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Component of a 10-year Management Plan

North-East Tobago
Man and the Biosphere Area

unesco
Man and the Biosphere Programme

FOCUS: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

AUGUST 2022

Component of a 10-year Management Plan

FOCUS: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

for the

North-East Tobago Man and the Biosphere Area

Draft

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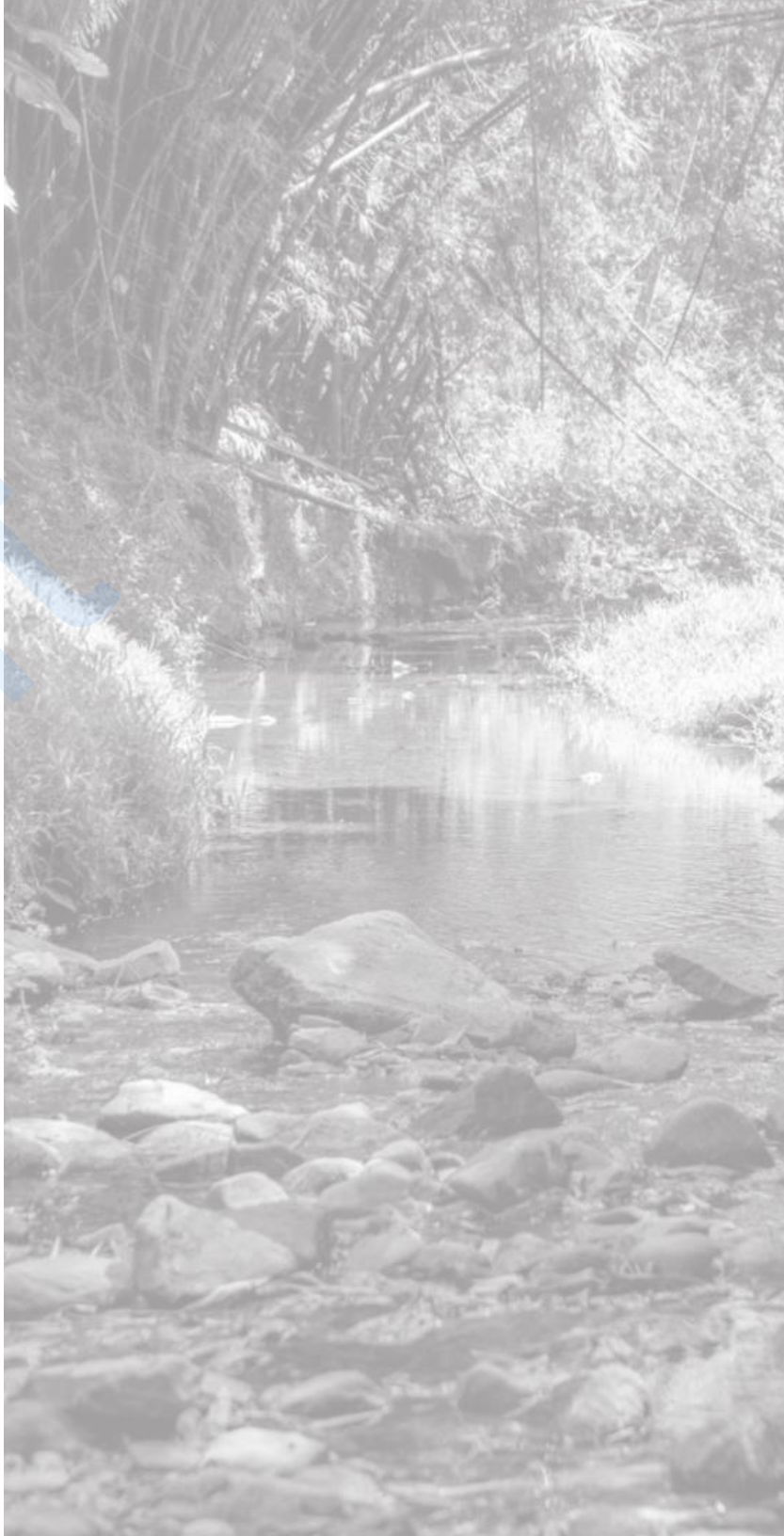


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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document was developed as part of a project titled: *"Caribbean Small Island Developing States Trinidad Sub-Project Rehabilitation of Quarries"* (IWEco TT) with funding from the Global Environmental Facility, under approval of the United Nations Development Programme and via a contract with the Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. It is meant to be a guideline for the future management authority and staff of the North-East Tobago UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve (NETMABR). While it will be open to all stakeholders, it is not meant to be an instrument for outreach activities; an outreach-friendly, intelligible version of the management plan will be developed in late-2022. The document represents the second component of the overall 10-year Management Plan for the NETMABR. The first, complementary component was finalised in December 2021 and a third and final one will be finalised under other interventions and consolidated in November 2022.

This draft plan was developed via review and analysis of primary and secondary literature as well as formal and informal stakeholder consultations between 2018 and 2022; major limitations were based on COVID-19 restrictions and significant primary data deficiencies. The draft plan at hand will be discussed with stakeholders between June and November 2022, revised and finalised accordingly.

This, second component of the Plan includes:

- Revision of previous Stakeholder and Communication Plans,
- Participatory Development of Vision, Mission, Objectives and Principles,
- Site Description,
- SWOT and PESTLE,
- Alignment with existing Legal and Regulatory Framework, Policies and International Conventions.

Furthermore, it includes situational analyses, high level goals, priorities, strategies and proposed actions for three management topics / components:

- Conservation Strategies, Programmes and Priority Projects
- Climate Change Resilience Strategies, Programmes and Proposed Actions
- Community-based, Green, Blue, Purple Economic Strategies, Programmes and Proposed Actions

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Next steps and two key recommendations are provided in the chapter below.

The ERIC team would like to thank the EMA Office, Trinidad and Tobago, specifically Alicia Aquing, GEF IWEco National Project Coordinator, and Mr Linford Beckles, Director, Department of the Environment, Tobago House of Assembly for facilitating this intervention and put trust in our technical capabilities.

North-East Tobago Man and the Biosphere Reserve Management Plan Components

SLM

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6. Alien Invasive Species
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2 THE WAY FORWARD

The ERIC has successfully applied to the UNDP Small Grants Programme, Trinidad and Tobago, to fund the final components of the Management Plan and create a knowledge sharing platform for the Plan via a project titled: "*Drafting the Final Components of the Management Plan for the North-East Tobago UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve and Intelligible Knowledge Management*". The proposal was endorsed by the Department of the Environment, Tobago House of Assembly, which is the Focal Point for the UNESCO MAB Programme in Trinidad and Tobago and by Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, UNESCO, Paris, France. This final component was approved in May 2022.

This timing aligns perfectly with a contract between the Inter-American Development Bank and Syntegra Change Architects Limited (Trinidad) with the following key objectives:

1. to structure the corporate governance framework of the NETPAMPT under a research-driven and participatory approach;
2. to structure the institutional framework of the NETPAMT, using components of an environmental and social management systems and including the foundations for a fund-raising strategy; and
3. to provide training and dissemination of i) the corporate governance framework; and ii) E&S institutional framework to key stakeholders.

Having started in February 2022, this intervention, of which the NETPAMT, and by extension the Tobago House of Assembly, is the direct beneficiary, will allow the NETPAMT, as future management organisation of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve in North-East Tobago, to revise, refine, and apply the finalised management plan.

Based on these interventions, **the key recommendations** for advancing the sustainable development goals under the UNRESCO MAB Programme for NE Tobago are to:

1. **engage the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly to provide the necessary budget allocations (2022-2024) for the operations of the NETPAMT until initial Green Fund funding and subsequent, self-financing is secured, and**
2. **facilitate stakeholder awareness and tangible benefits for communities in the NETMABR.**

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3 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This document was developed as part of a project titled: *"Caribbean Small Island Developing States Trinidad Sub-Project Rehabilitation of Quarries*" (IWEco TT) with funding from the Global Environmental Facility. It is meant to be a guideline for the future management authority and staff of the North-East Tobago UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve (NETMABR).
The document represents a component of the overall 10-year Management Plan for the NETMABR. The additional, complementary components will be finalised under another intervention, and both consolidated in June 2022.
Amongst other guidelines, the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR, UNESCO 2021) were taken into consideration for preparing this document.

