



Sea Sense Annual Report 2025

Empowering coastal communities to
conserve and protect Tanzania's
marine life

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At Sea Sense, we believe that coastal communities and marine biodiversity can thrive together. By working hand-in-hand with local communities, we are protecting Tanzania's vital marine ecosystems, safeguarding endangered species, and strengthening sustainable livelihoods.

Our commitment remains steadfast. Throughout 2025, we continued to advance community-led conservation and expand programs that support sustainable coastal livelihoods. We recognize our responsibility not only to the marine environment, but also to the people whose lives and well-being depend on it.

Through collaboration, innovation, and dedication, we are creating meaningful, lasting change across Tanzania's coastline.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our partners, supporters, and coastal communities. Together, we are making a measurable difference for people, marine wildlife, and the future of our ocean.

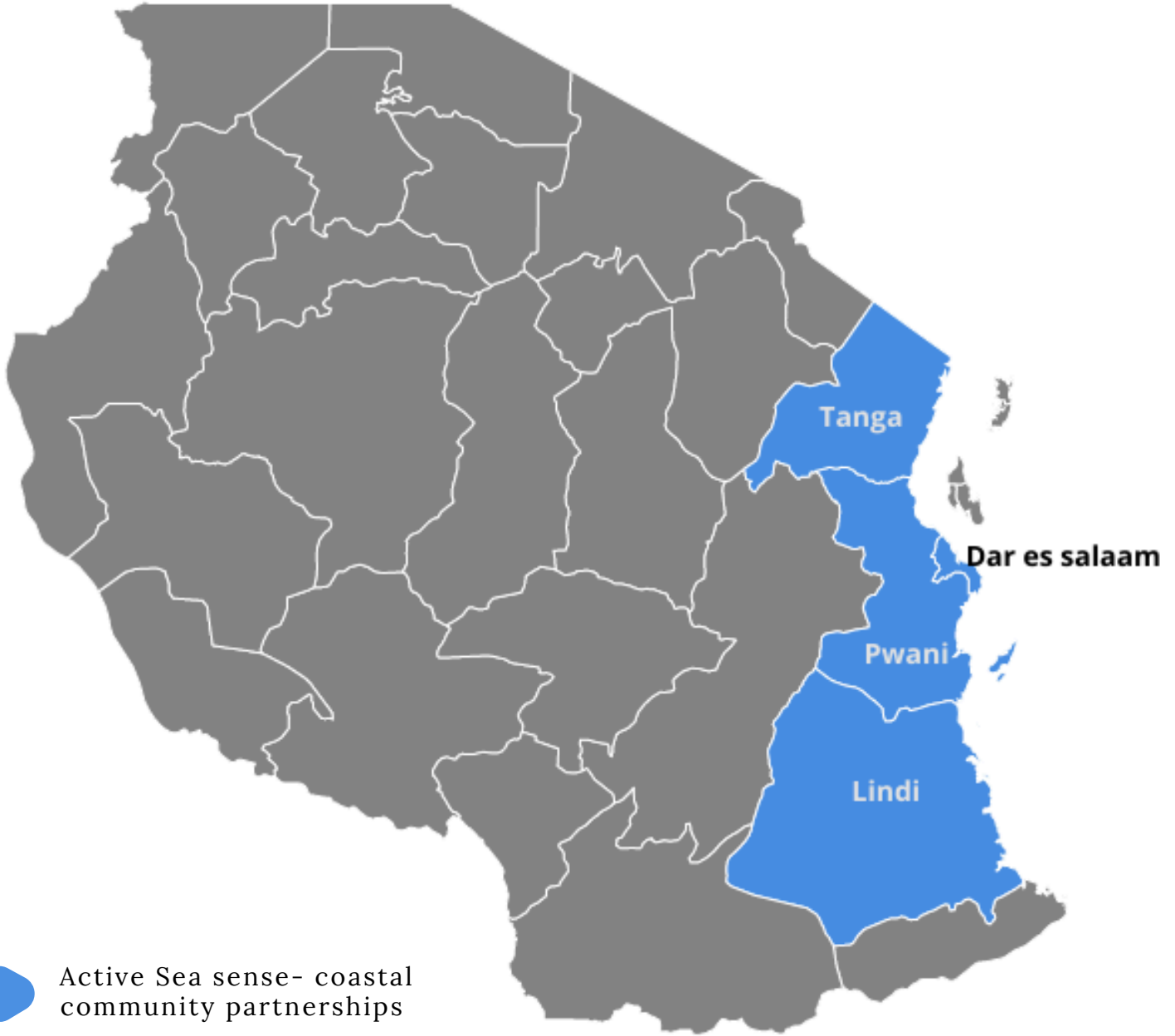


“By connecting conservation, community leadership, and partnerships, we are shaping a future where Tanzania’s marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods thrive together..”

Executive Director
Gosbert Katunzi

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

“Where community leadership meets conservation impact.”



Active Sea sense- coastal community partnerships

Other regions

Sea Sense

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Our Programmes

Our organization operates along the Tanzanian coast to protect endangered marine species while supporting sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities. Our programmes integrate research, conservation action, community engagement, and livelihood development to promote healthy marine ecosystems and resilient communities.

