



AFRICAN SEA TURTLE NEWSLETTER



Photo: © Pierre Andre Roth

Divers from Blue Eden Dive Center in Santo Antão, Cabo Verde, free a turtle entangled in a fishing net and trapped under a rock.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Manjula Tiwari

Marine Turtle Ecology & Assessment Program
 NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service
 Southwest Fisheries Science Center
 8901 La Jolla Shores Drive
 La Jolla, California 92037, USA
 &
 Ocean Ecology Network
 2320 Valley Street, Berkeley,
 California 94702, USA
 email: Manjula.Tiwari@noaa.gov

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John Dutton Productions, California, USA
 email: john@johnduttonmedia.com

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Integrating Local Leaders in Efforts to Improve Biodiversity Conservation

Juan Patino-Martinez, Leno Dos Passos, Estanislau Dos Reis & Rocío Moreno
 Maio Biodiversity Foundation (FMB), Cidade Porto Inglês, Ilha do Maio, Cabo Verde
 (email: juan.patino@fmb-maio.org)

Awareness campaigns can make unique and important contributions to the relationship between humans and nature and improve conservation practices and outcomes (Mascia 2003). Despite the widespread acceptance of awareness campaigns and the importance of involving the human component into conservation, indicators of success of awareness campaigns remain difficult to measure in practice. In general, there are culture, knowledge, capacity or acceptance barriers between local communities and conservation NGOs. Here we document a case study in which these barriers have been overcome and the results have been clearly positive through the commitment of local football team members and their leader to raise awareness about the value of loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) conservation on the island of Maio, Cabo Verde.

In some countries the high consumption of sea turtle meat over many decades, coupled with bycatch or fishing, has caused drastic population declines and even local and regional extinctions (Spotila *et al.* 2000, Jackson *et al.* 2001, Fretey *et al.* 2007, Dethmers and Baxter 2011, Fiedler *et al.* 2012). Although the Cabo Verde archipelago also has a history of consuming sea turtle meat and eggs, it still hosts an important loggerhead nesting population (Marco *et al.* 2012), which is due, at least in part, to 20 years of conservation work by national and international NGOs (Marco *et al.* 2018). The Maio Biodiversity Foundation (FMB) has been implementing loggerhead conservation for the last eight years on the island of Maio to decrease or even eradicate poaching. The island has thirteen different human settlements (Fig. 1), all of which have been habitually exploiting sea turtles and consuming their meat and eggs.

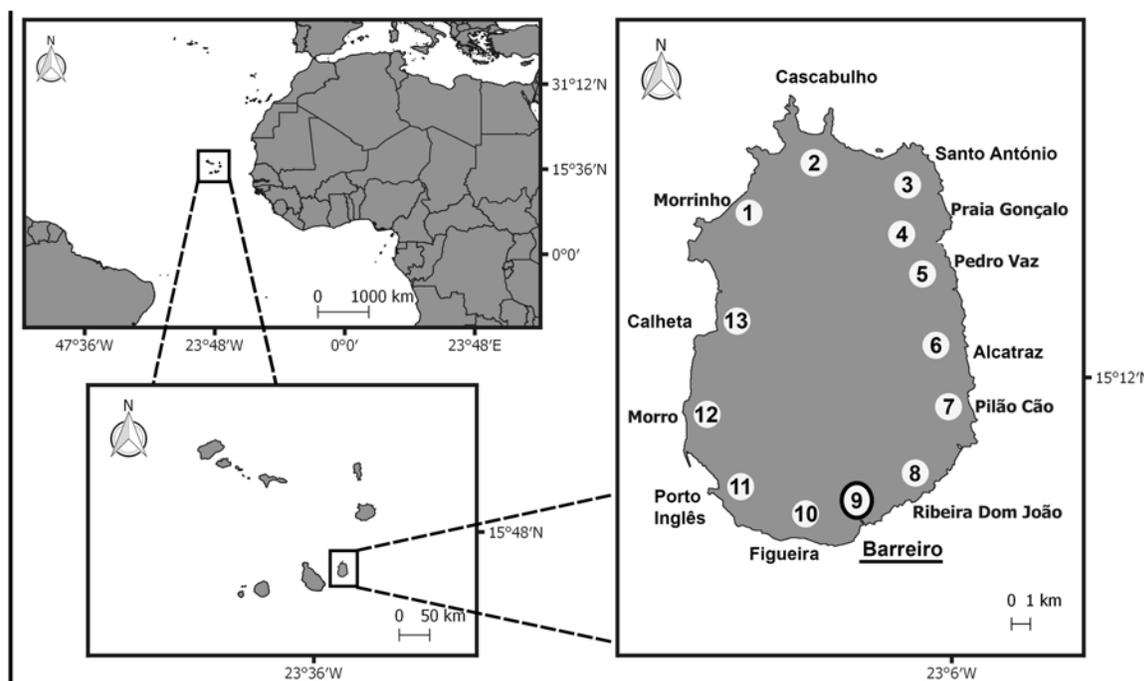


Figure 1. Location of the island of Maio, Republic of Cabo Verde and the thirteen zones with human settlements. The Barreiro zone (#9) is highlighted – in 2019 the local football team led the most effective awareness campaign in the history of the island.

