



Case study on the value of Civil Society Organisations to forest conservation and management in Jamaica

Prepared by Hugh Dixon, Southern Trelawny Environment Association

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1. Executive Summary

The work of the Southern Trelawny Environment Association (STEA), South East Cockpit Country Local Forest Management Committee (SECCLFMC), Northern Cockpit Country Local Forest Management Committee (NCCLFMC) and Sawyers Local Forest Management Committee (SLFMC) was assessed to determine the contribution to forest conservation and management in the Cockpit Country. Over the years these Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have implemented reforestation activities, mobilised citizens for environmental awareness, advocated and promoted forest and biodiversity conservation. The cost associated with the project management, monitoring, supervision and advocacy for forest and environmental conservation is at the expense of the organisations, with limited grant funding from donor organisations to cover the cost of material inputs. For the calendar year 2022, the value of this voluntary contribution by the four CSOs was estimated to be up to 3.3 times more than the dollar value of donor funding received, which is their only source of cash funding.

The existing technical, infrastructural and human resource capabilities of these CSOs are inadequate to undertake the full scope of work associated with good forest and biodiversity conservation. Notwithstanding this issue, the CSOs assessed were delivering significant results for forest conservation and management within the Cockpit Country.

CSOs could benefit from access to financing from sustainable use non-timber forest resources. The Forestry Act makes provision for licensed logging of timber in the forest reserve. Other forest resources and uses to enable sustainable alternative livelihoods for rural residents are not as widely entertained. Optimal use of the renewable forest resources, like medicinal herbs and managed ecotourism, that leaves no footprints, could generate alternative income to supplement the massive cost of volunteerism by CSO operatives and local communities. Such a proactive policy approach would offer incentives to CSOs and rural residents to protect and conserve the forest, which facilitates their sustainable alternative livelihoods. This would also generate additional revenue for forest conservation and engagement in forest governance and management, including public sector budgeting.

The Government of Jamaica's programme to strengthen its public finance management (PFM) to improve governance, accountability, fiscal control, efficiency and effectiveness in resource use is a



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commendable and positive undertaking. Public entities partnering with CSOs for forest conservation and management represent a model that can effectively embrace this PFM initiative and achieve its objectives through the process of participatory budgeting. This possibility becomes even more realistic as the Government overcomes the limitations imposed by annual budget deficits, which have historically restricted its ability to adequately finance the budgeted estimates projected by the forest sector.

Recognising the important and irreplaceable contribution of CSOs to forest conservation and management, CSOs have a right to be included in the budgeting process and allocated more funding to strengthen their important work. These funds could be put in the care of an independent grant management institution with an oversight board of stakeholders that can ensure a robust system of transparent fund management to meet the forest sector requirements.

2. Introduction

The Government of Jamaica has undertaken a programme to strengthen its public finance management (PFM) system, to improve governance, accountability, fiscal control, efficiency and effectiveness in resource use.

With funding support from the European Union (FED/2021/428-620), the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), a regional non-profit technical institute, partnered with two Jamaican CSOs—the Caribbean Coastal Area Management (C-CAM) Foundation and the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDDT)—to implement a project on participatory budgeting/PFM for the forest sector, providing stakeholders with a voice in the process and ensuring that forest resources continue to meet their needs.

Under the project, a CSO Coalition for Forests was established to improve the skills, abilities and resources of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Jamaica to engage in collective analysis, advocacy and dialogue with key government agencies to promote the development of mechanisms for public finance management for the forest sector. This will lead to strengthened citizen engagement in and support for sustainable management of forest ecosystems and biodiversity in Jamaica, to benefit livelihoods, socio-economic development and human well-being. The Southern Trelawny Environment Association (STEA) is one of the members of the Coalition.

The overall purpose of the CSO Coalition for Forests is to engage key civil society actors in Jamaica in knowledge sharing and learning, collective analysis, advocacy and dialogue with key government agencies to promote the development of mechanisms for participatory budgeting and public finance management for the forest sector.

The responsibilities of the CSOs that are part of the Coalition include:

1. Collaborating with other entities that have interests, rights, and responsibilities in forest research, conservation and management.
2. Catalyse actions by CSOs working in or supporting the development of the forest sector by convening and participating in consultations and workshops with CSOs, CSO networks, government and private sector.
3. Facilitate and participate in coordinated advocacy to promote collective civil society positions on forest conservation and management.

To highlight the significant work and resources invested in forest conservation and management, CSOs individually and the Coalition collectively need to document their contributions to the forest sector. As the first step in this process, this case study aims assess the value of CSOs work within the Cockpit Country. The study will illustrate their involvement and analyse their financial contributions to forest conservation and management in this important protected area in Jamaica, which is the source of approximately 40% of the country's fresh water.

