



marinecultures.org

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Coral reef restoration and aquaculture for humans and oceans

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THANK YOU FOR WALKING THE PATH WITH US

Facing New Challenges

To address upcoming challenges, the Board decided, with the appointment of Fabienne Addor as Managing Director, to slightly expand the scope of marinecultures.org. In her first year, Fabienne has already made strong progress: we secured a three-year project agreement with Zoo Basel on sexual coral propagation and the development of an information centre. With the support of Blue Ventures, we will also establish a community-based fisheries management programme over the next three years. Both initiatives are key steps toward making our coral restoration efforts sustainable in the long term.

We are now looking east with concern: according to researchers, a record-strength El Niño is currently developing off the coast of South America. This is expected to lead to dangerously high sea temperatures in East Africa in the coming spring. After only three years of recovery, coral reefs are once again facing a major test: will our adapted restoration methods prove effective, and will newly planted corals show greater resilience?

Thomas Sacchi
President



Team meeting and handover from Christian Vaterlaus



President Thomas Sacchi, Managing Director Fabienne Addor,
Board Member Lucas Rachow

OUR MISSION

marinecultures.org supports coastal communities in Zanzibar in developing sustainable marine livelihoods and protecting ocean ecosystems.

Through aquaculture, coral restoration, and community-led conservation, we create alternative incomes, strengthen marine biodiversity, and build local capacity in close collaboration with communities, authorities, and partners.

BEING & DOING

WHO

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

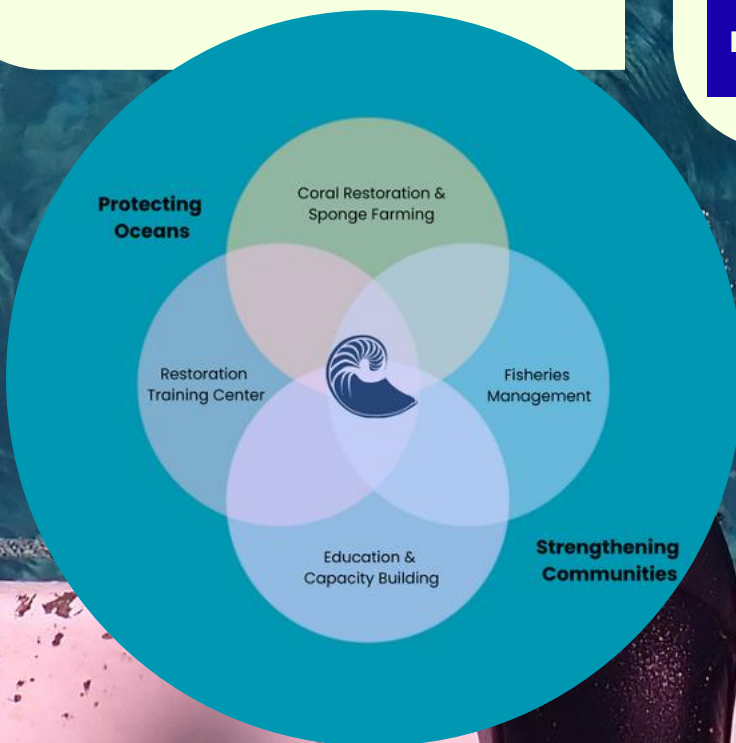
Overexploitation of the seas destroys the ecological balance and coastal populations lose their livelihood. Our goal is to improve the quality of life of the population and protect natural resources.

WHAT

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

HOW

Alternatives to overfishing the oceans, marinecultures.org researches and develops ecologically compatible aquaculture in cooperation with the population.



2025

A YEAR IN REVIEW

New Beginning, same mission!

Managing Director Christian Vaterlaus retired in 2025 and officially handed over leadership to Fabienne Addor (Switzerland). Following three months of close accompaniment, Fabienne gained in-depth knowledge and a strong understanding of the work marinecultures.org carries out across its projects.

