



Blue Victoria

For blue economy & thriving
ecological biodiversity



ANNUAL REPORT – 2024

[Our Year of Conservation Action]

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List of Abbreviation

- ALDFG - Abandoned Lost Discard Fishing Gear
- BMUs - Beach Management Units
- CCA - Community Conservation Area
- CCC - Community Conservation Committee
- CR - Critical Endangered
- GDF - Global Diversity Foundation
- GESA - Global Environment Summer Academy
- GGGI - Global Ghost Gear Initiatives
- ICMCF - Internal Community & Member Contribution Fund
- IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature
- SOS - Serve Our Species
- IoT - Internet of Things
- NGO - Non Government Organization
- TAFIRI - Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute

Executive Summary

In 2024, Blue Victoria continued to strengthen its impact in freshwater biodiversity conservation, climate change resilience, and sustainable fisheries management in the Lake Victoria Basin. This year was marked by significant progress in community-led conservation, capacity building, and advocacy efforts aimed at protecting endangered species, enhancing livelihoods, and fostering regional collaboration.

One of our major achievements was the establishment of a Community Conservation Area (CCA) in Mara Bay Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) to protect the critical endangered *Labeo victorianus*. This initiative was made possible through engagement with nine clans residing in Mara Bay, ensuring local buy-in and long-term sustainability. Additionally, we developed Community Conservation Guidelines, formed a Community Conservation Committee, and held meeting with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries to strengthen conservation efforts.

To enhance sustainable livelihoods, Blue Victoria distributed milk cattle to the youth clan in Mara Bay, empowering them with alternative income sources that reduce fishing pressure on Lake Victoria. We also set up an innovative Daga fish drying facility, improving post-harvest processing for local fishers.

Our commitment to community engagement and capacity building was evident in multiple initiatives. We conducted local radio awareness campaigns to educate communities on the importance of conserving Key Biodiversity Areas, trained Fisheries Officers in Rorya District, and built capacity among fishmongers and fishers in Mara Bay KBA.

On a regional and global scale, Blue Victoria expanded its influence through membership in the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, participation in the Global Environment Summer Academy, East Africa Aquaculture Conference, and Youth Week, and initiating conversations to form a coalition of organizations working across Lake Victoria's bordering countries. Additionally, our work was featured in the 17th edition of the Key Biodiversity Areas Community Newsletter, amplifying our conservation efforts to a broader audience.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain, including limited financial resources and the need for stronger policy enforcement. However, Blue Victoria remains committed to scaling up its impact in 2025 through new partnerships, expanded conservation programs, and innovative solutions that promote coexistence between sustainable livelihoods and ecological biodiversity.

We extend our gratitude to our partners, donors, and communities for their unwavering support in making 2024 a milestone year for Blue Victoria

Festus J Massaho
Executive Director- Blue Victoria.



CHAPTER 1

About the Organization.

Blue Victoria is a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) based in Mwanza Tanzania. The organization is registered under Non-Governmental Organizations Act of 2002 with registration number 00NGO/R/3260. The organization was founded by a group of passionate and dedicated youth who come from fishing livelihoods and have witnessed the ongoing decline of fish species in their communities. These young leaders recognized the urgent need to address the threats facing freshwater ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Their personal experiences and deep knowledge of local ecosystems inspired them to create an organization that would prioritize the conservation of freshwater biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable practices in the fishing and aquaculture industries.

Blue Victoria recognized the importance of establishing a strong foundation for its operations and initiatives. With a clear vision and a passionate team of dedicated individuals.

Vision

Our vision is a Tanzania where freshwater ecosystems are healthy, resilient, and abundant, and the communities that depend on thrive.

