

Independent sponge farming on the home stretch

Despite the current problems with the sponges, which we hopefully will get under control soon, the sponge farmers' cooperative was successfully established. It is called Ushirika wa Wakulima wa Sponji Zanzibar and is an important step towards the farmers' independence from marinecultures.org. In March the minister of Blue Economy & Fisheries paid us a visit, and Ali Mahmudi and Nasir Hassan were able to present their projects and lay the foundation for a more intensive cooperation in the future.

Our coral farmers were also able to take an important step towards improved networking on the island. They are currently working on Mnemba Island together with four local coral farmers trained by us. All these are important steps, which increase confidence, self-perception, and joy of the crew.

Thomas Sacchi
President

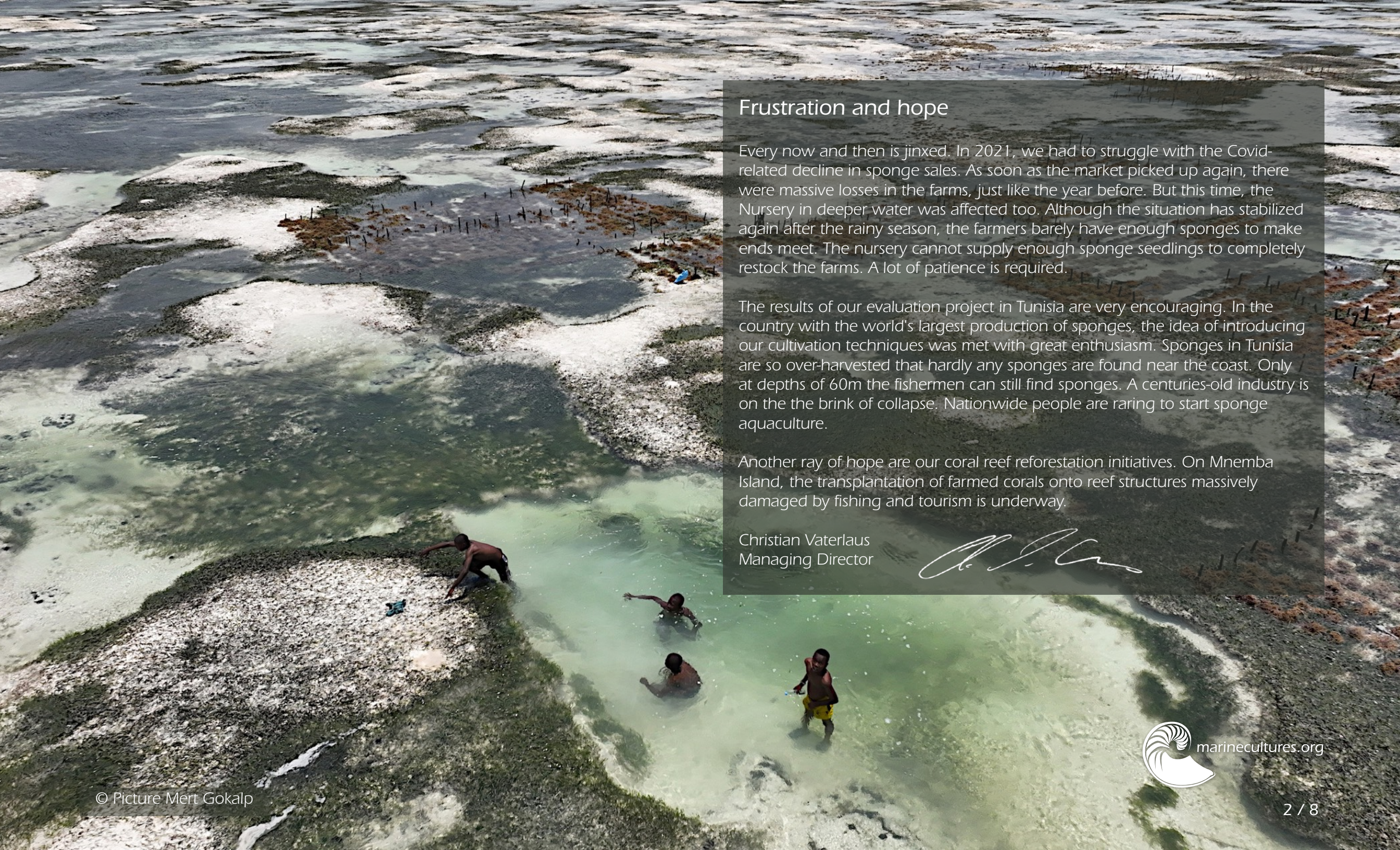


Annual Report 2021/22



marinecultures.org

Aquaculture & Marine Conservation




Frustration and hope

Every now and then is jinxed. In 2021, we had to struggle with the Covid-related decline in sponge sales. As soon as the market picked up again, there were massive losses in the farms, just like the year before. But this time, the Nursery in deeper water was affected too. Although the situation has stabilized again after the rainy season, the farmers barely have enough sponges to make ends meet. The nursery cannot supply enough sponge seedlings to completely restock the farms. A lot of patience is required.

The results of our evaluation project in Tunisia are very encouraging. In the country with the world's largest production of sponges, the idea of introducing our cultivation techniques was met with great enthusiasm. Sponges in Tunisia are so over-harvested that hardly any sponges are found near the coast. Only at depths of 60m the fishermen can still find sponges. A centuries-old industry is on the the brink of collapse. Nationwide people are raring to start sponge aquaculture.

