



Dr Vik Mohan,
Blue Ventures
Conservation

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CONSERVATION

A holistic approach to integrating community-based health services with local biodiversity conservation initiatives, which empowers local communities in southwest Madagascar to protect their marine environment and manage their resources sustainably.

This innovative model improves food security, enables better provision for families and boosts local conservation efforts by allowing populations to achieve a more sustainable balance with the rich marine ecosystems upon which their livelihoods depend.

Along Madagascar's southwest coast, semi-nomadic Vezo fishing people face extremely limited access to basic health services, with clinics located up to 50 kilometres from some villages. Blue Ventures is addressing this challenge by training female community health workers to offer voluntary counselling in the community, supported by a wide-ranging programme of community education.

The programme co-ordinates with their biodiversity conservation initiatives and engages men and women in sustainable fisheries management, which over the past decade have established some of the largest locally-run marine protected areas in Madagascar. Alongside these conservation and health initiatives, Blue Ventures is also pioneering community-based aquaculture enterprises that diversify coastal livelihoods, thus reducing dependence on fishing.

Currently involving 20,000 people living in 50 of Madagascar's poorest and most isolated coastal villages, there is a huge need to take this integrated approach to scale with other communities and ecosystems.

To address this need, a network of health and conservation agencies is being convened to work in some of Madagascar's most biodiverse and under-served areas, to explore opportunities for scaling-up this inter-disciplinary model through cross-sector partnerships.

Winning The St Andrews Prize for the Environment provides a vital boost to this work, supporting their ongoing efforts to drive broader adoption of their integrated model:

- Showcasing the value of this approach to the international conservation community.
- Supporting partners to replicate this approach in critical biodiversity hotspots elsewhere in Madagascar and the east Africa region.
- Enabling Blue Ventures to expand this work among communities living in the Barren Isles archipelago, as part of an ambitious conservation initiative working to establish the Indian Ocean's largest community-managed marine protected area.

'We are thrilled that The St Andrews Prize for the Environment is highlighting our inter-disciplinary model as a pragmatic solution to supporting environmental conservation and community education in one of the world's most critical biodiversity hotspots,' says Dr Vikas Mohan, Medical Director of Blue Ventures Conservation.

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THE ST ANDREWS PRIZE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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