LIGHTHOUSE STORY: RESILIENT CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES

Best Practices Strengthening Climate Resilience through Nature based Solutions for Resilient Caribbean Communities

Focus area: Climate Adaptation project

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The "Resilient Caribbean Communities (CCR)" project aims at developing nature-based solutions to help vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change in the Caribbean Biological Corridor. The participatory approach focuses on working directly with community members to strengthen the ecosystems they directly or indirectly depend on.

The project has five strategic goals:

1. **Developing Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) solutions:** EbA plans based on vulnerability and risk analyses including all important ecosystem functions are developed and implemented in a participatory process.
2. **Strengthening local organizations and civil society:** The project applies the multi-actor partnership (MAP) approach to unite diverse stakeholders in developing climate adaptation solutions that protect biodiversity, support ecosystems, and secure livelihoods.
3. **Climate-smart agriculture:** Promoting agroforestry, silvopastoral systems, natural erosion control, and climate-sensitive value chains for food security.
4. **Integrated water management:** Land use plans and the reforestation of watersheds secure people's water supply. At the same time, species-rich forest areas are better protected. Fire brigades are trained to prevent forest fires at an early stage.
5. **Integration of EbA into national strategies:** Project results are made available and replicable. The solutions developed will be integrated into national climate strategies and adaptation plans.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Name:	Resilient Caribbean Communities (CCR)
Location:	Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba
Objectives:	Ecosystem-based adaptation, climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, resilient livelihoods, governance
Duration:	2019- 2027
Budget:	EUR 20,519,791(including own funds)
Funded by:	BMUV
Partners:	OroVerde, Centro Naturaleza, ENDA Dominicana, UPSA, BIOECO, Concert Action

THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE – A REGION AT RISK

As global temperatures rise, the Caribbean deals with a host of complex issues that threaten livelihoods and ecosystems.

- **More frequent extreme weather events** - Rising sea surface temperatures fuel stronger storms, posing significant threats to infrastructure, agriculture, and human lives.
- **Water scarcity and drought** - Rising temperatures lead to increased evaporation rates, exacerbating water scarcity and drought in the Caribbean. Freshwater resources are already limited in some areas, and prolonged droughts can severely impact agriculture, public health, and access to clean drinking water.
- **Threats to biodiversity and ecosystems** - rising temperatures and ocean acidification are putting sensitive ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, and tropical forests, and their ecosystem services, such as food, freshwater or climate regulation, are at risk.

Coffee agroforestry system in El Cercado, Dominican Republic.

Fruit tree grafting in Thiotte, Haiti.

A multi-level approach: The CCR project works at local, national, and regional levels, aiming at engaging stakeholders to mainstream EbA into public policy.
Find out more: www.ccr-project.com

HOW THE PROJECT STRENGTHENS CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EbA) has emerged as a promising strategy that uses the natural protective mechanisms of ecosystems and the services, they offer to enable vulnerable rural communities adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

By **conducting vulnerability and risk analyses**, the project is able to design EbA plans and interventions that are informed by current and future climate risks and thereby better address vulnerability factors.

The EbA approach is people-centered (anthropocentric) and employs a participatory process. This means that a key objective is to help communities strengthen their agricultural livelihoods and economic benefits, which depend directly or indirectly on multiple ecosystem services, including through the support of local engagement and knowledge sharing. By transforming and adapting their production systems according to the changing climate conditions, and by conserving and restoring the ecosystem services they depend on, the communities can increase their climate and overall resilience, while preserving traditional practices and cultural ties to the land.

By integrating EbA solutions designed within the project into national climate strategies and adaptation plans, this strengthens an enabling environment for improved climate adaptation governance.

The project applies to a **gender-sensitive approach** in all activities. Gender shapes how communities interact with their environment and respond to climate change. By considering the specific needs, knowledge, and roles of women, men, and groups in vulnerable conditions, EbA initiatives can become more contextually relevant and impactful.

IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The crucial role of governance in Ecosystem-Based Adaptation. Governance is crucial in EbA because it provides the structure and guidance needed to make sure that EbA efforts work effectively. Good governance ensures that resources are used fairly, people's voices are heard, and rules are followed, while promoting cooperation among various sectors. This enhances the resilience of ecosystems and communities, enabling EbA measures to be sustainable, equitable, and responsive to changing environmental conditions.

The project highlights the synergies between the different paradigms of **biodiversity conservation, livelihood resilience and adapted agricultural practices** for climate change resilience and emphasizing the need for **regional synergies and systemic approaches**.

To date, over 1,800 rural households in Haiti, the DR and Cuba, have implemented EbA measures on their plot, which has led to benefits such as reduced soil erosion, increased water retention and better crop yields (including coffee, cocoa, avocado or citrus fruit). Since the project began, up to 2,500 hectares of degraded areas have benefited from reforestation, erosion control, conservation and soil improvement measures. In addition, 750 households have gained access to improved drinking water through the combination of EbA and grey infrastructure. By the end of 2027, it is foreseen that at least 60% of the direct target households will have increased their income and will have reduced their crop losses from extreme weather events as a result of integrating EbA measures.
The project will promote replication and scaling of successful EbA approaches by presenting and discussing them at a range of national and international exchange fora. This will also support the mainstreaming of EbA at policy level, which will be demonstrated by local actors (including government stakeholders and civil society organizations) that were trained as part of the project, who will have integrated the EbA approach into strategic planning and policy documents.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Ecosystems are not bound by political borders; thus cross-border and ecosystem-wide approaches are key. The project is situated in the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC), linking areas of high biodiversity significance across countries.
- Strong governance and partnerships are crucial in EbA interventions, and incorporating EbA into policy and planning frameworks is essential for its effective implementation and contribution to improved climate governance.
- There is a need for clear incentives in place to change harmful traditional practices, such as slash-and – burn activities in a durable manner.
- NbS can deliver multiple benefits for the people (improved livelihoods and food security) and the planet (restoring, preserving biodiversity while increasing adaptive capacities and overall resilience to climate change).

“We have learned that if we do not treat the forest as our enemy, but manage it well, we will have greater biodiversity and more fertile soils.”
Wendy Jaquez, smallholder farmer, Dominican Republic

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