ENGAGING LOCAL FISHERMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN MARINE HABITAT REHABILITATION TO SUPPORT INCREASED MARINE PRODUCTIVITY IN THE PORTLAND BIGHT

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 Jamaica Fishermen Cooperative Union (JFCU)

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OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY FOR ECOSYSTEM STEWARDSHIP AND LIVELIHOODS IN CARIBBEAN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES (STEWARDFISH) PROJECT

- 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 Secretariat (CRFM), 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, Saint Lucia and 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$24,000 microgrant facility to provide support to Caribbean fisherfolk organisations to implement practical ecosystem stewardship pilot projects that would enhance their capacity to be ecosystem stewards and contribute to fisheries sustainability.

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 March 2021, the Jamaica Fishermen Cooperative Union (JFCU) was awarded a microgrant of US$4,000 from this microgrant facility for their project, “Engaging local fishermen to participate in marine habitat rehabilitation to support increased marine productivity in the Portland Bight”. The project was implemented in partnership with the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) over a 4-month period from March 03 to July 31, 2021.
The Jamaica Fishermen Co-operative Union (JFCU) was established in 1942. It is a secondary co-operative society with membership of nine primary fishermen co-operatives and several hundred individual fishermen. Combined membership in the JFCU from these two sources is about 4,000. The JFCU provides a range of services to its members and other licensed fishermen. It is a major supplier of a wide range of commercial fishing equipment to fishermen in the island and is managed by a nine-man board representing member societies.

The organisation has a vital role to play in the protection of the marine environment as this will help stem the decline in the industry and ensure its survival. The Co-operative Union therefore works with environmental authority and non-governmental organisations to do this. These include the Ministry of Agriculture’s Fisheries Division; the Natural Resources Conservation Authority; the South Coast Conservation Foundation and the Sea Turtle Recovery Network. The work being done includes training fishermen to help change cultural practices which are harmful to the marine environment.
The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) was established in 1997 to promote coastal conservation in Jamaica. C-CAM’s mission is to promote sustainable development of the Portland Bight Protected Area through stakeholder participation in the implementation and management of programmes and projects. This includes executing livelihood enhancement activities for stakeholders as well establishing a sustainable financing programme for C-CAM.
The Portland Bight Protected Area is the largest protected area in Jamaica. Its land area (519.8 km²) is 4.7% of the island of Jamaica, and its marine area (1,356.4 km²) is a significant part of Jamaica’s shallow shelf.

Over the past 50 years the fisheries and health of the associated marine habitats of the Portland Bight Protected Area have been negatively impacted by several factors including pollution, overfishing and climate change.

This has negatively affected the marine productivity which reduces the catch and economic viability of local fishers.
PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

• To increase the amount of climate resilient coral reef habitat within the Portland Bight Protected Area which will have the longer-term benefit of increasing the habitat for marine creatures which will lead to increased marine productivity in the Portland Bight.

Objectives

• To support the use of scientific and local knowledge in the selection areas for reef rehabilitation
• To build capacity of fishers to construct, monitor and maintain coral nursery and artificial reefs
• To build awareness about the importance and threats to marine ecosystems and participation of fisherfolk in ecosystem management and stewardship
Dr. Suzanne Palmer, Marine Biologist, University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona and a team of students along with the C-CAM team conducted AGRRA surveys in central Portland Bight Protected Area.

The preliminary findings were shared at a meeting of the Portland Bight Fisheries Management Council in April and subsequent sessions in May with fisherfolk. The PBFMC includes representatives of fishers from all the fishing beaches in the Portland Bight Protected Area.

The data collection and subsequent discussion with fisherfolk helped to define where reef structures should be placed considering proximity to sanctuaries as well as path of boats to ensure artificial structures would not be a hazard and would not be damaged.

Key output:
- Local and scientific knowledge used to define where artificial reef structures should be placed for reef rehabilitation
2. CAPACITY OF FISHERS BUILT TO CONSTRUCT, MONITOR AND MAINTAIN CORAL NURSERY AND ARTIFICIAL REEFS

In April, Mr. Hay, Science Officer, C-CAM held a meeting with fishers at Welcome beach. At the meeting, participants were updated about the project and the upcoming workdays for construction of the artificial reef structures.

In May, sessions were held with fishers and the C-CAM field team to construct the artificial reef structures. The sessions were also used to discuss the monitoring and maintenance needs of the structures. Two underwater cameras and SD Cards were purchased to be used by the fisherfolk and other divers for monitoring the reefs.

In June there were workdays, which included fisherfolk, to assist with the construction of the domes.

Key outputs:

- 17 fishers with improved knowledge and experience in construction of artificial reef structures
- 3 coral fixtures (domes) with the power supply completed
- Equipment procured to support fisherfolk and other divers in the continuing monitoring of the artificial reefs
3. AWARENESS BUILT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AND THREATS TO MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND PARTICIPATION OF FISHERFOLK IN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

The presentation to fisherfolk groups by Dr. Palmer and Mr. Hay during the project highlighted the importance of and threats to marine ecosystems and what fisherfolk can do to help protect these ecosystems. Fisherfolk also received posters and handouts on ecosystem based management, mangroves and coral reefs to give out at the various beaches across the Portland Bight Protected Area. Social media posts on C-CAM’s Facebook page further highlighted the work done under the project.

Key outputs:
- Meetings held with fisherfolk to highlight importance of and threats to marine ecosystems
- Posters and handouts on ecosystem based management, mangroves and coral reefs printed and disseminated to fisherfolk
- Social media posts on project activities produced and shared on C-CAM’s Facebook page
CHALLENGES

- Major challenges were – the delay in getting microgrant funds, bad weather throughout the project period which limited field work, restrictions brought about by the impact of COVID-19, and planning activities for dates which were convenient for fisherfolk. These all contributed to an overall delay with project implementation.

- The project timeframe was very short to properly implement the project activities and discuss results and findings. This meant that any delays outside of the implementing partner’s control (e.g., delays in getting funds, poor weather, COVID 19 restrictions, timely availability of items sourced overseas etc.) could not be reasonably accommodated.
LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- Including fisherfolk in project activities, through individuals and the Portland Bight Fisheries Management Council, was a critical way to get community buy-in and build sustainability into the project.

- Having Mr. Hay of C-CAM go to Welcome Beach Fisheries Association to meet with and talk to fisherfolk about the project activities including seeking their participation helped to get buy-in from the fishers.

- The session with the fisherfolk also facilitated Sagicor Life Jamaica Limited doing a presentation on insurance for fisherfolk and updating them on the COVID-19 relief available from the National Fisheries Authority and how they can apply.

- JFCU did not have the capacity to implement all aspects of the project, so partnering with the Portland Bight Fisheries Management Council and C-CAM helped to ensure that the project’s objectives were achieved.

- Asking CANARI for an extension of two weeks allowed delayed project activities to be completed.

- By engaging with fisherfolk under the project, C-CAM was able to get further buy-in from fisherfolk for their dive training and certification programme for fisherfolk and C-CAM staff. Fisherfolk participation in this training programme will contribute to project sustainability as participating fisherfolk will gain diving skills to help monitor coral reefs.
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