



GOS-GEF-UNDP

*Expansion and Strengthening of the Protected Area
Subsystem of the Outer Islands of the Seychelles and its
Integration into the Broader Land and Seascape Project*



ABOUT THE OUTER ISLANDS PROJECT (OIP)

Importance of the Outer Islands:

- o More than half of Seychelles islands are Outer Islands
- o 9 of 20 (45%) Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) of Seychelles are in the Outer Islands
- o When the project started in 2014, there were very few Protected Areas in Outer Islands. These include:
 - 2 fully gazetted sites: (a) Aldabra Special Reserve (15,260 ha terrestrial and 23,100 ha marine); (b) African Banks Protected Area (2 ha terrestrial and 3 ha marine)
 - 2 declared Nature Reserves: (a) Boudeuse; (b) Etoile (each less than 1 ha terrestrial)



PROJECT GOAL:

To conserve biodiversity in Outer Islands of Seychelles by combining Protected Area conservation and sustainable development

PROJECT AIMS:

- o Support establishment of 5 new Protected Areas in the Outer Islands
- o Establish institutional framework (information and planning systems)
- o Support integrated management of PA sites
- o Conserve biodiversity and reduce land degradation

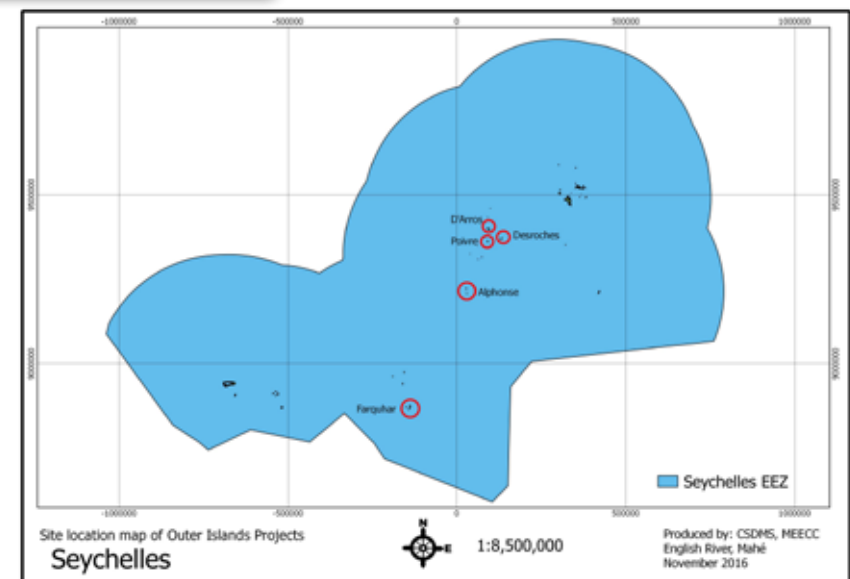
Executing Agency: Government of Seychelles, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC)

Implementing partners: GOS-UNDP-GEF Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) on behalf of Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC), Island Conservation Society (ICS), Islands Development Company (IDC), D'Arros Research Centre/Save Our Seas (DRC/SOS) & Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF)

Funds: The project is supported by a GEF grant of USD 1,935,500 and secured co-financing of USD 10,284,049, giving a total project value of USD 12,219,549

Project Duration : August 2014 to June 2020 (including a 1 year extension)

Project sites: Alphonse Group, D'Arros and St. Joseph, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre



WHY WE CHOSE THESE SITES AND ISLANDS

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Current and planned tourism development will provide financing for Protected Area management at each site.



