

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Independent project evaluation:

**Seizing the trade and business potential of Blue
BioTrade products for promoting sustainable
livelihoods and conservation of marine biodiversity in
selected Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
(OECS) Countries***

Independent Evaluation Unit
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This evaluation report was prepared by Mr Evan Green, Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée, hereafter the evaluator.

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ACRONYMS

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
BBT	Blue BioTrade Project
CBF	Caribbean Biodiversity Fund
CEDA	Caribbean Export Development Agency
CFMC	Caribbean Fishery Management Council
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Machinery
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
EU	European Union
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
ITC	International Trade Centre
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OSPESCA	Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano
RQCFMCP	Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan
SC	Steering Committee

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SusGren	Sustainable Grenadines
SVG	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
TED at UNCTAD	Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch
TOR	Terms of Reference
UEBT	Union for Ethical BioTrade
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEG	The United Nations Evaluation Group
WECAFC	Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission

1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the report for the final evaluation of the project *Seizing the trade and business potential of Blue BioTrade products for promoting sustainable livelihoods and conservation of marine biodiversity in selected Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Countries* (herein referred to as “the Blue BioTrade/BBT project” or simply as “the project”). This initiative aimed to empower small-scale coastal producers to produce and trade queen conch products sustainably through the application of Blue BioTrade principles and criteria.

The project was implemented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), in cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat between October 2020 and December 2022. The evaluation was commissioned by UNCTAD, as the leading and coordinating implementer of the project, and carried out by Evan Green and Nadia Perez from Baastel between February and April 2023.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE BBT PROJECT

This first phase of the BBT project, implemented as a pilot, aimed to increase stakeholder capacity for sustainable trade of queen conch through the application of Blue BioTrade principles and criteria, in three beneficiary countries, namely Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The project was launched in October 2020 and was initially scheduled to end in December 2021. Due to delays in the implementation processes and Covid-related challenges, the project requested and was granted two no-cost extensions: the first one to July 2022, and the second one to December 2022, when the project was completed. This first phase of the project is funded by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the European Union under the Regional Integration Through Growth Harmonisation and Technology (RIGHT) Programme with a total budget of 300,000 EUR.

2.1. Project Background

BioTrade is defined as “the activities related to the collection or production, transformation, and commercialization of goods and services derived from biodiversity (genetic resources, species, and ecosystems) under environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria.”¹ It includes a wide range of practices, goods and services in a variety of sectors. Since 2017, UNCTAD, the

¹ Please see UNCTAD (2020) [BioTrade Principles and Criteria for terrestrial, marine and other aquatic biodiversity-based products and service](#).

Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), CITES and the International Ocean Institute (IOI) have explored and researched how to adapt the BioTrade Principles and Criteria (BT P&C) to the marine environment, known as Blue BioTrade. The implementation of these guidelines can foster sustainable use of scarce oceanic resources and lessen the negative impacts of humans over marine ecosystems, directly contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14 and 15². Still, trade of marine biodiversity-based products and services remains largely unexplored. In this context, the BBT project is designed as a pilot project to test the application of the BT P&C (2020) into the marine realm. For this phase, the value chain of the Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*) was selected in three countries: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and Saint Lucia. Each country is a major queen conch producer in the Caribbean region, with its own challenges and realities.

The queen conch or “lambi” is a large marine shellfish renowned as one of the Caribbean’s most iconic and valuable fishery resources strongly linked to the region’s culture and economy. It is a highly appreciated seafood delicacy, also used in therapeutical products and handicrafts. Global demand has boomed in recent years, and in 2015 alone, 1.4 thousand tonnes of conch were exported from the Caribbean to the United States (representing about 70 per cent of global trade)³. Production of queen conch by St Vincent and the Grenadines, Granada and Saint Lucia were equivalent to 645 metric tonnes (mt) with a value of about USD 7.63 million in 2012⁴.

At the same time, small-scale coastal producers do not fully seize the opportunities offered by sustainable conch markets. In many locations, early uncontrolled harvesting paired with the increasing demand has resulted in overfishing, illegal landings, and a rapid deterioration of endowments. Supply-side issues include the absence of traceability systems, limited landing and trade evidence, poor understanding and use of CITES processes and permits, lack of common handling practices and sanitary standards and a low level of associativity of fishers. From a trade perspective, limited access to markets – in particular international buyers - and the absence of certification schemes for producers are major challenges ahead. In this context, the project aimed to empower small-scale coastal producers to produce and trade queen conch products sustainably through the application of Blue BioTrade Principles and Criteria⁵.

Eastern Caribbean States acknowledge that achieving sustainable trade of queen conch at the value chain level can promote environmental, social, and economic development in the region, as well as lay the foundations for best practices in other ocean economy value chains⁶.

2.2. Project Objectives and Implementation

The main objective of the project was ‘to empower small-scale coastal producers from OECS member states to produce and trade queen conch products in domestic, regional, and international markets under the Blue BioTrade environmental, social, and economic sustainability

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

³ C. Deopersad. Can We Revive and Sustain the Caribbean Queen? (2018). See <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/8423/>

⁴ FAO, Regional queen conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan (2014)

⁵ FINAL OECS_BBT_Prodoc-signed (2020)

⁶ Draft cumulative progress report (June 2022)

criteria, including CITES'. Overall, the BBT project sought to complement and reinforce the work done in the region concerning sustainable use of marine resources, as well as facilitate stakeholders' compliance with existing regulatory requirements⁷. It also addressed key economic, environmental, and social objectives of the regional OECS Development Strategy 2019-2028.

Accordingly, the purpose of the project was that OECS member states maximized benefits derived from production and trade of queen conch products in a legal, traceable and sustainable way. Its specific outcomes were:

- Outcome 1: Stakeholders have enhanced capacity to identify sustainable business opportunities and formulate joint actions to apply Blue BioTrade principles in the conch value chain.
- Outcome 2: Small-scale coastal producers in beneficiary countries benefit from enhanced sustainable production and trade opportunities in the queen conch value chain.

For this first phase, the project focused on Outcome 1 and Output 2.2 of Outcome 2. The project developed a methodology for its implementation, that encompassed three subsequent and complementary steps or milestones, as follows:

- **Step 1 - Queen conch product assessments (Outcome 1):** These studies were undertaken in the three beneficiary countries and assessed the potential for production and export of queen conch and conch-based products, including women and men supply-side capacity, legal requirements, and market access in the value chain.
- **Step 2 - Regional Blue BioTrade Action Plan (Outcome 1):** Based on findings of the country studies, a draft action plan for the region was developed by UNCTAD in collaboration with CITES and the OECS. At least 3 priority actions per identified opportunity were proposed to, discussed with, and validated by OECS stakeholders in a regional workshop.
- **Step 3: Business facilitation and market access (output 2.1 of Outcome 2) – to be implemented during a second phase of the project-:** Technical assistance will be delivered to the project beneficiaries, in at least two priority areas identified by the Blue BioTrade Regional Plan of Action.

During the 28 months of implementation, the project carried out all planned activities from 2020-2022 at 100% implementation rate and at 99% cost⁸. Figure 1 shows a summary of project implementation and outputs. Additional activities envisaged to enhance stakeholder-owned value chain assessments were also implemented. Some of these were⁹:

- An online training for trainers on the UNCTAD/ITC Blue BioTrade self -assessment tool in November 2021;
- A Blue BioTrade in the Eastern Caribbean video, launched at the regional workshop and validation of the OECS Blue BioTrade Action Plan;

⁷ For example, [the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan \(RQCFMCP\) and CITES CoP decisions on queen conch](#).

⁸ Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022. p.23

⁹ Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022. p.27

- A Queen Conch Stock Assessment workshop and field survey in Grenada in October 2022.

The project also reached considerable levels of visibility as a result of its dissemination campaign, for example, reaching a wide and diverse group of organizations such as UNDP, WTO, and FAO who work on trade and environment issues in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and small coastal rural communities¹⁰.

2.3. Project stakeholders

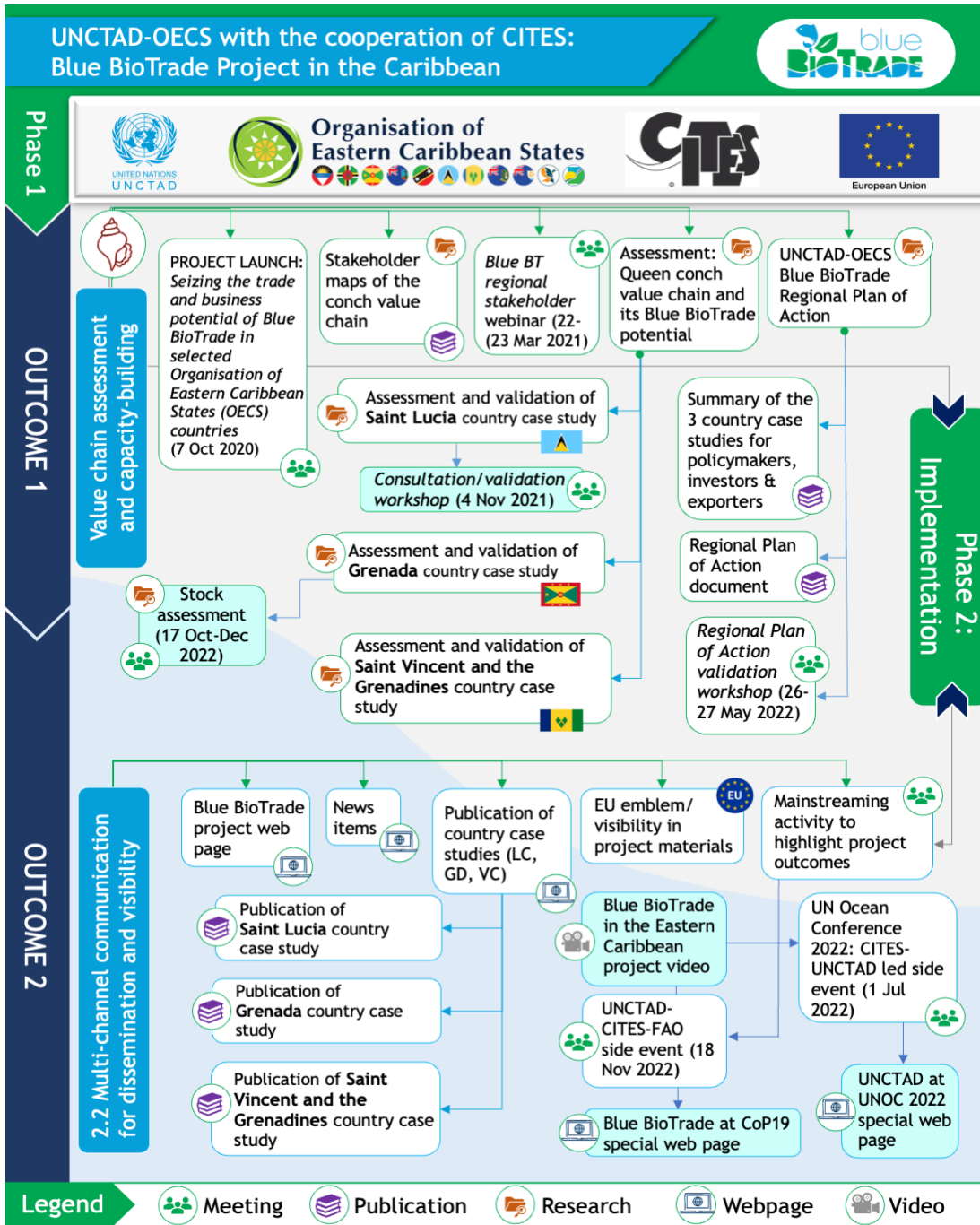
The OECS Secretariat, through its Project Management Unit, Economic Affairs and Regional Integration Division, and Ocean Governance and Procurement Units, is the responsible agency for the project. It contracted the Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch (TED) of UNCTAD as the implementing agency. The project is coordinated by a Steering Committee (SC) which included 1) OECS Secretariat Representative, 2) Permanent Delegation of the OECS to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, 3) The Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch (TED) of UNCTAD, and 4) a technical representative from the CITES Secretariat.

