

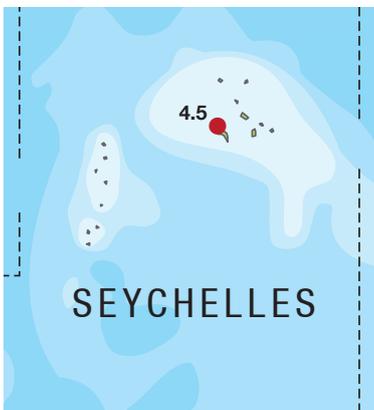
Rehabilitation and sustainable management of the North-East Point marsh



Radio programme on site with SSA members, Mahé, Seychelles © MFF Seychelles

threatened by invasive plant species, principally the water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and water hyacinth (*Eichornia crassipes*). Both species spread quickly, blocking sunlight and depleting the water of oxygen, thus affecting endemic plant and animal species. They also reduce the aesthetic values of wetlands.

This SSA project aimed to address the negative effects of development projects, unsound business practices and the spread of invasive plant species on Mahé's North-East Point marsh. The project was designed in line with national policies, as the Department of Environment is actively involving various groups, especially young people, in protecting the marsh and educating people about its values. The marsh has social and economic value because it is near a popular beach. It also has potential for ecotourism, and provides habitats for a number of endemic plant and animal species.



LOCATION

North-East Point, Mahé, Seychelles

PRIORITY POWS

- Knowledge for Management
- Civil Society Engagement
- Capacity Building

DURATION

One year

MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$11,900

Objectives

This project had three objectives:

- 1 to control water lettuce and other invasive plant species threatening the endemic terrapins, fish and plant species of North-East Point marsh;
- 2 to enhance partnerships between NGOs, government and the community for conducting environmental activities; and
- 3 to engage Seychelles Scouts Association members in tending, survey and research work, and in sensitizing the local community to the management and conservation needs of North-East Point marsh.

Background

Wetlands are a critical ecosystem in the Seychelles. The Department of Environment (DOE) and the Seychelles Scouts Association (SSA) understand the need to conserve wetlands, which, despite their known importance, are under constant threat from human activities as competition for land intensifies. Moreover, the marshes of the Seychelles are

Target beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries were 25 Scouts, both boys and girls, two Scout leaders, two programme coordinators, and three casual laborers from the district. Indirect beneficiaries included the small community next to the marsh, the Scouts network, and the DOE.

Outputs

- ▶ Clean-up of the North-East Point marsh and subsequent maintenance of the wetland to prevent growth of water lettuce and water hyacinth.
- ▶ Involvement of the people from the project district in the management of the marsh.
- ▶ An inventory (number and types) of plants and animals found in the marsh.

Accomplishments and challenges

The project introduced young Scouts members to environmental management activi-

ties and conservation values. It provided a venue for the newly introduced environment component in scouting (especially in the Seychelles). The Scouts and their leaders had the chance to speak with local people about how unsound business practices were negatively affecting the wetland ecosystem, a new experience for Scouts in the Seychelles.

Although the project team was small, it managed to delegate work on a rotational basis while ensuring consistency and adequate monitoring of the project. A local person from the community helped the young Scouts each time they visited the site. Staff from the DOE provided effective support, and participants were motivated throughout and alert to special features or species in the wetland.

Challenges

The group fears that if they do not visit often, the marsh could again become a community waste dump. The timing between site works was also a concern for the Scouts leadership, DOE and the MFF NCB, as invasive plants grow quickly and fill the marsh with debris faster than they can be cleared. The SSA hopes that the community awareness campaign will help reduce these threats. The Scouts are also organizing other community-based groups such as the Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles to join them in sustaining their effort.

Contributions to cross-cutting themes

Communications

A documentary is being filmed about the project, and SBC radio broadcasted a programme entitled *The North-East Point Wetland*, a 20-minute report aimed at raising awareness about the wetland and why the Scouts were restoring and maintaining the site. An information brochure on the importance of wetlands, the Scouts' environment programme, and partners in conservation,

was also produced. The brochure includes information on the MFF project, and how the project contributes to the important wetlands in the area.

Gender equality

The Scouts leadership and membership are a mix of men and women, including children of both sexes and all age groups.

Climate change

The work begun by this project marks the start of a longer-term action to ensure the marsh functions naturally for the benefit of both wildlife and the surrounding community. Wetlands remain a critical ecosystem, which if healthy can greatly reduce some of the impacts of climate change.

Lessons learned

This project was a holistic venture for Scouts members, as it allowed them to learn about and benefit from the experience of professionals in the field, as well as join workshops that broadened their theoretical understanding of wetlands and their functions. The Scouts learned techniques for maintaining ecologically important sites and for social research and data collection (such as the inventory of flora and fauna in the marsh, raising community awareness through discussions, and local site visits).

Close collaboration with the community yielded positive results, but one of the planned results (no invasive plant species in the marsh) proved over-ambitious. Project managers found that the aggressive growth of invasive weed species makes them extremely difficult to eliminate.

Partners and their contribution

The Seychelles Department of Environment made an in-kind contribution through facilitation, consultation, guidance and equipment (as stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement signed at the start of the project).



Starting control of invasive weeds at North-East Point marsh, Mahé, Seychelles © SSA

"This was the first time that our environment project received financial support from MFF. It was a great help for us in responding to our principles, especially in providing opportunities for us to connect to the natural world through environmental education and on-the-ground action."

— FRANCIS ACCOUCHE
SSA COORDINATOR

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