



BIOT Environmental Interpretation and Education Project

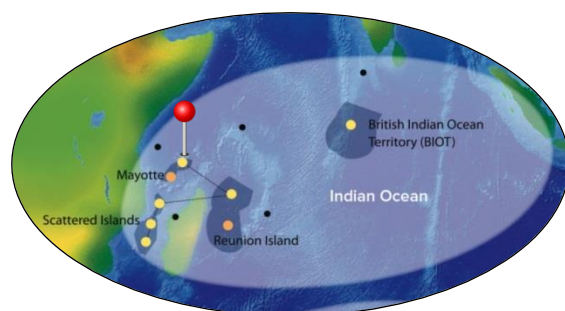
Targeted territory: British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)

Total project budget: 95,843 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 89,107 Euros

Duration: May 2016 – March 2017 (11 months)

Lead organisation: British Indian Ocean Territory Administration (BIOTA)



Background:

In 2010 BIOTA declared the BIOT as a fully no-take Marine Protected Area (MPA) to prevent damage to BIOTs globally exceptional biodiversity from extractive activities such as commercial fishing. Strict laws regulate the potential for disturbance or damage, for example by prohibiting visitor access to sensitive habitats. However, damage can still be caused by visitors or temporary residents acting in ignorance of both of the laws and of the importance of BIOT's biodiversity.

While penalties or prosecutions can provide a significant deterrent, in some cases the damage caused cannot be compensated by a fine. Regulation is only one part of achieving effective protection; personnel and visitors to BIOT represent a potentially highly effective group of advocates for positive environmental action. Engagements to date show a strong willingness to engage in conservation activities and thereby to help protect and enhance the BIOT environment. As BIOT has a highly transient population, with a regular turnover of personnel and visitors to the islands, the constant influx of new personnel significantly elevates both the risks of impacts and the opportunities for engagement.

Description of the project:

The project will address this risk posed by personnel and visitors to BIOT and encourage environmental stewardship through the development of a range of education and interpretation



materials and facilities. These will ensure that the global importance of BIOT, and the management measures in place to protect it, are well-communicated and are understood by all temporary residents and visitors to the territory.

Alongside basic communication, signage and materials, the project will promote the sustainable use of BIOTs environment, by developing a forest boardwalk/trail and a snorkel trail on Diego Garcia. This will encourage amenity use of BIOTs environment away from an often extractive basis, such as recreational fishing.

The project will promote a citizen science approach through the use of the signage, identifying for example where and how personnel can report sightings of rare species, thus contributing to ecological knowledge.



Intended results:

- Increased understanding and appreciation of BIOT's biodiversity and environment by those working in or visiting the territory.
- Improved understanding and compliance with BIOT's environmental laws by those working in or visiting the territory.
- The encouragement of non-extractive amenity use of the territory leads to a more sustainable use of BIOT's environment.

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