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Advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries for Resilient Caribbean Coastal Communities and Livelihoods

Regional Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Stewardship Action Learning Group

Concept Note

1. Overview

Coastal communities—including fisherfolk—in Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago face increasing vulnerability to climatic hazards such as coastal erosion, storms and storm surges, flash flooding, and landslides, as highlighted in recent vulnerability assessments. With climate change, the frequency and intensity of these hazards are expected to rise, further threatening key ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs. These ecosystems are critical to sustaining local fisheries, marine-based tourism, and cultural heritage.

Beyond climate-related impacts, these communities are also grappling with pollution from inadequate waste management systems and habitat degradation from unsustainable fisheries and tourism practices and ad hoc development. The combined pressures of environmental degradation and climate change place nature-dependent sectors—such as fisheries—at increasing risk, with direct consequences for food security, employment, and income. Many fisherfolk are already experiencing damage to property and assets (boats, gear, and jetties), disruptions to markets, and rising operational costs.

To secure livelihoods and restore critical ecosystems, it is essential to advance sustainable fisheries that depend on healthy, well-functioning marine environments. The **Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)** recognises that fisheries management must go beyond fish stocks alone, considering the broader ecosystem and human dimensions. A core principle of EAF is participatory management, ensuring that those who depend on fisheries—particularly small-scale fisherfolk—are actively engaged in decision-making and resource management.

A key strategy for strengthening fisherfolk participation is fostering collaboration among islands and communities through an **Action Learning Group (ALG)**. By bringing together fisherfolk, fisheries agencies, and other coastal and environmental stakeholders, the ALG approach will provide a platform for participatory engagement, peer learning, and shared problem-solving. Through this process, participants can **identify common challenges, co-develop practical solutions, and enhance their collective capacity** to build resilience in fisheries and coastal ecosystems.

This concept note proposes the constitution of a **Regional Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) and Stewardship Action Learning Group** under the project "[**Advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries**](#)

[for Resilient Caribbean Coastal Communities and Livelihoods](#)¹ which aims to promote climate change adaptation, conservation, and sustainable management of small-scale fisheries in Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago using the ecosystem approach to fisheries. The project runs from January 2024 – July 2026.

The Regional EAF and Stewardship ALG is convened by the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations ([CNFO](#)) in collaboration with the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute ([CANARI](#)) and Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies of the University of the West Indies ([UWI-CERMES](#)).

2. Objectives

The key objectives of the **Regional EAF and Stewardship ALG** are to:

- **Enhance understanding of EAF principles** – Build capacity among fisheries stakeholders by deepening their knowledge of EAF, including its principles, best practices, and real-world applications in the Caribbean region.
- **Promote collaborative learning and knowledge exchange** – Facilitate peer-to-peer learning among fisheries managers, fisherfolk, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to share experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing EAF and stewardship initiatives.
- **Strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement** – Enhance collaboration between national government agencies, fisherfolk and coastal communities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to ensure an inclusive and participatory approach to fisheries governance and stewardship.

3. Membership of the ALG

- The Regional EAF and Stewardship ALG includes a diversity of Caribbean perspectives.
- The ALG is comprised of persons from national government agencies, fisherfolk organisations and civil society organisations with a shared interest in EAF, ecosystem-based adaptation and stewardship.
- ALG members serve in a voluntary capacity.
- The ALG is comprised of **18 core members**, with additional stakeholders invited to attend ALG meetings based on their interest in the specific topics covered by the ALG.
- Core members include representatives from each of the three target countries under the *"Advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries for Resilient Caribbean Coastal Communities and*

¹ *"Advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries for Resilient Caribbean Coastal Communities and Livelihoods"* is a project of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, co-financed by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection through KfW. It is being implemented by CANARI in partnership with the University of the West Indies – Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES); Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO); Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development, Saint Lucia; Fisheries Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation, St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Fisheries Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Trinidad and Tobago.

Livelihoods" project—**Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago**, as follows:

- three (3) fisherfolk (preferably 1 male, 1 female and 1 youth² of any sex) per country
- one (1) national fisheries agency representative per country
- one (1) representative from a national agency responsible for environmental or coastal zone management per country
- one (1) representative from a civil society organisation with an interest in coastal and marine resources management per country

4. Meeting schedule

- The ALG will convene 6-8 meetings over the life of the project starting in June/July 2025, looking at various topics for sharing discussion, capacity development and the formulation of recommendations which support responsible and sustainable fisheries, appropriate climate change adaptation, and promote ecosystem health.
- Dates of meetings will be finalised by ALG members.

5. Topics to be explored by the ALG

The ALG will explore a range of topics related to EAF aligned with the modules below:

- **Module 1:** Introduction to the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) and the Action Learning Group (ALG)
- **Module 2:** Understanding and Maintaining Ecosystem Health
- **Module 3:** Sustainable Fisheries for Resilient Livelihoods
- **Module 4:** Governance and Policy for Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management
- **Module 5:** Climate Change Adaptation and Fisheries

6. Meeting/sessions format

- ALG meetings will be held virtually.
- ALG sessions will be facilitated through the CNFO's Leadership Institute.
- ALG sessions will be facilitated by topic experts with co-facilitation support by fisherfolk leaders.
- Each session will be allocated approximately 90 - 120 minutes, preferably scheduled in the evenings from 7:00 p.m. AST. (The preferred timing of the ALG meetings will be confirmed at the first ALG meeting)
- Sessions will feature expert presentations alongside interactive activities designed to engage participants in discussion and knowledge sharing.

² Youth would be considered from ages 18 – 35.