



*Expanding Civil Society  
Participation in the Caribbean  
Environment Programme*

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BRIEFING PAPER

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**Acronyms**

**CCA** - Caribbean Conservation Association

**CEP** - Caribbean Environment Programme

**CSO** - Civil Society Organization

**GEF** - Global Environment Facility

**MOU** - Memorandum of Understanding

**RAC** - Regional Activity Centre

**RAN** - Regional Activity Network

**SPAW** - Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife

**UNEP** - United Nations Environment Programme

**WCR** - Wider Caribbean Region

**WIDECAST** - Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network

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## 1. Introduction

The Caribbean Sea functions as the foundation for the economies of many of the countries in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) and it is increasingly clear that responses to maintain the integrity of these natural assets require a coordinated, whole of society approach. The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) provides the legal framework for the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP), which functions as the implementation mechanism for coordinated action to promote economic development while protecting the natural heritage and biodiversity of the region.

This Brief summarizes the history of civil society participation in the CEP and Cartagena Convention, identifies the value and benefits of expanding civil society participation, and suggests actions that the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention can consider to formalize and expand participation of civil society in implementation of the Cartagena Convention, specifically the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW Protocol) and its related sub-programme (SPAW Sub-Programme).

This Brief also supports elaboration of the governance framework summarized in the Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region 2023-2030.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Civil Society in the Development Process

The 2004 report of the United Nations Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations<sup>2</sup> notes that there is no single correct definition of civil society but, for the purposes of the United Nations, offered the following description:

‘Civil society: Refers to the associations of citizens (outside their families, friends and businesses) entered into voluntarily to advance their interests, ideas and ideologies. The term does not include profit-making activity (the private sector) or governing (the public sector). Of particular relevance to the United Nations are mass organizations (such as organizations of peasants, women or retired people), trade unions, professional associations, social movements, indigenous people’s organizations, religious and spiritual organizations, academe and public benefit non-governmental organisations.’ (p. 13)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/LBS%20COP6/CEP%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan\\_WG.41%20INF.22%20REV.2\\_EN.pdf](https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/LBS%20COP6/CEP%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan_WG.41%20INF.22%20REV.2_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UN Secretary-General’s Note on Report by the UN Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/523950?ln=en&v=pdf>

Though the term civil society covers a wide range of collectives, it is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, nonprofits, and community organizations. The conceptualization of civil society is also expanding to include networks, public benefit corporations, social enterprises, and unincorporated nonprofit associations. The foregoing notwithstanding, this Brief uses the United Nations' definition of civil society quoted above.

The civil society sector evolved in size and sophistication to meet the challenges faced by communities and marginalized groups, and in recent decades, in line with the evolution of the global environment and development agenda. Hence the recognition by countries and global organisations of the necessity of engaging with civil society in assessment, design, and implementation of programmes.

The global trend is reflected in the Caribbean, documented in publications<sup>3,4</sup> and noticeable for the expanding work and advocacy by civil society.<sup>5,6,7</sup>

A Caribbean Awakening,<sup>8</sup> the 2023 book by Judith Towle, provides a glimpse into the role of civil society in development of the environmental movement in the Caribbean, which predated and supported development of the CEP.

The first evaluation of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP Technical Report 1)<sup>9</sup> identifies several forms of contribution by civil society to the development of the CEP. Civil society organisations:

- (1) Participated in the initial review of regional environmental problems and in the consultations to set the scope of the action plan and design of the CEP.

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<sup>3</sup> Baver, S.L. and Lynch, B.D. (Eds.), 2006. *Beyond Sun and Sand: Caribbean Environmentalisms*. Rutgers University Press, USA.

<sup>4</sup> Bowen, Glenn A. 'Caribbean Civil Society: Development Role and Policy Implications' Nonprofit Policy Forum, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, pp. 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2012-0013>

<sup>5</sup> Report of the First Greater Caribbean Civil Society Forum, 1997. <https://www.fdpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/First-Greater-Caribbean-Civil-Society-Forum-1997.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Civil Society Discussion Paper prepared for the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States. [https://www.fdpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Caribbean-CSCWG-Discussion-Paper\\_Aug-2013.pdf](https://www.fdpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Caribbean-CSCWG-Discussion-Paper_Aug-2013.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The Caribbean We Want: Civil society recommendations for transformative pathways to Caribbean sustainable development, 2024. [https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Caribbean-We-Want\\_March-2024.pdf](https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Caribbean-We-Want_March-2024.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Towle, J.A. 2023. *A Caribbean Awakening: The Dawn of an Environmental Movement in a Sea of Small Islands*. IRF Books. USA.

