



NETWORKING FISHERFOLK IN GUYANA THROUGH A STRENGTHENED NATIONAL FISHERFOLK ORGANISATION AND COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND LIVELIHOODS

PROJECT REPORT

Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries



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OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY FOR ECOSYSTEM STEWARDSHIP AND LIVELIHOODS IN CARIBBEAN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES (STEWARDFISH) PROJECT

- From September 2019 to July 2021, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) collaborated with the Caribbean ICT Research Programme (CIRP), Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies of the University of the West (UWI-CERMES) and the fisheries authorities of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines to execute the Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries ([StewardFish](#)) project.
- The main objective of the StewardFish project was to empower fisherfolk throughout fisheries value-chains to engage in resource management, decision -making processes and sustainable livelihoods with strengthened institutional support at all levels.
- StewardFish was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

OVERVIEW OF CARIBBEAN SEA INNOVATION FUND (CARSIF) - MICROGRANTS SCHEME FOR CARIBBEAN FISHERFOLK ORGANISATIONS

- Under the StewardFish project, CANARI implemented a US\$20,000 microgrant facility to provide support to Caribbean fisherfolk organisations for organisational strengthening initiatives that would enhance their capacity to participate in coastal and marine resources governance and management, including ecosystem stewardship, in the Caribbean.
- This microgrant facility formed part of CANARI's Caribbean Sea Innovation Fund (CarSIF). CarSIF supports innovation and best practices by civil society and community enterprises to address priority needs and actions in the Caribbean on marine and coastal resources governance and management.
- In December 2020, the **Guyana National Fisherfolk Organisation (GNFO)** was awarded a microgrant US\$4,000 from this microgrant facility for their project, "**Networking fisherfolk in Guyana through a strengthened national fisherfolk organisation and collective action for sustainable fisheries and livelihoods**". The project was implemented over a 5.5 month period from November 30, 2020 to April 15, 2021.

ABOUT THE GUYANA NATIONAL FISHERFOLK ORGANISATION



The Guyana National Fisherfolk Organisation (GNFO) was formed on August 20, 2008 as a Trade Development Organisation under the Friendly Societies Act of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The GNFO represents all small-scale fishers in Guyana and is a forum to address the concerns of small-scale fishers, and ensure that their voices are heard locally, nationally and regionally.

The GNFO's roles, according to the organisation's constitution, are:

- To provide education, training and institutional strengthening awareness for its members
- To advocate at local, national and regional levels the interest of members
- To be involved in the conservation and management of fisheries resources
- To mobilise resources for members
- To provide facilities for processing and marketing of products of members
- To foster affiliation to Caribbean fisherfolk organisations

ISSUE ADDRESSED BY GRANT

- In the years following its formation the GNFO did not function as expected and eventually became dormant.
- The organisation was inactive until 2017 when representatives of Meadowbank Fishermen's Co-op in Georgetown, Charity and Lima Fishermen's Co-op, Rosignol Fishermen's Co-op, 3-Door Fishermen's Co-op, and Upper Corentyne Fishermen's Co-op were elected to serve on the Executive Committee.
- Between 2017 and 2018 the Executive Committee convened approximately 10 meetings but has not met since late 2018.
- Interest and participation in the GNFO dwindled because members and fisherfolk had the perception that all issues brought to GNFO would be solved by the Fisheries Department or government. When their issues were not addressed, members believed that their participation in the GNFO was useless.
- Additionally, Executive Committee members from Berbice and the Essequibo Coast found it difficult to travel to Georgetown for monthly meetings resulting in non-attendance.
- As such, the current Chairman, Mr. Pamashwar Jainarine, of the Upper Corentyne Fishermen's Co-op and has been shouldering the responsibilities of the GNFO and representing the organisation locally, nationally and regionally, with little support from other members.



PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

- To strengthen the GNFO through an engaged membership and sustained collective action for sustainable fisheries and livelihoods in Guyana

Objective

- To increase participation of primary fisherfolk organisations in the GNFO through development and implementation of a national membership outreach and communication plan

I. MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION CONDUCTED

At the start of the project, a stakeholder analysis was conducted by the project team to identify the primary fisherfolk organisations in Guyana that would be targeted to become members of the GNFO.

Following the stakeholder analysis, the project team developed an outreach and communication plan to guide scoping activities to be conducted with the target primary fisherfolk organisations including raising their awareness about the objectives and functions of the GNFO.

