



# PHE partnerships guide

Managing PHE partnerships and cross-training staff

Version 1

**blue ventures**  
beyond conservation

 **PHE**  
Madagascar  
Population  
Health  
Environment  
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 7 - Managing PHE partnerships and cross-training staff**. 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](mailto: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.

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## 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.*

# 7. Managing PHE partnerships and cross-training staff

<p><b>By the end of this chapter you should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know some different ways of structuring and managing teams for PHE implementation</li> <li>Know how to coordinate activities and budgets across workstreams</li> <li>Know how to balance the need for high levels of collaboration with staff autonomy</li> <li>Understand why it's important to cross-train staff</li> <li>Know how to facilitate the exchange of technical knowledge among staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>This chapter may be of particular relevance to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers of environmental organisations</li> <li>Managers of health organisations</li> </ul>
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## What are some different ways of structuring and managing teams for PHE implementation?

There are various ways of structuring and managing teams for PHE implementation, with the following three possible team structures corresponding to the three institutional arrangements outlined in chapter 1 ([How can PHE initiatives be implemented?](#)):

Institutional arrangement	Partnership between environmental and health organisations	Sector-specific teams working within the same organisation	Interdisciplinary team working within the same organisation
Possible team structure	2 key contacts ( <i>typically head office-based partnerships coordinators or regional managers - responsible for ensuring the full contribution of their respective staff to the PHE partnership</i> )	1 site manager ( <i>responsible for overseeing site logistics and ensuring adequate coordination among sector-specific teams</i> )	1 site / integrated programme manager
	2 programme managers ( <i>these may be the same people as the key contacts</i> )	2 (or more) programme managers ( <i>one of these may be the same person as the site manager</i> )	
	Community-based staff with sector-specific responsibilities	Community-based staff with sector-specific responsibilities	Community-based staff with cross-sector responsibilities

In deciding how to structure and manage teams for PHE implementation, you'll of course need to take into account how your organisation already organises its teams and lines of responsibilities but also bear in mind that PHE implementation may require more collaborative or integrated set-ups as outlined above.

In the case of a partnership between an environmental organisation and a health organisation, the above structure is simply one possible example and each organisation may structure their teams differently.

When partners are committed to a long-term collaboration and deeper integration of activities, it may be desirable to jointly recruit a dedicated manager responsible for ensuring close coordination among partners; where this person is located and how they are managed should be determined collectively by all partners.

### The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) partners with Marie Stopes Madagascar (MSM):

WCS is collaborating with MSM in the MaMaBaie (Makira, Masoala and Baie d'Antongil) terrestrial and marine conservation area in northeast Madagascar to implement PHE activities. These include having MSM's mobile outreach team offer long-acting reversible contraceptives to isolated communities in the area, and training community health agents to facilitate discussions about the links between family planning and natural resource management.

**Key contacts based in the capital city of Antananarivo** - responsible for initiating and outlining the terms of the partnership, connecting their respective programme managers and sharing service delivery data as appropriate

**Managers based in the regional towns of Tamatave / Maroantsetra** - responsible for coordinating the practical details of the collaboration and ensuring that community-based staff understand the purpose of the PHE partnership

**Community-based staff with sector-specific responsibilities** - responsible for delivering their services or implementing their activities as part of the PHE partnership

### Blue Ventures develops a more integrated team structure for its PHE initiative in Belo sur Mer

Blue Ventures is implementing a small PHE initiative in Belo sur Mer and surrounding villages on the west coast of Madagascar. The institutional arrangement here is sector-specific teams working within the same organisation (we also partner with health organisations including JSI Mahefa Miaraka and MSM but we're leaving these out for the purposes of this example).

**Site manager** - responsible for overseeing site logistics, coordinating community outreach activities and budgets, facilitating cross-training among staff, ensuring achievement of grant objectives, liaising with partners, etc.

**Programme managers** - one manager is responsible for the development and implementation of conservation initiatives including mangrove fisheries management and aquaculture, and the other manager is responsible for the development and implementation of community health initiatives including family planning, child health and WASH promotion

**Community-based staff with sector-specific responsibilities** - one staff member is responsible for fisheries management outreach, one staff member is responsible for aquaculture support, and one staff member is responsible for community health outreach and support - although all are cross-trained in order to be able to work across sectors

Previously we didn't have a dedicated site manager in Belo sur Mer, so we relied on two programme managers working closely together to harmonise their activities and budgets. As our PHE initiative developed, we decided that having a dedicated site manager would facilitate greater integration and smoother coordination. Based on our positive experience of this team structure to date, we would recommend it for relatively small sites where tight integration is desired and where it's reasonable to expect a single site manager to be able to oversee everything.



