



Beyond Borders:
A co-created educational project on emotional, ecological and
ocean literacy.
Ruvuma Region, Tanzania

Fieldwork: July 8-19, 2025

Main Location: Nyerere English Medium for Adult, Youth, Children Care Academy (NEMCA),
Municipality of Songea, Ruvuma Region Tanzania.

In collaboration with the Verdis Vocational School, Mbeya, and with the support of the Matimira
Secondary School, Tanzania.

A Collaborative Project between Wells Cathedral School, UK (Horizon Award), ECO_CARE (UiT),
The Ocean Incubator Network and the Ocean Decade Blue Catalyst, Blyss, (UArctic), BridgET (UiT),
Mucho Amor (Italy)

A deliverable of the UN [Ocean Decade Commitment](#)

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Summary

Beyond Borders is a collaborative project developed through a joint effort between education and research institutions in Tanzania, Norway, the UK, and Italy, alongside communities from Tanzania and Sinai. Launched in 2024, the initiative was spearheaded by Camilla Haule (Horizon Award, Wells Cathedral School) and brought to fruition through the coordination of Agnes Haule (Tanzania), Ladslaus Bigambo Masakula, the kindergarten teachers group (NEMCA), Margherita Paola Poto, Carolina Sarti (ECOCARE), Pietro Parola, Valentina Russo (Mucho Amor), Dana Ahmed, Claudia D'Andrea, Faezeh Karimpour, and the communities of the Verdis Vocational School in Mbeya.

The project unfolded in three key phases:

- Project inception and ideation led by Camilla Haule during the Summer Semester of 2024.
- Development of research and teaching materials, coordinated by Carolina Sarti in the Spring Semester of 2025.
- Implementation in the Ruvuma Region, carried out in the Summer Semester of 2025.

This report describes and assesses the relevance of the activities conducted by the Beyond Borders team during the Summer Semester 2025, focusing on fieldwork in the Ruvuma Region, Tanzania, and particularly in the municipality of Songea. The Beyond Borders Initiative is part of a larger effort to foster meaningful partnerships and expand educational opportunities through direct engagement with local communities. It is also a

deliverable of the SDG Ocean Action Commitment: [Ocean for All: Reimagining Justice with Love and Law.](#)



Figure 1 Children from NEMCA holding their hands during the early morning class, July 2025. Photo: Igor Peftiyev

Acknowledgments

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Structure and content of the event series

Summer Semester Activities and Field Work in Collaboration with NEMCA, Songea

This report outlines the activities developed during the summer semester, with a particular focus on the fieldwork conducted in collaboration with NEMCA, Songea. The activities were designed based on the Beyond Borders syllabus, which was created and coordinated by Carolina Sarti during her internship with ECO_CARE.

The syllabus was subsequently adapted in collaboration with the school's teachers—Maria, Anna, Happiness, Patrick, and Ladslaus—to address the specific learning needs of 57 pupils aged 3 to 7 years. After school activities involved children from 8 to 10 years old, assistant teachers, parents and community members.



Figure 2 Mrs Anna, assistant teacher, helping to set the class. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

Introduction: Thematic Areas for Emotional, Ecological, and Ocean Literacy

The summer semester activities, coordinated by Carolina Sarti (Sarti, Beyond Borders Syllabus, 2025) and co-created by the team members, were designed to foster emotional, ecological, and ocean literacy among children, using three main thematic areas: **Music, Storytelling, and Art/Creativity**. These pillars were chosen to stimulate

children’s engagement by stimulating their natural creativity and curiosity. By integrating these themes into the educational program, the team aimed to create an inclusive and interactive learning environment that encouraged self-expression, emotional awareness, and ecological consciousness. The activities were carefully adapted to the needs of 57 pupils, aged 2 to 7 (four of them with different learning and physical abilities), ensuring inclusivity and respect for their developmental stages.