The loggerhead turtle awareness and conservation activities developed by FMB in the thirteen towns of the island include: nightly nesting beach patrols with contracted local residents; guided tours of hatcheries and nesting beaches; alternative livelihoods for people to improve their quality of life; and the integration of national and international team leaders in each area, who coordinate conservation activities and live within each community with local families. The government of Cabo Verde recently approved (May 2018) a law that criminalizes the capture of sea turtles and the consumption or commercialization of any of their parts, as well as the destruction or alteration of nesting habitats. Both the awareness-raising activities and possibly the new law have had a positive effect, gradually decreasing the mortality of nesting females in all areas. However, one of the zones, Barreiro, (Fig. 1) is now a remarkable example compared to the others because it has transformed from being the zone with the highest exploitation and consumption of nesting females on the island to the zone that has almost completely eliminated exploitation of turtles in 2019 (Fig. 2) and has become actively involved in protection (Fig. 3). What, then, have been the key factors to change the attitude of people in this particular zone

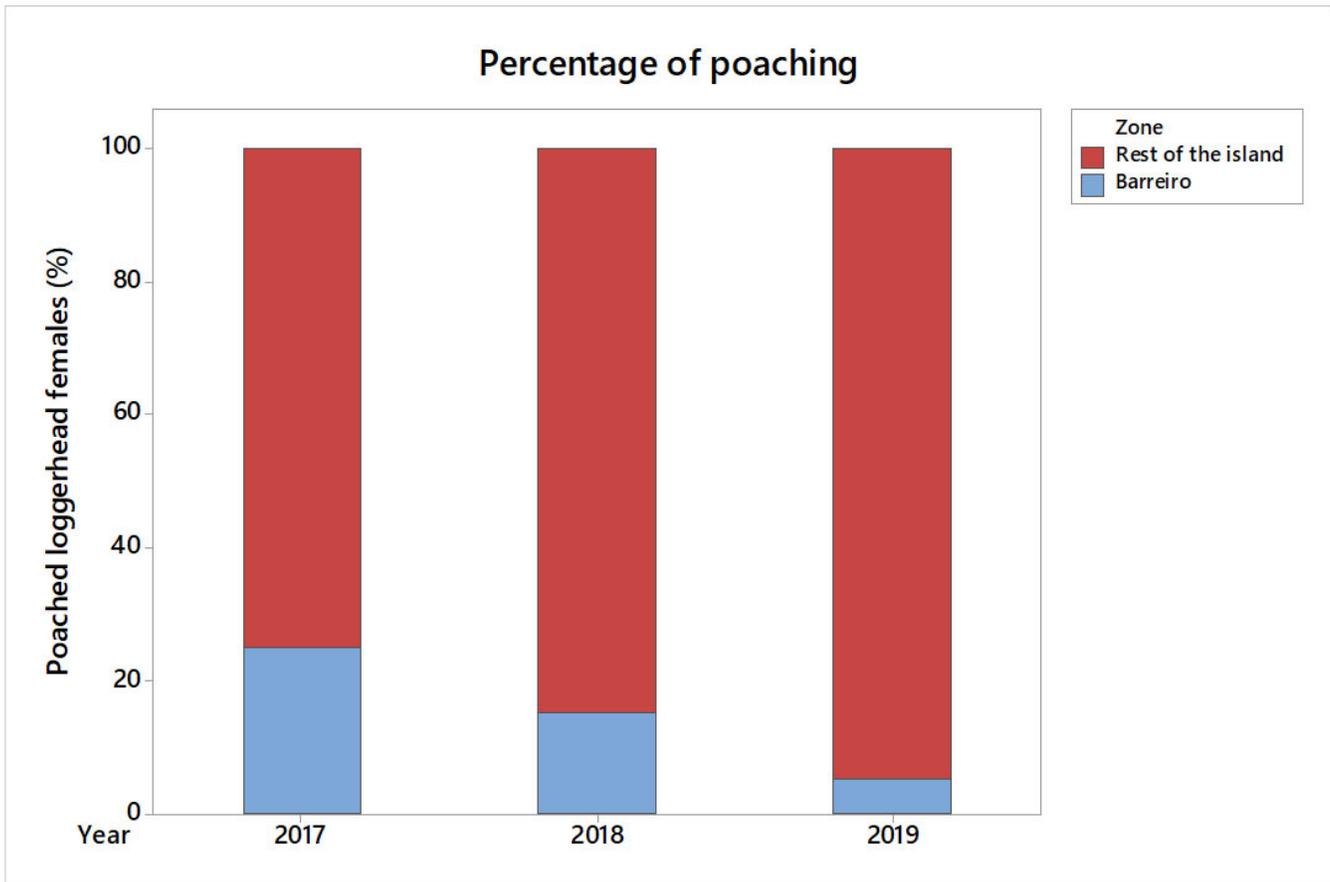


Figure 2. Percentage of loggerhead nesting females captured and killed on the island of Maio. In the year 2019, in the town of Barreiro, the football team and its leader have taken responsibility for raising awareness about the conservation of sea turtles in the local people.

