



PRESS RELEASE

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2014 ST ANDREWS PRIZE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT \$150,000 USD IN PRIZE AWARDS

THIS YEAR'S WINNER – Blue Ventures Conservation Madagascar: An integrated approach to conservation

An innovative project empowering local communities in southwest Madagascar to protect their marine environment and manage their resources sustainably by integrating holistic community-based health services within local biodiversity conservation initiatives has won this year's St Andrews Prize for the Environment.

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' project addresses this by training female community health workers to offer voluntary counselling and health services in the community, supported by a wide-ranging programme of community education. The project coordinates closely with marine conservation and coastal livelihood initiatives engaging women in octopus fisheries management, and sea cucumber farming.

This integrated model allows better provision for families; improves food security, empowers women and boosts local conservation efforts.

At a ceremony in the University of St Andrews today, Vikas Mohan representing the Blue Ventures Conservation team was presented with the winning prize of \$100,000 USD. Vikas says: 'I am delighted with this win. It will enable us to undertake a rigorous process evaluation of our programmes and also provide funding to replicate this integrated approach on and around the Barren Isles Archipelago where we are supporting the formation of one of the largest marine protected areas in the western Indian Ocean.'

The St Andrews Prize for the Environment is an environmental initiative by the University of St Andrews, which attracts scholars of international repute and carries out world-class teaching and research, and independent exploration and production company ConocoPhillips.

Sir Crispin Tickell, Chairman of the St Andrews Prize for the Environment Trustees, says: 'This is the 16th award of the prize and we are delighted to have been able to support yet another empowering and innovative project that will make a huge difference locally to the knowledge and livelihood of rural communities. We aim to find and reward entrepreneurs with original and practical ideas for coping with specific environmental problems. I am confident that this year's winner will use their award funding to drive their specific training and educational efforts where it will reap the maximum of benefit for those concerned.'

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This year's runners-up who were each presented with a cheque for \$25,000 USD were:

- **Inga Foundation: Land for life programme**, which aims to create sustainable rural livelihoods in tropical areas across the world. The project provides farmers with hands-on training, Inga tree seeds and ongoing support to enable them to establish alley-cropping upon their land. This initiative creates a sustainable rural livelihood for farmers and their families, providing them with food security and the ability to grow cash-crops.
- **Reef Check: Empowering local communities to improve reef health**, which is a worldwide project that trains coastal community members, including fishermen, to scientifically survey the health of coral reefs and to create non-extractive businesses that can provide a higher income than fishing. So far, Reef Check has trained thousands of volunteers to survey over 4,000 reefs in 90 tropical countries and has helped set up many ecologically sound and economically sustainable marine protected areas.

To mark the significance of 15 years of the Prize, previous winners were welcomed back to St Andrews this year where they delivered a public lecture entitled **'Eight people who are changing the world'**. In this session they explained how winning the Prize has helped their work and how their projects have developed and progressed.

As part of the prize programme, a further public lecture was given by Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge on Wednesday, 30 April entitled **'Beyond £s: Valuing the things that really matter'**.

Professor Louise Richardson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of St Andrews says: 'Global warming and the finite nature of fossil fuels together present one of the greatest threats to the 21st century. At the University of St Andrews, we are working to address this threat both locally and internationally, on a theoretical and practical level; with ground-breaking research in this field, the creation of a six-turbine wind farm and the development of a centre of renewable energy. The St Andrews Prize for the Environment is a natural progression of this effort, allowing the University to honour and support the bright ideas that have the potential to translate into world-changing action.'

David Chenier, President UK for ConocoPhillips adds: 'Through our involvement with The St Andrews Prize for the Environment, we can understand some of the issues faced over a wide spectrum of communities as we work with groups on the development of new technology, ideas and solutions that will all ultimately create a path to a more secure and sustainable environment for future generations. The forum lets us directly recognise those people who make a difference with their innovative ideas. It also gives our people the opportunity to be involved in the development and sustainability of these life-changing projects.'

Further details about this year's projects and a full list of the winners supported over the past 15 years can be found at www.thestandrewsprize.com.

Since its launch in 1998, The St Andrews Prize for the Environment has attracted entries on topics as diverse as sustainable development in the Amazon and Central American rainforests, urban re-generation, recycling, health and water issues and renewable energy.

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