



Newsletter

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Fotografia: José Carlos Bernardo Costa

Editorial

Dear friends, colleagues, followers, sea turtle lovers and fans of our cause, it is with great pleasure that we share our first Newsletter of Programa Tatô Association.

While I thought on what to write in this first editorial, I thought about what really motivated me to do this job, why this passion for sea turtles? I remembered the many adventures I have gone through, the different countries and cultures, the remote and isolated places, the extreme conditions, the bubbles on my feet for walking miles and miles on the sandy beaches and very often without seeing a single sea turtle, the sleepless nights, facing turtle hunters, and all for the sea turtles; I remembered the hundreds of turtles I've seen in the ocean and on beaches while nesting, the turtles I've helped to return to the sea, and until today I am always touched when I see a sea turtle nesting or a baby turtle fighting to face the sea. But I realized that what really motivated and motivates me until now are not only the sea turtles, but the people, the different cultures, the opportunity to contribute to improve living conditions of vulnerable people and to make them participate in conservation of nature and endangered species. What motivated me to get until here is to be able to see in someone's eyes a different sparkle while protecting instead of eating.

In 2016 I was invited to be part of this wonderful team of Programa Tatô. With many challenges faced, with many difficulties, but also with great joy, we have a great complicity between all of us which allowed us to achieve many things and to share with you with great pleasure this big step in the life of all of us, the creation of Programa Tatô Association. Together we have many years of experience in countries as diverse as Oman, Brazil, Panama, Costa Rica, Cape Verde, Angola,

Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau and many others.

We are happy to share our adventures in São Tomé and Guinea Bissau, to tell you the stories that fill our daily lives and that have made our lives a great and collective adventure. Protect, share, and inspire: these are the words that identify us, and that with great courage and motivation have allowed us to get here.

This first issue of our newsletter presents the latest news from Programa Tatô, our activities, our team, our partners, giving voice to those who every day, through their commitment to people, a place, a history, work for the protection and conservation of sea turtles.

Other means of communication are available or under development to share our extraordinary work. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and take a look at our website that will be on the air soon.

Thank you for being part of this great family and for helping us to protect sea turtles and their marine and coastal ecosystems. Good luck to all and see you soon.



Betânia Ferreira

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EQUIPA EDITORIAL
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Programa Tatô Association



Programa Tatô was created in 2003, by the NGO of São Tomé and Príncipe MARAPA, which stand for Sea, Environment and Artisanal Fisheries, with the main goal to protect sea turtles. For years, MARAPA was supported by several national and international organizations, technically and financially, contributing to the implementation of a monitoring and protection plan for sea turtles and the development of various awareness campaigns.

But in March 2018, Programa Tatô was no longer just a project, and it was with great pleasure and enthusiasm that we decided to take this big step for the all team and especially for sea turtles. The coordination team, together with MARAPA, decided to restructure the conservation project of sea turtles on the island of São Tomé through the creation of an international NGO called “Programa Tatô Association”, maintaining the name already known throughout the society of São Tomé and internationally, thus giving more autonomy and sustainability to the sea turtle conservation initiatives in São Tomé.

Extending its scope of action, Programa Tatô operates internationally for the conservation of sea turtles and the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Programa Tatô, in partnership with MARAPA, is responsible for the protection, conservation and research of sea turtle populations that occurs in São Tomé Island, with the support of several technical and financial partners.

At the same time, Programa Tatô also developed a recent partnership with the Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Guinea Bissau, with the main goal of supporting its Guinean partners in the implementation of a project funded by the MAVA Foundation for the consolidation of sea turtle conservation in the Bijagós Archipelago.

Considering the challenges that sea turtle conservation faces, we adopt an integrated and systemic approach essential to improve protection, conservation and sustainable management of the main habitats of sea turtles (nesting beaches and foraging areas) by engaging communities and key national actors in the conservation and research, in the integration of young early biologists and conservationists, and in capacity building of national actors, but also through the development of alternative livelihoods valuing non-consumption use of sea turtles and increasing awareness of coastal communities.

Our partners

Programa Tatô is the result of the work, dedication and collaboration of all sectors of society, from fishermen to fishmongers, their families and their communities, national authorities, civil society, our team of technicians and researchers and even the journalists and media that promote the conservation message and the work with sea turtles on the island of São Tomé and Guinea Bissau.

