



FORUM

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS): A civil society perspective on priorities for sustainable development

Nicole Leotaud and Anna Cadiz

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

Abstract: *The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and other members of the Independent Research Forum (IRF2015) are promoting a new development agenda which must recognise the mutual dependency of economic, social and environmental outcomes; be grounded in local experiences and needs; and be adaptable to diverse contexts and capacities. Major shifts are needed in how we approach development: from ‘development assistance’ to a universal global compact; from top-down decision-making to multi-stakeholder decision-making processes; from economic models that increase inequalities and risks to ones that reduce them; from business models based on shareholder value to those based on stakeholder value; from meeting ‘easy’ development targets to tackling systematic barriers to progress; from damage control to investing in resilience; from concepts and testing to scaled up interventions; and from multiple discrete actions to cross-scale coordination. Caribbean experiences, needs, and opportunities must be considered in global agenda-setting. Priorities for sustainable development in the Caribbean islands include participatory and integrated inter-sectoral governance and management of natural resources including for regional resources in the Caribbean Sea. Priorities for building resilience to climate change and natural disasters include integrating local and traditional knowledge into decision-making, participatory policy development and planning, and facilitating community-led adaptation planning and action.*

Developing and strengthening partnerships with SIDS civil society actors is a critical strategy to achieving a coordinated, inclusive and effective approach to sustainable development in SIDS and will require building capacity of both government and civil society to go forward with a collective voice on Caribbean SIDS priorities for SDGs post-2015.

Keywords: Caribbean, SIDS, sustainable development, civil society, green economy, partnerships for development, participatory governance

INTRODUCTION

A strong civil society perspective is needed as part of the discussions on SIDS priorities for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States to be held in Samoa in 2014 and the development of the global post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), a non-profit, technical organisation working across the islands of the Caribbean for nearly thirty years, is well positioned to share ideas rooted in on-the-ground experiences and informed by links with global knowledge networks such as the Independent Research Forum (IRF2015).

CANARI works to facilitate and promote participatory approaches to natural resource management in order to improve and create sustainable livelihood opportunities while protecting the natural resources upon which these depend. CANARI has thus always intertwined the elements of sustainable development, simultaneously addressing participatory governance, livelihoods and well-being and ecosystem health.

CANARI is bringing its deep Caribbean experience into a global civil society network through membership in the IRF2015¹, a global think tank alliance collaborating to promote an integrated approach to development of post-2015 goals and strategies so that development issues can be approached in a way that integrates their environmental, economic and social dimensions. IRF2015's vision² is a post-2015 development agenda which recognises the mutual dependency of economic, social and environmental outcomes; is grounded in local experiences and needs; and is adaptable to diverse contexts and capacities.

A revitalised approach to sustainable development recognises the intertwined economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainable development but offers an economic lens through

which it can be examined. Caribbean stakeholders have developed a vision for a more resilient, green and inclusive economy in the Caribbean which 'aims for long-term prosperity through equitable distribution of economic benefits and effective management of ecological resources; it is economically viable and resilient, self-directed, self-reliant and pro-poor'. Recommendations are presented on how small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) can play a critical role in the economic transformation which is needed in the Caribbean to meet this vision.

TRANSFORMING OUR APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CANARI and other members of IRF2015 are promoting a new approach to development, with major shifts:

- *from 'development assistance' to a universal global compact* among countries and between government, civil society and the private sector, drawing on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities for negotiation of roles of different countries;
- *from top-down decision-making to multi-stakeholder decision-making processes* that engage implementing and beneficiary stakeholders for more legitimate, feasible and accountable decision-making;
- *from economic models that increase inequalities and risks to ones that reduce them* by: internalising environmental and social costs; emphasising secure livelihoods, decent jobs, technological innovation, and greater productivity; and offering new ways to measure well-being and progress;
- *from business models based on shareholder value to those based on stakeholder value* that reward long-term resilience and generation of co-benefits such as seen in sustainable production systems and new models of social and environmental enterprises;
- *from meeting 'easy' development targets to tackling systematic barriers to progress* so that the poorest and most vulnerable do not continue to be left behind and consumption patterns are more sustainable;
- *from damage control to investing in resilience* through adaptive management;
- *from concepts and testing to scaled up interventions* through policy support, incentives, and overcoming

resistance from groups that benefit from 'business as usual';

- *from multiple discrete actions to cross-scale coordination* across sectors and local, national and global levels.

