

Implementing Sustainable Financing and Management of Eastern Caribbean Marine Ecosystems (ID 3858)

National Conservation Fund (NCF) in Saint Lucia

1) Overview of the project

Known for its natural beauty and rich biodiversity, Saint Lucia is home to diverse terrestrial, marine, and coastal ecosystems including tropical forests, coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, and wetlands. Despite their intrinsic natural and economic value, Saint Lucia's ecosystems face increasing pressure from a suite of problems and threats, such as climate change, natural disasters, unsustainable development, poor land use practices, and pollution.

This regional project aims to contribute to enhancing the long-term sustainability of Protected Area Networks in the Eastern Caribbean Countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) by: (i) establishing sustainable financing mechanisms; (ii) strengthening of Marine Protected Area (MPA) networks; and (iii) deploying a regional monitoring and information system for Protected Area networks.

In Saint Lucia, the Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund (SLUNCF), which was incorporated in 2016 and which became fully operational in 2018, is dedicated to securing sustainable financing and the provision of grants to support the conservation, restoration, and effective management of Saint Lucia's biodiversity and natural resources. SLUNCF's original purpose was to manage funding flows generated by the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) – a regional endowment fund whose objective is to provide sustainable funding for activities that conserve, protect, and maintain the biodiversity within Caribbean national protected area (PA) systems or other areas of environmental significance.

All countries that join the CBF are required to ensure that their local fund has at least one sustainable financing mechanism that will ensure that the CBF funds are matched in a 1:1 ratio, from a suitable funding source. In October 2018, the SLUNCF began a successful collaboration with the Saint Lucia Hotel Tourism Association and currently the Fund receives a portion of the voluntary fees collected through the hotels. Since then, the SLUNCF has begun seeking out collaborations with others in the private sector, including Massey Stores (supermarket chain). Following its establishment, SLUNCF's mandate expanded beyond the management of CBF funds; SLUNCF can now accommodate a diverse range of funding flows that align with its overarching mission and goals. Currently, SLUNCF is working to generate diverse sources of sustainable funding to support its activities and grant-making.

2) Role of GEF funding and key outcome of the project

The Sustainable Financing and Management of Eastern Caribbean Marine Ecosystems Project financed through a US\$8.63 million grant from the GEF, a US\$10.15 million grant from the German Development Bank (KFW), and a US\$4.175 million grant from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Since SLUNCF's inception, it has worked to follow international best practices for conservation trust funds and has thus established its operations and grant-making through activities such as developing a Grant-Making Strategy and Guidance Document, an Operational Manual, a Strategic Plan and a Sustainable Financing Plan, and hiring staff. The SLUNCF also signed a Partnership Agreement with the CBF and has already received financing for 2018 and 2019 from the endowment fund.

SLUNCF has also begun to develop multiple strategic partnerships with both public and private sector organizations in Saint Lucia, regionally, and internationally. SLUNCF began grant-making in the second quarter of 2018. The first call for proposals for 2019 was issued in March and the SLUNCF is presently reviewing the Concept Notes. Grants from SLUNCF can support a wide range of both marine and terrestrial conservation-related activities. SLUNCF provides sustainable financing for conservation and sustainable development projects in Saint Lucia, with a focus on projects that directly support government-endorsed plans and policies for environment and conservation.

3) Features of the project

SLUNCF receives a set amount of funds from the CBF each year which correspond to the interest raised by the CBF's investment portfolio. In addition, SLUNCF raises funds to match these funds. With the funds, SLUNCF can provide grants for a wide range of grantees, as well as coordinate programs with a national scope, pursue an agenda that is aligned with government goals and public-sector priorities, and operate a unique structure with a balance of public, private sectors, and non-governmental organization (NGO) representation.

SLUNCF conducted research on public and private funders and revenue streams that could help them increase their financial sustainability and that align with SLUNCF's mission. Their research identified a variety of prioritized financing revenue streams for SLUNCF to pursue and evaluated the benefits and strengths, potential drawbacks and difficulties, estimated annual revenue generated, and feasibility of the revenue streams. Their sustainable financing plan also highlights priority public and private funders for SLUNCF to target, and detailed outreach approaches for the top funders, including key messages that align with funder priorities, specific opportunities to engage with funders, and next steps for pursuing opportunities with the funders. The new opportunities include corporate sponsorship, Dept swap, marina program and others.