Another ray of hope are our coral reef reforestation initiatives. On Mnemba Island, the transplantation of farmed corals onto reef structures massively damaged by fishing and tourism is underway.

Christian Vaterlaus
Managing Director



Activity: Sponge Farming

The sponge farming project is slowly but surely coming to its planned conclusion. The women farmers have established their sponge cooperative which is recognized by the government. Trainings for record keeping are planned - an important aspect since the bureaucratic requirements are challenging and almost everybody has little schooling.

The farmers' autonomy is steadily increasing. Aspects such as training, processing of sponges, and order management are largely done independently by the women. Interventions on the part of marinecultures.org are becoming less necessary.

The recent sponge die-off and farm restocking issues continue to keep us on our toes. We are still in the dark about the actual origin of the die-off and the farmers can't do more than intensify cleaning to increase the sponges' chance of survival. More intensive labor is not very attractive in view of the massive loss of income that some are experiencing.

Fortunately, starting 2023 an international research consortium will spend two years studying the water quality in the Jambiani lagoon with respect to seagrass and coral health. Pollution, nutrients and contaminants, pathogens and everything else that is important for a healthy ecosystem will be studied. Hopefully, this will provide insight into causes of the sponge die-offs. The research results will benefit the local population, who depend on healthy marine habitats.



Activity: Coral reef Restoration

Our coral farm produces continuously and approximately 150 corals are transplanted weekly onto damaged reef stretches in the lagoon, provided the underwater drilling machine is not broken again. Initial damage from net fishing has occurred, but the coral team is now trying to work out solutions with the responsible fishers. Our crew has also visited local school classes several times this year to present their work to the children and teachers and to teach them about the importance of corals for the marine ecosystem.

With the local efforts progressing so well, we are focusing more and more on scaling up in the region. The one-month intensive training of four new coral farmers for Mnemba Island was a great success. They independently operate the Mnemba farm which is the second of its kind on Zanzibar that marinecultures.org has helped establishing. By the end of the year, marinecultures.org will have trained four more farmers for the Linda Bahari project in Matemwe. The construction of the third Zanzibari coral farm in Matemwe is already under way.

For 2023, marinecultures.org has been commissioned as a subcontractor by the World Conservation Society (WCS) to establish two additional coral reef reforestation projects in Pemba and Tanga

Activity: Fisheries Management

Our efforts to motivate the two fishing committees to enforce local management of fish and octopus stocks are a Sisyphean struggle. The resistance of the local fishermen for protection measures is fierce. Among the octopus fishers, it is mainly the young freedivers who oppose closed seasons. They want to earn fast money and do not see that catch reductions in the short-term will lead to healthy octopus stocks and increased catches in the future.

Covid related losses and a rapidly rising inflation increase the pressure on natural resources everywhere. More deforestation is taking place and for the first time in years we are seeing an increasing numbers of fishing boats as well as fishermen per boat. Those are signs of desperation - development going in the wrong direction.

A glimmer of hope is the new Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries where clever minds are working professionally to come up with promising new regulations. But it is not yet clear if conservation efforts will actually be increased in the field or only on paper. The ministry is increasingly seeking our advice which is a good sign.

Organization

marinecultures.org is a Swiss non-profit organization. Registered as an association in the trade register office of the Kanton Zurich (UID CHE-114.582.081). We are re-registered as an NGO with the Zanzibar Revolutionary Government in 2018 with the new No. Z0000008818. Our Tax Identification Number (TIN) is: 110-483-058.

We are financed by membership fees, donations and project support contributions. Donations are tax deductible in Switzerland.

Bank: Postfinance, Bern, Switzerland Account No: 85-51774-9, IBAN: CH77 0900 0000 8505 1774 9, BIC/SWIFT: POFICHBEXXX

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In the picture: Ali Mahmudi Ali, Local Project Manager



Finance review (CHF)	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
Income			
Members	6'199	6'550	6'186
Donations	26'475	43'522	19'520
Grants	44'357	29'365	57'098
Others	17'025	3'695	16'029
Special Reserves	30'000	30'000	
In-house efforts	61'686	52'806	52'346
Total Income	155'743	135'478	151'179
Expenditure			
Projects *	124'057	112'701	122'667
Governance **	8'054	10'291	11'444
Total Expenditure	132'111	122'992	134'111
Increase/Decrease Income (Ref. previous year)	91.2%	93.1%	109.0%
Percentage of governance **	6.1%	8.4%	8.5%

* incl. 90% of the managing director's salary and social costs

** incl. 10% of the managing director salary and social costs

For detailed financial and audit report 2021/22 see www.marinecultures.org

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Aquaculture & Marine Conservation

Who we are

marinecultures.org is a small non-profit organization on the island of Zanzibar; organized as an association and founded in Zurich, Switzerland in 2008. We are financed by membership fees, donations and project grants.

Why we are involved

Overexploitation of the seas destroys the ecological balance and coastal populations lose their livelihood. Our goal is to improve the quality of life of the population and protect natural resources.

What we are committed to

We want to preserve the diversity of marine fauna and create sustainable jobs through the development of aquacultures.

How we get involved

As an alternative to overfishing the oceans, marinecultures.org researches and develops ecologically compatible aquacultures in cooperation with the population.

Where we get involved

The focus of our activities is in Jambiani, a fishing village on the east coast of Zanzibar. We also operate individual projects on other coasts in Tanzania and East Africa.

Verein marinecultures.org

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