IMA NEWS

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Red mangrove *Scientific name: Rhizophora mangle*
Photo Courtesy: https://www.uusc.org/

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INSTITUTE OF MARINE AFFAIRS

Restoring Roots: Mangrove Clean-Up Unites IMA and NGC for World Wetlands Day 2025

Volunteers at mangrove clean up at Carli Bay

In celebration of World Wetlands Day 2025, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) and The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC) joined forces on Sunday 2nd February 2025 for a highly successful mangrove clean-up at Carli Bay, Couva. The event was a shining example of corporate-community collaboration, environmental responsibility, and education in action.

Over eighty volunteers took part in the initiative, removing an astonishing 86 bags of waste, amounting to over 1,110 kilogrammes—more than one metric tonne of garbage—from the mangrove forest on the southern side of Carli Bay, just north of the Couva River.

Did You Know?

Mangroves can store up to five times more carbon than tropical forests, making them powerful allies in the fight against climate change and sea level rise.

The event featured remarks from both partnering organisations. Mr. Ermath Harrington, Chairman of the IMA Board of Governors, praised the collective effort:

"Today's clean-up reflects the strength of partnerships. Organisations from various sectors came together with a shared purpose—to safeguard our natural resources."

He also acknowledged NGC's pivotal role as a corporate steward, especially within the fenceline community of Carli Bay.

Dr. Joseph Ishmael Khan, Chairman of NGC, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the company's ongoing commitment to sustainability:

"NGC has reiterated—in word and action—its commitment to environmental preservation. This partnership with the IMA has helped us develop a closer connection with our Couva/Point Lisas fenceline community, and support the restoration of an ecosystem that is critical for food security, climate adaptation, and national resilience."

A Living Classroom

The clean-up was not just an environmental action but also a valuable educational experience. Volunteers, including local youth, learned first-hand about the role mangroves play in coastal protection, flood mitigation, and as nurseries for marine life.

l- Mr. Ermath Harrington, Chairman of the IMA Board of Governors
r- Dr. Joseph Ishmael Khan, Chairman of NGC

Volunteers in action, collecting debris among the mangrove roots

cleaned site

"I never realised how much waste ends up in these areas. This experience really opened my eyes," said one young volunteer from Couva.

What's Next?

This event marks just one step in a longer journey. Plans are already in place for:

- Follow-up clean-ups to maintain the health of the area
- Community outreach and education initiatives
- Monitoring and reporting to ensure long-term ecosystem recovery

Supporting Global Goals

This initiative supports several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including:

- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 14: Life Below Water
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Takeaway Message:

Protecting our mangrove forests is a shared responsibility. Events like this highlight the power of partnerships and the importance of sustained, hands-on action to ensure the health of our coastal ecosystems for generations to come.

Stakeholders gather at the IMA-NGC community meeting to support mangrove restoration efforts in Carli Bay.

Community Collaboration Fuels Mangrove Restoration in Carli Bay

Coastal resilience starts with community. That was the message at the heart of a recent stakeholder meeting hosted by the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) and The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC). Held on January 21, 2025, at the Roystonia Community Centre in Couva, the event marked the launch of community engagement activities under the IMA-NGC Stakeholder Engagement – Mangrove Rehabilitation and Restoration Project.

This joint initiative aims to restore and conserve the mangrove forests of Carli Bay—ecosystems that play a critical role in protecting the coastline, supporting biodiversity, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The meeting brought together a wide cross-section of the community—from representatives of the Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo Regional Corporation, Forestry Division, and Environmental Management Authority, to NGOs such as CANARI and Ecosystem Approaches, along with faith-based groups and concerned residents. Their presence reflected a shared commitment to safeguarding natural resources through inclusive dialogue and action.

A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey was administered to participants to better understand local perceptions of mangrove conservation. The insights gathered will guide future outreach efforts and inform a series of public education campaigns tailored to the needs of the Couva/Point Lisas community.

Dr. Rahanna Juman, IMA's Deputy Director of Research, noted that successful mangrove rehabilitation goes beyond simply planting new trees. "Sometimes, restoring mangroves means removing stressors—like blocked tidal flow—and returning the natural hydrological balance to the area," she explained.