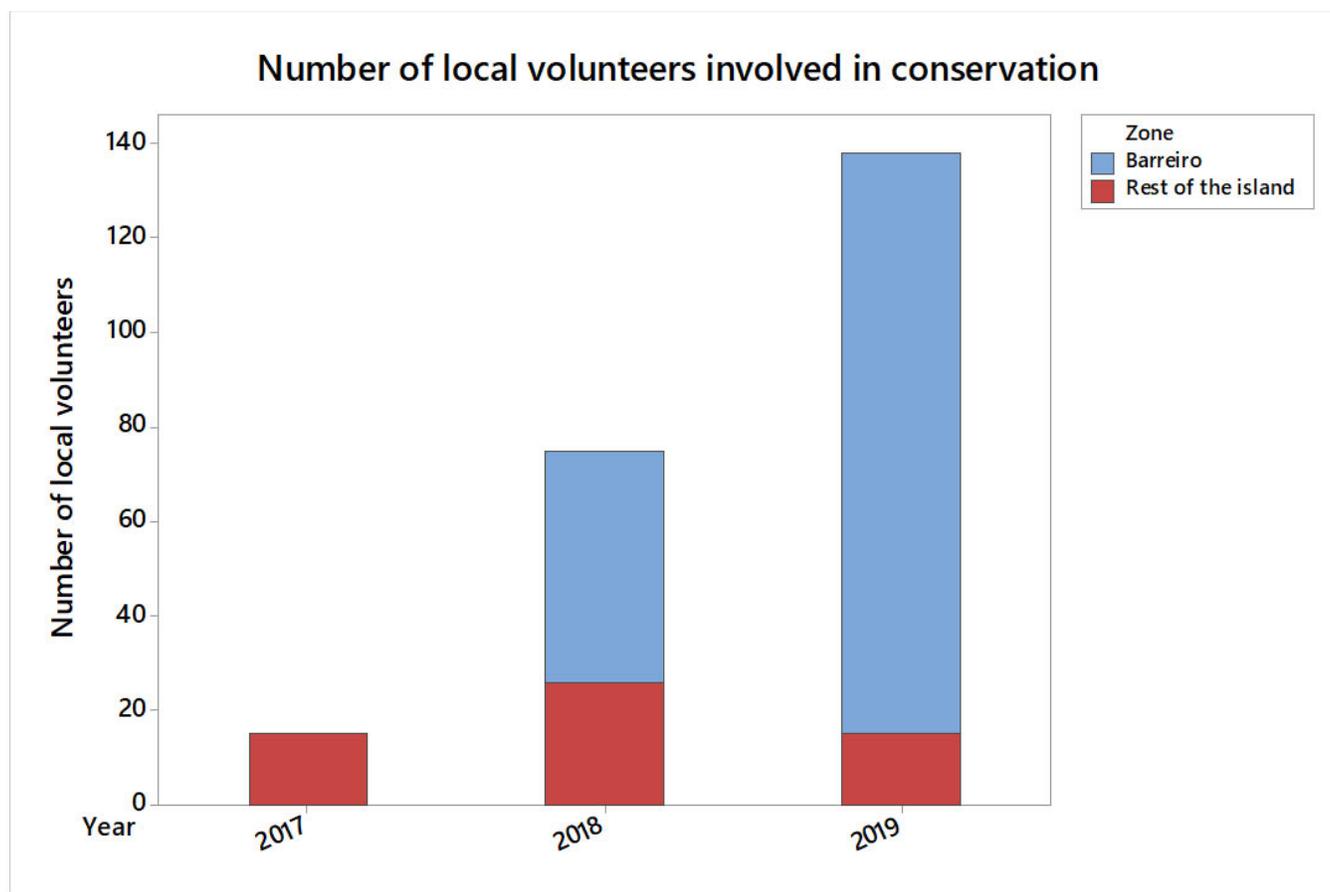


Figure 3. Number of local volunteers involved in the beach conservation programme. In 2019, in the town of Barreiro, the football team and its leader have taken responsibility for raising awareness about the conservation of sea turtles in the local people.