The TGBR provides an indicative list of several main items a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Management Plan should contain:

a. a recommendation for an organisational/governance structure responsible for implementation of the plan,
b. a situational analysis,
c. a vision,
d. medium-term goals,
e. management priorities,
f. proposed priority projects, and
g. monitoring indicators,

The document at hand covers, for the components under the contract with the EMA, items **b, c, d, e, and f**. Item **a** was covered under a previous assignment, item **g** will be covered under the above-mentioned complementary SGP project.
The components (topics) of the NETMABR Management Plan covered under this assignment included:

- Revision of previous Stakeholder and Communication Plans
- Participatory Development of Vision, Mission, Objectives and Principles
- Site Description, SWAT and PESTLE
- Alignment with existing Legal and Regulatory Framework, Policies and International Conventions
- Conservation Strategies, Programmes and Priority Projects
- Climate Change Resilience Strategies, Programmes and Proposed Actions

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- Community-based, Green, Blue, Purple Economic Strategies, Programmes and Proposed Actions
- Stakeholder Consultations, Local Capacity Building and Media Outreach

As discussed with the funding agency, stakeholder consultations were quite limited due to time- and COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, stakeholder consultations will be most efficient and effective when the full draft of the Management Plan will be available in 2022 and a more concise and intelligible version can be produced to meaningfully engage at all stakeholder levels. Once all documents will have been consolidated, the final layout will be polished using an advanced desktop publishing and page layout designing software application. Once funding permits, an intelligible and interactive website will be created to facilitate ease of access to and navigation through the Management Plan.



Figure 1. Fishermen in Castara Bay

4 METHODS

This draft document was developed via review and analysis of primary and secondary literature (see Annex 1) as well as formal and informal stakeholder consultations between 2018 and 2022. These consultations were conducted in relation to the drafting of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Nomination Form for NE Tobago, the drafting of the Dossiers for the Designation of NE Tobago's Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Islets and Reefs as Natural National Heritage Sites of Trinidad and Tobago and the drafting of a proposal to the Inter-American Development Bank titled: "Organisational Governance and Operational Strengthening of the North East Tobago Protected Area Management Trust (NETPAMT)".

It should be noted that this document applies the common writing style of UNESCO MAB Reserve Management Plans and, as such, does not claim to be or follow the writing style of a scientific research paper.

5 LIMITATIONS

The bulk of the document was prepared between November 2021 and June 2022 when restrictions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited workshops, group consultations and broader community involvement. Additionally, the extremely tight timeline for delivery of the draft and final document did not allow for the desired stakeholder participation. However, these limitations can be addressed in mid-2022, when the complementary components of the management plan will be finalised and a more intelligible version of the management plan can be developed, which will be more directed towards stakeholder engagement than programme management guidance (as it is the case for this document).

An additional, major limitation is the ubiquitous data deficiency for NE Tobago regarding all components of the management plan. Therefore, many statements in the situational analyses are based on recent, oral stakeholder reports and personal observations of the resident expert team. Hence the reason that baseline surveys, monitoring and evaluation interventions are essential to inform the future implementation organisation.

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6 VISION

MAB Vision: A world where people are conscious of their common future and their interactions with the planet, and act collectively and responsibly to build thriving societies in harmony within the biosphere.
To be based on stakeholder consultations.

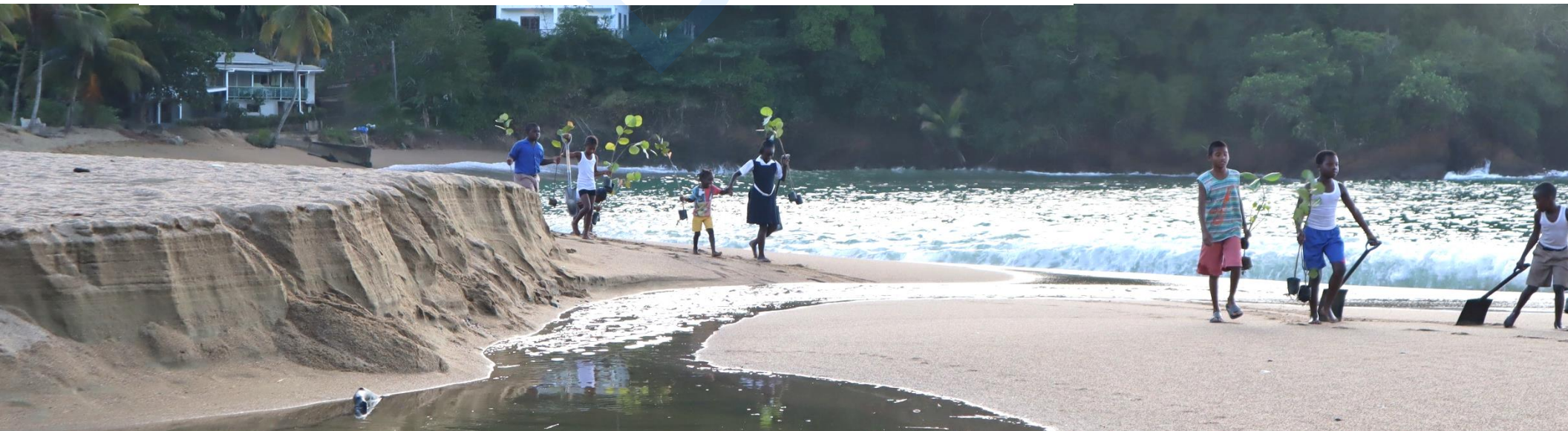
7 MISSION

The MAB Mission 2015–2025 is to

- develop and strengthen models of sustainable development through the WNBR;
- communicate experiences and lessons learned, and facilitate the global diffusion and application of these models;
- support evaluation and high-quality management of biosphere reserves, strategies and policies for sustainable development and planning, and accountable and resilient institutions;
- help Member States and stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by sharing experiences and lessons learned related to exploring and testing policies, technologies, and innovations for the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

To be adapted on stakeholder consultations.

Figure 2. Children planting trees in Parlatuvier Bay (Janina Ewals)



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8 KEY OBJECTIVES

In order to address NE Tobago conservation and sustainable development challenges through strengthening the functions of a BR, the technical team proposes the following **Main Objective** for the management of the NETMABR:

To successfully consolidate and co-manage interventions related to sustainable and regenerative development, research, capacity building, education and networking on landscape, human- and eco-system levels for the benefit of NE Tobago's cultural and natural heritage, communities, and people.

Note: To be adapted based on stakeholder consultations

This key objective is designed to address the 12 key barriers that were identified by previous management plans for NE Tobago and IFPAM documents further as follows:

1. outdated legal and regulatory framework for establishing and managing natural and cultural resources,
2. unclear, fragmented roles responsibilities of stakeholders, especially managing authorities,
3. disempowered and under-resourced management authorities,
4. inadequate funding,
5. willingness to participate if interventions seem to be too restrictive,
6. stakeholder conflicts,
7. lack of broad, bipartisan political will,
8. lack of technical capacity to identify and address issues,
9. minimal capacity on the ground with respect to practical approaches to effective natural and cultural heritage management,
10. inadequate law enforcement,
11. minimal experience with income-generating opportunities, and last but by no means least,
12. a lack of transparency, accountability and compliance with regulation and legislation by the Tobago House of Assembly.

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While IFPAM and other programmes and projects were able to partially address these barriers, and while it can be stated that conservation status and efforts in NE Tobago have never been better, it remains a fact that all of the above barriers are still valid and need attention.
The Management Plan at hand is based on the methodical approach that most of the above-mentioned barriers can be addressed by implementing strategies aligned with the three MAB functions.

These, below-described key strategies, are mainly based on the results of the recent Improved Forest and Protected Area Management Project (IFPAM, 2015-2020) which applied a participatory approach in identifying objectives and potential solutions to overcome conservation barriers; additionally, the ongoing interaction between the technical team and key stakeholders was used to refine recommendations included into the Management Plan.
These strategies are reoccurring and supported by proposed activities in the various components of the Management Plan at hand.
It should be noted that, while IFPAM continuously considered socio-cultural aspects of NE Tobago as essential to successful management of natural resources, there was, unfortunately, not a matching project to similarly address the management of NE Tobago's cultural heritage.

Figure 3. Iguana Bay (Janina Ewals)



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9 WHAT IS THE UNESCO MAB PROGRAMME?

In 1971, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) launched the intergovernmental Man and the Biosphere programme (MAB) that aims to establish a basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments. It predicts the consequences of today's actions on tomorrow's world and thereby increases people's ability to efficiently manage natural resources for the well-being of both human populations and the environment (30).

The working unit of MAB is the Biosphere Reserve (BR), an international description of recognition from UNESCO for an area in the world, which is deemed to demonstrate a "balanced relationship between humans and the biosphere".

Biosphere Reserves are internationally recognised areas comprising terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each reserve promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use by local communities. BRs are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located.

BRs are intended to be model regions for demonstrating successful approaches to protection and sustainable development at a regional level. MAB sites are established with the goal to:

- harmonise conservation of biological and cultural diversity with economic and social development, and
- make a tangible contribution to the transition to green societies and support national governments' efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Biosphere Reserves have **three inter–connected functions**:

- **Conservation**: protecting cultural diversity and biodiversity, including genetic variation, species, ecosystems, landscapes, and securing services provided by such diversity.
- **Development**: fostering economic and human development that is environmentally and socially sustainable and culturally appropriate; and
- **Logistic Support**: facilitating demonstration projects, environmental education and sustainable development education and training, research and monitoring.

