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BL-T1110 - Leveraging Digital Technology for Improving the Business Climate in Belize (US\$214,066 disbursed)(2018-2021)

Counterparts: The Economic Development Council and the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry

Objective: Reengineering and digitizing the delivery of services that are critical to improving the business climate in Belize

Results: In 2018, the Government of Belize requested technical assistance to reduce the time and cost of registering businesses. This led to the development of a one-stop-shop system for business registration in Belize which was launched in 2022. The project also funded the digitization of the records of the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry (BCCAR) to facilitate the use of the new registration system, with 18,720 files having been digitized by the end of the project and new files being digitized daily. In addition, the retrieval and use of electronic files was incorporated into daily processes and facilitated by strategically located kiosks for those without computer and internet access.

The project reduced the cost for registering company statutes, memorandum and articles of association from BZD585 to BZD300, and helped draft the following policies and regulations: 1) Policy regarding online requests and submissions for business records; 2) Electronic Transactions and Electronic Funds Transaction Bill; 3) Data Protection Bill; 4) Electronic Signature Policy; 5) Freedom of Information Act; 6) Cybercrime Bill.

BL-T1113 – Improving Sustainable Production in the Belize Shrimp Cluster (US\$369,242 disbursed)(2018-2022)

Counterpart: Belize Shrimp Growers Association

Objective: Enhance the ability of shrimp growers in Belize to react to biosecurity and climate risks.

Results: The project financed a Bio-security Aquaculture Zone Management Plan (BAZMP) and monitoring and surveillance program benefitting the entire sector of 15 businesses (12 men owned, 3 women owned), including an early warning system, along with legislation and regulations for the BAZMP. It also provided capacity building for shrimp farms on sustainable production. Nine courses were conducted by a fishery and aquaculture expert, with 83 men and 22 women attending.

In addition, the project financed an Aquaculture Stewardship Certification (ASC) audit for 8 shrimp farms, two of which were certified. The ASC certification will allow shrimp farms to enter competitive markets interested in responsibly produced shrimp. The project generated 600 new jobs in Belize, 450 of which were for women.

BL-T1119 – Innovation Platforms for Social and Economic Impact in Belize (US\$298,105 disbursed)(2019-2022)

Counterpart: Economic Development Council and BELTRAIDE

Objective: To strengthen the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem for supporting the development of innovative and sustainable solutions that have a positive developmental impact.

Results: The project financed a social innovation challenge which supported innovative business ideas aimed at reducing the participation of youth in violence, five of which received seed financing. In addition, the project financed a 14-week data analysis digital skills bootcamp in Belize to equip students with the skills for data-driven professions across the world. Seventy-one (71) percent of participants were employed at the end of the program.

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The project also financed an innovation auto-diagnostic benchmarking tool for Belizean businesses, which was rolled out to over 250 companies assisted by BELTRAIDE. The tool assessed Belizean businesses' strength and weaknesses related to innovation, informed them of opportunities for improvement, and suggested actions that will consolidate the businesses' innovation process. Finally, an Innovation Pact was developed for Belize, which was subsequently signed by the Prime Minister and representatives of Belize's private sector, to commit different parties to increase innovation activities in Belize.

BL-T1135 - Supporting Technology Adoption for Financial Inclusion and Sustainable Growth of the Belize Smart Sugar Cluster (US\$292,000 disbursed)(2020-2024)

Counterpart: Belize Sugar Industries Limited

Objective: To improve the management practices and climate resiliency of small-scale sugar farmers in Belize.

Results: The project financed a blockchain solution to improve the management practices and climate resilience of 2000 small-scale farmers and to foster their financial inclusion by addressing information asymmetries along the sugar cane supply chain in Belize. The solution also integrates credit providers into the supply chain, which should increase the ability of these farmers to access finance. The solution – branded as Smart Grow – was launched in 2024.

The project was executed in partnership with IDBInvest, which contributed additional resources, and IDBLab, who supervised the development of the blockchain solution and hosts it on its LACCHAIN.

BL-T1145 – Development of the Blue Economy of Belize (US\$216,138 disbursed)(2022- ongoing)

Counterpart: Ministry of the Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management

Objective: To strengthen the policy and institutional framework for the development of the Blue Economy in Belize

Results: This project intended to support the Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation (MBECA) (recently renamed Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management) in implementing some of the strategic actions for the development of the Blue Economy (BE) that had already been diagnosed by the UNDP.

Activities included strengthening of the policy and institutional framework, and assessing and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Ministry of the Blue Economy and of other ministries and departments, which play key roles in the management and coordination of the BE, including the Department of Fisheries and the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI).

The project financed a Blue Economy legislative gap analysis and a comprehensive Blue Economy Bill. The project has undertaken an institutional capacity gap analysis and started the implementation of a capacity building plan targeted at the Blue Economy Unit, the Fisheries Department, and the CZMAI of the Ministry of the Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management. Support is being provided to develop a framework for a Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification system for the Blue Economy, as well as for generating partnerships within Belize's institutional arrangements and with other countries to ensure information sharing, policy feedback loops and continued collaboration as BE data management ramps up and becomes more systematized in Belize. The project includes wider stakeholder sensitization (including MSMEs and women entrepreneurs), communications, and knowledge management activities to inform stakeholders about the institutional and regulatory reforms, and their benefits for the local economy. Additional focus was placed on gender considerations and concrete measures to improve policy development & program management by the Ministry of the Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management.