Supporting this sentiment, Ms. Ramkissoon, Senior Technical Officer at CANARI, highlighted her organisation's commitment to empowering communities through stewardship of natural resources. "Engagement is key," she said. "This project is as much about listening as it is about restoring."

Carli Bay has experienced significant mangrove dieback over the past five years. Building on NGC's Reforestation Programme, this collaborative effort with the IMA hopes to reverse that trend—one community conversation and mangrove root at a time.

With this first step in community engagement complete, the IMA and NGC are preparing to roll out additional restoration activities and educational programmes in Carli Bay. Residents and stakeholders alike are encouraged to stay connected and continue shaping the future of their coastal ecosystem.

Arima North Students Explore Science at IMA Lab!

IMA lab technician explains the use of analytical instruments to Arima North Secondary students during their Chemistry Lab tour.

On January 29, 2025, nine Upper Sixth Environmental Science students from Arima North Secondary visited the IMA Laboratory, guided by their science teacher, Ms. Thomas. The visit provided them with a hands-on learning experience where they gathered valuable data for their project, "Assessing Seawater Quality in Chaguaramas."

The students engaged in water quality testing, learning firsthand about the different methods used to assess seawater quality. They were introduced to tools such as multi-parameter probes and spectrophotometers, which are essential for analysing various water parameters, including pH, salinity, turbidity, and nutrient concentrations. They also explored the significance of sample collection techniques, understanding how these practices are crucial for monitoring the health of coastal ecosystems.

"This visit has been invaluable for my students. They've seen firsthand how what we study in the classroom is applied in real-world scientific research," remarked Ms. Thomas. The students' research will contribute to understanding how local water bodies, like those in Chaguaramas, are being impacted by pollution and how we can mitigate these effects to preserve marine biodiversity.

The experience helped the students connect the dots between their classroom studies and real-world applications, reinforcing the importance of environmental science. This visit supports the national curriculum's focus on environmental science and contributes to the growing emphasis on sustainability and environmental stewardship in education.

By exploring water quality testing at the IMA, these budding scientists got a closer look at how scientific research is conducted and why it matters. The IMA hopes to inspire more students to pursue careers in marine science, as they play a key role in shaping the future of our planet's health.

Engaging the next generation: IMA laboratory personnel showcase scientific tools used in marine research

Student gain hands-on insight into water quality testing procedures during a guided demonstration by IMA staff.

Enhancing Coastal Research: IMA Hosts Five-Day Drone Training with TTDF

The Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), successfully hosted a five-day Drone Operation Training Program. The event, led by Lieutenant Atiba Briggs of the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, took place at the IMA and was designed to equip participants with valuable hands-on experience in drone technologies.

The comprehensive training included both classroom sessions and practical field exercises, focusing on DJI Enterprise drones. These drones are equipped with both optical and lidar sensors, enabling Real-time Kinematic (RTK) data collection. This technology allows participants to gather high-resolution data in real-time, which is crucial for various environmental applications, such as coastline change analysis, beach dynamics monitoring, and mangrove carbon assessment.

Key training modules included:

- Airspace and craft management
- Safety procedures and risk management
- Mission planning
- Data handling and post-processing

This initiative is part of the IMA's ongoing efforts to strengthen its Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) capabilities, enabling the organization to leverage drone technology for critical research and environmental monitoring.

The program highlighted how rapidly evolving drone technologies are transforming environmental research. With the ability to capture actionable, real-time data, drones are becoming an invaluable tool for making informed decisions, particularly in monitoring sensitive coastal ecosystems. By incorporating drone data, the IMA is better equipped to address pressing environmental challenges and contribute to broader efforts in sustainability and resilience.

Participants of the five-day Drone Operation Training hosted by the IMA and TTDF engage in a session at the IMA auditorium.

Combatting Climate Change is at the Top of Dr. Rahanna Juman's Agenda

Photo credit: Unsplash

Dr. Rahanna Juman, Deputy Director of Research at the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), is the technical lead on piloting a Blue Carbon Credit Scheme for Trinidad and Tobago.