An integrated approach to sustainable development for improved human well-being requires simultaneously:

- *Economic progress* to provide the basis for people's livelihoods and the goods and services necessary for development
- *Equitable prosperity and opportunity* so that the poor have adequate resources on which to survive
- *Healthy and productive natural ecosystems* will produce ecosystem goods and services necessary for subsistence and economic activities
- *Stakeholder engagement and collaboration* for a cooperative approach that ensures transparency and accountability

The previous over-emphasis on the ecological or environmental dimension has been detrimental to a broader and integrated approach to development. A new vision recognises the intertwined economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainable development but offers an economic lens through which sustainable development can be examined. Based on consultations with Caribbean stakeholders, CANARI has pulled together a vision for a new model of economic development in the Caribbean. This more resilient, green and inclusive economy in the Caribbean 'aims for long-term prosperity through equitable distribution of economic benefits and effective management of ecological resources; it is economically viable and resilient, self-directed, self-reliant and pro-poor'.³

The rural coastal community of Laborie in Saint Lucia offers an example of bottom-up integrated development. The community developed a Strategic Plan for Development in 2001, with a vision of 'a culturally vibrant community where there is continuous improvement in the quality of life and where people are able to enjoy all the basic necessities and to participate fully in the process of development'. The plan is structured along several strategic directions, including: participation; uniqueness and competitiveness; economic linkages and integration; encouragement of self-help, autonomy and initiative; strengthening of community organisations; and cultural development, and it includes five sectoral plans (education and human resources;

health care and social services; agriculture and fishing; tourism; and youth and sports). Implementation is coordinated by the Laborie Development Foundation, a not-for-profit company with 10 members comprised of community organisations from Laborie. One organisation, Labowi Promotions, a not-for-profit community-based cultural organisation, organises annual 'Jazz in the South' cultural events. This free, cultural event targeting the local community as well as other Saint Lucians and international visitors brings economic opportunities to Laborie vendors and promotes environmental conservation messages.⁴

There are several opportunities for economic transformation that have been identified in a regional programme of work⁵ developed by CANARI and partners collaborating in a Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group.⁶ As part of this programme, CANARI works to catalyse and support the development of sustainable livelihood opportunities through small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and has developed a background paper⁷ to guide further work in this area.

Small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) are already significant contributors to Gross Domestic Product and employment in the Caribbean, with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) estimating that up to 70 per cent of jobs are in this sector. They are also expected to be the main engine for future job creation and growth, and particularly 'green' growth. Reliable data on SMMEs are limited, in part because of the extent of the 'informal' (i.e. unregistered, cash economy, non-tax paying) element of the sector. However, documented 'success stories' and case studies indicate that many SMMEs, and particularly the smallest (micro) ones, rely heavily on the use of natural assets. Such businesses include those involved in agriculture, craft and other non-timber forest products, food and beverage processing and ecotourism. SMMEs therefore have considerable potential to contribute to or detract from healthy ecosystems and provision of ecosystem services, depending on the practices they use.

Several key areas have been identified for attention:

- a. Comprehensive, coherent national programmes need to be developed to incentivise SMME practices that contribute to environmental, social and cultural benefits or increased equity. Barriers to competitiveness and growth of SMMEs need addressing urgently. New policies in these areas also offer potential for introducing incentives for 'green' SMMEs or 'green' behaviour, such as improved energy or

waste management. However, changes are also needed in policies affecting land use planning, land tenure, access to state lands, and education for SMMEs to contribute optimally to green economies. Programmes that provide perverse incentives (for example that result in environmental degradation) must be reversed.

- b. SMMEs need to build their capacity in areas of business planning, cash flow projections, management, book-keeping, marketing, communication skills, customer service and information and communication technology (ICT). There is also an emerging consensus that capacity building for community businesses and collectives (e.g. cooperatives and small or micro business associations), should also focus on 'softer' skills like leadership and conflict management. Additionally, to support an expansion of the role of SMMEs in green economies, most traditional SMMEs (i.e. those that are not collective enterprises) would need a shift in world view and culture to encompass the idea of co-benefits, and to a lesser extent, environmental sustainability.
- c. Financing mechanisms for SMMEs need to address the challenge of no or low collateral in order to be accessible to start-up micro-entrepreneurs. Financing schemes also need to incentivise 'green' behaviour and co-benefits.
- d. Government support for marketing of the products and services of small enterprises and collectives needs to be improved, particularly in the tourism and agriculture sectors.

