

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

July 2020

CEPF Grant 109509

Island Biodiversity Conservation

Rescuing the last Seychelles White-eyes from Mahé and developing partnerships for sustainable tourism on small islands of high biodiversity value

Seychelles

Grant Summary

1. Grantee organization: Island Biodiversity Conservation
2. Grant title: Rescuing the last Seychelles White-eyes and developing sustainable tourism partnerships
3. Grant number: IBC109509
4. Grant amount (US dollars 50,000).
5. Proposed dates of grant: 1st November 2020 to 30th October 2021
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken: Seychelles
7. Date of preparation of this document: 1st July 2020.

8. Introduction

This one-year project mainly focuses on saving the unique Seychelles white-eye population on Mahé, where (with 68% of its genes different from the other original population of Conception; Rocamora & Richardson, 2001) is likely to become shortly extinct. This will include the translocation of 5-10 individuals from Mahé to Grande Soeur and the preparation of a translocation plan to transfer ca. 30 birds from Frégate to Mahé to reinforce the relict population of La Misère and try to maintain the presence of this emblematic species on Mahé.

On Grande Soeur, we will continue to monitor the SWEs and the Giant tortoises that were translocated under Phase 1; conduct intensive post-release monitoring of the SWE that will be translocated from Mahé to Grande Soeur; and conduct myna control to keep the probability of predation from these birds very low.

We will also resume activities on Ste. Anne that is expected to re-open in December 2020 by developing with the new hotel (Club Med; c.300 rooms; probably largest room capacity hotel on Mahé) a partnership focusing on the development of eco-tourism activities, monitoring of marine turtles and explore possibility to also collaborate with biosecurity and integrated pest management.

In addition, we would also continue to conduct monitoring activities in the islands important for the SWE (Frégate, Ile du Nord, Conception).

9. Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

The main stakeholders of this one-year project are the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) and Sisters Island Ltd. In addition, we shall keep the community living at La Misère/Souvenir informed about the SWE status and the objectives of our project.

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) is the highest authority for nature conservation and environmental issues in Seychelles. Its Conservation section in the Division of Environment started the Seychelles White-eye Recovery Programme in 1998, and produced in 2002 the first Seychelles White-eye Action Plan. The MEECC was regularly consulted and involved in the CEPF Phase 1 project (2017-2019). They were again consulted for this one-year project to translocate the SWE from Mahé to Grande Soeur. MEECC will play the role of facilitator particularly for the authorisation of the SWE inter-island transfers. The MEECC staff is likely to participate to operations such as SWE monitoring, capturing and ringing Seychelles White-eyes from the source population, island transfers or to training sessions organized by the IBC. MEECC has frequently been engaged in the implementation of the CEPF project Phase 1 and the planning of this 1-year project. Our last engagement meeting was 20th March 2020 to further discuss the fate of the SWE on Mahé. A brief overview of the activities and implementation of the project was given; positive remarks were made and there were no objections, reluctance or negative comments of any kind expressed. MEECC will also be looking into the possibility of co-funding the CEPF

project which they consider to be a top priority in terms of saving the SWE on Mahé which is in a critical status. A letter of support dated 11th May was provided to IBC.

Sisters Ltd is the company of the owners of the two sister islands, Petite Soeur and Grande Soeur, in charge of their management. They have been showing interest in ecological restoration activities since 2010, when they decided to undertake at their own cost (through a personal loan from the owner) the eradication of rats and cats, and later the control of mynas. It was at that time that members of our team (G. Rocamora & A. Labiche) started working with the owners of Gde Soeur and Petite Soeur in 2010-2011, conducting the eradication of rats, cats and establishing a control programme for mynas and basic wildlife monitoring. Restoration activities resumed in 2016 and were boosted with the small-scale habitat restoration and the species translocations undertaken during previous Phase 1 CEPF-funded project. The owners intend to continue only ad-hoc small-scale habitat rehabilitation. At this low pace it will take many years to recreate sufficient suitable habitat for new species such as the Seychelles magpie-robin. However, once the tourism industry recovers from the Covid-19 crisis, the number of day visitors through cruise-ships and birdwatching tours may increase (as was the case between November 2019 and March 2020 when several cruise ships had Gde Soeur on their itinerary). This will bring significantly more revenue to the island and the owners informed us of their intention to reinvest this money into habitat restoration and conservation activities. In our last exchange with Sisters Ltd (email correspondence from May) it was agreed for our project activities to start in July 2020 on Gde Soeur pending grant approval from CEPF.