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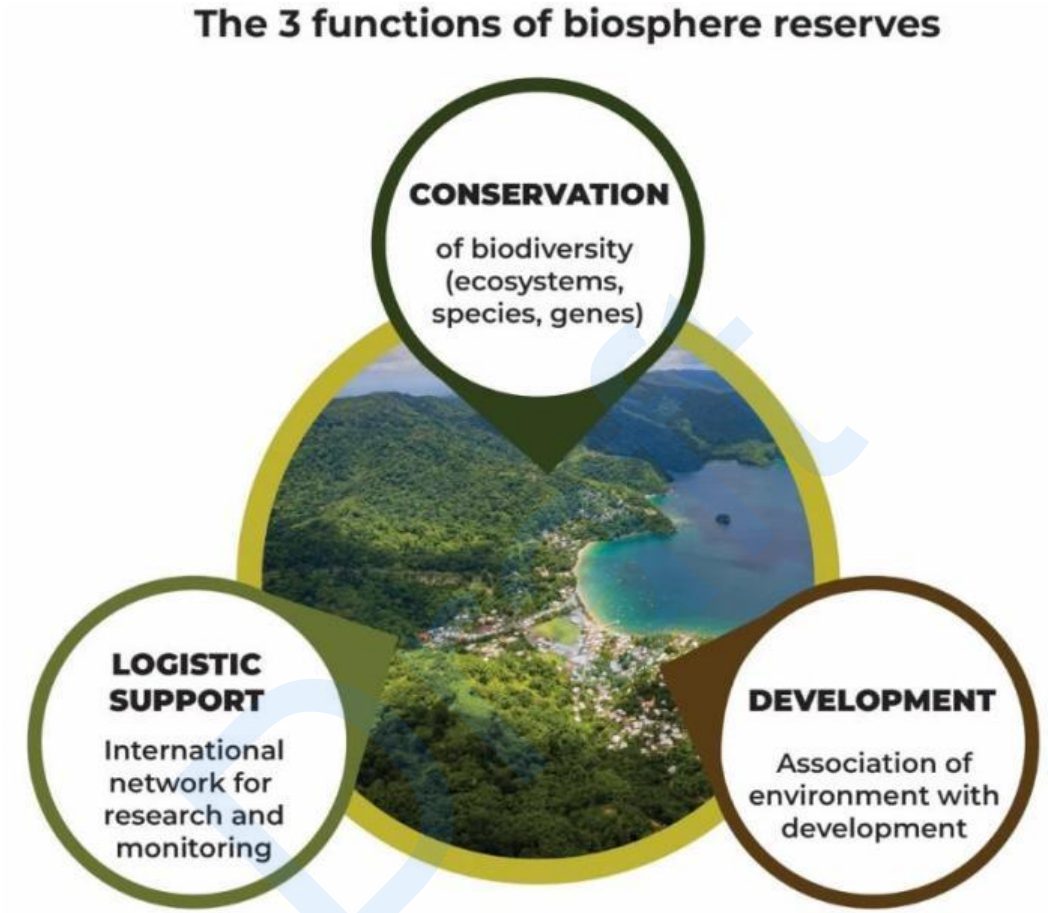


Figure 4. Schematic overview of 3 functions of biosphere reserves.

A BR consists of **three areas or zones – The core, buffer, and transition zones**.

The core zone is usually a legally protected area in which human activity is strictly limited and where monitoring of conservation priorities take place.

The buffer zone allows for appropriate activities such as research and scientific study, ecotourism, education and training.

The transition zone contains human settlements, agricultural and other commercial activities synonymous with human settlement.

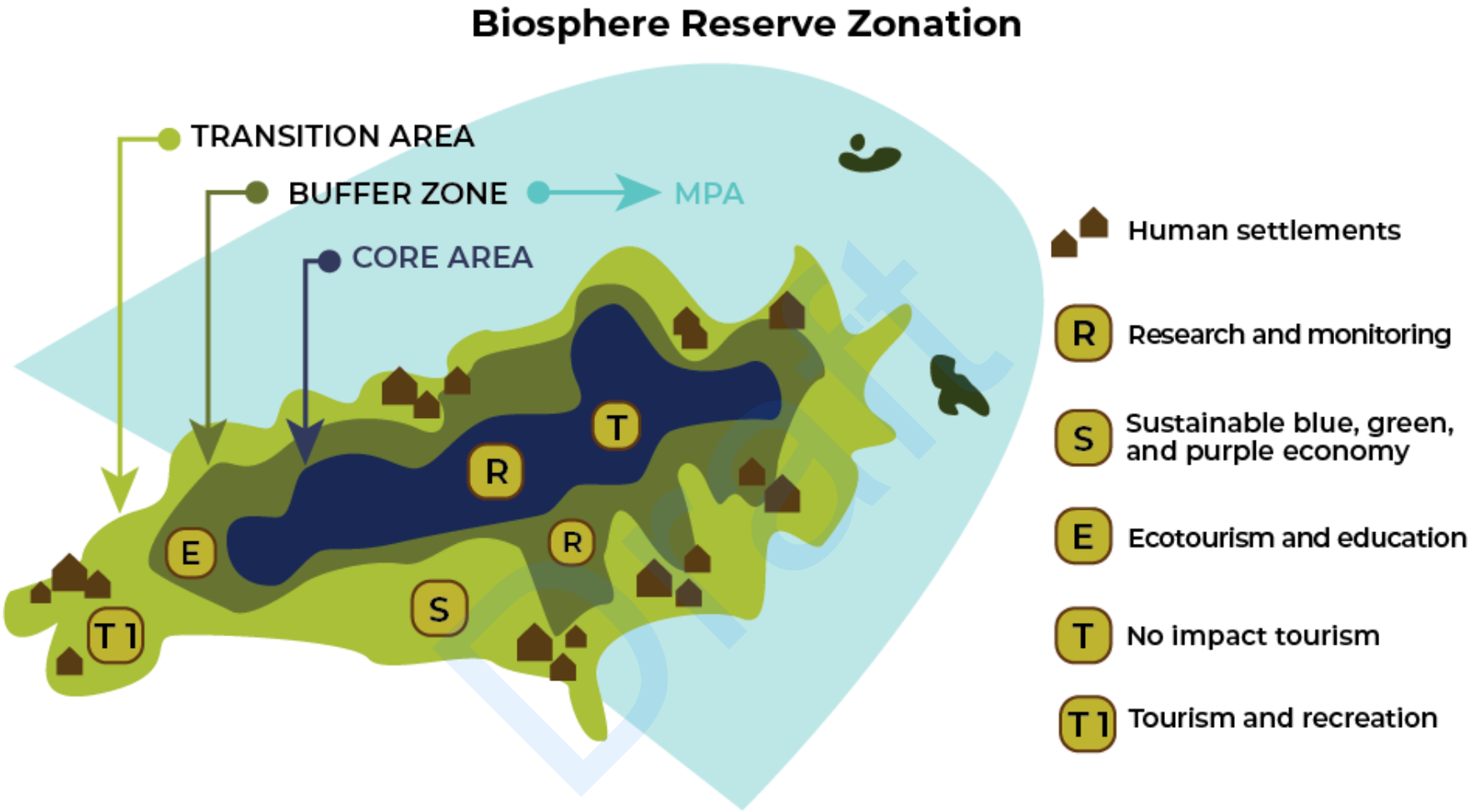


Figure 5. Schematic overview of NE Tobago Biosphere Reserve zonation (ERIC 2021).

The MAB Programme has a significant World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) which serves as a management tool for various municipal regions to improve strategies for sustainable development. As the pressures upon ecosystems increase with growing populations and climate change, the need for upgraded relationships between people and their natural surroundings only increases.

The **MAB Programme Mission** for the period 2015-2025 (31) is to:

- develop and strengthen models for sustainable development in the WNBR;
- communicate the experiences and lessons learned, facilitating the global diffusion and application of these models;
- support evaluation and high-quality management, strategies and policies for sustainable development and planning, as well as accountable and resilient institutions; and
- help member states and stakeholders to urgently meet the Sustainable Development Goals through experiences from the WNBR, particularly through exploring and testing policies, technologies and innovations for the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources and mitigation and adaptation to climate change. (MAB Strategy 2015-2025 & Lima Action Plan)

9.1 Administration

The international MAB Programme

The MAB programme is organised under an international agreement through UNESCO; state parties undertake actions within the MAB programme voluntarily and sites remain under national jurisdiction. At the global level, the MAB Programme is governed by its International Coordinating Council (ICC), under the overall authority of the UNESCO General Conference and its Executive Board.

