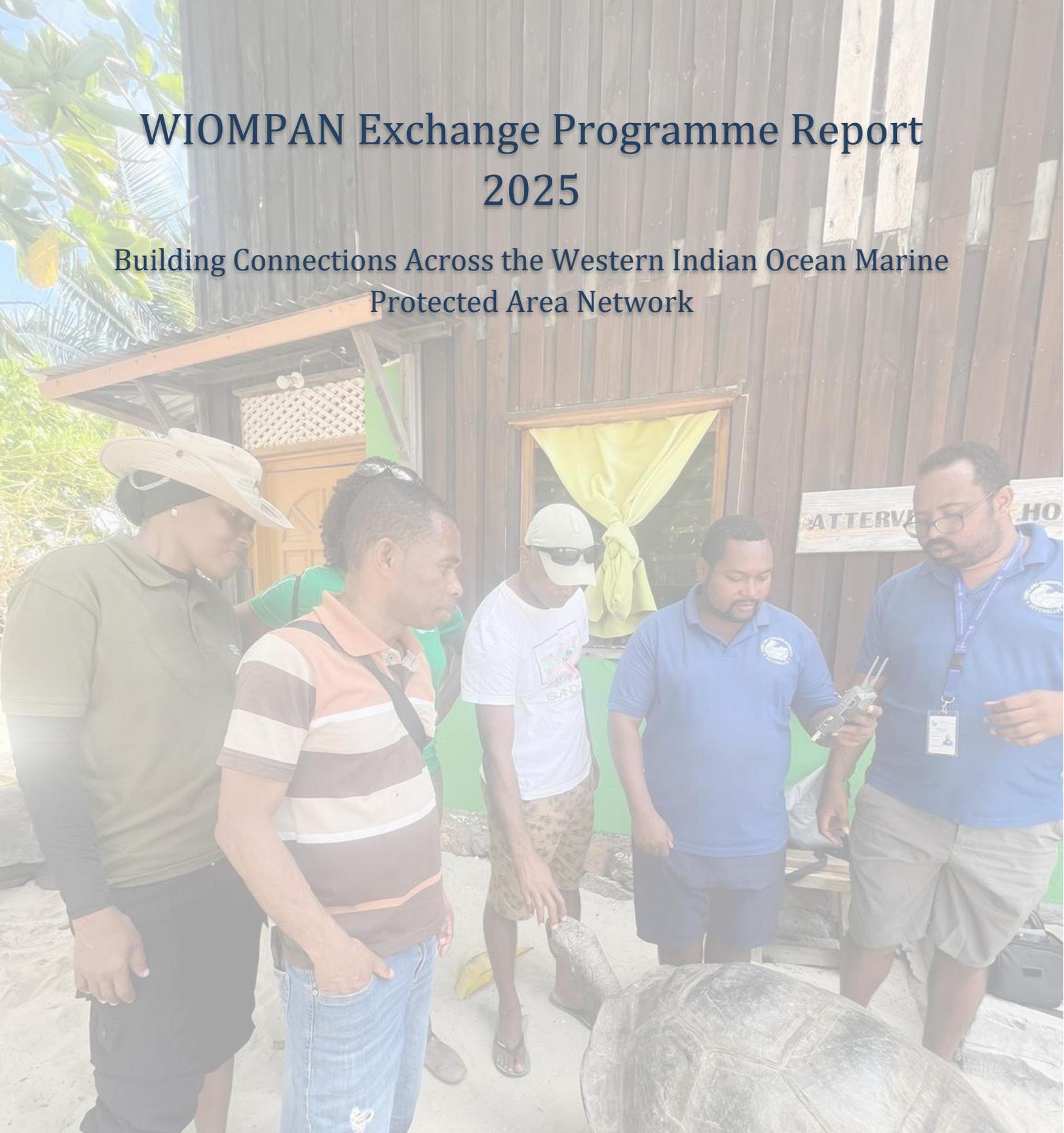


WIOMPAN Exchange Programme Report 2025

Building Connections Across the Western Indian Ocean Marine
Protected Area Network



Foreword

The WIOMPAN Exchange Programme in Seychelles represents an important step in deepening peer-to-peer learning across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. As marine practitioners, we recognise that knowledge is most powerful when it is shared in practice — when managers from different marine protected areas can learn directly from one another’s challenges, innovations, and insights. The Seychelles exchange created space for that kind of shared discovery, particularly around the use of technology, adaptive management, and collaborative approaches to effective conservation.

