STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THE SAINT LUCIA FISHERFOLK CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED TO BETTER SERVE PRIMARY SOCIETIES AND ITS MEMBERS

PROJECT REPORT

Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries
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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 Organizations (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 Saint Lucia Fisherfolk Cooperative Society Limited (SLFCSL) was awarded a microgrant US$4,000 from this microgrant facility for their project, “Strengthening the capacity of the Saint Lucia Fisherfolk Co-operative Society Limited to better serve primary societies and its members”. The project was implemented over a 6.5-month period from December 1, 2020, to July 31, 2021.
The Saint Lucia Fisherfolk Cooperative Society Ltd. (SLFCSL) is an umbrella organisation that serves as the representative body of all primary fisherfolk cooperatives in Saint Lucia. The Society plays an important role in the fishing industry in all communities on island.

With a membership of nine primary fisherfolk cooperatives, representing over 1,400 fisherfolk, the SLFCSL continues to grow due to the benefits many fisherfolk can derive from being part of the Society.

Throughout its existence, the SLFCSL has maintained close relationships and works collaboratively with the Department of Fisheries and Ministry of Agriculture, to gain support for fisherfolk in the various cooperatives.

The SLFCSL also pursues small grant funding with regional entities to implement projects and programmes to empower fisherfolk island wide. The Society also facilitates education and training programmes to equip its members with knowledge of fishing gear, methods of basic navigation and safety at sea.
Fisherfolk Cooperative Society Ltd has existed for thirteen years as an itinerant organization without a centralized location to attend to both Fishers and Primary Society’s needs; this has resulted in an inability to manage scarce resource efficiently, consolidate on gains in the industry and to make strategic and direct representation for and on behalf of fishers.

This proposed project is to establish a secretariat to manage and administer the affairs of the Society in a centralized and professional manner. This has become necessary as the Corona Virus Pandemic has exposed huge gaps in the earning capacity of fishers, with the tourism and hospitality industry in limbo the market share for fishers has vanished along with their ability to earn meaningful livelihoods as local capacity to consume fish has decreased as many person have lost their jobs and has limited purchasing power.

Establishing a centralized location to provide strategic representation and advocacy for the needs of primary society members is our immediate priority and capacity development needs of SLFCSL.
PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

• To establish a central secretariat to carry out the mandate of the SLFCSL to support the needs of its primary societies and fishers

Objective

• To establish an office and operations manual for the administration of the affairs of the SLFCSL thereby strengthening the capacity of the SLFCSL to provide strategic representation to primary societies and fishers
1. OFFICE SPACE ESTABLISHED FOR THE SLFCSL

During the project the SLFCSL undertook works to renovate the office space at the Vieux Fort Fishing Complex which was donated to the SLFCSL by the Department of Fisheries. Renovation works included installation of electrical and data lines, installation of air conditioner units, painting and construction of a partition to create a meeting/conference room. These upgrades will facilitate effective administration of the affairs of the SLFCSL including the hosting of regular Board meetings

Key outputs:

- Renovations and upgrades completed for the SLFCSL’s office space

Upgrades to the SLFCSL’s office space include construction of a partition to create a separate conference room.
Within the timeframe of the project the SLFCSL was able to complete a draft version of an Operations Manual for the administration of the affairs of the Society. Further consultations with the members of the SLFCSL’s Board of Directors and other stakeholders, such as the Managers of the member primary societies, will be needed to finalise the Manual. Some of the key areas covered in the draft Manual include the following: a cash handling policy, human resource policy, record keeping procedures, bank account procedures and emergency procedures.

**Key output**

- Draft operational manual for the SLFCSL developed
During project implementation it was realised that the requested funds were inadequate. This was a result of a combination of reasons including that the cost of items, such as building materials, seemed to have increased tremendously between project conceptualisation and project implementation. Additionally, budgeted items may not have been based on realistic estimates.

While there was tentative agreement by the Ministry of Agriculture for the SLFCSL to use the office space at the Vieux Fort Fishing Complex, the official go ahead to refurbish the space for use took longer than expected and created delays with project implementation. COVID-19 also created some delays with the implementation of the project.
LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- Ensure that budget estimates are as realistic as possible.
- Ensure that all necessary formal government approvals are obtained sufficiently ahead of project start up.
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Visit the project webpage:
https://canari.org/stewardfish-project