



CANARI POLICY BRIEF

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Effective grant-making to Caribbean civil society: Lessons and innovation from CANARI's experience as an intermediary organisation

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Civil Society and Governance

Summary

Working with an intermediary civil society organisation (CSO) from the Caribbean to manage grant programmes produces valuable results and is a strategy to sustain funding efforts. Over the past decade (2006 – 2016), the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) has coordinated, managed and administered national and regional level grant programmes for civil society on behalf of eight donors working in the Caribbean in the areas of biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and resilience, livelihood development based on the sustainable use of natural resources, participatory governance and organisational capacity building. Donors can use different models to partner with an intermediary depending on their programme needs and available resources. This policy brief outlines the benefits of partnering with an intermediary and shares some innovative practices that CANARI has used to support the effective implementation of grant programmes in a way that meets specific donor requirements and investment aims and importantly, builds capacity for lasting impacts in the Caribbean.

Key messages

- Engaging a Caribbean intermediary CSO to support grant-making in the region draws on local knowledge, credibility and convening power to leverage additional support and amplify impacts.
- A crucial component of effective grant-making to CSOs is consistent and systematic on-the-ground support and capacity building using innovative, participatory mechanisms.
- Partnering with a Caribbean intermediary CSO is a key strategy for grant programmes to effectively reach civil society particularly at local and national levels.

What is an “intermediary organisation”?

An intermediary organisation in this context is one which acts as liaison and facilitator between a donor and target beneficiaries to help fulfil the goal of a grant programme. The intermediary can play a range of roles on behalf of the donor including providing strategic

advice on implementation and investment priorities, managing and administering grants and monitoring and evaluation.

Different entities may act as intermediaries (e.g., regional or national offices of international agencies, government agencies or private sector firms). However, the selection of a CSO derives benefits, particularly in the areas of reach, credibility and sustainability.

Benefits of engaging a Caribbean intermediary CSO

Over the past ten years (2006 - 2016), CANARI has managed and administered a total amount of US\$6,244,794 in grant programmes for civil society in 18 Caribbean islands on behalf of eight donors (see Table 1 for details). CANARI uses small grants as one of several complementary strategies to build CSO capacity for participatory natural resource governance and sustainable natural resource-based livelihoods.

Benefits to working with a Caribbean intermediary CSO to support planning and implementation of a regional grant programme include:

Table 1: Grant programmes managed and administered by CANARI

Thematic focus of grants	Donor & project title	Total amount in grants managed (USD)	Countries of focus	No. of grants & Type of grantee
Organisational capacity building	Darwin Initiative Building Civil Society Capacity for Conservation in the Caribbean UKOTs	\$78,150 Average grant = \$9,768	Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks & Caicos Islands	8 small grants to national trusts and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
Climate change adaptation and resilience planning	Conservation International (CI) - with funding from BHP Billiton Trinidad & Tobago Climate ACTT: Action by Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago to build resilience to climate change	\$75,000 Average grant = \$15,000	Trinidad & Tobago	5 small grants to local community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs
Biodiversity conservation	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot	\$481,774 Average small grant = \$17,241 CANARI also supported management of \$5,388,639 in large grants Average large grant = \$137,957	Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, The Bahamas	29 small grants and 46 large grants to 68 local, national, regional and international CSOs
Organisational capacity building to more effectively participate in governance	European Union (EU) Strengthening Caribbean fisherfolk to participate in governance	\$111,216 Average grant = \$10,110	Anguilla, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago and Turks & Caicos Islands	11 small grants to fisherfolk organisations
Participatory forest management of forest resources	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO) Participatory Forest Management: Improving policy and institutional capacity for development (2006-2010)	\$28,015 Average grant = \$4,670	Dominica, St. Kitts & Nevis, Trinidad & Tobago	6 small grants to CBOs
Forest-based community businesses	UN FAO Field testing an approach to support forest-based community businesses in the Caribbean	\$15,000 Average grant = \$5,000	Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago	3 small grants to CBOs
Development of small and micro-enterprises based on the sustainable use of natural resources	JB Fernandes Memorial Trust I Making it happen: Developing sustainable small businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago	\$5,000 Average grant = \$1,000	Trinidad & Tobago	9 small grants to CBOs
Organisational capacity building	John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Going from Strength to Strength	\$42,000 Average grant = \$6,000	Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica	7 small grants to local and national CSOs

Table 1: Grant programmes managed and administered by CANARI *Continued from previous page*

Thematic focus of grants	Donor & project title	Total amount in grants managed (USD)	Countries of focus	No. of grants & Type of grantee
Climate change resilience building in businesses based on sustainable use of natural resources	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN) Empowering rural women through improving livelihoods	\$20,000 Average grant = \$1,000	Trinidad & Tobago	14 small grants to women from rural communities and one \$6,000 grant to support development of a network of rural enterprises.

