



GEF-Satoyama Subgrantee Highlights Report

Organization Name:	GIF
Country:	Seychelles
Reporting Quarter:	FY19 Q3 (January – March 2019)
Person submitting Report:	Mariliana Leotta

The Seychelles is a globally important storehouse of marine biodiversity and the fisheries sector is essential for ensuring food security and economic development.

Small-scale artisanal fisheries exploit a high diversity of species and habitats. Historical data shows that several species have disappeared or declined from the artisanal catch although national fishery statistics focused only on a few key commercial species and no detailed threatened species surveys were undertaken. Demersal resources within 10 km of the coast were believed to be overfished, as only a few regulations are in place concerning only vessel licensing, gear restrictions and seasonal closure of fishing grounds; threatened fish species, with the exception of the whale shark, are not protected in Seychelles.

The traditional approach to fishery management of top down imposition of regulations had proven unsuccessful, in part due to very limited capacity for enforcement. This was recognised by the authorities and the Fisheries Act 2014 provided enabling mechanisms for co-management approaches.

In 2016 Green Islands Foundation (GIF) started a GEF-Satoyama funded project, *“The development of a co-management plan, designed by fishers, to minimise the impact of the Seychelles artisanal fishery on threatened species”*, with the objective to develop a fisher-designed and endorsed series of management measures to reduce the fishing pressure (catch, by-catch and disturbance) on threatened species (IUCN classifications: VU, EN, CR) in the artisanal fishery, and to create database and baseline of occurrence in artisanal fishery catch, monitoring protocol and educational material.

The project, undertaken in partnership with the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) and fishers associations, on the main island of Mahé, where 90% of artisanal catch is landed, targeted a diverse community of private sector, such as fishers, fish vendors and boat owners.

The project developed a baseline of threatened species occurrence in the artisanal fishery through a review of old technical and historical literature, fishers’ interviews, workshops and consultations, and an intensive 12-month survey of artisanal catch to support fishers in the identification and development of pragmatic management measures to reduce artisanal fishing pressure on threatened species. Methods utilised for catch, by-catch issues and key locations and habitats were recorded as well.

Once a monitoring protocol was established, fishers and technical staff were trained both directly on site and during workshops.

In 2017 data on 22 threatened species were collected on a daily basis for 12 months, in collaboration with the fishing community, at 7 key landing sites and points of sales on Mahé Island. Information gathered included species name, fishing method, fish size, sex (sharks and rays) and maturity (juvenile or adult). At the same time photos and key information were gathered for developing educational materials. ID cards and posters were produced and distributed to fishers’ community, collaborators, technicians, partners, local NGOs and school students at the various fish landing sites and markets, and at training workshops and presentations.

Data were analyzed, and results and recommendations were presented to fishers during numerous district meetings to identify pragmatic measures to reduce impact of artisanal fishery on threatened species. National meetings with fishers’ representatives were held and “fisher-led” measures were refined and agreed. Fishers’ representatives signed a declaration based on the agreements, reached on 13 species, to release, not land or land minimum size.

In December 2018, GIF had a meeting with the Minister of Fishery and Agriculture, Hon. Charles Bastienne, and officers from the Ministry to present the results of one year of monitoring on artisanal fishery catch as well as present the signed recommendations agreed on by fishers. The Minister gave his endorsement to the measures and proposed that GIF will be included in discussions for a comprehensive Fisheries plan for the country.

On the 18th of January 2019 the agreement was presented to the Seychelles Fishing Authority with the intention of formulating the measures under the 2014 Fisheries Act. After presentation of results and the agreed measures, the press was invited to film the handover of the fishers' agreement to SFA. Project participants were interviewed to share their experience on the project and to talk about the importance of such measures for artisanal fisheries. The presentation ceremony was shown in the local news bulletins of Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) and TéléSesel.

In February 2019 a committee has been set up to oversee the implementation of the **co-management plan for the demersal trap and line fishery of the Mahe Plateau** and to provide regular and ongoing recommendations to the Minister responsible for fisheries, with the goal of a sustainable demersal fishery that delivers the best possible ecological, economic and social benefits for the Seychelles through effective, transparent and participatory management. GIF has been invited to be part of the committee

Furthermore, GIF has applied for additional funding to SeyCCAT (Seychelles Conservation and climate Adaptation Trust) to expand the work to render artisanal fishery more sustainable. This project now also research occurrence of rays, sharks and species 'of local concern', caught in artisanal fishery with the intention of recommending measures that will reduce impact on these species.

The GEF-Satoyama funded project has allowed GIF to make valuable contributions to fisheries research and management in Seychelles.

Photos



Photo 1 - Meeting with Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture @GIF/M. Leotta



Photo 2 - GIF GM, Wilna Accouche, handing over the fishers' declaration to the SFA CEO, Rony Renaud @GIF/M. Leotta