Other various stakeholders involved in different aspects of the BBT project included:

- A project Coordinator (consultant), leading the implementation on the ground including stakeholder engagement, collecting and analyzing data, and drafting the outcome reports,
- A Queen Conch Expert (consultant), providing technical knowledge and services for the development of the case studies in the three countries, and supporting the Queen Conch Stock Assessment,
- Government officials such as representatives from the National Fishery Agencies and national CITES management authorities, acting as a focal point for each country, providing feedback of the outcomes and overseeing implementation on the ground,
- Small-scale coastal producers of queen conch and conch products, e.g., artisanal fishermen, fisher associations and cooperatives, producer groups, processing MSMEs and exporters from Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,
- Sustainable Grenadines (SusGren), a grantee NGO, assisting with the on the ground organization of the regional validation workshop in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2022,
- Experts from the International Trade Centre (ITC), Caribbean Export Development Agency (CEDA), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Machinery (CRFM), Florida Atlantic University, and the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT), among others, involved in specific events providing international and regional expertise into the process,
- Interested donor representatives such as from the EU delegation and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund.

¹⁰Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022. p.30

Figure 1: Output implementation of the BBT project



Source: BBT Project Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022

3. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was designed to support both accountability and learning by providing an independent assessment of results to several stakeholders, primarily to UNCTAD management, the Management Team of the OECS Commission and the European Union; and by identifying lessons to inform design and implementation of the potential second phase of the project. The evaluation's primary intended users are the project teams from UNCTAD and OECS.

The methodological approach for this evaluation was utilization-focused, guided by how the intended users plan to apply its results, particularly to gather lessons learned and inform the second phase of the project. In line with this approach, the evaluation team worked closely with the UNCTAD team to ensure a collaborative and iterative process, benefiting from their knowledge and experience, and adjusting the exercise as needed to meet their needs.

As set out in the inception report, the evaluation methodology was gender- and equity-responsive and rights-based. Questions about the integration of gender and other cross-cutting issues were integrated into the evaluation design and data collection, and the evaluators made efforts to ensure a range of voices and perspectives, including from different genders and roles, were heard, and valued in the evaluation process to the extent possible. The evaluation was also aligned with the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation¹¹, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines¹², as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy¹³.

3.1. Evaluation scope and objectives

The evaluation covered the project's entire implementation period (from October 2020 to December 2022), and all activities associated with Outcome 1 and Output 2.2 of Outcome 2 in the three selected countries. The ultimate objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Assess the degree to which the desired results under the first phase of the project have been realized, and;
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the design and implementation of related interventions, including a possible second phase of the project.

3.2. Data collection

The evaluation used mixed methods and multiple data sources to generate a sound base of evidence. This process was guided by the evaluation matrix (please see Annex 1).

¹¹ [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#), UNEG (2016)

¹² [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#), UNEG (2020)

¹³ [Evaluation Policy](#) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), December 2011.

Data was collected through:

- ◆ **Document Review** – Systematic review covered all relevant documents and online resources provided by the UNCTAD project team. The review started during the inception phase to inform the understanding of the project and support the refinement of the evaluation questions and continued throughout the evaluation process to answer evaluation questions and triangulate information from other sources (please see Annex 4 for a list of documents reviewed).
- ◆ **Semi-Structured Interviews with Key Stakeholders (KII)** – 9 KIIs were conducted between March 14 and April 11, 2023, with a purposive sample of stakeholders that ensured representation across categories. Semi-structured interview protocols, tailored to the distinct categories of stakeholders and individual roles, allowed the evaluators to ask various stakeholders some of the same questions to facilitate triangulation, while creating open-ended opportunities to explore other topics relevant to specific individuals, as they arose in the interviews. The BBT Project Manager facilitated follow-up via email as needed. When difficulties arose due to lack of response or availability, or turnover in roles, alternative contacts were provided where possible.

Challenges with scheduling meant the sample proposed in the inception report had to be modified; however, the final sample was relevant and included almost all stakeholder categories¹⁴, as shown in Table 1. Details of stakeholders involved in the data collection process can be found in Annex 2.

Table 1: Sample of stakeholders

Stakeholder Category	Organization	# of KII
Implementer partners	UNCTAD	1
	OECS	2
	CITES	1
Project consultants	UNCTAD-OECS Blue BioTrade Project	2
Country Government Representatives	Fishery Agencies	1
Final Beneficiaries	Fisherfolks/private sector, private sector association	2
Total data collection events		9

¹⁴ A donor representative was not included in the final sample, as it was not possible to reach them. See the next section “Limitations” for more details.

3.3. Analysis, validation, and reporting

The evaluation team triangulated and analyzed data from the various lines of evidence against the evaluation matrix to generate reliable evidence in response to the evaluation questions. The result of this analysis is the present report, which was refined in consultation with the UNCTAD Evaluation Independent Unit and the BBT project team.

3.4. Limitations

As predicted in the inception phase, contacting and scheduling data collection with some stakeholders was challenging, due to delayed responses, lack of response, and turnover of people involved in the project.

Scheduling KIIs with in-country beneficiaries, both at the national level (Fishery agencies) and at the local level (fisherfolks and fisher associations) was especially challenging, time-consuming, and not always fruitful. With the Fishery Agencies, their lack of availability was due to official responsibilities and staff turnover. The BBT project team supported by sending follow up emails, and searching for potential alternatives, but even then, only 1 KII was possible. Regarding the local level beneficiaries, as discussed during the inception period, establishing contact with these groups is usually done *in situ*, and their use of online tools such as email is rather low¹⁵. Following the project consultants' advice, alternative methods were implemented such as WhatsApp messages and calls, but response was still limited. As a solution, the BBT project team provided some written feedback from the workshop sessions implemented during the project.

Setting up a KII with the donor was not possible due to the EU representative's unavailability during the period of the evaluation, and the lack of a viable alternative. As a solution, the UNCTAD project team suggested a KII with the representative from the Permanent Delegation of the OECS in Geneva, who provided perspectives about the inception and design period as well as the funding process with the EU.

As a result of the timely response of the project team and collaboration with the evaluation team, solutions were found, and the sample remained balanced and relevant, and did not affect the results of the evaluation.

¹⁵ As discussed during the inception phase, the TORs excluded field visits, due to limited budget to support travel, making data collection bound using online tools and at a distance only.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Relevance and coherence

Finding 1: Since inception and throughout the project, the implementing partners collaborated with national and local actors in all three countries, so the project activities would be relevant to their needs and priorities.

The project proposal was a collaborative effort between the OECS and UNCTAD that allowed for a tailored approach and clear understanding of the beneficiaries' needs and priorities from the beginning. These efforts, building upon an existing working relationship and body of work on the Blue Economy, allowed them to select the value chain (queen conch) and the three countries with objective criteria and as a joint decision¹⁶. Queen Conch is a regionally iconic species and a valuable commodity for the region, directly supporting the livelihoods of a significant number of families and facing increasing pressure for its production. At the same time, it is a species listed under CITES Appendix II, which requires that national regulatory measures are in place for commercial trade to continue. Many producing countries may not have the capacities for effective compliance and implementation (e.g., control measures) and may need additional support in this regard. The three selected countries were of particular interest due to this. Grenada is facing two (and a potential third) CITES trade suspensions, St Lucia had been previously signaled by CITES but had managed to avoid a ban¹⁷; and St Vincent and the Grenadines has considerably increased its production, so there was a risk of overharvesting and breaching CITES regulation if growth is not properly managed¹⁸. The project directly addressed these needs by providing a better understanding of the Queen Conch value chain in the region and promoting capacity building of the three producing countries, so they can better comply with CITES.

Another issue identified since the exploration phase of the project was the lack of data regarding the queen conch value chain, especially from the supply side. The project addressed this need by gathering preliminary information and traditions of the Queen Conch in these islands through stakeholder mapping and by conducting value chain assessments in these three countries. In the specific case of Grenada an additional step was taken, and a stock assessment of the Queen Conch was produced. A couple of stakeholders commented that the project provided them with a clear snapshot of where each country is, what are the challenges and advantages, and the priority areas to intervene. It also allowed the beneficiary countries to explore new alternatives and actions on how to improve the management of the Queen Conch, although it has not produced immediate tangible changes on the ground for the fisherfolk communities and the Fishery Agencies (which is out of the scope of the project).

¹⁶ PRODOC 2019, p. 10

¹⁷ Saint Lucia had also previously overcome trade suspensions. In 2002, the suspension of imports of conch from Saint Lucia was removed, after responding to recommendations. For more information, see CITES, "Forty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee Geneva (Switzerland), 12–15 March 2002", available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/46/46-16-2.pdf>.

¹⁸ KII, March 2023.