3. Methodology

A survey was conducted with four CSOs operating in the Cockpit Country: Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA), South East Cockpit Country LFMC (SELFMC), Sawyers LFMC (SLFMC), and Northern Cockpit Country LFMC (NCCLFMC). The purpose was to determine their contributions to forest conservation and management in the Cockpit Country. The survey, pre-tested before administration, was carried out in the summer of 2023, focusing on data from the calendar year 2022. Complementing this survey were individual discussion with key contacts from each entity. The data collected from this survey was then analysed and findings documented.

4. About the organisations

The Local Forest Management Committees (LFMCs) were developed out of an initiative of the Forestry Department to get communities involved in forest management. Their purpose is to enable the participation of communities in the co-management of the forested areas specifically managed by the Forestry Department. The LFMCs became a channel of communication between the Forestry Department and local stakeholders that is valued by all. Early on in their operations, it is believed the LFMCs contributed to the Department's watershed management plan. They helped the Forestry Department to better understand problems occurring within reserves, suggested ways in which forest management can be improved through collaboration with stakeholders, identified opportunities for increasing the contribution of forest reserves to local development, and translated some of these into small but ambitious projects¹.

STEA was started by a community initiative to focus on forest conservation and alternative livelihood opportunities for residents living close to the forest environment of Cockpit Country. Based in Albert Town and Rock Spring communities in Cockpit Country, STEA's aim is to advocate for the protection of the forested environment and generate income from sustainable use of its resources². The organisation over the time of its operations has consistently advocated for protecting the Cockpit Country's forested landscape and has actively undertaken alternative livelihood activities through community and ecotourism attraction development.

In the early years of its operation, STEA conducted environmental awareness meetings in over 33 communities and districts in Cockpit Country to raise awareness of the local environment and forest landscape. The organisation has promoted a Trelawny Yam Festival that demonstrated the potential for alternative livelihood activities and in more recent times, it has taken legal action aimed at protecting the Cockpit Country Forest landscape from strip mining for bauxite. The organisation is currently engaged in a Cockpit Country community outreach programme, aimed at finding environmental

¹ Geoghegan, T. and Bennett, N, 2003. *Local Forest Management Committees: A new approach to forest management in Jamaica*. CANARI Technical Report No. 328.

² <https://www.stea.net/>

stewards and developing a network of independent CSOs that can advocate and implement environmental, forest and biodiversity conservation projects effectively.

5. Analysis

a) Missions of the CSOs

The four organisations assessed had mission statements that were impressive and represented worthy ideals. This is even more commendable when compared to their scale of operations and the capacity of the institutional structures they have in place. In the case of the LFMCs, their target area was geographically defined by the Forestry Department's management units. This geographic area dictates the corridors in which the entities operate and define the functional engagement within the prescribed geographical space. Unlike the LFMCs, STEA's target area is the entire Cockpit Country which spans six parishes and over 60 satellite districts. This wide expanse of area emerged from the visionary freedom of the founders, endorsed by the passionate membership, and is formally reflected in its memorandum and articles of incorporation.

b) Significant in-kind contributions

Despite the differences in their target areas within the Cockpit Country, the fact is that all four organisations are under resourced to tackle the scope of work needed to fulfil their missions. The organisations' main source of funding is from grants received from local and international donor organisations. The assessment of their operations for calendar year 2022 showed that this grant funding was far less than the real cost associated with the project implementation. Across the three LFMCs, the total grant funding received was **JM\$4.43M**. This includes **JM\$430,000** for reforestation, **JM\$400,000** for public awareness and **JM\$3,600,000** for sustainable livelihood activities. STEA received **JM\$6.9M** in grant funding for the same period. As shown in Table 1 below the total grant funding for the four CSOs was **JM\$11.3M** (equivalent to approximately US\$72,400).

Table 1. Grant funding received by the organisations in 2022

GRANT FUNDING 2022 (JM\$)						
	Reforestation	Awareness	Alternative Livelihood	Advocacy	Capacity Building	Total
SECCLFMC	140,000	120,000	974,000			1,234,000
SLFMC	150,000	120,000	1,800,000			2,070,000
NCCLFMC	140,000	160,000	800,000			1,100,000
STEA			1,200,000	5,100,000	600,000	6,900,000
	430,000	400,000	4,774,000	5,100,000	600,000	11,304,000

As shown in Table 2, the combined in-kind contribution of LFMCs for project implementation was estimated to be **JM\$14.8M**, which was **3.3 times greater than the amount of funds received from donors**. For STEA, the value of their in-kind contribution for 2022 was estimated at **JM\$7.8M**, just under **JM\$1M** more than the inputs from donor funding. This level of in-kind contributions through volunteerism is commendable, however, if sustainable forest conservation and management is to be achieved the shortfall in the funding must be addressed.