WIOMPAN, through its coordination under WIOMSA, remains committed to fostering a strong and connected community of practice for Marine Protected Areas and Community Managed Areas professionals in the WIO region. This report captures the learning, reflection, and momentum generated through this exchange, and serves as both a record and an invitation to continue strengthening our regional collaboration.

— Dr. Arthur Tuda
Executive Director, WIOMSA



MANAC
Municipal Administration
Nassau, Bahamas

MANAC
Municipal Administration
Nassau, Bahamas

HOOD

Executive Summary

The WIOMPAN Exchange Programme held in Seychelles from **31 August to 11 September 2025** brought together marine protected area (MPA) managers and practitioners from across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, including representatives from **Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Comoros, and Tanzania**.

Participants represented a diverse range of institutions — **national conservation and management agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community members** actively engaged in marine and coastal conservation. This diversity of experience and perspective created a rich environment for mutual learning and exchange. The list of participants is captured in **Annex 1**.

Hosted by the **Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA)** and supported by **WIOMSA, JNCC, and WIOMPAN**, the exchange served as a platform for knowledge sharing, experiential learning, and cross-country collaboration. Participants visited key marine parks, engaged with rangers and management teams, and explored practical tools such as the **EarthRanger** system for monitoring and management effectiveness.

The exchange focused on five central **learning themes**:

1. **Technology integration** for management effectiveness;
2. **Adaptive management** and data-driven decision-making;
3. **Ranger professionalisation** and peer learning;
4. **Community engagement** and co-management; and
5. **Collaborative governance** and partnerships.

This report summarises the exchange process, the key insights gained through shared learning, and the recommendations for sustaining peer-to-peer collaboration across the WIOMPAN network.



Background and Objectives

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Area Network (WIOMPAN) connects marine and coastal area managers, rangers, and practitioners from the 10 Nairobi Convention countries. The Seychelles exchange was developed under WIOMPAN's systems-informed capacity development framework to strengthen adaptive management skills, promote innovation, and build trust and collaboration among practitioners. The objectives were to:

- Facilitate direct peer learning among MPA managers and rangers in the WIO region.
- Strengthen understanding of technology-driven monitoring and management tools.
- Demonstrate Seychelles' model for integrated MPA management, including community partnerships.
- Identify lessons and opportunities to improve management effectiveness at participant sites.

Exchange Design and Implementation

The exchange was coordinated by WIOMPAN and hosted by the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA). Participants joined their Seychelles counterparts for site visits, demonstrations, and workshops from 31 August to 11 September 2025. Field activities were conducted across Curieuse Marine Park, Ste. Anne Marine National Park, and the SPGA headquarters.

The design followed WIOMPAN's learning model — combining observation, dialogue, and reflection — to strengthen capacity through shared problem-solving and systems thinking.

See **Annex 2** for the detailed exchange programme.

Learning Topics and Key Insights

Five key learning areas emerged from the Seychelles exchange:

Learning Topics and Key Insights

The Seychelles Exchange focused on deepening participants' understanding of practical tools and strategies that enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and resilience of marine protected area (MPA) management. The key themes are captured below.

1. Sustainable MPA Financing

Participants ranked **sustainable financing** as the top area for continued learning. Discussions highlighted the need for innovative funding mechanisms to ensure long-term MPA operations. SPGA's blended approach — combining government support, tourism revenue, and strategic partnerships — illustrated how financial diversification can sustain conservation outcomes.

Participants expressed interest in exploring financing models adaptable to national contexts, including payment for ecosystem services and blue carbon initiatives.

