

It is not easy being a sea turtle. One person who noticed this problem was the Kenyan environmentalist Julie Church. Her idea was an instant success, so in 2005, she founded a company, Ocean Sole, and started employing full time local workers to produce flip flop toys in a factory in Nairobi. Today, Ocean Sole employs 150 permanent workers in their factory and pays thousands of others a fair wage for collecting over 50 tons of flip-flops for recycling on Kenya's beaches each year. They collected, cleaned and cut flip-flops to create colourful turtles, whales and dolphins. She realised that making flip-flop toys could be a great way to clean up Kenya's coastline and help protect marine life while helping poor people earn some much-needed cash. Now, apart from toys, the company produces fashion accessories like bracelets and key rings which are sold in shops around the world, as well as from the company's website. This endangered species faces a huge number of threats such as overfishing, illegal hunting and even flip-flops. In 1999, while working on a sea turtle conservation project on Kiwayu Beach, she was shocked by the thousands of flip-flops that washed up on the beach each day. These cheap rubber sandals often get left behind on beaches where sea turtles lay their eggs. Then, after the eggs hatch, some baby sea turtles find it impossible to move around flip-flops which block their path to the sea.