PRIORITIES FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

There are several priorities for effective management of natural resources to support well-being of Caribbean people including:

- a. *Valuation of natural resources and integration into economic decision-making:* The Caribbean continues to be heavily reliant on natural resources to support the main economic sectors of tourism and agriculture. However, these resources continue to be degraded and destroyed. Development models need to integrate the value of these resources and their management when considering

multiple demands made on land space and resources in these small islands.

- b. *Integrated and participatory governance*: At local and national levels, management of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems requires integrated land use planning and participatory governance approaches to involve all stakeholders with responsibilities, rights and interests in the resources. In particular, resource users from rural communities, who are highly dependent on natural resources for their well-being but who would otherwise be marginalised from decision-making and management, need to be effectively and equitably engaged. Stakeholders need to be engaged in all phases of the decision-making process, including needs assessment, policy development and planning, implementation and evaluation of development initiatives. Integrated and collaborative governance and management should link local, national and regional levels across all sectors, using integrated land use and development planning as key tools.
- c. *Shared governance of the Caribbean Sea*: Management of marine resources is especially challenging given cross-territorial resources such as fisheries that need to be managed as well as the intimate connections within the Caribbean Sea ecosystem that mean that impacts are often felt far away from the actions. Regional marine governance and resource management is essential and early efforts to establish the institutional and management framework through regional policies (such as the Caribbean Common Fisheries Policy), structures (including the Caribbean Sea Commission) and regional fisheries management plans need to be taken forward to implementation.
- d. *Building resilience to climate change and natural disasters* is an urgent priority in Caribbean islands. Much of the infrastructure, population, resources and economic activity are located in coastal areas that are highly vulnerable. Although some progress has been made with developing national policies and government organisations dealing with climate change, much still remains to be done. Priorities include:
 - Facilitating participatory development of policy and plans and developing integrated cross-sectoral institutions (policy frameworks,

- structures and processes) that engage all stakeholders in a coordinated and collaborative approach to resilience building
- Integrating local and traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge and using this knowledge as a basis for decision-making
 - Facilitating community-level adaptation actions led by local communities, drawing on local experience and realities, building local capacity, and including 'soft' solutions that provide social, economic and environmental benefits in a 'win-win' approach.

SIDS PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The primary emphasis of governments negotiating the priorities for the SIDS 2014 conference has been on partnerships with international actors and the private sector. However, developing and strengthening partnerships with SIDS civil society actors should be an additional critical strategy to achieving a coordinated, inclusive and effective approach to sustainable development in SIDS. Partnerships need to be built at all levels: international, regional, national, and also at the local community-based level.

CANARI believes in several key principles to guide its partnerships:

- a. *Shared vision and values:* The collaborating organisations should agree to form partnerships because they share a common vision of what should be achieved and they have common objectives. They should seek to build partnerships on the basis of their current and projected niche(s) and strength(s).
- b. *Specificity:* Partnerships should only cover specific areas of cooperation and each partner organisation will retain the right to take independent and autonomous decisions on all matters outside of these specific areas. The partners should, however, be encouraged to collaborate, both formally and informally, through communication and information sharing, mutual support and the constant exploration of opportunities for collaboration.
- c. *Ownership, equity and trust:* Collaborating organisations are owners and full participants in the arrangement, and the levels of their respective contributions to the

partnerships should be somewhat comparable. All decisions regarding partnerships should be taken collectively and on the basis of consensus. All levels and structures within the partner organisations (governance boards, management, staff) will be fully informed and will be involved as appropriate.

- d. *Effective governance:* Mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate joint decision-making, and to avoid and resolve disputes. These mechanisms should be transparent and participatory to reinforce trust and ownership.
- e. *Value added and clear purpose:* All partners should be satisfied that partnerships have a purpose and that they are adding: (a) to their capacity, especially because each collaborating organisation, is bringing a unique set of skills and experiences into the partnership and (b) to their funding opportunities, especially by giving them access to sources that would not otherwise be available to them individually. Partners need to understand each other, learn how to work together, know each others' strengths and what each partner can bring to the table.

An effective, strategic and multi-sectoral partnership for sustainable development operating at the national level that embodies CANARI's key principles for partnerships is the *Consortio Ambiental Dominicano* (CAD).⁸ CAD is a non-profit organisation working in the Dominican Republic for over ten years with members from civil society and government working in conservation of natural resources. CAD's governance structure facilitates joint decision-making by consensus following core principles of mutual respect, equal voice of members, and collaborative working. Members cover specific areas of cooperation (law enforcement, protected area management, research, etc.) and each member retains the right to take independent and autonomous decisions on all matters outside of these specific areas so there is no overlap between individual members and the network. Through strategic alliances with international and inter-governmental agencies, universities and the private sector, CAD has a strong voice in national policy development and implementation.

The Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) is an example of a partnership that demonstrates how participatory governance can lead to meaningful engagement of local and regional voices at the international policy level. CNFO is an

informal, regional network of fisherfolk operating in CARICOM countries to build the capacity of fisherfolk to play a more effective role in fisheries governance. CNFO's structure ensures representation from the local level right up to the regional, including a core coordinating body of elected national representatives. CNFO has built partnerships with regional and international civil society, academic, and technical inter-governmental stakeholders that enable CNFO to have a voice in regional and international policy debates, such as the Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

CANARI sees partnerships as one element of participatory governance, where governance is a social process of decision-making and the process by which these decisions are implemented (or not implemented) via various institutions.⁹ Participatory governance is where there is a meaningful, engaged and informed process of decision-making, inclusive of all key stakeholders and supported by policies, laws, structures and other enabling factors.

Through its work in participatory natural resource management in the Caribbean, CANARI has also identified seven core capacities needed to engage in participatory processes which can be applied to a SIDS partnership approach for development. These are outlined in Table 1.

Civil society has a huge role to play in partnerships for sustainable development. Very often, it is civil society that is on the ground and well placed to feed into decision-making about the needs, threats and workable local and regional solutions to development problems. As key implementing partners, civil society also have an important role to play in developing enabling policies and plans.

Table 1: Capacities to engage in participatory processes¹⁰

Capacity	Requirements
World view/ philosophy	A coherent philosophy must exist with values, attitudes, principles and beliefs of respect and value for all people and the contribution that they can make. There must be trust and openness to allow other people to play an equitable role in decision-making. This vision must place people at the centre of development and address issues of equity and sustainability. A commitment is needed to participatory processes that effectively and equitably engage stakeholders in decision-making for livelihoods and conservation benefits.
Culture	There must be a willingness to work with other stakeholders towards shared objectives and a belief that this can be effective. Within an organisation this is expressed through procedures and processes guiding how the organisation does things.
Structure	Structures need to be in place to facilitate open and clear communications internally within the organisation and with partners. Communication channels must exist to receive input, share information, and facilitate discussion, debate and negotiation. Structures must have a clear definition of roles, functions, lines of communication and mechanisms for accountability.
Adaptive culture and strategies	The importance of continuous adaptive management as a result of active learning must be recognised. Internal structures and mechanisms need to be flexible to adapt to changes in the natural resource being managed, the patterns of use of this resource, and the needs, interests, roles and responsibilities of all of the stakeholders involved. A learning organisation will have policies and practices that support systematic monitoring and evaluation and ensure that lessons learnt are put into practice for continuous improvement.
Linkages	An ability to develop and manage relationships between individuals, groups and organisations is needed. Multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral approaches should be used to bring together different government agencies and the full range of stakeholders, e.g. academia, private sector, NGOs, CBOs, communities and individuals.
Skills, knowledge, abilities (competencies)	Technical skills and knowledge relevant to the specific management area are required. These may include, for example, knowledge about the ecosystem, management issues, management approaches (e.g. protected area, sustainable extraction) and livelihood aspects. Skills might include for example, research, map reading, data interpretation and analysis, use of technology, etc. Skills and knowledge in how to effectively facilitate or engage in participatory processes is also needed. Examples include communication and interpersonal skills, ability to negotiate, ability to speak clearly and communicate effectively in front of a large group.
Material resources	Technology, equipment, materials and finance must be in place to support the effective implementation of the participatory process. There must be flexibility in allocation of these resources to respond to changing needs. Equitable allocation to stakeholders is also important.

However, Caribbean SIDS face key capacity challenges that prevent civil society from being actively engaged in partnerships and policy processes:

1. *Civil society lacks the capacity to participate effectively in decision-making processes:* Civil society often lacks the capacity to effectively communicate their needs, issues, lessons learned and best practices. They also may not know how to use information effectively for policy advocacy. They do not always have effective relationships (partnerships) with government agencies and other key decision-makers.
2. *Government agencies lack the capacity to promote and facilitate participatory processes:* Government agencies often operate from a strong history and culture of top-down decision-making and even where they have a formal commitment to participatory approaches, they lack the foundation of values, skills, and relationships to meaningfully engage civil society in decision-making processes or facilitate participatory processes.