This collaborative project between the IMA and the Inter-American Development Bank aims to design a high-quality Blue Carbon Credit Scheme to improve digital mapping, monitoring, reporting, and verification of ecosystem services. It also promotes the management and ownership of natural capital and creates practical opportunities for livelihood enhancement and revenue generation.

Marine ecosystems—particularly tidal marshes, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests—absorb (sequester) and store carbon within biomass and soils.

Commonly referred to as "blue carbon," these ecosystems provide climate mitigation benefits and a range of other ecosystem services that support coastal livelihoods and adaptation to climate change, according to Dr. Juman.

"For you to be able to participate in any carbon schemes internationally, you have to have rigid data," she explained.

"Our first step is to collect the data—how much carbon is actually stored within the biomass and the soil in the mangrove forests—and then also look at the state of the mangrove forest. We rehabilitate degraded ecosystems to find out how much more carbon can be sequestered or 'sucked up' when you restore the ecosystem.

"And how that carbon can be translated into some type of commodity, so that local communities—the people who depend on the resources: the crab catchers, the fishermen, and so on—can actually benefit."

Once successful, the Blue Carbon Credit Scheme will be beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago.

"If we are able to get into the scheme and get funding, that money can be used to rehabilitate the ecosystem," she said.

"Besides carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation, mangroves provide other services, such as protection from coastal erosion and habitat for a lot of the things we eat. So, it will enhance those other benefits. It's about improving and increasing the ecosystem services they provide. All of society can benefit, because they (mangroves) protect us all—our coastline, our food."

Dr. Juman began working at the IMA on a four-month contract as an intern in the Research Department straight out of university in 1996.

"Growing up, I wanted to be a doctor, but I couldn't afford it back then," she shared.

"I went to university and did the next best thing, which was science. After graduating from UWI, I was able to get a four-month internship at the IMA—and I'm still here, 29 years later."

The wetlands ecologist and avid advocate for wetlands conservation holds a PhD in Zoology from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of London. She has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals and authored two informative publications titled The Mangrove Forests of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Juman has delivered numerous presentations on coastal wetlands both nationally and internationally, including a TEDx Talk in 2017 on the importance of mangrove forests, and more recently, a Toute Bagai podcast lecture titled Wetlands and Human Policy Well-being.

"When I joined the IMA, I started working with the wetlands ecologist doing research on mangrove forests, then I started to do research on seagrass beds," she explained.

"Unlike corals and mangroves, very few people know about seagrass beds. While at the Institute, I got a fellowship that allowed me to do my master's and I upgraded straight into a PhD."

After completing her studies, Dr. Juman secured the position of Research Officer at the IMA, later rising to Deputy Director of Research. She also acted as Director for some time.

Dr. Juman currently serves as Deputy Chair of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Inter-Ministerial Committee and as Chair of the National Sargassum Task Force—two significant Cabinet-appointed committees. She is also leading efforts to develop a Marine Spatial Plan for the Gulf of Paria.

She chaired the Caribbean Sea Commission from 2021 to 2023 and is a member of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environment Protection (GESAMP) Working Group 41 on Ocean Interventions for Climate Change Mitigation.

Photo credit: Unsplash

Charting the Blue Carbon Future: IMA at the Forefront in Jamaica

L-R: IMA Director, Dr. Ava Maxam; Head of SODECO, UWI, Mona Campus, Professor the Hon. Terrence Forrester; IMA Researcher, Mr. Attish Kanhai; IMA Researcher, Ms. Nikia Gooding; and, IMA Researcher, Mr. Hamish Asmath

From March 18–20, 2025, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) participated in the Blue Carbon Workshop – Coastal Futures: Advancing Blue Carbon Policy, Finance, and Science in the Caribbean, hosted at the Medallion Hall Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica. This three-day workshop, coordinated by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), brought together regional experts, scientists, and policymakers to explore the growing potential of blue carbon as a nature-based solution to climate change.