Our work is implemented in key coastal areas, including Tanga, Pwani, Dar es Salaam, and the Lindi region, where critical sea turtle nesting beaches and important marine habitats are found. Through close collaboration with local communities, government authorities, and conservation partners, Sea Sense advances community-led conservation initiatives that ensure local people play an active role in protecting their marine resources.

The organisation prioritizes marine turtle research and conservation, including monitoring nesting beaches, protecting turtle nests, and collecting scientific data to inform conservation strategies.

Sea Sense also implements education and outreach programmes that raise awareness among schools and coastal communities about the importance of protecting marine ecosystems. At the same time, the organisation promotes sustainable livelihood initiatives that support communities in developing alternative income sources to reduce pressure on marine resources, while strengthening community co-management and governance systems to ensure long-term protection and sustainable use of marine ecosystems.



Conservation & Research

In 2025, our 35 conservation officers recorded 266 marine turtle nests, with a total of 31,232 eggs laid and 25,077 hatchlings successfully reaching the ocean. The hatchling success rate in 2025 was 80%, representing a notable increase from 74% in 2024.

The significant rise in hatching success indicates improved nest management, effective community-led patrols, and stronger responses to threats such as predation, flooding and pollution.

These outcomes underscore the impact of Sea Sense's continued investment in community capacity building, awareness raising, and collaborative conservation with local authorities and Beach Management Units (BMUs).

In 2025, 53 marine turtle strandings were recorded, including 40 green turtles, 8 hawksbill turtles, 2 leatherback turtles, 2 olive ridley turtles, and 1 unidentified turtle. Most mortalities were primarily attributed to net entanglement and illegal meat harvesting.



Looking ahead, Sea Sense aims to further enhance marine turtle conservation by increasing community engagement programs, strengthening monitoring of nesting sites, and implementing targeted measures to reduce human-induced threats.