Building capacity of government as well as civil society to engage in effective partnerships should be a key strategy for sustainable development and needs to be incorporated into agendas being set as part of the SIDS and global SDG processes.

CONCLUSION

Caribbean SIDS need to put forward a strong collective position in the debates on SIDS priorities to be discussed at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States to be held in Samoa in 2014 and development of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Unfortunately, Caribbean SIDS continue to be extremely vulnerable yet are being marginalised in global development agenda setting as Africa, Asia and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) take priority. Caribbean SIDS also have much to learn from their Pacific and Indian Ocean counterparts in how to develop partnerships and a powerful collective voice on the global stage. A joint and coordinated approach must be taken by all actors in Caribbean SIDS to analyse key areas where progress has not been made with sustainable development and to identify priorities and feasible strategies moving forward. Caribbean civil society is well placed and has

capacity to support government, private sector and inter-governmental efforts and should be more effectively engaged in the global agenda setting and implementation actions.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Nicole Leotaud is the Executive Director of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). She is a conservation biologist by training and has over fifteen years experience working in natural resource management in the islands of the Caribbean. She has successfully facilitated participatory and multi-disciplinary planning and policy development processes involving government agencies, civil society organisations, communities and private business interests from different sectors. She has designed and facilitated numerous workshops on participatory natural resource management, organisational development, strategic planning, project management, and proposal development. Email: nicole@canari.org; Website: www.canari.org

Anna Cadiz is a Senior Technical Officer and manager of the Civil Society and Governance and Capacity Building Programmes at the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). She has 7 years experience working in natural resource management and civil society capacity building. She is currently managing the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Caribbean islands programme which focuses on providing grants for biodiversity conservation and civil society capacity building in eleven countries in the region. Email: anna@canari.org; Website: www.canari.org

NOTES

- ¹ The *Independent Research Forum on a Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda* (IRF2015) responds to the need for independent, rigorous and timely expert analysis to inform the evolution of the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Post-2015) and the concurrent intergovernmental process on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched at Rio+20. IRF2015 is a collaboration of twelve leading sustainable development research institutes from across the globe that brings together a rich diversity of analytical skills and perspectives, engagement methodologies and networks. More information on the work of the IRF is available at <http://www.irf2015.org/>.
- ² Independent Research Forum (2013). *Post-2015: framing a new approach to sustainable development. Policy paper*. March 2013. http://www.canari.org/documents/IRFFrameworkPaper_000.pdf
- ³ CANARI. *Towards a green and resilient economy for the Caribbean. Policy Brief 13*. Laventille, CANARI, 2012. <http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIPB13GEEng-Oct12.pdf>
- ⁴ For an analysis of this example of bottom-up development see Renard, Y. and A. Dominique (2013). *Community-based development through arts and culture: Case study from Laborie, Saint Lucia*. Laventille, CANARI. <http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIGE7LaboriecasestudyDominiqueandRenard.pdf>

- ⁵ CANARI. *Programme of work of the Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group. Draft May 2013*. Laventille, CANARI, 2013.
<http://www.canari.org/documents/GEALGprogrammeofworkdraftJune2013.pdf>
- ⁶ The GE ALG is a multi-stakeholder group of independent experts from government, civil society, academia, private sector, and regional technical agencies. Members have expertise in key sectors such as macroeconomic development, tourism, agriculture, energy, land use and urban planning, gender, sustainable livelihoods, rural development, governance, policy development, and communication. The overall purpose of the GE ALG is to identify and promote ways in which 'green economy' can advance sustainable development in the Caribbean through shaping visions, perspectives, positions and actions.
- ⁷ From McIntosh, S. (2013). *Catalysing and supporting sustainable small, medium and micro enterprise development*. Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group Background Paper. Laventille, CANARI.
<http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIGE4SMMEsMcIntosh.pdf>
- ⁸ CANARI. *Consortio Ambiental Dominicano (CAD): A decade of networking and developing strategic partnerships to promote the conservation and participatory management of natural resources in the Dominican Republic. Technical Report No. 396*. Laventille, CANARI, 2011.
http://canari.org/documents/CADcasestudyEnglishfinal_000.pdf
- ⁹ From CANARI. *Strategic Plan 2011-2016*. Laventille, CANARI, 2011.
http://canari.org/documents/CANARI2011-2016StrategicPlan_002.pdf
- ¹⁰ From CANARI. *Facilitating participatory natural resource management: A toolkit for Caribbean managers*. Laventille: CANARI, 2011.
http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIPNRMTooklitFinalJan2012_003.pdf