Two factors have been unique to Barreiro and could explain the change in attitude towards sea turtles. The first factor is a broadcast, on the most popular national news channel, describing Barreiro as the area with the largest illegal capture of nesting females on the island of Maio. It is possible that part of the Barreiro population was determined to reverse this negative perception broadcast by the national news. The second factor exclusive to the Barreiro area was the active commitment of the local football club to share the conservation message with their families, fervent fans, and neighbors. There is conclusive evidence that the direct message of the President of the football club to his players and to the entire community has had a positive effect and increased awareness. In addition, we have not recorded any poached turtles during the patrol period since 2018 (all turtles have been caught outside the patrol period). With the partnership since 2018 there is no registered presence of poachers on the beaches and we have had no reason to call the police to support the patrol. Between 2013 and 2017, the police were called every year by the patrol team, 2-4 times during the nesting season, to support the patrol team; there were poachers on the nesting beaches every night trying to capture turtles and disturbing the patrol team.

In conservation psychology, the natural leader of the area is the one who combines and integrates the beliefs, values, norms and cultural rules to transmit the conservation message in the appropriate format to allow the rest of the community to understand and assimilate it (Saunders 2003).

We encourage conservation organizations to prioritize collaborations with local genuine leaders, optimize communication channels to convey a compelling message, and to understand and address the challenges of changing habits. It is important to identify and engage true natural leaders to convey the message of biodiversity conservation in their local areas. Communities have their own legitimate perspectives on what conservation is or could be, and the social and natural science professionals involved in conservation must understand them to be effective (Berkes 2007, Bennett *et al.* 2017). Local communities can potentially modify historical consumer attitudes when they truly understand the benefits of conservation.

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Relecture d'une Tortue Luth 10 Ans Après!

Nathalie Mianseko, Jean-Gabriel Mavoungou & Laurène Poli
Renatura Congo, BP 414 Pointe-Noire – République du Congo
 (email: Direction@renatura.org)

Abstract: On November 11, 2019, the Renatura Congo team found a leatherback turtle nesting in Djeno, south of Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo, that had been previously tagged by them with a monel tag in the rear right flipper (tag number: KUD33424) when she had nested at the same site on January 12, 2009, more than 10 years ago demonstrating nesting site fidelity. Subsequently, this female was released from a fishing net in February 2013 in Djeno. In 2009 she measured 145 cm (curved carapace length), and in 2013 and 2019 she measured 156 cm.

Renatura Congo œuvre pour la préservation des tortues marines et de leur habitat en République du Congo depuis 2005. L'association déploie chaque année des équipes le long des plages afin d'étudier et de protéger les femelles et leurs pontes. En 2019, 150 des 170 kilomètres de côte que compte le Congo bénéficient ainsi de ce suivi (Fig. 1).



C'est ainsi que le 11 Novembre 2019, l'équipe de Renatura qui assure le suivi des pontes à Djeno, au sud de Pointe-Noire, la capitale économique, a observé une tortue luth en pontes. L'animal était une relecture, c'est-à-dire qu'il était déjà marqué à la pâte postérieure droite par une bague de type monel, numérotée KUD33424. Vérification faite, cette tortue marine était venue pondre sur le même site le 12 janvier 2009, plus de 10 années plus tôt. La bague en question lui avait alors été apposée par l'équipe de Renatura. La tortue était par ailleurs ressortie pondre sur le même site quelques jours plus tard, en février 2009. Elle mesurait alors 145 cm de longueur courbe de carapace (LCC). Par la suite, cette femelle a été libérée d'un filet de pêche en février 2013, toujours à Djeno. Quatre ans plus tard, elle mesurait 156cm de LCC et en 2019, elle présente toujours cette même dimension.



© Renatura Congo

Cette relecture illustre bien la fidélité de ces espèces à leur site de pontes. Elle démontre également l'intérêt d'apposer des bagues d'identification pour le suivi de ces animaux. Enfin, et même par-dessus tout, cette relecture apporte une note d'espoir en cette période d'inquiétude sur la situation de nos océans. Le fait que cette femelle ait pu revenir au Congo, après tant d'années, pondre ses œufs, et ce en ayant échappé à toutes les menaces qui sévissent dans nos océans démontre l'importance de poursuivre les efforts de conservation pour aider ces espèces dans leurs efforts de survie.

Nous tenons, à travers cet article, à remercier nos partenaires qui nous aident chaque année pour la préservation de ces espèces: bien entendu le Ministère de l'Economie Forestière mais aussi l'Union européenne, US Fish and Wildlife Service et Total Congo.

Nous remercions également nos équipes de suivi des pontes pour le travail remarquable qu'ils font chaque année sur le terrain et aux communautés côtières qui nous accompagnent dans notre action.