Leading IMA's delegation was Director Dr. Ava Maxam, who delivered a compelling presentation on the Institute's flagship initiative: "Piloting a Blue Carbon Credit Scheme for Trinidad and Tobago"—a pioneering project funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Dr. Maxam's presentation highlighted how the scheme aims to enhance digital mapping, monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of coastal ecosystems, such

Director of the IMA, Dr. Ava Maxam

as mangroves and seagrasses. She explained how the project supports the valuation of ecosystem services, opens opportunities for community-based livelihoods, and creates potential for revenue generation through blue carbon credits.

> "Our goal is to transform science into practical solutions that support people, ecosystems, and policy." – Dr. Ava Maxam

Scanning the Future with 3D Innovation

Mr. Hamish Asmath, IMA Research Officer

Another standout moment came with the presentation by Mr. Hamish Asmath, IMA Research Officer, who spoke on "Terrestrial Laser Scanning for the Estimation of Above-Ground Mangrove Biomass." He demonstrated how using 3D laser scanning technology enables researchers to reconstruct mangrove trees in fine detail, allowing for precise estimates of biomass—and by extension, carbon storage potential.

Participants responded enthusiastically to the use of innovative tools like laser scanning in ecosystem assessments, recognizing the practical implications for blue carbon accounting and climate mitigation efforts across the region.

Diplomatic Engagement and Regional Support

L-R: Thérèse Yarde, Caribbean Fellow, Conservation International; Nikia Gooding, IMA Researcher; IMA Researcher, Hamish Asmath; IMA Researcher and Awardee of Conservation International Fellowship, Attish Kanhai; IMA Librarian-OIC-IC, Lorraine Barrow; IMA Director, Dr. Ava Maxam; and, Policy Analyst, Conservation International, Lauren Babuik

On the evening of March 18, workshop participants were hosted at a reception in the Windrush Garden at the Residence of the British High Commissioner. Deputy High Commissioner Jonathan Cook welcomed participants, reaffirming the UK's support for regional blue carbon initiatives. He emphasized the importance of protecting and restoring coastal ecosystems to build resilience and reduce vulnerability across Caribbean nations.

Deputy High Commissioner Jonathan Cook and Dr. Ava Maxam

Representing the IMA, Dr. Maxam presented His Excellency with a token of appreciation—a package of IMA publications—on behalf of the Board of Governors, Management, and Staff. The exchange reflected both diplomatic goodwill and growing international recognition of the IMA's leadership in blue carbon research.

What is Blue Carbon, and Why Does It Matter?

Blue carbon refers to the carbon captured and stored in coastal and marine ecosystems such as:

- Mangrove forests
- Seagrass beds
- Tidal marshes

These ecosystems are vital carbon sinks, absorbing CO_2 from the atmosphere and locking it into plant matter and sediments.

Why is this important for T&T and the Caribbean?

- Mangroves protect our coastlines from erosion and storm surges.
- Healthy blue carbon ecosystems support fisheries and biodiversity.
- Carbon credits can create new income streams for communities through conservation and restoration efforts.
- Data collected supports international participation in carbon markets and climate finance opportunities.

Looking Ahead

As climate impacts accelerate, the importance of blue carbon has never been clearer. The IMA's engagement at this high-level regional event signals Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to leading with science and collaboration. The next phase of the project will involve continued fieldwork, cross-sector partnerships, and refining the data needed to move toward certifiable carbon credits and sustainable community benefits.

Through data, innovation, and regional cooperation, the IMA is helping shape a resilient and sustainable coastal future for generations to come.

Regional Experts Meet at IMA to Tackle Sargassum and Pollution Challenges

From March 18–20, 2025, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) proudly hosted a joint in-person meeting between the **Open-Ended Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment of the LBS Protocol** and the **SPAW Sargassum Working Grou**p at its headquarters in Chaguaramas, Trinidad.