Other the years, there have been several consultations between IBC and Sisters Ltd. Various activities and issues have been discussed. The management of Gde Soeur is expected to continue to apply the basic biosecurity measures that were set up after the rat eradication in 2010. It was enhanced during previous Phase 1 CEPF-funded project to be more performing especially for species other than rats. Since no reinvasion or incursion of rats or any new invasive species has occurred since then (except for Hairy caterpillars sp. and Fungus gnats that can fly and affected all other granitic islands of Seychelles) the current management of Gde Soeur can be considered adequate for the island to remain rat-free in the long term. Control of invasive animals such as mynas is also expected to be continued, as this activity is currently in place since 2016 and being taken care of by the owner on his own, with the occasional help of IBC volunteers.

Since 2017, we have tried to engage with the community living at La Misère/Souvenir area. Educational activities such as tree-planting sessions (totally several hundreds of samplings) were conducted at La Misère with pupils from the La Misère school with the support of school teachers and some parents. We consulted the representatives of this community repeatedly (District administrators and Members of National Assembly of Gde Anse and Plaisance; Catholic school priests and community, school teachers, company responsible for waste and pest control, plus MEECC representatives) through email and one-to-one discussions, and circulated a draft of the Pest Management Plan. However, none of the 10 invited representatives turned out to the presentation and meeting we organized in 2018 to discuss the PMP, and sent letters of apology. Therefore, we plan to keep this community informed but cannot identify them as a key stakeholder, due to the absence of structured associations and leadership.

Hence, through these consultations and engagement, IBC can be sure to do the needful for the proposed current project. To note, that IBC produced several project reports, articles, documentaries and posters about the project activities which were disseminated to project stakeholders and the public. Below are links to two promotional project posters illustrating these results from Phase 1:

<https://unisey.ac.sc/wp-content/uploads/Advancing-Ecosystem-Management-and-Threatened-Species-Recovery-through-Partnerships.pdf>

<https://unisey.ac.sc/wp-content/uploads/Advancing-Ecosystem-Management-and-Threatened-Species-Recovery-through-Partnerships-2.pdf>

10. Project Stakeholders

The two key stakeholders of this one-year project are the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) and Sisters Island Ltd (see above). Sisters Island Ltd will be directly affected by the project because the main project activities will take place on one of their islands. MEECC's role is mainly in facilitating the project through the provision of the authorisation to conduct the transfers but the project is also a means for their staff to benefit from training.

Other stakeholders are listed below:

The community of villagers from La Misère/Souvenir will not be much affected by the removal of the last few birds still surviving in this area, due to the small size of the birds. However, the SWE being an emblematic species of this area, they will be consulted and kept informed about the project activities, such as rat control (through trapping), SWE monitoring and transfer of individuals to Gde Soeur. La Misère school and Member of Parliament for the Grand Anse District have been engaged in the project since Phase 1 and will continue to be engaged in future projects.

Management of President of U.A.E Affairs. This is a company that manages the properties of the President of UAE in Seychelles, which host very few of the Seychelles White-eyes left on Mahé. Since 2006, an ongoing programme has been conducted by MPA to control the rats and replant some native trees rich in berries and invertebrates favoured by the Seychelles White-eye, in view of increasing the relict Mahé population that keeps fluctuating but with a clear decreasing trend since 2009. Our current project would provide support to create a new momentum and improve the effectiveness of this programme.

Club Med is a very large French hotel group employing over 3700 people and with many large touristic resorts all over the world, including one in Mauritius. They are currently opening several large new resorts per year around the world. Club Med Seychelles on Ste. Anne Island will have a total of 295 rooms (compared to 87 for the former Beachcomber resort). Their new resort in Seychelles has been developed in association with New Mauritius Hotels (that manage all Beachcomber resorts), that have invested 70 million euros. They will propose to their clients many outdoor activities including snorkelling and scuba-diving, sailing, tennis and other sports, and also activities to discover Seychelles wildlife; this will include many activities for children. Several meetings have taken place between IBC representatives and Club Med officials, which have demonstrated a strong interest to develop a strong partnership with the IBC centre and Dr Rocamora. They have, for example, been very receptive to the idea of setting up an integrated pest management for the island. They wish to develop ecotourism and also progressively conservation programmes. This should include continuing small scale habitat rehabilitation on their property (formerly started by Ste Anne resort), and helping IBC to monitor and protect native wildlife (rare plants, marine turtles, giant tortoises, terrapins etc.).