Key output:

- Membership outreach and communication plan developed.



2. KEY ISSUES IMPACTING PARTICIPATION PRIMARY FISHERFOLK ORGANISATIONS IN THE GNFO IDENTIFIED

Guided by the communication and outreach plan, the project team conducted a diagnostic scoping to identify the key issues impacting participation of the primary fisherfolk organisations in the GNFO. The scoping was done via face-to-face and WhatsApp meetings with the leaders and core members of the identified primary fisherfolk organisations. Face-to-face meetings were held at the landing sites of the various primary fisherfolk organistaions.

A report documenting the findings from the scoping exercise was prepared.

After the scoping activities, the primary fisherfolk organistaions were asked to submit two nominees each to be elected at an upcoming GNFO election to represent the respective landing sites. The nominees were from across the country and were kept up to date on the progress of the elections via WhatsApp, emails and phones calls.



2. KEY ISSUES IMPACTING PARTICIPATION PRIMARY FISHERFOLK ORGANISATIONS IN THE GNFO IDENTIFIED

Key outputs:

- Stakeholder feedback received on the key issues impacting the participation of primary fisherfolk organisations in the GNFO.
- Report of diagnostic scoping of key issues impacting participation primary fisherfolk organisations in the GNFO prepared.
- 7 primary fisherfolk organisations engaged, their issues identified and their commitment secured for increased participation in GNFO.



3. GENDER-INCLUSIVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RE-ELECTED WITH REPRESENTATION FROM GNFO'S MEMBERSHIP



Photo Credit: GNFO

On March 28 2021, the GNFO elected its new Executive Committee.

The election was attended by the the Minister of Agriculture -Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha; Minister of Labour – Mr. Joseph Hamilton; Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture- Ms. Delma Nedd and Chief Fisheries Officer – Mr. Denzil Roberts.

The GNFO's new Executive Committee consists of 7 members, 2 of whom are women.

3. RE-ELECTING A GENDER-INCLUSIVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WITH REPRESENTATION FROM GNFO'S MEMBERSHIP

Key outputs:

- Gender-inclusive Executive Committee re-elected with representation from GNFO's membership

Members of the GNFO's new Executive Committee:

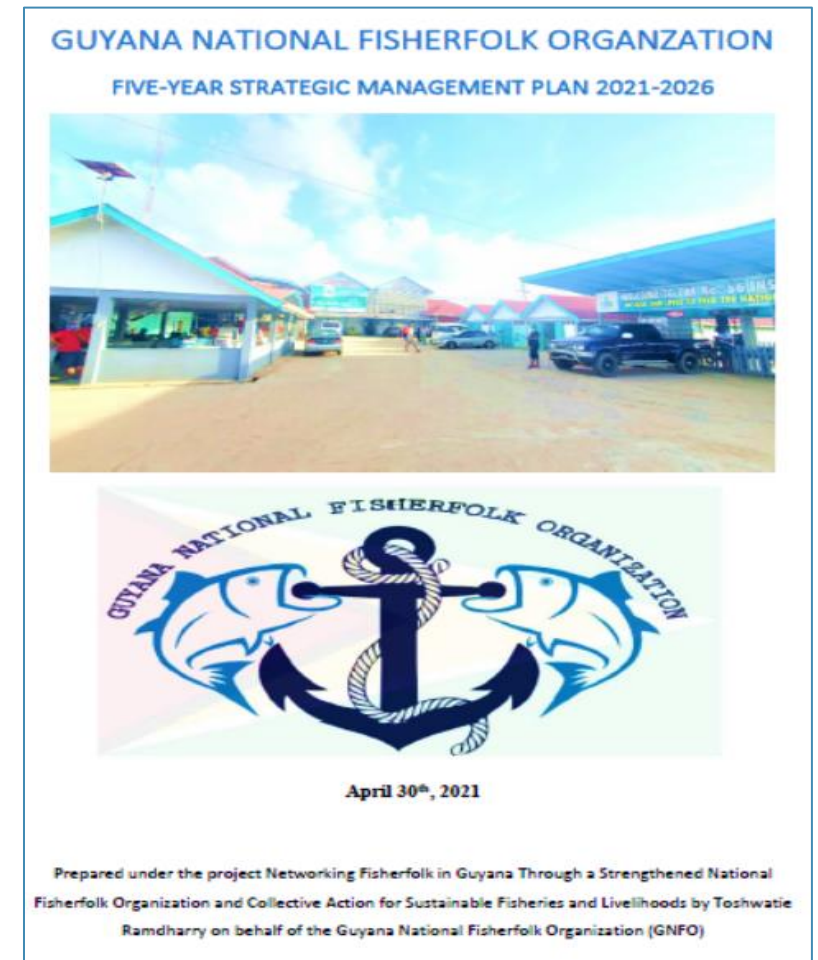
1. Mr. Pamashwar Jainarine – Chairman- Upper Corentyne Fishermen's Cooperative Society Ltd. Region # 6
2. Mr. Deonarine Singh – Deputy Chairman- Essequibo Potential and Interested Fishermen's Group, Region #2
3. Ms. Renita Joseph – Secretary- Greater Georgetown Fishermen's Cooperative Society, Region #4
4. Mr. Veeram Ramsarran – Treasurer- Albion Landing Site, Region #6
5. Ms. Rehanna Roopnarine- Asst. Treasurer/Secretary- Rosignol Fishermen's Cooperative Society Ltd. Region #5
6. Mr. Vishnu Persaud – Committee Member- De'Edward Three Door Cooperative Society, Region #5
7. Mr. Hemchand Chanderbir – Committee Member- Parika Fishermen's Cooperative Society, Region 3

4. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING EXERCISE COMMENCED

On April 8, 2021 the GNFO held its first meeting where the newly formed Executive Committee discussed plans for the GNFO and how to address the challenges of fisherfolk in Guyana. At the meeting, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was done to start development of a 5-year strategic plan for the GNFO.

The GNFO's Executive Committee meets every first Thursday of the month and are currently working on:

- Establishing guidelines for membership
- Developing a letterhead, stamps and other forms of identification
- Addressing issues affecting fish landing sites
- Completing a 5-year strategic plan



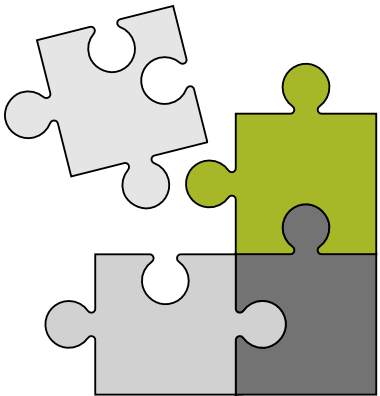
4. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING EXERCISE COMMENCED

Key outputs:

- Work on the GNFO's strategic planning commenced under the project through the development of a draft five-year Strategic Management Plan 2021-2026.



CHALLENGES



- The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions (e.g., no large gatherings) meant that the project team was unable to meet with the full executives of the various landing sites. The face-to-face meetings were limited to four to ten members per meeting. The team met only key management personnel and fisherfolk leaders at the sites and in a widely spaced area observing all COVID-19 protocols.
- Guyana is a large country with three counties divided by rivers. Some of the fisherfolk operate in remote and underdeveloped locations and it was difficult to communicate with and visit all the locations to meet with these fisherfolk. The scoping team was unable to meet face-to-face with fisherfolk in the Essequibo region.
- The Three Door Co-op nominees opted out of the election the day before the election. The project manager advised the Chairman of the Co-op to send an alternate representative to be nominated for the election.
- At one landing site there were two groups that claimed they were managing the site. The project team resolved this by inviting both sides to send a representative to the election.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- The questionnaires and scoping activities highlighted the main issues that were affecting primary fisherfolk organisations and helped to understand the true problems they face.
- The scoping report and the outreach and communication plan helped to plan other activities under the project including the election activities. Planning helped to eliminate delays during the election.
- In general, the project was well designed, which made implementation easy.
- The success of the project was due to both the commitment and skills of the project team and the desire of the fisherfolk to be a part of the GNFO.
- GNFO has a good working relationship with the Fisheries Department and was supported by the Department in the implementation of the project.



LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

- Given the limited engagement of the primary fisherfolk organisations by the GNFO over the years, it was anticipated that their cooperation and involvement in the project would be minimal. However, this was not the case, as fisherfolk were very enthusiastic and excited when they were invited to participate in scoping activities. They were very interactive and showed commitment to make the GNFO work this time around.
- Most of the fisherfolk who participated in the project owned hand-held smart devices such as phones and tablets. This made it easy to communicate with them digitally via WhatsApp and email.



Photo credit: GNFO



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Visit the StewardFish project webpage: <https://canari.org/stewardfish-project>