

Republic of Seychelles

The Seychelles National Institute for Culture, Heritage and the Arts COP 28 – UAE

*“The Greek Initiative at UN Level on Protecting Cultural and Natural Heritage from Climate Change Impacts:
State of Play and Follow Up” - Monday 4/12/2023*

Title of Presentation: *Protecting Cultural Heritage through Climate Change - the
Seychelles’ Initiatives.*

Speaker: **Gabriel Essack – Technical Adviser – Seychelles’ Culture Institute**
(Email: filipesak@yahoo.com)



**The Seychelles National Institute
for Culture, Heritage and the Arts**

“Gardyen Nou Leritaz”



Republic of Seychelles

Location: **4th degree south of the equator**

Weather: **Tropical**

Average temp: **28C**

Settled in 1770 by French settlers.

Mixed race nation of European, Asian and African origins.

Language: **Creole**

Population: **100,000**

Economy: **Tourism and Fisheries**



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1 - Introduction

- For the people of Seychelles climate change is an immediate existential threat as a significant part of Seychelles is in low lying areas on the coast.
- The low lying areas are prone to flooding and surges.
- This is particularly so for the outer islands which are coralline islands just a few meters above sea level.
- The population is heavily dependent on marine resources and the effects of coral bleaching has an impact on its way of life.
- Seychelles has worked with the World Bank on a management plan to reduce its carbon footprint and already are using the right LPG gas and we have banned the use of plastics and the importation of balloon in the country.
- More than 40% of its territory has been designated as nature reserves which also acts as carbon sink.
- Seychelles is situated outside of the cyclone belt but the tropical storms are becoming more and more ferocious.

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2 - Seychelles World Heritage Sites: the *Aldabra Atoll* and the *Vallee de Mai Forest*

- Seychelles has two world heritage sites, they are the *Aldabra Atoll* and the *Vallee de Mai Forest*.
- The *Aldabra Atoll* is prone to coral bleaching as well as impact on its unique flora and fauna, while the ecosystem of the *Vallee Mai* are impacted by invasive species (both insects and plants) due to migration of invasive alien species or pathogens and parasites due to climate change.
- These may impact the outstanding universal value (OUV) of those two world heritage sites and they could be delisted.

The Aldabra Atoll - World Heritage Site - Republic of Seychelles



The Vallee de Mai – World Heritage Site - Republic of Seychelles



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3 - Impact on Heritage on the Coastline

- The impact of climate change on the Seychelles cultural heritage is significant.
- 60% of the built heritage is around the coastline and Seychelles is surrounded by the sea and we have a very strong maritime culture.
- It is believe that we have already lost around 7% of our heritage situated on the coast line due to climate change.
- This includes old cemeteries as well as maritime sites of heritage importance as well as the homes of traditional fishermen which had to be moved further inland.
- The stronger storms have impacted lighthouses and other heritage sites further out into the sea.

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4 - Impact of Low Tourism on Cultural Heritage Management

- The global impact of climate change negatively affects people on a world wide scale, and if the tourists visiting Seychelles decreases significantly, this will have an immediate impact on the management of the cultural heritage sites as most of them are dependent on the national budget which is mostly funded by the tourism industry.

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5. Flooding and National Cultural Infrastructure

- Excessive flooding has also impacted our low lying cultural infrastructure such as the national museums which are traditionally located in historic buildings.
- Historic buildings are more porous and draws water from the ground into the structure.
- The rise in humidity level can cause insect's infestations to the wooden structures of those buildings.
- There are also mold infestations especially in these old buildings due to the rise in temperatures.
- The sea spray from the increasingly stronger storms also accelerates the rusting of metals in some heritage structures within proximity of the sea.

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6 - Moveable Heritage

- Movable heritage such as museums pieces are also affected from higher level of humidity and an increase of Ultra Violet (UV) levels.

7 - Social Impact of Climate Change on Heritage

- There is a tendency to move away from the coastline and further inland and this has an impact on national nature reserves as there is a need to build dwelling further inland to avoid the sea level rise.
- This has negative impact on the land that have been designated as nature reserves which are also natural heritage.
- Certain heritage sites have also been negatively impacted due to encroachment.
- Significant decline in certain sea side activities such as collecting of the edible Palourde clams which are traditional delicacies.
- The warmer sea is now not conducive for the proliferation of these marine species. This has also had an impact on the local diet as sea food is good for health.

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Part Two: Mitigation Measures

9 - Cultural education programs and traditional skills transmission

- Raising awareness about the impact of sea level rise on our cultural heritage sites as well as conducting classes to transmit traditional knowledge and skills especially in traditional construction technics which is an aspect of heritage.

10 - Safeguarding - Documentation

- Systematic and comprehensive digitalization of cultural and heritage properties/assets and the knowledge and history associated with them.
- Preserving knowledge associated with cultural heritage sites for future generations.

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11 - Monitoring and Evaluation of the Sites

- Drafting of a comprehensive strategic management plan to assess the impact of climate change on cultural properties.
- Factoring climate change and cultural heritage risks in municipal planning.
- Survey for new sites; assessing site vulnerability; monitoring and tracking of erosion. The idea is to possibly relocate certain heritage assets to higher ground.

12 - Continuing research to support national decision making for conservation programs

- Collect statistics and develop comprehensive reporting mechanism to mobilize political will and support.

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13 - Planning for emergency preparedness

- Building protective barriers and sea walls around vulnerable coastal sites.

14 - Re-evaluation of management priorities in response to climate change

- Cultural sites may not be a national priority, there is therefore the need to convince the decision makers of their cultural importance for development and community identity.

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15 - Training as mitigation measures especially in traditional skills, monitoring, management and emergency preparedness

- Training of specialists (consultancy) in heritage management and risk mitigation.
- Restoring traditional resource management features.
- Establishing appropriate adaptive responses; and maintaining cultural heritage funding for data recovery and conservation.

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16 - Involving the local community

- Involve the local communities as much as possible as they are the knowledge holders of the heritage properties.

17 - Networking

- Network as much as possible with the regional and international partners and international bodies for both possible funding and knowledge sharing, particularly in related sciences to manage climate change impact in relation to cultural properties.

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Conclusion

- Climate change is an obvious existential threat to humanity.
- Along with it the heritage memories are also vulnerable, and small island states feel the brunt of it all, particularly as low lying areas prone to floods, surges and sea rises.
- There is more than ever a pressing need to reverse the process since from a cultural heritage point of view, part of the cultural memories of humanity are in danger of disappearing, and that's irreversible and humanity will be poorer because of it.

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Thank you for your attention



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