

Building Climate Resilience in the Caribbean

The story of collaborative climate action in the Caribbean (2007-2015)

Natural disasters and climate change impacts are felt frequently in the Caribbean region, which is composed of a number of small island states. As a joint response, the Governments of fifteen Caribbean nations initiated the development of a strategic framework for achieving sustainable development resilient to climate change in 2009. After a period of comprehensive participatory planning, their shared strategic framework resulted in a series of coordinated projects, in improved alignment of national strategies and in additional donor funding.

The insights emerging from this story are:

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| Starting from local conditions and needs to develop a relevant regional strategy | 3 ▶ |
| Designing a governance structure to enhance dialogue and national ownership | 3 ▶ |
| Building models of success to identify and share what works | 4 ▶ |
| Using climate resilience knowledge and tools to improve livelihoods | 4 ▶ |
| Investing in an inclusive consultation process to build a strong foundation for implementation | 5 ▶ |
| Identifying different entry points to engage multiple private sector organisations in delivering resilience and livelihood interventions | 5 ▶ |

Context

For the governments of the Caribbean, the idea of combining climate change and development is an obvious choice.

Especially for this region the question of its vulnerability to natural hazards is a very important part of the work and conditions we live in. Our geography is one that we can't escape: hurricanes, seismic activity. The Caribbean is on that volcanic arc of fire if you will. That has been an issue that we have placed at the forefront of our work. Now even more so with the issue of climate change, which threatens to make that challenge even more difficult for our countries.

Cheryl Dixon, [Caribbean Development Bank](#)

In the early 2000's, donors including the World Bank invested in a large number of pilot projects on climate adaptation in the region, increasing both the practical knowledge base—and the need for coordination. As more Caribbean countries moved towards middle-income status, traditional development cooperation funding dried up. This further increased incentives for regional coordination and an ambitious focus on climate change.

Grenada never really recovered from Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The storm wiped out 200% of its GDP. The island has been experiencing periods of El Nino type weather events since then. Its fiscal deficits are accumulating. That makes it difficult to pursue the kind of resilience programs it wants.

Dr Kenrick Leslie, [CCCCC](#)

Key stakeholders and their roles

The role of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID)

When DFID's Caribbean programme underwent a strategic review, they realized that their work so far had underestimated the region's vulnerability to climate change and disaster risk. The emerging regional process centred around the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), it was an opportunity to connect existing scientific models with policy work and demonstrate adaptation on a practical level. DFID took a leadership role in orchestrating donor alignment, strengthening the governance of the process and boosting project implementation capacity at the regional level. The result was an implementation plan owned by all 15 governments in the region.

"DFID was one of the first donors to start to mobilise around the implementation plan [in 2012]" Simone Banister, [DFID](#)

In addition to DFID, the following stakeholders were interviewed for this story:

Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) –

Dr Trotz, Dr Leslie and Dr Bynoe are assisting with the coordination of climate action across the Caribbean region.

Caribsave – Owen Day and Newton Eristhee are delivering the C-FISH project under the implementation plan. They are working with local communities, national governments and private sector partners around coastal zone management.

