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THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE PLUS INITIATIVE

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the seychelles islands

Preparing for Climate Change in the Tourism Sector

A Guide for Hotels and Guesthouses

Risk Management Section
Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine
January 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

For many small island states, including Seychelles, tourism has become a major contributor to the local economy and one of the principal strategies for islands to improve the socio-economic living conditions of the local population and to combat poverty. However, this increasingly important sector is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate variability and change. Favorable climatic conditions at destinations are key attractions for tourists, especially in beach destinations.

In the context of Seychelles, we continue to find ways and means to diversify our products and promote alternative tourist leisure activities such as nature walks, bird watching, marine leisure activities which include cruise tourism, watersports, scuba diving, kayaking etc. with the aim of attracting new tourism market segments. However it is important to remember that these activities are also highly dependent on specific climate and weather conditions.

The climate is changing and the impacts are already being felt on land and in the sea. For tourism in Seychelles to thrive, it is critical that we understand the implications of climate change on our sector, participate in actions to reduce our carbon footprint, and start planning ahead to minimize losses.

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE ?

Globally, scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) agree that the earth's climate is now changing due to greenhouse gas emissions from human activities such as burning fossil fuels for energy, electricity and transportation, production of cement, widespread burning of forests and industrial agriculture. Recent emissions are the highest in history, and the changes to the climate are having widespread impacts on human and natural systems*. Impacts include warming of the air and sea, sea level rise, an increase in the intensity and frequency of storms, and changes in precipitation and other weather patterns across the globe.

In 2015, the world came together to agree on the Paris Accord, an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support efforts for countries to adapt to the changing climate. By signing this agreement, Seychelles committed to doing its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and take action to prepare for the impacts of climate change. However, climate change will impact all sectors and the full participation of all - including the private sector, civil society and government - is required for an effective and coordinated response.

* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers.

2. HOW WILL CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT TOURISM ?

Globally, climate change will have both direct and indirect impacts on tourism, and some of these may even be positive for some destinations. Some mid-latitude countries (e.g. in Europe) that are both tourism generating and receiving destinations may experience a positive effect. They are expected to have longer beach seasons and warmer temperatures, which may entice tourists to vacation closer to home instead of visiting tropical destinations like Seychelles and other remote islands. Many tourists are also trying to reduce their carbon footprint and for this reason,may choose holiday destinations close to their home.

Seychelles is a tropical destination that relies on sand, sun and sea for our marketing strategy. If tourists from our top markets are more motivated to choose closer destinations, then Seychelles will lose out on these markets and needs to start planning accordingly.

While there are a few cases like this where tourism in some areas may experience some positive impacts from climate change, research shows that the negative effects of climate change on tourism will by far outweigh the positive ones*, and this certainly rings true for Seychelles. Because of this, tourism business operators need to be fully aware of the current and predicted impacts of climate change on tourism, and consider the effects that these impacts may have to their respective business over the short and long terms. Research and experience indicate that damage to the product and earnings of the tourism sector because of climate change can eventually lead to serious to socio-economic impacts. Our best strategy is to plan ahead for climate change, with eyes wide open, and then take whatever actions are necessary to both reduce our contributions to climate change and adapt to its impacts. This manual is intended to help hotels and guesthouses along that path…

* Siddiqui, Samreen & Imran, Muhammad. (2018). Impact of Climate Change on Tourism. In: Impact of Climate Change on Tourism, Publisher: IGI Global, pp.68-83.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON TOURISM IN SEYCHELLES

IPCC scientists from around the world have pulled together thousands of research papers to try and predict how climate change will affect the world*. Here is a summary of how those impacts are expected to affect tourism in Seychelles.

