Empowering youth for coastal conservation across Madagascar

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In Madagascar, human pressure, particularly when compounded by global warming, is a major threat to biodiversity. Overexploitation of resources, destructive fishing practices, agriculture and deforestation are the main sources of degradation of marine, coastal and terrestrial biodiversity. To address these issues, C3 (Community Centred Conservation), in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education (MEN) through the Regional Directorate for National Education (DREN) decided to implement new methods of effective training for teachers responsible for environmental education and to create a youth network called the Junior Ecoguards, an environmental club made up of young people from 13 to 16 years old. These Junior Ecoguards support local conservation efforts through participation in training and awareness-raising and reforestation activities in their local areas. The idea is to connect to local communities and help them to understand the challenges of protecting their resources, to reflect on their own daily attitudes and to awaken in them the motivation and an eco-citizen mentality. In order to improve and reinforce environmental education, a toolkit of pedagogical tools accompanied by an environmental awareness guide have been designed and distributed within schools in the communes of the Diana region. In July 2016, a training course was conducted on the use of this guide for 40 teachers from 20 institutions. These teachers trained and created Junior Ecoguard groups in their respective schools. In 2014, there were only 50 Junior Ecoguards, but now this number has increased to more than 700! The training and the distribution of the kits has continued throughout 2017 and an extension of the Junior Ecoguard network to the other regions of Madagascar is planned this year.