<sup>9</sup> CEP Technical Report 1. <https://www.unep.org/cep/resources/report/cep-technical-report-01>

- (2) Provided training in workshops and research laboratories on research and monitoring of petroleum pollution.
- (3) Generated research data and scientific publications which contributed to the assessment of petroleum pollution in the Caribbean.
- (4) Implemented projects on environmental education, coral reef monitoring and management, as well as sea turtle recovery and conservation. These projects included training and preparation of management plans (coral reefs and sea turtles).
- (5) Participated in the first meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Action Plan that took place in December 1981.

The evaluation report noted that the contributions by civil society organizations were significant, and in the case of some projects, exceeded expectations.

That determination explains to some extent why the first evaluation of the Action Plan included a criterion on community participation; that being, ‘the level of community participation in the decision-making process with respect to resource exploitation and conservation’ (CEP Technical Report 1, page 2, paragraph 8).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) also played significant roles in several regional environment and development initiatives, some of which are currently contained within the CEP. Notable roles/initiatives by CSOs (see footnote #9 below) include:

- (1) Management of the first regional cultural heritage project in the Caribbean.
- (2) Management of the first regional marine protected areas project in the Caribbean.
- (3) Establishment and management of the first regional network for species protection (sea turtles).
- (4) Preparation and implementation of the first regional environmental education strategy for the Caribbean.
- (5) Compilation of collections/libraries of environment and development case studies, training materials, information materials, technical guides, and other publications.

In the context of firsts, the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA)<sup>10</sup> deserves special mention as it occupied a unique space. For decades the CCA’s annual general meeting functioned as a regional conservation gathering, one in which governments, business interests, CSOs, and individuals participated (most as members) and discussed topical and emerging environment and development issues in the Caribbean region. The CCA also:

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<sup>10</sup> The CCA is no longer operational.

- Hosted several local (Barbados) and regional programmes, one of which (the Eastern Caribbean Natural Areas Management Programme) subsequently became a regional organisation (the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute) that currently supports and manages national and regional initiatives.
- Started or co-founded, and provided initial secretariat support for, networks and associations such as the Caribbean Youth Environment Network, Caribbean Environmental Reporters Network, and Museums Association of the Caribbean.

The Island Resources Foundation also deserves special mention for its role in the environmental movement in the Caribbean generally and for functioning as a technical assistance organization to governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. Civil Society in the Contemporary Caribbean Environment Programme**

Global and regional intergovernmental arrangements have evolved to increasingly articulate roles for civil society and provide mechanisms for its participation in said arrangements (Appendix 1). That evolution reflects the increasing demand by civil society for participatory decision making in development processes AND growing awareness of the need for collective action to address the range and scope of issues faced by countries and the global environment. The latter factor is currently framed as a ‘whole of society approach’ and appears in funding mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and global programmes such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Section C, paragraph 7(c)<sup>12</sup>).

### **4. Policy and Practice**

The Cartagena Convention and its three Protocols include provisions that support participation by civil society in the associated programmes (Appendix 2). Civil society, individuals and organizations, contribute to the CEP and its three sub-programmes (Appendix 3) by:

- Voluntarily providing expertise for development and implementation of initiatives, as well as for ongoing programming.
- Facilitating exchange of ideas and experiences relevant to the CEP.

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<sup>11</sup> Legacy of the Island Resources Foundation. <http://www.irf.org/browse-the-legacy-of-irf/>

<sup>12</sup> The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>



- Providing technical expertise, as consultants, for assessments, production of technical reports, development of strategies, and training/capacity development.
- Functioning as a bridge between the work of the CEP and other regional and international programmes and bodies, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, and Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles.