The contribution of our national and international partners is also fundamental such as non-governmental organizations, private companies, national authorities and district chambers.

Our main technical partner in São Tomé is the national NGO MARAPA. Founding member of Programa Tatô with whom we coordinate side by side the sea turtle conservation activities and is also a key partner in the institutional representation of Programa Tatô at national level. We can never forget that it was MARAPA who took the first steps in the protection of sea turtles in São Tomé and Príncipe and has now taken the initiative to create this new organization. A big thanks to MARAPA!

Programa Tatô has several financial partners, in particular the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Lisbon Oceanarium, which have been giving us an essential technical and financial support in the last years.

We also receive donations from several Portuguese companies and international organizations, fans of our cause and who help Programa Tatô to protect sea turtles and improve coastal communities livelihoods.

In order to participate in sea turtle conservation efforts in Bijagós Archipelago, Programa Tatô also receives funding from the Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Guinea Bissau (IBAP) as part of a project funded by the Swiss MAVA Foundation. Programa Tatô's sustainability depends on the collective participation and collaboration, allowing us to contribute to a better world, where human development and respect for all forms of life goes side by side.



Our first mission in Guinea Bissau was a success!

Programa Tatô started in 2018 an important partnership with IBAP, Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Guinea Bissau, to support the implementation of a project funded by the MAVA Foundation, "Consolidation of the Conservation of Sea Turtles in the Bijagós Archipelago". During three years, we will share experiences and strengthen technical capacities and environmental awareness and education actions of national stakeholders in partnership with IBAP, national NGO Palmeirinha and research centres of MARE – ISPA and University of Exeter.

From July 22nd to August 2nd, 2018, we conducted our first mission to Guinea Bissau and organized a theoretical and practical training session on the Ecology and Biology of Marine Turtles, Monitoring of Nesting Beaches and Data Collection, to the technical staff of IBAP, the Protected Areas teams and NGO Palmeirinha. At the same time, a number of awareness-raising actions were carried out, such as the creation of a wall painting in Bubaque market (island of the Bijagós), a presentation of a theatre play and Cinema-Debate session. We also distributed to our partners Environmental Education Kits with

a user guide, with all necessary materials required to carry out environmental education and awareness activities in schools and communities. Finally, following a participatory approach, we created a slogan and a logo with our Guinean partners for the awareness campaign to be launched in 2019. This action was very interesting because of the approach and methodology adopted, by reflecting with the national stakeholders and technicians on the objectives of sea turtle conservation in Guinea Bissau, problems, target public, and message we want to transmit as well as the best way of reaching the different target groups.

In February 2019 we will welcome Guinea Bissau team in São Tomé and Príncipe, to share experiences and strengthen IBAP technical capacities. Our next mission to Guinea Bissau will be in April 2019.



Our team

Hipólito Lima



Hipólito Lima better known as the "Father of the Sea Turtles of São Tomé and Príncipe" was raised with turtle meat for dinner captured by his father, as the large majority of the children born in the coastal communities of São Tomé and Príncipe in the 50's. For him, sea turtles have always been a source of livelihood for his family until the 1990s. But in 1994, with the arrival of the first United States Peace Corps to carry out the first survey on sea turtles in the archipelago, his way of seeing sea turtles changed radically, and so did his life. His charisma and local knowledge about fishing gears that catch sea turtles, made him quickly involved in supporting the Peace Corps team. Hipólito himself explains that the first time he saw a sea turtle nesting after several failed attempts, its persistence and vulnerability left him extremely affected and he felt motivated to do something to protect these species. Since then, he has become a national reference for its own work and determination for the preservation of these threatened species, often struggling against the current, under death threats, with-

In each Newsletter, we will present members of our team. For this first number, we start with the fathers of sea turtle conservation in São Tomé.

out payment, but never giving up. In 2016, he was distinguished worldwide with the Champion Award of the International Society of Sea Turtles delivered by Roderick Mast, for his commitment, enthusiasm and dedication to the sea turtles of São Tomé and Príncipe. Today, with 68 years old and more than 20 years of experience in the conservation of sea turtles, Hipólito Lima is responsible for the supervision of all patrollers of nesting beaches and foraging grounds of the island of São Tomé and one of the co-founders of Programa Tatô.

