

Environment

Swiss and local university students join forces to tackle solid waste

Since Tuesday, 18 students from the University of Seychelles (UniSey) and 18 students of the Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab) of ETH Zurich, Switzerland have begun a three-week intensive research programme on waste management and disposal.

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Seychelles, like all other small island states, faces a significant waste management challenge. For instance, the Providence landfill barely has ten years of life span whilst the national annual waste consumption increases. This is just one of the many waste issues in Seychelles that led to the signing of an agreement between the University of Seychelles

(UniSey) and Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab) of ETH Zurich to promote cooperation in education and research.

"The ETH Zurich is renowned for being among the top ten universities in the world, boasting 9,000 staff and 20,000 students" said the Vice Chancellor of UniSey, Professor Denis Hardy during his welcoming speech on Monday, which marked the official launch of a three-week joint teaching and



Group photo of the UniSey and ETH Zurich students.

research project.

"Amongst us are 18 ETH Masters students, whose studies relate directly to engineering, agricultural and environmental science. These Swiss students will be joined by 18 UniSey students, all studying for Bachelor's degrees on the Environmental Science programme. Together, they will focus on fieldwork to investigate the solid waste system in the Seychelles", he stated.

The ceremony took place at the Unisey Anse Royale Campus in the presence of officials from the ministry of Environment and other representatives from environmental organisations, including Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S).

The lecturers from the TdLab/ETH Zurich explained that each foreign Uni-student will be paired

with a local Uni-student to create cross-cultural teams which will allow different socio-political-economical views to prosper and work together in two major activities. This includes general assessment of solid waste management in Seychelles, vegetation monitoring and human impact assessment of the Baie Lazare water catchment area.

Furthermore, the lecturers explained that during the three week period, project members will conduct interviews, collect waste data, run cost estimates, and work alongside stakeholders to tackle the topic from different angles, including policy, technology, and consumer behaviour.

"Based on the research and data collected, we will then provide new information on how the local

waste system can be more sustainably managed. Also the research will be a teaching activity for both UniSey and ETH, a topic that allows them to understand real-world problem framing, analysis and solving, as well as to apply a variety of methods," one of the lecturers said.

It was mentioned that the students will work in close collaboration with the ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, S4S and other key stakeholders from administration, business and civil society. In addition, an advisory board will act as the expert body to guide and support the research.

TODAY spoke to 21-year old UniSey student Dyllis Pouponneau, and 26-year old ETH student Jasmin Fetzer - who are both

studying Environmental Science. Dyllis said she's extremely excited to participate in the three-week research programme along with Jasmin.

"I'll be part of a journey which involves improving my country's environment whilst making new friends along the way," said Dyllis. As for Jasmin, she's delighted to be in Seychelles which is her first visit but hopefully not her last.

"I'm committed to doing my part and helping my new found friends in finding potential solutions to their waste problems," she concluded.

The 36 young brilliant minds will be presenting their findings on 13 July and hoping to contribute innovative and potential solutions to the ongoing waste problem in Seychelles.



The two lecturers of Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab) of ETH Zurich address the students of their duties.