The number of civil society organizations participating in the meetings of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, as well as the related sub-programmes, has increased over time, even as the evolution of the cooperation framework for implementation of the CEP and Cartagena Convention face new challenges. Such challenges include:

- The requirement for the CEP to facilitate achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The establishment of an Ocean Coordinating Mechanism for the Wider Caribbean Region,<sup>13</sup> which is expected to experience challenges in implementation.<sup>14</sup>

The Ocean Coordinating Mechanism for the Wider Caribbean Region does not appear to recognise the value of, nor does it provide a role for, civil society in ocean governance in the Caribbean. This highlights the fact that institutional arrangements designed to enable management of the shared heritage of the Caribbean have yet to be fully responsive to the evolution of engagement provisions and mechanisms in multilateral environmental agreements and programmes, especially the increasing call for a whole of society approach and ‘mobilization of broad public support at all levels’ (Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Section C, paragraph 7(e)).

Expanding the scope of civil society participation in the Caribbean Environment Programme/Cartagena Convention is a natural and necessary step in effectively pursuing a sustainable development agenda in the Caribbean.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ioc.unesco.org/en/articles/intergovernmental-oceanographic-commission-signs-mou-establish-ocean-coordination-mechanism-wider>

<sup>14</sup> Challenges to Implementing Regional Ocean Governance in the Wider Caribbean Region.  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.667273/full>

## 5. Benefits of Increased CEP Engagement with Civil Society

The frequency and scale of impact of natural disasters are increasing, and even the large economies are experiencing difficulties responding to the plight of their citizens. As a result, the countries of the Caribbean will find it increasingly difficult to access the financing, technical resources, and supplies to respond to disasters and rebuild their economies and communities.

Appropriate responses by Caribbean countries will necessarily require mass mobilization in support of a common agenda. That whole of society approach is facilitated by governments invested in effective governing and good governance.

In that context, increasing the scope and forms of participation by CSOs in the CEP has several potential benefits to the CEP, such as:

- (1) Improving access to technical expertise and relevant decision support systems (such as information management systems) through more targeted engagement with CSOs, especially universities, other research organizations, and CSOs engaged in knowledge production and learning networks. The need for knowledge is confirmed by the SPAW-RAC Strategic Plan 2023-2028<sup>15</sup> (Section 2.6), and the aforementioned sources of technical resources would be particularly beneficial in implementing provisions such as Articles 13, 17, 18, and 20 of the SPAW Protocol.
- (2) Motivating collective action by CSOs at the national and regional scales to support CEP directly or indirectly through the outcomes and impacts of related activities. Networks whose objectives currently align with the CEP and the SPAW Sub-Programme (Appendix 3) offer early points of engagement for advocacy and cooperation.
- (3) Providing a context for action by CSOs who are able to access financing for action at the community level. In addition to local financing and periodic financing from external donors, there are discussions within the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to increase the level of funding available to CSOs under the Small Grants Programme for the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund.
- (4) Realizing the potential of CEP to function as a mechanism for facilitating alignment between national sustainable development goals and national commitments to regional and global multilateral environmental agreements. This is particularly relevant in instances where Caribbean civil society (individuals and organizations) participate in global programmes as experts, regional contact points, and contributors to knowledge products.

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[https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/SPAW\\_STAC10\\_WG.43%20INF.7%20EN%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf](https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/SPAW_STAC10_WG.43%20INF.7%20EN%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf)

- (5) Ensuring that CEP has access to the experimentation and innovation taking place within the civic sector that advances environmental, economic, and social resilience.
- (6) Increasing the potential for the CEP to successfully discharge its obligations to facilitate achievement of the sustainable development goals by enhancing the capability of CEP to work on intersectional issues, particularly at the nexus of the disaster risk reduction, climate change, and sustainable development agendas.<sup>16, 17</sup>

The afore-mentioned benefits from expanding cooperation with civil society may also be realized in several areas of particular interest to Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, including:

- (a) **Circular economy and blue economy initiatives:** CSOs are involved to a substantial degree in waste reduction, recycling, and other pollution reduction projects. If the actions of community organizations and national strategies are aligned with the CEP priorities, an increase in the amount of funds provided to CSOs from the GEF Small Grants Programme could increase community livelihoods while addressing pollution and ecosystem issues.
- (b) **Sargassum management/utilization:** Civil society is involved in research and a large number of local initiatives<sup>18</sup> which would benefit from, at the least, having an information hub. Given its mandate, the CEP Secretariat is well placed to function as an information clearing house on sargassum<sup>19</sup>.
- (c) **Management of protected and other conserved areas:** One of the main constraints to achieving the '30 by 30' targets in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is management capacity. The Caribbean's experiment in co-management and devolution of management responsibility to CSOs (Appendix 4) offers the possibility to scale up action while making site management relevant to local conditions. Though financing will remain an issue, linking the willingness of CSOs to manage conserved areas with the institutional potential of the CEP and partner organizations for technical expertise is an appropriate strategy for achieving success for the countries and region.
- (d) **Tourism:** Most countries in the Caribbean are highly dependent on tourism,<sup>20</sup> requiring a constant balancing act between the benefits and the costs of tourism, particularly the negative impacts on coastal ecosystems. The CEP responded to that dualism by developing a successful initiative in the mid-1990s to early 2000's to promote sustainability in the Caribbean tourism sector, but current