Figure 3 Beyond Borders Syllabus 2025: cover

Music: Learning Through Singing, Rhythm and Melody

The music sessions, led by Pietro Parola and Camilla Haule, were designed to integrate rhythm, melody, and movement into the learning process. The team adapted children's songs to align with the storytelling themes, incorporating ukulele music and creating new lyrics to complement the stories. To enhance engagement, cinesthetic and rhythm exercises were introduced, ensuring that learning was reinforced through play.

Children were provided with small musical instruments, including ukuleles, maracas, xylophones, drums, and various types of whistles (all donated by private donors from Italy). These instruments allowed the children to explore different sounds and rhythms while playing joyfully. The sessions not only introduced the basics of music but also encouraged teamwork, coordination, and creativity. The cheerful atmosphere created by the music sessions became a highlight of the program, leaving a lasting impression on the children.



Figure 4 Pietro Parola starting the music class. Photo credit: Camilla Haule.



Figure 5 The music teachers Camilla Haule and Pietro Parola after the music session and before lunch. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.



Figure 6 Children exploring the different sounds from the musical instruments. Photo credit: Camilla Haule



Figure 7 Children around the newly donated musical instruments. Photo credit: Camilla Haule



Figure 8 Ladslaus Bigambo, NEMCA Principal, receiving the musical instruments for the children. Photo credit: Camilla Haule

Storytelling: Exploring Emotions and Knowledge

The storytelling sessions, coordinated by Valentina Russo and Margherita Poto, focused on two key books: *My Heart Knows* (Valentina Russo) and *A Story About Knowledge* (Russo, Porrone, Poto).

My Heart Knows is a forthcoming publication illustrated and developed by Valentina Russo, telling the story of Busu, a Tanzanian girl, her friends, and her emotions. The book was translated into English and Arabic by Dana Ahmed. The storytelling session was complemented by a heart-shaping workshop, where children used yarn and other materials to create heart-shaped crafts. Additionally, an ocean literacy puppetry and doll session was conducted, featuring sea creature dolls (crabs, jellyfish, stingrays, and turtles) created by Dana Ahmed and the women of the Sinai community (Egypt) through the Asfour Initiative. These activities helped children familiarise themselves with ocean animals, learning their names in Kiswahili and English, while singing and playing along.



Figure 9 Playing with Aisha the Turtle. Photo credit: Camilla Haule.



Figure 10 Playing with crab. Photo credit: Camilla Haule.



Figure 11 Boys playing with the sea dolls. Photo credit: Camilla Haule.

A Story About Knowledge was inspired by the illustrated book developed by Valentina Russo in collaboration with Arianna Porrone and Margherita Poto (2021). The story was narrated in English and translated into Kiswahili by assistant teacher Patrick, with children mimicking animals' search for knowledge through nature. Props, including touchable animal figures created by Luciana Panieri, were used to enhance the experience.

These storytelling sessions not only nurtured the children's imagination but also introduced them to ecological and emotional themes engagingly and interactively.



Figure 12 Valentina Russo coordinating the storytelling session "My Heart Knows", with the aid of illustrations and the help of Patrick (translation in Kiswahili) and Carolina Sarti. Photo credit: Margherita Poto.



Figure 13 Valentina Russo during the storytelling session on *My Heart Knows*. Translated into Kiswahili by Patrick. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.



Figure 14 Session on *A Story About Knowledge* about ecological and emotional literacy. Photo credit: Carolina Sarti.



Figure 15 A Story About Knowledge Illustrated version donated to the school. Photo credit: Camilla Haule.

Art and Creativity: Hands-On Learning

Art and creativity played a central role in the program, with activities designed to stimulate the children's imagination and fine motor skills. Highlights included:

- Bilingual Colouring Book: Children engaged with the bilingual colouring book created by young artist Sophie Lam, which featured themes from Tanzanian savannah and ocean life.



Figure 16 Two children working on Sophie Lam's colouring book. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

- Playdough and Plasticine Figurines: The children crafted figurines of animals from the savannah and ocean, fostering a deeper connection to nature.
- Basket Crafting: Team member Anna crafted traditional baskets using recycled plastics, which were later used to store learning materials.
- After-School Arts and Crafts: Activities were also organized for primary school children and adults, ensuring inclusivity and community involvement.



