



## GOAL 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

'Cross the river in a crowd, and the crocodile won't eat you.'  
[proverb from Madagascar]

### One day spent with Pascal from Madagascar

Salama! No anarako Pascal. It's nice of you to visit me here, even though it is so early in the morning. This is the beach, where I spend most of my time every day. It is very close to our little village 'Anakao' here in the south of Madagascar.

Madagascar is an island full of adventures. It has many bays like this one here. In the past many pirates used to hide in them. Madagascar has the most exciting pirate stories!

Today I am going to go fishing with my cousins Pali and Marael. Fishing is a job for us men! Meanwhile the girls collect sea urchins in the shallow water. The sea urchins can be spooned out and eaten. My little sister loves them. I prefer eating fish – my favourite fish are the little sardines. If you think fishing is really easy then you are very much mistaken! It is a lot of hard work. Yesterday when we were around the bonfire we had to spend a long time mending all the holes in the fishing nets, it took us hours. I also have to make sure I take good care of my pirogue. A pirogue is a little boat which looks much like a canoe.

I can remember when my father gave me my first pirogue, it was a birthday present three years ago. For months I practised steering it along the shallow water up and down the beach. My father said that it would be some time before I would be allowed to take it far out into the sea. Now I have got a bigger pirogue although it is not as big as the ones grown ups use, but it is fine for me, my cousins and I fit in pretty well.

My father always talks about how this island used to be a real paradise. The nets used to be filled with all different kinds of fish. You used to be able to feed a whole family when you returned from your fishing journeys. Nowadays fishing is only a hobby for us boys. There aren't very many species left and my net has never really been fully filled.

That is probably because the big fishing fleets that pass here every day take so many fish. Their fishing nets are as big as five football fields! So it is no surprise they take away most of our fish! They sell their fish for very little money abroad. Sadly, they also catch other animals with those big nets, such as dolphins or turtles which often get injured and just thrown back into the sea.

Look over there! Can you see the little bright dots in the distance floating above the water? That is a flock of birds – a good sign! Where the birds fly over the sea, that is where all the fish are and that is where I am going to throw my fishing net out in a minute. Before I go out to sea I want to tell you my wish for the future. I wish for a world where people took much more care of nature and particularly our oceans. The oceans are the nutritional base for our fish and other sea water life.





## Life below water — Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, reduce pollution

The ocean is by far the largest habitat on earth. We should have called this planet 'Ocean' and not 'Earth', because 70 percent of this planet is covered with water. Without the oceans there would not be life; they are just as essential as the atmosphere. That is why we should take good care of this sensitive habitat.

The oceans and many marine animals are already endangered today because of the way they are treated by humans. Sadly, we have been using the oceans as the biggest dumping site on earth. Every hour an estimated 675 tons of rubbish is dumped in the sea and half of that is plastic. It looks as though this waste simply disappears somewhere in the sea but marine pollution has severe consequences. Plastic takes years to disintegrate and releases toxic substances into our environment. Plastic particles clog the digestive system of marine animals such as dolphins, fish and water birds, this in turn leads them to starve because they have tummies full of plastic and there is no room for food.

But plastic isn't the only problem, oil is equally bad. 6,000 tons of oil end up in our oceans every year. Oil tanker accidents happen frequently, for example, the one in 1989 when Exxon Valdez, an oil tanker, owned by the Exxon Shipping Company, struck a reef and spilled 37,000 tons of crude oil into the ocean. The huge oil slick killed an incredible number of sea dwellers. This disastrous accident clotted the feathers of water birds and caused irreversible damage on our environment. Goal 14 stipulates that all kinds of sea pollution should be substantially reduced by 2025.

Another big problem we face is that our oceans are being fished to the point of exhaustion. That is not the fault of Pascal or other small fishermen but it's the huge fishing fleets that fish more than 80,000 tons of fish in a year. Pascal is right, the fishing nets are up to 23,000 square meters big, that is as big as 5 football fields. Therefore, they do not only catch fish for food but many other marine animals are also caught up in the big fishing nets. World-wide up to 30 million tons of unwanted sea animals a year, such as juvenile fish, sharks and turtles are captured and killed or injured. They often perish torturously in the nets.

Goal 14 says that by 2020 we should regulate all fishing activities efficiently and that over-fishing, illegal or unregulated fishing as well as destructive fishing practices should be stopped. The oceans should be healthy and productive again so that they can also provide for small fishermen, such as Pascal and his friends.

### What can we do, to help achieve this goal?

- When you go buy fish, make sure you know where it comes from. There are different types of quality marks that guarantee, for example, the protection of dolphins or state that only fisher nets of a particular size are used. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has a fish guide. You can also get it as an app for your smartphone: [fischratgeber.wwf.at](https://www.fischratgeber.wwf.at)
- If you separate your waste properly, it can be disposed more efficiently and recycled properly. You should also dispose of cooking oil separately, it shouldn't just be put down the drain. One litre of oil can contaminate 1 million litres of water. If you dispose cooking oil in visibly labelled containers and take them to a waste collection centre they can be used to help produce biodiesel fuel.
- With a WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) sponsorship you can give whales, dolphins, sea turtles and other sea dwellers a better future. Maybe your school class would like you to take up a sponsorship together and give a presentation on the topic 'sea life' in your school. You can raise the money together! You can find more information on: [meere.patenschaft.at](https://www.meere.patenschaft.at)

**Metin (14) from Bad Gleichenberg, Styria:** 'I looked at a documentary about whale culling. It was horrible. I think everybody should see this movie!'

**Vanessa (15) old from Lienz, East Tyrol:** 'The WWF have a lot of campaigns that I like to support. I collect signatures for petitions at my school. If I can get enough signatures, we can really make a difference!'