

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Plastic pollution has been a thorn in Sjani's side since she arrived on the idyllic private Mnemba Island off the coast of Zanzibar in 2002.

Plastic waste, discarded fishing lines mixed with seaweed would wash up on the pristine beaches twice a day as the tides came in.

Not only is this rubbish unsightly and killing marine ecosystems, but a hindrance for the Green Turtles coming to lay their eggs.

Sjani's love for these turtles grew as she sat night after night patiently watching the females lay their eggs.

She learned everything she could about these very special creatures and witnessing the first hatchlings emerge from their nest she literally cried with joy; the tiny turtles were simply amazing! She vowed to do everything in her power to help as many as possible. Since Sea Turtles mistake plastic bags and bottles for jelly fish, eat them and die, the only solution was to eliminate plastics from our oceans! And so the dream to clean up plastic waste started, hoping to save one baby Green Turtle at a time.

Years (and two children) later the family moved into their dream home. A few months later the rainy season started and with that they discovered a small river close to their home that brought waste from as far as the Spice Farms much further inland – syringes, nappies, a lot of plastic and the odd car tyre. Daily clean ups did little to help as the two month long rains continued, every day bringing more and more waste.

- *“Where is the waste we are were collecting going?”*
- *“Is this waste coming from a landfill?”*
- *“Is it the same waste that we collect that is washing up again?”*

Bothered by these questions and her burning desire to instil the same love for the oceans and marine life in her children, Sjani went in search for a solution. ZanRec, a waste management company that collects waste was an obvious answer, but too costly for a small household. Separating household waste, learning how to compost, and finding creative ways to reuse tin cans etc. cut down the waste considerably, but there was still the plastic problem. Burning plastics in open fires close to homes is the norm on Zanzibar, but with the fumes, releasing toxic gases into the atmosphere posing a threat to vegetation, and human and animal health, this was certainly no solution either.



Only 1 out of 1'000 hatchlings will reach maturity



Jeannette Muggenburg (age 6) cleaning the beach



Karl-Detlef Muggenburg (age 7) removing a tyre from the beach



"There can be no Plan B because there is no Planet B"
- UN Secretary - General Ban Ki-moon

HOW IT ALL STARTED

By now it was about much more than just saving baby turtles...

Global warming, rising sea levels and the risk to low lying communities, the plight of our oceans, its marine life – the eco-system that we as humans depend on DEMANDED immediate action.

Countless hours spent watching YouTube videos on how to recycle provided some insight, but ultimately led to even more hours of failed attempts, burned fingertips, toxic fumes in the kitchen at home, a ruined oven and too many pots, pans, trays and utensils to count.

Waldemar (a chef by trade) literally banished Sjani from their kitchen, but sharing her passion and drive, bought her a small oven, Panini machine and some utensils and together they set it up on the patio to try again.

The results were not much better, still too many fumes. Their lack of knowledge was hampering their efforts. Sjani spent the better part of a(nother) year educating herself on the 7 different types of plastics, the classifications, different melting temperatures, toxicity levels of each and how best to recycle them (or stay clear from). Eventually, she found Precious Plastic an entire online community of like minded people who taught her you how to build the equipment needed to recycle plastics. Unfortunately building the machines was not as easy and another year went by without any results.

The biggest disappointment came when Sjani learned that even if she had all the Precious Plastic equipment, that only 2 of the 7 plastics can be recycled on a small scale. Recycling water bottles, which is the biggest polluter, was not possible due to toxicity at only 50 degrees. Sjani's growing frustration (and the ever growing pile of plastic waste in the corner of their property) motivated her to make one last effort.

Sydney Smith's famous quote inspired her to make a change, however small, not to focus on the plastic bottles that she could not recycle, but rather focus on what can be done.

Armed with a small shredder, an old convection oven that the team at OZTI refurbished, a new set of pots and pans, Waldemar's relentless encouragement and the support of the OZTI Team she set out to reduce the pile of plastics, and thus recycle@OZTI was born – baby steps to a cleaner Zanzibar.



Ruined baking tray (there were many!)



2 years in, something was taking shape



Signature keyring made from 6 bottle caps



“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little - do what you can” - Sydney Smith