2. Management Effectiveness

Management effectiveness was identified as the second most critical learning area. The exchange introduced participants to the use of **EarthRanger** and the **Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET)**, showcasing how data-driven decision-making strengthens operational planning and performance tracking. Field exercises demonstrated how these systems improve monitoring, patrol coordination, and adaptive management at site level.

3. Enforcement and Compliance

Enforcement emerged as a shared regional challenge. Participants observed SPGA's collaborative enforcement model that integrates rangers, community members, and the coast guard. Peer discussions underscored the value of structured ranger training, welfare, and recognition frameworks, as well as the use of real-time monitoring to improve compliance and safety during patrols.

4. Coral Restoration

Hands-on exposure to **coral rehabilitation and reef monitoring** activities enhanced participants' appreciation for restoration as a core component of ecosystem recovery. The sessions provided insight into the use of low-cost methods and partnerships with local communities to scale coral restoration and strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change.

5. Coastal Rehabilitation

The final learning theme centered on **coastal habitat restoration**, including mangrove rehabilitation and erosion control. Participants examined how integrated coastal management practices link terrestrial and marine systems, and how community participation in rehabilitation projects fosters stewardship and long-term success.



PARKS AND GARDENS AUTHORITY
SEYCHELLES

Participant Feedback and Learning Reflections

Overall Sentiment

Participants described the exchange as “educative,” “creative,” “fantastic,” “exciting,” and “delightful.”

Mentimeter

In one word, how are you feeling at the end of the exchange?



The dominant feeling captured was one of **learning and inspiration**, with most participants highlighting that the exchange broadened their perspective on MPA management and collaboration in the WIO region.

Most Enjoyed Aspects

Participants most appreciated:

- **Technology and innovation:** learning about digital monitoring tools such as *EarthRanger*, *IMET*, and drone applications.
- **Hands-on experience:** engaging in real-time monitoring, mangrove walks, and field-based sessions.
- **Collaboration and sharing:** opportunities to exchange experiences, observe SPGA’s operational practices, and interact with peers from other countries.
- **Hospitality and organisation:** the professionalism and friendliness of the SPGA team, the logistical coordination, and the interactive format of the sessions.

Knowledge Gained

All respondents indicated that their knowledge had increased “a lot” as a result of the exchange, with strong emphasis on:

- Integration of **digital tools** in protected area management.
- Enhanced understanding of **management effectiveness** frameworks.
- Deeper appreciation for **sustainable MPA financing** and innovative management models.

Most Useful Topics

The most useful topics identified were:

1. Sustainable MPA Financing
2. Management Effectiveness
3. Enforcement and Compliance
4. Coral Restoration
5. Coastal Rehabilitation

Many participants noted that *all topics were valuable*, underscoring the comprehensive and applied design of the exchange.

Areas for Improvement and Future Exchanges

Participants suggested several ways to strengthen future exchanges:

- **Increase time for field practice** and include a short reflection after each visit.
- **Provide more space for participant presentations** to share national experiences.
- **Enhance inclusivity** by engaging French and Somali-speaking counterparts to ensure equitable participation across the region.
- **Develop a participant guide** to harmonise preparation and expectations.
- **Integrate IMET tools earlier** to tailor field sessions to site-specific needs.
- **Include sessions at headquarters** to understand administrative processes supporting site management.

Applying the Learning

Participants plan to use what they learned by:

- **Cascading knowledge** to their teams through presentations, debriefs, and reports.
- **Integrating digital tools** such as EarthRanger and IMET in daily monitoring and reporting.

- **Establishing or improving MPA management plans** and strengthening ranger operations.
- **Promoting peer learning** by sharing knowledge within their national WIOMPAN chapters.
- **Enhancing restoration activities**, including coral and reef rehabilitation, and advancing sustainable financing initiatives.

Key Takeaway

The MentiMeter reflections demonstrate that the Seychelles exchange was a **highly impactful learning experience**, enhancing technical capacity, motivation, and cross-country collaboration. The participants' enthusiasm and intention to apply knowledge at their home sites affirm the value of continued investment in peer learning under the WIOMPAN framework.

