



Newsletter

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Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we share our second Newsletter on this special day, that the world celebrates the International Women's Day. To honour women, Programa Tatô decided to dedicate this number to all the brave women struggling daily for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of our natural resources.

I have always been passionate about the sea, and so I ended up becoming a marine biologist and an environmental educator. I realized that without touching people's minds and hearts it would not be possible to build values such as sustainability and respect for the incredible web of life that we inherited from our planet. Over the past few years, I have been confronted by several people who ask me: what leads a woman to become a conservationist, to change her home country for a developing country lacking basic services, and to live far from her friends and family?

I believe that our nonconformity for the way our planet has been repeatedly disrespected, jeopardizing our own survival, ended up awakening in us the will to "put hands to work" and to transform realities. Woman in her essence nurtures a feeling that goes from children to entire communities, helping to make her path restless, thanks to her persistence and commitment to the causes in which she believes. However, this rewarding journey is often marked by moments of deep frustration, various obstacles imposed by society itself, requiring great effort, discipline and resilience from our part.

Throughout this course, I have come to the conclusion that in order to be an environmental conservationist and educator, it is essential to keep in mind certain characteristics that I consider fundamental. First, I believe in the joint construction with local communities where we work to plan something that makes sense to them. I do not

believe that it is possible to implement pre-established projects, since co-construction is the key to empowerment and ownership of all of those involved. All people have something to give and when we respect the diversity of knowledge and concerns, motivates in others the desire to contribute at its best so that in the end all can benefit. Second, setting priorities is fundamental, but always with flexibility, because everything changes rapidly and key players are not always ready to change effectively for a common good. Third, and perhaps the most important to me, is to spread love for the life we inherited from our planet. Every living being, however small and seemingly insignificant may appear it is valuable, because it is part of the web of interdependence and reciprocity that exist in nature. In the field of conservation many women stand out and many of them were true sources of inspiration for all of us. There are many that hold or have held leadership positions in a wide range of civil society, government and private sector organizations. I would like to congratulate all of them on this 8th of March, especially to those whose mission is to turn the world a better place! Of course, men who contribute to noble causes deserve applause, but those who encourage women to follow their path have a special recognition.



Sara Vieira

IN THIS NUMBER:

- *Women of Programa Tatô*
- *Women's Productive Group*
- *Our Team*
- *Researchers in São Tomé*
- *The Visit from Guinea Bissau to São Tomé was a success!*
- *We already released 20,000 hatchlings this season!*
- *Inform to become aware and to change habits*

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Women of Programa Tatô



As a developing country, São Tomé and Príncipe faces major social challenges such as lack of professional and educational opportunities, social exclusion, economic vulnerability and gender inequality. Often a woman is seen only as a mother, responsible for taking care of her children, the house and to please the man, without being able to make choices, without freedom of speech, or that her rights are respected.

Programa Tatô counts mostly with women in its direction and coordination. Among the coordinators, field assistants, trainees and students, currently 23 women belong to the team, and the program is coordinated by 5 of those women. Working daily on nesting beaches and at sea, it involves working with a team formed mainly of men, local fishermen, being a great challenge day by day, and demanding a lot of professionalism and resilience. It is not easy to be a woman in São Tomé, especially when working and coordinating a sea turtle program, where the culture and habits of the local communities are killing, trading and consuming the meat and shell of these animals. Gaining the acceptance and trust of local communities where we work every day was not something achieved in the first moment and in many of the communities where we work is still a constant battle for their trust, says Sara Vieira, Technical and Scientific Coordinator of Programa Tatô.

Maria Branco and Gabriela Fernandes, field assistants of Programa Tatô, say that regarding the general overview of a group of women leading a group of men and working daily in inhospitable places, away from everything, often at night, “in our countries this is normal”, but the fact that we are mainly from foreign countries has made our position better accepted and respected by local communities. On the other hand, if a local woman expresses willingness to do the same work already causes disagreement and general controversy. Still, the message of conservation we wanted to spread on the island began to have a much greater impact when Domingas Monteiro, our National Coordinator of Programa Tatô São Tomé since 2016, became the face of the project, because of her strength, charisma, good mood and for being an excellent communicator.