Marine turtle conservation highlights

266

Total number of nests recorded

31,232

The total number of green turtle eggs laid on the beaches

25,077

The total number of green turtle hatchlings that successfully reached the ocean

53

Marine turtle mortalities

Nests per District

MAFIA 180

KIGAMBONI 51

PANGANI 30

MKINGA 03

MUHEZA 01

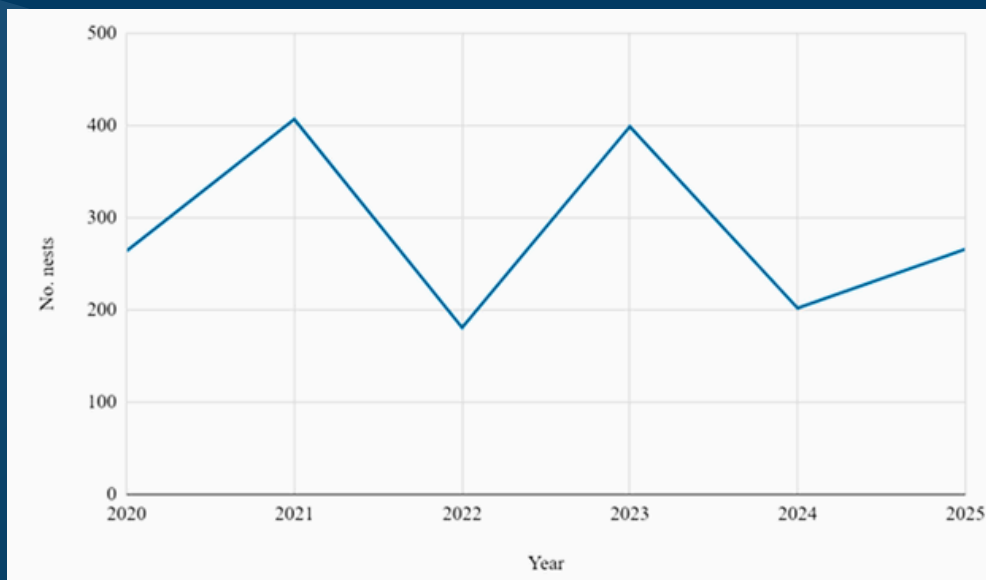
MKURANGA 01

Marine Turtle Conservation

Over the past five years, Sea Sense Conservation Officers have monitored more than 1,700 nests, demonstrating a consistent effort in protecting and documenting nesting activity. This ongoing monitoring has provided valuable insights into population trends and helped us guide conservation strategies including the National action plan aimed at safeguarding sea turtles along the Tanzanian coastline.



The graph below shows the results of our nest monitoring programme over the past five years. Records show that 2021, followed by 2023, were particularly remarkable years for turtle nesting with significantly higher numbers compared to other years in the dataset. This inter annual variations in nesting is common globally for green turtles.





Over the course of 2025, we worked with more than 3,000 community members to support the development of sustainable livelihood activities, boosting income while protecting marine ecosystems and strengthening the balance between people and nature.



Sea Sense provided training in eco-friendly income activities like seaweed value addition, beekeeping value addition, and community-based environmental monitoring, equipping communities to boost their livelihoods while protecting marine ecosystems.



SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD | STORIES OF CHANGE

From Hive to Hope! this is Bakari's Journey of Innovation and Conservation

Bakari Mchia's journey began in the coastal village of Mchinga 1 in Lindi, where he learned traditional beekeeping from his grandfather. In 2002, he revived this childhood skill by crafting local hives and harvesting honey mainly for family use. Over time, his annual honey production grew from 0–20 litres to more than 50 litres, earning him recognition across the village. Despite his increasing success, Bakari had little understanding of honey's market value and often shared it freely with community members.



A turning point came in 2025 when Bakari attended a Sea Sense training held at the SIDO offices in Lindi. The training introduced him to modern beekeeping practices, value addition, packaging, and basic entrepreneurship. He discovered that honey could be used to produce high-value products such as scented body oils, batik fabrics, candles, and therapeutic balms. This new knowledge reshaped his understanding of honey not just as a household food, but as a viable source of income and innovation

Motivated by what he learned, Bakari returned to his village and began training a small group of young people. Their first collective effort produced 30 jars of honey-based body oil, with 10 jars sold locally as a market test. The positive feedback and high demand confirmed the potential of their new products and encouraged the team to expand production. Bakari and his two trainees have now set plans to register their products through SIDO Lindi and participate in the National Nane Nane Agricultural Exhibition in August 2026.





“ These trainings have completely transformed my understanding of beekeeping, I never imagined that honey could be turned into so many useful, everyday products with real market value. Learning how to process, package, and sell these items has opened doors I never knew existed and given me the confidence to build something meaningful for myself and my community.” Bakari Mchia said.

