

Project Update: April 2008

Transplantation of coral colonies can result with unexpected outcomes.

Transplanted colonies of *Stylophora* and *Favia* were surprisingly attacked by local fish (i.e. butterfly fish grazed on polyps, parrotfish broke branches or scrapped tissue) immediately following their attachment to the new sites. Those attacks led to tissue damage, loss of branches, and in extreme cases to the detachment of the colony from the substrate. While at first, we worried about the fate of damaged corals, a surprising fast recovery of most of the attacked colonies was evident. This further indicates for the good physiological condition of the nursery-grown colonies that were raised in the coral nursery under idyllic condition, permitting them to cope with the biological disturbances encountered at the natural reef.

In addition, our transplants were quickly colonized by invertebrates including *Trapezia* crabs, *Spirobranchus* worms and *Alpheus* shrimps. The spatial and ecological niches created by the presence of the reef-building corals were filled by those coral obligatory invertebrates. Thus, the transplants not only reinforce the local coral population, but also stimulate coral reef in-fauna.

