

Population, Health and Environment

Making the connections, sustaining real change

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

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



What is PHE?

'Population, Health and Environment' is an innovative and fast-growing approach to conservation and development. Its success lies in delivering an integrated portfolio of projects that reflect the inextricable links between humans, their health and the environment.

PHE programmes address the interconnected challenges of poor health, unmet family planning needs, environmental degradation, food insecurity, gender inequality and vulnerability to climate change in a holistic way.

Integrating family planning services and health education with conservation and sustainable livelihood activities generate synergies that result in the more effective achievement of both health and environmental objectives, producing greater impacts than if either issue were tackled in isolation.

Combining health and conservation messages broadens community engagement, for example, by informing men about family planning and involving women in natural resource management. This integration also maximises cost efficiency by allowing the sharing of resources and skills between projects.

In short, the PHE approach empowers couples to make their own reproductive health choices and equips them with the skills to manage their resources sustainably. This allows them to plan and better provide for their families, strengthening local conservation efforts and enabling them to create their own paths out of poverty.





The interconnected challenges in Madagascar

Madagascar is one of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots, with a spectacular array of endemic and endangered species. It also has one of the world's fastest growing human populations, with an average fertility rate of almost 5 births per woman.

The southwest coast of Madagascar supports the third largest coral reef system in the world. This region is home to semi-nomadic fishing people, the Vezo, whose livelihoods and cultural identity are intimately tied to the sea.

Due to a severe lack of access to reproductive health services in this isolated region, the fertility rate is even higher than the national average at nearly 7 births per woman. This is largely due to unmet family planning needs, and impacts negatively on maternal and child health.

With the population doubling every 10-15 years, Vezo communities are finding it increasingly difficult to catch enough fish to feed their growing families. Overfishing combined with destructive fishing practices pose significant threats to the extensive coral reefs and other marine habitats upon which their livelihoods depend.

The PHE approach offers these coastal communities a way of living more healthily and sustainably with their marine environment, building social and ecological resilience to climate change.

Our work in Madagascar

Blue Ventures has been running a PHE programme in the Velondriake area of southwest Madagascar since 2007, and has replicated this approach further north along the coast in Belo sur Mer from 2013.

Alongside our ongoing marine conservation and sustainable livelihoods initiatives, we now provide health services across 50 villages, delivered through a network of local women trained as community-based distributors of contraceptives. Our rights-based approach to family planning offers couples the information and means to freely choose the number and spacing of their births.

We have also developed a diverse range of integrated community education activities to promote sustained behaviour change. These include radio programmes, interactive village meetings, youth club sessions and school workshops using theatre, sports, music, film and social marketing to engage children, youth, men and women in a variety of conservation and health topics.

Our fully integrated PHE approach encompasses:

- Locally-led marine conservation
- Sustainable fisheries management
- Aquaculture enterprises
- Community education and capacity building
- Sexual, reproductive, maternal and child health services
- Water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives

Our impact

- The proportion of women using contraception in Velondriake increased more than fivefold from **10% to 55%** between 2007 and 2013, while the general fertility rate fell by over a third
- Every three months we **reach over 5,000** people through educational tours that engage children, youth, men and women in a variety of integrated conservation and health topics
- **More than 80%** of the population in Velondriake now appreciate the links between reproductive health, family size, food security and sustainable natural resource management



About us

Blue Ventures rebuilds tropical fisheries with the poorest coastal communities by developing transformative approaches for nurturing and sustaining locally-led marine conservation.

We work in places where the ocean is vital to local cultures and economies, and where this a fundamental need to support human development.

We have created the largest locally managed marine areas in the Indian Ocean, catalysed a sea change in sustainable fisheries management, established successful aquaculture and ecotourism businesses, and pioneered integrated approaches for addressing community health needs.

Our dedicated team of conservationists, marine scientists, development specialists, medical professionals, researchers and social entrepreneurs work together with the poorest coastal communities to tackle the challenge of marine conservation in all of its complexity.



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 Volunteering Organisation"



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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"



Enterprising 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"