Throughout implementation, the BBT project made efforts to engage the key stakeholders of the value chain. It was a challenge, especially at first, since small-scale (artisanal) fishing tends to be an informal sector, and due to the nature of their work, fisherfolks are used to being independent, so the level of associativity is low¹⁹. Moreover, the lack of formal guidelines for their operations often means that everyone works independently and there is no harmonious coordination in the sector. At all levels – community, fishery agencies, national government – stakeholder’s capacity for getting involved in the project varied²⁰. Engaging stakeholders turned out to be a time-consuming task, as it required both a scouting mission and a trust-building process, combined with logistical and transport issues between islands. Nonetheless, by the end of the project, several stakeholders were consulted, and outputs were validated, giving local actors a platform to participate in the decision-making process. Various interviewees agreed that the Plan of Action reflects this collective effort. Moreover, their participation in these spaces has also allowed them to better understand the benefits of associating among themselves and working together.

Hiring a consultant that understood the culture and specificities of the fishing sector, and could easily interact with them at multiple levels proved to be a strength of the project. Several stakeholders mentioned during the interviews that a contributing factor to this productive engagement was the disposition and hard work of the BBT Project Coordinator on the ground. Direct collaboration and cooperation of the focal points at the Fishery Agencies also allowed for the project to maintain its alignment to the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries.

As the project recognized the differences and specificities of each context, it provided recommendations at the country level, and tailored them to its needs. According to multiple interviews with beneficiary countries, the project outputs are a steppingstone in the right direction to comply with international regulation (both the BBT principles and CITES).

Finding 2: The application of the Blue BioTrade principles to the queen conch value chain is coherent with the goals of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management Plan of Action and the countries’ efforts towards key targets of SDG 14 and SDG 15. However, there is limited evidence of stakeholders’ understanding of the contribution to key targets of SDG 15.

Queen Conch has been a niche topic for many years, and as such there have not been too many initiatives about it in the region. As reported by the original Project Document, most of the assistance on Queen Conch is provided at the WECAFC level and within the framework of the Regional Working Group²¹. This group includes the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC and the CRFM. One of their main initiatives is the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management Plan of Action, proposed in 2017.

The evidence suggests that the BBT project, at its pilot phase, has already contributed to some of the goals of this Regional Management Plan, and a few stakeholders mentioned it is mutually beneficial. In surveys carried out during the BBT events, stakeholders also expressed that the

¹⁹ KII, March 2023.

²⁰ KII, March 2023.

²¹ PRODOC 2019, p. 11.

BBT activities helped them identify where they were in the regional plan and how to support its implementation.²² Through the country case studies and the Grenada Queen Conch stock assessment the BBT contributes to the Regional Management's Plan first objective of improving the collection and integration of scientific data needed to determine the overall queen conch population status as the basis for the application of ecosystem-based management. Moreover, the Blue BioTrade Action Plan created during the project is aligned with the overall Regional Plan; especially its objective of increasing collaboration and harmonizing regional governance arrangements²³.

The project also targets challenges shared by the region. As mentioned by the OECS, harvesting Queen Conch in a sustainable manner, as proposed by the BBT principles, can lead to a decrease of overfishing – both legal and illegal. As a result, it could prevent the United States from listing the queen conch as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of US Federal Law. This would avoid potential socio-economic impacts for conch exporting countries²⁴.

Evidence shows that since the inception period, the project was consistent with the countries' efforts to achieve key targets of the SDG 14²⁵. Since the OECS already has expertise in projects related to the ocean economy, the needs of fisheries regarding SDG 14 were taken into consideration during the negotiation phase. A few interviewees also mentioned that by identifying opportunities and setting out clear actionable recommendations, the project indirectly contributes to the countries' work on SDGs, especially for key targets 14.4. and 14.7. The project was also acknowledged as advancing SDG 14 in the Caribbean by UNDP Rising Up for SIDS initiative²⁶.

Regarding the key targets of SDG 15, through the application of Bio Trade principles to the queen conch value chain, the BBT contributed to raising awareness of alternative sustainable fishing practices and the effects of the conch's illegal harvesting and trade. These efforts supported progress toward key targets 15.6, 15.7 and 15.c. However, the evaluation found that how the BBT project supported SDG 15, i.e. specifically from the marine realm, was not always understood by the project's external stakeholders. For several interviewees, it was not clear how the project could provide support to achieve SDG 15's key targets.

4.2. Effectiveness

Finding 3: The project met, and for the most part surpassed, all its planned results at the outcome and output levels by the end of the period. However, there is limited reporting on the contribution to the overall objective of the project.

²² SusGren – Workshop evaluation report. P.10

²³ Prada, M. C., et al. "Regional queen conch fisheries management and conservation plan." *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper (FAO) eng no. 610* (2017).

²⁴ Since the US initiative was introduced at the end of 2022, when the pilot project was coming to an end, more targeted actions, such as engaging with local partners and US representatives, was not possible.

²⁵ PRODOC 2019, p. 6 and 7.

²⁶ UNDP SIDS. (2022, July). UNDP SIDS Bulletin: Issue 60. <https://mailchi.mp/undp/undp-sids-bulletin-issue-15880589?e=%5BUNIQID%5D>

The BBT project delivered and exceeded targets for the two indicators at the outcome level and delivered the 5 indicators at the output level. Performance data provided in the cumulative progress reports against the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2 Key Performance Indicators

Indicators ²⁷	Final progress ²⁸
Outcome 1. Stakeholders have enhanced capacity to identify sustainable business opportunities and formulate joint actions to apply Blue BioTrade principles in the conch value chain.	
Number of opportunities identified and prepared for implementation during the assessment phase	<i>Completed</i>
Number of stakeholders having enhanced capacity in opportunity identification and action formulation	<i>Completed</i>
Outputs	
1.1.A stakeholder mapping of the conch value chain is conducted.	<i>Completed</i>
1.2.A regional stakeholder webinar on oceans/blue economy and Blue BioTrade principles and criteria is organized.	<i>Completed</i>
1.3.An assessment of the queen conch value chain and its Blue BioTrade potential is conducted in three countries.	<i>Completed</i>
1.4.An OECS Blue BioTrade Regional Plan of Action for queen conch is formulated by stakeholders and validated by beneficiary countries.	<i>Completed</i>
Outcome 2: Small-scale coastal producers in beneficiary countries benefit from enhanced sustainable production and trade opportunities in the queen conch value chain²⁹.	
Outputs	
2.2. Multi-channel communication is undertaken throughout the project cycle in a way that	<i>Completed</i>

²⁷ The three cumulative reports did not include information about the indicator for the overall objective of the project (*No. of small-scale coastal producers mastering Blue BioTrade principles and criteria and planning to incorporate them into their business*); and consequently, it is not included in this table.

²⁸ Evidence in the final reports did not compare the results against original targets, so it was not possible to determine the percentage of surpass performance. As such, this report only presented them as “completed” instead of a %.

²⁹ Since output 2.1. will be implemented in the second phase, there is no reporting during this pilot phase for the overall outcome.

ensures dissemination and visibility of results, while successfully acknowledging donor support.	
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As pointed out by various stakeholders and in line with documental evidence, the BBT project managed to deliver high-quality outputs, following the proposed methodology of complementary steps. First, it conducted a stakeholder mapping of the conch value chain to provide an initial overview of the three countries (output 1.1). This initial scope, done in preparation for each country's case study, was presented and validated by stakeholders during the regional stakeholder webinar on Blue BioTrade and BioTrade Principles and Criteria including CITES requirements (output 1.2). Afterwards three detailed country case studies were conducted involving stakeholders from the fisherfolk community and national agencies on the ground (output 1.3). As an additional step for these drafts, a consultation and validation meeting of Blue BioTrade in St Lucia was organized at the end of 2021. The discussions and feedback from these meeting were crucial for these assessments to provide an overview of the Queen Conch value chain in each country, pointing out bottlenecks, potential opportunities, and challenges for implementing BBT principles, as well as key recommendations to diverse stakeholders. Using these findings as a foundation, a regional Blue BioTrade Plan of Action (output 1.4) was prepared, presented, and validated at the regional workshop in Saint Vincent in May 2022, with over 180 participants³⁰.

Throughout its implementation, the BBT project also managed to reach high levels of visibility both at the regional level, as well as among UN and non-UN organizations involved in the Blue Economy. Several outreach activities were carried out and included the presentation and participation of the BBT project in events organized by international organizations: diffusion through the websites and social media of other UN agencies and partners and an active press and media campaign. Some examples included the BBT mainstreaming at the UN Ocean Conference, the CITES processes at CoP19, and the 50th anniversary celebration and World Wildlife Day celebration.

The evaluation found that the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders at different levels, including the high-level and political support at the national and regional level, were key to the success of these outputs. Participation of the national fishery agencies at different stages of the process, i.e., during consultation and validation of the outputs, fostered a sense of ownership and motivated them to follow through with the recommendations from the Plan of Action. As explained by some beneficiaries of the program, the BBT project fostered enthusiasm and interest to keep doing the work on their own. For example, Grenada is still working with CITES to address trade suspensions on Queen Conch and on other CITES listed species, despite the project being over.

Stakeholder engagement throughout output activities also contributed to the project's enhanced capacity to identify sustainable business opportunities and formulate joint actions to apply BBT principles in the queen conch value chain (Outcome 1). As such, during these activities, at least 50 specific recommendations tailored to policy makers and private sector players were proposed and over 30 action points to lay the groundwork for the application of Blue BioTrade Principles

³⁰ Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022

were identified either at the national or regional level³¹. Evidence in the reports also pointed to trainings, a field survey and active stakeholder participation in the validation of the outputs as means for capacity building. This was confirmed by different stakeholders during the interviews, where they expressed that the project provided them with a very good understanding of the whole value chain and a higher appreciation of the Queen Conch and its importance for the region, and supplied them with a roadmap to move forward. At the national level, stakeholders recognized that they now have a better understanding of the CITES regulation and the BBT principles, and are more familiarized with its indicators and how it can be put into practice.

Fisherfolk also got valuable input regarding safety practices for queen conch harvesting, and want to continue learning about the industry, its development and conservation. The evaluation found that although some members of the fishing community have gained knowledge and have started to introduce small changes in their practices, more training and awareness supported by national and regional authorities is still needed for them to master the BBT Principles and introduce them at a large scale³².