The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders—including scientists, technical experts, and representatives from regional agencies—working under the umbrella of the **Cartagena Convention**. Their goal: to advance cooperation on two urgent and closely related issues affecting the Wider Caribbean Region—**Sargassum influxes and land-based sources of marine pollution.**

Over the course of three days, participants engaged in deep discussions on the regional impacts of **mass Sargassum strandings**, which have disrupted livelihoods, fisheries, tourism, and coastal ecosystems across the Caribbean in recent years. Presentations and working sessions highlighted potential links between the increasing frequency of Sargassum blooms and **nutrient enrichment from land-based sources**, such as agricultural runoff and wastewater discharge.

The meeting also aimed to strengthen regional **monitoring and assessment mechanisms**, identify critical data gaps, and promote joint research initiatives to better understand and manage these complex issues. It emphasized the importance of improving the flow of information between Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs), as well as coordinating efforts under both the **LBS and SPAW Protocols**.

By hosting this event, the IMA reaffirmed its leadership in marine environmental management and policy in the region. It also provided an opportunity to showcase its technical capabilities and commitment to supporting evidence-based solutions to shared challenges in the Caribbean Sea.

The collaborative spirit of the workshop set the tone for future action, with participants expressing optimism about building more integrated, science-driven approaches to tackle Sargassum and marine pollution together.

IMA Joins CARIBE Blue School Training in Colombia to Enhance Ocean Literacy

Ocean literacy participants from latin America and the Caribbean Participants of the Ocean Literacy Workshop from Latin America and the Caribbean

In April 2025, Mr. Glendon Glasgow Information Officer at the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) represented Trinidad and Tobago at the CARIBE Blue School Coordinators Training in Colombia. This three-day workshop brought together experts and educators from across the Caribbean and Latin America to explore how the Blue School framework can be integrated into education systems to promote ocean literacy.

Aligned with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), the Blue School program aims to embed ocean education in school curricula, contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 14 (Life Below Water).

Key Takeaways for IMA

The training provided valuable insights into the implementation of the Blue School model, which emphasizes:

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** IMA can leverage its expertise in environmental education to coordinate Blue School initiatives with partners in government, education, and communities.
- **Project-Based Learning:** IMA's existing programs like school visits and mangrove restoration are easily adaptable to the Blue School framework.
- **Resource Development:** IMA can develop locally relevant resources and conduct teacher training to support the implementation of ocean literacy in schools.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** IMA will play a key role in assessing the impact of Blue School activities.

Next Steps

To bring the Blue School program to Trinidad and Tobago, IMA will:

- Form a national steering group with stakeholders like the Ministry of Education.
- Pilot the Blue School model in selected schools, building on existing outreach efforts.
- Provide training and resources to teachers to integrate ocean literacy into classrooms.
- Collaborate with local and regional partners for successful implementation.

The Blue School initiative offers an exciting opportunity for IMA to further its mission of fostering environmental awareness and ocean stewardship in Trinidad and Tobago's schools.

Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease: An imminent threat to our coral reefs

Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) is wreaking havoc on coral reefs in the Caribbean. First observed in Florida in 2014, SCTLD has since spread to 32 other countries in the region. The SCTLD pathogen is highly transmissible and is spread through water currents, direct contact with infected corals and ballast water from ships. It has been found that ports are often an early site of infection.

SCTLD appears as lesions of dead tissue on the coral. As the infection spreads, these lesions get bigger as more tissue sloughs off of the coral. While other coral diseases exist, the high virulence of SCTLD results in rapid coral mortality, with corals dying within a few weeks to months. While scientific research is ongoing to determine the exact cause of the disease, research so far indicates that it is caused by bacteria or a combination of virus and bacteria. This has stimulated actions for the preservation of remaining coral populations in the Caribbean region. This includes protocols for treating infected corals with antibiotics, and efforts to relocate corals to land based facilities.

