



Ocean Sole Impact 2025

Turning Waste Into Art, Jobs & Impact

Mission & Vision

Why We Exist. Where We Are Going.



Our Mission

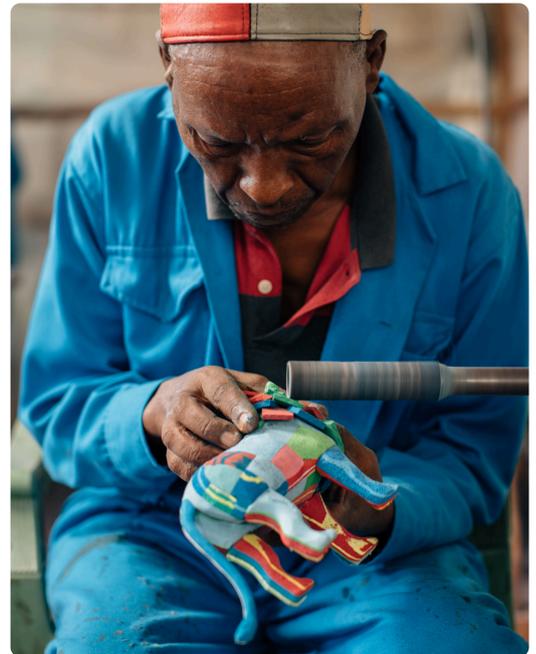
Transforming ocean waste into Art, Jobs, Impact, Change & Hope.

At Ocean Sole, our mission comes to life through action.

We rescue **discarded flip-flops** from beaches and waterways and transform them into **bold, meaningful art** — creating **jobs**, protecting **marine ecosystems**, and inspiring people to see waste differently.

- Every sculpture supports livelihoods.
- Every cleanup protects wildlife.
- Every flip-flop reclaimed is a step toward something better.

This is how we turn pollution into purpose — one flip-flop at a time.



Our Vision

A world where oceans are flip-flop free & coastal communities thrive.

We envision clean coastlines, healthy oceans, and empowered coastal communities leading the way in conservation and creativity.

When communities thrive, the ocean does too.

A Word From Our CEO



Dear Solemates,

As I reflect on the year behind us, I'm filled with gratitude — for our communities, our artisans, our partners, and for you, the Solemates who continue to believe in the power of creativity to drive change.

2025 was a year that asked us to adapt, to listen closely, and to lead with intention. While global and local pressures reshaped how we worked, our purpose remained steady: turning discarded flip-flops into art, dignified jobs, and lasting environmental impact.

This year, Ocean Sole removed tons of marine waste from Kenya's coastline through our own sponsored community-led beach cleanups, mobilizing women's groups, fishers, youth, and partners along more than 28 kilometers of shoreline. At the same time, our artists continued transforming waste into wonder — creating bold sculptures that carried messages of conservation far beyond our beaches and into global public spaces through collaborations with partners like Event Network, Rubis, Mystic Aquarium, Henkel, and KLM Cargo .

Some of our most meaningful impact happened quietly, close to home. The Ocean Sole Mamaz grew into a thriving women-led enterprise, strengthening food security, launching new income streams, and turning care for the ocean into opportunity for their families. Our Turtle Safe program reached a powerful milestone — zero turtles poached in 2025 — proving once again that when communities lead, conservation succeeds. From classrooms to orphanages, gardens to reefs, our education and community programs continued to nurture curiosity, resilience, and pride in the next generation of ocean stewards.

Not every metric grew this year, and that's okay. What matters is that we stayed true to our values, supported livelihoods responsibly, and continued innovating — even expanding our materials to include other hard-to-recycle waste streams while holding fast to our mission.

Every sculpture created, every beach cleaned, every turtle protected, and every child reached tells a bigger story: that solutions to the plastic crisis already exist when creativity, community, and care come together.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your continued economic support makes this work possible — and together, we are proving that waste can become art, and art can become change.

