CANARI launches innovative project on public finance management for Jamaica’s forestry sector

Port-of-Spain, June 13, 2022 – A first of its kind in the Caribbean, the European Union-funded project, Participatory budgeting and financial management for the forest sector in Jamaica, was formally launched on May 26, 2022. This project, which will run until November 2023, is being implemented by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and its co-executing partners, the Caribbean Coastal Area Management (C-CAM) Foundation and the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDT).

The project targets Jamaican civil society organisations (CSOs) that have interests, rights, and responsibilities in forest research, conservation and management, including the co-management of forested protected areas. The three main target sites are the Portland Bight Protected Area, the Blue and John Crow Mountain and the Cockpit Country.

As noted by the European Union (EU), “The project is set to raise the public's awareness of public finance management issues and ensure that civil society groups can play a role in the planning and delivery of the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan (NFMCP).”

Speaking at the virtual ceremony last month, the Head of the EU Delegation to Jamaica, Ambassador Marianne Van Steen, said that the project is expected to enhance CSOs’ capacity to engage the Jamaican government on budgetary planning and activation of the country’s NFMCP.

“The project’s push to develop a national civil society coalition is a step in that direction as it will foster knowledge exchange, advocacy and collective analysis for the country’s forestry sector,” said Ambassador Van Steen. “The EU is very happy to be working on this project and we look forward to seeing the results which can hopefully be used to improve future initiatives,” she added.

One of the key milestones already achieved by this project was the establishment of the CSO Coalition for Forests on May 18, 2022. The coalition comprises Jamaican CSOs whose capacity will be built to engage in collective analysis, advocacy and dialogue with key government agencies to promote development of mechanisms for participatory budgeting/PFM for the forest sector.

This will enhance capacity, build readiness and catalyse continued action by key CSOs working in the forest sector to engage in strategic budget formulation, budget analysis and debate, budget execution and reporting, and evaluation for accountability.

Executive Director of CANARI, Nicole Leotaud, noted that the idea of participatory budgeting and participatory financial management is completely new to the region so this innovative approach will set a precedent. “CANARI is very excited to be working with our partners in Jamaica, including the CSO Coalition for Forests established under this project. We also look forward to working with our government stakeholders who will be integral in the implementation of this project. We hope that what
we learn from this project will not only benefit Jamaica but also inspire other countries around the region,” Leotaud said.

Noting the importance of mangroves and coastal forests are extremely important, CANARI’s Executive Director told launch attendees that the focus will be on examining how decisions are made about financing that includes management and restoration.

“The aim of the project is to enhance participation in decision-making. This is a critical issue and we do need to ensure that the forest ecosystems of Jamaica are conserved, sustainably used, restored, and well managed.”

Conservator of Forests and CEO of the Forestry Department in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Ainsley Henry, spoke about some of the other benefits of the project. “Despite all the successes we have had in this sector, we recognize that some gaps remain. The delivery of this training by our partners will therefore have a transformative impact on the local forest sector. We anticipate a sector that is more structured and accountable in expenditures as this project can only help it to grow and become more sustainable,” he said.

“As the sector attracts more funding,” Henry added, “transparency and efficiency in how funds are expended is critical to the credibility with funders. We are pleased that this project will help to address these gaps through training. The launch of this project will significantly lay the foundation for the work that will significantly advance the sector and make it more resilient.”

For more information on this project, visit: https://canari.org/green-economy/jamaica-participatory-budgeting/