Local knowledge of the region

A Caribbean intermediary CSO brings an understanding of political, cultural and socio-economic sensitivities which is critical in adapting a grant programme's strategy, operations and approach to address local needs and threats and ensure alignment with national and regional level plans, policies and projects through a collaborative, coordinated approach.

Intrinsic understanding of Caribbean civil society

Civil society is structured and positioned very differently to other sectors such as government and the private sector. Understanding the unique challenges faced by Caribbean CSOs is critical to knowing how best to support them to be more effective and efficient.

Ability to build trust

An intermediary Caribbean CSO can build mutual respect and a peer-to-peer relationship with CSO grantees in the region. Trust is easily built which encourages grantees to raise issues that can be solved in an open and receptive environment.



CANARI established a Regional Advisory Committee for CEPF in the Caribbean islands (Source: CANARI)

Cost effectiveness

Working with a home-grown organisation from the region where staff are already based in target countries helps to cut administrative and operational costs. Further, Caribbean CSOs do not usually have the luxury of reliable long-term core funding and are therefore forced to constantly seek efficiency and effectiveness and they bring this operational model to implementation of the grant programme.

On-the-ground support and representation

Local point persons in the countries where grants are implemented add value by providing on-the-ground technical support to applicants and grantees and importantly, through their availability for regular face-to-face communication and outreach to government and other partners.

Credibility and convening power

An intermediary CSO with experience and longevity in the Caribbean has access to social networks that can help open doors for grantees and increase overall impact and



In its role as the Regional Implementation Team for CEPF in the Caribbean, CANARI coached and mentored CEPF grantees throughout project design and implementation.

(Source: Conservation International/photo by Michele Zador)

visibility of the grant programme. CSOs can operate in informal, neutral spaces and facilitate exchanges across political or other boundaries where governments and others may face constraints. Supporting partnership building and networking is a key strategy for sustaining results, enabling cross-fertilisation of ideas, fostering regional integration and increasing project impacts.

Core values

CSOs have an inherently high level of commitment to social, environmental, economic and governance changes. Working with a Caribbean intermediary CSO with values matching the vision of a grant programme helps to maintain programme integrity, increase quality of results and bring about more meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

Adaptive management

CSOs do not have heavy bureaucratic structures and systems and therefore have the ability to be very responsive to emerging needs and can deal with changing contexts and different capacities of grantees. Learning and innovation are central to CSOs' mode of operation. An intermediary Caribbean CSO can help tailor grant programmes to evolving on-the-ground needs, providing a depth of advice and responsive support.

Long-term commitment to the region

CSOs based in the region have to maintain credibility with stakeholders including governments, civil society and donors if they are to survive and so particular emphasis is placed on ensuring grant processes and procedures are transparent. In addition, a Caribbean CSO with a mission and programmes that match or complement that of the grant programme can help to carry activities forward in follow up work, leading to sustainability of results and impacts.

Empowerment for sustainability

By partnering with an intermediary CSO from the region, donors simultaneously invest in support and capacity building for the intermediary CSO itself, which builds its systems and competencies through the engagement. Intermediary CSOs can then effectively play key roles in supporting implementation of other regional initiatives to ensure that civil society is effectively engaged. This translates to real empowerment within the region, which is critical for sustainability and impact.

Innovative practices for managing grant programmes for Caribbean civil society

CANARI has identified several innovative practices that enable a successful grant programme for CSOs, including through its experience as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for CEPF's investment in the Caribbean. These are highlighted below and in Box 1.

Participatory, bottom-up, country-driven approach

Meaningful outreach to and engagement of all stakeholders in the design of a grant programme ensures buy-in for the strategy and funding priorities and helps build a collaborative programme of work. For example, the CEPF Ecosystem Profiling process draws together available scientific knowledge on priorities for biodiversity conservation and the opinions of stakeholders to identify priorities for CEPF investment. CEPF also adapts the structure and roles of each RIT to meet the particular local circumstances of every region they invest in.

“The RIT was widely identified as critical to the success of the CEPF investment in the Caribbean. Many respondents felt that having a regional NGO with deep roots in, and knowledge of, the region was important for the success of their projects. This is particularly important in the island context and in the Caribbean because of the importance of a regional approach to supplement local capacity. CANARI also built, or strengthened existing partnerships in this role.”