Mission

To conserve freshwater biodiversity, promote sustainable practices in the fishing and aquaculture industries and mitigate the effects of climate change on freshwater ecosystems

Values

When discharging its responsibilities, Blue Victoria will demonstrate the following values

- **Conservation:** We are committed to the conservation of freshwater biodiversity and the preservation of natural resources for future generations.
- **Community:** We value and respect the communities that depend on freshwater ecosystems, and we work collaboratively with them to promote sustainable practices and improve their livelihoods.
- **Integrity:** We conduct our work with honesty, transparency, and accountability, and we adhere to the highest ethical standards in all our operations.
- **Innovation:** We are open to new ideas and approaches, and we strive to be creative and adaptive in addressing the challenges facing freshwater ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.
- **Knowledge:** We value knowledge and expertise, and we seek to build capacity and share information with our partners, stakeholders, and the wider community.
- **Respect:** We treat all people with respect and dignity, regardless of their background, beliefs, or values.
- **Sustainability:** We promote sustainable practices in all our operations, and we are committed to minimizing our environmental impact and maximizing our positive social and economic impact.

CHAPTER TWO

Key Achievements in 2024

A. Conservation Programs

1. Establishment of CCA in Mara Bay KBA

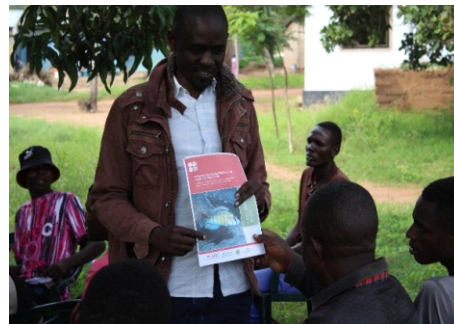
In 2024, Blue Victoria achieved a significant milestone in freshwater biodiversity conservation by establishing a Community Conservation Area (CCA) in Mara Bay Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). This initiative aims to protect CR Labeo victorinus, a native fish species threatened by habitat destruction and overfishing.

To ensure local ownership and sustainability, we engaged nine clans residing in Mara Bay, facilitating dialogues to gain their support in establishing the CCA. The process involved conducting community consultations to understand local perspectives on conservation, raising awareness about the ecological and economic importance of protecting KBAs, and gaining consensus from community members to implement community-driven conservation measures.

The successful establishment of the CCA sets a foundation for long-term conservation efforts, ensuring that traditional knowledge and modern conservation practices are integrated to safeguard the biodiversity of Mara Bay.



Meeting with Kitaga-Mahagi clan



Mr. Massaho showing IUCN report on Lake Victoria to the members of Warimba clan during the meeting

2. Development of Community Conservation Guidelines

To support the implementation of the Community Conservation Area, Blue Victoria developed a set of Community Conservation Guidelines. These guidelines provide a framework for:

- Regulating fishing activities to prevent overexploitation of critical fish species.
- Protecting breeding and nursery grounds of *Labeo victorinus*.
- Establishing sustainable resource management practices based on community participation.
- Defining roles and responsibilities of local stakeholders in conservation efforts.

These guidelines serve as an important reference for local fishers, conservation committees, and policymakers, ensuring that conservation practices align with both scientific recommendations and traditional ecological knowledge.



Mr. Massaho, leaders of the clans and BMUs member during development of by-laws



Group photo after development of by-laws

3. Formation of the Community Conservation Committee

As part of the governance structure for the newly established CCA, Blue Victoria facilitated the formation of a Community Conservation Committee. This committee comprises local leaders, fishers, youth representatives, and Beach Management Units (BMU). The committee has the following duties;

- Overseeing the enforcement of conservation regulations within the CCA.
- Monitoring illegal fishing activities and reporting violations.
- Engaging with government authorities and conservation organizations to advocate for stronger conservation policies.
- Conducting community outreach and education programs on sustainable fisheries management.

B. Youth Empowerment & Livelihood

1. Distributed Milk Cattle to Youth in Mara Bay KBA

In 2024, Blue Victoria distributed 18 milk cattle to youth in the Mara Bay Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) as part of our livelihood diversification initiative. This intervention aimed to reduce youth dependence on fishing by introducing sustainable alternative income sources, ultimately easing pressure on Lake Victoria's fish stocks.

The program was designed to empower local youth by ensuring they have the necessary skills and resources to succeed in dairy farming. We engaged nine clans, each with over 40 youth members, to participate in the project. Each clan received two pregnant heifers, which would provide a continuous milk supply and potential future breeding stock. To ensure proper management and sustainability, Blue Victoria conducted comprehensive training sessions on:

- Animal husbandry and cattle management – covering feeding, health care, and disease prevention.
- Milk production and marketing – helping youth understand dairy business opportunities.
- Sustainable land use and pasture management – ensuring proper grazing and environmental conservation.