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/publication/disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation-pathways-sustainable-development>

<sup>17</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/techpaper\\_adaptation.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/techpaper_adaptation.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unep.org/cep/resources/factsheet/sargassum-influx-champions-civil-society-frontline>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unep.org/cep/events/conference/4th-international-conference-small-island-developing-states>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9781484315194/ch03.xml>

initiatives have been limited in scope. However, tourism in the Caribbean is highly dependent on the state of the environment and reversing the trend in continuing degradation of coastal ecosystems<sup>21</sup> requires collective action supported by a coherent policy framework.

- (e) **Mobilization of public support for conservation:** It is clear that public awareness and outreach alone are insufficient to mobilize public support and action, particularly when it requires changes in attitude and behaviour. Mobilization requires access to relevant information and increased engagement by the public in routine development decision processes, such as anticipated by Article 13 of the SPAW Protocol.<sup>22</sup> There is increasing capacity within civil society for effective engagement in participatory decision-making processes, capacity that can be available to the CEP and Contracting Parties.
- (f) **Capacity development:** Inadequate capacity is identified as a major constraint in development decision making in the Caribbean. That constraint can be alleviated to a significant extent through structured re-engagement with CSOs (e.g. academic and other institutions) that focus on research and learning.

The potential benefits of increased civil society participation can be actualized through the use of different engagement mechanisms.

## 6. Mechanisms for Expanding Civil Society Participation in the Caribbean Environment Programme

The Cartagena Convention and its Protocols contain provisions that encourage participation by civil society, and expanding civil society participation can be achieved within the current provisions, as indicated by the proposals below.

- (a) **Build out the Regional Activity Networks (RANs):** The model for a RAN adopted under the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol) is one in which organizations with memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the Cartagena Convention Secretariat form a RAN managed by the Secretariat. This model is different from the structure articulated in the 2008 guidelines for establishment and management of regional activity centres (RACs) and RANs, which envision that RANs are managed by the RACs. Building out the RANs to utilize the range of technical institutions and individual expertise suggested in the 2008 guidelines (Section 2, paragraph 6) would require significant additional human and financial resources (in the RACs and Secretariat)

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<sup>21</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/36352>

<sup>22</sup> Article 13 provides for environmental impact assessment to be used '*In the planning process leading to decisions about industrial and other projects and activities that would have a negative environmental impact and significantly affect areas or species that have been afforded special protection under this Protocol.*'

for interfacing with or guiding the work of the RANs, which imposes a significant constraint on the number, size, and focus of the RANs.

That constraint can be resolved by adopting a RAN model that allows for different management relationships between the RANs and the RAC-Secretariat structure. That flexibility is exhibited in the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) and is suggested for further development of the Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers Network and Forum.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, the proposed model satisfies the intent of the 2008 guidelines and facilitates CEP engagement with a much wider range of civil society organizations and individual experts needed to effectively address the challenges faced by the Caribbean and the CEP.

As offered in the 2022 Review of Operations, Functioning, and Financing of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks of the Cartagena Convention,<sup>24</sup> expanding the role of civil society *'may contribute to the financial sustainability of RACs and RANs and enhance the operational effectiveness of the Cartagena Convention'* (page 3, final paragraph). Revision of the 2008 guidelines is currently underway, presenting an opportunity for formally recognising a wider range of roles for CSO in the CEP.

- (b) **Revise the Convention and Protocol guidelines for engagement with CSOs:** Meetings convened under the auspices of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols must abide by the Rules of Procedure, which, among other things, set parameters for representation and credentials to the meeting and participation therein. Within those rules, the category of observer that includes civil society is identified as *'international inter-governmental or non-governmental organization'*. This categorization, understandable in the early days of the CEP, is not only limited and constraining, it also does not reflect a current conceptualization of civil society or accepted forms of participation in inter-governmental arrangements. In practice, CSO participation in meetings of the Convention is not limited to international non-governmental organizations. However, periodic discussions regarding categories of observers suggest that minor revisions to the Rules of Procedure may enable increased participation by civil society. Additionally, rules which limit CSO participation in working groups relative to the number of government-nominated experts should be revised to facilitate increased participation.