LOGISTICS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PERSONNEL

- o Functioning airstrips on all islands with daily/ weekly flights
- o ICS conservation personnel already operate on Alphonse and Desroches
- o Lodging and offices provided by IDC for personnel



BIODIVERSITY & ECOSYSTEM VALUES

Each selected site has globally significant species biodiversity and ecosystem function, meriting inclusion in the Protected Areas system of Seychelles



Flagship Endangered Species and Features of the Outer Islands:

Fish: Reef Manta Ray (*Manta alfredi*); Bonefish (*Albula sp.*); Giant Trevally (*Caranx ignobilis*); Sting Rays (Order Myliobatiformes)

Shark Nursery Sites for: Lemon Sharks (*Negaprion acutidens*); Black Tip Reef Sharks (*Carcharhinus melanopterus*)

Sea Turtles: Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*); Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Birds: Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*); Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*); Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*); Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*); Black-naped Tern (*Sterna sumatrana*)



THREATS AND IMPACTS

<i>DRIVER/ ECOSYSTEM</i>	<i>HABITAT CHANGE</i>	<i>CLIMATE CHANGE</i>	<i>INVASIVE SPECIES</i>	<i>OVER EXPLOITATION</i>	<i>POLLUTION / MINING, ETC.</i>
Terrestrial Ecosystems	Historically significant; currently limited	Unknown	Serious, not increasing	Limited	Limited
Marine Ecosystems (inshore seagrass beds, mangroves, coral reefs)	Locally important	Serious, but status uncertain	Unknown, but likely limited	Locally sensitive (inshore fish stocks)	Limited

INVASIVE SPECIES



MARINE POLLUTION



COASTAL EROSION



COMPONENT 1 AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The activities of the OIP were being measured according to 2 key components.

Component 1 focussed on 'Management effectiveness [being] enhanced within a sample of coastal and marine protected areas (IUCN Category I, II and VI) operating under innovative public-private-civil society partnership agreements' and comprised of 7 outputs. The key achievements undertaken for each output were as follows:

Output 1.1: Biodiversity & Ecosystem Assessment, Monitoring and Conservation Programmes to strengthen PA Management

- o Fine-scale Terrestrial Habitat Maps and broad-scale Marine Habitat Maps (supported by the MEECC's Climate Science and Data Management section) developed for Alphonse, Bijoutier, Desroches, Farquhar, Poivre and St. François
- o Standardised monitoring protocols developed for conservation of coral reefs, reef fish, mangroves, seagrass, giant tortoises, seabirds, sea turtles, water quality, subsistence fishing and fish spawning aggregations
- o Species conservation Management Plans developed for coral reefs, reef fish, mangroves, seagrass, seabirds and sea turtles



- o Baseline Assessment for coral reefs, reef fish, mangroves, seagrass, seabirds and sea turtles completed
- o Monitoring of coral reefs, reef fish, mangroves, seagrass, seabirds and sea turtles ongoing
- o Establishment of 'Citizen Science' programme in relation to: a) recreational fisheries monitoring, and b) recreational diving monitoring programmes on: Alphonse Group and Desroches
- o Marine habitat mapping and monitoring programmes supported on Aldabra



Output 1.2: Institutional capacity to plan and implement PA expansion is strengthened

- o The project supported the establishment and running of conservation centre on Farquhar
- o Capacity-building of PA Management staff: 25 capacity-building activities targeting 148 males and 141 females from Government, non-Governmental organisations, the private sector and youth



Output 1.3: Infrastructure and Resources enhanced to enable PA management

- o Equipment and materials purchased for baseline assessment, monitoring and conservation activities

COMPONENT 1 AND ACHIEVEMENTS CONT'D....

Output 1.4: PAs Identified in the Outer Islands and nomination files prepared

- o Nomination file to designate 5 terrestrial areas ('St. François Atoll Terrestrial Special Reserve', 'Île du Sud-Farquhar Atoll National Park', 'Île aux Goëlettes-Farquhar Atoll Special Reserve', 'Bancs de Sable-Farquhar Atoll Special Reserve' and 'Île du Sud-Poivre Atoll National Park') under National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act (1969) submitted to the MEECC for approval
- o Together with the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP)/The Nature Conservancy (TNC)/OIP jointly submitted nomination file to designate (and re-designate) areas for PA status of Desroches Atoll (Marine) Sustainable Use Area, Poivre Atoll (Marine) Sustainable Use Area, Alphonse Group (Marine) Sustainable Use Area and Farquhar Atoll (Marine) Sustainable Use Area under National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act (1969). The areas were approved and gazetted by the Government of Seychelles on 26th March 2020
- o Draft regulations and gap analysis for these proposed PAs are being prepared



