



Discussion Paper for the development of the CARICOM Biodiversity Strategy (CBS) - Role of Civil Society Organisations in the implementation of the CBS

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Synopsis

Engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in biodiversity related initiatives is often limited to public awareness or cursory consultation. Civil society's potential to play an active role alongside government in biodiversity conservation is often not appreciated or facilitated. This includes their potential role in the design and implementation of biodiversity related policies, strategies, projects and programmes.

A number of regional initiatives have attempted to close this gap. Phase one of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Investment supported CSO action to improve legal protection for eight under-protected Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic and Haiti. The CEPF also resulted in civil society lead improved management of 25 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in eight countries. CEPF supported the CSO development of innovative biodiversity protection financing mechanisms and improved the management of invasive species in a number of target countries.

There are other well-established cases of CSOs engaged in biodiversity management. These include community management of nesting beaches of leatherback turtles in Trinidad and Tobago. In Antigua & Barbuda, the Environment Awareness Group (EAG) - an Environmental NGO - is the lead agency managing an Off-shore Island Conservation Project (OICP) which in turn aided the survival of the Antigua Racer Snake. The Caribbean Student Environmental Alliance (Caribbean Sea) works throughout the Caribbean with local partners, using citizen science approaches to help local youth manage aquatic biodiversity resources.

The regional re-profiling process to inform the second phase of CEPF investment is currently in progress. Thus far, the draft regional profile suggests that phase 2 should continue to strengthen CSO biodiversity technical knowledge and skills as well as their skills in administration, project management, fundraising and financial management, all toward enhanced biodiversity conservation in the region. Given current Caribbean conditions, technical skills on climate change impact assessments and invasive species management are paramount. There is also greater need to improve CSO ability in advocacy. The draft CEPF re-profile also suggests that CSO management of biodiversity can continue to be improved through mechanisms like peer learning and exchanges. Overall, the second phase of CEPH investment will likely continue to promote formal and informal networking, information sharing, and capacity building among CSOs, scientists and government institutions.

Taking into consideration the issues outlined above as well as other information you may be aware of stakeholders are asked to consider:

What should the CBS showcase, state or highlight on the role of CSOs in the implementation of the CBS to best address:

- your organisation's needs
- your country's needs – where national capacity and resources could benefit from additional regional support
- regional needs

Respondents are also asked to consider:

- How can the CBS build support and effective mechanisms to enable a stronger civil society (including local communities and indigenous groups) and private sector (including SMEs) role in biodiversity governance, knowledge sharing and resource management? How can the CBS build capacity among these stakeholders to achieve the above?
- How can the CBS highlight and promote relevant tools and methodologies to facilitate engagement of CSOs and local communities in a ridge to reef approach to reduce pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems?
- How can the CBS promote synergies, alignment and coordination among protected area initiatives, including those led by civil society such as the CEPF and BIOPAMA?
- How can the CBS support the scaling up and replication of successful protected area management projects from CEPF and other programmes?

Finally: any additional issues, ideas or points you would like to highlight for inclusion or consideration in the development of the Strategy?

Bibliography

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