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The Quest for Sustainability: Milestones and Challenges at the Kids Beach Garden

Tolani Kadiri

Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children (MEDIC), Nigeria
(email: contactus@medicng.org)

Politics, religion and institutions sum up the factors that either make or mar efforts aimed at building a sustainable environment. The interplay of these factors can be intimidating especially when an individual seeks to address maladies in the society all along. Suffice it to say that sustainability would not thrive if it had been a currency. Lagos, for all its cosmopolitan appurtenances still retains a conservative hue about certain issues that affect the socioeconomic balance of the society. Amidst the malaise, the Kids Beach Garden is managed as an eco-friendly beach geared towards promoting a sustainable environment. The beach is an initiative of the Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children (CAC/IT/NO/48306); a non-profit organisation founded by Doyinsola Ogunye in 2011. It seeks to address mental and environmental maladies affecting the development of individuals right from childhood. The 7.2-hectare land was leased to the Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children (MEDIC) by Paragon Holdings in 2015 as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).



Kids Beach Garden.

How it all started: Like most great achievers in life, Doyinsola had her dreams and goals sketched and well articulated in a notepad on November 21, 2009. With her passion for cleanliness, relentless love for children, fun-loving lifestyle, positive energy, and most importantly patriotism, her goals were birthed in July 2009. She then launched the Kids Clean Club on the November 21, 2009.

Having experienced the brunt of bad leadership at all levels of government over the years, Doyinsola knew it would amount to sheer folly leaving the task of building an environmentally conscious society to the government. The Kids Clean Club was established for this purpose. She began the campaign for a cleaner environment in her neighbourhood and the need for children to be conscious of their environment. Her concepts were crystallized in 2012 when she registered the Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children as a non-profit organisation.

In pursuit of this initiative, the Kids Beach Garden runs its activities using a communal engagement scheme incorporating volunteers regardless of socioeconomic status or religious background. The environment as we know has no affiliation to such demographic parameters.



Doyinsola interacting with young volunteers of the Kids Clean Club at the Kids Beach Garden.

Monthly beach cleanup exercises: Beach cleanup exercises at the Kids Beach Garden initially began as random chores observed by visitors, but soon became a monthly routine attracting individuals and corporate bodies from all walks of life. According to the Plastic Soup Foundation, more than one million plastic bags are thrown away after an average use of just 15 minutes. UN Ambassador for Oceans, Peter Thomas, attested to the menace of plastics in his statement “plastic pollution has dire consequences for the future of many species including humankind.”

In 2018, the Kids Beach Garden fixed the fourth week of each month for its monthly cleanup exercise. Commencing from 7.00 am to 11.00 am on Saturday, the exercise is usually themed

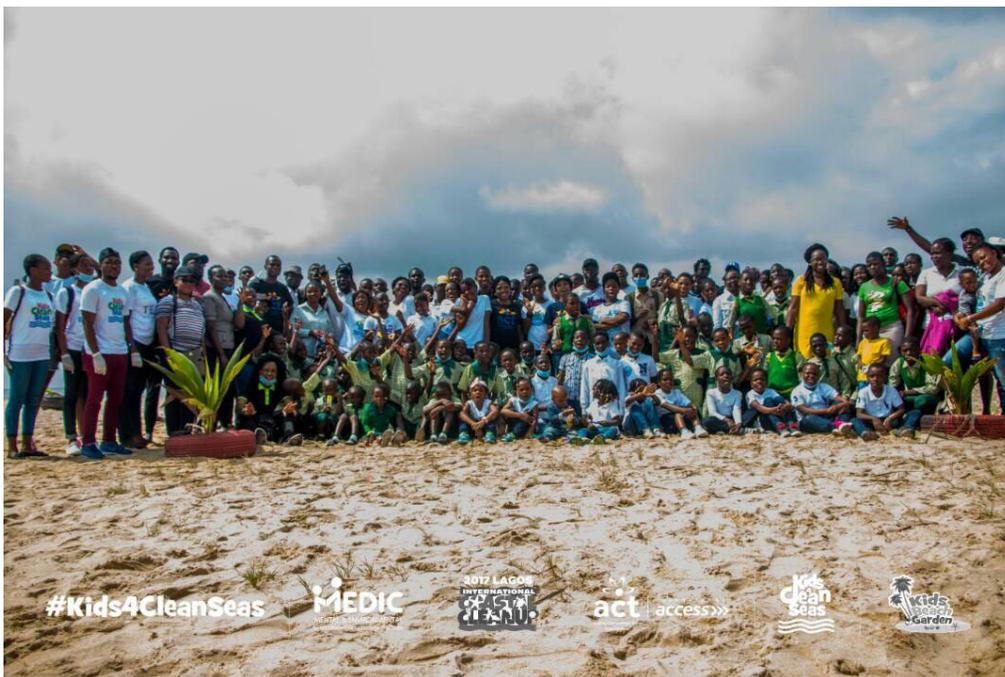
after a day sanctioned by the United Nations in commemoration of an event. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the themes for each of the clean-up exercises in 2019.

