

Building sustainability through business strengthening: a case study of Caribbean nature-based enterprises

July 2024

Introduction

From 2021-2024, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) led a project [to strengthen nature-based enterprises and livelihoods](#) in targeted Caribbean countries in support of the Global Environment Facility [Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States \(GEF-IWEco\) Project](#). This CANARI project supported nature-based small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) to strengthen their businesses, build climate resilience into their activities and conduct ecosystem stewardship of the natural resources their enterprises depend on. This three-pronged model of support to SMEs builds their over-all sustainability.

Initially, community nature-based SMEs across targeted project countries were paired with mentors who conducted [capacity assessments](#) of their organisations. A self-assessment was then conducted by the individual SME to assess their delivery of triple-bottom line or economic, environmental and social benefits, including good governance, using CANARI's [Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar Tool](#) (Figure 1).

Once assessments were conducted, SMEs continued working with their mentors to develop and submit proposals for business strengthening microgrants based on needs identified. Upon receiving the grant, CANARI and mentors worked with SMEs to execute their microgrant workplans and report on their results under the project. In addition to the business strengthening activities, SMEs also received grants to conduct ecosystem stewardship and climate resilience activities. This report focuses on the business strengthening activities that the following six SMEs conducted:

- **The Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust (NEPT), Jamaica**
- **Hanover Bee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd. (HBFCSL), Jamaica**
- **Fond St Jacques Development Committee (FSJDC), Saint Lucia**
- **Jacq-Co Valley Products Ltd. (JCVP), Saint Lucia**
- **Nevis Turtle Group (NTG), Saint Kitts and Nevis**
- **Madeira Valley Forest Park (MVFP), St. Vincent and the Grenadines**

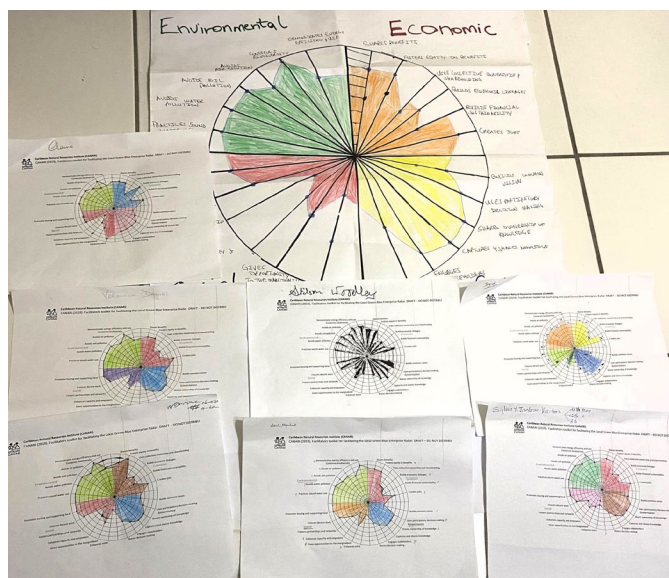


Figure 1: Green-blue radar results for the Madeira Valley Heritage Park in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Photo credit: Madeira Valley Heritage Park



JAMAICA

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The Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust (NEPT), Jamaica

The Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust (NEPT) has been developing, implementing, managing and monitoring projects for local community groups in Negril, Jamaica for almost 27 years. NEPT's work within the Negril Environmental Protection Area is diverse, ranging from managing the 289-acre Royal Palm Reserve in the Negril Great Morass, to serving as the national coordinator of the internationally accredited beach and marine certification, the Blue Flag Campaign. The organisation has also served as the communication and education awareness focal point for the National Wetlands of International Importance Convention (Ramsar) Secretariat. As manager of the Orange Bay Special Fishery Conservation Area, NEPT provides support to over three hundred fisherfolk through activities such as demarcation buoy installation and the implementation of a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) programme.

As a business venture, NEPT provides environmental management services incorporating climate-smart agriculture using adaptable greenhouse technology. The organisation has established a climate-smart agriculture demonstration site in the Negril Environmental Protection Area where farmers are trained in soil conservation, rainwater harvesting, irrigation, greenhouse production of vegetables and hydroponics. Benefitting farmers from more than ten communities within the protected area, NEPT's work at the site fundamentally supports sustainable livelihoods and increases ecosystem stewardship among resource users in the area.

Organisational capacity needs

Based on a mentor-facilitated assessment of the priority capacity needs of the organisation, four specific areas were identified for NEPT's capacity building. Core needs included business training, business plan development, enhancing the organisation's financial management system, and an updated website for wider promotion and marketing of the organisation's work.