Bakari’s transformation has also become a catalyst for environmental conservation in Mchinga 1. Deeply concerned about the rapid destruction of mangrove forests, he partnered with the village BMU to strategically relocate several of his beehives into mangrove areas. The presence of bees now serves as a natural deterrent to illegal cutting, as people avoid disturbing the hives, while at the same time enhancing pollination and supporting the natural regeneration of the mangroves. This innovative, community-driven approach demonstrates how improved livelihoods can go hand in hand with the protection and restoration of critical coastal ecosystems.



Today, Bakari stands as far more than a beekeeper, he has become a dedicated trainer, a local innovator, and a proud ambassador for conservation within his community. His story demonstrates the powerful outcomes that arise when rural communities are equipped with practical knowledge, skills, and the confidence to lead change. From practicing traditional honey harvesting to spearheading a value-addition enterprise and championing environmental protection, Bakari’s journey shows how one individual’s transformation can influence an entire community, fueling inspiration, building resilience, and advancing sustainable coastal livelihoods for the future.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD | STORIES OF CHANGE

Turning Tides! How Miss Zuwena Transformed Seaweed into Opportunity

In Shuka Village, Lindi Region, seaweed farming has long been a key livelihood for coastal communities. However, income from selling raw seaweed has traditionally been very low, limiting economic growth, particularly for women. Through targeted, evidence-based interventions supported by Sea Sense, this situation is beginning to change.



Miss Zuwena, a community member from Shuka Village, is one of the beneficiaries of the SIDO training facilitated by Sea Sense, focused on seaweed value addition. Before the training, raw seaweed was sold at only TZS 1,200 per kilogram (approximately USD 0.48), providing minimal income. Following the training, the same seaweed is now processed into higher-value products, including seaweed powder sold at TZS 30,000 per kg (about USD 12.1), seaweed soap bars at TZS 8,000 per piece (about USD 3.2), and seaweed skin lotion at TZS 8,000 (about USD 3.2) demonstrating a substantial increase in earning potential.

By shifting from selling raw materials to producing finished products, Miss Zuwena has significantly improved her household income and strengthened her financial independence. Beyond income, the training has opened new opportunities for leadership, learning, and connection





“Previously, my livelihood depended entirely on selling raw seaweed, which ranged between TZS 1,200 and 1,300 depending on the season, providing very limited income. After receiving value-added training from Sea Sense, my economic situation has dramatically improved. Today, I not only earn more, but I also have the opportunity to train others, build a strong professional network, and engage with communities across different areas.” Miss Zuwena, from Shuka Village, explained

Sea Sense designs its interventions based on a thorough understanding of community needs. According to Abdallah Ngaugula, Sea Sense Coordinator, every initiative begins with comprehensive community assessments to identify key challenges, gaps, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods



“Normally, we begin by conducting an assessment to understand the most critical needs, challenges, and gaps within coastal communities, including the community where Zuwena comes from. After careful analysis, we realized that seaweed training had the potential to transform their lives. Today, we are encouraged to see people like Zuwena, and others as well, benefiting from the training provided,” he explains.

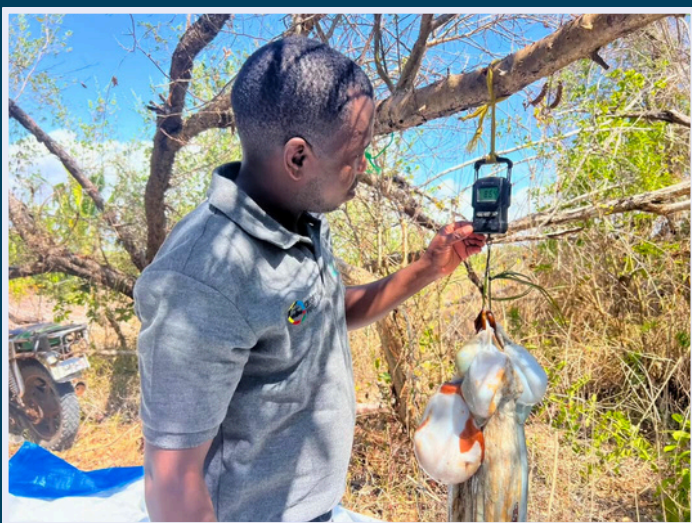
Through such initiatives, we continue to support lasting socio-economic change while strengthening conservation-linked livelihoods.





