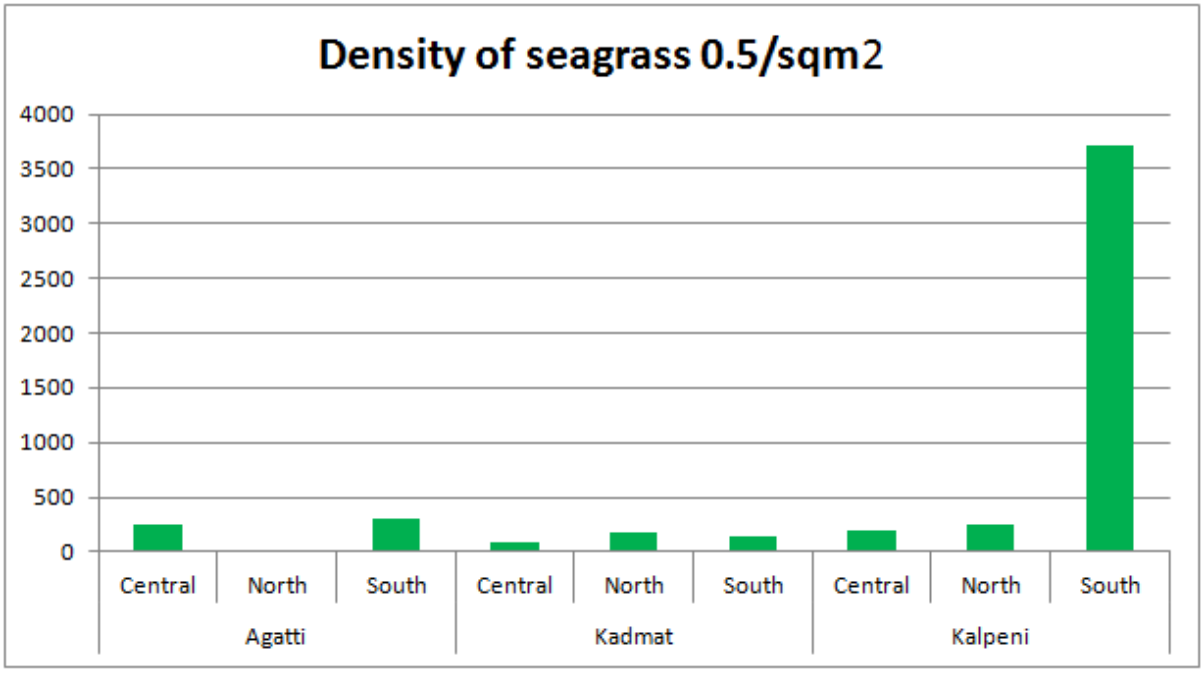
Project Update: August 2018

Surveys in Kalpeni were concluded by mid-May 2018. I conducted surveys to measure sea turtle and seagrass density. I also conducted fisher surveys to gauge the extent of turtle-fisher conflict on the island of Kalpeni.

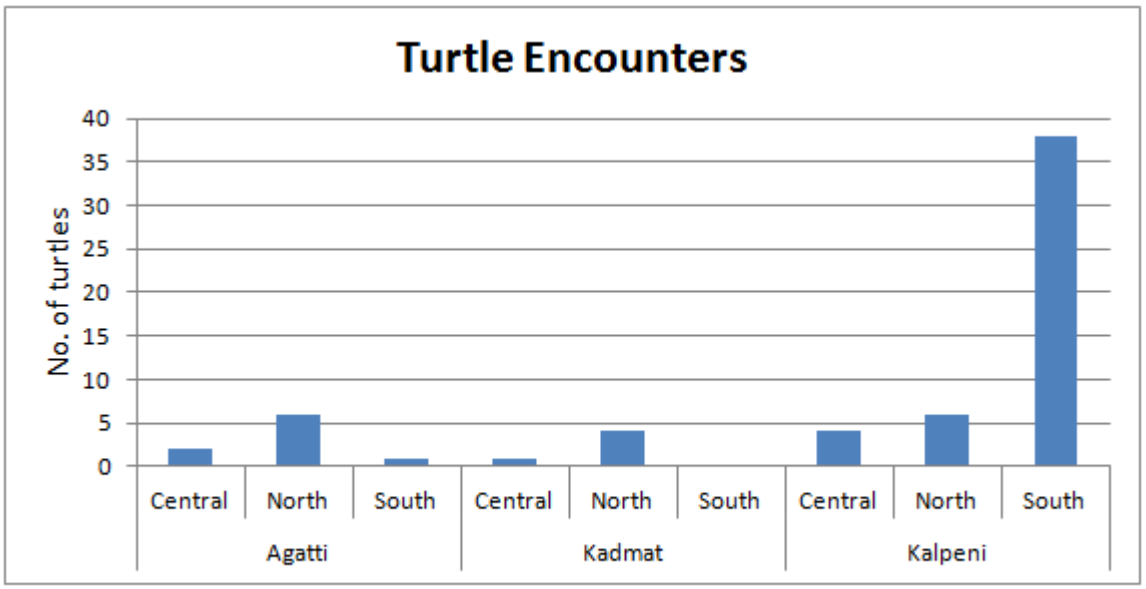
Surveys showed higher density of sea turtles in Kalpeni than the other two study islands. Tide was observed to affect turtle densities in the lagoon where turtles were mostly present during low tide. Seagrass surveys indicated presence of *Thalassia hemprichii* and *Syringodium isoetifolium* in the lagoon. High densities of closely cropped *Thalassia* shoots were observed in the southern section of the lagoon. Surveys with the fishers showed a growing resentment for the turtles. According to the fishers, turtles were indirectly reducing fish population in the lagoon. Fishers also pointed out that turtles would mostly get caught in their nets at night and usually end in turtles breaking the net. Fieldwork ended in late May with the commencement of monsoons.