Outcomes and Impact

The Seychelles exchange contributed to strengthening both individual and institutional capacities across the WIO region. Participants returned with practical ideas to enhance their local MPA operations and integrate technology, adaptive management, and stakeholder collaboration. Specific outcomes included:

- Enhanced skills in using digital monitoring and reporting tools.
- Increased understanding of ranger professionalisation frameworks.
- Strengthened collaboration among WIO MPA agencies and practitioners.
- Identification of follow-up exchanges and mentorship priorities under WIOMPAN.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Building on the success of this exchange, WIOMPAN and its partners will continue supporting peer learning and capacity development initiatives. Recommended next steps include:

- Establishing a mentorship framework to link experienced MPA managers with emerging leaders.
- Expanding use of digital tools (EarthRanger, IMET) across regional MPAs.
- Integrating exchange outcomes into WIOMPAN's regional strategy on management effectiveness.
- Sustaining collaboration through follow-up virtual sessions and national chapter meetings.

Curieuse Marine Park

Key

- Snorkelling Area
- Diving Area
- Coral Reef
- Tortoise Sanctuary
- Mangrove Area
- Mooring Area
- Beach Area
- Nature Trail

About the Marine Park

UK A sanctuary for flora and fauna, the Curieuse Marine Park was designated on the 11th June 1979. On this small island there is an intriguing and unique biodiversity. Curieuse has a significant collection of Seychelles' endemic species, from giant tortoises introduced from Aldabra and endemic birds, to the world's biggest nut, the legendary Coco de Mer. The island is the only other place, apart from Praslin, where the Coco de Mer palm grows naturally.

FR Sanctuaire de la flore et de la faune, le parc national marin de Curieuse a été désigné le 11 juin 1979. Sur cette île relativement petite, il existe une biodiversité intrigante et unique. Curieuse abrite une importante collection d'espèces endémiques des Seychelles, telles que des tortues géantes introduites d'Aldabra et des oiseaux endémiques, à la plus grosse noix du monde, le légendaire Coco de Mer. L'île est le seul autre endroit, à part Praslin, où le palmier Coco de Mer pousse naturellement.

Giant Aldabra Tortoise

Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority

Helpline 281 8800

Emergencies 999



Acknowledgements

The WIOMPAN Exchange Programme was made possible through the leadership of the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA), and the active participation of MPA practitioners from Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Comoros. WIOMSA extends sincere gratitude to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) for its support, and to all participants for their engagement and contributions to this collective learning journey.

Closing Remarks

The Seychelles exchange stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and shared learning across the Western Indian Ocean. It has reaffirmed the importance of continuous investment in people, systems, and partnerships that drive effective marine conservation. The lessons and relationships forged here will continue to inform WIOMPAN's efforts to strengthen management effectiveness across the region.

— The WIOMPAN Coordination Team



Annex 1: Participants list

		Park Manager	Bazaruto Archipelago National Park	Mozambique
		Marine Conservation	Marine Parks and Reserves Uni	Tanzania
		Community Engagement Coordinator	WCS Madagascar	Madagascar
		Ranger	Malindi Marine Park, KWS	Kenya
		Marine management specialists	Madagascar National Parks (MNP)	Madagascar
		Head of the Biodiversity Management Department	ANAC	Mozambique
		Conservation and Education Coordinator	Chumbe Island Coral Park	Zanzibar, Tanzania
		Project Manager	South East Marine Protected Area (SEMPA)	Rodrigues
		Conservator	Mitsamiouli–Ndroudé National Park	Comoros
		Senior Ranger, Mombasa Marine Park & Reserve	KWS	Kenya

