



TAKING ACTION TOGETHER FOR OUR BIODIVERSITY

COMOROS – FRANCE – MAURITIUS – MADAGASCAR – SEYCHELLES



Supported by



Implemented by



7 PARTNERS PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

Agence Française de Développement and Expertise France have selected seven partners operating in the South-West Indian Ocean Islands to implement the Varuna projects.



CAPBOI is a platform based in Mauritius comprising the chambers of commerce and industry and professional organisations in the South-West Indian Ocean region.



CIRAD is the French agricultural research and international cooperation organisation working for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions. It has been operating in the region for decades.



IRD, the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, is one of the leading scientific actors in the South-West Indian Ocean region.



The association Les Naturalistes de Mayotte was founded in 1999. It aims to showcase, popularise and protect Mayotte's cultural and natural heritage.



The association Réserves Naturelles de France brings together a national network of over 700 nature professionals (rangers, conservationists, activity leaders, etc.) working in some 350 nature reserves.



UdM is a Mauritian public university founded in 2012. It provides training in the fields of sustainable development and engineering, trade, and information and communication technologies.



UoM was founded in 1965 and is the oldest public university in Mauritius. It hosts over 12,000 students in seven faculties.



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VARUNA PROGRAMME 2022 > 2025



GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY LOSS

International experts estimate that 75% of the world's terrestrial environments and 40% of its marine ecosystems are severely degraded.*

One million species are in immediate danger of extinction.* The extinction rate is between 100 and 1,000 times higher than the natural rate.* And this loss of biodiversity is largely due to human activities, which put enormous pressure on nature. This pressure has been clearly identified: destruction and fragmentation of natural environments, overexploitation of wild species (overfishing, deforestation, poaching...), water, soil and air pollution, the climate crisis which comes on top of the other causes and exacerbates them, and the introduction of alien invasive species. Yet biological diversity provides irreplaceable services that are essential to human life: supply (food, fresh water, energy, medicinal resources...), regulation (climate,

soil, erosion prevention, pollination...), and culture (recreation, knowledge production...).

SOUTH-WEST INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS: A HOTSPOT UNDER THREAT

The Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles: these South-West Indian Ocean territories are home to exceptional biodiversity, marked by extremely high levels of endemism. This hotspot does not escape global dynamics. For example, IUCN and Global Wildlife Conservation estimate that 95% of lemurs are threatened in Madagascar's forests. Similarly, almost all the endemic birds in Mauritius are classified as threatened. The level of preservation of ecosystems varies considerably from one island to another and between terrestrial and marine

areas. But the overall situation calls for strengthened and appropriate responses.

VARUNA'S AMBITION

Being very active in the area, Agence Française de Développement has designed and financially supported the Varuna programme to contribute to halting this biodiversity loss in the region. An ambition shared by regional actors, for the benefit of local communities. Following an extensive consultation and co-development phase for the programme between 2020 and 2021, the contracting authority was entrusted to Expertise France in January 2022 for the coordination of Varuna's eight projects. Expertise France's professionals, in a dedicated team based in Antananarivo and Paris, and the partners are now contributing all their experience and expertise for the implementation of activities on the ground.

Expertise France is the French interministerial actor for international technical cooperation and a subsidiary of Agence Française de Développement Group (AFD Group). The second largest agency in Europe, it designs and implements projects that strengthen public policies over the long term in developing and emerging countries. It works in key areas of development, such as governance, security, climate, health and education. Alongside its partners, it contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For a world in common.



75%

of terrestrial ecosystems are severely degraded*



1 million

species are threatened with extinction*



20 000

animal populations plummeted by 68% between 1970 and 2016*



2022, 2025

The duration of the "pilot" phase 1 of Varuna



€10 million

The budget allocated to Varuna by Agence Française de Développement



7

The number of partners involved in Varuna

* Source: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services..



3 LINES OF ACTION

8 PROJECTS

1 COMMON OBJECTIVE

The Varuna programme is based on three main components:

1. Structure networks of regional actors to encourage coordinated efforts to preserve biodiversity. **2.** Support the mainstreaming of ecological transition among economic actors. **3.** Promote the contribution of research to the science and society dialogues on biodiversity.

Each action comprises two to three projects led by one or several partners established in the region. They all have the same objective: **work together to preserve biodiversity, for the benefit of the inhabitants.**



ACTION 1 // STRUCTURE LOCAL NETWORKS

1/ BRING TOGETHER MPA MANAGERS IN THE REGION

Structuring a network of managers of marine protected areas (MPA) for the South-West Indian Ocean region is a key issue. This network is led by Réserves Naturelles de France with the aim of pooling everyone's tools, practices and experiences. The objective is to build the expertise of local stakeholders and thereby ensure a more sustainable management of local marine protected areas.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles

2/ MOBILISE RESEARCHERS FOR PROGRAMMES ON NATURAL CAPITAL

The universities of Mascareignes and Mauritius are responsible for the development of a network of academics on biodiversity and the valuation of natural capital and ecosystem services. Varuna thereby facilitates the creation and dissemination of knowledge on these issues in the region through dedicated research programmes, training, and the production of policy briefs for public and private decision-makers.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles

3/ STRENGTHEN THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE

Cap Business Indian Ocean is responsible for strengthening the dialogue between public and private stakeholders and civil society on issues related to biodiversity, natural capital and Nature-based Solutions. This partner is building and coordinating a regional platform to strengthen links between the stakeholders and mobilise the private sector, by addressing biodiversity issues in a cross-cutting manner.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles



ACTION 2 // SUPPORT THE PRIVATE SECTOR

4/ BUILD THE CAPACITIES OF COMPANIES

One of the tools identified is to improve the management of companies through natural capital accounting and by encouraging them to invest in Nature-based Solutions. Cap Business Indian Ocean will be providing training in environmental accounting tools, producing and disseminating studies on the impact of the local economic sector on biodiversity, and assisting regional companies with their strategies to limit their impacts.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles

5/ LAUNCH A CALL FOR BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

To go a step further, a €2.5 million call for projects will be launched to provide financial support to private sector initiatives, in partnership with civil society stakeholders. The objective is to limit their impact on ecosystems and integrate biodiversity conservation into their economic models. This project is conducted by Expertise France.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles



VARUNA

AGIR ENSEMBLE POUR LA BIODIVERSITÉ
DANS L'OCEAN INDIEN



ACTION 3 // PROMOTE THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE & SOCIETY

6/ RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS

Mobilise various dialogue tools to improve biodiversity governance: this is the project led by the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development which will set up travelling exhibitions, the ePOP (Small Participatory Waves) project, digital resources and exchange workshops. It will also provide training for young people, local communities, journalists, public administrators, researchers and civil society stakeholders to inform about biodiversity issues and promote dialogue. *Madagascar*

7/ DISSEMINATE KNOWLEDGE ON BIODIVERSITY

Naturalistes de Mayotte will distribute a popular science magazine on biodiversity in the South-West Indian Ocean which will bring together decision-makers, scientists and citizens around these issues.

Comoros, France, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles

8/ RETHINK THE GOVERNANCE OF FOREST SYSTEMS

The French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) will lead the project to strengthen synergies between the conservation and development of forest biodiversity on three sites in Madagascar and the Comoros. Technical and social innovations will be developed in territorial living labs to share practices and visions. The objective is to improve the joint management of forest landscapes.

Two sites in Madagascar & one site in the Comoros.

