



Photo © R. Renoux

## Project MANG: Giving impetus to a collective movement in favour of the preservation of coastal wetlands in EU overseas territories

The rich biodiversity of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide, including flood regulation, water treatment, and shoreline protection, are increasingly threatened. In EU overseas territories, these systems are still poorly characterized. The Mang project, funded by the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), attempts to fill this gap in knowledge and addresses the associated shortage of management methods and tools needed to improve coastal wetland conservation, and thus positively impact all the wetlands in the European ORs (Outermost Regions) and OCTs (Overseas Countries and Territories). These objectives will be achieved through four activities: 1. establishing and promoting a method for site assessment; 2. specifying a participatory and transversal method for coastal wetland management; 3. promoting the adoption of the method; and 4. getting public and private stakeholders involved.



80% of French biodiversity is in its overseas territories

2<sup>nd</sup>: France has the second largest EEZ in the world

35,000 hectares of mangroves will be awarded protected status by the *Conservatoire du littoral* (French coastal protection agency) by 2016. That's a third of the mangroves in the French overseas territories

700 people are employed in the management of protected areas in the French overseas territories: there are about 9 times more in metropolitan France

160 sites in the French overseas territories are currently protected by the *Conservatoire du littoral*

8 pilot sites have been selected for the MANG project, 1 in each territory. All of them are *Conservatoire du littoral* sites

## Description of the project

The European Union's 7 ORs and 21 OCTs are unanimously recognised for their exceptionally rich biodiversity. The wetlands in these regions are essentially coastal. They possess unequalled biodiversity, mainly through the role they play in hosting wildlife for breeding, feeding, and migration stopovers. These diverse ecosystems (mangroves, lakes, and lagoons) provide numerous ecosystem services to local communities, notably flood control, groundwater recharge, water purification, and protection of the coastline from storms.

However, the coastal wetlands of the European overseas territories are particularly fragile and threatened. Moreover, because they are poorly known and management methods and tools are flawed, their conservation needs to be improved. For these reasons, it is hard for the stakeholders involved in the preservation of these wetlands to integrate conservation objectives into local, national, and European policies. There is an urgent need to encourage a collective drive to preserve the coastal wetlands of the European overseas territories. In response to this deficit of recognition and knowledge, and the need for a wetland management tool, the Mang project ("mang" is Creole for mangrove, the emblematic tree of overseas coastal wetlands) received funding from the French Development Agency in the framework of the agreement between France and IUCN. The objectives of Mang are to:

- set up the technical and methodological foundations for the protection of OR and OCT wetlands, filling gaps in terms of knowledge, networks, and capacity-building
- define conservation strategies that involve all the stakeholders for each site
- provide useful and pertinent information to the stakeholders and various target groups concerned, in order to raise awareness and appreciation of the values and ecosystem services rendered by these habitats.



Two organisations with experience in the preservation of overseas natural areas are involved in the project: *Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels* (Aten) – the Coordinator, and the *Conservatoire du littoral* – Partner. Aten's roles are the networking and professionalization of the natural area managers, and the coordination of the Te Me Um programme. The *Conservatoire du littoral*, in charge of the *Pôle-relais mangroves et zones humides d'outre-mer* (Overseas mangroves and wetlands transfer unit), already protects a large number of overseas sites, including 6 with the Ramsar quality label. It therefore already has an operational network of local managers for reserves, parks, and local communities.

The Mang project is divided into 4 activities:

- Activity 1: develop a site assessment method, and communicate it to the stakeholders involved in management and conservation
- Activity 2: define a participative methodology for managing wetlands
- Activity 3: communicate these working methodologies to all wetland managers, and facilitate their adoption
- Activity 4: involve the various target groups concerned for better conservation of wetlands.

The project, which will last 36 months, gives priority to stakeholders involved in the European wetlands of the Americas and the Indian Ocean. It is intended to benefit all ORs and OCTs.



## CONTACTS

Emmanuel Thevenin  
Emmanuel.thevenin@aten.espaces-naturels.fr