Figure 17 After school activities from the book My Heart Knows, coordinated by Valentina Russo (on the right). Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

All activities were designed to accommodate children with different learning and physical abilities, ensuring that everyone could participate. The schedule was carefully coordinated to respect the children's daily routines, including meal and nap times.



Figure 18 Miss Happiness and Madam Anna serving lunch to the children. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

Weekend Activities: Community Engagement and Special Events

The weekend was dedicated to additional activities and community engagement, which enriched the overall program. Highlights included:

Visits and Training Sessions: The team welcomed the VETA Vocational School team, who conducted sewing sessions for the community of the girls in Mbeya, school bags for the children at NEMCA, sea creatures dolls following the trainings developed by the Asfour Initiative.

The establishment of the beehive at NEMCA, coordinated by Igor Peftiyev, aimed to promote sustainable practices and environmental awareness within the community. This initiative provided hands-on training in beekeeping, empowering participants with skills to produce honey while supporting local biodiversity. The project will also serve as an educational tool, teaching children and community members about the importance of bees in maintaining ecological balance.



Figure 19 One of the beehives installed at NEMCA. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev



Figure 20 Beehives delivered at NEMCA. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

Football Match: A friendly football match was organized, involving children and community members, fostering teamwork and healthy movement,

Visits to Matimira Schools and Families: The team visited Matimira Secondary School, the library (donated through a co-funding initiative in 2020), and the well and water tank. They also acknowledged the progress of secondary school students, supported by the acquisition of a copy machine.

Donations: Laptops, phones, tablets, and smartphones were donated to support educational advancement. Additionally, reusable pads and school bags were created and distributed by Christina, coordinator of the Verdis Vocational School, and her team.

Support for Families in Need: The team provided assistance to disabled children, families in need, and 10 orphans, ensuring that the program extended its impact beyond the classroom.



Figure 21 Matimira Library, a project initiated thanks to a crowdfunding initiative in 2020. New books and magazines were donated during the Beyond Borders visit in July 2025. Photo credit: Valentina Russo.



Figure 22 Follow Your Heart and My Heart Knows reached Matimira's Secondary School Library. Photo credit: Valentina Russo.

Conclusion

The summer semester activities, grounded in the themes of music, storytelling, and art/creativity, successfully fostered emotional, ecological, and ocean literacy among the children. The program's inclusive approach, combined with community engagement during the weekends, created a holistic and impactful learning experience. The collaboration with NEMCA, Songea, and the dedication of the entire team ensured that the program not only met but exceeded its objectives, contributing to a common future for all where no one is left behind.

Collaboration Outcomes

Educational Impact: The successful implementation of the Beyond Borders syllabus, tailored to the needs of 57 pupils aged 2-7, fostering emotional, ecological, and ocean literacy.

Community Engagement: The establishment of sustainable initiatives, such as the beehive project and improved access to water for local farms, promoting environmental awareness and economic empowerment.

Cross-Regional Collaboration: Plans for a twinning activity in Sinai, supported by the Ocean Decade Blue Catalyst (Blyss), to encourage knowledge exchange and shared learning experiences.

Research and Publications: Ongoing research efforts and the development of a co-edited book, with the publication project submitted to Palgrave Macmillan for release in early 2026.

Funding and Resource Mobilization: Submission of a project application to the Ocean Love Award (UN Ocean Decade) for the *My Heart Knows* learning toolkit and the continuation of a crowdfunding initiative to support kindergartens, children's education, and families in need.

Capacity Building: Training sessions and workshops for local communities, including sewing, beekeeping, and arts and crafts, empowering participants with practical skills and fostering self-reliance.