Following fieldwork, faecal samples were analysed using histological methods. Analysis showed presence of *Thalassia*, *Cymodocea* and *Halodule* shoots and leaf sheath, seagrass rhizomes, coconut husk and coir. Other matter observed in the samples was plastic, net filaments, coral fragment, pieces of cloth.

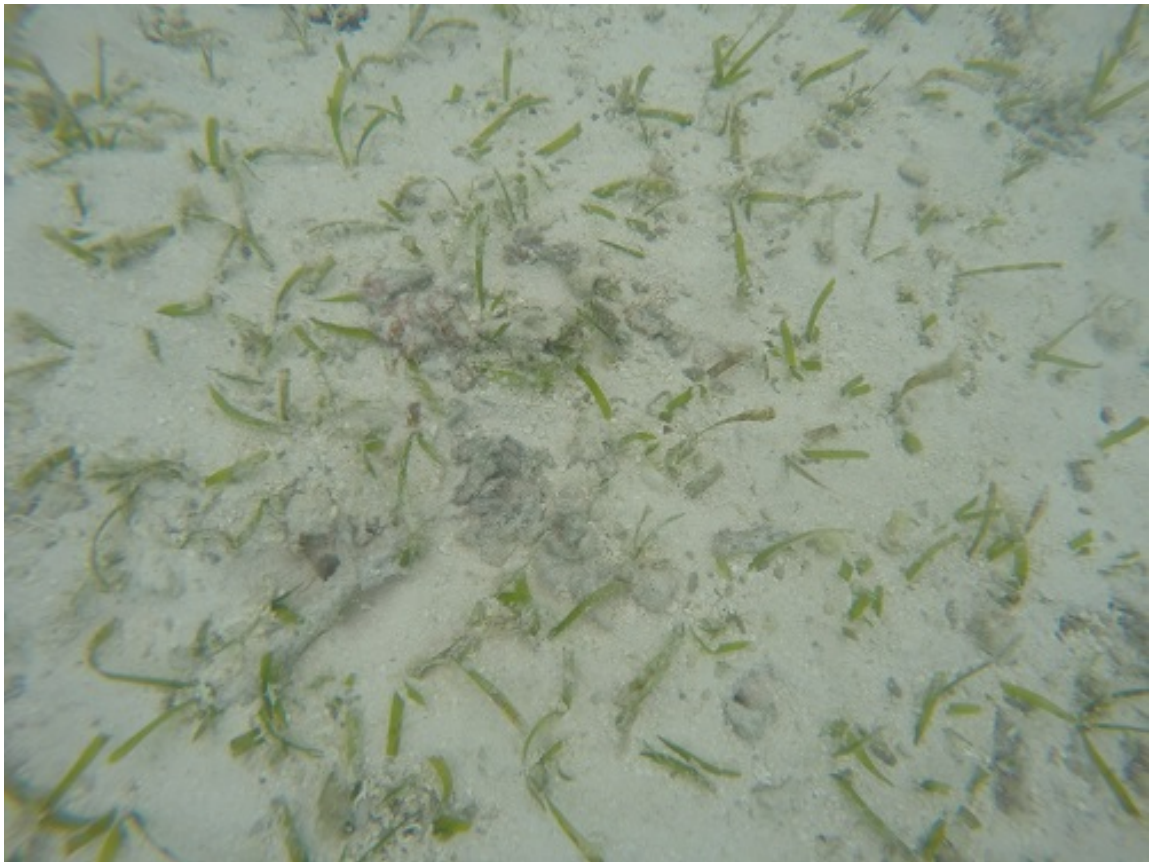
Permission requests for the next field season have already been submitted to the Government of Lakshadweep. The permits are expected to come in by December 2018 and methods such as tagging, photographic identification, morphometric measurement for the other objectives will be initiated.



Density of seagrass



No. of turtles observed in Agatti, Kadmat and Kalpeni by boat transects in 2018



Thalassia shoots in Kalpeni.