Output 1.5: PA Management Structures in place and sufficiently financed

- o Development of four 10-year Business Plans for Alphonse, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre
- o Together with the Protected Area Finance Project, organised capacity building of developing business plans for Protected Area sites

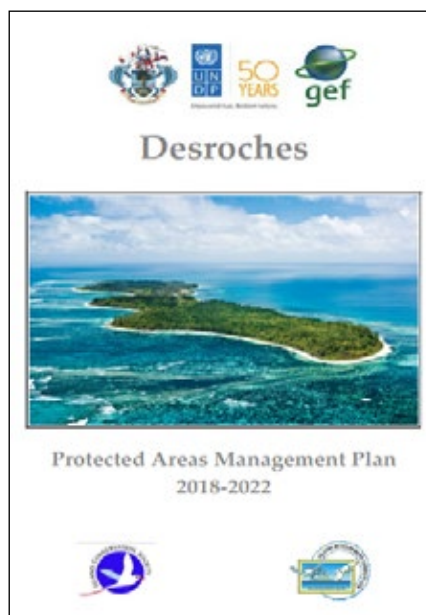


Output 1.6: PA Management Plans Developed and Implemented

- o Conservation Management Plans updated for Alphonse and Desroches
- o Conservation Management Plans developed for Farquhar and Poivre

Output 1.7: Increased Education and Awareness levels support PA management in the Outer Islands

- o Public awareness and education campaigns organised for National theme days, such as: National Protected Area Day (31st January), International Day of Biodiversity (22nd May) and Seychelles National Day Expo (29th June) celebrations
- o General public and students also targeted through a range of awareness-raising activities
- o Newspaper articles, blog articles and Facebook posts to raise awareness of the OIP and its activities were produced by a Communications Officer employed under the project



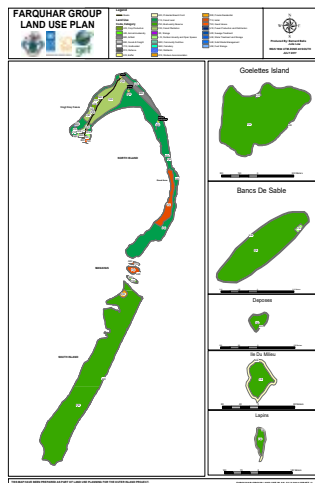
COMPONENT 2 AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Component 2 focussed on 'Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape in the Outer Islands' and comprised of 6 outputs. The key achievements undertaken for each output were as follows:

Output 2.1: Spatially-based decision support system in place to enable integrated natural resource management in the Outer Islands

The project supported the MEECC's Climate Science and Data Management (CSDM) Section by:

(i) An example of gender transformation by the project, OIP supported MEECC's Climate Science and Data Management (CSDM) Section by paying the salary of a young female GIS technician



(MHILT) for approval

o Production of mini-documentaries on the Land Use Plans for public review

(ii) Providing equipment such as plotters, printers and laptops

Output 2.2: Land Use Plans completed for targeted Islands

o Land Use Plans produced for Alphonse, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre and submitted to the Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport



Output 2.3: Ecosystem-wide Zoning and Master Strategy for the Outer Islands in place

o Supported MSP/TNC in the approval of all the Milestones of the Marine Spatial Plan, recently Milestone 3, being the protection of 30% or 410,000,000 ha of the Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone:

• Five High Biodiversity Protection Areas designated as Marine National Parks covering 20,307,100 ha

• Eight Medium Biodiversity Protection and Sustainable Use Areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty covering 23,844,200 ha

