

## **The potential for small-scale shellfish aquaculture in coastal East Africa**

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### **Abstract**

The western Indian Ocean coastal regions are poised to develop the great potential, largely untapped to date, for increased seafood production from marine aquaculture. The scales at which aquaculture development in the region proceeds will determine how the benefits from this economic activity are distributed. Finfish and shellfish farming can be pursued at a variety of scales. Some forms of aquaculture, including tilapia farming in ponds, can be conducted effectively at the small (family) scale, while others (shrimp farming, ocean cage farming) are most efficient at larger (corporate) scales. Marine shellfish farming in particular can be very efficient at the family scale, with adequate infrastructure support. In coastal villages in Tanzania and other parts of East Africa, local species of clams and oysters can be farmed by individuals or small cooperatives in ways that are ecologically and economically sound. Shellfish farming can generate revenues of several hundred dollars/year/person at this scale, and can provide economic opportunity for women as well as men. Significant markets for additional shellfish product exist in local communities, in tourist restaurants, and in international export markets. Infrastructure requirements to support such farming include hatcheries and training in shellfish grow out and business skills. We illustrate this concept with a case study from Zanzibar, Tanzania.