This season, Alinesa, a future Biologist from São Tomé, joined our team as a trainee, and has been learning a lot about sea turtles behaviour and following the team in their daily activities. For her, it is a great challenge to participate in this internship and to conciliate it with her personal and student life, but it has been definitely an unique experience for her career as a biologist. Betânia Ferreira, Director of Programa Tatô, says that it is undoubtedly a huge challenge to be a woman and to work for the conservation of endangered species in developing countries and where man always has a more active role. In all the countries where she worked, her teams have always been formed mainly by men. But in more than 15 years

of experience, she has always found respect, recognition and trust from all the people she crossed in Africa and Worldwide.

To develop a job like this, and to win the trust of everyone, it takes years of daily dedication, often mixing personal with professional life. The path to gender equality is long, and even with the growth of women’s presence in the labour market, the disparity between men and women is still very wide. Achieving equality of opportunities and recognition is still a long way. Men and women should be free to make their own choices and develop their personal capacities without the interference or limitation of stereotypes. It is fundamental to integrate women in our societies, considering their needs and qualities. If there is one attribute that can be widely attributed to women is determination, and there is no doubt that we are a team of determined and motivated women to make a difference for a better world. We wish all women - mothers, working women, wives, sisters, grandmothers, housewives, companions - and everything else that they wish to be, congratulations for their determination, motivation, daily effort and the achievement of freedom, which allowed us today to be who we are.

Happy International Women’s Day, today and always!



Women's Productive Group



UmOne of the main objectives of Programa Tatô is the generation of alternative livelihoods for coastal communities involved in the capture and trade of sea turtles. One of the greatest challenges of our team in recent years was to establish a relationship of trust with the Palaiês (fishmongers) of São Tomé Island, which used to sell sea turtle meat in the country's main market in the city of São Tomé. After a long period of negotiations, which lasted about two years, these ladies accepted a conversion process, leaving behind the sale of sea turtle meat the only thing they knew how to do, and that they learned from their mothers and grandmothers. To change their habits and lives and abandon this illegal activity, they understood the importance and necessity of creating an association to defend their interests and develop new projects. And that is how 17 women became part of Programa Tatô and with our support created in 2016 the association "We want to have a future with destiny". Since then they have been receiving training in business management and family income, in sewing and manu-

facturing handicrafts, and they benefit from continuous monitoring and advising from our team. Today, these ladies have been working on the confection and marketing of original handicrafts made from recycled materials and African fabrics. These items are on sale at several strategic tourist spots on the island of São Tomé and the benefits generated by the sale of these souvenirs are reverted to the women's association and to the sea turtles conservation program.

Changing lives with their age, already with children and grandchildren to care, is not an easy task, just as it is not an easy task for us to follow and advise this group of women with so many difficulties in life. But these ladies every day surprise us for their strength, determination, and because now they are the ones that protect sea turtles. We can only thank them for trusting in our team and for enabling us to promote gender equality, access to capacity building and social integration, thus reducing the demand and capture of sea turtles.



Our Team

Sara Vieira

She was born in Almada, Portugal, grew up by the sea. Her fascination with the sea was motivated by the long afternoons spent in the fishing community of Praia da Fonte da Telha, watching the fishermen return from the sea and making the waves her great playmates. Her passion for marine biology began with Jacques Cousteau's fantastic documentaries about the sea and its mysterious inhabitants. In 2004 she moved to Faro to study Marine Biology and Fisheries at the University of Algarve, where she also obtained her master's degree in Marine Biology and Conservation. It was during her degree that she had the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica as a volunteer in a sea turtle conservation project. Her passion for sea turtles started at this moment. The following year she applied as a field assistant in a marine turtle conservation project near Bocas Del Toro in the Panamá, where she developed several tools related to the management of community-based conservation projects and by engaging the main players in the conservation of sea turtles. In 2009 she decided to go to Cape Verde where she developed her master's thesis and participated in several studies related to the ecology and conservation of these fascinating species. Nowadays she is co-founder and vice-president of the Association Programa Tatô and

Technical and Scientific Coordinator of Programa Tatô São Tomé since 2014.