Together with Project Manager Ali Mahmudi, co-founder Connie Sacchi, and President Thomas Sacchi, marinecultures.org successfully completed its first year under the new leadership team. Several new projects were launched, and additional team members from Zanzibar joined the organisation. The year was packed, and we definitely had our hands full, sometimes juggling more than a few coral fragments at once!

Marinecultures.org continues its work with the same mission and long-term commitment. Thank you for staying with us!



UPDATE ON CORAL RESTORATION

Coral reefs remain severely affected by the mass bleaching event of 2024. Despite these challenges, the marinecultures.org team continues its restoration efforts with persistence and dedication.

The team conducts four dives per week in the Jambiani Lagoon, working across:

- the coral nursery
- the sponge nursery
- coral transplantation sites

Additionally, **70 artificial Reef Stars** were planted in the Jambiani lagoon, and the **Adopt-A-Reef-Star** initiative was developed in partnership with a local dive center.

In 2025, the team operated fully independently for the first time, facing early-season heat challenges and launching **five** intensive 10-day

Coral Restoration Trainings

together with conservation partners and a new 3-months pilot phase project with Blue Ventures (see page 14). These will be among the reasons why we did *not* reach our outplanting target of the year.

While we did not reach our goal of 10,000 outplants this year, we are proud to report that **4,707** corals were successfully transplanted and 70 Reef Stars were established, hosting around **700** corals.

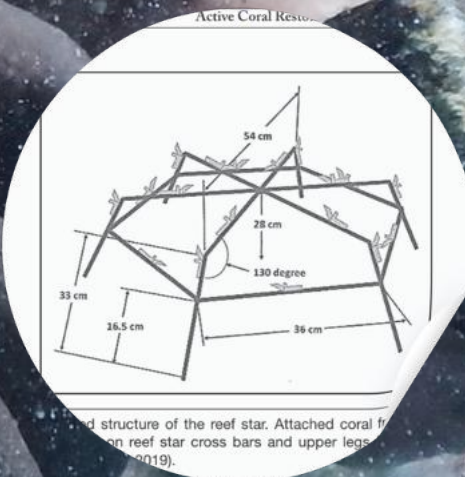
We are now **refining our methods** to close remaining gaps and further strengthen our reef restoration impact.

Also, in 2025, marinecultures.org successfully **implemented and operated the 3rd coral nursery** and conservation projects outside Jambiani, including Musuka (Pemba), Kigombe, and Boma (Tanzania), together with valuable partners working in conservation.

Teams from these partners were trained at our Jambiani training center and operate the farms under our direct guidance and supervision.



Corals from the nursery ready for transplanting onto the reef.



Coral fragments grow on Reef Stars, providing shelter and breeding grounds for fish.



Harvested rope nursery ready for transplanting

marinecultures.org

New Coral Nursery

IN BOMA, TANZANIA

In March 2025, marinecultures.org, together with Mwambao Coastal Community Network, **successfully launched a coral restoration nursery** in Boma. A total of 40 coral tables were installed, connected by a rope nursery, and populated with Corals of Opportunity (COOs) to maintain genetic diversity and support natural reproduction.

Three local coral divers were trained at our Jambiani Training Center and are now fully integrated into the project. All materials were sourced locally, supporting the regional economy.

This is the **third** nursery outside Jambiani that marinecultures.org has helped establish **within 2 years**. Partner NGOs and their teams were trained to operate the nurseries independently, with our team conducting bi-monthly visits during the first year in 2025 for guidance and monitoring (applies for 2 out of 3 nurseries).

After setup, the nursery continued to be stocked, a longterm maintenance plan was implemented, and coral transplantation onto degraded reef structures began successfully after 6–9 months.

The project focuses on regenerating damaged reefs, maintaining genetic diversity, and strengthening local restoration capacity. By January 2026, all three nurseries were successfully fully handed over to our partners – mission accomplished!



Installing a rope nursery between coral tables.



Coral tables are in the water and are now being equipped.

LARVAL PROPAGATION

NEW IN-HOUSE RESTORATION PROJECT

Sexual reproduction of corals is a key component of sustainable reef restoration. In the Western Indian Ocean, however, there is still limited data on coral spawning patterns, making it difficult to support this process effectively.

