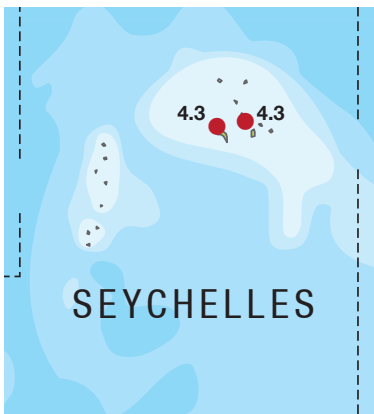


“Mangroves are a Must!” Promoting mangrove conservation awareness and education in the face of climate change in the Seychelles

Puppet show about conserving wetlands, WCS festival, 2010, Mahé, Seychelles © MFF Seychelles



LOCATION

Mahé and Praslin islands, Seychelles

PRIORITY POWS

- Knowledge for Management
- Strategies for Management
- Civil Society Engagement

DURATION

July 2009 to February 2011

MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$25,000

Objectives

The overall objectives of this Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles (WCS) project were to overcome negative or indifferent attitudes to wetlands and mangroves, and to bring about a change in societal priorities in the Seychelles.

Background

As many Seychellois are largely unaware of their values and services, wetlands continue to be lost and degraded, destroying important wildlife habitats and making the archipelago increasingly vulnerable to the extreme weather events induced by climate change. This project sought to launch a vigorous long-term campaign of public sensitization aimed at encouraging the whole community to take action to conserve wetlands.

Target beneficiaries

Members of six coastal communities, the private sector, and WCS members (224 people) and leaders (10 people).

Outputs

- The establishment of six “Mangrove Teams” to implement project activities in

each target community, including mangrove planting.

- Establishment of outdoor classrooms in wetlands to teach wetland restoration techniques, and organization of many indoor conferences and lectures.
- Organization of eleven youth leadership training sessions, after which trainees led similar sessions in their communities.
- Launching of the “Art to Educate” campaign in three regions, involving the creation of prominent roadside murals on wetland themes.
- Creation of an “Adopt a Wetland” scheme whereby people or businesses can commit to protecting their “own” wetland.
- Launching of a countrywide media campaign.

Accomplishments and challenges

The project involved WCS leaders and members, schools, the wider community, media outlets and national stakeholders in government and the conservation field, helping to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands and generating information on mangrove planting and restoration.

A survey that assessed community appreciation of coastal resources in the six target communities found that 96% of respondents regarded wetlands as valuable assets. The survey prompted community members to look at the benefits from healthy wetlands, and encouraged activities to protect wetlands in their vicinity. A partnership between government and stakeholders was established, and even after the project ended activities in wetland protection and restoration continued.

The Mangrove Teams drew praise from

key stakeholders such as the Department of the Environment, as well as certain communities which have now registered as organizations in their own right and are applying for funding to expand their efforts.

Challenges

Two of the Mangrove Teams implemented only part of their action plan because of ill health and other commitments. The WCS coordinator also occasionally found it hard to monitor every ongoing project.

Contributions to cross-cutting themes

Communications

Media coverage of the project was excellent. *The Nation* newspaper ran six articles, five of which mentioned MFF. A 15-minute radio programme and many shorter updates were broadcast on project activities, as well as a 20-minute television report and shorter updates of about seven minutes each.

The project also produced posters detailing community survey results, an annual 24-page magazine for children, and a 65-page book, *A Wetlands and Coastal Activities Guide*.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Gender equality

More than 90% of the WCS leadership is female; about 70% of its membership are women.

Climate change

This was a project focal area and a motivating force for mangrove rehabilitation. Training was given to WCS members in climate change, its potential impacts on islands and coastal communities, and other relevant concerns. The training included film shows, group work, art and drama. These activities were later rolled out to schools.

Lessons learned

Given its scale, this project would have benefited from a dedicated project manager. Outputs were best achieved by training all participants in implementing and managing action plans, writing reports and other management tasks. Decentralizing implementation also worked well.

Partners and their contribution

Almost all Seychelles conservation organizations, as well as government ministries, contributed to making the project a success.



Mangrove site restoration by WCS club members, Mahé, Seychelles © Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles

“It is good to see the young people taking interest. I have never seen it before. I will help them by looking after the plants they planted here.”

— MRS VERLAQUES
A COASTAL VILLAGER