Business strengthening objectives

Under CANARI's GEF-IWEco project microgrant scheme for SMEs, NEPT's goal by the end of their project was to improve their financial management system and overall operational efficiency through updated accounting software. To achieve this, they sought to purchase and install SMART Pay and QuickBooks accounting software. Through staff training in the use of new software, the organisation expected to achieve more efficiency and timeliness in its accounting and reporting.

Business strengthening outcomes

NEPT's final evaluation of its GEF-IWEco business strengthening project was positive as the organisation welcomed the opportunity to have its capacity needs assessed and addressed. The organisation reported that it was able to successfully purchase and install the accounting software required to upgrade their financial management system with the US\$2000 grant awarded to them. The SMART Pay and QuickBooks accounting programmes were installed, and staff training was completed within a three-week period. As a result, the organisation was immediately able to input its income and expenditure figures dating back to 2019 into QuickBooks, allowing staff the benefit of receiving proper payslips and the organisation the ability to move towards audited financial statements.

After operating for twenty-six years as the Hanover Bee Farmers Association, in 2011 the organisation legally registered as the Hanover Bee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd (HBFCSL). This members' owned organisation has since been processing and bottling honey and other value-added products for sale to local hotels, supermarkets, distributors, retailers and exporters. Currently comprising of fifty-eight registered bee farmers, members rear their bees mainly in forested areas in Jamaica, using the natural environment for housing beehives; members also engage in planting more trees to ensure that the bees' essential source of sustenance is maintained. After acquiring a grant from the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), HBFCSL constructed a honey processing and bottling facility, equipped with a computer and printer. The facility is located on leased land in Hanover and afforded the HBFCSL's members the ability to process, package and sell their products locally and abroad. Products offerings included 750ml, 500ml and 250ml plastic bottles of honey.

Organisational capacity needs

HBFCSL's project mentor identified business strengthening through product innovation as the priority capacity need of the organisation. The mentor's assessment highlighted the need for the business to pivot away from its post-COVID 19 weakened business trajectory by diversifying its offerings into value-added products that could correspondingly diversify its income streams. Market research and development of new and convenient packaging were recommended for revamping the organisation's product offerings and generating more income. Development of a marketing plan was also identified as essential to promoting the organisation's new product line.

Business strengthening objectives

Prior to the start of the CANARI initiative, the HBFCSL had purchased a honey sachet packaging machine to produce 20g honey sachets as an affordable option for consumers. The machine was purchased with funds from the Digicel Foundation, however the HBFCSL did not have sufficient funds to clear the machine from customs. As such the CANARI GEF-IWEco grant funds were targeted for this purpose.

Business strengthening outcomes

Under their microgrant scheme project, *Promoting Honey Market Diversification and Sustainability*, HBFCSL was able to fully achieve its stated objectives. Sachet production began and a survey conducted to garner feedback on the sachet's label design revealed that its bright colours made it stand out and quite attractive to customers (Figure 4). Members also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to add project writing and management to their business skillsets developed through the process of the CANARI microgrant mechanism.



Figure 2: Advertisement for the Honey Sachets produced by the Hanover Bee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd.

Photo credit: Hanover Bee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd. Available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CikyXChOD75/>.



ST. LUCIA

3

Fond St. Jacques Development Committee (FSJDC), St. Lucia

In the aftermath of a battering from Tropical Storm Debbie in 1994, a response-group was formed in Fond St. Jacques in St. Lucia. The group's aim was to strengthen residents' ability to better plan and prepare for the destruction wrought on their community by natural disasters. With a focus on continuing to build up their community, the group was formalised in 1995 as the Fond St. Jacques Development Committee (FSJDC), an advocacy-centred community-based umbrella organisation. From that inception point, the FSJDC has centred its work around advocating and acting as a representative for the collective physical, social and economic needs of the residents of Fond St. Jacques.

Today, FSJDC comprises of 28 members, inclusive of a nine-member executive. Membership is diverse, consisting of representatives from other community groups inclusive of eight sub-communities, and individuals with specific skillsets, knowledge and abilities required to help the community achieve its developmental goals and objectives. A current priority goal of the organisation is livelihood development for constituents in the community.

FSJDC's work is supported by grant funding, but the organisation is currently trying to utilise the community's natural environment to generate income through an agrotourism park. Park activities will include hiking tours, interactive cooking and dining experiences, organic farming, agro-processing, and birdwatching, among other nature-related activities. This venture has the potential to give the local economy the boost it requires to generate much needed income for constituents, particularly local farmers.

Organisational capacity needs

FSJDC had already sourced a considerable amount of the funding for the development of the agrotourism park. As such, the mentor-facilitated capacity assessment identified that a promotional campaign to kick-start brand-awareness and visibility for the planned Fond St Jacques Agrotourism Park was a priority need of the organisation which could be facilitated under CANARI's GEF-IWEco SMEs microgrant arrangement.