Output 2.4: Institutional Capacity strengthened for the implementation of Integrated Natural Resource Management

o Increase the capacity of the MEECC and ICS staff on Information Management systems, Geographic Information System (GIS) and database management

o Provided support to ICS to develop its geodatabase



Output 2.5: Ecosystem Restoration and Invasive Species Management Support PA management objectives

o Vegetation Management Plans completed for Alphonse, Desroches and Farquhar

o Restoration and maintenance of the 15 ha of native forest restored on Desroches. A tortoise sanctuary and native tree trail has been built and rain water harvesting infrastructure has been installed

o Pest Abatement protocol and awareness material finalised and distributed, in partnership with Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)



Output 2.6: Monitoring and Management of Ecosystem Functions to reduce land and resource degradation at PA sites

o Development and implementation of programmes for coastal erosion control and beach profiling on the 4 Outer Island sites

o Under different outputs of Component 2, the project organised 11 capacity-building exercises for 94 staff (50 males and 44 females) from Government, non-Governmental organisations, the private sector and youth.

OIP COMPONENTS AND ACTIVITIES BY ISLAND

COMPONENT	ACTIVITIES	DESROCHES	POIVRE					FARQUHAR ATOLL							ALDABRA
			Poivre	Ile du Sud	Alphonse	St François	Bijoutier	Ile du Nord	Ile du Sud	Ile aux Goélettes	Bancs de Sable	Déposés	Ile du Millieu	Lapins	
1. Management effectiveness is enhanced within a sample of coastal and marine protected areas (IUCN Category I, II and VI) operating under innovative public-private-civil society partnership agreements	Terrestrial Habitat Map														
	Marine Habitat Map														
	Coral Reef														
	Reef Fish														
	Seagrass														
	Mangroves														
	Terrestrial Fauna														
	Sea Turtles														
	Seabirds														
	Establishment of Citizen Science- Recreational Diver														
	Establishment of Citizen Science - Recreational Fisheries														
	Monitoring of Water Quality Protocol														
	Marine Habitat Mapping and Monitoring programs														
	Set up Conservation Centre (including staff salaries)														
	Supplies and Equipment for Conservation Centres														
	Nomination Files (Marine)														
	Nomination Files (Terrestrial)														
	10 year Business Plans														
	Protected Area Conservation Management Plans														
	Education and Awareness Campaigns														
2. Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape in the Outer Islands	Development of Land Use Plans														
	Marine Spatial Plan														
	Development of Biodiversity Geodatabase														
	Ecosystem Restoration (Vegetation Management Plan (VMP))														
	Ecosystem Restoration 15 ha of native forest														
	Invasive Species Management (Pest Abatement Plan)														
	Beach Profiling and Coastal Management Plan														
	Rain Water Harvesting Systems														

INTERESTING FACTS REVEALED THROUGH THE PROJECT

SEABIRDS

Populations of breeding Sooty Terns (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) and Brown Noddies (*Anous stolidus*) on Ile aux Goëlettes, Farquhar, and Black-naped Tern (*Sterna sumatrana*) colonies on Farquhar and St. François exceeded International Important Bird Area (IBA) criteria

The Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) population on Ile du Sud, Farquhar, has been increasing rapidly over the past c.10 years. The first ever breeding attempt was recorded on St François in 2019



The nesting population of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (*Ardenna pacifica*) on Desroches has benefited from consistent predation control measures. Numbers have increased from 250 to 1200 pairs within 3 years (2016-2019)

CORAL REEFS

Coral reefs around the Farquhar Atoll have been severely impacted by cyclone 'Fantala' (April, 2016). Mean live hard coral cover (LHCC) has remained low and constant over the last decade, at around 16-17%

Encouragingly, there are signs that branching corals are recovering slowly. So long as there are no major storms or bleaching events, this trend is projected to continue over the next 5 years

There is a noticeable decline in fish populations in recent times (between 2009 and 2019) for several key species and functional groups; principally: Napoleon Wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), Humphead Parrotfish (*Bolbometopon muricatum*), groupers (*Serranidae*) and snappers (*Lutjanidae*).



INTERESTING FACTS REVEALED THROUGH THE PROJECT CONT'D...