The next level of governance is represented by regional and thematic networks. Governance at the national level is ideally through MAB National Committees.

The MAB institutional structure is outlined in Figure 6.

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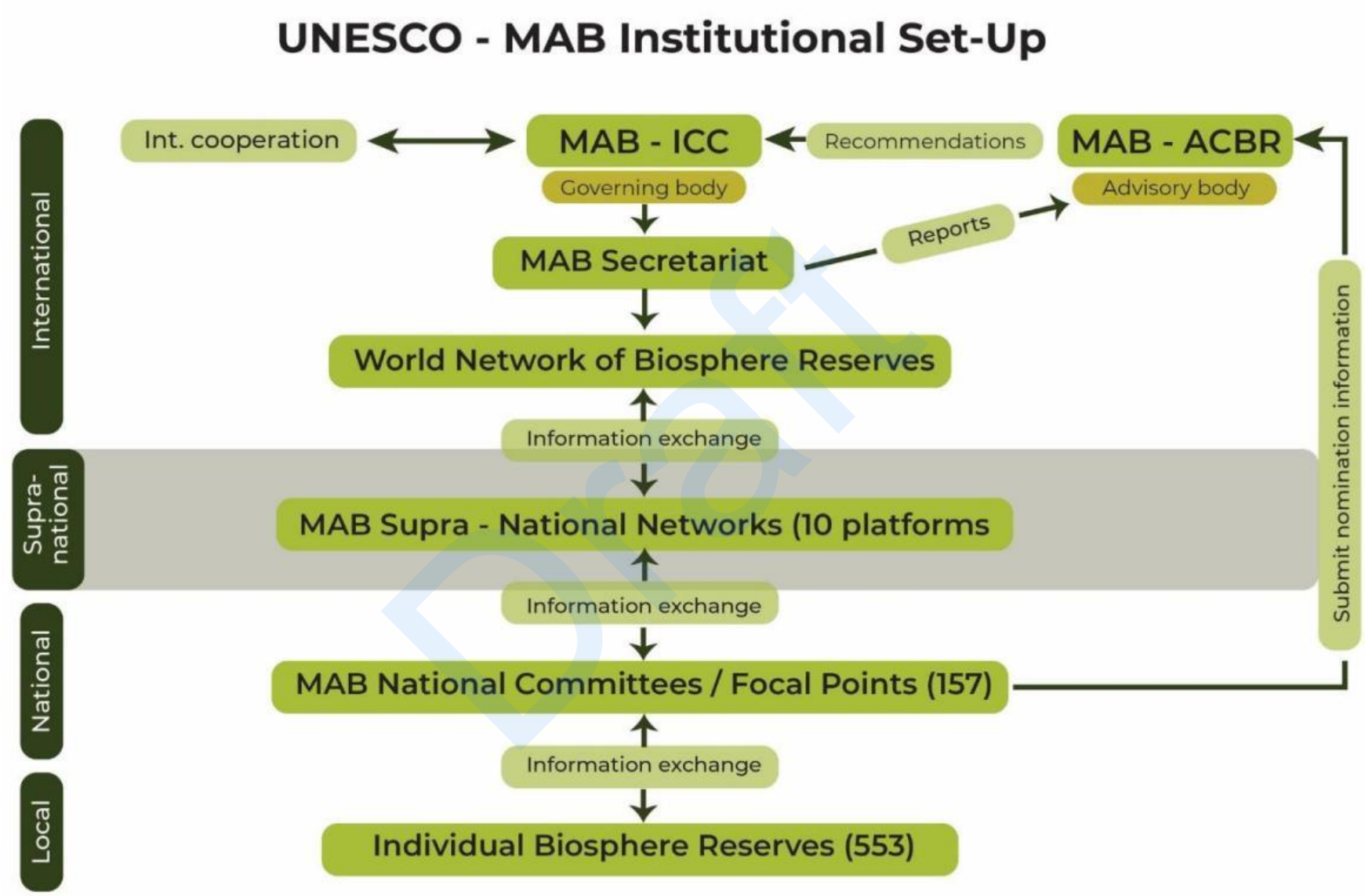


Figure 6. Diagram of the MAB institutional structure adapted from Schliep (24).

The MAB International Coordinating Council (ICC) is the governing body that meets biannually and consists of 34 Member States elected by UNESCO's General Conference. The ICC elects a chair and five vice-chairpersons from each of UNESCO's geopolitical regions that constitute the MAB Bureau which undertakes the responsibilities of the ICC between its biannual meetings. The MAB International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves is the primary scientific and technical Committee body advising the ICC. The MAB Secretariat is the administrative centre for MAB based at UNESCO's Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences in Paris, the Secretariat work closely with the different field offices and Supranational Networks (e.g., IberoMAB – Iberian Peninsula and Latin America/ Caribbean region) around the world to coordinate the work of the MAB programme at the regional, national and individual Biosphere Reserve levels.

MAB is funded through the regular budget of UNESCO and mobilises funds-in-trust granted by Member States, bilateral and multilateral sources and extra-budgetary funds provided by countries, the private sector and private institutions.

UNESCO's intergovernmental structure provides MAB with a framework to help national governments support the planning and implementation of research and training programmes with technical assistance and scientific advice.

MAB-related activities are nationally financed however the programme can grant seed funding to assist countries in developing projects and/or to secure appropriate partnership contributions.

MAB offers fellowship opportunities co-sponsored by a number member states to assist the technical development of individuals seeking to build a profession within the field of the UNESCO programme priorities. These opportunities would be available to local staff to apply for.

Importantly, designation as a MAB Reserve does not necessarily require the formation of new laws.

9.2 Designation of NE Tobago

In September 2019, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago successfully submitted a Nomination Form to UNESCO with the request to consider NE Tobago as a Man and the Biosphere Reserve.

The eligibility criteria taken from the Biosphere Reserve Nomination Form are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1. The eligibility criteria taken from the Biosphere Reserve Nomination Form (2018).

	MAB Eligibility Criteria	NE Tobago
1	**Encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic region(s), including a gradation of human interventions**	✓
2	**Be of significance for biological diversity conservation**	✓
3	**Provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale**	✓
4	**Have an appropriate size to serve the three functions of biosphere reserves**	✓
5	**A legally constituted core area/s devoted to long term protection of sufficient size to meet long term conservation objectives**.	✓
6	**Buffer zone/s clearly identified & surrounding or contiguous to the core area/s, where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place**".	✓
7	**Outer transition area where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed**	✓
8	**Organisational arrangements should be provided for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of inter alia public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and the carrying out of the functions of a biosphere reserve**".	Ongoing
9	**Able to describe arrangements in place or foreseen**	✓
10	**Mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone or zones**	✓
11	**Management policy or plan for the area as a biosphere reserve**	Currently developed
12	**Designated authority or mechanism to implement this policy or plan**	Department of the Environment, NETMAPT
13	**Programmes for research, monitoring, education and training**	✓

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In the Nomination Form, NE Tobago' values were described as follows:

"Covering over 835km^2, the proposed area encompasses three protected areas, one of which is the oldest protected tropical forest reserve in the world, a large planned Marine Protected Area (MPA) and 15 communities which are home to approximately 10,000 residents with a rich historical and cultural heritage. The area's rare and largely intact Caribbean Island Ridge-to-Ocean eco- and human-systems are well equipped to fulfil the three functions of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (BR): its biodiversity, range of ecosystems, and special-interest species are important on a regional and global scale (Conservation); the cultural heritage is a living example for the region's deeply rooted, historical, socio-economic and spiritual relationship between communities and natural resources (Development); and decades of regionally outstanding educational, research and networking activities (Logistic Support).

The close linkage between ecosystem services and natural resource use, active community groups, successful sustainable development projects, governmental initiatives and its closeness to Trinidad's resources provide the area with the prerequisites to successfully implement a BR and share lessons learnt with its Caribbean neighbours while serving as a regional role model. Being a hotspot for conservation related research for decades and having a track record of environmental education, capacity building and monitoring are well established cornerstones for providing and further increasing logistical support.

The legal, policy and institutional framework to manage a MAB area exist; current projects and programmes as well as those in the national and local development pipeline, and improved collaboration between government, civil society and private sector are demonstrably supportive of this BR nomination initiative. On varying levels, NE Tobago is already close to meeting the key conservation objectives of a successful BR as mentioned in the Seville MAB Strategy.

Coordinating future sustainable development efforts under a MAB umbrella and the inclusion of all relevant sectors of the society will significantly improve conservation and livelihoods through responsible use of our natural and cultural heritage which is the central goal of Tobago's guideline policy document, the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan."

On 28 October 2020, NE Tobago was officially declared a UNESCO MAB Reserve.