Expanding the participation of civil society could also be facilitated by adoption of a formal accreditation process that allows for engagement and participation beyond the main meetings of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. The UNEP Major Groups modality<sup>25</sup> and the differentiated group model used by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem

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<sup>23</sup> [https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/SPAW\\_STAC10\\_WG.43%20INF.8%20EN%20CaMPAM%20Options%20Paper.pdf](https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/SPAW_STAC10_WG.43%20INF.8%20EN%20CaMPAM%20Options%20Paper.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.gefcrew.org/carrcu/LBSSTAC6/RAC\\_RAN\\_CARTAGENA\\_CONVENTION\\_Report2022.pdf](https://www.gefcrew.org/carrcu/LBSSTAC6/RAC_RAN_CARTAGENA_CONVENTION_Report2022.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> UNEP Major Groups: <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/major-groups-modalities>

Services<sup>26</sup> offer insights to development of an appropriate model for the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

- (c) **Develop a CSO Engagement Strategy:** An engagement strategy, incorporating multiple modalities, would provide clarity, enhance participation, and, to some extent, guide CSO programming that directly supports the CEP.
- (d) **Explore the potential offered by the SPAW Consortium:**<sup>27</sup> The Consortium in Support of the SPAW Programme of the Cartagena Convention (SPAW Consortium) selected the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders model as the basis for the Consortium's membership, signalling its willingness to facilitate structured engagement by the SPAW Protocol and Sub-programme with a wide range of stakeholders. Alignment of agendas, strategies, and actions enhances progress towards achieving Cartagena Convention and SPAW Protocol goals. The SPAW Consortium provides a more flexible mechanism for collaborative action for organizations and individuals who are not interested in joining a RAN or whose work does not necessarily fit a RAN structure.

## 7. Issues to Consider

Expanding the participation of civil society in the CEP and the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols would proactively address issues and perspectives that are not easily accommodated within the current structure and practice of CEP and Cartagena Convention. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) There is increasing acceptance of the need for involving civil society and other groups in the strategies to address the synergistic effects of the drivers of coastal ecosystem degradation in the Wider Caribbean Region.<sup>28</sup>
- (b) There is a wide range of interests that exist within civil society and other major groups which must be understood, navigated, and supported if the sector is to be mobilized in support of an agreed agenda. This will necessarily require patience and flexibility in fostering alignment between a wide range of agendas, strategies, and actions to enhance progress towards achieving the medium and long-term objectives of the Cartagena Convention.
- (c) The need for patience must be balanced against the urgent need for action to address the range of threats faced by Caribbean communities.

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<sup>26</sup> IPBES: <https://www.ipbes.net/about>

<sup>27</sup> <https://monitorcaribbean.org/spaw-consortium>

<sup>28</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/36347>

- (d) Though there is a significant level of effort required to establish, coordinate, and maintain a pool of technical expertise for advice, knowledge production, assessments, capacity development, and project development and implementation, the overwhelming need for fact-based decision making justifies the effort and associated expenditures.
- (e) The challenges faced by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat to mobilize adequate resources to effectively deliver the Convention and programme objectives may be exacerbated by expanding participation of civil society in the Convention and programmes.<sup>29</sup> However, mobilization of civil society and other stakeholders towards achievement of an agreed agenda offers significant potential for resource mobilization.
- (f) There are several proposals to establish RANs and other alliances to support the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. This suggests the need for expanding action and the willingness of stakeholders to undertake such action. Such proposals are also reminders of the need to rationalize the official status of networks that have historically supported the CEP. An engagement strategy, with supporting rules and practices, provides an opportunity to improve coordination of, and enhance benefits from, aligned groupings by providing structure and coordination while reducing the administrative burden on the Convention Secretariat and RACs.

The SPAW Consortium was formed to enhance the participation of civil society in the Cartagena Convention to support effective implementation of the SPAW Protocol. On that basis, the SPAW Consortium will cooperate with the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, Contracting Parties, and SPAW RAC in designing and navigating the challenges of a multimodal civil society engagement strategy.