Through this initiative, more than 400 youth directly benefited from the program. Beyond financial gains, the program has also improved nutritional security in the region by making fresh milk readily available. The long-term goal is for the initial herd to multiply, creating a sustainable dairy farming system that supports economic resilience and food security in the Mara Bay KBA.



Cows that has been distributed to youth

2. Innovative Fish Drying Facility for Post-Harvest Management

One of the major challenges in small-scale fisheries is post-harvest loss, which significantly affects fishers' earnings and food security. To tackle this issue, Blue Victoria established an innovative Dagua fish drying facility in Rukuba Island, benefiting over 100 fishermen.

This modern drying facility was introduced to:

- Reduce reliance on traditional drying methods, which often involve drying fish directly on the ground or fishing nets, leading to contamination and frequent damage to fishing gear.
- Improve fish hygiene and quality, ensuring that dried Dagua meets market standards for both local and export consumption.
- Speed up the drying process, making fishers more productive and increasing their potential income.

The new drying technology requires minimal sun energy, allowing Dagua to dry faster while maintaining a higher quality. This modern approach enhances climate resilience and contributes to a more sustainable fisheries industry by:

- Reducing post-harvest losses, ensuring more fish reach the market in good condition.
- Enhancing hygiene and food safety, making dried fish safer for consumption and increasing market value.
- Protecting fishing gear, as fishers previously dried fish on their nets, causing frequent damage and increasing repair costs.

With over 100 fishermen now utilizing this facility, the project has improved livelihoods by reducing economic losses, increasing profitability, and promoting sustainable fish handling practices. The facility serves as a model for future post-harvest innovations, helping communities in the Lake

Victoria region move towards environmentally friendly and efficient fisheries management. A short video documentary was produced you can watch [here](#).



Installing innovative drying rack



Dagua fish which has been dried on modern drying rack

3. Participation in Youth Week 2024

In 2024, Blue Victoria actively participated in Youth Week, an annual event aimed at empowering young people with knowledge, skills, and opportunities for development. This year's event was held in Mwanza and brought together over 5,000 youth from across the Lake Victoria regions, providing a platform to discuss critical issues affecting youth, the environment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The event was organized by the Prime Minister's Office under the theme: "Vijana na Matumizi ya Fursa za Kidigitali kwa Maendeleo Endelevu" (*Youth and the Use of Digital Opportunities for Sustainable Development*). As part of our participation, Blue Victoria conducted interactive sessions focusing on:

- Environmental conservation – educating youth on the importance of protecting Lake Victoria's biodiversity and sustainable fisheries management.
- Sustainable livelihoods – introducing alternative income-generating opportunities beyond fishing, such as aquaculture, eco-tourism, and digital entrepreneurship.
- Digital innovation for conservation – demonstrating how technology and data-driven solutions can support environmental monitoring, including the use of IoT-based water quality monitoring.
- Youth engagement in policy-making – encouraging young people to take an active role in advocating for policies that support environmental sustainability and economic empowerment.



Banner and participants at the youth week 2024

C: Capacity Building:

1. Training of Fisheries Officers from Rorya District

As part of our commitment to strengthening fisheries governance and conservation efforts, Blue Victoria, in partnership with the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI), conducted a specialized training program for fisheries officers in Rorya District. This training focused on sustainable fisheries management, law enforcement, and the ecological significance of key biodiversity areas (KBAs) in Lake Victoria. The training took place at the Rorya District Offices and was attended by nine fisheries officers responsible for monitoring and regulating fishing activities in the region.

During the training Blue Victoria highlighted the IUCN Report on Freshwater Biodiversity in Lake Victoria, which identifies selected KBAs and the species they trigger. The report provided critical insights into:

- The current conservation status of key fish species, including threatened and endangered species.
- The importance of KBAs in sustaining aquatic biodiversity and how conservation measures can help restore fish populations.