Business strengthening objectives

Through implementation of the promotional campaign, the organisation's main goal was to shape and build awareness of the FSJDC's brand. A corollary of this goal was to engage and build relationships with potential consumers of the park's offerings; a strategy aimed at supporting the future profitability of the park. The organisation's grant objective was therefore to carry out a three-month promotional campaign aimed at improving its brand awareness and visibility. To set the campaign in motion, the first activity outlined under the microgrant was the development of a campaign brief to determine target audiences, key messages, budget, goals and team member responsibilities. Subsequently, content for traditional and digital media advertising would be developed, followed by the production of promotional materials. Utilising these strategies



Figure 3: Members of the Fond St. Jacques Development Committee in front of an Agrotourism Park sign produced with microgrant funds.
Photo credit: CANARI

and materials and upon execution of the detailed promotional campaign, FSJDC's expectation was that the target audience would gain a clear understanding of the offerings of the Fond St Jacques Agrotourism Park and that their brand would become more widely recognisable.

Business strengthening outcomes

FSJDC's project culminated with its three-month promotional campaign activities under the microgrant scheme being achieved successfully. At a one-day workshop, a facilitator instructed Committee members on campaign brief development, strategies for identifying and measuring marketing goals, understanding audiences and targeted messaging, and understanding timelines, roles and responsibilities. The resultant brief was distributed among the Committee and relevant stakeholders, including potential investors and funders. Content was also successfully developed and used for print, audio, video and social media advertisements. One hundred bookmarks were also successfully printed and distributed to students, 25 t-shirts were printed and given to Committee members, 250 brochures were printed and disbursed to hotels, community centres and tour operators, and directional and informational signs were erected in the area (Figure 3). While issues did arise with shipment cost fluctuations of materials and resulting project delays, FSJDC's goal of raising its brand profile through promotional visibility was indeed realised, particularly with the organisation being better able to reach out to new potential investors and interested parties.

4

Jacq-Co Valley Products Ltd. (JCVP), Saint Lucia

Jacq-Co Valley Products Ltd. (JCVP) is an agro-processing and distribution business helmed by an eight-member, all female partnership in Saint Lucia. The organisation aims to encourage healthy eating habits by sourcing and only using locally grown, and when available, local organically grown, fruits and vegetables for its products. JCVP's main product offering are sugar-free, all-natural fruit pops, which are marketed primarily towards local schools and day care centres. Its secondary offerings are dried herbs, barbeque sauces, green seasoning, sun-dried fruits, and teas made from local ingredients like soursop and basil. Developed with an explicit bias towards health-consciousness, JCVP's sauces and seasonings contain only natural preservatives.

Organisational capacity needs

Through a mentor-facilitated capacity needs assessment, it was determined that JCVP's priority capacity need was a structural upgrade to their agro-processing facility.



Figure 4: Jacq-Co Valley Products Ltd. members within their agro-processing facility.

Photo credit: CANARI

Business strengthening objectives

JCVP's project funds were targeted towards repairing the food processing facility's roof and upgrading its cupboards and storage room.

Business strengthening outcomes

While JCVP's project, *Upgrading Jacq-Co Valley Products Limited's Processing Facility for Food Safety Certification*, was largely successful, repairs to the facility were more extensive than anticipated. In order to avoid cost overruns, the organisation recalibrated its microgrant budget to allocate more funds to roof repairs instead of the cupboards and storage room.



SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

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Nevis Turtle Group (NTG), Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Nevis Turtle Group's (NTG) core mission is to protect and conserve Nevis' sea turtles. The non-governmental organisation (NGO) has conducted tours to turtle nesting and landing sites on beaches throughout island of Nevis since 2004. An important aspect of these tours is to raise awareness of turtles as a protected species and promote their value. The group has consistently incorporated children and young adults into awareness-raising activities, including through logo design competitions and turtle-based quizzes for school children. Turtle camps and a student volunteer programme have also been conducted by the group, along with a sea turtle conservation training seminar for young adults incorporating hands-on training in sea turtle conservation.

NTG's work also entails conducting daily and nightly patrols of Nevis' beaches to collect data on turtle crawl numbers and the numbers and types of turtles that regularly nest on Nevis. The group also engages in the tagging and measuring of turtles, and making records of nests and hatchling success rates. Collaborative efforts towards turtle conservation have also played a role in the group's work, including a current satellite tracking project with the Four Seasons Resort in Nevis, to outfit, track and monitor hawksbill turtles that have nested on the island. NTG is also a member of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST).

Organisational capacity needs

Under the guidance of their project mentor, the group identified an overall lack of an online presence as a major deficiency in its marketing and promotion capabilities, and corresponding opportunities for business development. Addressing this deficit to effectively bring the group into the digital economy/marketing space was earmarked as critical. Further, the group's lack of business management and development skills also hindered its pursuit of a for-profit aspect of its operation that could facilitate expanding its turtle watching and tours services.