Beyond this anecdotal evidence from stakeholders, there is limited available data about the contribution to the overall objective (OO) proposed in the original logic framework “to *empower small-scale coastal producers from OECS member states to produce and trade queen conch products in domestic, regional, and international markets, under the Blue BioTrade environmental, social, and economic sustainability criteria, including CITES*”³³. For example, there is no reporting in the progress and final reports against targets set for the OO indicator nor the OC1.2 indicator³⁴. Although participants surveys were conducted during the three major events of the program (namely, the regional webinar on BBT principles; the validation workshop for the Action Plan and the Grenada Queen Conch stock assessment), including questions related to these indicators, no further data analysis or consolidation was found indicating whether the goals were achieved. Collecting systematic data at the outcome and overall objective level appears to be challenging for the context. Moreover, it should be re-emphasized here that these expected changes take time, resources and consistency, and results won’t be fully observable, or may be incipient at best from a pilot phase.

Finding 4: The BBT project managed to achieve various unexpected positive outputs, despite some challenges with implementation. These spin-offs, although unplanned, contribute to the impact and sustainability of the project.

Beyond the planned outputs and outcomes, additional outputs were achieved throughout the project, by turning some of challenges presented into opportunities for the project.

³¹ Cumulative Final Progress Report 2020-2022. p.19. Evidence in the final cumulative report presents a large number of recommendations and action points, but does it not always disaggregated them by country, so it was not possible to determine the exact number per country.

³² KII, March 2023.

³³ PRODOC 2019, p. 30.

³⁴ Targets for OO were 1) “Producers involved indicated they have a better understanding of Blue BioTrade principles and criteria and applicable; CITES provisions (70%); 2) they plan to incorporate them into their business (50%)”; and target for the Oc1.2. was “At least 70% of stakeholders participating to activity A 1.4.2. indicate to have enhanced capacity in opportunity identification and action formulation”.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic measures, travel and events were restricted and several activities had to be adapted to a virtual format, or postponed. This new scenario of implementation, relying heavily on the consultants on the ground and hybrid events, opened new spaces. For example, to complement the first consultation event – in a hybrid format in St Lucia in November 2021 –, UNCTAD and the International Trade Center (ITC) organized the virtual BioTrade self-assessment tool “training for trainers” workshop. At the beginning of 2022, a video on Blue BioTrade in the Eastern Caribbean was produced, as a virtual means of easily presenting the project, key opportunities and challenges and the need to secure CITES compliance for the queen conch value chain. The video gave visibility not only to the project in different spaces of the region, UNCTAD and the UN, but it also highlighted stakeholders working on the ground. The video was launched at the regional workshop and validation of the OECS Blue BioTrade Action Plan for the queen conch value chain in the Eastern Caribbean in May 2022 and presented at several events afterwards ³⁵.

Moreover, as a response to the travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, funds were redeployed to additional activities that contribute to the impact of the project such as the assistance to Grenada dealing with the CITES requirements through the Queen Conch Stock Assessment. The national queen conch stock assessment workshop and field survey in Grenada were consecutively carried out in October 2022³⁶.

The initial stakeholder mapping and the three country case studies provided an overview of the challenges and needs of each country. It also highlighted that, in some specific cases, the issues of limited capacity could be easily solved in the short term. One of the key findings of the Saint Lucia report was that the country was at risk of facing a CITES trade ban on queen conch due to the lack of annual reports since 2017. Flagging this issue on time allowed them to address it and avoid the sanction³⁷. Likewise, the project assisted Grenada to avoid a third suspension (temporarily) under the CITES National Legislation Project and is on course to also address remaining issues relating to its current trade suspensions³⁸. These two positive developments were achieved thanks to the collaboration between the beneficiary countries and CITES as a result of the project.

As mentioned by several stakeholders during the interviews, one of the most important spin-offs of the project was the alliance established with an expert from Puerto Rico regarding the creation of an aquaculture facility (conch nursery) in St Vincent and the Grenadines. During the implementation of a regional workshop, the OECS seized the opportunity and gathered political support for building the infrastructure of this new facility, and is currently securing funding for this project. The nursery is likely to have far reaching impact on the value chain of Queen Conch and the whole region.

³⁵ Cumulative Progress Report June 2022. p. 15

³⁶ Cumulative Final Progress Report Dec 2022. p. 27

³⁷ Cumulative Progress Report 2021. p.19

³⁸ Cumulative Progress Report June 2022. p. 3

4.3. Efficiency

Finding 5: The complementarity and commitment of the three implementing partners was key to responsive and effective project management. However, the amount of work needed by each one was underestimated from the beginning.

Stakeholders shared generally positive perceptions of project management, expressing appreciation for the Steering Committee's commitment, responsiveness, and support throughout the project. The evaluation found that implementing partners managed project processes and activities in an efficient and appropriate manner, with a budget implementation of 99% of the budget by December 2022³⁹.

There was a general agreement among stakeholders that one of the contributing factors for such efficiency was the complementary expertise of the Steering Committee and the collaborative approach with clear roles and tasks for each partner. UNCTAD lent its high capacity and extensive experience in dealing with trade and industrial policy issues in the ocean economy; while CITES provided the technical expertise on advising, implementing, and monitoring Queen conch regulations; and OECS used its vast network in the region to support and follow up at the country level implementation. The Committee also benefited from the long-standing work relationship between the members and followed a consensual approach to decision-making, increasing the commitment of all engaged parties, and promoting transparency and accountability. For example, parallel efforts in communications ended up in more efficient use of resources and greater dissemination. This joint approach also allowed them to work together to find solutions to issues such as the potential third CITES ban in Grenada.

Another feature mentioned in interviews with stakeholders was the adaptive and responsive approach of the Steering Committee, which allowed accommodation of contextual needs and circumstances, as well as the emergence of new ideas and spin-offs of the project. The project encountered several challenges that affected its timeline. For example, Covid-19 pandemic restrictions as well as the La Soufrière volcanic eruption in April 2021 affected Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent; most project activities planned for 2021 faced significant setbacks. As a response, the project implemented several adjustments: activities relied heavily on consultants on the ground, hybrid formats were implemented, and funds were redeployed to additional activities that contributed to the impact of the project⁴⁰. Moreover, the production order of the country assessments was altered as expecting SVG to conduct it after the volcanic eruption was unrealistic. Despite these adaptations, the pace of project implementation was still affected, as it was highly dependent on beneficiary countries' capacity to respond and absorb technical cooperation⁴¹. Countries appreciated the support and understanding of the OECS for implementation through these circumstances. Thanks to the responsiveness of the Steering Committee, two no-cost extensions were granted, allowing for an efficient execution of the funds.

³⁹ Cumulative Final Progress Report Dec 2022. p. 37

⁴⁰ Cumulative Final Report 2020 -2022. p. 37

⁴¹ Cumulative Progress Report. June 2022. p. 22

The project also managed to anticipate government (staffing/leadership) changes as a result of the general election held in Grenada in June 2022. The timely support of the OECS, through their technical officer's visit to the capital, ensured continuity of the implementation of the project and the legislative review process by Grenada⁴².

However, interviews with stakeholders pointed out that the amount of work and time needed for this project was underestimated. Since it was a pilot project, it was not easy to assess during the design phase the amount of effort that certain processes would require. For example, the joint decision to hire only two consultants to implement the project in the three countries and write four products whilst also coordinating related activities proved to be a risk for the timeline of the project. Since studies were done consecutively, instead of simultaneously, there were some delays in the implementation, but this decision aimed to build knowledge and experience and harmonize the outputs. Still, engaging stakeholders on the ground in a context of informality and low associativity during a pandemic implied a high investment of time and effort that was not foreseen. Mitigating actions were implemented such as transferring tasks to other BBT team members, focusing on key deliverables as well as transparent and timely communication amongst the team⁴³.

Stakeholders also mentioned that administrative processes such as meetings, quality assurance and complying with UN requirements were time-consuming and challenging. Strict measures for contracting, spending, communication requirements among others within the UN structure implied an additional burden for the implementation of the project, and in some cases limited the maneuverability of activities. Funding was limited so stakeholders reported they had to absorb internal costs in order to deliver results. According to the final report, implementing partners UNCTAD's and CITES' contribution to the project (in staff time and administrative support) can be estimated at \$215,000⁴⁴.

4.4. Sustainability

Finding 6: There is evidence of efforts to leverage technical and financial resources to continue a new phase of the project, with a focus on implementing some recommendations from the BBT Plan of Action. However, a variety of factors could threaten the sustainability of the initiative and its results.

The project mobilized resources to create knowledge and materials that could continue to be used after the end of the project. The knowledge products created through the program (stakeholder mapping, country case studies and stock assessment) provide data that can be used in the development of new programs and policies. Moreover, the first phase of the project generated

⁴² Cumulative Progress Final Report. 2020 - 2022. p. 28

⁴³ Cumulative Progress Report. December 2021 p. 14.

⁴⁴ UNCTAD provided staff time estimated at \$150,000 and additional assistance to support implementation of additional activities for about \$30,000 from the Ocean Economy component of its Trade and Climate multi-donor trust fund. CITES contribution between 2020 and 2022 in staff time terms (Scientific and Legal Support Officers) is estimated at around \$35,000. Cumulative Final Report 2020-2022 p. 3

expectations and set the stage for new projects about other value chains. Some countries of the region have expressed their interest and want to get involved in upcoming projects.⁴⁵

Moreover, through the project methodology, technical capacities to apply BioTrade Principles have been strengthened in the three countries. Stakeholders agreed that their participation on the validation and approval of the project outputs (three country case studies, the BBT plan of Action, the stock assessment), contribute to a better understanding of the queen conch industry and its regulations, and fostered interest and ownership across engaged parties. Involvement in the research and stock assessment survey also allowed fisherfolks and communities to gain some training and knowledge on good practices and techniques that can continue to be applied in their daily operations. At the national level, the BBT regional Plan of Action provided participant countries with actionable recommendations and suggested a way forward in the journey to sustainable BioTrade.

The project also made significant efforts to ensure financial support for both the next phase and some of the spin-offs of this pilot. First, during implementation, as an additional activity the project developed a proposal for the second phase and managed to secure its funding. In 2022, the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) pledged €600'000 to the second phase of the Blue BioTrade Project. This next phase is planned to be led by the OECS in all 11 countries, affirming the perceived success of this project and its capacity to deliver results. The focus of this new project is the implementation of priority actions under the BBT Action Plan for the queen conch⁴⁶, and is planned to be implemented through mid-2026. Furthermore, the OECS is also seeking funding for the development of the conch nursery in SVG, to promote responsible harvests and spread juvenile queen conch in the whole region⁴⁷.