## How to coordinate activities and budgets across workstreams?

In order to manage your PHE partnership effectively, you'll need to create simple systems for joint planning and information sharing among organisations. Here are some top tips:

- Create regular opportunities for teams to plan activities such as integrated community outreach (linking health and environmental topics) together - these could be monthly or quarterly planning workshops depending on the level and frequency of your collaboration
- It may be desirable to produce joint work plans taking into account any grant objectives that need to be achieved within certain timeframes
- Weekly coordination meetings at the community level can be very helpful for maximising communications among teams (both about their respective activities and any issues raised by community members) and identifying opportunities for pooling transport e.g. 4x4 vehicles or boats for community outreach missions
- Depending on the nature of your partnership, it may be appropriate to have a single combined budget that everyone can work from with different lines funded by different funders or shared among several funders

## How to balance the need for high levels of collaboration with staff autonomy?

It's good to have programme managers and community-based staff clearly responsible for the delivery and quality of certain activities within integrated PHE initiatives, and for this a certain degree of autonomy is required. However, it's equally if not more important that programme managers and community-based staff work closely together to coordinate their work.

Key to achieving this balance is building trust and understanding among teams (e.g. through trust-building exercises, reflecting on the complementary strengths of different staff, cross-training sessions and frequent communications), nurturing an organisational culture that values cooperation, having systems in place that facilitate regular open communications, and ensuring that all staff can see how their work feeds into the broader PHE initiative (see chapter 8 - [How to develop a programme theory?](#)).

Collaborating proactively with colleagues and partners should be written into the performance plans of all staff, so that they can be held accountable for working in this way in addition to delivering the activities for which they're directly responsible.

### Ultimate team member exercise

*Participants are arranged into groups of 4-8 people and instructed to share individual strengths and positive attributes which they feel that they could contribute to the success of their group.*

*Each participant writes down their individual strengths and positive attributes on a piece of paper, then each group is instructed to create their "ultimate team member" by combining each individual's strengths and positive attributes into one imaginary person.*



Photo credit: Jean-Philippe Palasi

*This "ultimate team member" should be given a name, have a picture drawn of them on a large sheet of paper and have their different attributes labelled. The group should also write a story about this "ultimate team member", highlighting all of the things their imaginary person can do with all of their amazing characteristics.*

*At the end of the exercise, each group should share their "ultimate team member" with the wider group and read the accompanying story. This exercise can help co-workers to understand that they're capable of having more strengths and positive attributes as a group than they would have working solo.*

## Why cross-train staff?

Staff working in different sectors with different backgrounds can have different worldviews, terminologies and ways of approaching problems. There may also be a significant differences between organisational cultures across sectors. Cross-training staff so that they can understand and support each other's work is probably the most crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of cross-sector PHE partnerships.

Environmental staff must understand the health component of the PHE initiative, and health staff must understand the environment component of the PHE initiative. Much learning and communication may occur informally between teams, but it's important to develop the institutional infrastructure to ensure that this happens.

## How to facilitate the exchange of technical knowledge among staff?

Here are some top tips for facilitating the exchange of technical knowledge among staff:

- Cross-training workshops covering the issues being addressed by the PHE partnership. These might include the basic principles of community-based natural resource management, reproductive rights, benefits of family planning, different contraceptive options, health-promoting behaviours, PHE linkages, etc. so that all staff are able to assist with integrated community outreach and/or even if staff are not charged with implementing different sector-specific activities, they at least understand the approach that's being taken in that sector and why. These workshops could be facilitated by managers with the contribution of relevant community-based staff. They should ideally be organised at the beginning of a partnership followed by refresher sessions at regular intervals. [See Annex IV](#) for a cross-training workshop outline.
- Community consultations facilitated jointly by environmental and health staff to learn directly from communities how the health and environmental challenges they face are interconnected.
- PHE briefing materials should be readily available for new and existing staff. A thorough introduction to key environmental and health topics (as detailed in [chapters 10, 11, 12 & 13](#) of this guide) should be provided by relevant managers to new staff as part of their orientation - this could include one-to-one talks and discussions to ensure full understanding.

### Blue Ventures' staff facilitate cross-training workshops:

*Blue Ventures' staff include public health professionals, fisheries specialists, aquaculture technicians and community organisers. Bringing together such diverse talents and skills to enable interdisciplinary work isn't always straightforward; Blue Ventures has come to value inter-staff training as a great way of exchanging knowledge across sectors and making sure that all team members are able to support each other's work effectively. This means that when a fisheries specialist is holding a village meeting they can also be facilitating discussions around reproductive rights, or when a community health agent is assisting with a women's group they can also be talking about marine resource management.*

*Blue Ventures' community health staff have organised workshops to train their environmental colleagues in the fundamentals of their Safidy community health programme (Safidy means "the freedom to choose" in Malagasy; reflecting the organisation's long-standing commitment to reproductive rights), so that these environmental outreach workers can contribute to community health promotion efforts. In turn these environmental outreach workers have trained community health agents in the basics of marine resource management and health-environment linkages specific to their contexts, so that they can support increased women's engagement in management initiatives within their villages. These sessions have included PHE storytelling sequences, where community health agents are encouraged to narrate a story about a fictitious local family then identify overlaps between health and environmental issues within the story. This has led the community health agents to develop practical strategies for addressing such interconnected challenges in their villages, based on their own visions for healthy communities and ecosystems.*

- Developing an adequate understanding of PHE and basic knowledge of different sectors should be written into the professional development plans of all staff with details of the support or resources needed to achieve this - this could include participation in cross-training workshops, shadowing colleagues working in different sectors, and time to do more background reading or opportunities to ask relevant colleagues specific questions.





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