Table 1. The theme and amount of material collected from each beach cleanup during 2019. Trash was sorted by type: PET = polyethylene terephthalate (i.e. plastic bottles), Polypropylene (i.e. take away containers), HDPE = high-density polyethylene (i.e. milk/ juice containers, shopping bags), LDPE = low density polyethylene (i.e. frozen bags, cling film), and general.

Date	Theme	Number of Volunteers	Amount Collected (kilograms)				
			PET	Polypropylene	HDPE	LDPE	General
26 January 2019	in memory of victims of holocaust	183	45.0	28.0	24.5	21.2	89.0
23 February 2019	celebrating the mother language	191	42.3	28.7	26.9	24.5	83.0
30 March 2019	protecting wildlife	195	43.2	26.6	24.4	21.2	89.0
27 April 2019	promoting health	202	44.0	25.0	21.8	19.2	86.0
25 May 2019	protecting migratory birds	187	39.0	28.9	26.6	23.1	82.9
05 June 2019	air pollution	219	48.0	36.6	34.0	33.0	109.0
29 June 2019	beat plastic pollution	176	41.0	29.9	24.5	25.1	88.7
27 July 2019	promoting sustainable population	196	39.5	23.2	25.6	26.5	97.1
24 August 2019	women humanitarian heroes	189	38.0	27.4	29.4	28.1	95.0
21 September 2019	climate action for peace	233	52.0	28.0	27.0	29.0	126.0
26 October 2019	Nigeria's 59th independence	171	41.0	23.0	26.0	25.0	98.0
30 November 2019	Sendai seven campaign	-	-	-	-	-	-
28 December 2019	mountains matter for the youth	-	-	-	-	-	-



A cross-section of volunteers at the International Coastal Cleanup day held at the Kids Beach Garden.



A cross-section of volunteers at the International Coastal Cleanup day held on September 16, 2017.

Advocacy: The Kids Beach Garden has been an enabling environment for children to learn while they play. In consideration of its advocacy of proper waste management initiatives, the Aspire Coronation Trust (ACT) Foundation selected MEDIC as one of its grantees in 2017 for the implementation of an environmental project. The four million-naira (\$11,019.28 USD) grant was used in implementing the Kids for Clean Seas Project in sixteen public schools at the Etiosa Local Government Area of Lagos State. Seventeen thousand PET bottles were

aggregated in six months by 11,784 direct beneficiaries from the sixteen schools that participated in the project. A sum of 34,000 naira was made from the sale of these PET bottles and this was used in the provision of bins and other waste management materials for the schools.



Pupils of Kuramo Junior College pose with Kids for Clean Seas branded shirts during the 2017/2018 edition.

Buoyed by the success of 2017, the ACT Foundation gave a five million-naira (\$13,744.10) grant to MEDIC for the implementation of this project in 40 public schools at Etiosa and Ibeju Lekki Local Government Areas of Lagos State. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy of obtaining government approval from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment was an attendant challenge that almost aborted the project. Consequently after a series of meeting held with the ACT Foundation, the focus was then put on twenty low-income private schools in the Etiosa Local Government and five coastal communities in the Ibeju Lekki Local Government. The output was, however, a far cry from what was obtained in 2017. Only 3,785 PET bottles were aggregated in 12 months by 2,189 direct beneficiaries.



A cross-section of pupils at one of the low-income schools that participated in the Kids for Clean Seas edition of 2018.



An open interactive session held with residents of Lepia during the Kids for clean seas campaign held in 2018/2019.

Conservation: As part of efforts aimed at conserving the environment, the Kids Beach Garden is involved in the planting of trees at the beach. There are currently 400 coconut trees at the

Kids Beach Garden. Freshwater was a scarce commodity at the beach until a volunteer solely financed the installation of a water-pumping machine in 2019. Workers at the beach have an arduous time going to fetch fresh water and this had a negative toll on the health of the trees.

Another attendant challenge had to do with free-ranging herbivores that often found their way into the Kids Beach Garden. Putting the socioeconomic status of locals living close to the beach into consideration, the management of the Kids Beach Garden feels obliged to tolerate the excesses of shepherds and farmers whose animals often stray to the beach. To address this problem, planted trees are guarded with recycled tires to ensure the goats do not gain access to the leaves.



One of the coconut trees planted at the Kids Beach Garden.

Aquatic conservation efforts include the rescue and release of nesting sea turtles. Lagos perhaps is only second to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, when ranking the most cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria. That notwithstanding, the majority of the coastal settlements in Lagos are predominated by the ‘have nots’ (i.e., those living in poor socioeconomic conditions) who are also not well educated. Considering these odds, imagine the terror that could be unleashed by a fisherman who has eleven mouths to feed only for an urban volunteer now telling him to let go an endangered species in his net. In one of the team’s rescue missions, one of the poachers sharply asked if the Rescue Team were the ones who created the sea turtles. “Endangered my foot,” he retorted. “Why not go expend your energy in war-torn Benue and tell the marauding Fulanis that the Tiv are endangered. If you can go and return with your legs intact, I will reason with you”.

