



PHE partnerships guide

Organisational values and attributes

Version 1

blue ventures
beyond conservation

PHE Population
Health
Environment
Madagascar Network

About this guide

This guide consists of 15 chapters covering the core **values**, **skills** and **knowledge** needed to develop and implement effective cross-sector Population-Health-Environment (PHE) partnerships. You have downloaded **chapter 3 - Organisational values and attributes**. If you wish to download other chapters or the entire guide please visit the Madagascar PHE Network's website [here](#).

This guide is primarily designed for use by the staff of environmental organisations wishing to develop cross-sector PHE partnerships with health service providers in line with priority community needs and their organisational missions. Many chapters will also be relevant to the staff of health organisations wishing to develop cross-sector PHE partnerships with environmental organisations working in under-served zones. And of course livelihoods-focused organisations working at the interface of sustainable development and natural resource management are also ideally placed to develop and implement collaborative PHE initiatives with relevant partners.

This guide draws on the PHE implementation experiences of Blue Ventures and other members of the Madagascar PHE Network in order to provide practical advice structured in a conversational format with case study examples. As such it should be highly relevant to organisations working in Madagascar and much material will be applicable to organisations working in other countries as well.

This guide is accompanied by various complementary resources including an integrated PHE community outreach tool (illustrated PHE story cards) available via the Madagascar PHE Network's website [here](#). Please note that a comprehensive online library of documents relating to PHE programming has been collated by the Population Reference Bureau and can be found [here](#).

This guide should be considered a living document and as such it will be updated regularly. Please don't hesitate to contact Blue Ventures (pheinfo@blueventures.org) if you have any suggestions for improvement or requests for elaboration. We look forward to incorporating your feedback into future versions of this guide.

Credits and acknowledgements

This guide was written and produced by Laura Robson, Blue Ventures' Health-Environment Partnerships Manager.

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Valuable feedback on the content of this guide was also received from the following organisations via a PHE training and experience sharing workshop held by the Madagascar PHE Network in March 2016: Association Cétamada, Catholic Relief Services, Centre ValBio, Community Centred Conservation, Conservation International, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Honko Mangrove Conservation & Education, JSI/MAHEFA (now Mahefa Miraka), Madagascar Fauna & Flora Group, Madagascar Wildlife Conservation, Marie Stopes Madagascar, MIHARI Network, Ny Tanintsika, Population Services International, Reef Doctor, SEED Madagascar (formerly Azafady), Stony Brook University, USAID Mikolo, Voahary Salama, Wildlife Conservation Society and WWF. The photo on the cover page of this guide was taken by Jean-Philippe Palasi at that PHE training and experience sharing workshop. All other photo credits can be found on top of the photos included throughout this guide.

This guide should be referenced as follows: *Robson, L. (2017) PHE partnerships guide. London, UK / Antananarivo, Madagascar: Blue Ventures Conservation.*

3. Organisational values and attributes

<p>By the end of this chapter you should:</p>	<p>This chapter may be of particular relevance to:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Have an understanding of your organisational culture ▶ Know which kind of organisational values may be pertinent for PHE partnerships ▶ Know how desired organisational values can be nurtured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Managers of environmental organisations

Although certain skills and knowledge are needed to implement effective PHE partnerships and initiatives, organisational culture is equally if not more important because PHE is such a community-driven and rights-based approach. This can mean that sometimes organisations may need to work on cultivating organisational values appropriate for PHE.

What is organisational culture?

Organisational culture is a system of shared assumptions, motivations, beliefs and values that shapes how people behave within an organisation. Organisations are as unique as the people who constitute them, which explains why different organisations have different organisational cultures.

How to understand my organisational culture?

You can uncover key elements of your organisational culture by asking yourself and/or your colleagues a few questions. For example:

- ▶ How would you describe the character of your organisation in a few words?
- ▶ What motivates people in your organisation?
- ▶ Who guides your work?
- ▶ How do staff members relate to each other within your organisation?
- ▶ How would you describe your organisation’s main style of working?
- ▶ How do people learn and adapt within your organisation?

Why is organisational culture important?

Two organisations may have similar missions and strategies but if they have different organisational cultures then they’re likely to approach developing plans, implementing activities and interacting with communities or partners quite differently. Certain organisational values can be particularly conducive for PHE initiatives, so it may be worth trying to cultivate or maintain such values within your organisation.

Which kind of organisational values are pertinent for PHE partnerships?

No two organisations are the same, and PHE initiatives can be implemented effectively by a range of organisations. An important step in developing a PHE initiative is to take the time to explore your organisational values and attributes, ideally as a team, and to discuss which values will be most important for supporting your PHE work. Our experience suggests that the following organisational values may

be among those pertinent for the implementation of PHE partnerships:

Listening and responding to communities

Conservation and development professionals typically build up specialised expertise and work in single-sector silos, but focusing on health or environmental problems in isolation is like looking at the world with tunnel vision or blinkers on. Organisations that are truly committed to listening and responding to communities are prepared to learn about (and seek to respond to) all types of community needs, even if not directly related to their specialisation; their work is guided primarily by the perspectives of communities. This kind of openness is vital for developing PHE partnerships that are fully responsive to the interconnected challenges faced by communities.