– Kate Brown, Global Island Partnership (GLISPA),
independent evaluator for CEPF

Coaching and mentoring

Coaching grantees in specific technical skills, for example, in how to develop good project proposals, is key to supporting effective implementation of projects that address priorities of the grant programme.

Mentoring is a close relationship to provide long-term support and guidance. This can be a strategy for promoting partnerships, identifying project opportunities, building capacity and encouraging outreach. CANARI has trained and uses mentors

Box 1: CANARI's experience as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the CEPF Caribbean Islands investment 2010-2016

CANARI was the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the CEPF Caribbean Islands US\$6.9 million investment from 2010 to 2016. CEPF is a global programme that provides grants to civil society to protect critical ecosystems. Below are some of the ways CANARI contributed to the successful delivery of results as an intermediary CSO for this investment:

Ensuring accountability of funds and adherence to policies and procedures: CANARI is a regional NGO with high financial management capacity and experience with effectively managing large regional projects. This was critical to ensuring CEPF policies and procedures were followed. CANARI's financial management systems have been audited by donors including the World Bank and the EU.

Promoting transparent processes: CANARI established a voluntary Regional Advisory Committee for CEPF (RACC) comprising 17 experts who provided independent, technical reviews of proposals in order to increase transparency and accountability in the review process. The RACC also helped ensure effective coordination of CEPF's investment with other national and regional initiatives.

Building a strategic portfolio of grants: Once a project concept was approved, CANARI coached CSOs to help them develop proposals that were well aligned to CEPF's strategy, met local needs and helped fulfil the individual CSO's mandate. CANARI worked with the CEPF Secretariat and grantees to make linkages between projects where appropriate to encourage a cohesive portfolio of projects that collectively achieved more than the sum of their parts.

Facilitating access to CSOs across the Caribbean: CANARI conducted wide outreach to target beneficiaries across the hotspot, working across different institutional, political and cultural contexts and four languages (English, French, Haitian Kreyol and Spanish). Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the 68 organisations that received grant support were local and regional CSOs, reflecting CEPF's goal to support and build local capacity.

Building grantee capacity through mentoring and coaching: RIT members, including three Country Coordinators based in CEPF priority countries of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica, mentored and coached grantees in: project design and proposal development; financial management; monitoring and evaluation; reporting; communication; networking; and in technical areas, for example, reviewing draft business plans for protected areas and consultancy contracts. CANARI received a complementary grant from the MacArthur Foundation to train a pool of mentors in the region who also provided one-on-one capacity building support to grantees.

Brokering relationships and facilitating multi-stakeholder learning platforms to leverage results: CANARI used its social capital to facilitate networking between grantees, communities, private sector entities, donors and government partners through national and regional peer exchanges. This provided grantees with a space to present their projects to audiences that would have been difficult to convene on an individual basis. CANARI helped grantees package and present their projects clearly and concisely in ways that appealed to donor and government audiences, which encouraged genuine dialogue and led to follow up support.

Managing the small grants mechanism: CANARI managed and administered 29 CEPF small grants, which entailed adapting and establishing small grant operational policies and procedures and coaching grantees through contractual obligations, implementation and reporting.

Facilitating participatory monitoring and evaluation: In addition to monitoring all 77 grants in the portfolio, CANARI facilitated the CEPF Caribbean islands mid-term evaluation in 2013 using participatory tools and methods. This guided the assessment of relevance, results, efficiency and effectiveness of processes and sustainability. The evaluation comprised wide stakeholder engagement using a combined logical framework and outcome mapping approach. Several positive changes were put in place based on stakeholder recommendations that increased conservation impacts and overall success of the grant programme by 2016.

Long-term strategic impact: CANARI remains committed to building on the foundation established by CEPF's investment by continuing to engage CEPF grantees as partners in complementary and follow up work in biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, policy advocacy and public awareness.



Members of the Jamaica Fishermen's Cooperative Union (JFCU) participate in a workshop to build the capacity of their current and aspiring executive board members in financial management, including reviewing financial statements and audit reports. The JFCU received a small grant from CANARI under the EU-funded Strengthening Caribbean Fisherfolk to



Small grantees under the Climate ACTT: Action by Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago to build resilience to climate change project built their capacity for assessing vulnerability and building resilience to climate change in preparation of small grant implementation. (Source: CANARI)

based in target countries throughout the region. This allows CANARI as an intermediary CSO to increase availability of in-country support which is especially useful if the grant programme targets multiple countries where having permanently placed team members is challenging and costly. The MacArthur Foundation supported CANARI in developing a pool of mentors in 12 countries trained to support CSOs with designing and implementing projects focused on biodiversity conservation under the CEPF and other grant programmes.