## 8. Conclusion

Maintaining the integrity of the coastal and marine ecosystems of the Wider Caribbean Region requires coordinated action by all of society, and the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols constitute an established and well-regarded mechanism for that collective action. Article 16 of the SPAW Protocol not only addresses information and public awareness, it also asks Contracting Parties ‘to promote the participation of its public and its conservation organizations in measures that are necessary for the protection of the areas and species concerned’ (paragraph 2). This and other requirements for public engagement (Appendix 2) support the recommendation of this briefing paper to Contracting Parties to expand the scope of civil society participation in the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

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<sup>29</sup> [https://www.gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWSTAC10/SPAW\\_STAC10\\_WG.43%20INF.32%20EN%20Establishment%20of%20Marine%20Mammal%20RAN.pdf](https://www.gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWSTAC10/SPAW_STAC10_WG.43%20INF.32%20EN%20Establishment%20of%20Marine%20Mammal%20RAN.pdf)

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Intergovernmental Arrangements in which Caribbean Civil Society Organizations can Participate
- Appendix 2: Provisions in Cartagena Convention and Protocols that Support Civil Society Participation
- Appendix 3: Participation by Civil Society Organizations in the Caribbean Environment Programme and SPAW Sub-Programme
- Appendix 4: Examples of Caribbean Civil Society Organizations in Protected Areas Management



## Appendix 1

### Intergovernmental Arrangements in which Caribbean Civil Society Organizations can Participate

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

<https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/civil-society-organizations>

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

<https://www.ipbes.net/about>

Organization of American States (OAS)

<https://www.oas.org/ext/en/main/oas/our-structure/gc/sare/orcs>

Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement)

<https://d7.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement/regional-public-mechanism>

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Consultative Status – facilitates participation in relevant conferences convened by the United Nations, access to several intergovernmental programmes (e.g. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Small Island Developing States programme), and participation in the work of the ECOSOC regional commissions (e.g. the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).

<https://ecosoc.un.org/en/ngo/consultative-status>

United Nations Environment Programme Major Groups

<https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/major-groups-modalities>

**Appendix 2**

**Provisions in Cartagena Convention and its Protocols that Support Civil Society Participation**

<b>Form of Engagement</b>	<b>Cartagena Convention</b>	<b>Oil Spills Protocol</b>	<b>SPAW Protocol</b>	<b>LBS Protocol</b>
Participation in meetings of the Contracting Parties	Article 20(1) Rules of Procedure for meetings (Rule 54)	Article 11(2) Adopting Article 20 of the Convention	Article 23(1) Adopting Article 20 of the Convention	Article XV(1) Adopting Article 20 of the Convention
Involvement of communities in (national) planning and management of protected areas			Article 6(2)(e)	
Participation in cooperation and technical assistance programmes			Article 11(5)	Article V(1), (3) Article VIII
Participation of the public and conservation organizations in (national) protection measures			Article 16(2)	
Participation in the work of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of a Protocol			Article 20(2), (4) Article 22(2)(c), (g)	Article XIV(2)
Public participation in (national) decision making processes related to the Protocol				Article X

### Appendix 3

#### Participation by Civil Society Organizations in the Caribbean Environment Programme and SPAW Sub-Programme

##### I. Civil Society Organizations with Memorandum of Understanding with CEP

- Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)
- Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras José Benito Vives de Andreis (INVEMAR)<sup>30</sup>
- The Ocean Foundation

##### II. CEP Civil Society Observers 2023<sup>31</sup>

- Animal Welfare Institute
- BRANCH Coral Foundation
- Caribbean Cetacean Society
- Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Children and Youth Major Group (UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders)
- Common Seas
- Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide
- Foundation for Development Planning, Inc.
- Global Orca Charity - Caribbean-Wide Orca Project
- Green Heritage Fund Suriname
- Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
- Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras José Benito Vives de Andreis
- Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- International Union for Conservation of Nature - Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme
- Lightkeepers Foundation
- Monitor Caribbean
- Ocean Research and Education Foundation, Inc. - Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA) Program
- Rainbow Warriors Core Foundation
- SeaLife Law

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<sup>30</sup> INVEMAR is an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia.

<sup>31</sup> Observers also include governments, government instrumentalities, and intergovernmental organizations.

