

BHC staff give hands-on help to island restoration - 21.05.2013

**A team from the British High Commission (BHC) travelled to Aride Island yesterday to give a helping hand to the Island Conservation Society's (ICS) work to restore and protect the island's native**

**habitat.**

The 15 members of staff from the high commission are due to spend the day uprooting invasive plants, planting native shrubs and building nest boxes for the island's colony of roseate terns, under the supervision of the ICS staff on the island. British high commissioner Lindsay Skoll praised the work of the ICS staff for their dedication to rehabilitating and conserving Seychelles' unique island ecosystems. "The fantastic work that is taking place here on Aride and in so many other places in Seychelles, to protect and conserve the country's wonderful environment is an inspiration. We're all very grateful to ICS for giving us the opportunity to get involved." All the activities planned form part of the ongoing work that ICS does on a daily basis. "We wanted the team to get a feel for what it's like to be a conservation ranger for a day," the Aride Island manager, Uzice Samedi said. ICS's chief executive Ahab Downer stressed the importance of the Aride Island Nature Reserve and engaging members of the community as much as possible: "Aride is special. It boasts one of the most important seabird populations in the Indian Ocean with more breeding species than any other island in Seychelles. ICS is mandated to manage this precious resource but we are always keen to encourage and engage more people to experience enjoy and share all the wonders it has to offer in a responsible manner. This volunteer related activity is just one of the ways in which we go about achieving this. Furthermore, it also helps build on a fruitful and long-term partnership." The visit to Aride is part of a wider programme of cooperation between the BHC and ICS that includes a solar energy project for the school on Silhouette which will start in October 2013. The high commission has provided funding for an ICS initiative to install a solar energy and water storage system at island's primary school in La Passe. This will make it Seychelles' first school to run on a sustainable energy source and form part of a valuable educational and awareness programme for the children of both Silhouette and Bel Ombre schools. "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the British High Commission for their financial support towards initiating a small but meaningful renewable energy project on Silhouette. We very much look forward to collaborating on similarly useful and innovative activities and projects together in the future," said Mr Downer.