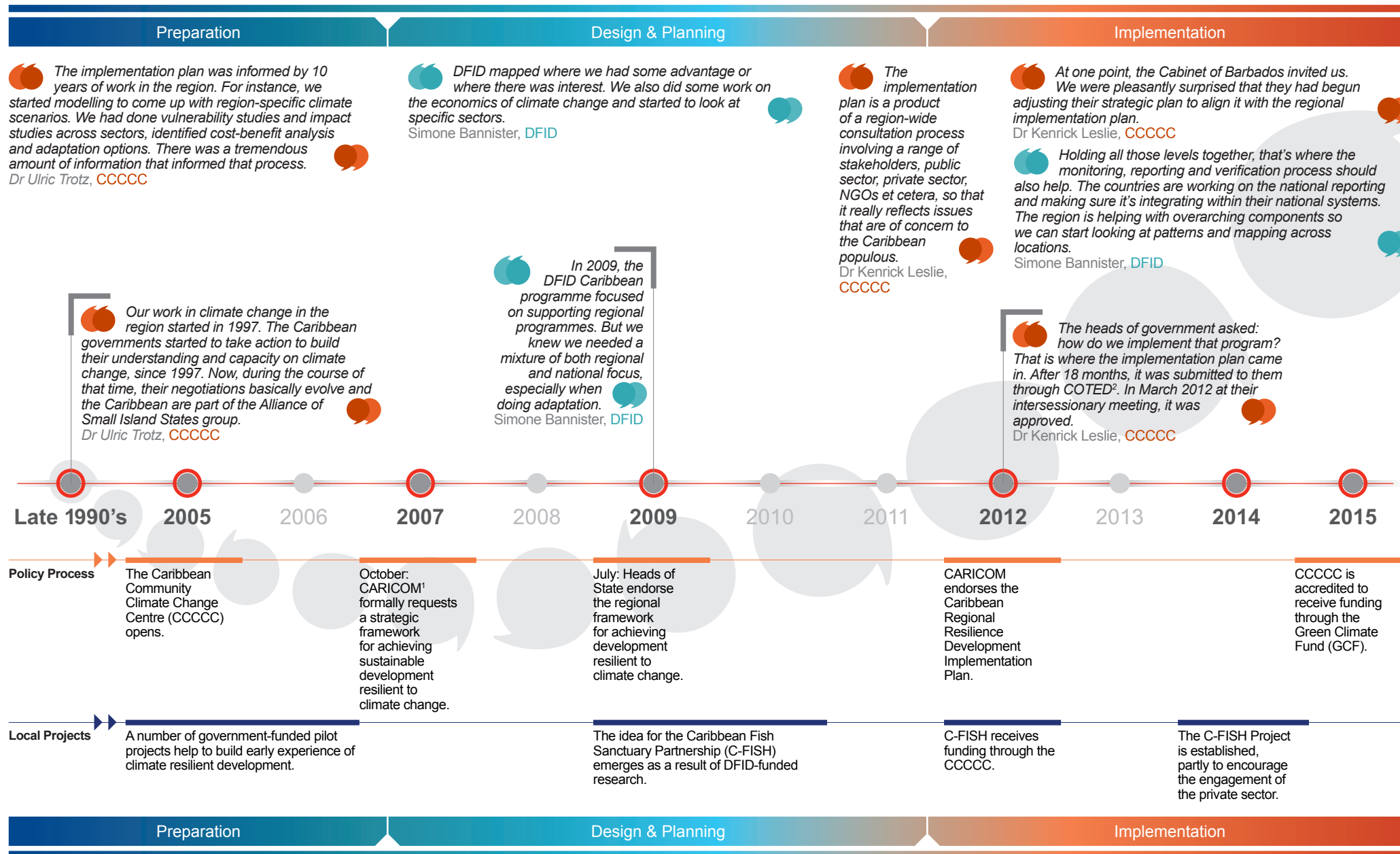
Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) – Cheryl Dixon heads the Environment and Sustainability unit at the CDB and has played a key role in mobilising resources for finance readiness activities and climate risk management tools.

Sandals Foundation – Heidi Clarke coordinates this resort operator's charitable foundation involvement in the Caribbean Fish Sanctuary Partnership (C-FISH) project.

Government of Grenada – Permanent Secretary Bernadette Lendore-Sylvester helped to operationalise the strategic framework and accompanying implementation plan for her islands through two desalination plants and the C-FISH project.



Timeline



Emerging Insights

Starting from local conditions and needs to develop a relevant regional strategy

Coordinated through the CCCCC, the small island states of the Caribbean have developed a joint response to the impacts of climate change. After a period of experiments and pilot projects, the shared strategic framework has enabled them to articulate priority areas and an approach for addressing some of the impacts associated with climate variability and change. The 15 national governments are driving implementation, creating an enabling policy environment. Delivery partners are NGOs, private sector organisations and regional institutions closest to local communities. Aligning activities at regional and national levels remains a constant challenge for implementation.

Before, the interventions would have come from the outside. Now we are asking: how can we help communities help themselves—given the information; given a better understanding of the processes at work; and given what you are doing for yourselves. But that is simply not enough because we have to make changes at the national level in terms of government policies because without that, it's not going to be sustainable.