Domingas Monteiro

Domingas Monteiro, born in Chácara, São Tomé and Príncipe, grew up following and watching her mother in several social actions for the poorest people in her country. In 2013 she graduated in Law. In the last 10 years, she has been involved in several social inclusion, community development and poverty reduction projects developed by the various NGOs on the island of São Tomé. In 2012 she moved to the community of Morro Peixe, where she had the opportunity to meet Mr. Hipólito Lima, the main reference of

sea turtle conservation in São Tomé and Príncipe. Here she was able to know closely the work developed by Programa Tatô, as well as to become aware of the socioeconomic and ecological importance of the conservation of sea turtles in her country. In 2015, she decided to become a volunteer of Programa Tatô and quickly realized that biodiversity conservation is a valuable approach to reinforce efforts to combat poverty and improve human well-being. In 2016 she became Coordination Assistant of Programa Tatô and is currently the National Coordinator of the sea turtle conservation program in São Tomé, treasurer and co-founder of the Association Programa Tatô.



Researchers in São Tomé

Joana Hancock



Joana Hancock is a sea turtle conservation biologist since 2002. Her passion for sea turtles has led her through a variety of projects around the world. She started working in São Tomé and Príncipe islands in 2012 where she is currently finishing her PhD on the evaluation of the conservation status of the three main species of sea turtles that occur on these islands. This has been achieved by conducting a multi-approach assessment of their distribution, dispersal and ecology using genetic markers, stable isotopes and population modeling, focusing not only on reproductive females, but also on juvenile and male sea turtles. This project, a joint effort between Programa Tatô, Projeto Protetuga in Príncipe Island, the University of Lisbon, CIBIO-Porto and the University of Paris Sud, has provided important insights on migratory connectivity of the species in the region, habitat use and reproductive behavior, contributing towards a clearer prospects on each population resilience in São Tomé and Príncipe to current threats, including illegal trade. Her thesis is due to be completed by March 2019.

Camille Kowalski



Programa Tatô is a partner of IMBRSea, the International Master in Marine Biological Resources, a joint Master programme organized by ten leading European universities in the field of marine sciences. Camille Kowalski is a

master student of the IMBRSea program in marine resources management and is undertaking her thesis on the impact of artisanal fisheries on sea turtles in the island of São Tomé. Small-scale fishing is an important source of income for local communities, but is also a major threat to sea turtles due to incidental capture. This study will enable Programa Tatô to assess the impact of artisanal fisheries on sea turtles and to identify the types of fisheries causing greatest impacts to the different species of sea turtles on the island of São Tomé. Her thesis is due to be completed by May 2019.

The Latest Events

The Visit from Guinea Bissau to São Tomé was a success!

Our partners from Guinea Bissau, IBAP - Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas, the NGO GAECA Palmeirinha and the Association of Marine Turtles of Varela, visited Programa Tatô in São Tomé during the month of February for an eight-day exchange visit. It was an intense week of sharing experiences, reflection on the conservation of sea turtles on the African continent together with the main players in the protection and conservation of these endangered species, such as the national authorities, and full of education and environmental awareness activities in schools and local communities.



We already released 20,000 hatchlings this season!

The 2018/2019 nesting season is finishing and the results could not be more positive. We extended not only our area of expertise, but also our team of guards, who protect the main nesting beaches of the 4 species that breed in the country. This year we also had two more students from the University of São Tomé that participated in our National Internship Program in partnership with Uni-STP. Today, Programa Tatô has a team of more than 60 people, most of them nationals of São Tomé. We hope to continue to involve more and more people in this cause, thus promoting a more sustainable use of natural resources and the valorisation of the natural heritage of each country where we are.



José Carlos Bernardo Costa

Inform to become aware and to change habits

Good communication and awareness of all sectors of the civil society are the keys to Programa Tatô, not just to create bonds of proximity and trust with local communities, but also to increase knowledge about the ecological and socioeconomic value of sea turtles and the benefits of their conservation. In order to continue to give voice to our awareness campaign "Tataluga - Mém di Omali (Turtle - The Mother of Our Seas) implemented since 2016, several activities have been developed this season. We highlight the Theatre Plays that have a great success in local communities; awareness spots on national television and radio with the participation of several personalities from São Tomé; and the school contest "Sea Without Plastic, a Fantastic Environment".



Our partners

