEANS

Blue Ventures
2021-2025

Strategy, January 2021

Executive summary

www.blueventures.org

Blue Ventures Conservation, Charity No. 1098893
Company No. 04660959 (England and Wales)

blue ventures
beyond conservation

Our values



COMMUNITIES FIRST

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



INNOVATION & COURAGE

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



PASSION & BELIEF

Our mission is urgent and critical, we believe that our approach works, and we're 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.



GROUNDING IN EVIDENCE

We have high standards and aren't afraid to be self-critical. If something doesn't work, we change track until we're on the right course.



OPENNESS AND HUMILITY

We work in a transparent and collaborative way to share what we learn.

Helping coastal communities to thrive by rebuilding fisheries and protecting ocean life

Blue Ventures is a marine conservation organisation that exists to protect life in our ocean. We were founded on the simple idea of putting communities at the heart of conservation.

For almost two decades, we've supported coastal communities to develop locally led approaches to marine conservation that benefit people and nature alike.

By listening and responding to the needs of coastal communities, we've developed a scalable model for catalysing and sustaining marine conservation, unlocking the potential of fishing communities to protect our ocean.

Our ocean has never been so vital, nor so threatened. It drives climate and weather, supplies oxygen for all and protein for many. Yet it is under assault from all sides. Overfishing, pollution, and climate breakdown.

These issues are changing the ocean in ways we've never seen before. These issues are changing the ocean in ways we've never seen before. They're draining our oceans of life, and threatening the fish stocks that provide food for billions and livelihoods for hundreds of millions.

Time and again, efforts to tackle the ocean emergency break down because they fail to address the needs – and protect the rights – of coastal communities. Yet these are the communities with the most to lose from collapsing fisheries, and the most to gain from conservation success.

By engaging and mobilising the small-scale fishers that live alongside – and depend upon – our oceans, we're showing that effective ocean stewardship delivers benefits for people and nature alike.

We believe that fixing overfishing is the single most powerful thing we can do to overcome the ocean emergency. And we believe that humanity's overwhelming dependence on our oceans is the solution that has been hiding in plain sight.

There are hundreds of millions of traditional fishers in remote, rural and urban communities around the world. With the right support, they can fundamentally reshape our relationship with our oceans. They can rebuild their fisheries, strengthen their livelihoods and improve their food security. They can restore ocean life and sustain healthy environments for generations to come.



After two decades of supporting fishing communities in some of the poorest countries on Earth, this has become the cornerstone of Blue Ventures' mission.

Blue Ventures' work is about much more than fishing. We work at the juncture of human rights, marine conservation and food security to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and environmental degradation.

Our 2025 strategy presents a roadmap for optimising fishing for nature, communities and food; not just for production and profit. We believe that together, our model and scaling strategy hold the power to drive locally led conservation movements across entire coastlines.

Our strategy represents the most effective and immediate way that we can help coastal communities respond to climate breakdown, and counter the injustices they increasingly face.

Given the scale of threats facing our oceans today, the impact we deliver over the next five years will be the most important work of our lives. Never has our mission mattered more.



Our model and pathway to scale

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



Sir David
Attenborough

Our strategy is built around serving fishers through local institutions that fully represent them. Supporting these institutions is an efficient way to deliver services, reach scale and address the failures of traditional 'top down' conservation.

We support fishers with an effective model for rebuilding their fishery, and with infrastructure so that this model can be expanded to the scale of fisheries. Where there is a need, we also facilitate partnerships with specialist organisations who can meet the critical human development needs of under-served communities.

A model that delivers what fishers need

Fishers are faced with a complex, wicked problem for which there is no single solution. Nearshore fisheries and marine ecosystems collapse because of four drivers which reinforce each other through feedback loops:

- 1. Nearshore fisheries are open access,** with multiple and often conflicting users. Fishers are often excluded from traditional fishing grounds by outside interests such as industrial fishing, aquaculture and coastal infrastructure.
- 2. Over-exploitation and over-capacity,** with growing numbers of fishers competing over dwindling stocks.

3. Scarcity — uncertain and fluctuating fishing income. Many fishers are fishing to survive, so can't absorb the opportunity cost of conservation — for example, while they might recognise the value of marine reserves, they don't have the savings or cash to see them through the temporary closure of a fishery or putting in place a reserve.

4. Opaque, inefficient and unfair supply chains. Most small-scale fishers act as simple harvesters of biomass underpinning long and complex supply chains. These tend to suffer from high post-harvest losses (i.e., spoiled fish) and rarely give fishers fair access to lucrative markets. Fishers need to catch more to compensate for low prices and high waste. Fishing communities have no control over external markets, which can drive overfishing and undermine local management.

Our simple model is a holistic response that coherently addresses these underlying causes of overfishing. It moves fishers from a position of scarcity to one of stability and security, where they are able to manage for the long term.

It changes the lives of traditional fishermen and women by supporting them to secure tenure to their fishing grounds, creating a space for fishers to use a collective voice to defend their rights, and empowering them to restore and safeguard their marine life.