Governance and Fisheries

Sea Sense engaged 74 Beach Management Units (BMUs) and Village Liaison Committees (VLCs), reaching 1,431 community members, including local leaders and district officials. This collaboration strengthened community governance, promoted responsible marine resource management, and increased local ownership of conservation efforts.



In 2025, we successfully supported seven Beach Management Units (BMUs) in implementing reef closures as a sustainable fisheries management strategy. These closures resulted in 9.69 tonnes of fish. They generated USD 13,371.6 in income, demonstrating that temporary protection of reef areas allows fish populations to recover while providing tangible economic benefits to local fishing communities once the reefs are reopened.



Governance and Fisheries

Sea Sense also strengthened coastal ecosystem restoration by rehabilitating 5.5 hectares of mangroves and coastal forests, where 26,589 seedlings were planted, achieving an encouraging 77.25% survival rate. Healthy mangroves provide essential nursery grounds for marine life, protect shorelines from erosion, and enhance climate resilience for coastal communities.

To support long-term conservation monitoring, 96 community data collectors were trained, building local capacity to gather ecological data and contribute to evidence-based management of marine resources. This investment in community-led monitoring ensures that conservation decisions are informed, inclusive, and sustainable over time.

Significant progress was made in safeguarding critical marine ecosystems through expanded sustainable management efforts. In total, 267,359 hectares of marine and coastal areas were placed under sustainable management, strengthening long-term protection of key habitats and supporting the recovery of marine biodiversity.

Within this area, 1,568.5 hectares of reef ecosystems were placed under temporary closure, allowing fish populations and coral communities time to regenerate. These closures play a crucial role in rebuilding depleted fish stocks, improving reef health, and ensuring more sustainable fisheries for coastal communities.

Fact Data 2025

Community members reached

33,125

Increase in Women's Leadership from

27% to 39%

Community Data collector trained

96

Mangrove and coastal forest restored

5.5 Ha

Community-led reef closures area covered

1,568.5 Ha

Average octopus catch size increased from

750 g to 2kg per trip

Number of BMUs, reached.

77

Income generated from the reef closures

13,371.6\$

Area under sustainable management

267,359 Ha

Marine turtle eco-tourism income earned

3,650\$

Local village leaders, and district officials reached

1,431

Marine turtle eco-tourism visitors

277



“The Mlola Forest Conservation Project serves as a national example of community-led conservation, restoring a vital ecosystem while strengthening the resilience of Mafia Island’s people and contributing to Tanzania’s efforts to address climate change.”

In 2025, we launched the 18-month Mlola Forest Conservation Project on Mafia Island, with support from the CEPF Fund and in partnership with Mafia Island Marine Park, Tanzania Forest Services (TFS), and the Mafia District Council. The project empowers communities in Kungwi, Kibada, and Kifinge villages to protect the forest, restore vital ecosystems, and build resilience against climate change, marking an important step in connecting people and nature for a sustainable future.



After working in Mkuranga for an extended period, we have now expanded interventions to Kibiti through funding support from Blue Ventures. This expansion aims to further strengthen Beach Management Units (BMUs) by enhancing their capacity to effectively manage and protect marine resources, thereby ensuring sustainable use and long-term benefits for both present and future coastal communities.





Communications and Education

In 2025, our media efforts reached over 20 million people through news features and coverage across national outlets, while our active presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn has been a major tool in sharing timely information and engaging with the public. We prioritized community voices, giving BMUs from Mkuranga, Kilwa Kusini, and Lindi DC dedicated time to share their achievements, challenges, and how Sea Sense and government support contributed to their successes.



This approach demonstrates the Communication Unit's pivotal role in championing community-led conservation, enhancing public trust, and strategically leveraging both traditional and digital media to maximize outreach, influence policy, and raise national awareness on the sustainable management and protection of marine resources.