In 2025, marinecultures.org, in collaboration with marine biologist **Dr. Ashlee Lillis from Sound Ocean Science**, initiated a monitoring programme with monthly night dives and a coral table equipped with spawning traps to determine spawning times of individual species in Zanzibar.

This work has already led to the first documented coral spawning events of *Galaxea* sp., **providing critical insights for future restoration efforts.**

By collecting gametes and supporting fertilisation, we aim to significantly increase coral recruitment compared to natural processes alone.

The project marks the start of a three-year programme (launched in October 2025), supported by **Zoo Basel**.

It complements our existing fragmentation approach by strengthening genetic diversity and resilience of restored reefs. While fragmentation delivers faster results, sexual propagation provides long-term ecological stability.

As part of this initiative, an **educational information center** will be established in Jambiani. We plan to move in by mid-2026. The centre will serve local communities, schools, and visitors, **raising awareness of coral reef ecosystems.** In particular, visitors will have the opportunity to explore a real laboratory setting and learn how corals reproduce sexually. The goal is to make our restoration work accessible and tangible.

We are excited and proud to be among the pioneers of this new era of coral reef restoration in the WIO.

In collaboration with



PROJECT OBJECTIVES



Regularly monitor a diversity of coral species for spawning timing, at multiple sites



Apply camera trap methods to detect spawning events and document precise timing



Provide native language training and education to local scientists and restoration groups



Create a coral spawning predictions calendar for Zanzibar



Identify spawning sites suitable for future gamete collection and larval propagation

LARVAL PROPAGATION CAPACITY BUILDING

A key part of the project is to train our team. We teach what is larval propagation, why it is important, how to conduct observations, how to use the cameras, how to store the data and much more. For the team, an exciting but challenging period has begun.



Gamete traps are placed over corals to collect spawning material, which typically occurs 4-8 nights after full moon. The coral tables need regular maintenance, and the traps must be checked frequently for gametes by our team..

Training Session

— Coral Gamete Trap Use

Presented by Dr. Ashlee Lillis,
Sound Ocean Science



As part of our **Larval Propagation capacity building**, Sound Ocean Science conducts regular **training sessions** to make our team experts.. Here are some insights..



Lengo letu – Kujua wakati matumbawe yanazaa ili tuweze kukusanya kwa ajili ya kuzaliana.

Solution: gamete traps Mitego ya gameti

GAMETI = MBEGU (MAYAI NA/AU MANII)



Lengo letu – Kujua wakati matumbawe yanazaa ili tuweze kukusanya kwa ajili ya kuzaliana.

Mitego ya gameti

Step 1. Bring camera (date/time set) & blue bag



Blue bag should have extra tubes and plenty of caps, as well as cleaning brushes for the mitego.

Coral Restoration Training

Since the launch of our Coral Restoration Training Program in our base, a total of **52 active coral restorers from the region have been trained** in advanced, efficient, and cost-effective coral reef restoration techniques.

In 2025 alone, **20 local and international participants** completed our training program. Altogether, we conducted **five intensive 10-day coral restoration courses** at our training center.

The participants, from organisations such as Mwambao, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and Ocean Without Borders, are now applying their newly acquired skills across different regions of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), multiplying the impact of our restoration efforts.



COMMUNITY GROUP TRAININGS

In 2025, marinecultures.org carried out **two major community trainings on coral reef restoration**: one in Msuka, Pemba (July) and one in Kigombe, Mainland (October), in collaboration with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and local partners.

Each training involved 22–30 participants, including community members, local authorities, coral restorers, and partner teams.

The trainings combined theory sessions on reef ecology, restoration

methods, and site management with hands-on practical exercises underwater. Participants worked directly with the local community to apply the Reef Star method and transplant Corals of Opportunity. In total, **58 Reef Stars were installed** across both sites.

By actively involving community members in both planning and fieldwork, local knowledge and capacity in reef restoration were strengthened, responsibilities shared, and a sustainable foundation for ongoing coral restoration in Pemba and Kigombe was established.

