

Project title: OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) project

Project amount: Regional project with overall budget of US\$ 7.57m: Saint Lucia components: US\$ 241,544.00

Geared towards providing global benefits through the conservation of globally significant biodiversity, the OPAAL project sought to "*contribute to the conservation of biodiversity of global importance in the OECS participating countries by removing barriers to the effective management of protected areas (PA), and increasing the involvement of civil society and private sector in the planning, management and sustainable use of these areas*"^[1].

The origins of the present project began with a Block B grant awarded to the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) by the World Bank in late 2001 to assist in the preparation of the "*St. Lucia Coastal/Wetland Ecosystem Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Project*", aimed at supporting conservation and protected area management at national and local levels in Saint Lucia. Following an internal Bank review of the draft project proposal prepared by late May 2002, and further discussions with government officials and prospective co-financiers, consensus was reached on adjusting the project's design toward an OECS-wide regional approach supporting national demonstration activities. This approach was deemed to better ensure the sustainable establishment and management of PAs in the OECS.

The project objectives were achieved by:

- i. strengthening national and regional capacities in the sound management of PAs;
- ii. establishing or strengthening a number of demonstration PAs;
- iii. providing sustainable economic opportunities for environmentally compatible livelihoods in buffer zones of project-supported PAs; and
- iv. involving communities, civil society and private sector in the participatory management of these PAs.

The project was structured around four components:

1. Protected areas policy, legal and institutional arrangements reform;
2. Protected areas management and associated alternative livelihoods;
3. Building capacity for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management and increasing awareness; and
4. Project management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and information dissemination.

A central element of OPAAL's approach was to support the establishment or strengthening of one protected area per country, with a range of interventions that would test and demonstrate good practice in protected area planning and management, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods. In addition to the various national and regional studies conducted, the main activities conducted at PSEPA (Saint Lucia) included ^[2]:

- Official declaration of the PSEPA as a protected area
- Preparation of a site management plan
- Renovation of interpretation centre
- Provision of vessel to facilitate monitoring and surveillance

- Provision of public awareness equipment
- Training in communication skills to promote the site
- Production of interpretation signs
- Training in project planning and proposal writing (10 participants), literacy and numeracy for small business, and tour guiding (13 participants)
- Training in support of livelihoods – agro-tourism, arts and crafts, entrepreneurship and marketing, and kayak handling and snorkelling (total 59 trainees)
- Provision of seed funding to livelihoods activities (14 beneficiaries)

[1] Nichols, K.E. (2004) OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) Project Brief, (Adapted from the OPAAL Project Appraisal Document)

[2] Source: Renard, Y (2011) Final Review of the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) Project, OECS Secretariat