

Environment

Conservation staff trained to implement water quality monitoring protocols on outer islands

As part of the GOS-UNDP-GEF Expansion and Strengthening of the Protected Areas Subsystem of the outer islands of Seychelles and its integration into the broader land and seascape project, staff from the Island Conservation Society Seychelles (ICS) and other organisations have benefited from ongoing capacity-building to establish baselines for environmental monitoring in the Outer Islands, including the development of monitoring protocols suitable for use by island staff.

Under the project, a one-day training session was organised on the developed water quality protocol, targeting 10 staff from ICS, the Islands Development Company (IDC), the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) and the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA).

The training was part of a larger project that aims to establish a monitoring programme for water quality measurement in the outer islands of the Seychelles; namely the four protected area sites of Desroches, Alphonse, Poivre and

Farquhar. Longer-term, the implementation of a standardised protocol - using indicators for the monitoring of fresh and seawater quality - will help establish a baseline to improve the understanding of the current status of water quality at the Protected Area sites.

The training was facilitated by Dr. Jerome Harlay from the James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute at the University of Seychelles. Dr. Harlay demonstrated various scientific techniques, including: water collection, the measurement of a maximum depth of light pen-

etration (the Secchi disk method), the measurement of salinity using a 'refractometer' (a laboratory or field device for the measurement of an index of refraction) and the determination of various chemical parameters in water samples using 'spectrophotometric' methods (a tool that hinges on the quantitative analysis of molecules, depending on how much light is absorbed by coloured compounds).

ICS' Conservation Officers plan to implement the methods acquired from the training as of next year and will collect data on remote islands to complement meteorological observations and the various ecological surveys that are already conducted daily. As part of the capacity-building programme, the training was video-recorded to produce a video training module for staff who are currently based on the Protected Area sites. This will assist future conservation officers to follow the same protocols and will guarantee consistency with measurements taken, for medium to long-term comparisons. The video module is also expected to reduce the high costs of future training for field staff based on the Outer Island Protected Area sites (due to their remote location), as

well as at other sites.

Commenting on the importance of implementing water quality monitoring protocols across the Outer Islands, ICS Head of Science and Projects, Pierre-André Adam, said: "Maintaining the quality of water is vital for the functionality and sustainability of ecosystems, on which we humans depend on. These assessment tools allow us to identify pollution and implement control measures before it becomes a problem."

Declining water quality has become a global issue of concern, threatening the health and functionality of aquatic ecosystems. The discharge of wastewater, for instance, has increased dramatically, with many developing countries discharging it, untreated, into largely pristine ecosystems. Deteriorating water quality is one of the leading causes of degradation of aquatic ecosystems and their related services, threatening livelihoods and development. Monitoring the health of aquatic ecosystems is a pre-requisite to value their potential, to provide and support essential ecosystem processes and services. Water quality issues are complex and diverse, and therefore urgently require global attention



A demonstration of a test being conducted



Attendees at the workshop

and action.

Water quality monitoring will enhance the capacity of local, regional and national authorities to sustainably manage their water resources and aquatic ecosystems. Scientifically-based guidelines to establish new, or to adapt exist-

ing, water quality and quantity standards for sustaining aquatic ecosystems, need to be developed within the regional context of climatic, geographic, geomorphologic, hydrographic and hydrological conditions of the Western Indian Ocean.

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