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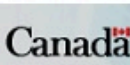
The Blue Economy: An opportunity to increase the capacity in Barbados

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Barbados’ maritime space is over 424 times bigger than its land space, covering 183,436 km2 and representing an opportunity that must be utilised in a sustainable way to advance the economic interest of the country, while at the same time protecting the environment. Recently, new and more potent threats have emerged related to climate change and the ferocity of its consequences, including the influx of sargassum seaweed on many of the island’s beaches.

Blue Economy Opportunity in Barbados

On a global scale, ocean potential also known as blue economy (BE) should not be underestimated. Covering over 71 per cent of the Earth’s surface, the ocean is responsible for 80 per cent of global trade and it is estimated that it concentrates 50 times more carbon than the atmosphere (around 2bn tonnes of CO2 per year). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) the contribution of the ocean economy to global value-added has recently been estimated in a \$1.5 trillion annually contribution in value-added to the overall economy and this number could reach \$3 trillion by 2030.

How to Think in Blue

An ocean-based approach to development not only offers a sustainable opportunity to exploit marine and coastal resources, but also an inclusive strategy to tackle some of the key challenges related to high unemployment, food security, poverty and resilience to climate change. Some aspects of the blue economy have traditionally been part of the nation’s socio-economic landscape, which could include for example tourism activities, fishing, seaport services and others. However, the blue economy as an economic sector remains far from achieving its full potential. This has reinforced the need to think blue.

The Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility (CCPF), a partnership between the UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, Global Affairs Canada, Caribbean Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, has been assisting the Barbados Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, and Green and Blue Economy (MENB), through a technical cooperation to develop a Strategic Roadmap, seeking to strengthen the institutional framework to support the growth of the relevant blue economy sectors.

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What is the size of Barbados' maritime space compared to its land space?

☐

424 times smaller

☐

424 times bigger

☐

The same size

☐

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As an integral part of the capacity building strategy included in the roadmap, a professional skills development programme was designed for public sector officials, that aims at supporting the coordination capacities of the MENB in its role of leading the national BE growth and development agenda.

The first cohort of 33 public officials attending the two core courses included key staff in MENB, as well as other planning and regulatory authorities across the public service with shared interest in the Blue Economy sphere.

The program builds on the findings and recommendations of the Blue Economy Institutional Capacity Assessment conducted in March 2021, which identified three overarching priorities:

- 1) Enhancing intra-agency coordination capacities,
- 2) Implementing the Blue Economy policy, and
- 3) Supporting the execution of the Blue Economy roadmap.

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The program’s five courses – two core courses and three electives – introduce the Blue Economy main topics, ranging from Marine Spatial Planning theory and practice to communicating the health and wellbeing benefits of Blue Economy approaches and Natural Capital and Blue Economy financing. They also provide an overview of the interdependencies it seeks to promote including economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas. The post-completion surveys from the participants revealed promising preliminary results as perceived increase on the participant’s knowledge on the topics delivered was of 25 per cent.

While the three elective courses of the program’s first edition, namely, Sustainable Ocean Finance, Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management, and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)) will be delivered in September-October 2022, the Government of Barbados will seek to enlarge the reach of future cohorts to the civil society at large, including private sector and NGOs. It is also envisioned by the IDB that this program will be further delivered to various interest groups in other Caribbean islands, particularly those where the blue economy is part of the priority industries to be developed further.

Small Island States like Barbados have traditionally faced challenges related to their limited economic diversification, fiscal fragility and their exposure to the effects of global warming such as hurricanes, sea level rise and increasing temperatures. The persistent nature of a lingering recession demand that governments be more strategic in its programs and policies, including those affecting ocean resources and its management. The Blue Economy is indeed an opportunity to increase the capacity in Barbados, and CCPF will continue providing support to Barbados and other Caribbean countries to spark a sustainable and inclusive recovery given the vast coastal and marine space in the region.

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