TAFIRI presented its latest report on the state of Lake Victoria's fisheries, offering a scientific perspective on:

- Trends in fish stocks, particularly commercially important species like Nile perch, dagaa and tilapia.
- The impact of overfishing, climate change, and habitat degradation on fish populations.
- Sustainable fisheries management approaches, including seasonal closures, gear restrictions, and habitat restoration.



Massaho during his presentation



Madam Magreth Msiba from TAFIRI

2. Building Capacity to Fishmongers

Recognizing the critical role of fishmongers in the fisheries value chain, Blue Victoria conducted capacity-building training for fishmongers in Mara Bay to improve their skills in fish handling, processing, and business management. The training aimed to:

- Enhance fish hygiene and food safety by educating fishmongers on proper fish handling storage techniques.
- Improve fish processing methods, including drying and preservation, to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Equip fishmongers with business skills, financial literacy, marketing, and value addition.
- Introduce climate-smart processing techniques, such as the modern Dagaa drying facility, which enhances the quality and shelf-life of fish products.

Key topics covered during the training included: Post-harvest fish management techniques to minimize spoilage and increase profitability, Proper hygiene and sanitation practices to ensure food safety, Entrepreneurship and financial literacy to empower fishmongers to grow and sustain their businesses, and Market access and value chain development, helping fishmongers tap into larger and more profitable markets. As a result, over 100 fishmongers in Mara Bay benefitted from the program, leading to improved fish quality, better income, and enhanced business sustainability.



Consultant Mr. Matiko during the training with fishmongers

Mr. Shabani from Blue Victoria during the training with fishmongers

D: Awareness:

1. Community Awareness Campaigns

Raising awareness about freshwater conservation and sustainable fisheries management is a key component of Blue Victoria's mission. In 2024, we intensified our community outreach efforts to ensure that local communities, particularly those living around Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Lake Victoria, understand the importance of conservation and their role in protecting aquatic ecosystems.

One of our most impactful initiatives was the local radio awareness program, which enabled us to reach thousands of community members with critical messages on environmental conservation, fisheries regulations, and biodiversity protection. The program was aired on Bunda FM, a widely followed community radio station broadcasting across the Lake Victoria regions. The live broadcast also gave listeners a chance to call in, ask questions and share their thoughts on protecting the lake's unique biodiversity.

E: Advocacy and Regional Collaborations

1. Engagement with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries

In 2024, Blue Victoria strengthened its advocacy efforts by engaging with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries to promote the recognition and protection of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Lake Victoria. Through consultative meetings, we emphasized the urgent need for policy support and resource allocation to safeguard critical habitats and endangered fish species found in those KBAs. Our discussions also focused on enhancing community-led conservation initiatives, recognizing that local engagement is crucial for long-term ecological sustainability. The Ministry acknowledged the importance of these efforts and provided valuable insights, recommendations, and technical contributions that will help shape future conservation strategies.



Bunda Fm Radio



During discussion with Officers from Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries



Group photo with Officers from Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries

2. Global Environment Summer Academy (GESA)

In 2024, our Executive Director had the privilege of participating in the Global Environment Summer Academy (GESA), a prestigious immersive fellowship program organized by the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF). GESA brings together environmental leaders, conservationists, and change-makers from around the world to engage in deep discussions on ecological and social justice issues. The program is designed to equip participants with advanced knowledge, interdisciplinary approaches, and leadership skills necessary to drive impactful environmental initiatives in their respective regions. The in-person session was held in London at the University of Oxford, providing a platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration with experts in biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development. Blue Victoria's participation in GESA reinforced our commitment to integrating global best practices into local conservation efforts, further strengthening our impact in Lake Victoria's freshwater ecosystems.



Group photo of GESA participants 2024 at Oxford University.



During GESA event, a session on food sovereignty provided participants with the opportunity to share their local cuisines. Mr. Massaho prepared Ugali with Dagaa a staple dish, and highlighted its vital in sustaining millions of livelihood in the Great Lake Region.

