



PHE partnerships guide

Building effective PHE partnerships

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 5 - Building effective PHE partnerships**. 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 Miaraka), 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.*

5. Building effective PHE partnerships

By the end of this chapter you should:	This chapter may be of particular relevance to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Know some key characteristics of effective PHE partnerships ➤ Know how effective PHE partnerships can be established ➤ Understand why it can be helpful to think of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as an outcome of the partnership building process once all of the groundwork for a respectful and productive working relationship has been laid ➤ Know what a PHE partnership MoU should include ➤ Know what to do if things go wrong with your partner(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Managers of environmental organisations ➤ Managers of health organisations

What is a partnership?

In the context of PHE, a partnership can be defined as a cooperative relationship between autonomous organisations working across sectors (combining expertise and services / activities) to deliver an integrated PHE initiative.

What are some key characteristics of effective PHE partnerships?

- Common purpose
- Compatible (ideally shared) values - *e.g. around reproductive rights and community leadership*
- Clearly defined objectives, roles and responsibilities designed to address expressed community needs - *these may be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding along with details of any funding or operational resources to be shared*
- Strong commitment to building a long-term relationship
- Appreciation of each other's complementary expertise and basic understanding of each other's sectors
- Balance of power
- Jointly agreed partnership principles - *for example:*
 - Mutual respect and trust
 - Transparency and accountability coupled with open lines of communication for feedback and data sharing - *this may include building in periodic reviews of the partnership in order to identify any issues and areas for improvement*
 - Commitment to learning, flexibility and adaptation

How can effective PHE partnerships be developed?

If you're interested in developing a PHE partnership in a region where you're already working or wish to reach, you should start by identifying potential partners that you could approach who also work in that region. If you're an environmental organisation then you'll probably be looking for health organisations to partner with and if you're a health organisation then you'll probably be looking for environmental organisations to partner with, in order to develop an integrated PHE initiative together.

Preliminary things to look for in potential partners include complementary expertise, compatible values, an understanding of the value of cross-sector working and geographical overlap / presence in the region where you're hoping to develop a PHE initiative. Once identified, you should reach out to these potential partners and suggest a meeting to discuss opportunities for collaboration. In this first contact, you could mention a little about your organisation's scope of work and the value that you believe you could add to their organisation's work by developing a cross-sector partnership (see chapter 1 - [What are the benefits of a PHE approach for environmental / health organisations?](#) - for ideas).

Suggested topic guide for your initial meeting(s):

- Personal introductions
 - Names and roles
- Organisational introductions
 - Mission and expertise
 - Objectives and key activities
 - Approach and values
 - Brief overview / history of community engagement in the region
- Identification of compatibility / overlap in terms of values and objectives
- Identification of complementarity / potential synergies in terms of expertise and activities
- Exploration of opportunities for collaboration
 - Increasing the reach of family planning and other health services in the region
 - Integrating community health promotion into ongoing environmental community outreach work
 - Expanding the scope of community health promotion to include food security and livelihood sustainability
 - Training community health agents to facilitate discussions about the links between family planning, community health, natural resource management and ecosystem health
 - Engaging men more in family planning discussions and women more in natural resource management decision-making
- Discussion of broad partnership principles - clarifying expectations regarding:
 - Potential roles and responsibilities
 - Level of coordination / integration of activities
 - Accountability, data sharing and communication
 - Likely formality and duration of collaboration
- Agreement on next steps
 - Reviewing guidance about PHE partnerships (such as this guide)
 - Consulting communities ([see chapter 4](#))
 - Seeking approval and/or buy-in from colleagues (including senior management as necessary)
 - Drafting a Memorandum of Understanding
 - Scheduling a follow up meeting for more detailed planning



What is a Memorandum of Understanding and is it necessary for an effective PHE partnership?