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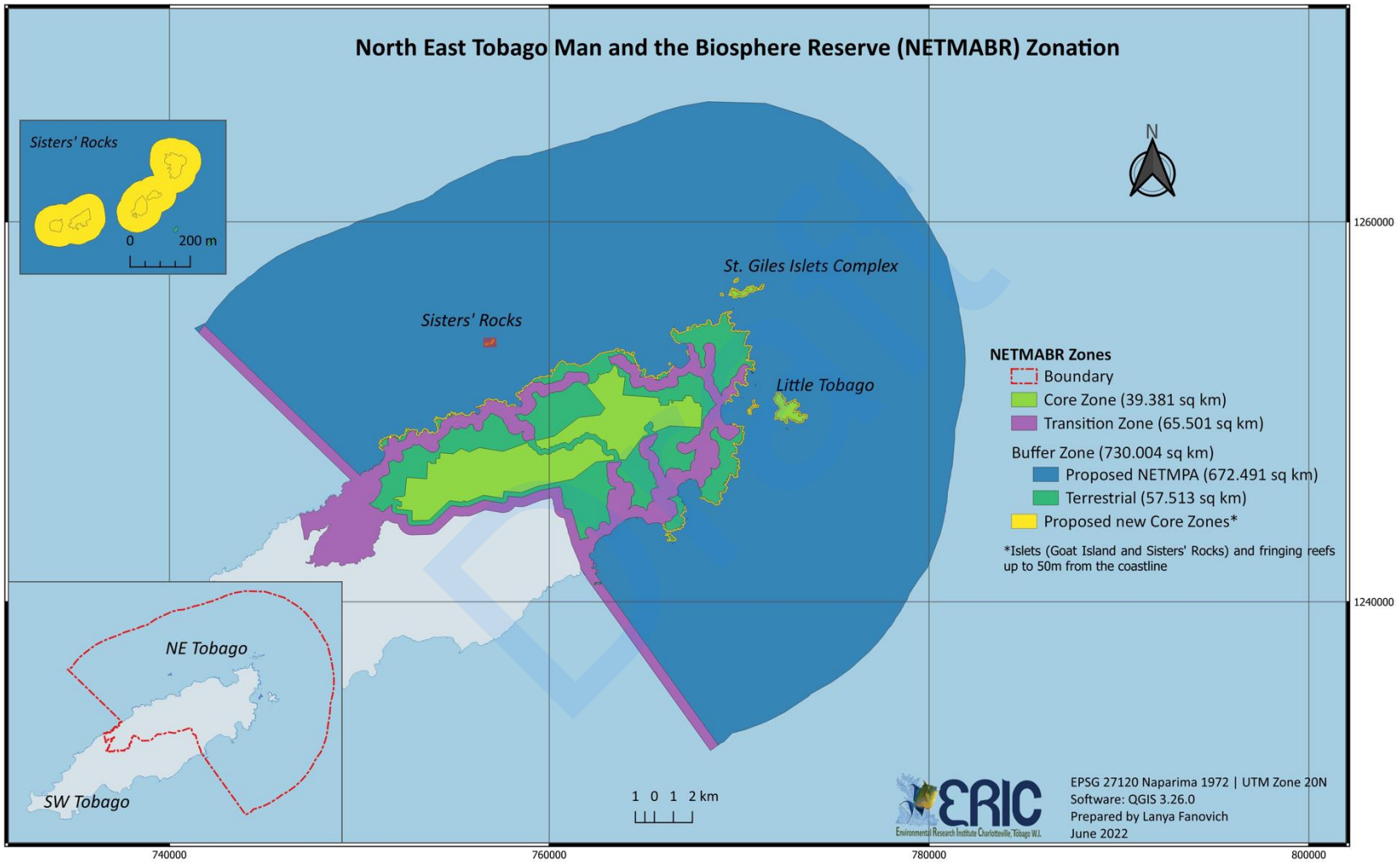


Figure 7. Zonation of the NE Tobago MAB Reserve (ERIC 2022)

The **Core Zone** of the NETMABR consists of three legally protected areas: the MRFR, Little Tobago and the St Giles Islet Complex, all of which are terrestrial.

It should be noted that, at the moment, the Core Zone does not include any marine areas, due to lack of protective legislation and regulations; however, work has started to designate high conservation value, coastal fringe reefs as Natural National Heritage Sites (which is the fastest way of to achieve legal protection) in 2021, and the National Protected Area Systems Plan was approved by Cabinet, which hopefully will result in the designation of the overall NE Tobago Marine Protected Area with some special, IUCN 1a category areas. Once these marine areas receive legal protection, they can, later on, switch from Buffer to Core Zone status within the BR.

The **Buffer Zone** for NETMABR was defined as:

- all lands between the Transition Zone and the MRFR Core Zone,
- a 125m belt on both sides of roads within the Core Zone (combining to a width of 250m)
- a 250m belt along the boundary between the Core Zone and the south-western area outside of the NETMABR,
- coastal areas between the boundaries of the NETMPA and the Transition Zone, and
- the entire marine realm of the proposed NETMPA.

As mentioned in the section above, some marine Buffer Zones might change to Core Zone as soon as legal protection can be provided. Therefore, the terrestrial, coastal Buffer Zones are crucial to protect sensitive marine ecosystems.

The **Transition Zone** was defined as all lands that are located within a 250m belt on both sides of all roads within the overall boundaries of the NETMABR; this includes all communities, and economic activities in the NETMABR (except for some micro-scale subsistence farming and hunting in the Buffer Zone). The result of this definition is a Transition Zone band, sandwiched between the terrestrial and marine Buffer Zones on which it has significant influence.

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10 MANAGEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

The following chapters are subdivided into situational analysis, goals, strategies, and proposed activities. It is important to understand that the chapters are at different results framework levels therefore the subheadings are not necessarily on similar logic levels as well. This is the result of the High-Level Goal of each Component starting on a different logic level.

Table 2. Management plan component levels

Component level	Definition
Summary Situational Analysis	The current state of the BR respectively to the chapter subject, descriptively identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
High-Level Goal	The desired status achieved by the management plan
Priorities	Interventions that either significantly contribute to achieving the goal, or significantly reduce existing threats to the goal
Strategies	Long-term plans of action designed to achieve the goal
Proposed Activities	Programmes, projects, and other interventions that are aligned to the strategies and should be revised once the situational analysis significantly changes.

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10.1 Addressing Barriers to Sustainable Management

The NETMABR is subject to a series of interconnected, indirect threats to successful implementation of the MAB programme. Local residents and stakeholders are not commonly inspired to undertake conservation-relevant practices. This is partly because intelligible, adequate and continuous environmental education still requires improvement. While knowledge often exists, it is not successfully translated into a positive attitude and actual practise. This in turn is partially due to perceived and actual lack of ownership and empowerment on the part of residents in NE Tobago. On the other hand, and in certain cases, the sense of ownership is very well developed and strongly articulated; however, ownership rarely translates into stewardship.

Similarly, residents facing environmental challenges are often not informed enough to take appropriate actions against those perpetrating the violations (e.g., seek assistance from the Environmental Police and/or the Environmental Commission of Trinidad and Tobago).

Additionally, the lack of coherent and consistent conservation co-management and co-operation often undermines good efforts in some areas by neglect in others. For example, efforts of CSOs to protect nesting sea turtles are undermined by a lack of law-enforcement regarding the use of turtle nets and turtle meat consumption.

The principal barrier to addressing direct threats to the ecosystems of NE Tobago is fragmented management and use. The National Protected Areas Policy, the National Protected Area Systems Plan (7), the IFPAM Project (6) and ERIC's stakeholder assessments have all identified and prioritised this barrier for NE Tobago. Regulations and roles are unclear and consequently there is limited "enforcement / implementation of regulations concerning natural resource use" as stated in the NE Tobago Management Plan (2003). Fragmented, formal and informal, public and private, land management and use create an environment where it is nearly impossible for a single stakeholder to meaningfully influence the direct threats that are degrading NE Tobago's ecosystems.

This barrier has two components.

Government Sector

The ***government component*** involves the formal management of public lands and waters. This barrier includes outdated legislation and policy, a labyrinthine institutional structure and limited government capacity and resources. Repeated government initiatives since the 1970's have failed to address this issue; a case in point is the National Protected Areas Policy (2011) that called for a wide range of actions to be undertaken by 2016. These include the "*revision, development and declaration of supporting legal instruments [to] enact an enabling legislative framework*", the establishment of a centralised authority "*to administer the coordination and*

implementation of the National Protected Areas Policy for Trinidad and Tobago", and the establishment of protected areas under the new policy. Unfortunately, all efforts to declare the North East Tobago Marine Protected Area have failed since over half a decade.