Applying treatment to infected coral, San Andres.
Photo credit: Julianna Vanegas

Of the 45 stony coral species found in the Caribbean, SCTLD infects more than 20 of these. Species susceptible to infection include maze, mountainous and brain corals all of which are the dominant coral species on reefs in Tobago! Even the world-renowned, giant brain coral found in Speyside is highly susceptible species to the disease. In a study conducted at coral reef sites in southeast Florida, it was observed that some heavily impacted species, including the maze coral and smooth flower coral had been reduced to < 3% of their initial population density due to SCTLD outbreaks. Other impacted species such as the boulder brain and symmetrical brain coral were reduced to < 25 % of their initial densities (Precht et al., 2016). As of now, the closest countries where SCTLD have been confirmed include Grenada, Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire islands. **Trinidad and Tobago has not yet officially recorded presence of SCTLD, but it is only a matter of time until it arrives.**

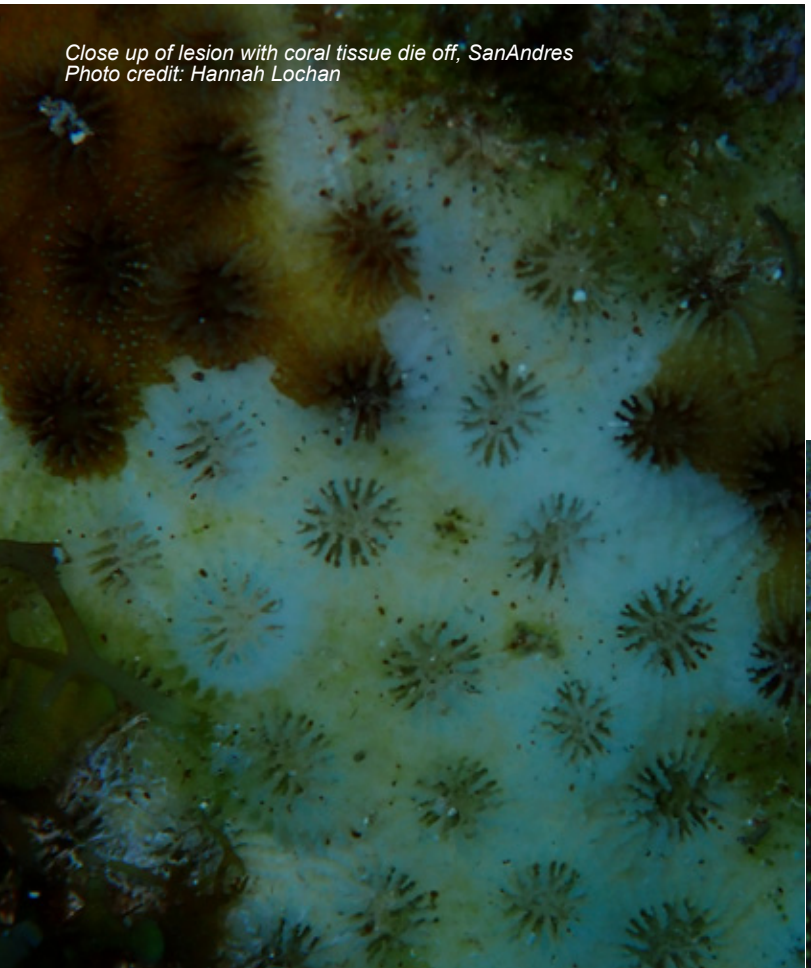
How do we avoid a narrative where the threat is often dismissed until it is too late, causing many to suffer? Survival is most probable when there is action from authorities, education of the public, and built capacity to strengthen defences against the threat.

In 2024, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) received a small grant from the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Regional Activity Centre (SPAW RAC) to conduct a one-year project entitled "Building preparedness against coral disease for the preservation of Tobago's coral reefs". This project is a partnership amongst key organisations including the Environmental Management Authority, Maritime Services Division, Department of Marine Resources and Fisheries, Tobago House of Assembly and Perry Institute for Marine Science (PIMS), USA.

IMA coral reef ecologists received training in January 2025 from PIMS in San Andres, Colombia, to conduct rapid coral disease assessments, identify SCTLD, prepare the antibiotic treatment and apply the treatment to infected corals. They will use this training to build capacity amongst local marine resource users in SCTLD management, raise awareness on the devastation caused by SCTLD and implement strategies to monitor, and slow the spread as much as possible.

Engagement of the resource users is critical to manage this threat. How can this be done?

1. Monitor the reefs. When diving or snorkelling look out for stony corals that have lesions of tissue mortality. Take photos if possible.