SEA LEVEL RISE

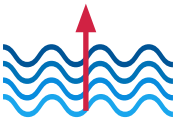
Sea level rise caused by melting polar ice as well as thermal expansion of seawater as it warms is expected to pose one of the greatest threats to tourism in the Indian Ocean region. It will eventually inundate small low-lying islands and coastal zones, causing coastal erosion and loss of land/beaches. Coastal tourism property owners (beach and sea side tourism establishments and to certain extent hillside establishments as well) will need to cope with wave, storm surge and wind related damage and other in-direct damages and cost. They will also face erosion, which is likely to be gradual and sustained. Inundation may result in loss of recreational value and carrying capacity of the beaches, loss of property and a decline in land and amenity values, deterioration of landscape and visual appeal. Finally there will be an increase in cost for beach and property protection. Many regions depending on tourism are already under threat. Small Island states in the Indian Ocean such as the Maldives and Seychelles have been listed amongst those islands under threat of sea level rise, along with others in the Pacific and Caribbean. In Seychelles, low-lying coastal properties and infrastructure along beaches are at highest risk.

INCREASE IN CYCLONES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Climate change is affecting cyclone patterns globally, with a general increase in the frequency and intensity of storms. While the main islands of Seychelles remain out of the cyclone belt of the Indian Ocean, outer islands further south are vulnerable, and we have already felt the impact of severe tropical storms e.g. Bondo that hit Providence Island in 2006, Falleng in 2013 and Fantalla on Farquhar in 2016. If this situation persists, a reduction of tourists visiting Seychelles can be expected, as cyclones can cause heavy rains and wind even on the main islands (outside of the cyclone belt), and significant damage to infrastructure on outer islands that is indispensable to the tourism industry, such as utilities, jetties, hotels, etc. Airport closures will lead to flights being diverted to other destinations.

* IPCC. (2018). Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

INCREASE IN STORM SURGES



A storm surge is an abnormal rise in seawater level during a storm, mostly caused by the wind pushing more water onshore than is normal. The size of the surge depends on the intensity and speed of the storm as well as the topography of the seabed just offshore. An increase in cyclones and storms in the region will likely mean higher risk of storm surges. If Seychelles also gets heavy rainfall from the tail end of the cyclone, this can exacerbate flooding in coastal areas and cause severe damages to coastal infrastructure essential to the tourism industry i.e. ports and airports, coastal roads, tourist accommodation and catering establishments, etc.

SALT-WATER INTRUSION FROM RISING SEA LEVELS

Salt water seeping into the soil contaminates coastal agricultural lands, reducing yields of local crops like fruits and vegetables, critical for food security as well as the local tourism industry. Salt-water intrusion can also affect potable water sources in farms, communities and tourism establishments (such on outlying islands) that rely on well water and want to avoid energy intensive desalination plants.

HEAVY RAINFALL AND FLOODING

Cyclones in the region may not hit Seychelles' main islands directly but they often result in continuous heavy rainfall in Seychelles that can at times cause flooding in low lying coastal areas, and landslides along roads closing roads and causing damage to sewage infrastructure and buildings. Heavy rainfall puts a damper on many activities in the tourism sector that rely on good weather. Climate change models predict a general increase in rainfall for Seychelles over the next few decades. The tourism industry must start developing alternative activities such as arts, cultural shows, museums, that can keep visitors busy and happy on those rainy days.

DESERTIFICATION AND WATER SCARCITY

While we can expect more rain, it can come in short intense bursts, in between extended dry periods without rainfall. This can make regions less hospitable for both local communities and tourists and may lead to an increase risk of outbreaks and epidemic of infectious diseases. Seychelles has limited water storage capacity and relies on regular rainfall for water security. Water desalination is a solution but is very energy intensive, making water efficiency measures a must for profitable tourism establishments.

BIODIVERSITY

Seychelles unique biodiversity and natural ecosystems attract thousands of tourists each year. Climate change is expected to have a negative impact on biodiversity in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems…

Ocean warming and acidification

As the ocean warms and becomes more acidic (due to increased levels of CO2), this is damaging and killing coral reefs, a major attraction for Seychelles as a tourist destination especially for divers and snorkelers. Many local fish rely on healthy coral reefs for food, shelter and reproduction, so further degradation of coral reefs will eventually have an adverse effect on local fish stocks. Fish is an important nutrient component in the Seychellois diet and an attraction for tourists wishing to taste Kreol cooking. A scarcity of fish will eventually affect food security and tourism in the country.

