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Blue Nature Alliance to Expand and Improve the Conservation of 1.25 billion Hectares of Ocean Ecosystems

GEFID#: 10375, GEF Agency: Conservation International, Project Status: Active



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Briefly describe what you consider to be the top three quantifiable results of the project to date.

1. To date, the Blue Nature Alliance is actively implementing in 1.24 billion hectares of ocean ecosystems with targets reached in just under 7 million hectares of ocean ecosystems.
2. The Blue Nature Alliance has developed a robust Code of Conduct to guide its work, which has been integrated into rigorous safeguards process deployed at all Blue Nature Alliance supported engagements.
3. The Blue Nature Alliance continues to support research pertaining to the integration of human dimensions and social equity into the planning and practice of ocean conservation at scale.

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE

To catalyze the conservation of 1.25 billion hectares of ocean ecosystems, to safeguard biodiversity, help build resilience to climate change, **promote human well-being**, and enhance ecosystem connectivity and function.

PROCESS

The Blue Nature Alliance recognizes that we, as well as many of our partners, have room to improve in integrating the human dimensions into our ocean conservation efforts. As a result, the Blue Nature Alliance elected to support research to bring greater attention to how social equity can be better integrated into ocean conservation policy and practice. The published research, available through [Frontiers in Marine Science](#), demonstrates how advancing social equity in conservation through the acknowledgement and respect for diverse people and perspectives; fair distribution of impacts through maximizing benefits and minimizing burdens; procedures through fostering participation in decision-making and good governance; management through championing and supporting local involvement and leadership; the environment through ensuring the efficacy of conservation actions and adequacy of management to ensure benefits to nature and people; and the structural barriers to and institutional roots of inequity in conservation, can lead to better and more durable conservation outcomes.

The research project was supported through a grant to Dr. Nathan Bennett, Chair of the People and the Oceans Specialist Group for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Research Associate at the University of British Columbia, and founder of the Peopled Seas Initiative. The Blue Nature Alliance selected Dr. Bennett, who conducted the research as an independent consultant and lead of The Peopled Seas Initiative, as the recipient of this grant due to his extensive experience studying the intersections of humans and the environment, with a focus ocean governance, conservation, and the blue economy.

The Blue Nature Alliance has continued to share the results of this research, which has included a larger discussion on the role of conservation organizations, governments, and donors in advancing social equity in ocean conservation. We, further, continue to support additional research in this field, both by the researchers involved in this study and others prominent researchers across the field.

RESULTS: PROMOTE HUMAN WELL-BEING

This process supported a research project to advance the field of large-scale ocean conservation by bringing greater attention to how social equity may be operationalized in and through the pursuit of ocean conservation.

The paper published – Advancing Social Equity in and Through Marine Conservation – provides the dual results of (1) contributing towards the Blue Nature Alliance targets under Component 4: Global Enabling Conditions to Scale Up Ocean Conservation and (2) serving as a global call to action for the ocean conservation community, including governments, non-governmental organizations, and donors, to commit to pursuing socially equitable conservation in all aspects of their work.

While the methods by which the ideas shared in this research are applied will vary based on organization and locale, this research illuminates the need for social equity to sit as a core principle of all conservation policies and practices, as it can serve to prompt conservation initiatives that are inclusive, collaborative, robust, and effective in the long-term.

INDICATOR #4.1.1 Number of research projects that advance the field of large-scale ocean conservation [5 research projects]

This process resulted in the completion of one research project to advance the field of large-scale ocean conservation.

INDICATOR #4.1.2 Number of peer-reviewed publications that advance the field of large-scale ocean conservation [10 peer-reviewed publications]

This process resulted in the publication of one peer-reviewed article that advances the field of large-scale ocean conservation. See below for article details.

Bennett, N. J., Katz, L., Yadao-Evans, W., Ahmadi, G. N., Atkinson, S., Ban, N. C., ... & Wilhelm, A. (2021). [Advancing social equity in and through marine conservation](#). *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 994.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The Blue Nature Alliance understands that there are many challenges in moving far and fast in marine conservation – as is required in meeting our ambitious target – including adequately understanding and integrating the human dimensions in marine conservation planning and management. Through this research, which defines human dimensions as the rights, needs, livelihoods, voices, visions, and cultures of local people, the Blue Nature Alliance was provided an opportunity to better understand how appropriate considerations for both the human dimensions and social equity can be integrated across our portfolio of work.

To ensure that the projects outcomes reflect this commitment, the Blue Nature Alliance has built upon this research, developing a [Code of Conduct](#) to guide and facilitate the integration of human dimension into our site scoping, development of site engagement frameworks, and implementation. This Code of Conduct serves to promote collaborative and equitable conservation, enhance the social and ecological outcomes of the Alliance’s investment in sites, and ensure the legitimacy and durability of marine conservation. Developed through an iterative and participatory process, the Code of Conduct provides a set of social principles and practical guidance to inform all phases of the Blue Nature Alliance’s work.

In compliance requirements by the Global Environment Facility, the Blue Nature Alliance has also designed a rigorous safeguards process that is deployed at all engagements. This safeguards process, further extends beyond the requirements of the GEF to integrate the social principles listed in our Code of Conduct. Recognizing that there is a global need to build capacity in this area and to ensure that the benefit of this work extends beyond the lifespan of the Blue Nature Alliance project, we also have initiated the development of a capacity-building program to help site partners and other practitioners with the tools and guidance on how to include elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their management efforts.

This process has demonstrated that the Blue Nature Alliance, and the field of conservation more broadly, has a long way to go in ensuring the human dimensions are fully integrated into our work. As a result, the Code of Conduct has been designed as a living document and we plan to update it as we reflect, learn, grown, and bring in new perspectives and understandings. As the Blue Nature Alliance continues to learn key lessons through its work, our Code of Conduct and corresponding efforts to support socially equitable conservation will adapt to reflect new best practices.

The long-term effectiveness and persistence of marine conservation initiatives relies on good governance and equitable outcomes. As a result, the Blue Nature Alliance sees this research as integral to the success of our project outcomes.

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