The goal: to empower the local community in restoring damaged coral reefs – through knowledge, hands-on practice, and shared responsibility.



Community members were trained in Reef Star restoration techniques, learning how to properly plant and secure coral fragments on the artificial reef structures



Four women from the local community actively participated in Reef Star restoration work, contributing directly to coral transplantation and nursery maintenance

UPDATE ON SPONGE FARMING

2025 marked the **first year of independent management** of the sponge farm by the cooperative **Ushirika ya Wakulima wa Sponji Zanzibar**.

While the cooperative now manages daily operations, it still relies on marinecultures.org for market access and sales in tourist shops. Key challenges are:

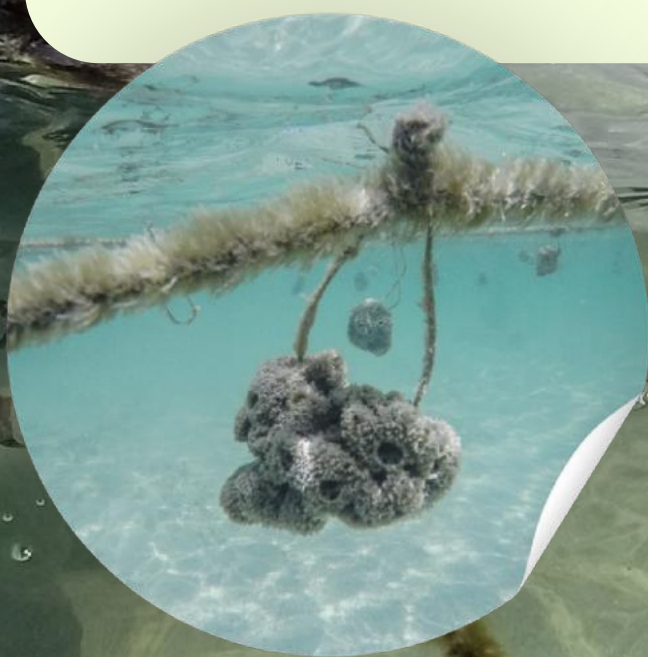
- Limited access to hotels for local vendors
- Language barriers, as many women do not speak English
- Ongoing need for support during monthly cooperative sponge sales

- Our Project Manager continues to support the cooperative in decision-making and book-keeping
- marinecultures.org also remains responsible for maintaining the sponge nursery and providing healthy seedlings to the women

Divers clean the deeper-water sponge farm once per week using scuba equipment and prepare seedlings as required.

In light of these realities, marinecultures.org has decided to **re-establish an official mandate to support Ushirika**. We recognise that gaining full independence is a long-term process requiring sustained guidance.

We are extremely proud of the women's achievements and the way they manage everything independently. A testament to local empowerment and sustainable impact!



marinecultures.org

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

NEW PARTNERSHIP

In 2025, marinecultures.org established a **strategic partnership with the organisation Blue Ventures** to advance **community-led marine conservation in Zanzibar**. Following a visit by Blue Ventures, our organisation was identified as a strong local partner with shared values and deep knowledge of the regional context.

Pilot activities, led by Project Manager Ali Mahmudi with support from newly hired Omar Haji, **engaged six local communities (Bwejuu, Kikadini, Paje, Kajengwa, Kibigija, and Kigaeni)**. Surveys, capacity building, and practical interventions were conducted to identify local fisheries management needs and the current committee structures.

For successful reef conservation, it is crucial to work closely with local fisheries committees to establish targeted no-take zones and raise community awareness about the value of coral reefs and marine conservation.

To scale up, we are expanding our team with a second local hire who will join in 2026. In partnership with Blue Ventures, these team members will play key roles in implementing the programme, supporting local communities, and will foster lasting ecological and social impact.

For a technical exchange, Ali and Omar were invited by Blue Ventures to travel to Mombasa, Kenya, to participate in a **three-day workshop on fieldwork and co-management**. Capacity building at its best!