Cheryl Dixon, Caribbean Development Bank

Basically all of our regional programmes are defined by national priorities. Whatever we do must have relevance to the countries. That is a very important part of the fabric.

Dr Ulric Trotz, CCCCC

Trying to do all things for all countries as a regional institution isn't always possible. In some cases we see delays because we can only move when all countries are ready. In some instances you need to start with a few. That's been a bit tricky and that tension continues.

Simone Banister, DFID

We have to ask: how can we make these programmes relevant to communities? There is always a need for an organisation to broker trust. When we go to each island they're all different. Our approach has to change for each community and each initiative needs to change. One of the roles of the CCCCC is to provide technical policy expertise to governments, create a database of knowledge and share models of success.

Owen Day, Caribsavé

Designing a governance structure to enhance dialogue and national ownership

The CCCCC was able to capitalise on fora with a direct line to heads of governments and high level decision makers at the regional level, such as the Council on Trade and Economic Development (COTED). This in turn strengthened a dialogue between governments and regional institutions, and allowed the strategic framework to reflect national priorities and regional alignment. As a regional institution, the CCCCC has a key role in navigating these political processes and getting buy-in from all stakeholders involved. Both the strategic framework and implementation plan have been designed in consultation with: national governments, members of parliament, NGOs and community organisations and private sector partners.

The heads of government asked: how do we implement that program? That is where the implementation plan came in. After 18 months, it was submitted to them through COTED. In March 2012 at their intersessionary meeting, it was approved. Shortly after that, the Cabinet of Barbados invited us. We were pleasantly surprised that they had begun adjusting their strategic plan to align it with the regional implementation plan.

Dr Kenrick Leslie, CCCCC

There are overlaps within the governance structures of these institutions, or in the national institutions. We need to constantly ensure that they are linking up with each other and sharing. Sometimes the traffic is one way and some of the traffic is back the other way, but it's a constant flow of information between the two.

Simone Banister, DFID

Under the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), the COTED is the highest policy level because it involves ministers directly. Through COTED we have direct access to the endorsement of the heads of governments at their annual meetings. The COTED also has a specific role through the Prime Minister that is responsible for environment and sustainable development within the CARICOM quasi-cabinet.

Dr Kenrick Leslie, CCCCC

We still needed to boost both the systems nationally and regionally to be able to deliver. We've been cognisant whichever way you cut it; you still need both of those to grow. So how do we gear up the regional institutions to manage this? At this time the CCCCC was delivering a couple of projects and surviving on the management fees. To become a proper governing body and implementation agency they needed more sustainable structures.

Simone Banister, DFID

Emerging Insights

Building models of success to identify and share what works

To implement the strategic framework, the Caribbean region often tests interventions through pilot projects. When successful, these models can be adapted and scaled up to other contexts. Resilience interventions were often tested on one strategically selected island to capitalise on an enabling environment. Other regional governments then visit successful models before engaging in similar activities.

With C-FISH, we wanted to focus on creating models of success. Only when you have a model will you be able to get people's attention; they need to see and feel. We had to be strategic about where we wanted to work. At times the government wanted to support more locations, but we pushed back.

And now we have some great models of successful fish sanctuaries. Other government partners have visited the sanctuaries and now they want to do more.

Owen Day, [Caribsave](#)

What's the role of these demonstration-type projects? It's to indicate what's possible, and then to work with governments to either change policy or to get them implemented within their respective countries. In St. Lucia a pilot project looked at demonstrating that building codes are worth pursuing. Clearly, they have financial implications because if we want persons to build to a certain standard, the costs of such buildings are likely to go up. After the project, the Government of St. Lucia changed its policy to ensure that any new hotel entity would need to put in the same technology. Based on that, it was repeated in Barbados.

Dr Mark Bynoe, [CCCCC](#)

One of the greatest benefits of C-FISH was that they have been so involved in being with the community and seeing what's working and sharing from island to island. I think we've benefited greatly from that.