Invasive alien species

Climate change will affect many species of flora and fauna and these will shift to more suitable climatic regions. Seychelles might lose some of its native/ endemic flora and fauna, which will affect the islands' biodiversity, and eventually this will have a negative impact on tourism, which highly depends on the natural environment. It is also to be noted that many species are also invasive and can create an imbalance in the ecosystem where they will be migrating. Many are likely to dominate native/ endemic plants as well as agricultural crops, and some may also have negative health effects on humans and animals. E.g. the Euproctis spp. (Hairy Caterpillar); the outbreak of this species had a significant impact on tourism.

Deforestation and the harm to biodiversity

The loss of trees due to development or fires affects ecosystems and discourages the demand for forested destinations by tourists. Deforestation directly reduces the ability of trees to remove carbon from the atmosphere and offset the emission of greenhouse gases (C02) from human activities. Seychelles is highly dependent on its forest cover, natural beauty and biodiversity for the tourism industry.

Changes in marine biodiversity

The marine environment including beaches may also be increasingly affected by rapid increases in certain species, such as jellyfish and accumulations of seaweed. As weather patterns become less predictable, variable trade winds that determine where seaweed drifts can result in local problems. Although naturally occurring and harmless, seaweeds can detract from otherwise picture-perfect coastal scenes, and make swimming less pleasant. The costs of clearing up beaches can also be considerable.

4. WHAT CAN WE DO ?

Although climate change is scary – there is a lot the tourism industry can do to address it. Climate actions fall under two broad categories:

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

These type of actions result in the reduction of greenhouse gases, either by reducing emissions or by planting trees or other fast growing vegetation to absorb carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas). Actions include reducing energy consumption, switching to renewable energy like solar, switching to electric or hybrid vehicles, investing in public transit, and reducing food waste that produces methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) from landfills, buying local foods grown close to the point of consumption, and eating more plant based foods. Mitigating climate change = reducing your carbon footprint.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CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

These are actions involving preparations to build resilience and minimize the social, environmental and economic impacts of climate change. Examples of adaptation actions include coral reef restoration to protect the coast, improving water storage capacities to adapt to prolonged droughts; fortifying infrastructures such as roads on the coast being eroded or overwhelmed by sea-level rise, and protecting natural ecosystems that help control flooding, coastal erosion and maintain water supply. Adapting to climate change = being realistic and planning ahead!


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REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF TOURISM ESTABLISHMENTS

There are many simple actions you can take to reduce your carbon footprint! Here are some practical guidelines for hotels and guesthouses to start reducing their greenhouse gas emissions (and saving money!)

PLANT TREES

Help build awareness regarding the need to protect our forests by organizing or sponsoring tree-planting activities in the community where your business is located.

USE GREEN TRANSPORTATION

Encourage your staff to walk, cycle or take public transport instead of constantly using the company car or taxis.

SAVE ENERGY

Make sure that you turn off all lights and appliances when not needed and make it easy for guests to do the same.

USE LESS AIRCONDITIONING

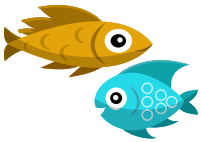
Set systems to an energy efficient level (e.g. 26C) or instead make use of fresh air by introducing natural ventilation within your building structure.

SAVE WATER

It takes a lot of energy to treat, distribute and heat water, so the less we use, the smaller our carbon footprint. Low flow showerheads and taps, dual flush toilets, and rainwater harvesting can all help to reduce use of treated water and lower your carbon footprint. Offer choices to encourage guests to use towels and sheets for a few days rather than changing them every day.

MINIMIZE PACKAGING AND WASTE

Avoid unnecessary packaging, as much as possible, reduce, reuse, and recycle your waste instead of throwing things away. Packaging takes a lot of energy to produce, transport and dispose of and the less you use the fewer emission level you produce.