Organisational capacity building

Building a grantee's organisational capacity in parallel with grant implementation encourages long-term sustainability of efforts and efficient use of funds. For example, strengthening a grantee's financial management capacity as part of a large grant under CEPF allowed for better management and use of grant funding and increased the grantee's ability to secure follow up funding from other donors.

The *Climate ACTT: Action by Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago to build resilience to climate change* project implemented parallel grants for organisational strengthening alongside grants supporting CSOs to implement practical climate change adaptation projects, recognising that strong organisations would be more effective at implementation.

Small grants can, in particular, be used as a capacity building tool, especially for young organisations or those with weak capacity. The very process of having to design a project and submit a proposal that can be approved and used as the guiding project document, requires a certain level of capacity.

Peer exchanges, networking and brokering partnerships

Helping grantees make linkages between their efforts and those of other grantees and partners leads to more strategic and deliberate actions of the grant portfolio. CEPF facilitated peer exchanges at the national and regional levels to support knowledge sharing and provide a space for genuine relationship building. Networking facilitated across language groupings was particularly valued. The EU-funded *Strengthening Caribbean Fisherfolk to Participate in Governance* project included facilitation of a Caribbean Action Learning Group of Fisherfolk Leaders, with members from 17 countries. Projects funded by the Darwin Initiative and the



In December 2014, CANARI, CEPF and l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) facilitated a 2-day event for representatives of civil society, donor and government agencies, academic institutions and the private sector in the Dominican Republic to share experiences in conserving biodiversity. (Source: Conservation International/photo by Michele Zador)

“I strongly believe that the CEPF field activities, and especially the grantee meetings/workshops, have facilitated a much needed push to stimulate contacts and joint activities between Caribbean NGOs. We have developed contacts and networking relations we never thought of before as well as, most importantly, the ability to actually engage with new partners.”

—Jean Wiener, Director of Haitian NGO, Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine (FoProBiM).

MacArthur Foundation enabled CANARI to facilitate peer learning among leading CSOs from different territories and countries via Action Learning Groups.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

In addition to standard M&E tools and methodologies, using innovative participatory approaches ensures that diverse perspectives from target audiences are captured and that there is buy-in to the findings and implementation of adaptive management actions as needed. Participatory M&E involves multiple

stakeholders and encourages mutual accountability and learning and strengthens partnerships. It results in increased mutual understanding, commitment to collaboration and opportunities to celebrate individual and shared success. For example, while it is important to monitor progress against a logical framework to ensure grant programme targets are being met, it is just as important to understand other unexpected changes, whether positive or negative, so that adaptive management actions can be put in place.

Outcome Mapping is one approach to participatory M&E that gauges changes in behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of the people and organisations with which a programme works directly. The Most Significant Change method encourages stakeholders

“CEPF has helped to create networks at the national and regional levels. We are beginning to see ourselves as CARIBBEAN. (CEPF) has contributed to the creation of a regional vision.”

—A CEPF grantee from the Dominican Republic commenting on the ‘Most Significant Change’ that CEPF has brought to the Caribbean



CANARI facilitated the CEPF Caribbean islands mid-term evaluation in 2013 using participatory approaches. (Source: CANARI)

to think 'outside of the box' and identify the most important result that an initiative has achieved. These methods were used very effectively by CANARI during the CEPF Caribbean islands mid-term evaluation.

Conclusion

Apart from the benefits to the donor (achievement of goals, improved outcomes, efficacy, sustainability and transparency) and grantees (namely built capacity), using a Caribbean intermediary CSO ensures that the experience gained and expertise and skillsets developed remain in and strengthen the region, consolidating cross-sectoral alliances and networks and sustaining outcomes.

Other CANARI publications that may be of interest to you:

CANARI. 2016. Effective support for Caribbean civil society for biodiversity conservation and rural development: Results and recommendations from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund 2010 – 2016. CANARI Policy Brief No. 22. Laventille: CANARI.

CANARI. 2014. Are we there yet? Using participatory monitoring and evaluation to assess real results in the Caribbean. CANARI Policy Brief No. 16. Laventille. CANARI.

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for over 20 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building and fostering partnerships.

For more information please contact:

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)
Fernandes Business Centre
Building 7, Eastern Main Road,
Laventille, Trinidad, W.I.
Tel: (868) 626-6062 • Fax: (868) 626-1788
E-mail: info@canari.org • Website: www.canari.org