- Shark Advocates International
- Sustainable Innovation Initiatives
- The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Ocean Foundation

### **III. CSO Members of Working Groups of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the SPAW Protocol (2024-2025)**

- Animal Welfare Institute
- Foundation for Development Planning, Inc.
- Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
- Lightkeepers Foundation
- Monitor Caribbean
- SeaLife Law
- Shark Advocates International

### **IV. CSO Members of Working Groups of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the LBS Protocol (2024-2025)**

- Universidad EAFIT
- University of the West Indies (St. Augustine)

### **V. Networks and Professional Associations Relevant to the CEP**

- Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean. <http://amlc-carib.org/>
- Caribbean Climate Justice Alliance. <https://canari.org/caribbean-climate-justice-alliance/>
- Caribbean Environmental Reporters Network
- Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network
- Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers Network and Forum: <https://campam.gcfi.org/>
- Caribbean Network for Urban and Land Management
- Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association. <https://cwwa.net/>
- Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network. [https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/EN%20IG.46%20INF.3 SPAWCOP12 Briefing%20Paper%20v1.6%20for%20SPAW%20COP.pdf](https://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SPAWCOP12/EN%20IG.46%20INF.3%20SPAWCOP12%20Briefing%20Paper%20v1.6%20for%20SPAW%20COP.pdf)
- Caribbean Youth Environment Network. <https://cyen.org/>
- Cari-Bois Environmental News Network. <https://www.caribois.org/>
- Global Environment Facility Civil Society Network (Caribbean Region). <http://gefcsnetwork.org/>
- Nature Caribé. <http://naturecaribe.org/>
- SPAW Consortium. <https://monitorcaribbean.org/spaw-consortium>
- Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network. <https://www.widecast.org/>

**Appendix 4**  
**Examples of Caribbean Civil Society Organizations in Protected Areas Management**

**I. Management, Co-management, and Partnership Arrangements<sup>32</sup>**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Sites</b>	<b>Management Arrangement</b>
Commonwealth of the Bahamas	5 national parks on San Salvador	The agency responsible for the sites is the Bahamas National Trust (BNT). The BNT signed an agreement with the San Salvador Living Jewels Foundation in 2018 to manage the 5 national parks on San Salvador. The co-management arrangement continues to evolve.
Belize	18 terrestrial protected areas and 8-9 marine protected areas	Managed by 12-13 organizations, that are members of the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations, through MOUs with the relevant government ministry. The association is said to manage approximately 50% of all co-managed protected areas in Belize.
	Billy Barquedier National Park Five Blues Lake National Park Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary	Managed by 4 organizations through agreements with the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management signed in 2023.
Dominican Republic	Jaragua and for Sierra de Bahoruco National Parks	Managed by Grupo Jaragua through co-management agreements with the Ministry of the Environment. Financial management (e.g. entry fees, payroll) remains with the government.

<sup>32</sup> This list is not exhaustive as it includes only the responses to the call for information circulated by the SPAW Consortium to four (4) Caribbean environment and development e-groups and 59 individuals on February 3, 2025.

<p>Dominican Republic (continued)</p>	<p>Ébano Verde Scientific Reserve</p>	<p>The site is managed by Fundación Prograssio under a co-management agreement, but the organization also handles the finances of the protected area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Miguel Domingo Fuerte Natural Monument - management responsibilities to be shared by the Southwest Support Foundation, the Catholic Technological University Foundation of Barahona, the Ecological Society of Paraíso, and the SOH Conservation.</li> <li>– Loma Novillero Forest Reserve and the Loma Los Sietes Picos National Park - will be managed by the Salesiana Don Bosco Foundation, the Foundation for the Development of Villa Altagracia, and the Federation of Neighborhood Councils of Villa Altagracia.</li> <li>– Padre Nuestro National Park - the institutions that signed the management agreement are the Padre Nuestro Guides Association, the Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies, and the La Romana-Bayahíbe Tourist Cluster.</li> <li>– La Ceiba Natural Monument – to be managed by the Iberia Foundation.</li> <li>– Bajo Yuna Mangrove National Park - management responsibilities shared by the San Lorenzo Bay Fishermen's Production, Work and Multiple Services Cooperative and the Center for the Conservation and Ecodevelopment of Samaná Bay and its Environment (CEBSE).</li> <li>– Salto el Limón Natural Monument - management responsibilities shared by the Salto del Limón Waterfall Ecotourism Community Association, CEBSE, and the Samaná Tourist Cluster.</li> <li>– Cabo Cabrón National Park - management responsibilities shared by Ecovivero, CEBSE, and the Association of Ecological Galeras Tourist Guides.</li> <li>– Cabo Samaná Natural Monument - will be co-managed by the Las Terrenas Light and Power Company, CEBSE, and the Association of Ecological Galeras Tour Guides.</li> <li>– Loma Quita Espuela Strict Nature Reserve 'Loma Quita Espuela Foundation'</li> <li>– Laguna Prieta Wetlands Wildlife Refuge - agreement signed by the Development Association, Caribbean Industrial Park, Association of Dominican Scouts, and the Ecological Society of Puñal.</li> <li>– The 27 Waterfalls of Damajagua - Association of Lifeguard Guides of the Damajagua River.</li> <li>– Evano Verde Strict Nature Reserve - Prograssio Foundation.</li> </ul>		
<p>124 sites</p>		<p>Currently under co-management - 5                  In progress - 21                  Pending - 74                  Identified for co-management – 24                  (Source: Vice Ministry of Protected Area, Ministry of Environment of the Dominican Republic)</p>

