

Project Brief – Blue Economy Project

Unlocking the blue economy potential of marine managed and protected areas (MMA/MPAs) in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The Challenge

Saint Lucia, Dominica, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines govern marine territories 51 times larger than their land mass. This vast “Blue Frontier” is a global biodiversity hotspot and the lifeblood of the region, with tourism alone contributing up to 48% of GDP and 55% of employment in the Eastern Caribbean. Despite this dependency, the region’s marine environment faces a crisis of pollution, habitat destruction and climate change. In the last 25 years, almost 25% of mangrove areas have been destroyed; coral cover has declined by 50% and seagrass by 43%.

At the same time, the potential for community-led, ecologically sustainable tourism, renewable energy production and the use of genetic resources remains largely untapped. While fisheries are essential for food security, they contribute only 1% to the GDP. Opportunities for value creation, e.g. through fish processing, upcycling of fish waste and stronger links with other sectors (aquaculture, eco-tourism, boat building) are utilized insufficiently. While marine protected areas (MPAs) are established, the surrounding communities currently do not have the means to transform these conservation zones into drivers of sustainable economic growth.

Coastal communities in and around MPAs in the Eastern Caribbean lack the technical, financial and institutional preconditions for sustainable marine-based development.

Objective

The primary objective of the Blue Economy Project is to strengthen the capacities of coastal communities and partner institutions in and around MPAs in the Eastern Caribbean to promote sustainable and economically viable marine-based development.

Our Approach

The Blue Economy Project applies a bottom-up, multi-level capacity development approach that links community-based action with national and regional processes. It brings together MPA-neighboring communities, public institutions, financial actors, and the private sector to develop locally adapted sustainable blue economy solutions. The project strengthens institutional capacities and access to inclusive and gender-responsive financing, promotes participatory decision-making, and ensures that local experiences inform regional learning and scaling across Caribbean SIDS.

Specifically, the programme works across the following key areas and activities within the sustainable blue economy:

➤ Co-Management of MPAs

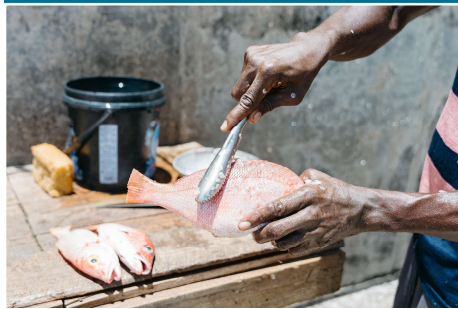
- Promote bottom-up, participatory cooperation between MPA-management and local communities
- Equip community members with technical and methodological tools to act as co-managers and partners in sustainable blue economy management

Project name	Unlocking the blue economy potential of marine managed and protected areas (MMA/MPAs) in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – “Blue Economy Project”
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Eastern Caribbean: Saint Lucia, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Lead executing agency	Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
Duration	01.07.2025 – 30.06.2028



L.: Fisherman explaining his work to child

R.: Coral reef with diver



L.: Fisherman scrapping fish in Grenada, August 2025

R.: Traditional boat construction

➤ Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development

- Support entrepreneurs and start-ups in founding and growing their sustainable blue economy businesses
- Develop new and strengthen existing financing mechanism tailored to target groups implementing sustainable blue economy measures

➤ Knowledge Sharing and Regional Learning

- Document and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from sustainable blue economy implementation
- Facilitate exchange formats at national and regional levels for peer learning among stakeholders
- Inform policy and enable scaling of sustainable blue economy approaches across the Caribbean

national policy implementation and local coordination; and

- **Communities and private sector partners:** NGOs, co-operatives, private sector associations, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and financial institutions to support capital investments, livelihood creation, and local action

Impact Roadmap: Tracking Progress

Progress is tracked using selected indicators such as:

- Real income increased by 10% for 600 private-sector actors (300 of which are women)
- Cooperation with MPA management has improved according to 75% of surveyed residents from the surrounding communities
- 78 new sustainable blue economy enterprises have been launched, including 33 women-led businesses
- 42 enterprises (17 women-led) met investment needs for their sustainable blue economy business models via new or improved finance mechanisms
- The total surface of marine areas protected by the measures implemented under this project has increased by 2,600 hectares (compared to areas supported through previous projects).

Strategic Partners and Stakeholders

The project's multi-layered partnerships include:

- **Regional partners:** the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as political executing agency, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and regional networks to facilitate knowledge dissemination, regional scaling, and policy alignment.
- **Institutional and regulatory authorities:** National and local government ministries to manage oversight,

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