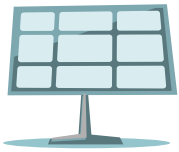


USE LOCAL FOODS

The carbon footprint of imported foods is huge, especially meat products like beef and lamb. Locally grown produce and livestock have a much smaller footprint, as does locally caught fish. Plant based diets are growing in popularity and have a lower footprint – by offering vegetarian or vegan options for your clients you can help reduce emissions.

ELIMINATE FOOD WASTE

Food waste produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, when it decomposes at the landfill. Take measures to minimize food waste by avoiding buffets, donating leftovers to farmers or food share programs, and investing in a composting system



ADOPT GREEN ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

Many green technology products are now available in Seychelles, e.g. solar water heaters, solar photovoltaic panels, LED lights, etc.

ACCESS CLIMATE FINANCING

Find out from your local bank or from the Seychelles Energy Commission (tell 4610818, e-mail: - info@sec.sc about the Seychelles Energy-Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programme (SEEREP) or any other financial incentive programmes that might help cover some of the costs or reduce taxes on energy efficient, renewable energy or recycling equipment for your business.

PARTICIPATE IN CLIMATE ACTION ORGANISED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Liaise with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (tel 4670500) to find out about any new or upcoming projects directly linked to climate change that they are promoting to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and see how you can collaborate with them.

KEEP INFORMED

Keep abreast of new developments regarding green technology by regularly browsing through social media networks. Find out more about current projects being implemented by contacting the PCU-UNDP project coordinating unit on tel: 4325606/4525599 or visit their website

COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Many local schools, businesses, faith groups and community groups are trying to reduce carbon emissions. Wherever possible support these efforts by buying local, sponsoring climate action, and using local expertise and services to help your own business cut emissions.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Once we accept that our islands will be very different in the year 2100, we can start working towards a progressive multi-sectoral adaptation plan to ensure that Seychelles' future generations are energy, water and food secure. Seychelles will need to plan and build new infrastructure like roads, drains, ports, reclaimed land and housing, taking into account a changing coastline and climatic conditions. The tourism industry is an important partner for these developments. Protecting critical habitats and biodiversity will provide us with natural protection against the impacts of climate change and safeguard the natural beauty that attracts tourists to our islands. By exploring innovative responses to climate change the tourism sector will ensure the sustainability of this industry for years to come. By helping to educate communities and tourism workers to ensure that they understand how to reduce risks presented by climate change, we can help to keep them safe, vibrant and resilient.
However, adaptation costs money and financial contributions from the tourism industry are critical. A 2007 study* estimated that USD 21 million in net present value terms over the following 15 years would be required to implement a tourism adaptation strategy for Seychelles.

Here are some practical guidelines to help hotels and guesthouses adapt to climate change:

ADOPT CLIMATE PROOF PLANNING

Good overall hotel planning and management include adequate set-back distance from the beach, adoption of proper beach management plans, better architectural design and landscaping promoting cooler garden spots and living environment for tourists, as well as energy conservation through better building design.

CONDUCT A HAZARD ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PROPERTY

Conduct a regular hazards assessment of your surrounding environment to detect changes as or result of climate change, such as changes that have taken place in nearby coastal areas. Note them and continue observing them. Report major changes to the Department of Energy and Climate Change Tel: 4670500.

* Payet, R.A. (2007). Impact of Climate Change on Tourism in Seychelles and Comoros. A Final Report Submitted to Assessments of Impacts and Adaptations to Climate Change (AIACC), Project No. SIS90. Department of Environment, Victoria, Mahe, Seychelles

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE COAST

Modification of coastlines for private hotel services such as marinas and slipways, removal of coral rock and discharge of pollution, all contribute to stress on vital coastal marine ecosystems. Coral reef and mangrove ecosystems play an effective role in protecting coastlines against extreme events, thus protecting and restoring them is an effective adaptation measure to combat climate change in the long term.