Annex 2: Detailed Exchange Programme

Sunday 31 st August (Arrival)		
	Arrival and airport transfers to accommodation	
Monday 1 st September		
Orientation		
AM	<p>Welcome briefing and orientation with the participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome address ➤ Introduction to SPGA facilitators ➤ Introduction by participants ➤ Distribution of program materials and agenda overview ➤ Introduction to SPGA, Seychelles' MPAs, biodiversity and conservation efforts 	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room
Tool Demonstrations		
AM	<p>Workshop: Introduction to Sustainable Financing for MPAs</p> <p><i>Session 1:</i> SPGAs MPA Network Overview</p> <p><i>Session 2:</i> Funding Mechanisms & Innovative Financing Tools (e.g Public-private partnerships, Eco-Tourism, Grant proposal writing, leveraging corporate CSR programs and international conservation funds.</p> <p>Addressing financing gaps and technological integration</p> <p>Detail diverse sources of revenue, into existing management frameworks.</p>	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room
PM	<p>Workshop: Strategic Planning & Partnership Building</p> <p>Developing Action Plans for</p>	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room

	<p>Collaborative Initiatives</p> <p>Addressing common challenges and opportunities in MPA management Sharing of experiences and best practices</p> <p>Exploring joint project opportunities. Participants will identify priority areas for future partnership, resource mobilization, and capacity building.</p> <p>Interactive Group and round table discussions / Q&A</p>	
Tuesday 2nd September		
AM	<p>Session: Use of EarthRanger for Biodiversity Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overview of Earth Ranger system functionalities ➤ Data collection, real-time monitoring, and reporting <p>The session will cover the architecture, functionalities, and deployment strategies of EarthRanger, emphasizing its role in enhancing data collection, analysis, and operational decision-making.</p> <p>Interactive Group discussions / Q&A Participants will engage in hands-on training exercises, including field simulations and mock data collection, to familiarize themselves with the interface and operational protocols.</p>	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room

AM	<p>Implementing IMET for Management Effectiveness</p> <p>Session: Introduction to IMET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Principles, components, and application ➤ Data collection and analysis <p>Interactive session: Conducting a mock IMET assessment in a selected MPA</p> <p>Participants will learn how to design and conduct assessments, interpret results, and translate findings into actionable management improvements.</p>	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room
PM	<p>Site Visits to MPAs (Mahe)</p> <p>Practical training session: Field exercises on Earth Ranger application</p> <p>Visit to: Baie Ternay MPA Port Launay MPA Ste. Anne MPA</p> <p>Participants will observe conservation strategies in action and interact with park rangers and community stakeholders to understand management approaches.</p> <p>Utilisation of EarthRanger in the field</p>	Field Visits - Mahe
Wednesday 3rd September (Travel to Curieuse Marine National Park)		
AM	<p>Visit to Curieuse Marine Park</p> <p>Welcome briefing and orientation with the participants: Interaction with Park Manager and staff</p>	Field Visits – Inner Islands

PM	<p>Participants will observe the practical application of management tools in a real-world context.</p> <p>The team will engage in demonstrations of real-time wildlife monitoring, data collection, and management decision-making processes, emphasizing the integration of technology into routine operations.</p>	Field Visits – Inner Islands
Thursday 4th September – Tuesday 9th September		
	<p>Visit to Ile Cocos Marine Park</p> <p>Demonstration of EarthRanger in action, data collection, monitoring, enforcement</p> <p>Participation and observation in the SPGA Coral Reef Restoration Project</p> <p>Observe sustainable tourism practices</p>	Field Visits – Inner Islands
Wednesday 10th September		
AM	<p>Return Trip to Mahe Island</p> <p>Arrival back to main island:</p> <p>Program Evaluation and future directions:</p> <p>Final debriefing and farewell session facilitates relationship consolidation and clarifies future steps. Participants present their key learnings and proposed actions, fostering peer review and consensus-building.</p> <p>Participants receive contact lists, follow-up materials, and opportunities</p>	SPGA Headquarters Conference Room

	for ongoing collaboration.	
PM	<p>A small closing ceremony, including certificate distribution, marks the program's culmination.</p> <p>Dinner: An opportunity for informal networking and cultural exchange among participants.</p>	Venue TBC
Thursday 11th September		
	Participants are transferred to Seychelles International Airport for departure.	