F: Conference and Global Representation

1. Coalition Formation for Lake Victoria Conservation

Recognizing the transboundary nature of Lake Victoria and the shared responsibility of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda in its conservation, Blue Victoria explore the possibility of formation of a regional coalition dedicated to its protection and sustainable management. In 2024, we held preliminary discussions with Train My Generation, a local NGO found in Mfangano Island based Kenya to assess the feasibility of establishing a collaborative platform that would address common conservation challenges, strengthen policy advocacy, and enhance knowledge sharing. The conversation was held by Mark Haviland who is a Co-founder of Train My Generation.



2. East Africa Aquaculture Conference

Blue Victoria was honored to participate in the East Africa Aquaculture Conference, a significant regional event that convenes scientists, policymakers, industry players, and conservationists to discuss the latest developments in sustainable aquaculture. The conference provided a unique opportunity for us to strengthen networks, exchange ideas, and learn about emerging technologies that can enhance sustainable fish farming practices. By engaging with regional experts and stakeholders, we gained insights into innovations that can improve fish production efficiency while minimizing environmental impact.



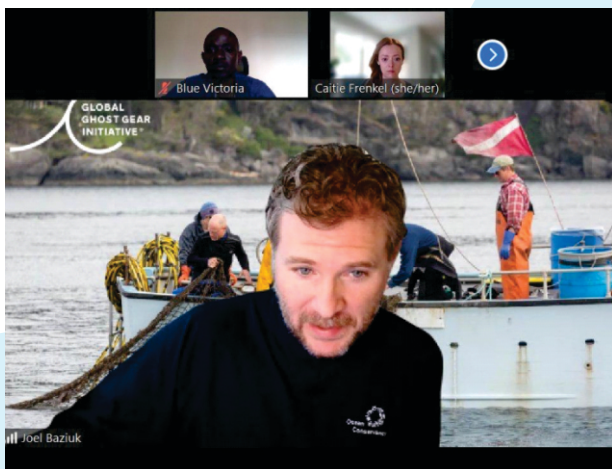
Mr. Shabani during the conference



Group photo

3. Membership in the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI)

In 2024, Blue Victoria achieved a significant milestone by officially becoming a member of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI). GGGI is the world's leading alliance dedicated to tackling the growing problem of abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ghost gear), which poses a severe threat to marine and freshwater ecosystems. Our membership in this global network allows us to contribute to and benefit from international strategies, best practices, and innovative solutions aimed at reducing ghost gear pollution in Lake Victoria. Through this initiative, Blue Victoria is committed to raising awareness Abandoned Lost Discard Fishing Gear (ALDFG), engaging local fishing communities, and implementing sustainable measures to prevent ghost gear accumulation, ultimately protecting fish stocks and maintaining the ecological balance of the lake.



Virtual meeting for joining GGGI and Official tweet for welcoming Blue Victoria as new member of GGGI

4. Featured in the KBA Newsletter #17 Edition

Blue Victoria's conservation efforts received global recognition in 2024 when we were featured in the 17th edition of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Community Newsletter. This feature highlighted our work in Mara Bay KBA, particularly our efforts in establishing a Community Conservation Area (CCA), promoting sustainable fisheries, and engaging local communities in protecting endangered fish species. Being acknowledged in an international publication further validates our impact in biodiversity conservation and strengthens our visibility in the global conservation community. This recognition encourages us to continue advocating for the protection of Lake Victoria's critical ecosystems while leveraging international partnerships to enhance our conservation initiatives.



KBA Community Newsletter - Issue 17: December 2024

Establishment of a Community Conservation Area (CCA) in Mara Bay Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), Tanzania

Author: Festus J Massaho, Executive Director, Blue Victoria



Designation of the CCA in Mara Bay as an official breeding site for endangered fish species.

Mara Bay, located in the northeastern region of Lake Victoria, is a biologically rich and ecologically significant area designated as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Despite its importance, the bay has faced increasing threats, including pollution, habitat destruction, overexploitation of fish stocks, and the impacts of climate change. To address these challenges, Blue Victoria spearheaded the establishment of a Community Conservation Area (CCA) in collaboration with local stakeholders, government bodies, and conservation partners.