At the same time, several stakeholders expressed concern that project results might be affected by the broader challenge of national governments and beneficiaries limited resources to implement recommendations or build on the results by themselves. Considering that fishery is mostly an informal economy, stakeholders pointed out that additional follow up and support especially to ultimate beneficiaries, i.e. small-scale coastal producers, is necessary to make sure that there are enough financial and technical capacities to move forward with the recommendations. A couple of interviewees suggested that this pilot of the project could have included a budget to start implementing a couple of key recommendations, setting the Plan of Action in motion⁴⁸.

Another threat to sustainability is the risk of turnover of policy makers, focal points, and other stakeholders on the ground, that have gained capacities and increased their commitment towards BioTrade principles. This can negatively affect the political support and momentum built by the BBT project.

⁴⁵ KII, 2023.

⁴⁶ Cumulative Progress Report June 2022. p.4.

⁴⁷ Cumulative Final Report 2020 -2022. p. 28

⁴⁸ Since the BBT project was a pilot there were budget constrains for implementation in this phase. Still, the project managed to carry out a stock assessment in Grenada, following a recommendation from the BBT Regional Plan.

Finally, stakeholders pointed out risks associated with the nature of the queen conch value chain. For example, the physical challenge of distances between islands which make any intervention expensive; and the reality of illegal harvesting and trade that affects the queen conch population. These issues call for regional solutions, but limited capacity can hinder enforcement.

4.5. Cross-cutting issues

Finding 7: The evaluation found evidence that there was some gender mainstreaming during the implementation of project activities, despite a lack of explicit analysis during the design phase. However, other cross-cutting issues such as human rights and disability-sensitive measures were not addressed meaningfully in project planning and only partially during implementation.

The evaluation found that during the design phase of the project, attention to these cross-cutting issues was minimal. Regarding gender mainstreaming, the project results framework does not include gender-specific outcomes, outputs, or indicators, nor there is a gender analysis of the project, and according to several interviews, gender equality and inclusion were not noticeably addressed in developing project activities or resources.

However, stakeholders agreed that as implementation went by, a gender balance organically emerged throughout the project. This balance was reflected in the project team, the focal points and even the participants on the project activities⁴⁹. As pointed out in the stakeholder mapping document and confirmed by several interviews, both men and women were involved in the queen conch value chain, and consequently in the stakeholder engagement and participation. Men are usually more present at the beginning of the supply side (harvesting and processing of queen conch); while many women are involved in later stages such as processing operations and the commercialization of queen conch and its related products.⁵⁰ In the BBT Regional Plan of Action, inclusion of participatory and gender sensitive approaches throughout implementation were strongly encouraged⁵¹. Some interviewees pointed out that although efforts were made there is room for improvement in this area. For example, it was suggested by a stakeholder that there should be continuous monitoring regarding women's involvement in this value chain, to establish whether gender balance is consistent or fluctuating. Regarding the two other cross-cutting issues, there is some evidence on how they were integrated. The project is built on the BioTrade principles, which include Principle 6 referring to the respect of rights of actors involved in BioTrade activities. Accordingly, the human rights-based approach is embedded in the activities. Some examples that reflect it are the close attention paid to fishers' livelihoods, and the training on diving safety for the divers of queen conch. Additionally, during the project events and meetings, when fisherfolk participation occurred, reasonable and timely compensation was provided to each participant factoring the economic losses they would have incurred for their in-person

⁴⁹ For example, in the cumulative Progress Report December 2021. p.4.

⁵⁰ Stakeholder Maps of the Conch Value Chains of Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines p.6.

⁵¹ The Blue BioTrade regional plan of action for the Eastern Caribbean queen conch value chain. p.7.

participation. However, when asked, some stakeholders were not able to identify explicit incorporation of the approach.

The criterion of disability-sensitive measures was added at the end of the project and by the evaluation, and thus was not mainstreamed into the activities. However, various interviewees mentioned that people involved in queen conch harvesting are at a higher risk of injuries, disability, and death, as a result of the dangers of the task. As such, measures to prevent disability were discussed throughout the project, and for example during the Queen Conch stock assessment, participants were trained in safety practices, including insurance, before being allowed to dive. As explained by an interviewee: “Standards and insurance regulations stemming from the BBT principles are put into place as a prevention measure for disability”⁵².

Overall, stakeholders agreed that although there were some actions, the project lacked a clear definition and scope of what needed to be done regarding these cross-cutting issues. Some interviews revealed that although there is interest and awareness on such issues, there is limited expertise and experience on how to incorporate them into the implementation of activities.

4.6. Partnerships and synergies

Finding 8: Good relationships with regional actors and synergies have been key to producing quality outputs. However, there is room for more connection to other key players in the region.

Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation observed that one of the factors ensuring success was the capacity of the BBT project to tap into networks that facilitated smooth implementation. Consistently acknowledging the European Union as a financial partner to the OECS, and UNCTAD as the coordinating implementer, gave the project support and credibility in the region⁵³. This was complemented by the OECS’ good political connections and trust at the country and regional level, which eased collaboration with local representatives; and CITES technical expertise and previous work with national governments.

Overall, the implementing partners (UNCTAD and OECS, in cooperation with CITES) played a key role in building and maintaining such networks, as their reputation fosters trust and attracts new connections. As mentioned during an interview, local partners also need an incentive to get engaged, so the BBT project used its communication platforms to give visibility and highlight these partnerships. Throughout the project, diverse partners have been invited to different activities as either commentators or participants. These include: the CBF; CRFM; UNDP and UN Barbados Office representatives, among others. However, a few stakeholders pointed out the project could have explored more synergies and further collaboration with other UN agencies working on similar topics in the region, such as FAO and its work regarding fishing.

⁵² KII, 2023.

⁵³ KII 2023.

The project also partnered with local actors to implement project activities in a more efficient manner. For the organization of the regional validation of the Plan of Action, the project team consulted with the UN regional office, who suggested SusGren (Sustainable Grenadines). SusGren is a regional NGO with a close relationship to the harvesters and has a dynamic style of work. Their involvement contributed to the smooth planning of the event and a satisfactory delivery of the output.

Finally, 2022 was the ocean super year, which sparked peak interest in the Blue Economy. In this context, the BBT project took advantage of the moment to showcase and present the project results to a wider audience at the international and global level. For example, in the 2022 UNOC Conference, it presented project findings through a side-event. It also produced and disseminated the Blue BioTrade project video through different media channels including the UN landing page⁵⁴. The BBT project also contributed to CITES' work on marine species and was recognized during the Convention's 19th Conference of the Parties (CoP19), the 50th anniversary of the Convention and the celebration of the World Wildlife Day in early March 2023⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Cumulative Progress report June 2022. p.4.

⁵⁵ Cumulative Final Report 2020 -2022. p. 5.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings across the five evaluation criteria, a set of conclusions are presented below:

1. Due to the involvement of the OECS from the inception phase, the BBT project tailored its methodology to respond to some of the pressing needs of beneficiary countries such as limited capacity to respond to CITES regulation and lack of data on the queen conch value chain. Since this is a pilot project, it benefited mostly countries at the national level by providing them with a series of actionable recommendations for policymaking, but tangible benefits for the ultimate target (fisherfolks and local private sector) might take longer to be seen.
2. The BBT project was implemented in a niche value chain, and the project outputs are aligned to the existing regional initiatives and regional issues of Queen Conch, contributing to advancement of key targets of SDGs 14 and 15. Still, there was room for more explicit connections and coordination with other regional actors involved in the Working Group on Queen conch.
3. The evaluation team concludes that the project was effective in achieving intended results. Despite logistical and contextual challenges, the project managed to continuously engage stakeholders of all levels, which turned into a key factor for the quality of the outputs, capacity building and for fostering ownership of the Regional Plan of Action. Additionally, trust building and partnerships were key factors for achieving intended results.
4. There is some evidence of the contribution of project activities to and progress made towards the outcome and overall objective. However, given the lack of consistent or comprehensive data or reporting against original targets, it was difficult to assess the overall level of contribution or performance in these indicators.
5. Previous working relationships and commitment among members made the Steering Committee's leadership responsive to external factors and challenges and implementation was efficient. However, the amount of resources demanded, especially in terms of work, was underestimated by all parties. Since the project was a pilot initiative, everything was new and to a certain extent, time to learn and adjust was needed. Nonetheless, the BBT program has accumulated experience and lessons learned and can now proceed with more accurate planning.
6. The project outputs present a solid foundation to build upon for the upcoming years. The BBT methodology and additional project activities address some of the main sustainability risks, including funding and capacities. However, some other challenges to sustainability remain.
7. Despite lack of attention during the initial phase of the project, contributions to cross cutting issues such as gender, human rights, and disability, organically emerged to some degree during the implementation of project activities. More systematic attention from the design phase is needed to have a better integration of these issues.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions across the five evaluation criteria, a set of recommendations are presented below:

For the OECS and future BBT projects:

- I. Following good practices from this pilot phase, the project (or follow up activities) should continue to and increasingly plan for engaging with stakeholders of all levels to ensure the project activities are responsive to the priorities and needs of beneficiaries. In addition, continue to provide actionable recommendations tailored to specific stakeholders, in order to maximize benefits across different categories.
- II. Ensure that project design and preparation processes include systematic efforts to identify potential complementarities and synergies with other regional initiatives and beneficiary country efforts related to key targets of SDG 14 and 15. Explore and establish explicit linkages, coordinating with existing activities, to maximize synergies.
- III. Develop an M&E framework within the project, including meaningful performance indicators for monitoring and reporting and feasible targets for results at all levels. Associate them with accurate tools and define roles and responsibilities for data collection. Furthermore, identify opportunities and create spaces for systematic program reflection, knowledge sharing, and learning.
- IV. Following good practice from the BBT project, continue and increasingly reach out to international organizations and global forums working in the ocean economy, to disseminate and position Blue BioTrade Principles and results as part of future initiatives.
- V. To address financial constraints for sustainability, include this type of project and its follow up activities (such as workshops and light support) in resource mobilization plans to attract additional funding.