Non-Government Sector

Fragmented management and use of land and waters also occurs in ***non-government sectors***. The absence of a national land use planning framework combined with outdated regulations and limited enforcement means that private land management and use is largely unrestricted. There is a concomitant lack of mechanisms and incentives for private land owners to engage in or benefit from conservation. The current, forested state of most private land in NE Tobago is therefore not a result of public policies or priorities, but an artefact of the priorities and preferences of individual owners. Although this speaks to the conservation commitment of some land owners, it is a highly vulnerable state for long-term conservation. Land owners may choose to develop their land with infrastructure or unsustainable agriculture that compromises the NETMABR.

Informal management and use of the land- and sea-scape, including public and private areas, is likewise unrestricted. As explained in the THA Comprehensive Economic Development Plan 2.0 (20), Tobago hosts "*longstanding insecure land tenure arrangements with as much as 83 percent of the lands of Tobago allegedly in informal tenure (the majority being family lands)*". Informal but long-standing family lands, squatting, small agricultural plots, unregulated dumping, hunting, harvesting of timber and other forest products, and harvesting of fish from the marine environment all represent often legitimate uses of public and private lands that can none the less contribute to fragmentation and degradation of ecosystems.

The implementation of the UNESCO MAB programme, including the operationalisation of the NE Tobago Protected Area Management Trust, offers a significant opportunity to de-fragment and consolidate the management of natural and cultural resources under one, overarching programme.

Although fragmented management is the principal barrier to conservation in NE Tobago, another critical barrier is a lack of monitoring and communication. This issue captures two hindrances to biodiversity conservation regionally as identified by the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot assessment: limited technical and scientific knowledge and poor availability of information needed for effective decision-making, and lack of awareness of importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services. This similarly applies to the socio-cultural and economic development aspects of the NETMABR. Limited information and communication mean that it is difficult to:

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quantify threats, foster informed discussions, prioritise management actions, measure the success of interventions, and inspire stakeholders to take action. This barrier will be specifically targeted by strengthening the logistic function of the NETMABR.

In order to address the described challenges through strengthening the functions of a BR, the technical team proposes the following **Main Objective** for the management of the NETMABR:

To successfully consolidate and co-manage interventions related to sustainable and regenerative development, research, capacity building, education and networking on landscape, human- and eco-system levels for the benefit of NE Tobago's cultural and natural heritage and people.

In order to go into more depth, previous management plans for NE Tobago and IFPAM documents further detailed 12 key barriers to successful natural resource management in NE Tobago as follows:

1. outdated legal and regulatory framework for establishing and managing natural and cultural resources,
2. unclear, fragmented roles responsibilities of stakeholders, especially managing authorities,
3. disempowered and under-resourced management authorities,
4. inadequate funding,
5. willingness to participate if interventions seem to be too restrictive,
6. stakeholder conflicts,
7. lack of broad, bipartisan political will,
8. lack of technical capacity to identify and address issues,
9. minimal capacity on the ground with respect to practical approaches to effective natural and cultural heritage management,
10. inadequate law enforcement,
11. minimal experience with income-generating opportunities, and last but by no means least,
12. a lack of transparency, accountability and compliance with regulation and legislation by the Tobago House of Assembly.

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While IFPAM and other programmes and projects were able to partially address these barriers, and while it can be stated that conservation status and efforts in NE Tobago have never been better, it remains a fact that all of the above barriers are still valid and need attention.
The Management Plan at hand is based on the methodical approach that most of those barriers can be addressed by implementing strategies aligned with the three MAB functions.

These, below-described key strategies, are mainly based on the results of the recent Improved Forest and Protected Area Management Project (IFPAM, 2015-2020) which applied a participatory approach in identifying objectives and potential solutions to overcome conservation barriers; additionally, the ongoing interaction between the technical team and key stakeholders was used to refine recommendations included into the Management Plan.
These strategies are reoccurring and supported by proposed activities in the various components of the Management Plan at hand.

It should be noted that, while IFPAM continuously considered socio-cultural aspects of NE Tobago as essential to successful management of natural resources, there was, unfortunately, not a matching project to similarly address the management of NE Tobago's cultural heritage.

Figure 8. View from Speyside onto Little Tobago and Goat Island (Janina Ewals)



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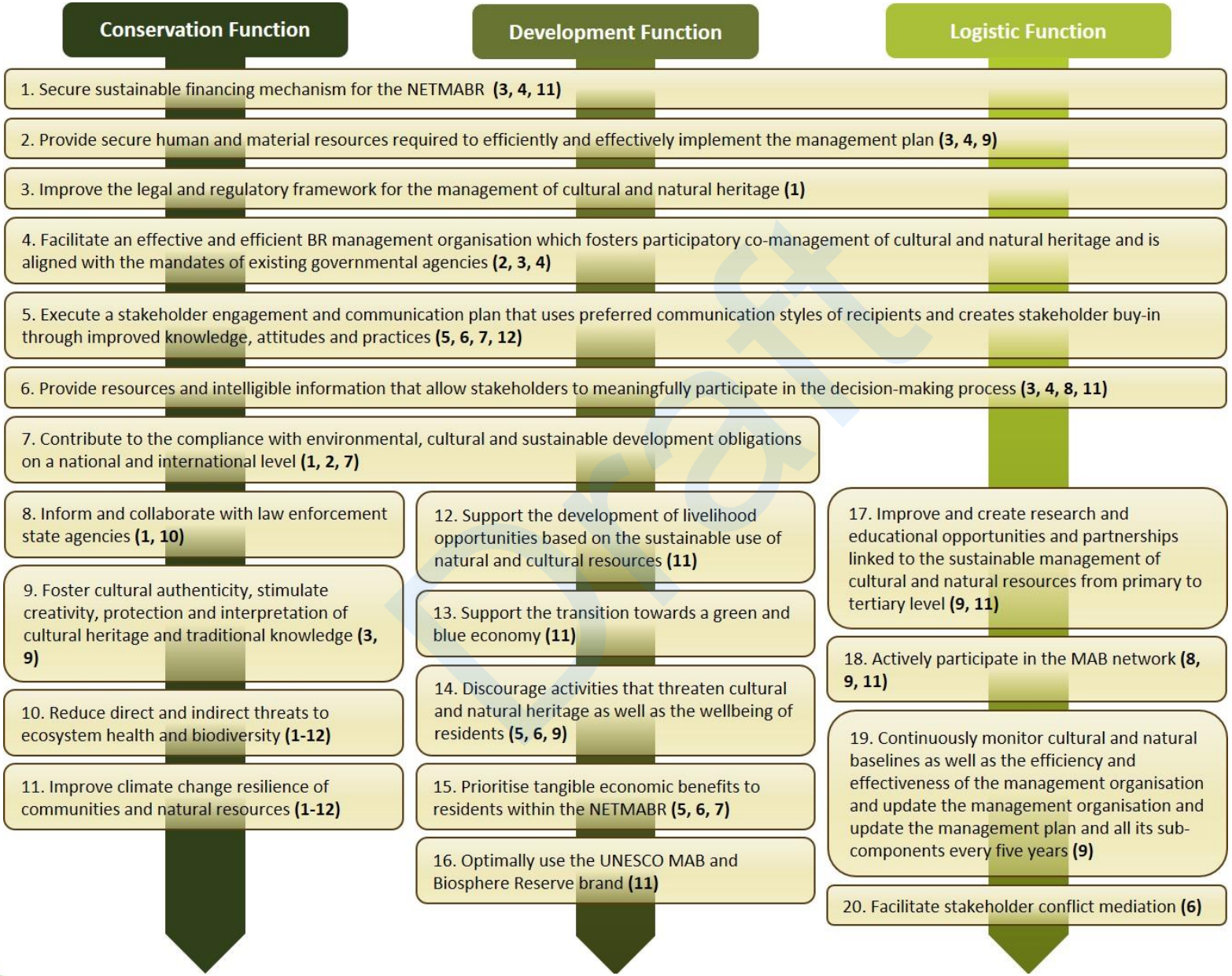


Figure 9. Proposed Main Strategies for the BR Management Plan, Addressed Key-Barriers in (brackets)

11 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

SUMMARY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

While the tourism sector was already on the decline in comparison to the hay days two decades ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has, as in many other tourism destinations, put a screeching halt to tourism activities in NE Tobago in mid-2020.

Tourism depending enterprises had to lay off staff and use the last financial resources to maintain properties, which was sometimes not even possible and valuable assets deteriorated.

Staff, as often before, experienced what a delicate flower tourism can be and had to seek other income-generating activities; many ventured into fishing as an alternative.

State subventions for lost income and grants for property upgrading provided some form of relief; however, not everyone was able to access such funds and many businesses seized to operate.

The post-COVID-19 recovery period has not even started by the end of 2021. There are still no international flights to Tobago and tourism products need to be upgraded and marketed.

