

**Africa Adaptation Programme – Ministry of Environment and
Sustainable Development/UNDP/JICA**

Knowledge Fair on Climate Change 29 – 31 October 2012

Symposium on Climate Change and Gender

31 October 2012

Octave Wiehe Auditorium - University of Mauritius

Africa Adaptation Programme
Knowledge Fair on Climate Change 29 – 31 October 2012

Climate Change Adaptation
Improving the Livelihood of Onion Farmers of the South East
&
Increasing Resilience for the Conservation of the Local Red Onion, an
agricultural heirloom of Mauritius

By

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GEF Small Grants Programme

- Established in 1992
 - Funded by the GEF as a corporate programme, SGP is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the GEF partnership, and is executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
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SGP is offered in 126 countries

LEGEND

 Countries where the Small Grants Programme operates (1992-1998)

- \$72 million in GEF Funds
- Over 1000 community-based projects implemented

UNDP-GEF
SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME



GEF-SGP in Mauritius

- Mauritius joined the GEF SGP in 1995
 - 129 projects have been funded since its inception
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SGP works with local communities in

- conserving **Biodiversity**
 - reducing the risks of **Climate Change**
 - protecting **International Waters**
 - combating **Land Degradation**
 - phasing out **Persistent Organic Pollutants**
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SGP works with local communities

- Provides up to \$50,000 grants to NGOs and CBOs
 - With specific emphasis on:
 - Poverty alleviation
 - Local empowerment
 - Participation of women
 - Vulnerable groups
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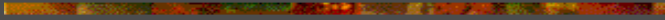
Mauritian Challenges:

- Whilst Mauritius has made impressive gains in reducing the level of rural poverty over the last two decades, there is a high risk that structural changes in the sugar and textile industries, allied to increasing energy prices, could see large numbers of marginal households slip backwards into poverty, unless there is proactive action to help them establish new means of livelihoods.
 - Two of the most vulnerable groups which have been identified are (i) the coastal communities with heavy dependence on marine resources, and for which sea-level rise is now an additional challenge, and (ii) the smallholder sugar planters and their families.
 - Failure to address the specific needs of these communities could well see a resurgence of rural poverty.
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Mauritian Challenges:



How does the SGP tackle those challenges?

- By funding demonstration projects through NGOs/CBOs
 - By reinforcing the capacity of individuals in addressing the challenges that they face
 - By funding projects that have high policy dialogue components
 - By looking into alternative income generating activities
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SGP Emphasis on Participation

- SGP project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is based on participation by community members and local stakeholders.



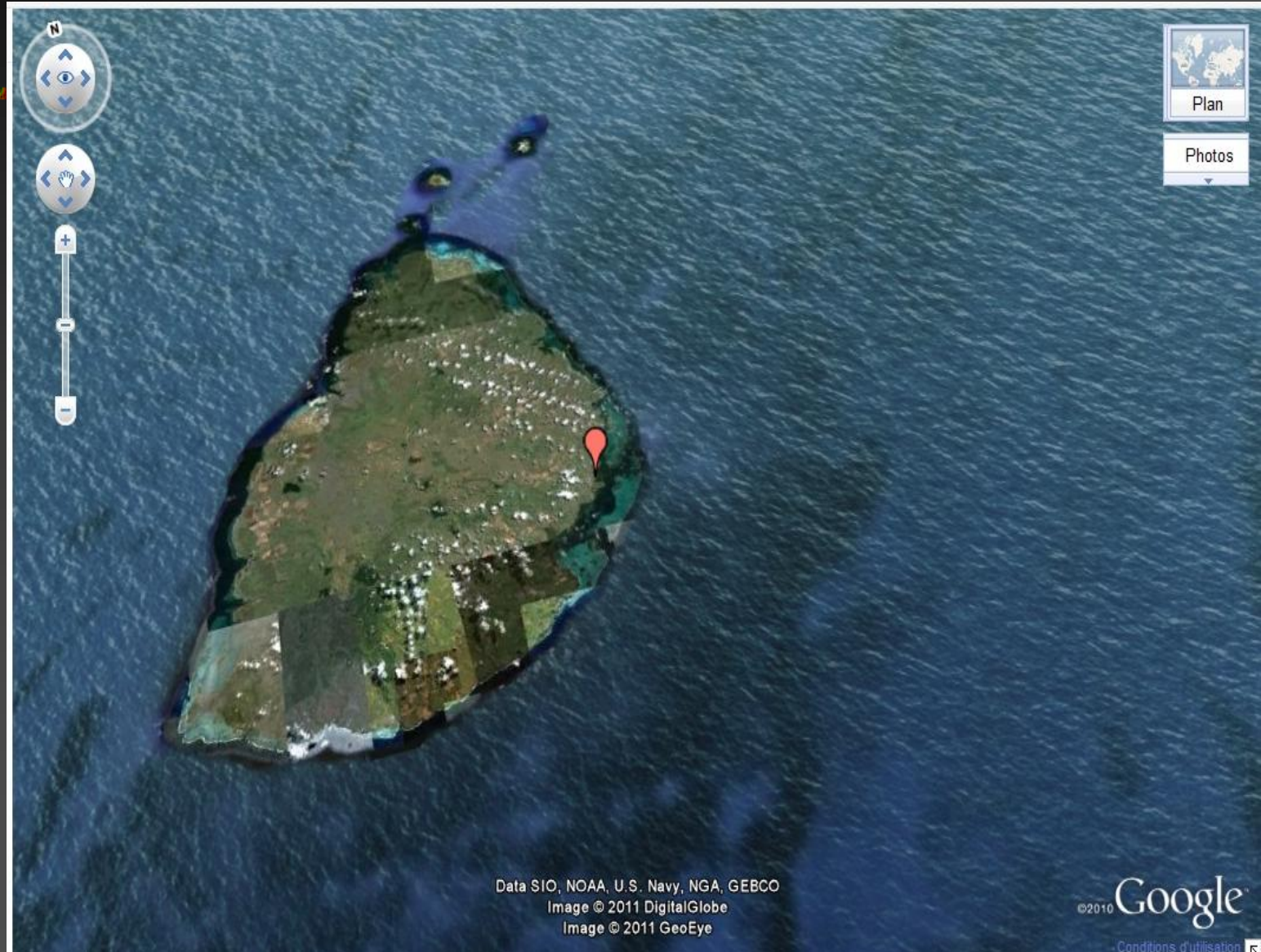
GEF Small Grants Programme at Petit Sable

Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

- **Summary of the Project** “Improving the livelihood of Onion Farmers of the South East and protecting the Local Red Onion as a Patrimoine Agricole de Maurice”
 - **Name of implementing Organisation:** Association des Planteurs du Sud Est in collaboration with Mouvement Pour L’Autosuffisance Alimentaire (MAA)
 - **Funder:** The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme implemented by the United Nations Development Programme
 - **Other Stakeholders/partners:** Agricultural Marketing Board, AREU, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development under African Adaptation Programme (AAP), and the International Office of Migration (IOM)
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Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

Location: Narrow coastal strips of Petit Sable, Grand Sable and Bambous Virieux



Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

Location: Narrow coastal strips of Petit Sable, Grand Sable and Bambous Virieux



GEF Small Grants Programme at Petit Sable

Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

Background

- Onion Mars known as the “Local red onion” or “Onion Toupie”
- In Petit Sable and Grand Sable: planters whose parents and grandparents have been growing these crops for over 100 years
- As main producers and suppliers of Local red onion seeds and ‘setts’ to the rest of planters’ community over the island, they strategically controlled this variety of onion production
- Maintaining production means protecting this local variety considered as a ‘Patrimoine Agricole de Maurice’ from disappearing



GEF Small Grants Programme at Petit Sable

Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

Challenges

- Regular crop loss due to heavy flooding in the rainy seasons
- Need to reinstate the soil medium regularly following severe soil erosion
- Increase in soil salinity level as the fields are directly exposed to the tides
- Need to consolidate the existing sea water retaining walls to reduce soil salinity
- Sea-level rise due to climate change
- Introduction of imported onion species in Mauritius



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- Marginalised, the South East onion farmers have strived hard to face the odds over several generations to maintain this onion production as their only source of livelihoods
- Discouraged, many onion planters have ceased the “Onion Toupie” production during the last twenty years to seek their livelihood elsewhere



GEF Small Grants Programme at Petit Sable

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- Remaining farmers have been trying very hard during the last five years to maintain production and are thus unconsciously protecting this local variety
- The Association des Planteurs du Sud-Est in collaboration with the MAA sought funds from the GEF SGP in order to reverse the decreasing trend and to address the challenges that have restrained local red onion production in the South East.



GEF Small Grants Programme at Petit Sable

Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

The specific objectives were:

- To set up an agro-processing unit to be managed by the women (15) to improve the livelihood of marginalised onion Farmers in the South East region by assisting them to move into higher value-added activities through processing, branding and marketing.
- To upgrade and consolidate the agricultural land drainage system so as to mitigate soil erosion and crop damage during flooding seasons. Works carried out by the men.



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The specific objectives are:

- To monitor closely the salinity of underground irrigation water in order to control its negative impacts on crop production if irrigated water is above the tolerated conductivity level.
- 6 Salinity meters were provided to the planters in October 2012



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The specific objectives were:

- To set up a new micro sprinkler and family drip irrigation methods to replace the backbreaking and labour intensive use of water cans by women. Unfortunately this was not possible as it was ascertained that it is only by using water cans that the salinity can be washed out from the plants.
- To leverage on networking opportunities to generate the required scale to fill the gap in the product value chain, from growing to high value local markets and eventually to exports.



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Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

The specific objectives were:

- To empower the planter's capacity to sustain their economic activity, enhance resilience and aim for exports.
- To develop stronger linkages with the tourism industry through the setting up of table d'hôte and food tasting for tourist market and generating tourism related spin off activities.



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Most Importantly Resist to Climate Change and Increase Resilience by:

- consolidating existing sea water retaining walls so as to reduce exposure to sea-level rise and soil salinity level
- Plantation of mangroves to retain sedimentation and create a buffer
- Thus increasing acreage of land nearer to the sea for optimum production.



Conserving the Local Red Onion: Fighting Against Flooding and Sea-level Rise

CONCLUSION

In this project, adaptation and increasing resilience to climate change is crucial:

- to maintain the economic activity of men and women
 - to conserve the agro-biodiversity
- to sustain the social and cultural traditions



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