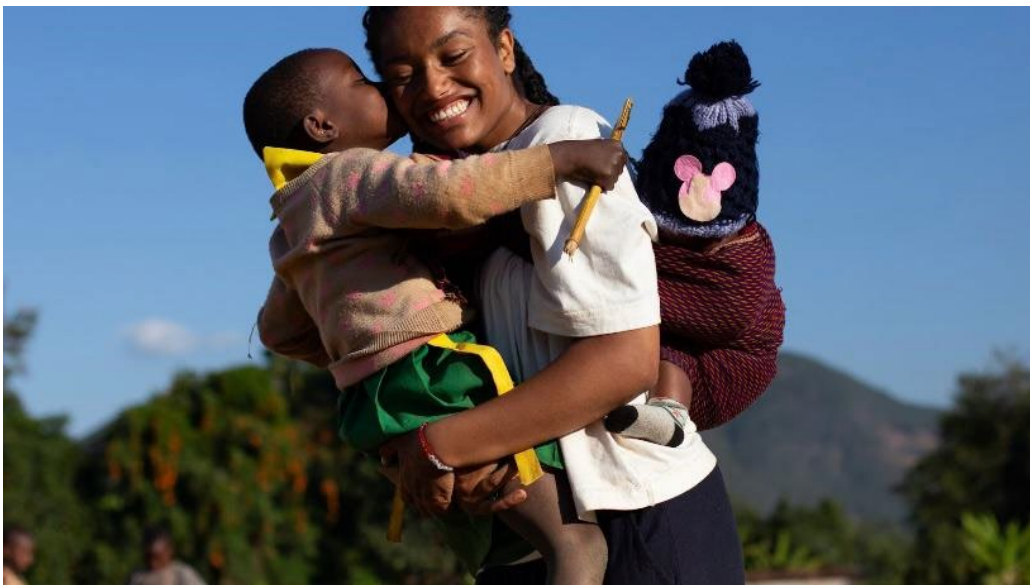


Figure 23 Camilla Haule playing with the NEMCA children. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.



Figure 24 Valentina Russo and the NEMCA children. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.



Figure 25 Carolina Sarti gifting the school uniform to one of the children. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.



Figure 26 Igor playing and teaching photography. Photo credit: Children around NEMCA.



Figure 27 Pietro holding baby Moses. Photo credit: Igor Peftiyev.

Ways forward and the next steps

In conclusion, the activities conducted during the summer semester of 2025 marked a significant milestone in advancing education and community engagement in Songea, Tanzania. Through close collaboration with NEMCA, local schools, and 57 young pupils, this initiative established a strong foundation for future educational programs and

community-driven projects. Looking ahead, we anticipate a sustained and impactful partnership between ECO CARE, NEMCA, and the local communities of Songea. This collaboration is expected to enrich educational opportunities while fostering a deeper understanding of ecological awareness, emotional literacy, and creative learning approaches. Throughout the semester, several promising initiatives emerged to further strengthen this partnership. These include plans to expand the Beyond Borders syllabus for 2025/2026, organise future workshops and training sessions in both Tanzania and Egypt, and develop co-created learning materials tailored to the specific needs of local communities. Additionally, sustainable initiatives, such as the beehive project and support for the local farm through improved access to water, underscore the potential for long-term environmental and economic benefits. Thanks to the support of the Ocean Decade Blue Catalyst (Blyss), we are planning to develop a twinning activity in Sinai, fostering cross-regional collaboration and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, a project application has been submitted to the Ocean Love Award (UN Ocean Decade) to secure funding for the development of a learning toolkit based on My Heart Knows. Future collaborations with project partners will also be continuously developed to expand the scope and impact of these initiatives. The crowdfunding initiative remains open and, in the coming months, will play a vital role in supporting the refurbishment of parts of the kindergartens, assisting children in need by providing books, school uniforms, and food, and aiding families by improving access to water and sanitation. These efforts aim to amplify the visibility and impact of our collaborative work, ensuring that the partnership between ECO CARE, NEMCA, and the broader Tanzanian community continues to thrive in innovative and meaningful ways. Additionally, research efforts will be sustained, with plans for a scientific publication, a co-edited book, set to be developed in the early months of 2026, with the publication project already submitted to Palgrave Macmillan.

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Websites

[The ECO CARE Project](#)

[ECO CARE Instagram profile](#)

[Faculty of Law, UiT The Arctic University of Norway](#)

[Ocean Incubator Network](#)

[Follow Your Heart](#)

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