The competition from other Caribbean islands, which depend even more on tourism, is stiff.

There are still encouraging signs: international and local tourists are placing bookings and some businesses are actually renovating, constructing new facilities and hire staff in anticipation of the 2022 tourism season; mooring facilities for yachts in Charlotteville will be established in early 2022.

Over the past years, the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited has done remarkable work for increasing Tobago's competitiveness via branding, marketing, representation, and green certification programmes. Additionally, an announcement was made in early 2021 that a major, island-wide customer service transformation training programme will start in 2022. However, there are indications that many, especially small, tourism actors in NE Tobago are not able to fully capitalise on these efforts and monetise them in the future.

The one, highly distinctive feature of NE Tobago, in comparison to other small island destinations in the Caribbean, is its Man and the Biosphere Reserve. Remarkably, years before the MABR declaration, the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan (CEDP) and

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North East Tobago Management Plan (NETMP) suggested the expansion of responsible tourism as a viable and appropriate economic activity for NE Tobago, which very much remains a valid statement. (36)
Interestingly, the, relatively new, concept of:

> ***regenerative tourism speaks specifically to involving tourists in positively contributing to conservation, sustainable development and cultural identity.***

Its main goal is for visitors to have a positive impact, leaving the host destination in a better condition than how they found it and creating the satisfying experience of having altruistically contributed.
As such, regenerative tourism goes beyond mere sustainability: while sustainable travel aims to "minimise the negative impacts of tourism", regenerative tourism helps, addresses and repairs.

> ***The MAB designation is the perfect branding, marketing and sales tool for NE Tobago's prime tourism markets: the middle- to higher-end eco tourist, looking for nature and community experiences in tranquil and authentic settings.***

Furthermore, the MAB Programme fully aligns and holistically supports the principles of sustainable, responsible and regenerative tourism.
However, translating the MAB brand into a significant increase in revenue generation from tourism requires (inter alia):

- upgrading of visitor facilities, accommodation, and trails,
- pollution management (liquid, solid, noise),
- customer service training,
- unique product development (especially culinary, cultural and historical),
- certifications according to international standards,
- significant outreach and capacity building to enable tourism stakeholders on all levels to mobilise and monetise this tool, for which Tobago is envied by its competitors, and
- improved airlift (which applies to Tobago in general).

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It should be noted that if the attractions of the NETMABR, and by extension Tobago as a whole, are not able to fill at least two direct international flights per week in the near future, the significance of the tourism industry's contribution to Tobago's economy might have to be re-evaluated.

The attractions within the NETMABR appealing to international travellers are mostly nature-based, ranging from beautiful beaches, ridge to reef scenery, forest and marine biodiversity in combination with the experience of life in small Caribbean fishing villages. Other attractions, such as cultural festivals and sport events, are targeting a more local and national clientele.
The main accommodation providers are small guest houses, privately-owned villas and three small hotels with up to 25 rooms; many of which suffered significantly under COVID-19.

Additionally, NE Tobago has a handful of Airbnb properties; however, the sector remains unregulated by the state and therefore inhibits adherence to environmental standards. Regulating a powerful sector as the Airbnb sector will provide accurate measurement of its economic and environmental impacts and ensure an environmentally sustainable accommodation industry.

Three villages are the focal points for tourism:

- **Castara**: famous for its community-based tourism product and sustainability efforts;
- **Charlotteville**: the environmental science tourism hotspot in Trinidad and Tobago; and
- **Speyside**: internationally renowned for diving at Goat Island and Little Tobago.

Table 3. Tourism attractions, location, activities and targets in the NETMABR (ERIC, 2018).

Main targets: l = local, n = national, I = international, m = mixed

Focus	Attraction	Location	Frequency	Activity	Main Target
Cultural	Heritage Festival	Various villages	Annually in several villages	Participation in the re-enactment of old traditions, dances, rituals	m
	Blue Food Festival	Bloody Bay	Annually	Celebration of root tuber vegetables	l
	Fishermen Fete	Various villages	Annually	Fisherfolk harvest	l

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Focus	Attraction	Location	Frequency	Activity	Main Target
	Speyside Jazz	Speyside	Annually	Music festival with regional artists	n
	Harvest	All villages	Annually in each village	Originally agriculture related, now general thanksgiving for the year	l
	Carnival	Roxborough	Annually	Music, dance, masquerading	l
	Village living	Castara, Parlatuvier, Charlotteville, Speyside	Permanent	Enjoying Caribbean village life	i
Sport	Boat Racing	Roxborough	Annually	Spectating	l
	Game Fishing Tournament	Charlotteville	Annually	Angling	i
	Marathon	Main Ridge Forest Reserve	Annually	Running	l
Natural	Beach aesthetics	Castara, Englishman's Bay, Bloody Bay, Charlotteville, Kings Bay	Permanent	Liming	m
	Marine biodiversity	Castara, Englishman's Bay, Bloody Bay, Charlotteville, Kings Bay	Permanent	Snorkelling	i
	Marine biodiversity	Along the entire coast	Permanent	Diving	i
	Bird diversity	Main Ridge Forest Reserve, trails in buffer zone, islets	Permanent	Birding	i
	Ecosystem and biodiversity	Charlotteville	Permanent	Science tourism	i

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Table 4 List of visitor accommodations, bedrooms and type within the NETMABR (pre-COVID-19, ERIC 2018).

	Property Name	Category	Location	# of Rooms
1	**Blue Waters Inn**	Hotel	Speyside	38
2	**Nabuccoo Resort Dive**	Hotel	Speyside	18
3	**Angel Retreat**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	10
4	**Bay Watch Apartments**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
5	**Bay Watch Inn**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2
6	**Bella Vista Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	2
7	**Belle Aire Inn**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	5
8	**Blue Mango Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	7
9	**Man-o-War Bay Cottages**	Self-Catering Cottages	Charlotteville	25
10	**Sharon and Phebs**	Self-Catering Apartment	Charlotteville	10
11	**Boatview**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
12	**Carpe Diem Villa**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
13	**Castara Bliss**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	3
14	**Castara Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments		
15	**Castara Retreats**	Boutique Resort	Castara	20
16	**Castara Roundhouse**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2
17	**Castara Villas**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	5
18	**C&K Apartments**	Self-Catering Facilities	Castara	2
19	**Charlottevilla**	Self-Catering Facilities	Charlotteville	4
20	**Chacalaca Villa**	Villa	Charlotteville	3

	Property Name	Category	Location	# of Rooms
21	**Cholson Chalet**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	12
22	**Coffee House**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2
23	**Cottage Mango**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	3
24	**Golden Apple**	Self-Catering Facility	Castara	2
25	**Grand View**	Self-Catering Facility	Speyside	3
26	**Davies Atlantic View**	Self-Catering Facility	Speyside	4
27	**Divers and Nature Lovers Dream**	Self-Catering Facility	Speyside	2
28	**Erasmus Cove Cottages**	Self-Catering Facility	Parlatuvier	4
29	**Essex Cottage**	Self-Catering Facility	Parlatuvier	2
30	**Glouchester Place**	Bed and Breakfast	Parlatuvier	4
31	**Green Valley Apt**	Self-Catering	Castara	1
32	**Hidden Cottage**	Self-Catering	Castara	4
33	**Humming Bird Haven**	Self-Catering	Castara	2
34	**Lilibeths**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
35	**Little House on the Hill**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2
36	**Mango Inn**	Self-Catering Apartments	Speyside	3
37	**Mot Mot**	Villa	Castara	4
38	**Naturalist Beach Resort**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	16
39	**Nature Retreat**	Self-Catering Apartments	Parlatuvier	6
40	**Nature View Apartment**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2

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	Property Name	Category	Location	# of Rooms
41	**Nature View Apartment**	Self-Catering Apartments	Speyside	1
42	**Nico Vile**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	5
43	**Ocean View**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	3
44	**Ocean View**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	1
45	**Ocean View Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments	Delaford	8
46	**Parrot Estate Villa**	Villa	Englishman's Bay	2
47	**Riverside Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
48	**Samahdi**	Self-Catering Apartments	Englishman's Bay	4
49	**Sea Garden Guesthouse**	Self-Catering Apartments	Delaford	3
50	**Sea Level Guest House**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	8
51	**Seascape**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	3
52	**Silk Cotton Valley**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	2
53	**Sunset Valley Estate**	Villa	Englishman’s Bay	3
54	**Tamarind House**	Self-Catering	Parlatuvier	4
55	**Tanager Ridge**	Villa	Englishman’s Bay	5
56	**Ten Cent Cottage**	Self-Catering Apartments	Speyside	2
57	**Tekeya Place**	Self-Catering	Castara	2
58	**Tony's Offgrid Cabin Getaway**	Self-Catering	Speyside	1
59	**Top Ranking**	Self-Catering Apartments	Speyside	5
60	**Top River Perl**	Self-Catering Apartments	Charlotteville	6

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	Property Name	Category	Location	# of Rooms
61	**Ali Baba Sea Breeze**	Self-Catering Apartments	Castara	4
62	**Villa Di Sorrisi**	Villa	Parlatuvier	2
	Additional non-listed rooms			70
			TOTAL	**398**

Figure 10. Tobago Blue Food Festival Poster



Figure 11. Charlotteville Fishing Tournament Poster



Figure 12. Tobago Heritage Festival Poster



Unfortunately, there are no pre-COVID-19 data regarding visitation numbers specifically for the NETMABR.

