

Case 18: SEYCHELLES

Restoration of degraded terrestrial sites in the Seychelles

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Following a study in 2009, which evaluated the extent of soil degradation and highlighted some of the most affected areas on Praslin Island. Praslin is the second largest of the 115 islands of the Seychelles archipelago, where there were coconut palms and several other varieties of palms including the coco-de-mer palm trees (*Lodoicea maldivica*), with its suggestively-shaped nuts weighing more than 17 kilograms, the largest in the plant kingdom. With its erotic shape, the coco-de-mer contributed towards the theory that the island, which was re-named in the 1880's as Praslin, was the original 'Garden of Eden'. Two and a half centuries later, however, the once-lush island's original lush green canopies of indigenous palm forests have shrunk to just a few spots on the island. The Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS), was launched as the only non-governmental organization (NGO) on Praslin. The NGO brings together a cohort of volunteers from the islands with the intent of transforming the hilltops into green forests using endemic and native plants. La Hauteur Mountain, overlooking the district of Baie Ste Anne, has been sporting bare red patches for almost thirty years following forest fires and soil erosion. The Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS), the only NGO based on the island of Praslin, has in its seven years of existence rallied volunteers to make the island once known as the 'Isle of Palms' greener. Many of those who rallied to help on the affected sites are local farmers and ordinary islanders who are concerned by the continued degradation of the hilltops.

Implementing Organization	Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS) Add : PO Box 4057, Trass Nursey, Fond B'Offay, Baie Ste Anne, Praslin, Seychelles Email: trass.seychelles@gmail.com
Funding Source	the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Small Grant Project, supported by the United Nations Development Programme
Implementing Period	11/2015 – 12/2020
Project site	Fond B'Offay, La Hauteur Mountain, Baie Ste Anne, Praslin, Seychelles

Key Words: Coco de mer, TRASS, Soil, Erosion, Volunteers, Praslin



A close-up of the slopes of La Hauteur Mountain: For over 30 years, the site has been characterized by crevices, dry land and boulders. The only plants that can grow in such an arid environment are small, scrubby shrubs. (Romano Laurence).



A total of two thousand endemic plants will be planted in the area before the rainy season ends in April.: Many of those who rallied to help on the affected sites are local farmers and ordinary islanders who are concerned by the continued degradation of the hilltops. (Romano Laurence)

Background of the Project

A total of two thousand plants, mostly endemic species such as the 'bwadnat' or *Mimusops sechellarum* are being planted. This exercise, which started in late November, was conducted using local volunteers and groups which helped to carry the plants and provided labour to dig holes and help plant the trees.

Although classified as 'near threatened' on the list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN, according to TRASS, the bwadnat is ideal for eroded areas.

Overall Goal and Objectives of the Project

This is something the volunteers are doing for the community, for the island and for the country. They are rehabilitating an area of 20 hectares of land on the hilltop of La Hauteur, which overlooks the district of Baie Ste Anne, on the island populated by over six thousand people.

This is a way to help the environment and the island. The exercise is also used to create awareness about the dangers and the impact of forest fires and deforestation. "All the volunteers are ordinary people, some are farmers, office workers, etc. who feel this is a cause of concern and they are committed to it. The TRASS members are encouraged to share the knowledge they have acquired about the issue with the local community.

Major Activities

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Direct Outputs from the Project

Rehabilitating an area of 20 hectares of land on the hilltop of La Hauteur, which overlooks the district of Baie Ste Anne with a total of two thousand plants, mostly endemic species such as the 'bwadnat' or *Mimusops sechellarum* are being planted.

Indirect Impact of the Project

The Palms and the endemic species such as the 'bwadnat' or *Mimusops sechellarum* been planted will give a lot of shade. Introducing new species on the hilltops will encourage animals and insects to make the forest their home. Improving the biodiversity and quality of forest creates a condition that will slow down the rate of invasion by other plants as they a low amount of sunlight reaches the forest floor.

Intervention of Central/Local Government and other stakeholders

With the restructuring of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change a new Section was created to focus on community outreach and public education namely PECO. PECO works very closely with the Ministry of Education and the NGOS such as TRASS to organize and implement community outreach programmes and activities in the communities, in schools and educational institutions. PECO is actively assisting communities to set up officially registered community-based organizations.

Resource Persons

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