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RG-T3519 - Experiential Learning of Cluster Development Best Practices in Small and Vulnerable Countries (US\$247,000 initially earmarked for Belize, however due to significant challenges this project was unable to progress as planned) (2019-2024)

Counterpart in Belize: BELTRAIDE. The Nature Conservancy was initially also a partner to the project.

Objective: To enhance the capacity of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) in small and vulnerable Caribbean countries to function as effective Cluster Support Organisations (CSOs), by enabling them to apply the cluster methodology learnt over the past several months. This TC used an experiential learning approach to further institutionalize international best practices in cluster development in Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname. This objective was directly in line with the overall focus of the second phase of the Compete Caribbean program - to ensure lasting change beyond its direct activities by piloting and transferring best-practices in private sector development to national entities. The objective of the Belize seaweed component of this project was to support the increased productivity for sustainably farmed seaweed and its access to niche markets.

Results: The project started with funding the certification for 15 seaweed farmers, including 9 women, covering sustainable seaweed farming and production. The training was carried out despite the restrictions imposed by COVID, however a subsequent study commissioned under the marketing and business consultancy concluded that several aspects including the lack of economic resources and insufficient equipment and infrastructure by the cluster would affect scaling up production. Additionally, the current regulatory framework of Belize does not allow fishermen to easily increase their production. They are operating under a special permit that was obtained by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) through the Fisheries department.

At this inflection point, BELTRAIDE requested Compete to provide funding to strengthen the regulatory framework for Belize's seaweed and mariculture industry. A consultancy to develop a robust Seaweed Mariculture Finance Scheme inclusive of an investment package was also commissioned. The investment package outlined opportunities for investment in the industry with accompanying return on investment.

To create awareness about the industry and to communicate the recent public efforts in developing the sector, a series of webinars focused on key subtopics within Seaweed Mariculture was executed during 2023, with a total participation of over 150 persons on sessions related to best practices in sustainable seaweed production and financing opportunities for seaweed mariculture production. A third webinar was held in January 2024 with 80+ participants which focused on exposing participants to value added products and market diversification for sustainable seaweed products. In the end, TNC offered BELTRAIDE support to develop the regulatory framework for mariculture, so no regulatory reforms were financed by the project.

RG-T3677 - Design and Implementation of a Regional Ag-Tech Pilot Project for the Caribbean (US\$69,807 disbursed for Belize) (2020-2023)

Counterpart in Belize: Corridgeree Belize Ltd.

Objective: To improve the capacity of public and private sector actors to collaborate in the design and implementation of commercial Ag-Tech solutions (viable technologies and the associated business models) for contributing to the improvement of agriculture sector productivity in the Caribbean.

Results: The project completed a gender-sensitive ag-tech maturity assessment to gather evidence of the types of ag-tech solutions that are sustainable and valued by farmers, agro-processors and other stakeholders in the Caribbean. The report took a deep dive into three key value chains: Fruits and Vegetables, Sauces and Spices and Coffee and Cocoa. The report then assessed sector strategies within Jamaica, Grenada and Guyana while providing an Ag-Tech adoption factor assessment with recommendations to foster Ag-Tech adoption.

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A Regional Ag-Tech challenge was designed and implemented. There were 7 online training sessions held for challenge participants on: Design Thinking, Business Model Canvas, Problem-solution fit, Solution-market fit, Pilot definition, Proposal presentation, Developing a pilot with Agile methodologies. A Scale Up Methodology Training was hosted for the Ag-Tech Challenge Winners. A workshop was also hosted for regional stakeholders to build capacity for future challenges. The learning involved the transfer of the lessons learned during the Ag-Tech challenge for similar future projects, including the program scope, challenge definition, participation encouragement, incentive design, participant selection, and participant mentoring. Overall, 11 webinars were delivered, 361 private sector individuals were trained, and 6 pilot interventions were implemented.

In Belize, this project provided technical assistance to Corridgeree Belize Ltd. to develop a standardized solution that provides bean-to-bar chocolate manufacturers with insights into the flavor profile of every batch of cocoa they purchase by developing a universal language that allows them to make informed choices on cocoa providers. The flavor profile solution was vital to Corridgeree and also had the potential to become a more widely used tool between chocolate manufacturers and cocoa producers.

Corridgeree's Bean Base system developed using an Android-based application allows cocoa bean processors to track every step of the procurement, post-harvest and export process, all based on new international standards. It is based on ODK Collect, which is open-source software that can be easily modified and allows flexibility in reporting through Power BI. The pilot results showed that chocolate manufacturers want reports that provide data and insights on both their current purchases, and how it compares to previous batches. The Bean Base traceability model was completed, and marketing products were developed. As a result, Corridgeree started exporting to the United States. This Bean Base model was also applied to vanilla operations.