North Island Ltd is the company that manages Ile du Nord, a 201 ha private island situated near Silhouette with a small 11 villa high class tourist resort. In 2005, rats were eradicated during the ICS-FFEM project and 45 ha of natural habitat were rehabilitated. In 2007-2008, Seychelles White-eyes and Seychelles Black-mud terrapins were reintroduced successfully. Monitoring of these populations has been conducted by our team until 2014 and was resumed under the IBC CEPF Phase 1 project in 2017.

Frégate Island Private Ltd is the company that manages Frégate Island, a private island of 219 ha with a 16 villa high class tourist resort. After rats were eliminated in 2000, Seychelles White-eyes were

transferred in 2001 and the population has been monitored until 2010. Monitoring was resumed under the IBC CEPF Phase 1 project in 2017.

11. Stakeholder Engagement Program

The main purpose of the stakeholder engagement programme is to successfully conduct the translocation of SWE from Mahé to Grande Soeur. Consultations have already been undertaken with the key stakeholders who agree with the transfer. Information that will be disclosed will be in the form of a translocation proposal to transfer SWE from Mahé to Grande Soeur, bearing in mind that our previous proposal to transfer SWE from other islands to Gde Soeur, already included a detailed ecosystem assessment and followed best practice international standards (IUCN guidelines). This will contain information of the status of the SWE on Mahé, monitoring amongst others, whereas habitat requirements and suitability of Gde Soeur were already covered during the previous transfer proposal. Information will also be in the form of articles and media programmes because we intend to disseminate the outcome of the project activities. In addition, we shall organize two public meetings with the community from La Misère / Souvenir areas to inform villagers of the objectives and activities of our project, in addition to media articles and TV reportages that we shall produce to inform the public nationally. We shall also organize a minimum of another tree-planting session with the local school, to improve habitat quality of this area for the SWE.

12. Consultation methods

The main methods that will be used to consult our 2 key stakeholders are e-mails, phone calls, and occasionally meetings when these are required. With regards to the community of inhabitants from La Misère / Souvenir areas, where some SWEs are still present, the main methods will be public meetings, ad-hoc encounters while conducting activities on site, and media articles or TV reportages.

13. Other Engagement Activities

We will need to inform the community from La Misère/Souvenir about what we shall be doing, i.e. removing the last SWEs there and bringing some from other islands the following year.

We could also engage or at least encourage the community to trap rats in SWE breeding areas as a means to collectively control rat population which is also a human health hazard.

14. **Timetable:**

Date	Location	Engagement activity
March 2021	Mahé	One project information meeting to be advertised for inhabitants and community leaders, and one presentation at La Misère school.
January 2021	Mahé	Approval of Translocation Plan by MEECC
January 2021	Mahé and Grande soeur	Confirmation with Sisters Island Ltd of the translocation schedule (dates that transfers will be done)
February – October 2021	Mahé	Rat control in SWE breeding territories

15. **Resources and Responsibilities:**

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be included into the job description of the Project Manager who will be responsible for the activities. Our two full time staff seconded by part-time consultant specialists of the species (Dr E. Henriette and Dr G. Rocamora) will conduct these duties as part of their contract.

16. **Grievance mechanism:**

If the stakeholder has a grievance, they can raise it via our public meetings, a letter or an e-mail to IBC (IBC@unisey.ac.sc). This can then be followed up by a telephone conversation. IBC will respond to them via a letter or e-mail. We will also provide them with the contact details of the CEPF Regional Implementation Team in case they wish to submit the grievance directly to the CEPF (cepfritmadio@tanymeva.org). The following clause will be inserted in our letter to them so that they may other grievance avenues ““We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail.

17. **Monitoring and Reporting:**

Staff of MEECC will be encouraged to participate in the project as part of their capacity building and training. The translocation of the SWE involves bird monitoring, catching using mist-nets, ringing and measurements and all these are techniques that staff from MEECC would like to acquire. The same applies to staff from Sisters Ltd, who actively participated to the previous SWE transfers and attended the bird ringing training course on Aride Island organized through our previous CEPF funded Phase 1 project. Stakeholder engagement will be reported in the project progress reports and the final report.