With gratitude,

Erin Smith

CEO, Ocean Sole

The Problem:

A Planet Drowning in Plastic

Plastic production has surged dramatically over the past decades and now exceeds 400 million tonnes every year, with nearly half designed for single use — items often used for minutes but lasting centuries in the environment.¹

Despite global recycling efforts, plastic waste remains largely unmanaged. Only about 9% of all plastic ever produced has been recycled, while the rest has been burned, buried in landfills, or leaked into natural ecosystems.²

Each year, millions of tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste flow from land into the ocean, carried by rivers, storms, and poor waste infrastructure.³ According to the United Nations Environment Programme, more than 11 million metric tonnes of plastic enter the ocean annually, damaging coastlines and marine habitats worldwide.³

Once in the sea, plastic dominates marine pollution. Roughly 80% of all marine debris is plastic, posing severe threats to wildlife, fisheries, and coastal communities that depend on healthy oceans for food, income, and culture.⁴

For countries like Kenya — where waste management systems are under strain and coastal livelihoods are closely tied to the ocean — this crisis is not abstract. It is visible on beaches, in fishing nets, and in the everyday lives of coastal communities.

References

1. UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Single-use plastics: A roadmap for sustainability.
2. UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Plastic pollution facts and figures.
3. UN Environment Programme (UNEP). From pollution to solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution.
4. Surfers Against Sewage / Environmental sources. Marine litter composition and plastic prevalence.



The World's Most Common Shoe

Flip-flops are among the most widely worn footwear on Earth.

Billions are produced every year because they are **affordable, lightweight, and accessible** — especially across developing countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

They are easy to wear, but **not built to last**. Flip-flops break quickly, are rarely repaired, and are almost impossible to recycle due to mixed plastics and foams. When discarded or lost, they travel through waterways and tides, washing up on beaches by the hundreds — sometimes the thousands.

That's where we come in! **Turning Flip-Flops into Art, Jobs & Impact.**

Beach Cleans

In 2025, Ocean Sole continued its commitment to protecting Kenya's coastline through regular, community-led beach cleanups along the Indian Ocean.

Working hand in hand with women's groups, fishers, youth, and local leaders, our teams removed over **5 tonnes of marine waste** from beaches and waterways across Kenya. These cleanups covered **more than 28 kilometers** of coastline, targeting some of the most polluted and vulnerable shorelines.

Across the year, **discarded shoes and flip-flops consistently emerged as the most common pollutants collected**, reinforcing the urgent need to address footwear waste before it breaks down into microplastics or enters marine food systems.

Powered by Partnerships

In 2025, our beach cleanups were strengthened through collaborations with a **growing network of partners** who share our commitment to ocean health and community action, including **Novotel, Green Heart Kilifi, and CMA CGM**.

Together, we mobilized hundreds of volunteers through cleanups and action days, showing the power of collective effort.



**Shoes &
Flip-Flops**

Top
pollutants

5+ tons

Of marine waste
removed

30+ Clean-ups
hosted

28+ Kilometers
of beach
cleaned

1800+

People
participated in the
cleans

More Than a Cleanup

Our beach cleanups do more than remove waste. Collected materials are **sorted and sold to local recyclers, creating income for community groups** — especially women-led initiatives like the Ocean Sole Mamaz — while sparking conversations about responsibility and care for the ocean.