RG-T3792 - Capacity Building of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) to implement community-based tourism (CBT) clusters and stimulate innovation in the new normal (US\$1,000,000 of which US\$333,333 disbursed for Belize) (2021-2024)

Executing Agency: Caribbean Tourism Organization Counterpart in Belize: Ministry of Tourism

Objective: To enhance the capacity of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) to support Community-Based Tourism (CBT) clusters in the region. This was the third phase of regional capacity building effort launched by Compete Caribbean in 2017 to institutionalize the cluster methodology in the region.

Participation of Belize: The Garifuna Cultural Trail Cluster

Results: In Belize, this community-based tourism cluster project intended to increase tourism to the Garifuna community, support local livelihoods and promote the Garifuna culture and heritage in Belize, specifically in Hopkins and Dangriga. There were 47 indigenous-owned businesses directly involved in the project that employed 118 persons, 44 of which are women. 345 businesses benefited indirectly. The project enabled the formalization of this cluster, helped to develop the cluster's product offering and increased their capacity to deploy their Community Based Tourism (CBT) products and experiences through a 4-month professional tour guide training and Belize Tourism Board certification of 50 community members in Hopkins and Dangriga (20 of which were women). The Garifuna Cluster now has newly certified National Tour Guides who can showcase the Cultural Trail, creating employment and enhancing the capacity of the community to host visitors.

The project also delivered business skills training and supported the development of a Branding and Digital Marketing Strategy with supporting collaterals, and supported the design and initial roll out of an Implementation Plan for the Garifuna Cultural Trail. The Ministry of Tourism has confirmed support for the sustainability and continued promotion of this niche offering. The Ministry has also approved the installation of signage along the Garifuna Cultural Trail in order to increase visibility for tourists and locals. A key aspect of the Digital Marketing Strategy was the new website developed for market access and promotion of the Garifuna Cultural Trail. The site is linked to Belize's main destination website and maintained with the support of the Belize Ministry of Tourism: <https://belizegarifuna.com>

By the end of the project, significant progress was made in upskilling private sector individuals and supporting MSMEs in transitioning from informal to more formal business operations. Overall, the number of private sector female individuals who benefited from

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capacity-building opportunities was 105, which exceeded the 81 end-of-project (EOP) projection. Similarly, for male private sector individuals, a total number of 104 benefitted from training opportunities, which exceeded the end-of-project estimate of 69. The types of training included the Belize National Tour Guide Certification Course (Belize Tourism Board); the Capacity Building and Business Development workshops; Marketing and Product Development workshops (Target Euro I PM Group); Legal Structure workshop; and the Garifuna Cultural Manual (Dr. Peitra Arana).

RG-T4017 - Support to Economic Recovery in the Caribbean through Trade and Investment in Blue Economy (US\$301,309 disbursed regionally, including Belize) (2022-ongoing)

Counterpart in Belize: BELTRAIDE

Objective: To increase institutional capacity to attract private sector investment into the Blue Economy (BE) in the Caribbean (Belize, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and Grenadines) to generate employment, growth, diversification of the economy and to contribute towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets.

Results: The project financed Blue Economy FDI promotion strategies and value propositions for Belize and for the three participating OECS countries. The one for Belize was presented to BELTRAIDE management in November 2024 and is on the BELTRAIDE portal: <https://www.beltraide.bz/belize-blue-economy-investment-promotion-strategy.html>. Virtual and in-person training workshops were conducted on these strategies for the participating investment promotion agencies.

A toolkit to promote gender parity in FDI promotion in the Blue Economy was also completed and disseminated to the participating investment promotion agencies.

A Blue Economy Investment Forum was carried out for OECS beneficiaries in November 2024.

RG-T3322 - Technology Extension Services (TES) in the Caribbean (2019-2024)

Objective: Technology Extension Services is a form of innovation policy that sought to accelerate the pace at which Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) "catch up" with more advanced firms by transferring cutting-edge technology. This Caribbean-wide project worked with agri-business, manufacturing, and tourism firms.

Results: This project funded 75 technology audits and assessments for MSMEs, with 50 of the firms also benefiting from partial implementation.

Belize's Participation

The Belizean firms that benefited included Island Magic Beach Resort, Belize Horse and Carriage, Tropical Paradise Hotel, Belize Chocolate Company, and IRRMA.

RG-T4003 - Technology Extension Services (TES) in the Caribbean Blue Economy and Essential Services Sectors (US\$37,462 disbursed for Belize) (2021-ongoing)

Objective: To support firms in the blue economy and essential services sectors in the acceleration of technological diffusion, adoption, and upgrading, thus providing support to the Caribbean in diversifying the blue economy and strengthening the delivery of goods and services in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results: This project delivered technology extension services to a group of businesses in every country. In addition, the project implemented a supplementary capacity building plan for a sub-group of women-owned businesses with growth potential.

Beneficiaries from Belize included: Friends of Swallow Caye/Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary (received supplementary support as woman owned firm); Belize Chocolate Company; Corridgeree Belize Ltd.