Jamaica	Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park and World Heritage Site	The Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust manages the site under an agreement with the National Environmental and Planning Agency.
	Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA)	<i>The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation coordinates site protection measures under an agreement with the National Environmental and Planning Agency, which also provides an annual subvention to the Foundation.</i>  <i>The Foundation also manages the three fish sanctuaries within the PBPA (Three Bays, Salt Harbour, and Galleon Harbour) through an MOU with the National Fisheries Authority, for which the Foundation receives a subvention from the Authority.</i>
	Multiple marine protected areas, including fish sanctuaries.	Some sites are managed by community-based organizations through MOUs with the National Fisheries Authority, which also provides subventions to some management institutions.
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	King Hill Forest Reserve	The site is managed by the Forestry Division. An informal partnership arrangement between the Forestry Division and JEMS Environment Management Services facilitates community action to address infractions, supports capacity development and awareness programmes in the adjacent communities, and utilizes grants obtained by JEMS to implement projects in the adjacent communities.
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Main Ridge Forest Reserve and Buccoo Reef Marine Protected Area, Tobago	The Main Ridge Forest Reserve is managed by the Department of Natural Resources (Forestry) and the Buccoo Reef Marine Protected Area is managed by the Fisheries Department (both departments of the Tobago House of Assembly). Most management arrangements include input from civil society.

**Cautionary Note:** *The information presented in this table cannot be used for analytical purposes as most of the information was provided by third parties and was not verified.*

Though the information presented in the above table cannot be used for analytical purposes, this snapshot of protected areas management in six countries suggests that there is significant interest in both the governments and the civil society sector for cooperation agreements in protected areas management.

## II. Examples of Civil Society Organizations with CEP-aligned Initiatives<sup>33</sup>

Given the scope of the Cartagena Convention, programmes of CSOs involved in environment and development issues may be aligned with the CEP, even if the organizations have no relationship with the CEP. The purpose of this section is simply to provide examples of programme alignment, even with small place-based initiatives.

### C.A.R.E. SKN

Saint Kitts and Nevis

#### June-Sept 2022

Pilot project, 'Coral Nursery Installation at Tamarind Cove', under the IWeco SKN National Project and Department of Marine Resources.

#### Current

Project funded by GEF SGP Small Grants Programme: '40 Coral-Trees in Major Bay Coral Nursery for Coral Restoration St. Kitts & Nevis'. The project also involves training, education, and public awareness.

The coral nursery at Major Bay involves year-round monitoring and management. C.A.R.E. SKN carries out Reef Check surveys on selected reefs for coral restoration (the first sites where coral out-planting will occur). The organization also organizes a Reef Check EcoDiver Training Course every year, since 2022.

#### Starting February 2025

New project funded by GEF SGP Small Grants Programme: Farming Native Caribbean King Crab (*Maguimithrax spinosissimus*) to support the coral restoration effort and to develop sustainable fishing.

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<sup>33</sup> A call for information was circulated by the SPAW Consortium to four (4) Caribbean environment and development e-groups and 59 individuals on January 14, 2025. The response by C.A.R.E. SKN demonstrates how initiatives by CSOs routinely support CEP objectives.