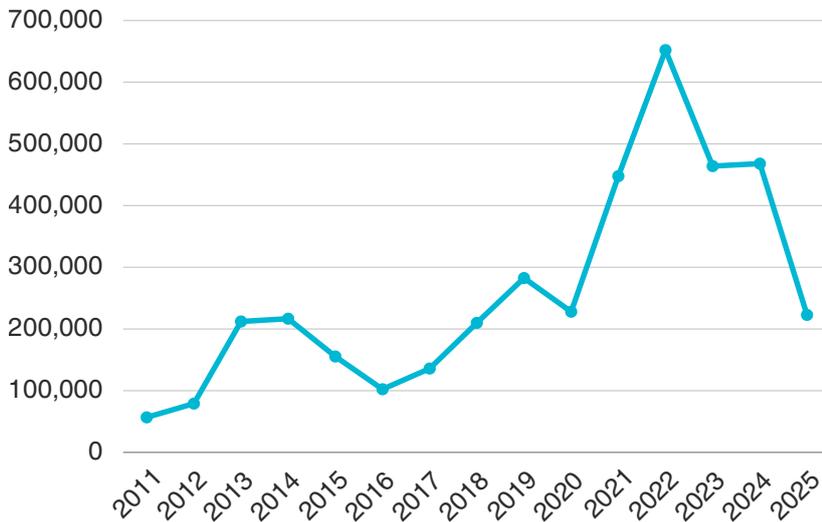
Every bag filled means **cleaner marine habitats, safer beaches, dignified jobs, and fewer flip-flops reaching the sea**.

In 2025, our beach cleanups showed what's possible when community, creativity, and conservation come together — one shoreline at a time.

3.9 Million Flip-Flops Since 2011

RECYCLING OUTPUT

A graph showing flip-flops recycled since 2011



+ 16,719 Kg of Styrofoam recycled since 2017

A Year of Adjustment

In 2025, Ocean Sole **upcycled 222,806 flip-flops**. While this is lower than in previous years, it reflects a year of economic, operational, and environmental shifts — and our commitment to adapting responsibly while staying true to our mission.

Key factors behind the change:

- **Rising government taxes** early in the year **increased operating costs**, leading to the difficult decision to release seven artists in February to protect long-term sustainability.
- **Lower production demand** during the first two-thirds of the year reduced the volume of flip-flops transformed into art.
- **An extended dry period with limited rainfall** in the final third of the year meant fewer flip-flops washed ashore; during this time, we relied partly on stored material from 2024.

At the same time, 2025 marked a moment of innovation. For our large-scale Beluga whale sculptures created for **Event Network**, we expanded our material palette — incorporating **rubber reclaimed** from old shipping containers alongside **flip-flops**. This approach allowed us to continue creating impactful art while exploring new circular solutions for hard-to-recycle materials.

Even in a slower year, every sculpture still carried the same purpose: protecting the ocean, supporting livelihoods, and proving that waste — in all its forms — can become wonder.

The Studio

In 2025, Ocean Sole's created **the Studio** — a creative hub for **purposeful partnerships**. A place where Ocean Sole **collaborates** with **like-minded partners** — from global organizations to fashion designers. This year, the studio not only produced powerful **sculptures** and **installations**, but also became a platform for collaboration with global partners who share our commitment to people and planet.

Through strategic partnerships with **Rubis**, **Henkel**, and **KLM Cargo**, Ocean Sole demonstrated how art can bridge communities, corporations, and conservation.



These collaborations have brought Ocean Sole's message far beyond Kenya's coastline — into public spaces, institutions, and global audiences. More than one-off commissions, each partnership is a creative journey, **using flip-flop art to tell powerful stories** about plastic pollution, ocean protection, and community-led solutions.

For our artisans, these moments expand both their creativity and their reach. They prove that **flip-flop art has no boundaries** — only imagination. Each piece brings not just **stable work**, but deep **pride** in seeing their craft celebrated worldwide.

For our partners, this is only the beginning. Together, we're **transforming bold ideas** and **corporate gifting** into something truly meaningful — and a little magical.

In 2025, the studio proved that when purpose-driven **partners come together**, art becomes more than an object — it becomes a catalyst for awareness, connection, and change.

Ocean Sole's partnerships are not about branding alone. They are about **co-creating impact**, advocating for change, and showing what's possible when **creativity leads the way toward a cleaner, more equitable future**.