MANGROVES

Mangroves cover 22.6 ha and make up 18.2% of vegetation on Poivre and St. François

Only Red Mangroves (*Rhizophora mucronata*) are found across both islands



TURTLES

Farquhar

There has been a clear increase in the nesting activity of Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*)

Nesting activity of Hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) remains relatively stable at low levels

Alphonse and Desroches

Although nesting populations of both species are still relatively small, they have increased since ICS Conservation Centres were established

With continued protection across all PA sites, the nesting populations can be expected to continue to increase.

SEAGRASS

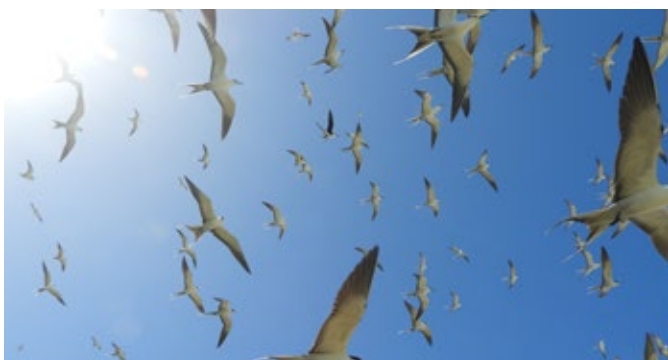
Seagrass covers 13,350 ha and makes up 31% of marine habitat across all four islands

Thalassodendron ciliatum and *Thalassia hemprichii* are the most common seagrasses found across reef flats



KEY LESSONS

As per the findings of the independent evaluator during the project's Terminal Evaluation in February 2020:



- o It is important to be realistic and honest at project design about the realities of working in Outer Islands and avoid being over-ambitious
- o The logistical challenges of working on the Outer Islands need to be fully built into project proposals (these include access to the island, costs of operating on Outer Islands and restrictions due to weather, when work on the Outer Islands is not possible). Risks also need to be properly identified (e.g. increased risk of cyclones for the country's southern islands)
- o The team designing projects need to have a practical and technical understanding of the Outer Islands, as well of the Seychelles' political context. Extensive consultation with all stakeholders needs to take place

- o Close communication between partners is critical to ensuring delivery of activities across the Outer Islands
- o Coordination and cooperation across stakeholders with diverse interests is essential to successful working in the Outer Islands
- o Indicators and targets should be within the control of the project and realistically set taking into consideration the challenges of working on the Outer Islands
- o In project formulation, we should take into consideration the specificity of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)/Outer Islands. The one-size-fits-all framework does not adequately take into account national circumstances, such as: the size of countries and issues related to SIDS
- o A comprehensive capacity assessment of the responsible partners should always be done at project design
- o Inter-disciplinary teams bring benefits. Interaction



with others increase the understanding of issues and hence the quality of outputs. Inter-disciplinary expeditions to the Outer Islands can also be cost-effective

- o Given the limited pool of national consultants, projects need to factor availability of consultants into their planning and allow realistic timeframes for completing the assignment
- o Seychelles has a strong ecosystem-based approach to the development of its Blue Economy. This can inform other SIDS as Blue Economy approaches in other countries typically take industry as their basis
- o Processes operating at different scales have to find a connection point, so that they do not operate as parallel processes, but rather become mutually beneficial and aligned. This was achieved through relationships with the MSP and TNC, the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund for bio-security and the coral collection facility located at the University of Seychelles

Expansion and Strengthening of the Protected Area Subsystem of the Outer Islands of the Seychelles and its Integration into the Broader Land and Seascape Project



Websites

- o United Nations Development Programme: www.undp.org
- o Global Environment Facility: www.thegef.org
- o Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change: www.meecc.gov.sc
- o GOS-UNDP-GEF Programme Coordination Unit: www.pcusey.sc/new
- o Island Conservation Society / Fondation pour la Conservation des Iles (Seychelles): www.islandconservationseychelles.com
- o Islands Development Company: www.idcseychelles.com
- o Seychelles Islands Foundation: www.sif.sc
- o Save Our Seas/ D'Arros Research Centre: www.saveourseas.com/sosf-darros-research-centre

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