For UNCTAD:

- VI. Building on this experience and lessons learned, during the design phase of future projects, identify any resource- or time-intensive administrative or programmatic processes that may affect the project timeline and, when possible, plan for alternatives or take these processes into account by building in realistic timelines and budgets that are ready to address predictable bottlenecks or delays.
- VII. In future projects, build in more comprehensive and participatory needs assessment and gender analyses at the design stage to identify potential synergy and ensure inclusion of diverse stakeholder needs and interests (e.g. women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.). From there, identify and clearly define results and indicators related to cross-cutting issues

such as gender, human rights- based approach and disability sensitive measures, both in substantive and process terms. If needed, seek support from gender and other substantive experts within UNCTAD to mainstream them into project activities and outputs.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
RELEVANCE				
1. To what extent the project design, choice of activities and deliverables properly reflect and address the development needs and priorities of participating countries, taking into account UNCTAD's mandates and OECS' objectives?	1.1. How does the project respond to the priorities of the participating countries' governments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of alignment between BBT project results and national governments' priorities and/ or national and regional programs ▪ Perspective of countries' government representatives ▪ Level of co-investment by partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents; national strategies and policies ▪ Government representatives
	1.2. How does the project address the needs of local stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participation of diverse groups during project design and implementation ▪ Stakeholder perspectives on the extent to which the program met local needs, by country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, reports, and exhibits ▪ Government representatives ▪ Beneficiaries including private sector, fisherfolks (as possible)
	1.3. How does the project integrate in the mandate of both UNCTAD and OECS' objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of alignment between BBT project results and UNCTAD mandate? ▪ Degree of alignment between BBT project results and OECS' objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, UNCTAD and OECS documentation ▪ Implementing partners

⁵⁶ For all indicators/evidence, data and perspectives collected will be disaggregated for analysis where relevant and possible. This has not been expressed in each indicator for reasons of space.

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
<p>2. What adjustments will be needed to make the project more relevant to the participating countries in supporting their efforts to achieve the targets of SDG 14 and SDG 15?</p>	<p>2.1. What adjustments will be needed regarding targets of SDG 14?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BBT results against key targets of SDG 14, specifically: ▪ Evidence of implementation of the RQCFMP (target 14.2; 14.4; 15.7) ▪ BBT results on awareness events about illegal harvesting and trade (target 14.4, 15.7) ▪ Evidence of increased productive capacity/associativity under the BBT principles (target 14.7 and 14.b) ▪ Stakeholder perspective on contribution to key targets of SDG 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, SDG indicators ▪ Implementing partners and government representatives
	<p>2.2. What adjustments will be needed regarding targets of SDG 15?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BBT results against key targets of SDG 15, specifically: ▪ Evidence of implementation among producers and business of BBT principles, including ABS (target 15.6) ▪ Evidence of increased stakeholder awareness and capacities on BBT principles (target 15.9) ▪ Evidence of increased funds (donors and private resources) for the implementation of actions (target 15.a) ▪ Stakeholder perspective on contribution to the specified key targets of SDG 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, SDG indicators ▪ Implementing partners and government representatives
<p>3. To what extent has the work of the project been complementary to other initiatives in the queen conch</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of similar and/ or linked interventions in the target countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documentation, regional strategies, or programming

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
value chain implemented by other UN and non-UN actors?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of synergies created. Stakeholder perspective on synergies among components 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing partners, govt. representatives and partners, donor
EFFECTIVENESS				
4. Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document and outcomes (intended or unintended), in particular against relevant SDG targets?	4.1. To what extent were the planned objectives and outcomes achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance in relation to targets on KPIs at immediate and intermediate outcomes level. Stakeholder perspectives on outcomes achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, PMF, SDG targets Implementing partners, govt. representatives, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible)
	4.2. Where there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of unintended positive or negative outcomes Stakeholder perspectives on unintended direct results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, Implementing partners, govt. representatives, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible)
	4.3. Which internal and external factors hindered or facilitated progress?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of factors affecting project progress Stakeholder perspectives on factors hindering or facilitating project synergy with other related initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, Implementing partners, govt. representatives, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible)
5. To what extent have the project participants gained the knowledge and skills gained through the project's activities to strengthen the sustainable production and trade of queen conch and conch-based products?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of activities transferring skills and knowledge Level of knowledge acquired by the project participants. Stakeholders' perspectives on knowledge and skills offered by project's activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, exhibits, project surveys if any Implementing partners, beneficiaries (as possible)
EFFICIENCY				
6. To what extent have the project resources been utilized to ensure the	6.1. Has the project management been adequate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of adequate management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress report, PMF

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
achievement of the expected outcomes in a timely manner?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability and quality of M&E data ▪ Stakeholders' perspectives about project management 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementing partners, project consultants
	6.2. How efficient was the project in utilizing financial resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned VS actual expenditures, including incurred expenditures. ▪ Evidence of additional activities implemented within the project budget. ▪ Stakeholders' perspectives about project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, financial reports, progress reports, ▪ Implementing partners, project consultants
	6.3. Have the expected outcomes been achieved in a timely manner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence and reasons of delays in activities' implementation ▪ Stakeholders' perspectives about time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, progress reports, extensions requests ▪ Implementing partners, project consultants
SUSTAINABILITY				
7. What is the likelihood that the project results and benefits will continue after the end of the project?	7.1. What evidence have been that beneficiary countries are committed to continue working towards the project objectives beyond the end of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of actions taken by the beneficiary countries themselves to build on the project outcomes. ▪ Stakeholders' perspective about likelihood of continuation by countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress reports, countries' strategies, and policies ▪ Implementing Partners, government representatives
	7.2. What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of measures taken to promote sustainability. ▪ Stakeholders' perspectives about sustainability measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review ▪ KII ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, progress reports, ▪ Implementing partners, government representatives, beneficiaries (as possible)
	7.3. Have there been catalytic effects from the project both at the national and/ or regional levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of catalytic effects at the national level ▪ Evidence of catalytic effects at the regional level ▪ Stakeholders' perspectives about spillover effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents, progress reports, national documents, regional documents ▪ Implementing partners, government representatives,

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
	7.4. What additional measures could be taken to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations of measures to promote sustainability of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing partners, government representatives, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible), partnerships,
CROSS CUTTING ISSUES: GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DISABILITY				
8. To what extent a human rights-based approach, a gender mainstreaming strategy and disability-sensitive measures were incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard?	8.1. How was a human rights-based approach incorporated in the design and implementation phases of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of integration of a human rights-based approach Stakeholders' perspectives on challenges and lessons learned in the incorporation of a human rights-based approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, Implementing partners, project consultants, beneficiaries,
	8.2. How was a gender mainstreaming strategy incorporated in the design and implementation phases of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of integration of gender mainstreaming strategy Stakeholders' perspectives on challenges and lessons learned in the integration of a gender mainstreaming strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports Implementing partners, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible)
	8.3. How were the disability-sensitive measures incorporated in the design and implementation phases of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of integration of a disability-sensitive measures Stakeholders' perspectives on challenges and lessons learned in the integration of disability-sensitive measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents, progress reports, Implementing partners, project consultants, beneficiaries (as possible)
PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES				
9. To what extent have the established partnerships amongst key stakeholders of the project contribute to the achievement and sustainability of results?	9.1. To what extent has the project advanced partnerships amongst project participants with national and regional counterparts, international development partners, the civil society and/or the private sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of established partnerships during project implementation Stakeholders' perspective on partnerships and synergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review KII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documentation, progress reports, regional documents Implementing partners, government representatives, donor, beneficiaries (as possible)

Evaluation Questions	Sub questions	Indicators ⁵⁶	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
	9.2. To what extent did the project partnerships contribute to, or hinder, the achievement of results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of results attributed to partnerships. ▪ Stakeholders' perspective on role of partnerships to achieve results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ KII ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documentation, progress reports, regional documents ▪ Implementing partners, government representatives, donor, beneficiaries (as possible)

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW LIST

Redacted for confidentiality purposes.

ANNEX 3: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

This is a general overview of the KII questions. Interview guides were tailored to the different categories.

Evaluation Questions	Implementing Partners	Donor	BBT Project Staff	Country govt representatives	Beneficiaries
RELEVANCE					
1. To what extent the project design, choice of activities and deliverables properly reflect and address the development needs and priorities of participating countries, taking into account UNCTAD's mandates and OECS' objectives?	X		X	X	X
2. What adjustments will be needed to make the project more relevant to the participating countries in supporting their efforts to achieve the targets of SDG 14 and SDG 15?	X		X	X	
3. To what extent has the work of the project been complementary to other initiatives in the queen conch value chain implemented by other UN and non-UN actors?	X	X	X	X	
EFFECTIVENESS					
4. Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document and outcomes (intended or unintended), in particular against relevant SDG targets?	X		X	X	X
5. To what extent have the project participants gained the knowledge and skills gained through the project's activities to strengthen the sustainable production and trade of queen conch and conch-based products?	X		X	X	X
EFFICIENCY					
6. To what extent have the project resources been utilized to ensure the achievement of the expected outcomes in a timely manner?	X		X		
SUSTAINABILITY					
7. What is the likelihood that the project results and benefits will continue after the end of the project?	X		X	X	X

Evaluation Questions	Implementing Partners	Donor	BBT Project Staff	Country govt representatives	Beneficiaries
CROSS CUTTING ISSUES: GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DISABILITY					
8. To what extent a human rights-based approach, a gender mainstreaming strategy and disability-sensitive measures were incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard?	X	X	X	X	X
PARTERNSHIPS AND SYNERGIES					
9. To what extent have the established partnerships amongst key stakeholders of the project contribute to the achievement and sustainability of results?	X	X	X	X	X

ANNEX 4: LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

The following list presents the documents consulted during the evaluation process:

- BioTrade Self-Assessment Tool
- Blue Bio Trade -Harnessing Marine Trade to Support Ecological Sustainability and Economic Equity
- Blue BioTrade in Grenada – Country report
- Blue BioTrade in Saint Lucia – Country report
- Blue BioTrade in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – country report
- CITES, “Forty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee Geneva (Switzerland), 12–15 March 2002”, available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/46/46-16-2.pdf>.
- Cumulative progress reports, with exhibits (December 2021, June 2022, and Final report 2020-2022)
- Evidence of CITES Side Event
- Evidence of consultation and validation meetings
- Evidence of regional workshops
- Prada, M. C., et al. "Regional queen conch fisheries management and conservation plan." FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper (FAO) eng no. 610 (2017).
- Project documents and 2 annexes
- Stakeholder List
- Stakeholder Maps of the Conch value chains of Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Summary of country case study recommendations for policy makers, exporters, and investors
- The Blue Bio Trade Regional Plan of Action
- TOR and Draft TOR for the BBT project
- Video [Promoting Blue BioTrade in the Eastern Caribbean](#)

ANNEX 5: EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference (TOR)

External Evaluation of Project: “Seizing the trade and business potential of Blue BioTrade products for promoting sustainable livelihoods and conservation of marine biodiversity in selected Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Countries”

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1. This document outlines the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the independent final project evaluation for the project titled “Seizing the trade and business potential of Blue BioTrade products for promoting sustainable livelihoods and conservation of marine biodiversity in selected Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Countries” funded by the European Union through the OECS Commission.
2. The evaluation will provide accountability to UNCTAD management, the Management Team of the OECS Commission, the European Union, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD's member States. The evaluation’s primary intended users are the project teams from UNCTAD and OECS.
3. The evaluation will provide assessments that are credible and useful, and also include practical and constructive recommendations. In particular, the evaluation will systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming and overall project performance. On the basis of these assessments, the evaluation will formulate recommendations to project stakeholders, in particular to UNCTAD and/or the OECS, with a view towards optimizing results of future projects, including on operational and administrative aspects.

II. CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

4. Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) is a highly appreciated seafood delicacy with important non-food uses, including therapeutical products and handicrafts. While global demand is booming, small-scale coastal producers in the Eastern Caribbean do not fully seize the opportunities offered by sustainable conch markets. In many locations, early uncontrolled harvesting has resulted in overfishing, illegal landings and a rapid deterioration of endowments. Supply-side issues include the absence of traceability systems, limited landing and trade evidence, poor understanding and use of CITES processes and permits, lack of common handling practices and sanitary standards and a low level of associativity of fishers. From a trade perspective, limited access to markets – in particular international buyers - and the absence of certification schemes for producers are major challenges ahead.
5. In this context, the project aims to empower small-scale coastal producers to produce and trade queen conch products sustainably through the application of Blue BioTrade principles and criteria. By conducting stakeholder-owned value chain assessments in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Saint Lucia and developing a Blue BioTrade regional plan of action, the project will enhance stakeholder capacity to identify sustainable and gender inclusive business opportunities and formulate actions to apply Blue BioTrade principles and criteria in the value chain. Research findings and evidence-based policy solutions will be mainstreamed globally and serve as basis for delivering tailor-made capacity building activities in the 3 countries. This will ensure that small-scale coastal producers within and outside beneficiary countries benefit from enhanced sustainable production and trade opportunities in the queen conch value chain. The project will contribute to achieving key targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and 15, while also addressing key economic, environmental and social objectives of the OECS Development Strategy 2019-2028 and supporting recovery in a post COVID-19 scenario.

III. SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

6. The overall objective of the project is to empower small-scale coastal producers from OECS member states to produce and trade queen conch products in domestic, regional and international markets under the Blue BioTrade environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria, including CITES. Its specific outcomes are:
 - **Outcome 1:** Stakeholders have enhanced capacity to identify sustainable business opportunities and formulate joint actions to apply Blue BioTrade principles in the conch value chain.
 - **Outcome 2:** Small-scale coastal producers in beneficiary countries benefit from enhanced sustainable production and trade opportunities in the queen conch value chain.
7. UNCTAD defines BioTrade as “the activities of collection/production, transformation and commercialization of goods and services derived from native biodiversity under criteria of environmental, social and economic sustainability.” The latter is known as the BioTrade P&C. BioTrade is considered as an important model for the implementation of the objectives of various trade and environment-related multilateral agreements and ensure compliance to it such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Nagoya Protocol, and CITES. It encompasses a wide range of goods and services for a variety of sectors, including personal care, natural pharmaceuticals, and phytopharma, fashion, horticulture products, handicrafts, natural fibers and textiles, sustainable nature-based tourism, and forestry-based carbon credit generation, among others. In 2019, total BioTrade sales of BioTrade beneficiary companies were estimated at €5.1 billion, a steep increase from USD 40 million in the early 2000s. However, trade of marine biodiversity-based products and services remains largely untapped.
8. The project has direct relevance to two SDGs, namely goals 14 and 15. Goal 14 is to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. For instance, project completion will contribute to target 14.2⁵⁷ by supporting the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management Plan of Action (RQCFMP). Goal 15 is to “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.” The project contributes towards this Goal for example through supporting the implementation of Blue BioTrade principles and criteria, including its principle 3 on access and benefit sharing (ABS).

⁵⁷ Target 14.2: By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans

9. The project selected three partner countries for collaboration: **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Saint Lucia**. Each country is a major queen conch producer in the Caribbean region. Objective selection criteria, including official requests from countries, have been applied in choosing the target region/countries. Informal consultations occurred between UNCTAD's Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch (UNCTAD-TED) at the Division on International Trade and Commodities and the Permanent Delegation of the OECS to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva.
10. Following regular exchanges between the Delegation and UNCTAD-TED, which served to define a thematic and geographic scope for the project and collectively develop a project proposal, a formal agreement was concluded in August 2020. The project commenced shortly thereafter, and with a completion date of 31 December 2022 (following the approval of the extension of the project implementation period by the donor). The project received funding of 300,000 EUR.
11. The project will contribute to address priorities and achieve objectives of the regional OECS Development Strategy 2019-2028. With respect to Pillar 1 of this strategy, "Generating Economic Growth", the project will help addressing key economic challenges, such as persistently high levels of unemployment, stagnating GDP growth and the lack of economic diversification as tourism accounts for over 60% of exports. Through supply-side interventions in the conch value chain, i.e. trade-related capacity building activities to producers and sector associations, the project will help achieving fisheries-specific strategic objectives.
12. Pillar 3 of this strategy, "Sustainable Use of Natural Endowments" mandates action for the conservation of marine biological diversity, which is a top priority under the project. By working closely with businesses and sector associations, as well as policy makers from OECS member states, the project will help advancing strategic objectives and lines of action in this realm.
13. The project, although at a lesser extent, will also contribute to strategic objectives part of Pillar 2 of the strategy, "Promoting Human and Social Wellbeing", that has to do with inclusion of vulnerable groups among which includes women, youth and the elderly.
14. In order to address these pillars, and to contribute towards the expected outcomes and SDGs, the project methodology comprises 3 subsequent and complementary steps:

15. **Step 1: Queen conch product assessments** (outcome 1) are undertaken in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Granada and Saint Lucia. These studies will seek to assess the potential of OECS Members for production and export of queen conch and conch-based products, including women and men supply-side capacity, legal requirements and market access in the value chain. It will allow local stakeholders to better understand the production possibilities and possible uses of conch products, as well as their market potential. Published as UN online publications, the country studies should also define the requirements and resources needed for gender inclusive value chain development and assess location-specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and bottlenecks for value addition, with a view to map country competitiveness in the value chain. Challenges may include the lack of key infrastructure, poor market access and high costs of compliance with standards. The assessment will take into account and build on the RQCFMCP and CITES regulations. The assessment will also take due consideration of gender issues, so to identify gender patterns in the division of labour, gaps in accessing productive resources or in the distribution of profits, identify any gender norms influencing women's overall participation in the Queen Conch value chain.
16. **Step 2: Regional Blue BioTrade Action Plan** (outcome 1): Based on findings of the country studies, a draft action plan for the region will be developed by UNCTAD in collaboration with CITES and the OECS. The plan will address existing bottlenecks and capitalize on opportunities identified in the country studies; including findings related to women's participation and gender equality. At least 3 priority actions per identified opportunity will be proposed to, discussed with and validated by OECS stakeholders in a regional workshop. The plan of action will take the form of a table listing general and specific objectives, activities, expected outcomes and indicators, as well as responsible entities and partners, sources of funding, and time frames. Actions will be targeted at maximizing value addition and participation of domestic firms in regional and/or global value chains; particular attention would be given to the participation of firms where vulnerable groups are more present and those having high potential to favour women's empowerment. Lessons learned during the process will be compiled and shared with the OECS Secretariat for business facilitation and market access phase in case funds are secured.

17. **Step 3: Business facilitation and market access** (output 2.1 of outcome 2 – *is not currently funded under the project and it would be part of a second phase, if funded*): Technical assistance will be delivered to the project beneficiaries, e.g., small-scale coastal producers, in at least two priority areas identified by the Blue BioTrade Regional Plan of Action. Technical assistance activities may include business support services that enable domestic enterprises, notably those with the utmost potential for female labour force participation, to increase domestic and/or international sales, including support to comply with regulations or standards. In doing so, capacity-building activities will create opportunities for additional income while ensuring environmental and social sustainability.
18. Also part of the current funded project is Output 2.2, which is *Multi-channel communication is undertaken throughout the project cycle in a way that ensures dissemination and visibility of results, while successfully acknowledging donor support*. This includes a dedicated UNCTAD webpage for the project, creation and dissemination of news items and social media content and production of three country studies.
19. The primary target group and main beneficiary of the project are small-scale coastal producers of queen conch and conch products, e.g. artisanal fishermen, fisher associations and cooperatives, producer groups, processing MSMEs and exporters from selected OECS member states. This set of actors will serve as a basis for compiling a detailed stakeholder mapping during the inception phase; due consideration will be given to the gender distribution of labour across the value chain. However, the project is also expected to engage to different degrees a broad range of national, regional and international stakeholders.
20. The project will be coordinated by a Steering Committee (SC) formed by 1) OECS Secretariat Representative, 2) Permanent Delegation of the OECS to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, 3) The Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch (TED) of UNCTAD, and 4) a technical representative from the CITES Secretariat. The SC will provide management oversight, technical advice (when/if needed) and oversee delivery of the project outputs and the achievement of project outcomes, by ensuring active engagement by all partners, timely and regular reporting of project advancement.
21. UNCTAD will lead, coordinate and manage project implementation including dealing with economic and trade policy analysis, the organization of capacity building activities, as well as facilitating consensus building and networking. A visibility strategy for the project, including underlying communication efforts will be jointly curated by UNCTAD and the OECS Secretariat.

22. The project will actively stimulate synergies and close collaboration by partners, including international and regional organizations and institutions (e.g., business and community associations, export promotion agencies, import promotion centres, development banks and civil society). It will draw upon the expertise and capacity of the OECS Economic Affairs and Regional, Integration Division (EARID) and Ocean Governance Unit, as well as from competent national authorities.