Healthy oceans yield greater fisheries catches and higher returns, giving fishers a more secure source of food and better income. Because our model recognises at each step how important women are in small-scale fisheries, it uplifts them as fishers, processors, traders and guardians of marine biodiversity.

The model has four parts, each a link in a chain. Without one, fishers will still face high barriers to rebuilding fisheries and protecting marine life.

1. **Secure tenure:** securing small-scale fishers' rights to access, use and manage traditional fishing grounds and stocks — their most important asset.
2. **Community-based fisheries management:** collective management of their asset, supported by participatory monitoring as a basis for science-based limits on harvests, as well as fishery closures, bans on destructive practices, and strong monitoring and enforcement by fishers.
3. **Fisher grants, savings and loans:** providing fishers with the cash means to overcome the upfront costs of effective fisheries management and conservation. Stabilising income and increasing savings so that fishers have the margin of manoeuvre to undertake management.
4. **Better return on fishing:** providing basic skills, training and market information to reduce spoilage and losses, improve quality and earn better prices, so fishers can earn better, lose less, and meet household needs for food and income at sustainable catches.

Our 2025 model



1

Secure tenure



Community-based
fisheries management

2



3

Fisher grants, savings
and loans



Better return on fishing

4



OUR MODEL IS
UNDERPINNED BY
ROBUST DATA.

WE PROVIDE COMMUNITIES
AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS
WITH THE DIGITAL
TOOLS AND ACTIONABLE
INFORMATION THEY NEED TO
FULLY LEVERAGE ITS POWER.

DATA, COLLECTED BY
FISHERS THEMSELVES,
**GUIDES LOCALLY LED
CONSERVATION ON
THE WATER.**



Working holistically

BV is a marine conservation organisation, not a livelihoods, health or education charity. But in certain contexts these needs and basic rights are unmet, deepening poverty, exacerbating the pressure on ocean resources and making conservation all but impossible.

We partner with specialists to ensure these services are delivered. By supporting these partners with our existing logistics, we make it viable for them to service remote and sparse populations. These include education, waste management, clean water, community health and family planning.

Operating at scale

To succeed, local actions have to be scaled across entire fisheries, fish stocks and seascapes, often extending hundreds of kilometres, and including hundreds of fishing communities.

Community conservation needs modest, flexible and sustained financing to start up and mature, but few initiatives can meet the conditions of funders because of their size and capacity. Funders themselves need to channel money to organisations who can use it most effectively, but face prohibitive transaction costs and high risks in putting money into local organisations.

Blue Ventures addresses these challenges by working as a central support platform and funder, enabling promising local organisations (from individual community groups to larger national NGOs) to take up our model.

Our scaling strategy provides the support infrastructure – fisher networks, data, finance and learning platforms – that local efforts need to thrive, so that local marine conservation using our model can reach scale.

Democratising data and funding

Our fully participatory methods democratise access to fisheries data and ground conservation in evidence everywhere we work. Aggregated, locally owned data can help communities engage more fairly with seafood markets, and advocate for legislation that secures local rights to fisheries.

We provide sustained, flexible funding and timely data support through central funds and data hubs that are able to serve local actors at a scale of seascapes.

Our approach also anchors local initiatives in larger management frameworks and peer support networks, linking local actions together to form greater networks, with increased visibility and influence to engage decision makers in policy reform.

Our field delivery is through sustained technical extension embedded in local organisations, sharing skills and building local leadership. The networked support infrastructure we build provides local organisations with the assistance they need to thrive, enabling local marine conservation to reach scale with an aggregated impact.

This approach to accelerating and scaling our impact is a pragmatic and powerful way to restore and protect marine life at the pace and scale demanded by our ocean emergency, decoupling the growth of our impact from the size of our own organisation's footprint.

Our data systems provide a transparent and equitable infrastructure to connect funders with high impact local conservation initiatives at an unprecedented global scale of thousands of communities across the coastal tropics, and at a resolution of individual catches within each partner community.

To fund impact at a scale commensurate with the environmental breakdown coastal communities are facing, we have established a Frontline Climate Fund. This is creating a new mechanism for efficiently channelling climate finance to the people who need it most and who can most efficiently spend it – coastal communities.



OUR FULLY PARTICIPATORY
METHODS **DEMOCRATISE**
ACCESS TO FISHERIES
DATA AND GROUND
CONSERVATION IN
EVIDENCE EVERYWHERE
WE WORK.



Advocating for change

We recognise that rebuilding fisheries and restoring ocean life is much bigger than one organisation alone, and are proud to be part of a growing global movement to build resilient oceans and uplift traditional fishing communities.

It's a movement with fishers at its centre, that gives them a collective voice and influence to defend and promote their rights, mobilise wider civil society and inspire dialogue with governments on policy reform.

Together, we're championing a new vision for marine conservation, one that moves beyond arbitrary protection targets like 30x30, and seeks to achieve conservation goals while securing food security and small-scale fishing livelihoods.

