IFISH: PILOTING AN ONLINE PLATFORM FOR ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING OF BARNUFO

PROJECT REPORT

Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries
Overview of the Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (StewardFish) Project

Overview of Caribbean Sea Innovation Fund (CarSIF) - Microgrants Scheme for Caribbean Fisherfolk Organisations

About the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations

Issue addressed by grant

Project goal and objectives

Project activities and outputs

Challenges

Lessons learned and best practices
From September 2019 to July 2021, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) collaborated with the Caribbean ICT Research Programme (CIRP), Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies of the University of the West Indies (UWI-CERMES) and the fisheries authorities of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines to execute the Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (StewardFish) project.

The main objective of the StewardFish project was to empower fisherfolk throughout fisheries value-chains to engage in resource management, decision-making processes and sustainable livelihoods with strengthened institutional support at all levels.

StewardFish was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
Under the StewardFish project, CANARI implemented a US$20,000 microgrant facility to provide support to Caribbean fisherfolk organisations for organisational strengthening initiatives that would enhance their capacity to participate in coastal and marine resources governance and management, including ecosystem stewardship, in the Caribbean.

This microgrant facility formed part of CANARI’s Caribbean Sea Innovation Fund (CarSIF). CarSIF supports innovation and best practices by civil society and community enterprises to address priority needs and actions in the Caribbean on marine and coastal resources governance and management.

In December 2020, the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO) was awarded a microgrant US$4,000 from this microgrant facility for their project, “iFish: Piloting an online platform for organisational strengthening of BARNUFO”. The project was implemented over a 6-month period from December 2020 to May 2021.
The Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO) is an umbrella, fishing industry organisation, officially formed on March 10, 1999. BARNUFO’s mission is to fulfil the requirements of its member fisherfolk organisations with a view to improving their socio-economic conditions based on sustainable development of fisheries “from the hook to the cook”.

The organisation originally comprised only primary (local) level site-based fisherfolk groups in Barbados but is now opened to individuals. BARNUFO is also a member of the regional Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO).

BARNUFO has been instrumental in offering an annual fisherfolk training programme, and more opportunistic courses, as part of its commitment to capacity building. Through partnerships with other organisations, BARNUFO has provided capacity building in navigation, safety at sea, first aid, engine maintenance, small business management, introduction to the computer, fish handling and quality assurance.
Through their organisational capacity needs assessment conducted under the StewardFish project, BARNUFO identified key areas for capacity building, including:

- Improving ICT proficiency of BARNUFO’s board members
- Improving skills of BARNUFO board members in small business management
- Improving attendance rate of members at meetings and other important engagements
- Enhancing communication and coordination among BARNUFO’s membership
PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

• To promote organisational strengthening of BARNUFO to effectively mobilise resources and build the capacity of its membership, with special emphasis on board members.

Objectives

• To develop an online platform for BARNUFO to deliver organisational capacity-building training tailored to the needs of BARNUFO and improve information sharing with membership and public
• To build the capacity of at least 20 members of BARNUFO, including Board and regular members, in proposal writing, resource mobilisation, basic bookkeeping, and public relations
One of the first activities under the project was to update BARNUFO’s existing website to include an online training and information sharing platform. The activity also sought to improve the board’s ability to use online platforms for engagement and training.

BARNUFO board members were trained to use simple web content management system and maintain and update the website in the future.

**Key outputs:**

- An online fisherfolk training platform (iFish) was successfully developed with a dedicated webpage on BARNUFO’s website (https://barnufo.org/training).
- Zoom and DropBox subscriptions were also purchased to facilitate online training sessions via iFish. BARNUFO utilises the Zoom platform to host meetings.
2. TRAINING OF BARNUFO’S BOARD IN ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY AREAS

The second objective of the project focused on building the capacity of BARNUFO’s board and members in the organisational capacity areas identified in BARNUFO’s organisational needs assessment.

Four online training courses, facilitated by experts, were delivered to BARNUFO’s board and members on proposal writing, resource mobilisation, basic bookkeeping and public relations. Participants enhanced their skills and knowledge in the subject areas and gained an understanding of how operations and administration in their organisations could be improved. Participants from the training sessions noted that they have already started to utilise the information in their small businesses.

Key outputs:

- 4 online training courses were delivered on proposal writing, resource mobilisation, basic bookkeeping and public relations
- 18 BARNUFO members participated in the training courses
An increase in COVID-19 cases and subsequent lockdowns in Barbados caused challenges to the implementation of the project as fisherfolk were focused on their livelihoods at this time. Engaging them to participate in the project was therefore not feasible at the expected time of project commencement.

A short coming of the project was the ambitious timeframe, particularly with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the significant ash fall event due to the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This resulted in shortened course schedules.
LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- It is important to engage with the wider BARNUFO membership in the project design phase to ensure that everyone is clear of the intent of the project and the expected outcomes. It is also an opportunity get the buy-in of the beneficiaries of the project.

- The strength of BARNUFO lies in its ability to mobilise its members and maintain networks with marine and coastal stakeholders at national and regional levels. Its affiliation to resource persons at other organisations and members’ willingness to be trained and educated allowed for the successful implementation of the project.

- BARNUFO intends to build on what was delivered and offer these courses as part of their annual fisherfolk training programme.

- BARNUFO would like to recommend that project extensions are automatically granted to organisations in the event of an emergency or the occurrence of natural disasters.
A BARNUFO YouTube channel was created for sharing recordings of the training sessions conducted (http://bit.ly/BARNUFOYouTube). BARNUFO intends to utilise the channel later in the year to support the annual fisherfolk training programme.

Coming out of the project and its training, project members were able to collaborate on the preparation of a concept note for submission to FAO to support a livelihood project and a partnership was also formed with the Barbados Environmental Conservation Trust with an opportunity to acquire funding to support interventions and ideas recommended during the proposal writing course.
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