Table 2. In-kind contribution of the organisation for 2022

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION 2022 (JM\$)							
	Reforestation	Education/ Awareness	Alternate Livelihoods	Advocacy	Capacity Building	Research	Total
SECCLFMC	162,000	1,050,000	7,200,000				8,412,000
SLFMC	162,000	450,000	2,600,000				3,212,000
NCCLFMC	162,000	450,000	2,600,000				3,212,000
STE A		2,850,000	600,000	2,550,000	1,160,000	672,000	7,832,000
	486,000	4,800,000	13,000,000	2,550,000	1,160,000	672,000	22,668,000

A further assessment of the grant funding points to the fact that this funding is restricted to specific measurable outcomes. For example, the funding provides the ability to implement projects related to reforestation, capacity building, public education and establishment of sustainable alternative livelihoods. Notwithstanding this grant funding, the costs associated with the labour, coordination, monitoring, mobilisation, and management of the processes leading to the successful project implementation, are often not included in the grants and are treated as in-kind contributions. The concept of equity from the CSO, which is instituted by funders/donors, is drawn from commercial lending where there is a ratio of investment/credit to equity/owner input. The misnomer here is that the outcome is not private profit for the CSOs but a product for the public or national good. Most donors also do not provide non-restricted funding that could allow the organisations to do other strategic activities, that could aid in building their financial sustainability.

c) Sustainable alternative livelihoods

All four organisations reported that they have taken an approach of promoting forest conservation through the implementation of local sustainable alternative livelihoods in communities. Some of the activities include craft making, beekeeping and eco-tourism attraction development. The CSOs have demonstrated the requisite expertise to mobilise the communities and engage in the establishment of these local enterprises, however, they are lacking the complementary enablers and key expertise to ensure long term successes.

One such enabler is a policy framework that provides CSOs with incentives for organisational start-up, and access to forest resources as a benefit to promote their operational stability. Easy access to be registered and operate as independent institutions unattached from parent state agencies like the Forestry Department. Another enabler is having the availability of business coaches to generate market research and enable access to the promotion and advertising of community and ecotourism services offered by CSOs. The absence of this kind of facilitation serves as the greatest deterrent to the growth and development of feasible and independent CSOs operating in the interest of the forest environment.

Additionally, using locally available knowledge for marketing and product promotion, setting acceptable standards consistent with the industry, opening distribution channels and networking within the several sectors, represented gaps to be filled to consolidate CSO development as sustainable institutions. The track record of these CSOs in starting an enterprise, getting it up and running as a profitable venture,

and generating sustainable income for participants was still a distant goal and aspiration. The success of the enterprises operated by the CSOs is an indicator for the wider community to be convinced that the concept of sustainable local forest management is feasible. That success sets up the consciousness among local communities that the conservation of the forest and wise optimal use of its resources can lead to the development of local businesses and direct financial benefits.

d) External funding

The CSOs were of the view that there was potential to garner more bilateral funds to support local forest management. For this to be achieved there needs to be a genuine partnership in which the Government can endorse bilateral agreements, so funding becomes available for the CSO sector. The Forestry Department, as the mentor for the LFMCS, could undertake the role of advocating on behalf of these entities to get the Government to provide these endorsements. Some of these funds could cover the gaps mentioned earlier and provide the opportunity for more qualified young men and women to see the CSO sector as progressive institutions to become attached to. Such a move would help to build the capacity, skills and capabilities of the CSOs to be effective local forest management institutions. This could be a strategy to secure additional funds for the forest sector, which may not be forthcoming from Jamaica's central Government, due to great competition/demand from the various sectors.

e) Advocacy activities

The need for freedom to initiate and uphold the aspirations of local people is a concern and part of the advocacy work for the STEA and one which the LFMCS want to do more of. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognises the importance of traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and Article 8(j) of the Convention aims to respect, preserve, and promote such traditional knowledge. The Convention also recognises the interdependence of indigenous and local communities and biodiversity. Forest operations, as well as landscape-level planning, should take into account both the rights and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities. The main principle for achieving this is through the effective participation of indigenous peoples and local stakeholders in decision-making and governance processes, based on free, prior, and informed consent to any projects, plans, or changes that affect their communities, traditional lifestyles, and environment³.