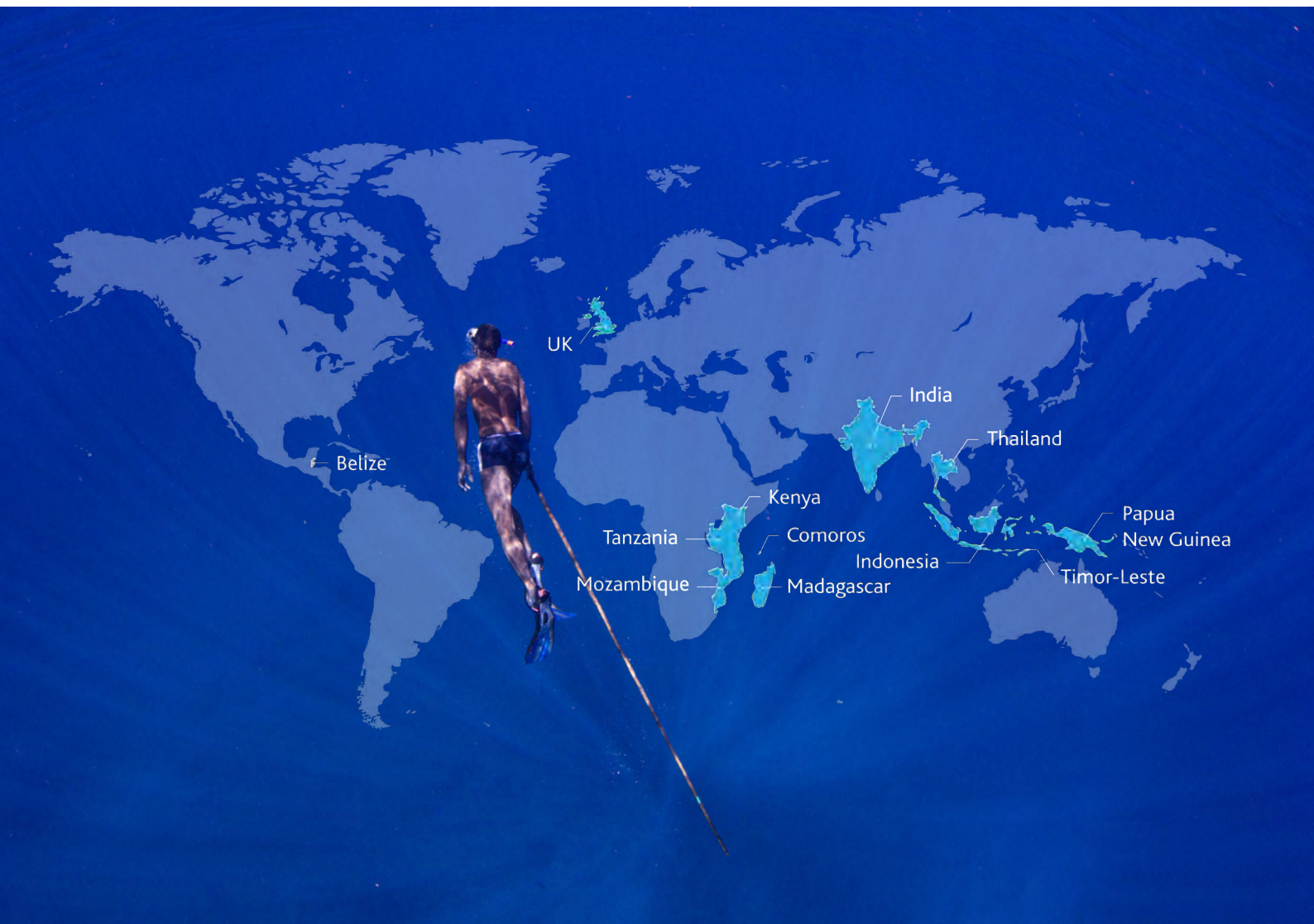
Over the next five years, we're committed to five main priorities to defend the rights of traditional fishers and safeguard marine life long into the future.

1. Exclusive rights to nearshore seas for small-scale fishers.
2. An end to destructive industrial fishing in nearshore waters.
3. Promoting gender equality in fisheries management, raising the voices of girls and women fishers at national and global levels and advocating for more seats at the decision-making table.
4. Redirecting harmful fishing subsidies to support equitable and sustainable small-scale fisheries.
5. Greater national and international transparency in fisheries based on international standards.

Where

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 are currently reaching more than 663,000 people, who are collectively managing over 16,000 km² of coast and ocean. Our strategy focuses on accelerating our expansion in the southeast Asian archipelagos and the Western Indian Ocean, with priority regions identified through a multicriteria hotspot analysis. We are also initiating exploratory partnerships in West Africa and the Bay of Bengal.



Our 2025 vision

1.5M



People living in low income coastal communities supported with the rights and tools to rebuild their fisheries

20



Countries where we work side-by-side with local partners to strengthen local marine management and restore ocean life

3M



People benefiting from secure fishing grounds where destructive industrial fishing is banned





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