

Zanzibar Lagoon Project

The Jambiani lagoon as a sustainable habitat

The NGO marinecultures.org has been developing projects in the Jambiani lagoon on the east coast of Zanzibar for ten years. Our goals: to protect the sea and to strengthen the people. We are looking for partners for the development of a comprehensive lagoon project. We want to achieve a sustainable management of the lagoon ecosystem in which all actors – the local population, the authorities as well as the tourism industry and tourists take responsibility to secure the basic needs of the coastal inhabitants.

Background

The inhabitants of Zanzibar's coasts still live mainly from fishing and collecting sea animals. But the marine ecosystem on Zanzibar's coasts is coming under increasing pressure: overfishing threatens livelihoods, climate change damages coral reefs, population growth and the rapidly expanding tourism industry are exacerbating the pressure on environment and scarce resources.

The initiators of marinecultures.org have been present in the village of Jambiani on the east coast of Zanzibar since 2000. They founded marinecultures.org (MC) in 2008 and registered it as an NGO in Zanzibar in 2009. They were able to follow the development of Jambiani for almost twenty years and for the past ten years mc projects have made small but noticeable contributions to positive change.

MC supports the people of Jambiani in the development and application of sustainable methods for the use of the sea and carries out projects for the protection of marine resources in cooperation with local people and authorities. Ecologically sustainable aquaculture initiatives such as sponge farming provide coastal women with alternative sources of income. Marine conservation initiatives such as the establishment of protected areas help conserving fish stocks.

However, over the years the condition of the Jambiani lagoon has deteriorated despite the various projects. In addition to the growing pressure on the ecosystem, one reason for this deterioration is the lack of cooperation, coordination and above all a common vision among the various stakeholders.

MC has been able to realise numerous projects, build a large network of partners and gain the trust of the authorities. In order for the development work to bear fruit in the long term, gears must be shifted to launch a more comprehensive lagoon project.

Project development of marinecultures.org

To date, MC's work has focused on the development of projects in two main areas: sustainable aquaculture and marine conservation. An overview:

Cultivating sponges

While the farming of marine organisms was not entirely new to Zanzibar (the cultivation of sea grass has been practiced for decades), MC has pioneered the cultivation of sponges in East Africa. The work MC has carried out includes:

- Identification of locally occurring sponge species and tests regarding their cultivability and commercial suitability
- Establishment of a breeding stock with suitable sponge species to cultivate small sponges (seedlings) for outgrowth in new farms
- Establishment of eleven sponge farms, where the sponges are outgrown and cared for by the farmers
- Training of 13 female farmers who after one year of training, were able to set up their own farm and secure an income that supports their families
- Development of a local market where farmers sell their sponges directly to hotels and souvenir shops

Protecting coral reefs

Together with our partner coralreefcare.com and the people of Jambiani MC is implementing measures to protect threatened coral reefs. The work MC has carried out includes:

- Establishment of a coral farm in the lagoon of Jambiani where fragments of opportunity are cultivated, methods are developed and tested and farmers are trained
- Reforestation of damaged reefs with cultivated corals involving local stakeholders such as boat captains and fishermen
- Building artificial reefs by reviving dead reefs or exposing reef balls in sandy seabeds where marine animals find shelter and a habitat
- Reducing anchor damage at popular dive sites by installing anchor buoys to allow boatmen to attach their boats without damaging corals
- Monitoring local coral reefs and looking out for signs of coral bleaching, pests and illegal fishing practices in order to take timely protective measures

Conserving fish stocks

MC is committed to the establishment of no-fishing zones. Experience with existing protected areas has shown that fish stocks can recover and yields may significantly increase when no-fishing zones or periods are respected. The work MC has carried out in cooperation with Blue Ventures includes:

- Reintroduction of the former octopus protection periods in Jambiani and establishment of a catch monitoring system
- Establishment of an octopus management training for local fishing committees, fishermen and local authorities

Raise awareness/cooperations

MC projects and educational events raise awareness among the local community and government agencies for the importance of a sustainable utilisation of marine resources.

MC is in constant dialogue with a broad network comprising Universities, government agencies, local communities, dive operators, hotels and other NGOs. Most projects are carried out in cooperation with other organisations such as Jambabeco (Zanzibar), Zoo Basel (Switzerland), Coralreef Care (Netherlands), Mwambao (Zanzibar) and Blue Ventures (UK).

Recently, MC has been involved in the documentary „Bahari Salama“ which will be screened at film festivals across the world and hopefully raise public awareness among the broader East African population via local TV screenings.

A long term concept consolidates the aforementioned projects and moves the focus on the Jambiani lagoon as a whole.

Jambiani lagoon as a sustainable common

We are looking for partners to work with us toward the sustainable management of the lagoon ecosystem. The Jambiani lagoon stretches over 15 kilometres of coastline, including outer reefs, internal reef patches, sea grass fields, aquaculture farms and fishing grounds. Jambiani has a rapidly growing population of currently 9000 inhabitants. For years this has been accompanied and fuelled by the expansion of tourism bringing more hotels, restaurants, diving boats and kite surfers every year.

The project aspires to preserve the lagoon ecosystem while considering the basic needs of all stakeholders. MC is convinced that a long-term survival of the Jambiani lagoon and its inhabitants in the face of climate change, population growth and tourism can only be guaranteed if all activities and efforts are coordinated. There must be a common vision for living and working in

this fascinating lagoon that is primarily driven by local stakeholders. MC can catalyse but realises that such a comprehensive project exceeds its and other local organisations' current capacities.

MC is therefore looking for partners with whom such a project can be developed and operated on a long-term basis. A cooperation with zoos is an obvious and promising possibility. Similar projects at the interface of environmental protection, species protection and the coexistence of humans with other species have already been realised by zoos in cooperation with local organisations and NGOs. Examples: Zoo Basel with marine protected areas in the Mediterranean and the anti-poaching project in Kenya; Zoo Zurich with its nature conservation commitment in the Masoala region in Madagascar and the Kaeng Krachan National Park in Thailand.

A vision for the Jambiani Lagoon

Let's create a sustainable Jambiani lagoon for people, marine animals and plants. Let's support the local community to protect and sustainably manage their natural resources. Let's make the Jambiani lagoon a model for other coastal areas in Zanzibar.

How can we achieve this vision? Are you interested in joining us on this journey? Would you like more information about the project? Then please contact us:

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