Awareness is even at its lowest ebb in other coastal states where private stakeholders bemoan the lack of leverage needed to air their voice. As a result, many atrocities on endangered species go unreported. In one of those daring missions embarked upon by volunteers of the Kids Beach Garden, there was a poacher who felt overwhelmed with our audacity and



Two olive ridley sea turtles that were about to be sold before they were rescued by the Kids Beach Garden.

eventually budged without much fuss. In his conversation with a member of the Rescue Team, he admitted that it was common to eat sea turtles in Oron where he hails from.

Nigeria is no alien to international conventions aimed at protecting endangered species from being poached. The problem, however, is the implementation of the provisions of these conventions at all levels of government. The average Nigerian outside the environmental space sees conservation effort as a theatrical gesture and that is often why poachers have no



A leatherback sea turtle rescued and released at the Kids Beach Garden on Sunday, February 3, 2019.

scruples for their actions. The institutions exist physically, but are almost becoming extinct in operation. There have been occasions when we place distress calls to government parastatals for assistance only to hear phrases such as “we will work on it”. On the February 3, 2019, when the Kids Beach Garden crew rescued a leatherback, a police officer came to the scene and took sides with the poachers. He told them to call our bluff if we weren’t willing to pay the ransom they asked for.

The coalition of civil societies may nevertheless help reduce the onerous task of negotiating with poachers. In September 2019, the Kids Beach Garden crew, led by Tolani Kadiri, met with staff members of Lekki Urban Forest Animal Sanctuary Initiative (LUFASI) and successfully rescued an olive ridley sea turtle from poachers who exhibited the nesting sea turtle for sale.



An olive ridley sea turtle released at the Kids Beach Garden on Tuesday, October 8, 2019.

On October 31, 2019, Mrs. Allison from the American International School of Lagos rescued a hatchling that was being posted online for sale and reached out to the Kids Beach Garden for its release into the ocean



A hatchling released by the American International School of Lagos to the Kids Beach Garden on Thursday, October 31, 2019.

Ongoing activities:

10th Year Anniversary of the Kids Clean club – Established in 2009, the Kids Clean Club will be celebrating its tenth anniversary with projects meant to have an impact especially on children living in vulnerable communities. The anniversary will travel down memory lane by incorporating the participation of kids who were pioneers of the club ten years ago. The week-long celebration was scheduled for November 19 until November 26, 2019.



The Kids Clean Club in a photo session with the Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

Beach Restoration Project (BRP) – The Kids Beach Garden’s Restoration Project is an initiative meant to revive, resuscitate and replenish beaches in Lagos State. BRP covers five thematic areas: (1) tree planting, (2) creation of a collection and sorting hub, (3) creation of a shelter, (4) shoreline protection and anti-poaching, (5) creation of a sea turtle sanctuary.

the Beach RESTORATION PROJECT

MONDAY THE SHELTER PROJECT

TUESDAY THE RECYCLING CO-SO HUB

WEDNESDAY THE SEA TURTLE SANCTUARY

THURSDAY SHORELINE PROTECTION SQUAD

FRIDAY TREE PLANTING

SATURDAY COMMUNITY CLEANING AT IBEJU LEKKI - BUS TOUR

18TH - 23RD OF MARCH 2019 PROJECT CALENDER

14 2019 KIDS BEACH GARDEN 17 2019 MEDICNG.ORG

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 📧 @kidsbeachgarden @www.medicng.org 📧 contactus@medicng.org

Recycling Scheme for Women and Youth Empowerment (RESWAYE) – RESWAYE is an initiative of MEDIC sponsored as a New World Program under the auspices of Global Water Challenge (GWC) and the Coca-Cola Foundation. The project is focused on generating value from the recycling of PET for the empowerment of women and youth living in 16 communities at Ibeju-Lekki and the Etiosa Local Government Areas of Lagos State.

RESWAYE
 RECYCLING SCHEME FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
 (LAGOS, NIGERIA)

“
Empowering Women and Youth through improved Education and job creation for more resilient communities.
 ”

Supported by:



Blue Box Campaign – The Blue Box program is a single stream recyclable collection program aimed at encouraging the separation of recyclable materials from the general waste at the point of generation. The Kids Beach Garden was co-opted by the Lagos State Government to help gather recyclables from households in Lekki Phase One, Etiosa Local Government Area of Lagos State.



The Kids Clean Club poses with PET bottles collected with purple nylon bags in pursuit of the blue box programme.

