

Environmental Philanthropy: Protecting the Sea and Tackling Poverty in Tanzania

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You may have heard that marine resources are coming under increasing pressure along the entire coast of east Africa. In the past 50 years alone, fish catches in the area have halved due to overfishing, and the marine habitat has been severely damaged. The loss of sea life is not only devastating to the marine environment, but it's also a very real threat to the local communities who depend heavily on fish and seafood for their livelihoods. Through a series of innovative social impact projects supported through partnerships with corporates, the UK government's *Department for International Development (DFID)*, the *European Commission* and our many supporters – we are demonstrating that it's possible to reverse this decline.



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Mzee Kionga, 76, a village elder from Somanga on the south-eastern coast of Tanzania has been fishing on and around local reefs all his life. Like many others in the region, he has seen a decline in fish stocks in near-shore waters as a result of unsustainable fishing practices, including dynamite fishing and the use of juya (using dragnets with a tiny mesh size from the beach). These destructive practices are common in the area and Mzee's story is not an isolated case.

Wherever people are in the world they rely on nature to meet the most basic of human needs: food, shelter, water and air. Millions of people like Mzee depend heavily on their immediate environment every day. Over-consumption is putting unsustainable pressure on our planet. The continued destruction and mismanagement of ecosystems will limit the availability of food, water and fuel in the future. And it's the poorest 40% of the global population who'll feel the worst effects most of all – because they're the ones who depend directly on the services that ecosystems provide to meet their basic needs. For example, the decline in fish stocks that Mzee is experiencing is likely to have an impact on the nutrition levels of communities here, as fish contribute about 30% of their total animal protein.

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WWF's goal is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. If we're to meet that goal, we need to acknowledge and address the fundamental link between poverty, climate change and ecosystem degradation. To achieve sustainable development within the means of one planet, conservation must be approached in an integrated way – tackling poverty and climate change as well as stopping the destruction of ecosystems. This approach is well demonstrated along the coast of Tanzania where fishing is the main source of income for most people: in some places 70-80% of men are involved in it in some way.

Working with people like Mzee it has been possible to improve the management of local communities' marine resources who have an important role to play in managing fisheries sustainably and protecting

vulnerable habitats and species in the area. In 2005, we launched a programme in association with district councils in three areas of Tanzania – Rufiji, Kilwa and Mafia Island – and have more recently expanded to include two other districts – Temeke and Mtwara-Rural. Since then, thanks to support from government aid agencies, corporate donors and members of the public, 54 *beach management units (BMUs)* have been established and thousands of local people trained. The *BMUs* coordinate and collaborate with one another to help improve the management of shared fisheries. They patrol for illegal fishing and dynamite blasting, which they report to the local authorities. And they agree where to set up ‘no fishing’ areas. They keep a record of any threatened marine wildlife they see – which helps in monitoring numbers. Together they establish and manage acceptable fishing practices and exchange harmful fishing equipment for environmentally-friendly alternatives.

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Supporting the establishment of collaborative arrangements, such as *BMUs*, between communities gives local men and women the power to make decisions about the things that matter most to them: securing nutritious food, preserving the immediate environment and protecting livelihoods. Responding to the issues he was facing Mzee joined Somanga's *BMU*, together with more than 30,000 other people who are now members of *BMUs* in these five rural coastal districts of Tanzania. As a result of this programme, some fishers along the Tanzanian coast have been able to increase their catches by 130%.

This *BMU* work is complemented by a micro-financing programme in the region, for those who aspire to own or expand their own small businesses.

All too often they lack the capital so we've established *Village Cooperative Banks*, known as *VICOBA*s, which act as saving and loan schemes in some of the region's poorest coastal villages. Local people deposit their savings and build up enough capital to become eligible for a small loan to start or develop a business. The profits they make are used to repay the loan, support their children's education, improve their housing and cover emergencies such as medical costs.

The *VICOBA* programme is diversifying people's livelihoods reducing their risk to environmental or other shocks and is also helping to build people's willingness to engage in wider fisheries management and conservation work. By connecting marine conservation with support for local communities, we're creating a sustainable model that enables both nature and people to thrive. It's a fine practical example of the old saying: 'give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime'.

Nikki Skipper is Head of Philanthropy at WWF-UK, responsible for overseeing funding partnerships with the environmental foundations and philanthropists who generously support WWF's work to help safeguard endangered species and threatened habitats, and address global environmental threats such as climate change. Nikki has worked in the voluntary sector for over 20 years, predominantly within International Development for organisations including Save the Children, WaterAid and Sightsavers. Nikki has a degree in Environmental Science and joined WWF in 2013 inspired by their vision of building a world where people and nature can thrive.