REDUCE COASTAL EROSION

Propagate plants and vegetation that adapt easily to coastal areas. For beach areas, plant native coastal trees like Takamaka, Indian Almond (Bodanmyen) bushes like Scaevola (Vouloutye) and beach morning glory (Patatran) to protect the beach and dune from erosion. In areas near river outlets, mangroves can be propagated and planted to reduce erosion. Liaise with the Department of Environment (4670500) or local NGO's to seek relevant information regarding any ongoing coastal planting projects to protect the islands' coastal zone.

PROTECT AND RESTORE CORAL REEFS

Help protect our coral reefs by providing tips to divers and snorkelers on how to avoid touching and breaking their fragile colonies. Find out about and participate in activities that will help protect and restore coral reefs and other marine ecosystems. Many marine environmental NGOs are already developing such projects and welcome partners from the tourism industry - liaise with them and find out what they are doing to protect our coral reefs. Ask them how your business can contribute.

BUILD WITH CLIMATE PROOFING IN MIND

If you are conducting major building renovation, redeveloping or building new infrastructure ensure that you mainstream climate compatible measures in your physical plans. Conduct simple research to find out which materials are more resistant to climatic conditions, or if there are new/innovative materials that can adapt well to extreme climatic conditions such as heat, high winds and heavy rains. Seek advice from the Planning Authority, or from a qualified local architect (several are very knowledgeable about climate change).

SAVE WATER

This is both a mitigation and adaptation measure. Introduce or increase water storage capacity on your premises and as much as possible reduce water consumption by introducing new water conservation techniques. These might include reusing your grey water for gardening, adopting rainwater harvesting etc. Put in place water conservation measures by using water saving devices and other methods. This will help to reduce water demand during drought periods. You will also see a reduction on your water bills. Liaise with PUC (e-mail: puc@seychelles.sc) for advice and guidance.

CASE STUDIES

Heliconia Grove, Praslin

Heliconia Grove, a self-catering establishment with 8 villas, based at Cote D'Or on Praslin, is a good example of a small establishment implementing climate change adaptation measures through the implementation of energy efficient and conservation practices. Here are a few examples of what they have done:

- Installed solar PV panels on the roof. The 10kW system is connected to the PUC grid and produces about 20-25% of the energy consumed by the hotel, reducing the carbon footprint and saving money.

- Garden lights have standalone PV powered LED lights and the lights bulbs throughout the establishment are all LED's or other low energy bulbs.

- The villas' have solar water heating systems powered with electric boosters that are switched on only on extreme rainy days.

- The swimming pool filtration system uses UV light, reducing the use of chlorine and other chemicals.

- There are water pressure reducers at each villa to reduce water consumption. Signs in each room invite guests to help save water by re-using their towels.

- Plants cultivated in the gardens require minimal watering and remain green throughout the year.

CASE STUDIES

Hilton Seychelles Northholme Resort and Spa, Mahe

Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort and Spa is a perfect example of a resort in Seychelles taking action to address climate change. They are using new methods and equipment to reduce energy and water consumption. This strategy has less impact on the environment, and generates significant cost savings. Here are some of the initiatives they have put in place:

• Abolition of PET water bottles on site. In January 2019, Hilton Seychelles began bottling and filtering their own water from the source at Mont Dauban on Silhouette Island. Since then the hotel group has used 370 000 fewer plastic bottles, equivalent to 7400kgs of plastic.

• Solar PV energy saving program: since 2014 when they installed solar PV panels, the hotel has cut carbon emissions by almost 95 tonnes! This is equivalent to taking 9 cars off the road.

• Water efficiency project – The hotel has installed manual adjustment of flush capacity to reduce the amount of water used per flush and replaced the showerheads with low-flow alternatives. They conduct a weekly inspection of the water system in all areas to monitor leaking.

Thanks to these actions they are saving approximately 30,000 SCR per month!

5. USEFUL CONTACTS

Many organisations in Seychelles are willing to provide advice to and collaborate with tourism establishments to help them go green and tackle climate change. Here are a few key contacts to get you started.

GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Many government ministries, departments and agencies are currently in the process of developing their own climate change action plans. Here is a list of some of the key governmental organisations that may be able to provide guidance and information to support climate action by hotels, listed in alphabetical order:

Department of Risk and Disaster Management (DRDM)
DRDM is the government's agency responsible for overseeing and improving capacities, mechanisms and procedures to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability in Seychelles. DRDM recognizes the close links between disaster risk reduction and preparing for climate change and is ready to collaborate with tourism establishments to help them develop and implement strategies to reduce risk in the face of climate change impacts and other potential disasters.
Contact:
Tel: +248 4672200
Email: paul.labaleine@drdm.gov.sc / email@drdm.gov.sc
Website: www.drdm.gov.sc

Department of Tourism - Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL)
The SSTL is a sustainable tourism management and certification programme designed to recognize and reward tourism accommodations that have integrated sustainability within their operations. The criteria used are of international standard but their development has drawn on local knowledge. The label is valid for a two-year period after which the hotels are reassessed to ensure that they are maintaining their sustainability commitments. For information or advice contact:
Tel: - +248 4 286 500
Email: jbristol@tourism.gov.sc; sstlsecretariat@gmail.com
Website: www.sstl.sc

Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change
For advice on any new or ongoing environmental projects, and opportunities for funding and partnership.
Tel. +248 4670500
Email: adecommarmond@gov.sc
Website: www.meecc.gov.sc

Public Utilities Corporation (PUC)
For advice about energy and water savings and strategies.
Tel: +248 4678000
Email: puc@seychelles.sc
Website: www.puc.sc

Seychelles Energy Commission
For advice about green energy and technology, and financial incentives.

Tel: +248-4610818
Email: info@sec.sc
Website: www.sec.sc

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs)

Many organisations engaging in climate action are NGOs, many of which are keen to work with tourism establishments to support their projects through a CSR relationship. Many of these NGO's can advise you on your plans and ideas to go green and tackle climate change, and are listed below in alphabetical order. However there may be other NGOs and community groups active near your establishment, and willing to collaborate with you on local climate action, that are not on this list.

Contact the **Citizen's Engagement Platform of Seychelles (CEPS)** to find more local groups in your area.
Citizen's Engagement Platform of Seychelles (CEPS)
Tel: +248 4325550 / 4325552
Email: info@ceps.sc
Website: www.civilsociety.sc

Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles (MCSS)
MCSS addresses climate change by partnering with local communities and private sector partners, especially in the tourism field, to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources in Seychelles. For further information please contact:
Email: info@mcss.sc
Website: www.mcss.sc

Nature Seychelles
For advice on protecting wildlife, restoring terrestrial, freshwater and coral reef habitats, renewable energy and going carbon neutral.
Tel: +248 4601100/ 4601122
Email: nature@seychelles.net
Website: www.natureseychelles.org - www.education.natureseychelles.org

Plant Conservation Action Group (PCA)
PCA offers several services to hotels including plant identification services, advice on habitat restoration, propagation of native plants and control of alien invasive plants, and advice on vegetation to protect and restore coastal ecosystems. Please contact:
Tel: +248 2637533
Email: pca.seychelles@gmail.com
Website : www.pcaseychelles.org

Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Foundation (SSTF)
SSTF offers advice about strategies for tourism establishments to go green with a special focus on reducing food waste and associated carbon emissions.
Tel: + 248 4225058
Email: info@seychellessustainable.org
Website: www.seychellessustainable.org

Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S)
S4S offers advice about sustainable technologies, reducing waste, and saving energy and water and tackling climate change. Help with liaising with local community groups and schools. Assistance with sustainability /climate change audits and planning for action.
Tel: +248 4224072
Email: info@s4seychelles.com
Website: www.s4seychelles.com

Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles (TRASS)
TRASS offers advice and partnership on ecosystem restoration and protection, as well as opportunities for hotel staff and guests to participate in activities such as planting and going on nature trails. Contact Victorin Laboudallon:
Tel: +248 251 3370
Email: trass.seychelles@gmail.com
Website: www.trass.org.sc

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This guide was written by the Risk Management Section, Tourism Department, Civil Aviation Ports and Marine.
The GCCA+ program (Michele Martin and Helene Pans) provided support with editing, graphic design and layout

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