Service Partnership with American International School of Lagos (AISL) – Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) are at the heart of the International Baccalaureate courses at the American International School. MEDIC is currently working as a Service Partner to help students identify inadequacies in the community and then come up with possible solutions to address these problems.



From the left – Programme Manager of MEDIC, Tolani Kadiri, and the Founder of MEDIC, Doyinsola Ogunye, at a session on Service Partnership goals held at the American International School of Lagos.

Conclusion: Our vision of achieving a sustainable environment through a communal engagement scheme is realistic and can be brought to fruition through the concerns of well-meaning individuals and organizations. Currently, the Kids Beach Garden is using an online fundraising platform, GoFundMe, for its crowdfunding campaign. For more enquiries, follow our social media on:

Instagram: Kidsbeachgarden, Kidscleanclub

Facebook: Kidsbeachgarden, Kidscleanclub

You can also reach us on +23480121251934, +2348033788641

Photo credits: Kids Beach Garden.



Introducing the New Executive Director at Sea Sense, Tanzania

Lindsey West

Sea Sense, P.O. Box 105044, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

(email: lindsey@seasense.org)

Many of you may know Sea Sense, an organisation focusing on community-based conservation of sea turtles in Tanzania. At the very core of Sea Sense is a network of “Conservation Officers” who have been democratically elected by their community to work alongside Sea Sense and lead sea turtle conservation efforts in their locality. Over the past 19 years, the Conservation Officer network has grown from six members in one coastal district to 36 members covering nine coastal districts. Conservation Officers patrol nesting beaches on a daily basis to monitor nesting activity, record and report sea turtle strandings and document illegal activities that may harm sea turtles and their habitats. Several of the Conservation Officers used to be well known sea turtle poachers, but today they are ambassadors for sea turtle conservation in their communities.



For the past 12 years, I have been the Executive Director of Sea Sense and have had the privilege of overseeing the expansion of the Conservation Officer network as well as the establishment of a sea turtle research programme in which the Conservation Officer network plays a critical role. It has been an absolute honour to work alongside coastal communities in Tanzania and to witness their tireless dedication and commitment to sea turtle conservation.

In June of this year, I stepped down as Executive Director and would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new Executive Director, Joana Trindade. Africa Sea Turtle Newsletter readers from the east coast of Africa will already know Joana as she was born and raised in

Mozambique and has held positions at WWF Mozambique and the IUCN. Both of these roles were based in Vamizi Island, which is an important nesting site for green and hawksbill turtles. During her time in Vamizi, Joana led the sea turtle conservation programme and managed the conservation and community teams, as well as researchers, volunteers, and interns working on the project. Therefore, she is in a great position to take the helm at Sea Sense! During her first six months in Tanzania, Joana has been busy getting to know the Sea Sense team, meeting with our donors, preparing technical reports and grant applications, and of course, spending time in the field meeting the communities we work alongside. Joana is now the main point of contact at Sea Sense and can be reached at director@seasense.org

I am continuing to contribute to the work of Sea Sense in my new capacity as “Technical Advisor” and can still be reached at lindsey@seasense.org. In January 2020, I am starting my PhD at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (University of Kent, UK). My PhD research will take an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the role of community-based

monitoring of sea turtles in achieving both ecological and social goals. Using Tanzania as a case study of course!



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Front Cover: Turtle Rescuers - Blue Eden Dive Center: (<https://www.blue-eden.com/>)

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

The African Sea Turtle Newsletter (ASTN) is a free, bi-annual international electronic publication about the biology and conservation of sea turtles in Africa, and the stories of people who work with sea turtles on this vast and diverse continent and its offshore islands. This publication hopes to increase communication and collaborations among all those working with sea turtles in Africa –scientists, conservationists, policy-makers, project managers, community members, students, professors, everyone!— as well as share news with the international sea turtle community.

Contributions can range from original scientific papers and natural history observations to opinions, anecdotes, local myths, taboos, pharmacopeia, and legends, as well as field experiences, workshops, education and awareness activities, and announcements. We will accept and publish contributions in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese so that everyone can express themselves in the language they most feel comfortable.

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Mustapha Aksissou and Wafae Benhardouze

Email: aksissou@yahoo.fr and wafae.benhardouze@gmail.com

Countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt

Jacques Fretey

Email: jfretey@imatech.fr

Countries: Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Congo-Kinshasa

Manjula Tiwari

Email: manjula.tiwari@noaa.gov

Countries: Cape Verde, Canary Islands, Azores & Madeira, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, Namibia

Phil Allman

Email: pallman@fgcu.edu

Countries: The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria

Angela Formia

Email: aformia@wcs.org

Countries: Ivory Coast, Eq. Guinea, Gabon, STP, Congo-Brazzaville

Lindsey West

Email: lindsey@seasense.org

Countries: Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa