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Evaluation Report of the Small Grant Projects under the Enhancing Alternative Livelihoods and Food Security in St. Kitts and Nevis through the Cultivation and Commercialisation of Sea Moss Project



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1. Introduction

In 2015, small-scale fisheries production in St. Kitts and Nevis was 454 metric tonnes, valued at US\$3,668,171. The fisheries also employed approximately 837 fishers. Over the last 10 years, however, anecdotal evidence suggested that there has been a significant decline in fisheries resources as smaller catches of conch, lobster, pelagic and demersal fish species are being landed.

In March 2015, prompted by concern over fluctuations in production, and the likely negative impacts on the livelihoods of fisherfolk and national food security, the Department of Marine Resources implemented the Sea Moss Culture Pilot Project. The objective of the project was to build the capacity of fisherfolk to develop sea moss farming as an alternative livelihood, while reducing fishing pressure on the nearshore fisheries resources, and improving earnings of the fisherfolk, their organisations and communities. The Pilot Project achieved success in enhancing existing sea moss culture methods, including encouraging a change from *Eucheuma gracilaria* to the cultivation of a more viable species *Eucheuma cottonii*.

In an effort to build on lessons learned and contribute to the sustainability of the results from the Sea Moss Culture Pilot Project, the [Enhancing Alternative Livelihoods and Food Security in St. Kitts and Nevis through the Cultivation and Commercialisation of Sea Moss](#) project was developed to provide technical assistance and small grant support to further build the capacity of fisherfolk and other key stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in sea moss culture, as a demonstration of an alternative livelihoods initiative within the concept of ecosystem based management (EBM).

CANARI, under its “Engaging Civil Society in CLME+ Strategic Action Programme Implementation” project is supporting the implementation of the “Enhancing Alternative Livelihoods and Food Security through the Cultivation and Commercialisation of Sea Moss, St. Kitts and Nevis” project.

1.1. Small grant support

With funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Global Environment Facility (GEF) as part of the “CLME+ Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems” project (CLME+ Project) CANARI implemented a US\$70,000 small grant facility to support two initiatives aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders in St. Kitts & Nevis in sea moss farming, as a demonstration of alternative livelihoods initiatives within the concept of Ecosystem Based Management.

Between March and April 2019 small grants were issued to the Liamuiga Sea moss Group (LSG) (See Box 1.) in St. Kitts and the Indian Castle Fisherfolk Association (ICFFA) (See Box 2) in Nevis. The LSG received a US\$35,170 grant to “increase the capacity of the LSG to successfully manage a small and micro enterprise while meeting the increasing demand for sea moss products” and the ICFFA received a US\$17,650 grant to “develop sea moss cultivation and production as an alternate income for the ICFFA”.

Each grantee had similar specific objectives for their small grant projects, they were to:

- expand their current sea moss farms by increasing the number of plots;
- build the capacity of their group members in small and micro enterprise (SME) development and management and value-added processing;
- upgrade their current processing facilities; and
- improve marketing of their sea moss products.

Small grant projects were implemented over a period of 5-6 months ending October 31, 2019. Technical support and guidance for project implementation was provided by assigned CANARI staff members and the trained small and micro enterprise (SME) and civil society organisational development mentors based in St. Kitts and Nevis under the European Union funded [Powering Innovations in Civil Society and Enterprises for Sustainability in the Caribbean](#)¹ project.

Box 1: About the Liamuiga Seamos Group (extracted from small grant proposal)

Box 2: About the Indian Castle Fisher Folk Association (extracted from small grant proposal)

2. Evaluation focus groups

¹ PISCES project: <https://canari.org/pisces/>

The mission of the Indian Castle Fisher Folk Association (ICFFA) is to encourage camaraderie and sportsmanship amongst its members; to educate its members in all areas of good fishing practice so as to reduce adverse impacts of unsustainable fishing practice; to enhance the livelihood of fishers and to promote social and community development.

The group was formed in 2013 after a number of fisherfolk met initially to organise a fishing tournament. The tournament was a success and the group expanded and has resulted in what it is today. The group is currently governed by 3 members who serve as the Executive of the group. The current membership is 26 with 3 being women.

The mission of the Liamuiga Seamoss Group is to supply high quality sea moss products while promoting the nutritional properties and health benefits of sea moss.

The group was formed in 2017 after a number of agro-processors and fisherfolk who were already involved in the harvesting and/or production of sea moss products from sea moss grown in the wild recognised that the increasing local demand for sea moss products could not be met due to the increasing pressure on wild sea moss stocks. With this in mind, the group was formed to establish a business that would be responsible for the cultivation of sea moss as well as the production and marketing of sea moss products.

The group is currently governed by the five members who serve as the executive of the group and since the establishment of the group in 2017, it has grown in number and today the current membership is 23, with 12 being women. In addition, a number of youth in the Conaree community where the sea moss farm is located have been supporting the work of the Liamuiga Seamoss Group by assisting regularly in the cultivation of sea moss at the site.

Between December 3rd and 7th 2019, CANARI facilitated evaluation focus groups in St. Kitts and Nevis with the members of the LSG and ICFFA to get feedback on their experience with developing and implementing their small grant projects including key lessons learned.

Focus group sessions were conducted over a two-day period in each island during the evening from 4:30pm - 7:30pm to accommodate persons who were working between 8:00am - 4:00pm. The time in-country was also used to conduct site visits to the sea moss plots set up by the grantees and the facilities used and proposed to dry their sea moss and process their sea moss related products.

The focus groups were facilitated by Ms. Akosua Edwards, Senior Technical Officer, CANARI who is an SME development expert.

2.1. Participants

Over the four days, a total of 21 persons participated in the focus groups - 10 in St Kitts and 11 in Nevis (see Appendix 1 for participants list). Participants from St. Kitts were all members of the LSG and their PISCES organistaional strengthening mentor Ms. Nikkita Browne (who joined virtually). Participants from Nevis were the members of the ICFFA and their PISCES SME mentor Ms. Catherine Forbes.

2.2. Evaluation report

This report presents the key findings and summary conclusions from the focus groups held in St. Kitts and Nevis. CANARI believes that documenting this information is important since both LSG and ICFFA are new to cultivating, harvesting, processing and selling sea moss related products using a SME business model. The knowledge gained and lessons learnt will therefore be important for both groups as they continue to build their capacity. This information is also important for improving future small grant programmes that will be implemented by CANARI and other development organisations seeking to support natural resource-based SMEs in St. Kitts and Nevis and the Caribbean.

3. Findings

Grantees and mentors were asked to evaluate their experience participating in the small grant programme including project implementation against the following seven key criteria:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability
- Coverage/Inclusiveness
- Coordination

Participants were asked probing questions to elicit unbiased responses for each criterion (see Appendix 2 for criteria and probing questions). A summary of findings from the discussions with both groups is presented in the sections below.

3.1. Relevance

This criterion sought to determine if the objective of the small grant programme – which was to “support capacity building of stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in sea moss farming, as a demonstration of sustainable livelihoods” was relevant to the needs of the grantees and to what extent the objective was still valid.

Members of both LSG and ICFFA agreed that the objective of the programme was relevant to their needs. ICFFA noted that the programme was successful in demonstrating sea moss farming and commercialisation as an alternative livelihood and highlighted that through the developments achieved under the project, they were able to bring in additional income for their business. Both groups highlighted their continued interest in building their capacity in sea moss cultivation and commercialisation, including operating sustainable SMEs.

3.2. Effectiveness

The “effectiveness” criterion sought to determine the extent to which the small grant programme helped to build the capacity of stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in sea moss farming as a sustainable livelihood. It also sought to determine the major factors which would have influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of the small grant projects.

Focus group participants for both LSG and ICFFA noted that the small grant programme was responsible for improving their knowledge and skills in sea moss cultivation and operating a small business, specifically in:

- Cultivating and processing (drying) sea moss
- Creating value-added products from sea moss
- Utilising “green” alternatives in their businesses

The following factors were identified as influencing the achievement of project objectives:

- Teamwork- members pulled together especially at the beginning
- Willingness to go the extra mile to get the job done
- Members willingness to sacrifice their time to ensure the project started
- Willingness and excitement to learn new skills especially about sea moss and business development
- Leadership of the project (e.g. the project leader got things done even if it meant having to do it himself).
- Having partners (e.g. the assistance and support of the Department of Marine Resources and the Agro-Processing Unit)
- Having a mentor to assist with proposal development made the process clearer and more focused

The following factors were identified as influencing the non-achievement of project objectives:

- Not all group members were as committed as they agreed to be to implement project activities
- Members not being available to dedicate time to implement the project due to their full-time jobs including as fishermen or small business owners
- Inadequate budgeting (e.g. costing of some items were more than budgeted in the proposal)
- Inadequate communication about the project to group members including their role in specific activities
- Limited technical knowledge on how to establish sea moss plots
- Inclement weather (e.g. in Nevis heavy rains and rough seas prevented the completion of the new sea moss plots)
- Difficulty in sourcing raw materials for the sea moss plots (e.g. sourcing seedlings to start the sea moss plots in Nevis was more difficult than anticipated)

- Limited feedback from CANARI than anticipated – believed that mentoring from CANARI would be ongoing from the beginning to the end of the project
- Safety concerns (e.g. in Nevis the initial sea moss shed and processing facility had to be relocated due to concerns about theft; a fully suitable place has not been found to date.)
- Rigid reporting formats made the organisation feel pressured

3.3. Efficiency

This criterion sought to determine if the small grant projects were a good use of money and time. It also sought to determine if the projects could have been implemented differently to achieve the same results using less money and time.

Both LSG and ICFFA thought that the small grant projects were a good use of money and time. Focus group members for both LSG and ICFFA agreed that additional capacity building and mentorship on the more technical aspects of sea moss cultivation would have benefitted them before project start up and during project implementation. They felt that this would have made establishing the sea moss plots easier.

3.4. Impact

The “impact” criterion sought to determine the most significant change resulting from the small grant projects.

The most significant changes shared by focus group members were:

- Increased capacity of the organisation in business development
- More knowledgeable of the benefits of sea moss
- Members became more self-motivated
- Improved leadership skills
- Additional source of income for the organisation
- Recognition from the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries during his budgetary speech
- Creating a new drink recipe
- Increased number of plots for growing sea moss
- Seeing communication become less and less over time
- Getting the confidence to start another business and earn income from it on a regular basis despite the challenges

3.5. Sustainability

This criterion sought to determine the extent to which the benefits of the small grant projects would continue now that the projects were completed.

Both LSG and ICFFA said that they had intentions to continue producing and selling sea moss. The LSG specifically noted that the organisation will continue to market and sell sea moss, employ others in the community, raise awareness of the benefits of sea moss and assist the community.

Focus group participants provided the following responses when asked what could help the benefits of their projects continue:

- Greater commitment by group members
- Continued teamwork
- Training and capacity building, particularly in quality control, marketing, business development, financial reporting, conflict resolution and leadership
- Greater group commitment
- Better marketing
- Mentoring - but using a different approach with more business support and face time from CANARI
- Capacity building on business survival

3.6. Coverage/Inclusiveness

The “coverage/inclusiveness” criterion sought to determine the extent to which women and youth were included in the implementation of the small grant projects and how the benefits of the projects impacted them.

Focus group members noted the following for their respective organisations:

LSG:

- The organisation is made up of over 95% women, so women have been involved throughout the project
- The women involved expressed their increased confidence not just in business but in themselves

- The project was able to provide employment and additional income to women
- Youth were involved in the cleaning and maintenance of the sea moss plots
- Youth who were involved were able to learn about being part of a community project
- The project also provided awareness to the schools in the area about the health benefits of sea moss

ICFFA:

- There are three women in the ICFFA. Effort will be made to involve more women in the organisation
- The organisation awarded a scholarship to the best agriculture student at its local high school. ICFFA intends to mentor the scholarship winner as well as train them in the rearing of sea moss and business development.

3.7. Coordination

This criterion sought to determine if the involvement of other stakeholders or agencies could have contributed to the successful implementation of the small grant projects.

Focus group members for both LSG and ICFFA believed that the involvement of other agencies would have contributed to more successful implementation of their projects. The following stakeholders/agencies were identified:

- The Co-operative Association
- The Government - could provide more assistance and incentives, support and capacity building for groups wanting to start small businesses.

4. Conclusion

Based on the evaluation findings, it would appear that the small grant programme met its objective of supporting capacity building of stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in sea moss farming, as a demonstration of sustainable livelihoods. Project stakeholders noted improved knowledge and skills from their participation in the project particularly in cultivating and processing (drying) sea moss and creating value-added products from sea moss. Grantees also noted their continued interest in building their capacity in sea moss cultivation and commercialisation, including operating sustainable SMEs.

Positive attitudes of project stakeholders, supportive partnerships (including support of mentors) and strong leadership appeared to be the key factors that contributed to grantees successfully meeting most of their project objectives. Factors which were identified as influencing the non-achievement of some project objectives included: limited commitment of group members (in part due to their unavailability because of working full-time jobs) to implement project activities; inadequate communication by project leaders about the project to group members including their role in specific activities and rigid reporting formats required by the donor which was felt to have taken up considerable time.