Heidi Clarke, [Sandals Foundation](#)

Using climate resilience knowledge and tools to improve livelihoods

In the Caribbean, the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable communities are particularly climate and disaster sensitive. As implementation partners work with communities on a daily basis, they design climate interventions to make the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable more resilient, thus helping them improve or secure alternative livelihoods. Strategic plans and policies at the regional and international level reflect and build on this strong synergy: resilience and disaster risk reduction are seen as tools to more sustained livelihoods development.

People are thinking employment and medical. They're not realising that we rely so much on the environment and there are aspects of it that we have to work on to have those livelihoods and to have that employment. Now that local fishermen are feeling the effects of not being able to catch fish, and we're seeing what's happening to our coral reefs, they now say: 'hold on a second. What can we do?'

Heidi Clarke, [Sandals Foundation](#)

This is a community project in Saint Thomas, Jamaica. It was interesting that they were linking degradation and vegetation loss in their communities to the fact that most of the young men had very little employment opportunities. They were all charcoal burners. They were cutting down these trees. Their community was convincing them to participate in this project in a way that would also provide them with an alternative livelihood stream and provide them with the information on the ongoing challenges that they faced: drought and extreme loss of portable water from traditional springs and so on. They required a different kind of dialogue. We're learning. It is not as quick as one would want to move resources into these communities but working with communities, it takes time.

Cheryl Dixon, [Caribbean Development Bank](#)

The main occupation of our male islanders is local traditional building of boats and using them for fishing and trading. In addition, the boats are used for the staging of our annual Regatta Festivals. So we are completely dependent on the sea. For fishermen to preserve their catch and then sell high quality fish on the open market, they need ice. For that you need water. We have suffered from severe droughts in the past. The desalination plant has a strong impact on livelihoods of local fisherfolk and the entire boating sector, because it produces clean water.

Bernadette Lendore-Sylvester,
[Government of Grenada](#)

Emerging Insights

Investing in an inclusive consultation process to build a strong foundation for implementation

At a regional level, the CCCCC is drawing heavily on the iteration of the implementation plan and stakeholder consultations, to ensure strong ownership. The strategic priorities are being revised and new priorities, such as energy and health, are being added. Consultations with national governments, NGOs, community organisations and the private sector are at the core of this process. They reflect priorities and realities on the ground. We also heard from the Caribbean Development Bank, the Government of Grenada, Caribsave and the Sandals Foundation that partnerships, social engineering and participatory processes are a must to ensure the sustained impact of resilience programmes.

I used to spend a lot of time developing policies and laws for marine protection. Now we're realising we're managing people—there needed to be a dialogue. Having the right incentives for engaging people is really important. For me, this social engineering is ecosystem based adaptation.
Newton Eristhee, Caribsave

There are some other issues which are now emerging, and we'll be working on them with policymakers. We have seen that there is a greater need for us to change the energy architecture within our region: focus more heavily on renewable energy, but also on energy efficiency. That needs to be given greater prominence. We have also recognized that there is a greater importance on the health impacts associated with climate change. That is something that we are looking at and need to articulate a bit better within our regional approaches to climate change.
Dr Mark Bynoe, CCCCC

The fishermen are not pulling in the fish they used to pull in. They have to go out deeper and deeper. We're in constant dialogue as to what's happening in the community. What we found is that they often did not understand why these things were happening.
Heidi Clarke, Sandals Foundation

When the marine protected area was first declared there was a big tension. Change brings fear. Change brings uncertainty. Caribsave worked with the local authorities to enhance the involvement of the fishermen and this brought them on board. Whenever you want, change you have to be prepared to go down to the level of where people are and to educate them about the benefit that will come. We try to show the fishermen that creating the sanctuary for the fish means that the fish population will multiply and there will be spill over.
Bernadette Lendore-Sylvester, Government of Grenada

Identifying different entry points to engage multiple private sector organisations in delivering resilience and livelihood interventions

Particularly around coastal zone management tourism has provided a straightforward entry point for the private sector to engage in climate interventions. Vibrant coral reefs, beautiful sandy beaches, and lush natural environments make the destination that's being sold to tourists. Sustaining that environment ensures future business.


