RESEARCH

of the
North-east Tobago UNESCO
Man and the Biosphere Reserve
Management Plan

SUMMARY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Since the 1960s, NE Tobago, especially Charlotteville, has been frequently visited by local and international researchers and student groups which makes it a national science-tourism hotspot.

Research programmes address reptiles, amphibians, birds, coral reefs, tropical forest biodiversity, climate change, sustainable tourism, policy planning, ecosystem services evaluation, archaeological sites, as well as cultural expressions. The relatively high intactness, variety, accessibility, and size make this area an ideal location for research, environmental education, and demonstration projects. Increasingly, local stakeholders insist on their right to be involved in research and be informed about results. Since 2014, the Environmental Research Institute Charlotteville (ERIC), an ENGO, established the first permanent research facility. Many research activities address issues shared with the region (e.g., turtle conservation, archaeological research) and globally (e.g., climate change, shark population monitoring; reef health monitoring). Unfortunately, research is still conducted in silos, information is unreliably stored, complicated to access and not widely shared.

HIGH LEVEL GOAL

Applied research directly supports the implementation of the NETMABR management plan, intelligibly informs and involves stakeholders, creates tangible benefits for NE Tobago residents, and contributes to knowledge exchange.

PRIORITY NEEDS

- Research activities in the BR are coordinated and aligned with the NETMABR management plan;
- research is implemented with and easily accessible for all stakeholders; and
- research results are applicable, derive direct benefits to residents, inform sustainable economic development, and assist in meeting the 17 SDGs.

STRATEGIES

- Establish a research and monitoring programme in collaboration with local and international stakeholders;
- establish a research repository, housed within the TOBIMA, and accessible to stakeholders;
- establish long-term research linkages with local and international academic institutions;
- encourage community-based science; and
- formalise research regulations to facilitate knowledge sharing, protect against research-piracy, and ensure that a percentage of any royalties derived from research in NE Tobago is used to support the implementation of the Management Plan

KEY PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Facilitate:

- Identification of high priority research areas with significant potential to create tangible community benefits;
- promoting the NETMABR as a site for formalised local, regional, and international research regarding conservation, culture, archaeology, innovative technologies, food production, climate change resilience, and benefits of the MAB programme;

- coordinated and continuous monitoring of:
  - biodiversity,
  - ecosystem health,
  - climate change impacts,
  - species of specific interest,
  - economic development (especially in the agricultural, tourism, fisheries, and cultural sectors), and
  - welfare and happiness

  through a collaborative effort of governmental, non-governmental, and private sector actors, especially including community-based science approaches;
- support for the continued documentation of tangible and intangible authentic art, traditions and cultural heritage;
- active knowledge sharing with the region and BR networks.
- enforcement of laws against pollution; and
- improved or new monitoring strategies against pollution.