Jorge Carvalho do Rio



Manuel Jorge de Carvalho do Rio, was born in the small community of Santo Amaro, on the island of São Tomé. In the 1980s he travelled to Cuba, where he studied at the National Institute of Fisheries and did his master's degree in Rural Development at National Centre of Agronomic Studies of Tropical Regions – CNEARC in France. When he returned to São Tomé soon became part of artisanal fisheries projects funded by IFAD (International Fund for

Agricultural Development) and the Government of Japan, and later became the Director of the National Artisanal Fisheries Support Program funded by the French Agency for the Development. At the end of this project, the technical team had no guarantees of employment, and therefore to continue the important actions that were being developed, this group of colleagues and friends decided to create their own NGO. It was in March 1999, with the support of the French Agency for Development, that this group of fishery technicians, marine biologists and development agents, founded the national NGO MARAPA - Sea, Environment and Artisanal Fisheries, with the objective to improve the living conditions of the coastal communities of the country, to contribute to the fishing sector structuration, to support the training and organization of fishermen and palaiês (fishmongers) and to improve their working conditions. At this time, with MARAPA being the only national environmental organization, the government assigned them the responsibility of protecting sea turtles, species that were already considered very important due to their degree of threat. And so, with the support of ECOFAC, the European Union and the FFEM, MARAPA, with Jorge as President of the Board, began its activities to protect sea turtles. Today, with 59 years old, Jorge is one of the great promoters of Programa Tatô, a very important person recognized nationally for his experience and charisma and, of course, one of the co-founders of Programa Tatô.

Beginning of the 2018/2019 nesting season

The first turtles have arrived in São Tomé and Príncipe's beaches and Programa Tatô team is already prepared for another nesting season on São Tomé Island!

In order to intensify the effort to protect and monitor these endangered species, together with the ongoing training sessions of the national technical team, we will have the support of two international field assistants, Maria Branco, Portuguese, and Gabriela Fernandes, Brazilian, thus maintaining an important link with Portuguese-speaking countries.

Our team will be constituted by 39 local patrollers, from 9 coastal communities where there are still cases of capture and commercialization of sea turtle products, three recently graduated national biologists trainees who will be part of Programa Tatô for a 6 month internship established in partnership with the University of São Tomé and Príncipe.



José Carlos Bernardo Costa



José Carlos Bernardo Costa

We also count with the unconditional support of our patroller's supervisor, Mr. Hipólito Lima, guardian of sea turtles for more than 20 years and our national coordinator, Domingas Monteiro.

Training of our Technical Team to start the new season!

The nesting season of 2018/2019 has officially begun on the island of São Tomé and from September 17th to 25th, 2018, the Technical and Scientific Coordinator Sara Vieira, the National Coordinator Domingas Monteiro, and the Patrollers Supervisor Hipólito Lima, organized a theoretical and practical training to our staff, beach and marine patrollers. A total of 41 team members were trained, on the biology and conservation of the sea turtles of São Tomé and Príncipe, beach monitoring techniques and nest management.



Distribution of posters through all coastal communities of São Tomé Island marked the beginning of our awareness campaign of 2018/2019

As usual, throughout the months of July and August the team went through the six districts of São Tomé Island, giving talks in all coastal communities of the island and distributing informative posters about the life cycle of sea turtles and their threats, focusing on the long-term ecological and socio-economic benefits of their preservation.



We completed the annual cycle of workshops in the Police Commands and District Chambers

These workshops are intended to inform and empower law enforcement officials on the importance of the conservation of marine and coastal environment, sea turtles and also on law-enforcement strategies. Consequently, we have been promoting discussions about the techniques to facilitate the management and conservation of the environment and endangered species, in order to implement more adequate surveillance measures.

3rd Edition of the National Internship Program

In this season of 2018/2019, Programa Tatô started the 3rd edition of the National Internship Program with the duration of 6 months, exclusively for students from São Tomé and Príncipe. This program was created with the purpose of training young biologists in sea turtle conservation and monitoring techniques. In addition to the monitoring and research on nesting beaches and foraging areas, the trainees are responsible for developing and participating in awareness-raising activities in coastal communities and schools. The trainees selected to join our team during this season are Marquina, Alisena and Wadmilton. We take this opportunity to welcome the three of them and wish them a great season!



Os nossos parceiros