The main, domestic tourism market for Tobago has been in Trinidad; however, the vast majority of domestic tourists were staying in the south-western side of the island which was more geared towards entertainment and night life-based tourism. Those local tourists that visited the NETMABR area were single-day visitors on a road trip through the island and spending money on mainly catering.

The annual cruise ship arrivals in Tobago fluctuated significantly (e.g., in 2017-2018 at 82,000; in 2016-2017 at 23,821). Tours to the MRFR and Little Tobago were offered and booked on cruise ships; however, there are no data on actual visitor numbers to the NETMABR. It can be stated that the economic, social and environmental impact of cruise ship tourists in NE Tobago was relatively low.

Annually, international arrivals in Tobago via airlift were around 26,000 (2018); however, this did not account for those international travellers that arrived at the, much larger, international airport in Trinidad (Piarco International Airport, POS), and then took a short (20 min) domestic flight to Tobago.

Those international visitors were staying overnight in the south-western part of Tobago; it can be assumed that at least 50% choose to take a one-day trip around the island and possibly booked a tour to Little Tobago or in the MRFR.

The main international markets were the UK, Germany and Northern America.

The pre-COVID-19 number of overnight stays within NE Tobago can only be estimated at a rough order of magnitude scale. The room stock in NE Tobago was estimated at approximately 400 rooms with an average booking of 40% resulting in roughly 160 daily overnight stays. The average cost per room is 60 USD, resulting in income from accommodation of roughly 9,600 USD/day for the entire NETMABR area. Further income is generated via car rentals, taxi services, catering, supermarket spending, guided tours, and diving.

Despite the generally low visitation level for the entire island, the efforts to establish sustainable community-based and science tourism products in NE Tobago have led to a relatively significant, pre-COVID-19, increase in bookings, especially in Castara and Charlotteville.

The management of tourism activities in the NETMABR is facilitated by the:

- Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation (DTCT) which is charged with the responsibility of establishing, standardising and sustaining the island's tourism product in a manner consistent with the repositioning strategy for Tobago as a tourist destination; and the
- The Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL), a state enterprise established in 2017. TTAL has oversight for the strategic marketing of the destination, product development and innovation, as well as cruise- and airlift. The core mandate of the TTAL is to lead the (re)development of the island's tourism product and the marketing and (re)positioning of Tobago as a premier island destination founded on the principles of sustainable development. This includes the establishment of quality standards, training of industry workers, research on the impacts and contribution of tourism, the development of quality products and services, and the facilitation of investment into the island's tourism industry. In order to fulfil its mandate, the TTAL is working with and through public and private sector stakeholders and partners in the aviation, cruise and hospitality sub-sectors.

Noteworthy private sector organisations are the:

- Association of Tobago Dive Operators,
- Castara Tourism Development Association, and
- Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association.

Due to the relatively low number of visitors, the negative impacts of tourism have been historically quite limited. Neither reefs nor forests were visited beyond the limits of acceptable change. The pressure on resources e.g., water, fish, fruits, vegetables, and other commodities have also been limited given that the average visitor numbers were less than 3% of the total population at any given time; the same applied to the very limited increase of waste produced by overnight visitors, which are often environmentally conscious.

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Spearfishing (mainly by recreational Trinidadian divers and by persons that lost their jobs related to the pandemic) continued through COVID-19 and led to a significant decrease in meso-predators and grazing parrot fishes at specific reefs.
Events and festivals produced a larger amount of waste which was managed by the THA or private event managers. Since 2018, the THA started to encourage event organisers to reduce their environmental footprint, especially regarding solid waste.
Land prices at scenic locations are relatively high, which can be a negative or positive tourism impact depending on the point of view.

The most obvious positive impact of the anticipated increase in tourism in 2022 is an increase in direct and indirect income for NETMABR residents and Tobago as a whole. Additionally, and once properly managed, increased science tourism can lead to increased scientific research, knowledge exchange, scholarships and publications relevant to sustainable development and management of cultural and natural resources. Since 2015, tourists were already paying for participating in ecosystem health monitoring through Reef Check and Forest Check and as such contributing to conservation efforts. As more persons understand that their income directly depends on a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment as more likely is it that they protect their cultural and natural heritage attractions and assets.
Most tourists that are attracted to a destination like NE Tobago have relatively high environmental standards. Increased visitation will therefore put additional pressure on tourism operators to satisfy customer preferences and reduce their environmental footprint.
The hosts or the owners of accommodation properties play an important role in creating these experiences for guests and must incorporate environmental conscious or green principles into their operations. The need to constantly acquire new knowledge on and development of sustainable measures that can be applied to their accommodation is critical to their survival.

The future management organisation of the NETMABR will have the mandate to coordinate its own (BR focused) tourism management activities with those of the THA Divisions responsible for the various aspects of reduction and mitigation of impact risks.
Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the relationship between the NETMABR management organisations and other management authorities is clearly defined and does not allow room for uncertainties regarding responsibilities and mandates; this does not only relate to the management of impacts but also to the overall relationship between these organisations.

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Figure 13. Map of NE Tobago indicating tourism activities such as hiking, birdwatching, snorkelling, and diving.

HIGH LEVEL GOAL

Regenerative tourism significantly supports ecosystem health and services, sustainable green/blue/purple economic development, positive cultural heritage, well-being, fair income, and career opportunities for residents.

PRIORITIES

- Improve the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of tourism stakeholders regarding the importance of healthy ecosystems, community benefits, and socio-cultural heritage, using stakeholder engagement and communication plan that used preferred communication styles (see main strategy 5), in partnership with the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI).
- Obtain broad tourism stakeholder consensus on applying regenerative tourism principles.
- Create a strong, locally and internationally appealing brand for the NETMABR aligned with the national tourism brand.
- Develop tourism products that allow tourists to experience the diversity of NE Tobago's cultural and natural heritage while understanding and contributing to addressing threats to the NETMABR.
- Demonstrate to tourism operators within the NETMABR the personal benefits of adhering to regenerative tourism principles and using the MABR designation as a marketing and sales tool.
- Improve the standards and quality of all tourism products and services according to regenerative tourism principles, including local and international certification schemes.
- Establish strong collaboration between the NETMABR management authority, TTAL and DTCT.
- Monitor visitor numbers, economic, ecological and cultural impacts of tourism in the NETMABR.

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Figure 14. Educational tourists visiting the Speyside waterwheel (ERIC 2918).



STRATEGIES

- Facilitate the participatory development and implementation of a regenerative tourism plan masterplan for the NETMABR including, but not limited to values, vision, mission, branding, marketing, enabling business environment, product development, capacity building, environmental and social benefits certification standards, limits of acceptable change, communication, M&E, and improvement of KAP.
- Support operationalisation of innovative, regenerative and locally adequate and acceptable tourism products.

- Implementation of sustainable and responsible tourism strategies already recommended in previous policy documents and management plans.
- Facilitate locally applicable, tourism-related research in collaboration with local and international academic institutions.
- Enable adherence to SLM and LDN principles regarding the development of new and maintenance of existing tourism facilities, events and the accommodation sector.
- Development of a strong and consistent tourism outreach programme in NE Tobago, including inclusion in school curricula.
- Establishment a standing tourism development committee consisting of the NETMABR managing authority, TTAL, DTCT, THTI, the Chief Administrator, CSOs and private business representatives.
- Mandatory inclusion of regenerative and sustainable tourism principles in vocational programmes.
- Establishment and enforcement of a regulatory framework for shared economies.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

- Coordinate the development and implementation of a regenerative tourism awareness programmes,
- Support expansion of local and international certification schemes,
- Hire expert teams to develop a regenerative tourism master plan, develop products, and train tourism operators
- Establish ongoing research agreement with academic institutions to facilitate the positive impact of tourism on NE Tobago,
- Secure funding for stakeholder organisations and private business owners to incorporate sustainability and regeneration into their business models,
- Give reconsideration to the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority that can properly account for the number of legitimate local tourism accommodation establishments,
- Operate a NETMABR tourism information facility and online promotional, marketing and sales presence, and
- Establish co-operations with international tour operators specialised in NE Tobago's niche tourism products.

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