Business strengthening objectives

The group's main goal under this project was to improve its online marketing presence and visibility in order to capitalise on ecotourism business opportunities. As such, NTG focused on establishing an active presence on various social media platforms and building the capacity of its members to create targeted content for each of its pages in order to strengthen its market visibility. Thus, with its business strengthening microgrant, the group hired a social media consultant to train its members to create social media content, with the aim of generating new followers and enquiries from potential customers. With the equipment purchased for content creation under the scheme, the group tried to curate and disseminate at least four social media posts by the end of CANARI's GEF-IWEco sub project (Figure 2).



Figure 5: Members of the Nevis Turtle Group reviewing their social media pages.

Photo credit: CANARI

Business strengthening outcomes

NTGs assessment of their project under the microgrant scheme entitled *Building and branding for growth through business development and social media* strengthening was positive. There was significant enthusiasm within the group for developing a viable business, targeting clientele such as ecotourists, hotel guests on the island, semester abroad students, local medical students, returning nationals and expatriates. While the group's business strengthening project goals and objectives were almost fully achieved, there were delays with sourcing a consultant and equipment on the island. Although the group faced these obstacles, the overall growth in strategy and skills acquired during the project has given the team the impetus to continue focusing on strengthening its digital marketing and promotional capabilities to build its business.



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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Madeira Valley Forest Park, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

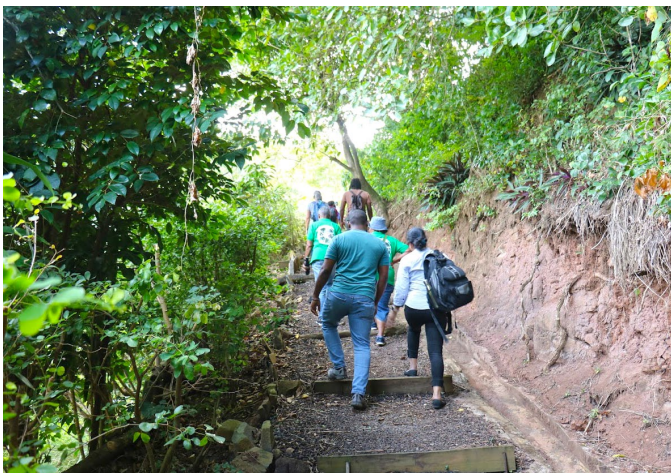
In operation since 2018, the Madeira Valley Forest Park, located in Biabou, St. Vincent, offers recreational and educational tours for tourists, schools, nature-lovers and a variety of community groups. Conserving the forest species of the coastal dry forest of the lower Massey Valley and highlighting the rich cultural, agricultural and economic heritage of the community has been central to the Park's mission from its inception. The Park's business model is therefore based on utilising conservation and ecotourism as drivers of economic development. Spread across five acres of naturally elevated land, a trail takes visitors through five platforms or levels from which they can observe, rest or relax.

Organisational capacity needs

Developing a marketing plan to define the organisation's business position, develop its brand and services, create promotional materials, and identify and penetrate new market segments was the principal recommendations of the mentor-facilitated capacity assessment. Strengthening the management capacity of the organisation was also identified as a priority need, particularly with regard to developing an operational, business and investment plan, expanding staff, acquiring modern tools, and making efficient use of resources. Further highlighted was the need for new strategic partners and donors, on-the-ground partnerships with local interest-aligned groups, and a recruitment drive for new members in order to strengthen organisational capacity.

Business strengthening objectives

Developing a clear strategy towards improving the marketing and promotion of the park was therefore the main project goal under the microgrant scheme. To this end, the organisation set out to engage a consultant to develop a marketing plan and host workshops with members to support the plan's development. They also sought to hire a graphic designer to create brochure and t-shirt artwork for the organisation; printing and distributing both sets of promotional material was also done.



Business strengthening outcome

Madeira Valley Forest Park was able to successfully procure the brochure and t-shirt designs as well as develop the marketing and promotional plan. Further, members of the organisation were introduced to product and service awareness-enhancing techniques and elements of marketing.

Figure 6: Visitors hiking one of the trails at the Madeira Valley Forest Park.

Photo credit: CANARI

This case study was produced under the CANARI initiative on [*Strengthening nature-based enterprises and livelihoods*](#) funded by the Global Environment Facility through the *Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (GEF-IWEco)* Project implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit institute which has been working across the islands of the Caribbean for 30 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean. Our work focuses on Equity and Justice, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Resilience, and Participatory Governance. See here for more information on CANARI: <http://www.canari.org/>