

## Empowering communities for climate resilience in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

**Port of Spain, 4 November 2024** – From damaged homes and infrastructure to disrupted ecosystems, the recent trail of destruction left by Hurricane Beryl across the Caribbean region once again highlighted the urgent need for increased climate resilience. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where the category 4 hurricane had devastating impacts, one project supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's (CEPF's) small grant facility managed by CANARI is proving timely. Led by JEMS Environment Management Services, the *Climate and Conservation Risk Mapping Initiative in St. Vincent and the Grenadines* project addresses both climate change risks and conservation challenges in six communities located within the biodiversity corridors adjacent to the Central Mountain Range in St. Vincent.

### Assessing and responding to climate and conservation risks

The project's core activity involved preparing a climate risk map using information and data from local communities to assess the effects of climate-related events and natural disasters such as hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. Residents of the target communities took part in workshops that assessed how these stressors affect wildlife and endemic plant species. This participatory exercise resulted in the creation of a 30-layer GIS map, capturing valuable information to guide conservation efforts and enhance the community's understanding of their ecosystem's vulnerabilities. Residents were also trained to use climate risk mapping tools, equipping them with knowledge and skills to monitor environmental changes and better prepare for climate-related events.



Mapping workshop in Georgetown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.  
Credit: CANARI.

JEMS's approach to community climate risk mapping has attracted international attention, with its President having been invited to train staff at the United Kingdom Meteorological Services in October 2024 to share the methodology used by JEMS and explore how to apply it to communities across the UK and globally, as part of a strategy for building local-level resilience to climate change impacts.

### **Strengthening local leadership and community resilience**

A significant and well-timed outcome of the project has been the formation of the National Association of Climate Change Organisations. The association, which brings together 12 community-based organisations (CBOs) across St. Vincent and the Grenadines was established in June 2024, just one month before Beryl hit the archipelago. This network proved to be an effective vehicle for collaboration and mobilisation to provide relief and manage the community-driven disaster response in the most affected areas. JEMS was able to leverage additional support to source book bags, books, generators, searchlights, lanterns and other resources to help families severely impacted by the hurricane. The residents who benefited from this complementary aspect of the project reported that the assistance provided by JEMS not only enabled them to send their children back to school but also to help rebuild their lives after such a destructive event. JEMS expects that the National Association of Climate Change Organisations will continue to play a crucial role in proactively leading climate resilience efforts long after the project ends, facilitating partnerships and collective action among local leaders, civil society organisations and academic institutions.



*Participants to the workshop establishing the National Climate Change Network, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. July 2024. Credit: JEMS.*

### **Fostering community connections for climate action**

The institutional arrangement framework that the National Association of Climate Change Organisations provides goes hand in hand with efforts under the project to build local leadership and deepen community understanding of climate change through cultural activities to create spaces for dialogue on climate action. In response to the lack of active youth and community organisations in the target areas, the project trained six volunteer district coordinators and field officers. Their role is to facilitate cultural activities within their communities and across St. Vincent and the Grenadines, ensuring that the project remains fully community driven.

Cultural and community events, such as sports days and community wakes, are valuable entry points for raising awareness and fostering dialogue about climate action in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They create opportunities for sharing climate and conservation messages across all demographics, from youth to the elderly.

This project is a powerful reminder of the importance of community-driven efforts in addressing climate change. With CEPF's support, local communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have now

laid the groundwork for future sustainable livelihood and conservation initiatives and taken significant steps toward a more resilient future.

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**For further information, please contact:** Wendy Dyemma-Harper, CEPF Communication and Information Management Officer, at [caribbeanrit@canari.org](mailto:caribbeanrit@canari.org).

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