Close up of lesion with coral tissue die off, SanAndres
Photo credit: Hannah Lochan

2. Make a report using the freely available IMA's SeaiTT app or email anjani.ganase@ima.gov.tt. Include information on the (i) location of the observation, (ii) depth of observation, (iii) type of coral species infected and (iv) number of corals infected. Submit your photos.

3. Do not touch corals. Touching infected corals can spread the pathogen to healthy colonies. Ensure your fins and other gear do not come into contact with corals.

4. Disinfect your diving and fishing gear. Gear can be soaked in a 1% bleach solution for 20 minutes and air dried, to kill the pathogen. If chemicals are not on hand, soak the gear in fresh water for at least two hours.

5. Disinfect bilge water in boats using a 1 % bleach solution. Allow it to soak for ten minutes then pump out the bilge water as far as possible from any sensitive area.

6. When planning dives, visit healthy sites first (SCTLD not present), then go to infected sites. Disinfect gear between visiting healthy and infected sites.

We must acknowledge the devastation caused by SCTLD in the Caribbean and work together to be guardians for our coral reefs. We have the duty to preserve the ecological and economic services of our reefs and to be proactive in implementing management strategies to protect our corals from the looming peril of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease.

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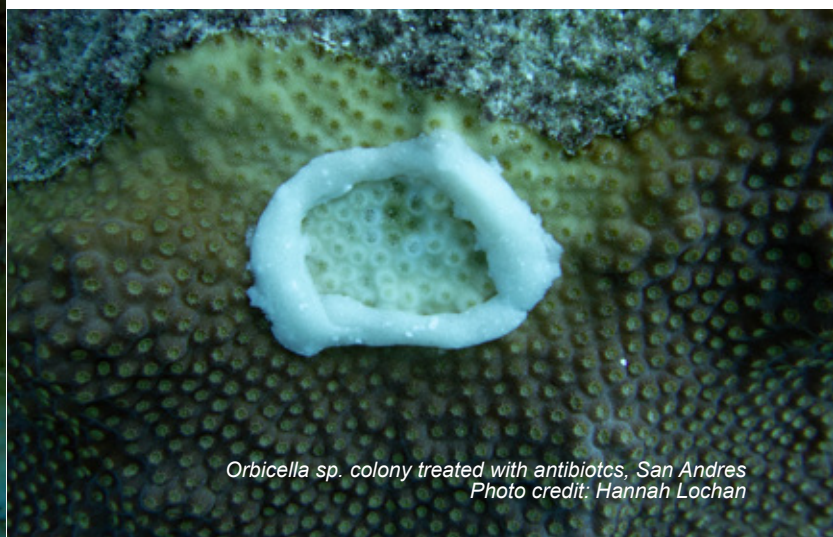

Orbicella sp. colony treated with antibiotcs, San Andres
Photo credit: Hannah Lochan

THE BLUE CORNER

The Vital Role of Marine Protected Areas in Coral Reef Conservation

Coral reefs, often referred to as the “rainforests of the sea,” are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth. They provide shelter and food for countless marine species and act as a buffer to protect coastlines from erosion. However, these vital ecosystems are under threat due to climate change, pollution, and overfishing.

To combat these issues, **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** have become a cornerstone of global marine conservation efforts. MPAs are designated regions where human activity is regulated to protect the marine environment. By limiting harmful activities like fishing, mining, and coastal development, MPAs allow ecosystems to recover, flourish, and maintain their biodiversity.

The Caribbean, home to some of the world’s most pristine and threatened coral reefs, has been expanding its network of MPAs. Trinidad and Tobago has already set aside several marine areas as MPAs to safeguard its unique marine life and ecosystems. The Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) plays an essential role in monitoring these protected areas, conducting research, and assessing the health of the coral reefs, which helps inform conservation strategies and policy decisions.

MPAs not only help protect coral reefs but also contribute to the well-being of coastal communities by supporting sustainable fisheries and enhancing tourism opportunities. Effective management and monitoring of these areas are crucial to ensuring that coral reefs can continue to thrive, supporting marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of those who depend on them.

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