Overall, grantees felt that their small grant projects were a good use of money and time but opined that additional capacity building in the more technical aspects of sea moss cultivation before project start-up could have facilitated faster roll out of some key project activities. They also believed that involvement of other stakeholders such as the Co-operatives Association could have supported more successful project implementation.

Small grants appear to be an effective method to support capacity building of civil society organisations and small and microenterprises interested in developing sea moss cultivation and commercialisation as an alternative livelihood. Using mentoring as an approach to support project development and implementation of lower capacity grantees was also effective. However, considering the current capacity of the grantees to manage projects, grant sizes could have been smaller or the duration for project implementation could have been longer with more on-the-ground support provided by CANARI.

Summary of key results and lessons learned from the small grant programme:

- The community benefited through income generation, social awareness and programmes that were initiated with the youth.
- Strengthening communication and building capacity in business development remain key issues for both organisations.
- Both organisations have earned income through the sale of their sea moss and sea moss related products and intend to continue to grow and develop.
- The small grant and mentorship support played a critical role in the development of the grantees' seamoss businesses.
- The mentorship area can be tweaked to add in more business support and face time from CANARI.
- The potential for the value-added products is immense and yet to be tapped, both organisations are interested in expanding their value chain
- Leadership capacity building is essential.

Appendix 1: List of participants from focus groups in St. Kitts and Nevis

Participants list (St. Kitts)

Name	Email address
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Participants list (Nevis)

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Andwar Coates	-
Stedroy Pemberton	-
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Randy Morton	Morton.randy@gmail.com
Camesha Morton	

Appendix 2: Criteria and probing questions for focus group evaluations

Criteria	Probing questions	
	Grantees	Mentors

Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The objective of the small grant programme under the “Enhancing Alternative Livelihoods and Food Security through the Cultivation and Commercialisation of Sea Moss, St. Kitts and Nevis” project was to “support capacity building of stakeholders in St. Kitts & Nevis in seamoss farming, as a demonstration of sustainable livelihoods. To what extent was the objective of the small grant programme relevant to your needs? 2. To what extent is the objective of the small grant programme still valid for your organisation? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent was this mentoring opportunity relevant to your professional and personal interests?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the small grant programme help to build the capacity of stakeholders in St. Kitts & Nevis in seamoss farming as a sustainable livelihood? 2. What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of your project? 3. How effective were the use of small grants and mentoring as approaches to help build capacity of stakeholders? 4. Was the support provided by CANARI (including at the proposal development stage) effective in helping you achieve your objectives? 5. Was the support provided by your Mentor (including at the proposal development stage) effective in helping you achieve your objectives? 6. What worked well and what could have been done better? 7. Could different approaches have been used to improve the results of your project? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How effective was the mentoring process in supporting grantees to build capacity? 2. What were the major factors influencing your performance as a mentor? 3. Was the support provided by CANARI effective in helping you in your role as mentor? What worked well and what could have been done better? Could different approaches have been used to improve the support to you as mentor?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think that what you achieved in your small grant project was a good use of money and time? 2. Could the project have been implemented differently to achieve the same results with less money and in less time? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent was the mentoring an efficient approach to help build capacity of the organisation? 2. Could the capacity building have been implemented differently to achieve the same results with less money and in less time?

Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think is the most significant change as a result of your small grant project over the past year? 2. What real difference has the project made to your organisation's ability/ capacity to sustainably cultivate, harvest and commercialise sea moss? 3. How many people have been affected? How have they been affected? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think is the most significant change as a result of your mentoring experience over the past year? 2. How has this mentoring experience impacted on you professionally and personally?
Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent will the benefits of your project continue now that the grant funding has ended? 2. What do you think could help the benefits continue? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent will you continue to be a mentor to the group, or other groups, beyond the project? 2. What do you think could help you to continue mentoring?
Coverage/ Inclusiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent were women and youth included in the implementation of the project? 2. To what extent will the benefits of the project positively impact women and youth in your community? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent were you able to engage all genders and marginalised group members during your mentoring?
Coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could the involvement of other stakeholders or agencies have contributed to the successful implementation of your project? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could the involvement of other stakeholders or agencies have contributed to enhancing your mentoring role?