

## SIDS

# Working on sustainable activities that lead to the increased protection of small islands

The Island Conservation Society has been at the forefront of bringing sustainable development to Seychelles. Here the author highlights some of the projects undertaken by the environmental NGO.

By AURÉLIE DUHEC, ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY



Kids from Silhouette and their sustainable energy vision.

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has been in session since 1 September and will wrap up today, in Apia, Samoa. "The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships" was the theme chosen for the gathering. Seychelles stands at the front line of the mounting global environmental

crisis and as a national environmental NGO the trustees, staff and volunteers of the Island Conservation Society (ICS) together develop, test and implement effective strategies to preserve biodiversity, mitigate the effects of climate change and promote sustainable development across the archipelago. The Aride Island Nature Reserve, deemed one of the finest nature reserves of its kind the world over, is owned and managed by ICS. This uniquely vibrant and well preserved island serves as a biodiversity showcase for thousands of national and international tourists every year who wish to experience what Seychelles may have been like before the arrival of Mankind. In addition, an agreement between ICS and the Islands Development Company (IDC) makes it possible for the society's conservation professionals to actively participate in managing environmental conservation across the Outer Islands under the

tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year and save about SCR60 000 annually. A solar system is a form of clean and quiet electrical energy generation technology, which has no adverse effects on the environment, such as air pollution, noise pollution or oil spillage. This current setup provides a model for other small scale renewable energy and nature conservation projects on remote islands. It also serves as a tool to educate the younger generation and make them aware of the threat of climate change on human-wellbeing, ecosystem services and functioning.

### Outreach programme and renewable energy demonstration system on Silhouette

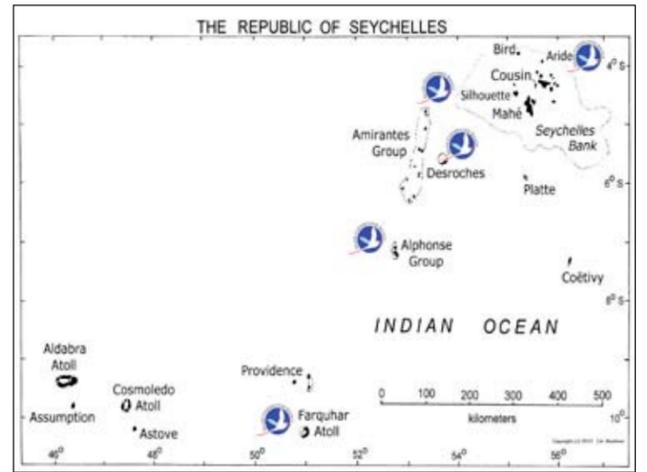
ICS recognizes Silhouette Island as being a major Seychelles biodiversity hotspot despite suffering from habitat degradation. The vision of the team is to restore and sustainably protect and manage the natural and cultural resources of the Silhouette National Park which currently represents 93% of the terrestrial area of the island. ICS and IDC are working together to implement a solar power and rainwater purification demonstration project at the La Passe Village Primary School, on Silhouette Island, with funds received from the British High Commission. In addition to the installation of

ing a tortoise. These prehistoric creatures were once widespread across the entire Seychelles group, but due to their ease of capture they were quickly hunted to near extinction. The vegetation restoration plan on Desroches is also helping to preserve these magnificent animals. The rehabilitation of the native forest is a success thanks to the determination of our team since 2009 and the immense assistance and support from IDC and Desroches Island Lodge staff. About 1 500 native plants have been planted to date.

### Alphonse Island team fights against marine pollution and



Cosmoledo coral reef monitoring.



### Farquhar "GoS-UNDP-GEF Outer Islands Protected Areas project"

The project seeks to promote the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial and marine biodiversity in the Seychelles' Outer Islands by expanding the protected areas system and strengthening protected area management, supported by broad-scale ecosystem planning and sustainable land management activities to conserve ecosystem functions.

### Cosmoledo expedition

IDC plans to re-open Cosmoledo in the near future. So, it was in this context, with the support of IDC, and thanks to the logistical and financial support provided by the owner of the M/Y Pangaea vessel, that a research team from ICS was able to visit Cosmoledo for a week in March 2014 to conduct baseline and follow-up studies of some of the most important terrestrial and marine ecosystems and species of the atoll. Cosmoledo, like Aldabra, hosts some of the richest biodiversity in the outer islands, in terms of marine turtles, nesting sea birds, fishes and coral reefs. Despite being under threat by human and pest predation and climate change our team have found generally healthy ecosystems.

The SIDS conference in Samoa echoes the importance of the fragility and vulnerability of Small Islands and ICS will continue to pursue sustainable activities that lead to the increased protection of small islands.



ICS staff planting trees.

conducted: sea turtle population monitoring (since the 80s to 2014), coral reef health monitoring (2007 and 2014), and the terrestrial vegetation (2014) and rat eradication projects implemented in 2007, the long-term success of which was recently assessed. On the islands, ICS' experienced field teams are made up of determined conservationists who are involved in monitoring, research and eco-tourism. We put emphasis on diverse programmes of coastal and forest rehabilitation and sustainable development and recognize the need for good communication, education and raising awareness about conservation issues.

**Aride Solar Energy Project**  
Aride is probably the most natural and least touched of all the islands of Seychelles. In response to the climate change, since the installation of a new solar system, we have successfully reduced our reliance on fossil fuels by up to 90%, avoided approximately five



Mating tortoises.

technical equipment such as solar panels, guttering and a rainwater storage tank, the school's teachers and ICS staff started an education programme to teach the children (and later, the local community) about the importance and potential of renewable energy and water management.

### Giant Tortoise rejuvenation programme and native forest rehabilitation on Desroches

The ICS Desroches tortoise rejuvenation programme is aimed at increasing the Giant Tortoise population on the island and allowing visitors and hotel guests to actually get involved in the conservation work by adopt-



Alphonse Island.