A growing part of C-FISH has been the engagement of the private sector. The Sandals Foundations wanted to do more around community involvement and marine conservation, and their interests coincided with those of our programme. We started talking to other companies about this and we were surprised how many of them wanted to help. Their help was not providing money but providing markets that can diversify community livelihoods. We need to think more strategically how companies' in-kind contributions can be more beneficial. The process takes time and often requires changes in the corporate culture.
Owen Day, Caribsave

Engagement in other sectors, for example energy, is more complex. When the risks associated with resilience projects and initial investments are too high for the private sector to get involved, pilot projects test different approaches, for example, providing specific credit lines for renewables and energy efficiency.

About 40% of the bank's investment in the region goes to the private sector through national development banks. We started a pilot program 1-2 years ago. We provide a portion of these lines of credit specifically for renewables and to promote energy efficiency. We have twinned this with business advisory services support. There is a lot of interest because there's a general lack of understanding about renewable energy and energy efficiency in the region.
Cheryl Dixon, Caribbean Development Bank

Governments in the Caribbean need to emphasize the importance of being involved in the environment and marine conservation. They need to try and drive this home to private sector and communities on whole.
Heidi Clarke, Sandals Foundation

Perceived outcomes




CCCCC has just been accredited to the Green Climate Fund (GCF). That's been a great result, not only in terms of access to finance but also in ensuring that CCCCC has proper systems and procedures in place. Accreditation requires scrutiny of accountability mechanisms, procurement systems and due diligence, and has thus created an incentive and given them guidance to strengthen their work.

Simone Banister, DFID



The process and this programme have had a much greater impact than just the production of 2 documents and the securing of £4.95million. We've been able to leverage other assistance, for example from KfW to the tune of €12.9million. We also have an EU-GCCA project which is worth €8million. The strategic framework has been used to build strong partnerships going forward.

Dr Mark Bynoe, CCCCC




What I'm most proud of is that even within the bank there has been a change in mindsets. When I got there the engineers said: 'do we need a treehugger?' Now we have young engineers here who fully embrace the concept of gender equity. They're big into understanding community consultations and why we need to have them, why they simply can't go in and build a school and not talk to the community about it. A lot has changed here.

Cheryl Dixon, Caribbean Development Bank



We've just finished our first environmental survey and we have been able to report a 250% increase in fish biomass in one of our sanctuaries. Also, we opened a little office in the middle of a fishing community, which we painted bright blue with lots of fish. There's a lot of traffic coming there, curious what this little office is about. People want to learn about the sanctuary and about the surroundings. It's really coming together as a partnership.

Heidi Clarke, Sandals Foundation



A lot of the strength of the implementation plan is that it tried to capture what countries were doing and their existing priorities. In doing that, it captured a reality but it was reflecting rather than shaping that reality. If you frame it differently [you could] say, well, this is a knowledge exchange, so that we all know who's doing what and we can compare and learn. But it would probably then be a different living document and process than an implementation plan itself.

Martin Whiteside, INTRAC/CDKN impact reviewer

Questions for reflection

1

How do we align strategies and priority areas of work at the regional and national levels?

2

How do all the different levels of work fit together, so they add value to one another?

3

How can we best resource regional institutions so they have sufficient capacity and financial sustainability?


4

What are promising approaches of integrating resilience, disaster risk reduction and sectoral work?

5

How can we balance shared risks and upfront investments to allow for a swift transition to renewable energy?

Closing thoughts



You have to believe in the possibility for success and change. You have to be willing to be engaged at every level—from the politicians who have a very short-term horizon to the residents in the community who feel that there is very little hope. You have to be willing to navigate. We have to have a longer view for these kinds of programmes and initiatives: it's not like building a road. There are many, many interlocking parts. You have to bring these all together and be able to, at the same time, shift gears and acknowledge that isn't working and find what might work. You have to be prepared to do it for the long haul.

Cheryl Dixon,
Caribbean Development Bank



About

This story is part of the DFID's sustainable development learning dialogue. As part of the dialogue we spoke to ten stakeholders about their experiences and perceptions of building resilience in the Caribbean. This is the story we heard. All stakeholders helped us review the story and quotes before publishing it. For more information and to participate, go to www.sddialogue.net.

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