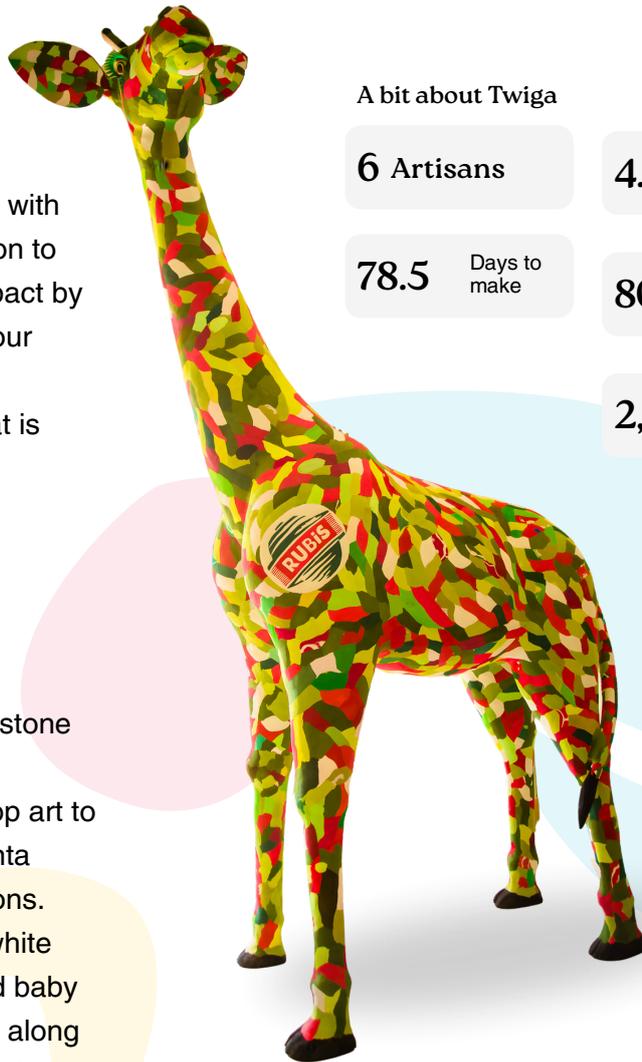


Masterpieces & Collaborations

Rubis

Meet Twiga

This Art, crafted in partnership with Rubis, reflects our shared vision to turn waste into meaningful impact by reducing pollution, protecting our environment, and inspiring communities to reimagine what is possible.



A bit about Twiga

6 Artisans

4.5M Tall

78.5 Days to make

80 kg In weight

2,200 Flip-flops upcycled

Event Network

Beluga whales & African Penguins

Event Network reached a milestone with their 10th Ocean Sole installation, bringing our flip-flop art to aquariums in Florida and Atlanta through their souvenir collections. The collaboration included a white beluga family—dad, mom, and baby—created for a beluga exhibit, along with four African penguins, helping share marine conservation stories with aquarium visitors

50h+

Of artisan work

190 kg+

Styrofoam recycled

6 Artists

Francis, Solomon, Mutuku, Kaloki, Henry, Stephen

4320

Ocean Bound flip-flops recycled



KLM Cargo

15 cargo planes

KLM Cargo partnered with Ocean Sole to create custom flip-flop cargo planes gifted to their largest suppliers at year's end, offering a sustainable and meaningful alternative to traditional corporate gifts. After a three-month collaboration, 15 handcrafted cargo planes have already been produced and sold, turning aviation icons into symbols of circular impact.

Ocean Sole Mamaz

In 2025, the Ocean Sole Mamaz continued to grow into a powerful example of **women-led resilience**, innovation, and **environmental leadership**.

What began as a beach cleanup group has evolved into a **thriving community enterprise**. The Mamaz established and managed a **community garden**, producing vegetables and compost that now help support **16 families** through both **direct food access** and **income** from **compost sales**. These efforts have strengthened food security while building practical skills rooted in **permaculture** and **water-wise farming**.