Objectives



The primary aim of the initiative is to protect critically endangered fish species such as the Ningu (*Labeo victorinus*), Singidia Tilapia (*Oreochromis esculentus*), and Victoria Tilapia (*Oreochromis variabilis*) while enhancing the livelihoods of local communities. The CCA provides a framework for integrating conservation and sustainable fishing practices into the socioeconomic fabric of the Mara Bay community.

Activities and Achievements

1. Stakeholder Engagement:

We organized multiple consultation meetings with the community, local fishermen, government representatives, and conservation organizations to build consensus on the importance of protecting Mara Bay's biodiversity.

CHAPTER III

Challenges

In 2024, Blue Victoria encountered several challenges in implementing our conservation, livelihood, and advocacy initiatives. While we achieved significant milestones, we also faced obstacles that affected the sustainability, scalability, and impact of our

1. Limited Funding and Short-Term Grants

One of the biggest challenges we faced was operating under limited funding. Many of the funds we received were for a one-year cycle, whereas conservation efforts require long-term commitment to tangible and lasting outcomes. The short funding duration made it difficult to sustain ongoing projects, expand community engagement, and scale up conservation interventions.

2. Conservation as a New Concept in the Community

The idea of community-led conservation is relatively new in the Lake Victoria region, and this unfamiliarity led to misinformation and skepticism. Some community members misinterpreted our efforts, with rumors spreading that we were attempting to sell the lake rather than protect it. This misconception created resistance, making it essential to invest more in awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and stakeholder engagement.

3. Lengthy Recognition Process (CCA)

While we successfully established a Community Conservation Area (CCA) in Mara Bay, obtaining official recognition from authorities proved to be a bureaucratic challenge. The process required multiple steps, extensive documentation, and prolonged approvals, delaying the formal endorsement of the CCA. This situation emphasized the need for streamlined policies and government support for locally-led conservation initiatives.'

4. Resistance to Sustainable Fisheries Practices

While efforts were made to train fishmongers and fisheries officers on sustainable fisheries management, adoption remained slow due to economic concerns and traditional practices. Many fishers were reluctant to transition to sustainable techniques due to short-term income trade-offs and a lack of access to alternative livelihood opportunities.

5. Post Harvest Losses and Market Access Barriers

Fishmongers and small-scale processors in Mara Bay and Rukuba Island continued to face challenges in fish drying, preservation, and access to markets. While we established an innovative Dagaa fish drying facility, the demand for such facilities exceeds current capacity, requiring more investment in infrastructure, training, and technology adoption.

6. Cybersecurity Breach and Social Media Account Hijacking

In 2024, Blue Victoria faced a cybersecurity challenge when our social media accounts and official emails were hacked. The attackers demanded a ransom of \$500 in Bitcoin to restore access. Through quick intervention, we successfully recovered our official email accounts and X (formerly Twitter) account. However, our Facebook and Instagram accounts remain compromised, which has limited our ability to engage with our online community and share conservation updates.



Way Forward

To address these challenges and strengthen our impact, Blue Victoria will:

- **Seek Multi-Year Funding** – Advocate for long-term conservation funding that allows sustainable impact instead of relying on short-term grants.
- **Enhance Community Awareness** – Strengthen radio programs, village meetings, and conservation education to counter misinformation and build local support.
- **Accelerate CCA Recognition** – Engage authorities and policymakers to simplify the approval process for Community Conservation Areas.
- **Expand Conservation Infrastructure** – Scale up modern fish drying facilities to serve more fishers and enhance market access.
- **Strengthen Regional Partnerships** – Continue discussions on a regional coalition and align conservation efforts across Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda.
- **To prevent future cyber threats, we are taking the following measures:**
 - We have strengthened cybersecurity protocols, including multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all accounts.
 - We have raised awareness among staffs on best cybersecurity practices.
 - We have explored alternative platform of LinkedIn to maintain our digital presence.



Key Partners & Collaborators:

- ◆ International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN
- ◆ Hilden Charitable Fund
- ◆ Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute - TAFIRI
- ◆ CISCO Foundation
- ◆ Tanzania Local Government Authorities - LGAs
- ◆ Global Ghost Gear Initiatives - GGGI
- ◆ Serve Our Species - SOS



Blue Victoria

For blue economy & thriving ecological biodiversity

