



THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Marine Protected Area Co-Management Capacity Building in North East Tobago

Project No: TRI/SGP/OP5/Y3/CORE/BD/14/06

Grantee: Environmental Research Institute
Charlottetown (ERIC)

Location: Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago

SGP Contribution: US\$ 50,000

Co-financing in kind: US\$ 52,488

Total Project Cost: US\$ 102,488

Project Duration: 14 Months

Number of people served: Six members of
three CBOs

Focal area: Biodiversity

Background: In November 2013 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago requested funding from the Global Environment Facility to implement the project: “Improving Forest and Protected Area Management in Trinidad and Tobago”. One of the six national areas earmarked is the planned Marine Protected Area (MPA) in North East Tobago. In 2014/2015, the Environmental Research Institute Charlottetown (ERIC) implemented a SGP funded project called: “Marine protected area co-management capacity building in NE Tobago”.

Project Objectives and Key Activities:

The goal of the project was that Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in NE Tobago will be able to meaningfully contributing to the co-management of their marine resources and the envisaged Marine

Protected Area.

The project objectives were as follows:

- to conduct 96 community talks informing and update community members or groups about the state of their marine resources and the future MPA;
- to make equipment & material, facilities, expertise and training available for conducting biodiversity data collection; and
- to monitor the marine biological status within the future MPA over a period of five months and establish baseline and a preliminary data base.

Results and Impact:

All activities and planned objectives were achieved:

The **community talks revealed** that most residents in NE Tobago were not clear about what a Marine Protected Area actually is, what would be the impacts of a MPA on their livelihood and who to participate in the creation of an MPA. Fishermen are mostly concerned that access to their traditional fishing grounds would be restricted, but some also saw additional income opportunities from an increase in tourism in a MPA. Direct communication via social media, sms or WhatsApp seems to be preferred. The 1 to 1 community talks also strengthened the communication skills of the project beneficiaries and helped them to assess their communication strengths and weaknesses.

ERIC's resources (facility, equipment, training material) were significantly upgraded and allowed for smooth implementation and execution of all project activities under safe and technically up to date circumstances.



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The **sea bird monitoring activities** showed that North East Tobago remains one of the most significant sea bird colonies (especially for Magnificent Frigatebirds) in the region. While it is too early to assess annual trends, the importance of regular monitoring becomes more and more evident, especially with increasing threats due to climate change and poaching.

Reef Check is the United Nations' official community-based reef monitoring programme and was applied during this project. 12 sites in NE Tobago were monitored every two months and while coral reef health seems still relatively intact, the almost complete absence of fish larger than 20 – 30 cm is an alarm bell that needs to be taken serious. The lionfish population seemed to increase slowly while for the entire year only three nurse sharks and no other shark species were observed at a place where they were once a common sight. Overall 210 research and reef Check dives were conducted by community members and experienced marine biologists and PADI instructors. As of September 2015, ERIC is the only Reef Check certified facility in Trinidad and Tobago and the only facility to offer Reef Check Expeditions in the Caribbean.

Training resulted in the certification of eight First Aiders, four PADI Open Water Divers, three PADI Advanced Open Water Divers, six Reef Check Eco Divers, three Reef Check Eco Diver Trainers. Furthermore, beneficiaries attended 88% of 230 technical and organisational capacity building hours including communication, conflict resolution, team building and participatory evaluation.

Project Visibility: ERIC promoted all project related activities via its own website (www.eric-tobago.org), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ERICCharlotteville>), Twitter, Instagram, its YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsQSDJWoiwc6WoSJlfUEQrQ>) and through several media articles published in national newspapers. The project was further featured in one short movie produced by the SGP office Trinidad and a 25 prime time report on Latvian TV to be aired in January 2016.

Lessons Learnt:

- The project substantiated the opinion that meaningful capacity building requires a long term approach and is best implemented by a continuity of activities that engage participants in areas that speak to their passion and determination.
- Secondly it became very clear that biological monitoring methodologies need to be adapted to the geographic location as well as to the preferred learning styles of beneficiaries.
- Involving beneficiaries in project design and evaluation will add project work load but clearly improves team cohesion and longevity beyond project duration.

Replication and Up-scaling:

The project has significant potential for upscaling especially because of its location between two PA's in Tobago and the demonstrated success of its approach. Currently, the Environmental Research Institute Charlotteville is preparing the required proposal to approach funders for a continuation of the project while expanding activities to include stakeholder use mapping and identification of environmental threats.

Partnerships:

- The British High Commission of Trinidad and Tobago
- Organisation of American States
- Speyside Eco Marine Park Rangers
- North East Sea Turtles

- The Parlatuvier Village Council
- Sea Bird Monitoring training with Darshanjit Singh Narang
- ReefCheck and its Course Director, Ms Nicole Ordway

Photos:



Sea Bird Monitoring in Little Tobago



Participant receive Reef Check Certificates



Participants after successful completion of Reef Check practical training



Participants hovering of the Reef Check Transect line to record data



Final Participatory Evaluation with NSC members and participants