With the shortfall of funding the organisations will not be able to fully contribute to the advocacy and actions required to ensure that the Cockpit Country is able to provide the ecosystem services for the populations that depend upon it. For example, advocacy is needed for the lands of endogenous Maroons, and for the Cockpit Country landscape to be protected from the building of haul roads to gain access under bauxite and other exploratory mining leases.

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that:

- a. The value of the in-kind contribution of the CSOs in the Cockpit Country was up to **3.3 times** more than the grant funding received for 2022.

³ Convention on Biodiversity 2010 IUCN, A good practice review. Sustainable forest management, biodiversity and livelihoods

- b. There is no sustainable source of funding to maintain the ongoing and valuable work being done by these four organisations assessed. Grant funding and the associated project cycles dictate the availability of funds to these organisations. To guarantee meaningful and wholesome outcomes for the funded projects, the leadership and staff of the organisations make significant in-kind contributions.
- c. In most instances grant funding does not including unrestricted funding that could allow the CSOs in implement strategic activities to build sustainability.
- d. Despite the limitations in funding, the CSOs assessed were delivering significant results for forest conservation and management in the Cockpit Country. This includes building public awareness about conserving the local forest for its contribution to our welfare and livelihoods. Despite their small institutional size and operational capacities, the passion and influence of the organisations' leadership, staff and supporters have resulted in impacts way beyond the scale of their operations both locally and globally.
- e. CSOs have underestimated the extent of forest resources. Apart from timber, there is a lack of information on other resources that could be utilised to promote optimal forest management. Real and potential rural livelihoods are not adequately assessed or understood and there is a lack of capacity to promote practical, feasible and sustainable alternative livelihoods from forest resources. Additionally, the Forestry Department's prohibition on access to the forest reserve, except for timber harvesting, restricts the development of sustainable alternative livelihoods in rural areas.
- f. These organisations need capacity building support to complement the capabilities of their leadership and staff. The capabilities and skill set of the leadership make them well poised to embrace and incorporate the additional technical and infrastructural support needed for institutional growth and expansion of their reach and impact.
- g. The CSOs support participatory budgeting to enhance efficiency and equity in allocating state funds for forest conservation. This includes the Government identifying and negotiating new external funding sources to directly support CSOs, helping to alleviate financial shortfalls and expand their impact in the forest sector.

7. Recommendations

Key recommendations emerging from the study are as follows:

- a. The CSOs must be encouraged, and their operational capabilities strengthened, to achieve greater outreach in the Cockpit Country. Enhanced technical, infrastructural, and human resource capabilities will enable them to reach and impact over 60 communities and districts in the Cockpit Country buffer zone. Increased outreach will raise awareness about forest and biodiversity conservation, foster the development of a proactive new network of CSOs and positively impact the sustainable and transparent fiscal and administrative management of the Cockpit Country forested landscape and its protected area.

- b. Specific and tailored training is required to improve the capacity of the leadership and staff within the CSOs. Much of this capacity can be developed through cross-training, leveraging existing skill sets within and among their respective institutions to advance the capabilities of others. To achieve this effectively, an independent audit of the skills, expertise and training of CSO operatives is necessary. Based on this skills bank, individuals can be employed through projects to transfer knowledge and skills across the organisation.
- c. The survey among the four CSOs in 2022 indicates that the voluntary contributions of leadership and staff to forest and biodiversity conservation are valued at up to 3.3 times the cash funding received. The concept of "sweat equity" or "applicants' input" by funders places a significant burden on the operational efficiency and productivity of CSOs. It is imperative to develop a strategy to fairly compensate the dedicated volunteers who contribute invaluable resources to the development process, particularly in protecting our forests and conserving biodiversity for the benefit of our society and economy.
- d. Research on the value of CSO contribution to forest conservation and management needs to be expanded nationally, using a more robust approach and focused on building the capacity of CSOs to collect data, including on in-kind contributions, going forward.
- e. Participatory budgeting for forests is a commendable concept, embraced enthusiastically by the organisations for its potential to improve and sustain our natural environment and conserve our forest landscape. Encouraging and lobbying the government to include more CSO participation in the budget development process is a worthy effort that must be continued and expanded.
- f. CSOs need to continue to advocate for the identification of external sources of funding (outside of the national budget) that could be routed directly to non-governmental organisations and independent disbursement agencies, such as the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ).
- g. The ideals of the Convention on Biodiversity must become a central part of the CSO organisations in Cockpit Country and by extension the CSO Coalition for Forests, for their organisations to have a meaningful impact on local forest conservation.
- h. There needs to be more research conducted on the available resources in the forest that can and have been used optimally and economically to promote alternative livelihood development. Much of the research must be aimed at gathering information from the local populations that utilise forest resources historically for their livelihoods.