Ali Mahmudi and Omar Moh'd Haji in Mombasa

Communities prioritise that nutritious fish are retained for local consumption, and apply methods to reduce losses from post capture handling and convert fish into shelf-stable products.

1-3 years

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

THANK YOU FOR WALKING THE PATH WITH US

Zanzibar is a place where worlds meet. Religion, tradition, deeply rooted cultures and belief systems all come together here. After more than a year of working closely with the people of this island, I still find myself having to pause, listen, and allow a very different way of thinking to reach me. That, I have come to understand, is not a challenge. It is a gift. A vast field of learning has opened up before me, one that offers something new to discover every single day.

What continues to move me most is the sense of community I witness. Decisions are made together. Values are shared. And again and again, I get goosebumps listening to our team speak, with such quiet pride, about what they are doing here: protecting and replanting the reefs so the fish will return, so the people will have more. There is something profoundly motivating about that clarity of purpose.

At the same time, I want to be honest: moving the marinecultures.org team toward new approaches is not always easy. Change does not come naturally in every context, and I have had to learn that, too. But we have found a shared foundation. If we want to bring change to our community, we must first begin with ourselves and walk ahead as an example for others.

Tuko Pamoja. We are in this together.

Fabienne Addor
Managing Director



FINANCIAL REVIEW

AS PER 31.12.2025

3-Year Overview	2023	2024	2025
Income in CHF			
<i>Membership fees</i>	6'440	6'767	9'696
<i>Donations</i>	35'086	25'315	23'867
<i>Support contributions</i>	29'310	67'379	68'448
<i>Legacies or other</i>	0	0	55'365
<i>In-house efforts</i>	35'505	25'456	14'536
Total Income	106'341	124'917	171'912
Expenses in CHF			
<i>Expense for materials goods</i>	16'522	20'347	35'919
<i>Employee expenses</i>	70'747	78'922	91'472
<i>Other operating expenses</i>	35'314	28'509	32'602
<i>Depreciation on fixed assets</i>	3'325	3'780	4'079
<i>Financial result</i>	1'994	-1'196	4'843
<i>extraordinary expenses</i>	-15'000	0	0
Total Expenses	112'902	130'362	168'915
Annual profit /-loss	-6'561	-5'445	2'997
<i>Change in income (%) compared to previous year</i>	--38%	17%	38%

The detailed audit report is also available on our website www.marinecultures.org

marinecultures.org

THANK YOU

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!



PARTNER

We would like to sincerely thank all our partners who collaborated with us throughout 2025. We are very grateful for the opportunity to work with you and for the valuable projects we share, each providing us with important experience. Thank you for trusting marinecultures.org!

Sound Ocean Science, Zoo Basel, WCS, Mwambao, Blue Ventures, Paje Adventure School, African Impact

SUPPORTER

A big thank you to:

- Urs Bürki†
- Monique Bär
- Barbara E. Albers
- Käthi Vaterlaus
- Aleyna Gönültas
- Astrid Heymann
- Marc Suter
- Margrit Sacchi
- Urs Schmid
- **All our members**

Dive Shops

- Buccaneer Diving, Zanzibar (Certifies our team)
- Ocean Wonder Diver, Zanzibar (Adopt-A-Reefstar)
- Tauchsport Käser, Switzerland (Dive equipment)

FOUNDATIONS

A big thank you to:

- Walter und Eileen Leder-Stiftung für den Tierschutz
- Peter Schupp, Oldenburg University Germany
- Mr Kahawa, Zanzibar
- AA Asbest Altlasten Sanierungen GmbH
- libC TECHNOLOGIES SA
- net working AG
- Artd Webdesign GmbH
- Noerdli.ch (Spende von elektrischen Geräten)

STAY WITH US



Contact Us

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Our Website

www.marinecultures.org

Organization marinecultures.org is a Swiss non-profit organization. Registered as an association in the trade register office of the Kanton Zürich (UID CHE-114.582.081).

We are 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.



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Bahari zenye afya kwa Jamii imara
Healthier Oceans for Stronger Communities



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