A Memorandum of Understanding or MoU is a formal agreement between two or more organisations, often used to establish official partnerships. MoUs are not legally binding, but they carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect, demonstrate a level of commitment to the partnership and provide clarity on what will be done. They express a convergence of objectives between signatories, and typically outline an intended collaborative course of action.

You don't need to sign an MoU in order to operationalise an effective PHE partnership, but it can be helpful in ensuring a shared understanding of how the collaboration is expected to work and it can also be used as a reference point during periodic reviews of how the partnership is progressing.

Collaboration with ministries

PHE partnerships generally entail collaboration between environmental and health organisations, however, such initiatives should also align closely with ministry frameworks and contribute to the achievement of ministry priorities. It can therefore be helpful to draw up a simple Terms of Reference or ToR to be approved by relevant ministries, detailing the scope of work of your PHE partnership (key objectives, activities, partners and alignments with national policies) in order to facilitate productive relationships with such ministries. The ministries should typically respond with a signed letter endorsing the ToR, and provide you with the contact details of designated focal points who will work with your organisation moving forward.

Avoiding a common pitfall! It's tempting to focus on drafting and signing an MoU, but this alone will not guarantee an effective PHE partnership. Instead, it can be helpful to think of an MoU as an outcome of the partnership building process, once all of the groundwork for a respectful and productive working relationship has been laid. This process includes sharing information with and requesting input from all relevant managers and staff, then listening to and addressing any of their concerns about the partnership, thereby ensuring strong commitment and buy-in from all involved.

What should a PHE partnership MoU include?

- Name of the contact person for each organisation
- Purpose of the partnership
- Intervention zone
- Key activities to be undertaken
- Roles and responsibilities of each organisation
- Timeline / completion dates for activities if relevant
- Important shared values - *e.g. upholding reproductive rights*
- Funding arrangements
- Sharing of operational resources - *e.g. transport / equipment*
- Sharing of data - *e.g. service delivery / community outreach data*
- Periodic reviews
- Duration of engagement

Please see [Annex III](#) for a full PHE partnership MoU template.

What to do if things go wrong with your partner(s)?

The chances of things going wrong should be minimised by following the above guidance about how to create a solid foundation for an effective PHE partnership; building strong commitment to a common purpose and shared values among all staff involved, and documenting your collective understanding of how the partnership will operate in an MoU.

However, if things don't go according to plan you should start by reviewing and clarifying your expectations of the partnership; specifically its purpose, and your respective roles and responsibilities. If one or both of you are unable to fulfil your commitment to the partnership, you should openly discuss the reasons for this and seek to identify appropriate solutions together. This may involve modifying the terms / scope / scale of the partnership, or bringing in other partners with complementary expertise. It's best to raise and address any concerns as soon as they arise in order to deal with them effectively and efficiently.



Marie Stopes Madagascar (MSM) works with Blue Ventures to ensure a consistent delivery of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) in remote southwest Madagascar:

Blue Ventures has been partnering with MSM in the Velondriake locally managed marine area of southwest Madagascar since 2010, with the aim of making LARCs available to women on a quarterly basis. Initially these methods were offered by MSM's mobile outreach team, comprising three or four medical professionals travelling in a 4x4 vehicle. However, this team serves a large area and has a busy schedule which is subject to change, making it difficult to ensure a consistent quarterly cycle of LARC provision,

check-ups and removals for women in Velondriake. Blue Ventures therefore discussed alternative service delivery options with MSM, which resulted in a new partnership with a "Marie Stopes lady" (nurse trained and supported by MSM to offer LARCs), who is based in the regional capital of Toliara. Blue Ventures agreed to arrange for her transport and accommodation in the Velondriake area on a quarterly basis, enabling her to visit five villages each time. The mobile outreach team also continues to visit as their schedule allows, and thus a consistent delivery of LARCs has been achieved in Velondriake.



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Laura Robson
Blue Ventures
laura@blueventures.org



Nantenaina Andriamalala
Madagascar PHE Network
nantenaina@phemadagascar.org

www.phemadagascar.org