This year, the Mamaz also extended their impact beyond their own group, **sharing** newly learned **permaculture practices** with other community groups — becoming teachers, mentors, and local **champions of sustainable living**.

Their savings culture has translated into **real economic progress**. By pooling earnings, the group invested in a **poultry business**, creating an additional income stream and reinforcing **long-term financial independence**.

At the same time, the Mamaz successfully expanded their creative work, **producing** and **selling** upcycled flip-flop products including beaded strings, necklaces, and bracelets. These colorful items turn **waste into income**, skill, and pride — proving that small materials can unlock big change.

The Ocean Sole Mamaz are more than beneficiaries of impact.

They are **leaders, educators, and entrepreneurs** — showing what's possible when women are supported to turn care for the ocean into opportunity for their families and community.



Growing More Than Food

In 2025, Ocean Sole deepened its support for a **local children's orphanage** by focusing on water access, food security, and joy — building foundations that nourish both bodies and futures. We began by **connecting the orphanage to the mains water** supply, ensuring reliable access to clean water. To strengthen resilience, we also installed a **rainwater catchment system**, allowing the home to harvest and store water during rainy periods and reduce dependence during dry seasons.



With water secured, the children helped establish a **kitchen garden** — transforming open ground into a living classroom. Together, they successfully **grew and harvested** nutritious crops including **mchicha** and **okra**, learning hands-on skills while reconnecting with the land.

Where meals once consisted mainly of bread and tea, the children **now enjoy pilau and fresh vegetables** grown just steps from their home.

Beyond food, Ocean Sole also provides **monthly sanitary pads** for the young ladies, ensuring they can manage their menstrual health with comfort, confidence, and privacy — and **continue attending school** and daily activities without interruption.

The **104 orphans** also completed our marine education course which included practical outings to the nearby reef; as well as interactive **art sessions**.

This project is about more than crops. It's about care, curiosity, and creating environments where children can **thrive** — with **full plates, clean water**, and a **garden** that reminds them every day that they are growing, too.



Turtle Safe

In 2025, Ocean Sole's Turtle Safe Program reached a powerful milestone: **zero turtles** were **poached**, down from four recorded cases in 2024. This achievement reflects the strength of **community-led conservation** and the dedication of our turtle rangers, many of whom are former fishers now standing as **guardians of the ocean**.

7 Nests recorded

81% Average hatchling success rate

300+

Hatchlings protected & safely made it to the ocean



Throughout the year, turtle rangers actively **monitored nesting sites**, **protected** nesting females and **hatchlings**, and responded to threats in real time. In one powerful moment, rangers intervened during an attempted poaching incident, successfully **safeguarding** a turtle while she was laying her eggs — a reminder that vigilance on the ground saves lives.

In 2025 Ocean Sole also hosted the **first mini turtle symposium** in Kilifi, gathering 13 local and international organizations.

Looking ahead, Turtle Safe is poised to grow. In 2025, Ocean Sole secured a **grant** from **Collette** to expand the program in 2026, enabling us to increase the number of trained turtle rangers and extend protection to additional **high-risk beaches**. This investment ensures that conservation leadership remains **local, consistent, and long-term**.

Turtle Safe remains focused, intentional, and life-saving — proof that when communities lead, turtles survive.



Kwa Chambo Fishers

The Kwa Chambo Fishers represent a powerful shift from extraction to stewardship. In 2025, Ocean Sole supported the group to formally establish themselves as a registered **self-help group**, strengthening organisation, collective decision-making, and long-term **resilience** within the **fishing community**.

Beyond structure, the year focused on knowledge and opportunity. Fishers participated in **training** on **coral reef ecosystems**, learning how healthy reefs support fisheries, biodiversity, and livelihoods. To expand income alternatives, Ocean Sole introduced **eco-tourism training**, including **snorkel safaris** and guided reef experiences — creating new ways for fishers to earn while protecting what lies beneath the surface.