Communications and Education

Public awareness and education remained a key component of Sea Sense's conservation approach, reaching 33,125 people through outreach activities conducted across coastal communities. These engagements increased public understanding of marine conservation, responsible fishing practices, and the importance of protecting critical habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, and sea turtle nesting beaches.

By working closely with community members, fishers, youth, and local leaders, Sea Sense continues to foster a strong culture of environmental stewardship and encourage behavioural change that supports the long-term health of marine ecosystems.

Sea Sense also collaborated with partners and government institutions to raise awareness at larger public platforms. Notably, with support from East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and the Government of Tanzania, Sea Sense helped commemorate World Sea Turtle Day in Kipumbwi Village, bringing together communities from Ushongo and surrounding areas.

The event provided an important platform for education, community dialogue, and celebration of conservation achievements, further strengthening partnerships and community commitment to protecting Marine turtles and their habitats along Tanzania's coast.



Organizational Progress and Growth

In 2025, Sea Sense made deliberate investments to strengthen our systems, people, and partnerships, ensuring the organization can deliver high-quality conservation and sustainable livelihood outcomes at scale. This growth reflects Sea Sense’s commitment to becoming a resilient, accountable, and future-ready organization capable of sustaining long-term impact beyond individual projects.



We strengthened our internal structures, refined operational procedures, and improved coordination mechanisms to boost efficiency and accountability across all our programs. By clarifying roles, streamlining planning processes, and establishing robust reporting systems, we were able to implement projects more effectively and ensure that our field-level actions remained fully aligned with our strategic priorities.





Building human capital remained a priority for Sea Sense, with staff receiving targeted training in key areas including community engagement, conservation monitoring, sustainable livelihoods, data collection, and communication to strengthen technical capacity and professionalism



To support staff growth, Sea Sense provided opportunities for both internal and external learning, including trainings delivered in collaboration with Maliasili and other partners, as well as support to attend external courses and workshops, fostering leadership, continuous learning, and accountability across the organization.



Sea Sense's WIOMSA visits strengthen regional collaboration and knowledge exchange while showcasing key sea turtle conservation data, including nesting trends, species records, and community-led nest protection and hatchling releases. The visits highlight Sea Sense's impact, support learning from regional peers, and reinforce science-informed, community-centered marine conservation in the Western Indian Ocean.



We also participated in the two-day National Preparatory Meeting for COP-30, contributing technical inputs and field-based experience to help shape Tanzania's national climate change position. Our engagement emphasized marine resource conservation and the role of empowered coastal communities in climate change solutions.



Through a three-day Conservation Standards Training Workshop hosted by Foundations for Success (FOS) in 2025, Sea Sense, together with Tanzania Forest Service, Mafia Island Marine Park, and the Marine Parks and Reserves Unit, enhanced staff skills and professionalism while strengthening collective capacity to protect Tanzania's marine and forest ecosystems



We were also honored to participate in the Annual NGO Forum in Tanga, a valuable platform to showcase our marine conservation initiatives and celebrate the remarkable contributions of NGOs working alongside government leaders. Congratulations to all the awardees, whose dedication continues to advance sustainable conservation in the country





PROTECT OCEANS! EMPOWER COMMUNITIES! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

At Sea Sense, every action counts. In 2025, we helped over 24,000 Marine turtle hatchlings reach the ocean, strengthened local Beach Management Units, and supported coastal communities in building sustainable livelihoods, proving that people and nature can thrive together.

But the challenges are urgent. Climate change, overfishing, and habitat loss threaten our oceans and the communities that depend on them. Your support can expand our reach, strengthen local leadership, and protect Tanzania's marine and coastal ecosystems for generations to come.

Join Sea Sense today. Partner with us to safeguard marine life, empower communities, and create lasting impact. Together, we can turn conservation into a legacy.

Our Partners



We sincerely thank our partners and supporters for their continued commitment to marine conservation. Your support makes it possible to safeguard endangered species, strengthen coastal communities, and advance sustainable livelihoods.

Together, we are creating lasting benefits for ocean health and for generations to come.



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office





We thank you for your
continued support in
our efforts to contribute
to Marine Conservation

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