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IV. EVALUATION SCOPE, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

23. This final evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:
- Assess the degree to which the desired results under the first phase of the project have been realized, including the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming; and
 -
 - Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the design and implementation of related interventions, including a possible second phase of the project.
24. The evaluation will cover the duration of the project from 31 August 2020 to 31 December 2022.
25. The evaluation will substantially cover the current phase of the project, which is Outcome 1 and Output 2.2 of Outcome 2. The results may inform the design and implementation of the second phase of the project, if this is funded.
26. The evaluation is expected to address the following questions under the following criteria (to be further developed in the inception report, as appropriate):
- a) Relevance**
- To what extent the project design, choice of activities and deliverables properly reflect and address the development needs and priorities of participating countries, taking into account UNCTAD's mandates and OECS' objectives?
 - What adjustments are needed to make the project more relevant to the participating countries in supporting their efforts to achieve SDGs 14 and 15, including responding to emerging challenges?
- b) Effectiveness**
- Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document and outcomes (intended or unintended), in particular against relevant SDG targets?
 - To what extent have the project participants utilized the knowledge and skills gained through the project's activities to strengthen the sustainable production and trade of queen conch and conch-based products?
- c) Efficiency**
- How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources and has the project management been adequate to ensure the achievement of the expected outcomes in a timely manner?
- d) Sustainability**
- To what extent has the work of the project been complementary to other initiatives in the queen conch value chain implemented by other UN and non-UN actors?
 - Is there evidence that beneficiary countries are committed to continue working towards the project objectives beyond the end of the project and/or have there been catalytic effects from the project?

- What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes? What additional measures could be taken to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes over time?
- e) Gender, human rights and disability**
 - To what extent a human rights-based approach, a gender mainstreaming strategy and disability-sensitive measures were incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard?
- f) Partnerships and synergies**
 - To what extent has the project advanced partnerships amongst project participants with national and regional counterparts, international development partners, the civil society and/or the private sector in support of the achievement and sustainability of results?

V. METHODOLOGY

27. The evaluation will adopt a theory-driven, utilization-focused approach. It will be guided by the problem tree and logical framework and ensure a gender, disability and human rights responsive evaluation. The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings.
28. Methods for data gathering for this evaluation include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Desk review of project documents and relevant materials;
 - Collect and analyze relevant web and social media metrics related to the outputs of the project;
 - Observe a sample of virtual meetings, webinars and other activities to be implemented by the project, as appropriate;
 - Online interviews with relevant UNCTAD and OECS staff;
 - Online surveys of beneficiaries of the project, and other stakeholders, as may be required; conduct follow-up interviews as may be necessary;
 - Virtual focus group discussions;
 - Telephone/online interviews with a balanced sample of project participants, project partners and other relevant stakeholders.
29. Budget is not available to support travel as part of the data gathering, so all methods must be managed remotely.
30. Contribution analysis could be undertaken in particular to assess project results.

31. As part of the desk review, which will lead to an Inception Report, the evaluator will use the project document as well as additional documents such as mission reports; progress reports, financial reports, publications, studies - both produced under the project as well as received from national and regional counterparts. A list of project beneficiaries as well as other partners and counterparts involved in the project will be provided to the evaluator.
32. The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report, determining thereby the exact focus and approach for the exercise, including developing tailor-made questions that target different stakeholders (based on a stakeholder analysis), and developing the sampling strategy and identifying the sources and methods for data collection.
33. The evaluator is required to submit a separate final list of those interviewed in the Annex of the evaluation report. The evaluator is to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders, bearing in mind the need to include those in a disadvantaged or minority position as appropriate.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE EVALUATION

(i) Deliverables and Expected Outputs

34. The evaluation, on the basis of its findings and assessments made on the above criteria, should draw conclusions, make recommendations and identify lessons learned from the implementation of the project.
35. More specifically, the evaluation should:
 - Highlight what has been successful and can be replicated elsewhere;
 - Highlight, as appropriate, any specific achievements that provide additional value for money and/or relevant multiplier effects;
 - Indicate shortcomings and constraints in the implementation of the project while, at the same time, identifying the remaining challenges, gaps and needs for future courses of action;
 - Make pragmatic recommendations to suggest how UNCTAD's work in this area can be further strengthened in order to address beneficiaries' needs and create synergies through collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions, international organizations and development partners, and other international forums;
 - Draw lessons of wider application for the replication of the experience gained in this project in other projects/countries;
36. Three deliverables are expected out of this evaluation (following UNCTAD templates):
 - i. An inception report⁵⁸;
 - ii. A draft evaluation report; and
 - iii. The final evaluation report⁵⁹

37. The inception report should summarize the desk review and specify the evaluation methodology, determining thereby the exact focus and scope of the exercise, including the evaluation matrix, the sampling strategy, stakeholder mapping analysis and the data collection instruments.

38. The final report of the evaluation must be composed of the following key elements:

- i. Executive summary;
- ii. Introduction of the evaluation, a brief description of the projects, the scope of the evaluation and a clear description of the methodology used;
- iii. Findings and assessments according to the criteria listed in Section IV of this ToR, with a comparison table of planned and implemented project activities and outputs; and
- iv. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the assessments.

Annex 1 presents the full requirements for the evaluation report.

⁵⁸ The quality of the inception report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Reports: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=608

⁵⁹ The quality of the evaluation report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

39. All the evaluation assessments must be supported by facts and findings, direct or indirect evidence, and well-substantiated logic. It follows that proposed recommendations must be supported by the findings and be relevant, specific, practical, actionable, and time-bound recommendations.

(ii) Description of Duties

40. An independent evaluation consultant will be recruited to undertake this assignment. The UNCTAD Evaluation Unit manages the evaluation and facilitates the work of the evaluator.
41. The evaluator reports to the Chief of Evaluation Unit. S/he will undertake the evaluation exercise under the guidance of the Evaluation Unit and in coordination with the project manager. The evaluator is responsible for the evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting as provided in this TOR. The evaluator will submit a copy-edited final report to UNCTAD.
42. The evaluator shall act independently, in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and in her/his private capacities and not as a representative of any government or organisation that may present a conflict of interest. S/he will have no previous experience of working with the project or of working in any capacity linked with it.
43. The evaluator should observe UNEG norms and standards for evaluation⁶⁰, as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy⁶¹, in the conduct of this assignment. The evaluator needs to integrate human rights, disability and gender equality in evaluations to the extent possible.⁶² The evaluator needs to ensure a complete, fair, engaging, unreserved, and unbiased assessment. In case of difficulties, uncertainties or concerns in the conduct of the evaluation, the evaluator needs to report immediately to the Chief of Evaluation Unit to seek guidance or clarification.
44. The Project Manager/Team will support the evaluation, by providing desk review documents (following Evaluation Unit desk review documents guidelines), contact details of project stakeholders as well as any additional documents that the evaluator requests. It is the responsibility of the project manager to ensure senior management engagement throughout the evaluation and timely feedback in the quality assurance and factual clarification process coordinated by the Evaluation Unit. The project team will review and provide comments on the inception, draft and final reports with a view on quality assurance and factual accuracies. The project team will also provide management response to the relevant evaluation recommendations.

⁶⁰ [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#)", UNEG (2016)

⁶¹ "Evaluation Policy" of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), December 2011. December 2011, https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/osg_EvaluationPolicy2011_en.pdf

45. The UNCTAD Evaluation Unit acts as clearing entity during the main steps of this evaluation. It endorses the TOR and approves the selection of the proposed evaluator. The UNCTAD Evaluation Unit reviews the evaluation methodology, clears the draft report, performs quality assurance of the final report and participates in disseminating the final report to stakeholders within and outside of UNCTAD. The Evaluation Unit engages the project manager throughout the evaluation process in supporting the evaluation and validating the reports.

(iii) Timetable

46. The total duration of the evaluation is equivalent to 30 days of work and will take place over the period 15 December 2022 to 15 April 2023.

(iv) Monitoring and Progress Control

47. The evaluator must keep the Evaluation Unit informed of the progress made in the evaluation on a regular basis. The contract concludes, and payment issued, upon satisfactory receipt of the final report.

48. The evaluator will submit the first draft of inception report by 31 January 2023. The Report should include draft data collection instruments for review.

49. The first draft of the report should be presented to the Evaluation Unit by 15 March 2023 for quality assurance purposes (approximately 1 week). The revised draft report will then be shared with the project manager for factual clarification and comments (approximately 2 weeks).

50. The deadline for submission of the final report will be 15 April 2023.

⁶² "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2014): <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>. The UNEG Handbook on "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations: Towards UNEG Guidance" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2011): <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>.

(v) Qualifications and Experience⁶³

51. **Education:** Advanced university degree (Master) in economics, trade, international development, evaluation, environmental management or related field.
52. **Experience:** At least 10 years of experience in conducting evaluations, preferably on interventions in the areas of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building. Solid understanding of the UN context and the Sustainable Development Goals. Experience conducting public policy and/or development programme evaluations; Solid understanding of evaluation design, data collection and analysis methods; Ability to develop clear, realistic, feasible recommendations; Experience in gender mainstreaming is strongly desirable.
53. **Language:** Fluency in oral and written English.

(vi) Conditions of Service

54. The evaluator will serve under a consultancy contract as detailed in the applicable United Nations rules and regulations. The evaluator will not be considered as staff member or official of the United Nations but shall abide by the relevant standards of conduct. The United Nations is entitled to all intellectual property and other proprietary rights deriving from this exercise.

⁶³ The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

Annex 1. Requirements for the evaluation report

	Report Section	Contents
1.	Title and opening pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title of the report Date of the report Names and organizations of evaluator(s) Name of the organizations commissioning the evaluation Acknowledgements
2.	Table of contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listing of all the contents of the report including annexes, boxes, figures and tables with page references
3.	Acronyms and abbreviations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listing of all acronyms and abbreviations used in the report
4.	Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Executive Summary needs to be a stand-alone section of maximum length of approximately 10-15% of the main report, excluding annexes. Needs to include a short overview of the project, the purpose, scope and objective of the evaluation and the intended users Provide key aspects of the methodology, its limitations and ways in which these were mitigated Summarize key findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations
5.	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background to the project and the evaluations Purpose of the evaluation including timing of the evaluation and expected users and use of evaluation results
6.	Context of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of the topic of the evaluation and relevant developments concerned Details on the topic in countries/regions covered by the project Details on policies, plans and programmes of government and other organizations on the topic concerned and support provided by other development partners
7.	Subject of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project, its objective and how it tries to achieve this Coverage in terms of countries/regions and time frame concerned Partners for implementation, including government, other UN agencies at country/regional level Project resources Past evaluations/assessments/studies if relevant, including gender analysis and vulnerability assessments An analysis of the theory of change of the project.
8.	Evaluation scope, objectives and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of the evaluation and rationale concerned Objectives of the evaluation, including evaluation criteria Evaluation questions, organized by evaluation criteria