Upholding human rights

As outlined in chapter 1 ([Does PHE have anything to do with population control?](#)), PHE initiatives uphold the reproductive rights of all individuals to choose freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their births without coercion or discrimination. A commitment to reproductive rights includes the belief that equal relationships between men and women in matters of reproduction are important, and that this requires mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.

Because of the family planning sector’s troubled relationship with population control advocates, organisations implementing PHE initiatives should think carefully about their motivations for increasing access to family planning services and ensure that all staff understand the importance of upholding reproductive rights. This commitment to upholding reproductive rights should be communicated to and shared by partners and funders, so that all stakeholders are aligned in working towards ensuring full access to voluntary family planning services and free choice regarding contraception use.

Alongside a commitment to reproductive rights, PHE initiatives also typically uphold the rights of communities to manage their natural resources by advancing local capacity for natural resource management and advocating for supportive legal frameworks as appropriate.

Blue Ventures’ experience:

“We started working in southwest Madagascar as a marine research group, surveying coral reefs. With several scuba divers on site at any time, we employed expedition medics who were responsible for ensuring the health of our volunteers. However, soon the medics became aware of pressing community health needs as local women were coming to them asking for access to family planning options and health services.

In this way, our unconventional journey in marine conservation began through listening. We learned that people in Velondriake, Madagascar’s first locally managed marine area, thought that fish stocks would collapse without increased

access to family planning. We also saw that, as an organisation working in these isolated communities, we were ideally positioned to address to this critical unmet need with various health partners.

Although we viewed ourselves as a marine conservation organisation, our commitment to listening and responding to communities led us to incorporate efforts to increase access to family planning and other health services into community-based marine management initiatives. Today, our PHE programme serves more than 25,000 people across three sites along Madagascar’s western coastline.

Recognising that this commitment to putting the needs and priorities of communities first has underpinned and shaped the evolution of our work over the past decade, we have articulated the following organisational value which continues to guide us today: Above all, we listen to community needs, responding in a sensitive and pragmatic way for lasting benefits.”



Photo credit: Garth Cripps

Blue Ventures' experience:

“As a marine conservation organisation with environmental objectives, we felt that it was important to make explicit our commitment to reproductive rights when we started collaborating with health partners to increase access to family planning services. The community health component of our PHE programme is therefore called Safidy, which means “the freedom to choose” in Malagasy. This theme of free choice permeates all of our community outreach and sends a strong message to our partners that although we’re an environmental organisation, our community health work is motivated by wanting to ensure that all individuals have access to comprehensive information and a full range of methods that they can choose freely to use to make their own family planning decisions.”

PHE can therefore be thought of as a dual human rights-based approach (encompassing reproductive rights and natural resource management rights) with a consistently community-centred ethos, which may contrast with more top-down conservation efforts. Environmental organisations that are interested in developing PHE partnerships yet usually work in a more top-down ways may like to consider whether it would be appropriate to change or adapt their ways of engaging with communities, particularly in light of potential synergies that could be achieved through more community-based work.

Working with courage and humility

Linked with the organisational value of listening and responding to communities, the PHE approach generally requires organisations to work with courage and step outside of their comfort zones to address priority community needs. PHE initiatives also tend to work best when organisations develop and facilitate them with humility; believing in and treating communities as experts with understanding and skills to contribute, and collaborating with partners in a respectful and transparent way.

How to nurture desired organisational values?

Nurturing desired organisational values is an important and ongoing process. It can seem quite intangible so here are some practical tips for supporting staff members to live and breathe desired organisational values:

- Convene a group of staff members from across your organisation to reflect on your organisational values and put them into words
- When recruiting new employees, include these values in your job descriptions, and try to assess the

Blue Ventures' experience:

“Our journey towards developing a PHE initiative was characterised initially by doubts about whether we could respond to what local communities were asking us to do (provide access to family planning options and health services). Different staff within our organisation held varying opinions on this dilemma. Some felt that it was outside of the scope of our mission. Others recognised the connections between human and ecosystem health, and saw that it was important to leverage our position to address these priority needs expressed by local communities. After some internal discussion and debate, the bold decision was made to pursue this work. Of course we recognised that we couldn't do this alone, so we reached out to health partners in the area to draw on their expertise and explore opportunities for collaboration.”



motivations and values of candidates (for example, by getting them to talk through how they would behave in different scenarios) in addition to their technical skills and experience

- Develop on-boarding processes for new employees that instill a deep understanding of and commitment to your organisational values (for example, by having them shadow existing staff members who model organisational values well)
- Craft performance planning and review frameworks to encourage and reward behaviour that's coherent with desired organisational values
- Create opportunities for staff members to evaluate their team's work in relation to desired organisational values and/or flag occasions where desired organisational values risk being compromised
- Ensure that working spaces and conditions enable and support the enactment of desired organisational values
- Recognise that the above steps can only nurture desired organisational values if your leadership team's words and actions are in tune with these values every single day





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