

## Pearl farming in Zanzibar

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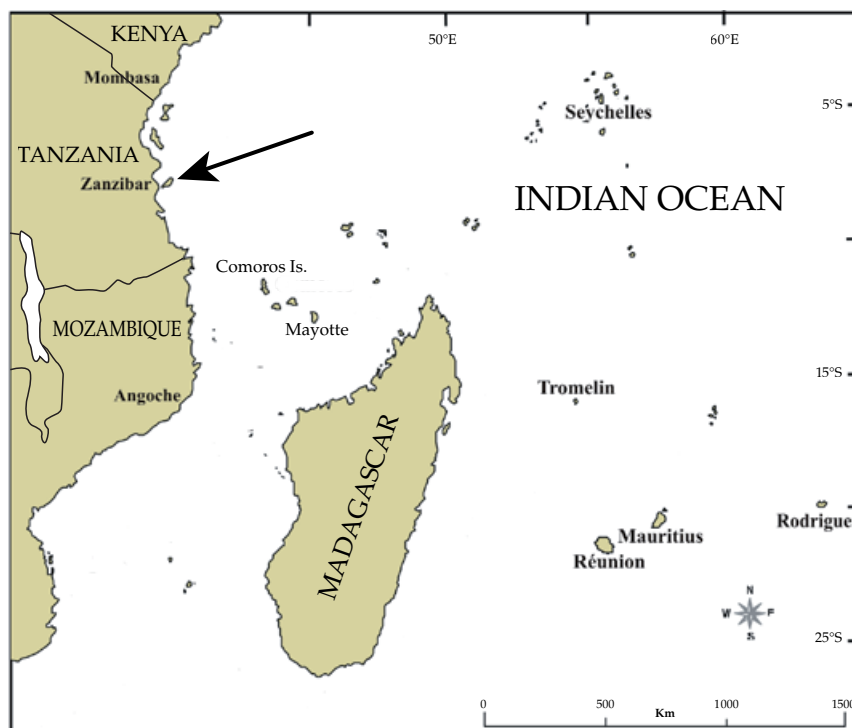
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Pearl farming is new to Zanzibar, and is demonstrating how scientific research can successfully support environmentally and economically sustainable projects. In 2006, Dr Maria Haws (University of Hawaii) and Dr Narriman Jiddawi (Institute of Marine Science-IMS) introduced pearl farming technology to women's groups of Fumba peninsula. This USAID-funded project, Sustainable Coastal Communities and Ecosystems (SUCCESS), has enabled the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), the IMS and their partners to work with women's groups in four villages surrounding Menai Bay to pilot half-pearl (mabe) farming. These women have traditionally been seaweed farmers, agriculturists and shellfish gatherers who would typically earn USD 40–50 in a good

month, working 5–7 days per week. In January 2007 a trial batch of 94 *Pteria penguin* were seeded for half-pearl production, each oyster seeded with 2–3 semi-spherical nuclei. Seeded oysters in nets were then suspended at a depth of 4 m from a raft near Bweleo. This resulted in 28 high quality half-pearls after one year, some of which were auctioned at a gala event held at the Palace Museum in February this year. The auction, organised by WIOMSA and IMS and facilitated by Dr N Jiddawi and Dr A Mmochi (IMS), was launched by the Minister for Women and Youth, Ms Asha Abdulla, and raised USD 3600. Some of the remaining pearls were made up into silver and gold jewellery, which will be used to test market acceptance with the 100,000 tourists who visit Zanzibar each year.

### Editor's note

This report of successful production of half-pearls from *Pteria penguin* in Zanzibar follows similar production of half-pearls from *Pinctada margaritifera* elsewhere in Tanzania, as reported in issue #17 of the *Pearl Oyster Information Bulletin* (2006). The large numbers of tourists visiting this region each year provide considerable opportunity for income generation from pearls and pearl shell products.



Zanzibar is part of the east African republic of Tanzania.