

## Case study on NGOs' Roles on Marine Conservation and Coastal Management

### Case 2: Better Blue the Divers Alliance on Marine Conservation

#### 1. Organizational Overview

Better Blue the Divers Alliance on Marine Conservation (无境深蓝潜水员海洋保护联盟, hereinafter referred to as Better Blue) was founded in June, 2017. The founder and CEO, Miao Wang, got her master's degree on international development at University of Manchester, then continually working for international NGO and Chinese domestic NGO for more than 3 years. This work experience helped Miao Wang in setting up Better Blue with her diver friends and gained amazing achievement within one year.

Better Blue views itself as a marine conservation hub of divers and for the divers. Its slogan is dive for a better ocean. Its vision is human and the ocean can interact harmoniously through scientific and friendly approach, and its mission is to promote government, non-profits and corporates to interact healthily and systematically on marine issues.

Currently Better Blue focuses on 3 topics: cetaceans in captivity, marine litter and marine biodiversity. The projects it implements can be divided into two kinds:

- 1) Build up a marine conservation platform for diver communities and diving clubs across the country
- 2) Promote the concept of marine conservation through nationwide public service advertisement and product design.

#### 2. Roles Analysis

The roles of Better Blue on marine environmental protection can be catalogued into 2 types, enabler role and expert role, which is in line with its two kinds of projects.

##### 1) Enabler Role

When works as a platform or hub for divers, Better Blue is playing the enabler role, which is regarded as its first important role.

Better Blue has local diver communities in more than 30 cities. With only 3 full time staff, Better Blue have had more than 180 public interest activities done by its local

diver communities within one year throughout China. The activities include: reef check, undersea wastes collection, deep blue movie show, deep blue lecture, zero-waste market and theme salon. To achieve this success, Better Blue provide following support to its local partners:

a) Network Creation

Better Blue has more than 100 core diver volunteers and more than 500 general volunteers, as well as 30-40 diving club members. These local members formed 30+ city level diver communities. They communicate regularly and implement nationwide activities together, such as “Clean Seas” campaign in February, 2017. This is a worldwide campaign initiated by United Nations Environmental Department, and Better Blue worked as its China local partner. During the campaign, the celebrity endorsed campaign posters were exhibited in local diver communities’ activity space (café, bar, bookstore etc.) and the movie, *Plastic Ocean*, was showed for 25 times in 18 cities.



The celebrity endorsed posters of “Clean Seas” Campaign

b) Tool Provision

Better Blue provide both technical tools and material tools to its local members. It developed project manual or SOP for some brand projects, then the local diver community can follow the SOP to organized its activity handily.

For example, in the “Clean Sea” campaign, besides public service advertisement, Better Blue mobilized more than 40 local diver communities to implement coastal cleanup both on the beach and under the sea in more than 20 cities. Better Blue developed methodology on undersea wastes cleanup alongside the matured beach cleanup method, then provided it to the local diver communities as well as marine wastes investigation toolkit (ICC card), gloves, scales, garbage bags (both on beach and undersea uses) and other equipment.

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Better Blue have also organized its local diver members to participant in Reef Check. In 2017, they participated in reef check in Guangdong Province. In 2018, Better Blue is the strategic partner of reef check in Guangxi Province, which is hosted by School of Marine Science, Guangxi University. They will provide reef check technical training, volunteer suits, ship, oxygen bottles and other necessary equipment to the diver volunteers.



Undersea marine wastes cleanup



Reef check in Guangdong Province

### c) Capacity Building

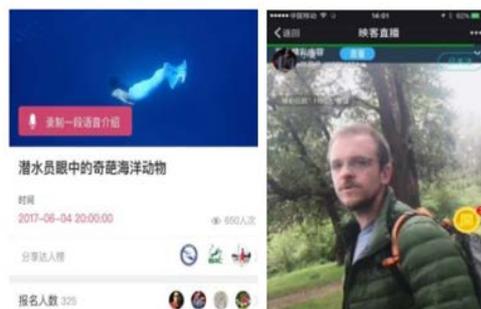
Better Blue takes a lot of effort on capacity building for local diver communities. It uses two approaches: onsite training and online education. In 2017, Better Blue supported more than 30 divers to participate in the iSeahorse Seahorse Ambassadors Training, National Marine Conservation Pilot Training, Red Sea Ecological Liveaboard Training, Carol Conservation Course and so on. The divers who received training will further become trainers for the local diver communities.

Better Blue invites experts from NGOs, government agencies and academia to deliver online lectures to its local members. The topics cover endangered species, marine wastes, Leave No Trace Traveling and so forth. In 2018, Better Blue set up a cooperation with PADI, the world biggest divers training organization, regarding online training. Better Blue will develop online courses and give monthly online training to PADI Chinese members. So far, more than 3000 divers have joined in the online lectures and courses.

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Seahorse Ambassadors Training



Online lecture and courses

## 2) Expert Role

Better Blue was very good at using celebrity endorsement and launching nationwide public service advertisement. Some of the advertisement includes key message on marine conservation, such as endangered species conservation, marine plastic pollution etc.

Better Blue also cooperate with some companies to make jointly-designed products. The company will donate a small percentage of its profit from selling these products to Better Blue, meanwhile the consumers of this products will learn some knowledge on marine conservation through using the products. This kind of cause marketing serves two ends for Better Blue: to raise money and to do public environmental education. On the environmental education end, there is some message on marine conservation on the product label or outer packing, and the consumers can easily learn the information. For example, Better Blue cooperated with a red wine company to produce a set of jointly-designed wines. The labels include designed pictures of endangered marine species and a QR code. The costumers can scan the QR code to learn more about that specific marine animal.



The PBA on seahorse conservation located at Beijing subway station



The jointly-designed red wines showed at Asian Diving Expo during Beijing Ocean Week

### 3. Conclusion

Better Blue defined itself as an enabler and hub of diver community. Its strategy is to empower the diver communities and the diving clubs, then to do marine conservation together. The main job of Better Blue is to manage the diver community network and provide necessary support to the local communities in this network. Therefore, the enabler role is the primary role, and the expert role is the secondary roles. The roles and their respective activities can be summarised in following chart:

Name	Roles		Activities	Description
<b>Better Blue</b>	Primary	<b>Enabler</b>	Network Creation	Coordinate diver communities and diving clubs scattered in 30+ cities to organize local coastal cleanup, reef check, movie show, marine wastes DIY and other activities
			Tool Provision	Developed project manual or SOP for some brand projects; provide methodology and equipment for activities
			Capacity Building	Support the member divers to attend trainings on marine conservation, develop online lectures and courses
	Secondary	<b>Expert</b>	Public service advertisement	Broadly disseminate key message on marine conversation to the public through PSA
			Jointly-designed products	Deliver knowledge on marine conversation to the customers of the products