Working in partnership with Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI), our team also **successfully surveyed** the local reef through a **citizen-science approach**. This collaboration was recognized regionally and featured in the **WIOMSA Magazine**, highlighting the importance of community knowledge alongside science in safeguarding the Western Indian Ocean.

This community-driven approach gained international recognition in 2025, when Ocean Sole was invited to speak at a side event at the **UN Ocean Conference (UNOC)** in Nice, sharing lessons from Kwa Chambo and other coastal programs on how **community-led ocean literacy** and climate action can drive lasting change.

Kwa Chambo Fishers show what's possible when **conservation** is built on traditional knowledge, and opportunity — where **protecting the ocean also protects livelihoods**.



Education

In 2025, Ocean Sole's **School Education Program** continued to grow its reach, using creativity, conversation, and hands-on learning to inspire young ocean stewards along the Kenyan coast.

Over the course of the year, we worked closely with **four schools**, delivering interactive education sessions focused on **plastic pollution, sea turtle conservation, coral reefs, and healthy marine ecosystems**. Lessons were designed to be engaging and accessible, combining storytelling, visual tools, discussion, and art-based activities that helped students build both knowledge and connection to the ocean.



During Sea Turtle Week 2025, the program expanded further, reaching **five public schools** and **one special needs** school through dedicated awareness activities. These sessions created **inclusive spaces** for learning, ensuring that conservation education was **accessible** to children of all abilities while helping to shift long-held perceptions around **sea turtles** and **ocean protection**.

To strengthen long-term impact, Ocean Sole also developed and delivered a **Conservation Education Toolkit**, equipping educators with **presentations, activity booklets**, and facilitator guides that support ongoing ocean literacy beyond our visits.

2300+

Additional children visited our Nairobi workshop, to learn about upcycling

By grounding education in local realities and lived experience, the School Education Program helped young people see the **ocean** not as something distant, but as a shared home — one they have the **power to protect**. Ocean Sole's education work in 2025 shows that lasting conservation begins with curiosity, inclusion, and early action.



Mangroves

This year, **mangrove restoration** became a powerful expression of our belief that protecting the ocean starts with **strengthening coastal ecosystems** and the communities that care for them.

In partnership with **Leaf Charity**, Ocean Sole took part in two **mangrove restoration exercises** in Kilifi, focusing on areas where degradation has weakened natural coastal defenses. Together with community members, we planted **2,700 mangrove seedlings**, including *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Ceriops tagal*, *Bruguiera gymnorrhiza*, and *Avicennia marina* — species essential to **healthy marine ecosystems**.



Mangroves are climate champions. They act as **powerful carbon sinks**, protect shorelines from erosion, and provide vital **nursery grounds for fish** and other marine life that local communities depend on. Yet they remain under constant threat from logging and coastal pressure.

By **restoring these mangrove forests**, we're doing more than planting trees.

We're **protecting fisheries**, supporting livelihoods, and **strengthening resilience** along Kenya's coast — ensuring that the benefits of conservation flow both to nature and to the people who live beside it.

2,700+ Mangroves planted in 2025

This work reflects what Ocean Sole does best: turning **collective action into lasting impact** — for the ocean, for the climate, and for coastal communities.



Key Programs Snapshot



Beach Cleans

Weekly clean-ups organized with local Mamaz, fishermen, and youth groups, collecting plastics, nets, and flip-flops to safeguard marine life while providing income and community pride through circular solutions.



Turtle Safe

Turtle nests protected along Kilifi's shoreline by trained rangers, with former poachers converted into conservation advocates through night patrols, nest relocations, and community education on marine ecology.



Education

Students educated in schools, orphanages and our Nairobi program with marine conservation lessons, activities & skills.



Ocean Sole Mamaz

Women-led groups trained in regenerative farming and upcycling, growing food for families, producing compost and soil amendments for income, and crafting goods from recycled flip-flops to strengthen coastal resilience.

Join Us

