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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: Twinning

AUGUST 2023

Component of a 10-year Management Plan

FOCUS: Twinning

for the

North-East Tobago Man and the Biosphere Area

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Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary 5

2 The Way Forward 9

3 Introductory Remarks 10

4 Methods 12

5 Limitations 12

6 Vision 13

7 Mission 13

8 Key Objectives 14

9 What is the UNESCO MAB Programme? 16

9.1 Administration 19

9.2 Designation of NE Tobago 21

10 Management Plan Components 26

10.1 Addressing Barriers to Sustainable Management 27

11 Twinning 32

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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

1. Background
2. Literature Review
3. Addressing Barriers to Sustainable Management
4. Governance
5. Financing and Donor Data Base
6. Alien Invasive Species
7. Sustainable Agriculture and Sustainable Land Management Practises
8. Sustainable Tourism
9. Pollution
10. Research
11. Education
12. Networking

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13. Principles
14. Vision
15. Mission

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16. Key Objectives
17. Site Description
    - 17.1. Biogeographic Location
    - 17.2. Biophysical Characteristics
    - 17.3. Ecosystem Descriptions
    - 17.4. Conservation Status
    - 17.5. Human Systems
    - 17.6. Land Tenure
    - 17.7. Zoning
    - 17.8. Existing And Proposed NNH Sites
18. Cultural and Socioeconomic Background
19. Historical Background
20. Cultural Background
21. Folk Tales
22. Socio-economic Background
    - 22.1. SWOT
    - 22.2. PESTLE
23. Relevant Legislations and Policies
24. Relevant International Conventions
25. Conservation
26. Climate Change Resilience Strategies
27. Development
    - 27.1. Green Economy
    - 27.2. Blue Economy
    - 27.3. Purple Economy

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28. Marine Zoning Guidelines
29. Sustainable Fisheries
30. Sustainable Cultural Entrepreneurship
31. Arts
32. Historical Sites
33. Income Sharing
34. Disaster Mitigation and Prevention
35. Branding
36. Marketing
37. Aesthetics
38. Safety
39. Twinning
40. Implementation Schedule
41. M&E and BR Review
42. Budget
43. Conflict Resolution

Annexes

44. Non-exhaustive list of relevant networks
45. Non-exhaustive list of relevant donors
46. Revised Stakeholder Register and Engagement Plan
47. Revised Communications Plan
48. List of Conservation Relevant Species
49. Intelligible Online Knowledge Management Platform

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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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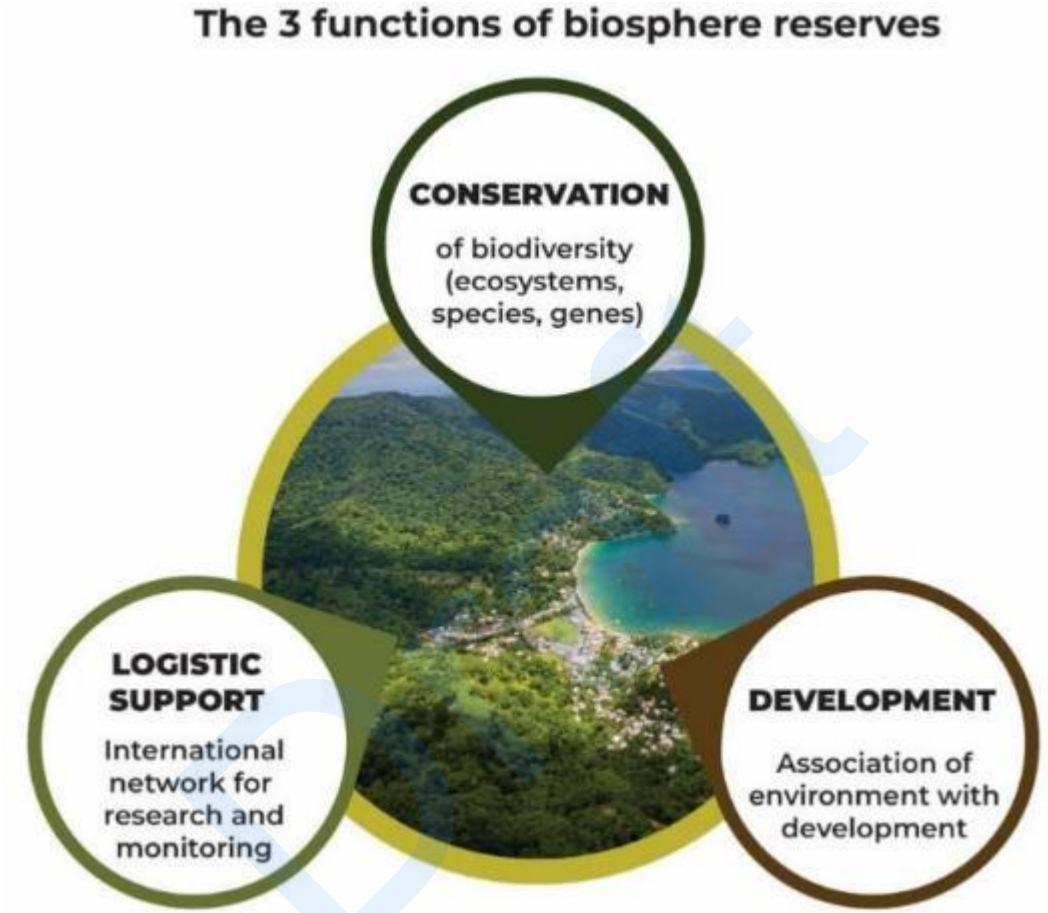


Figure 4. Schematic overview of 3 functions of biosphere reserves.

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.

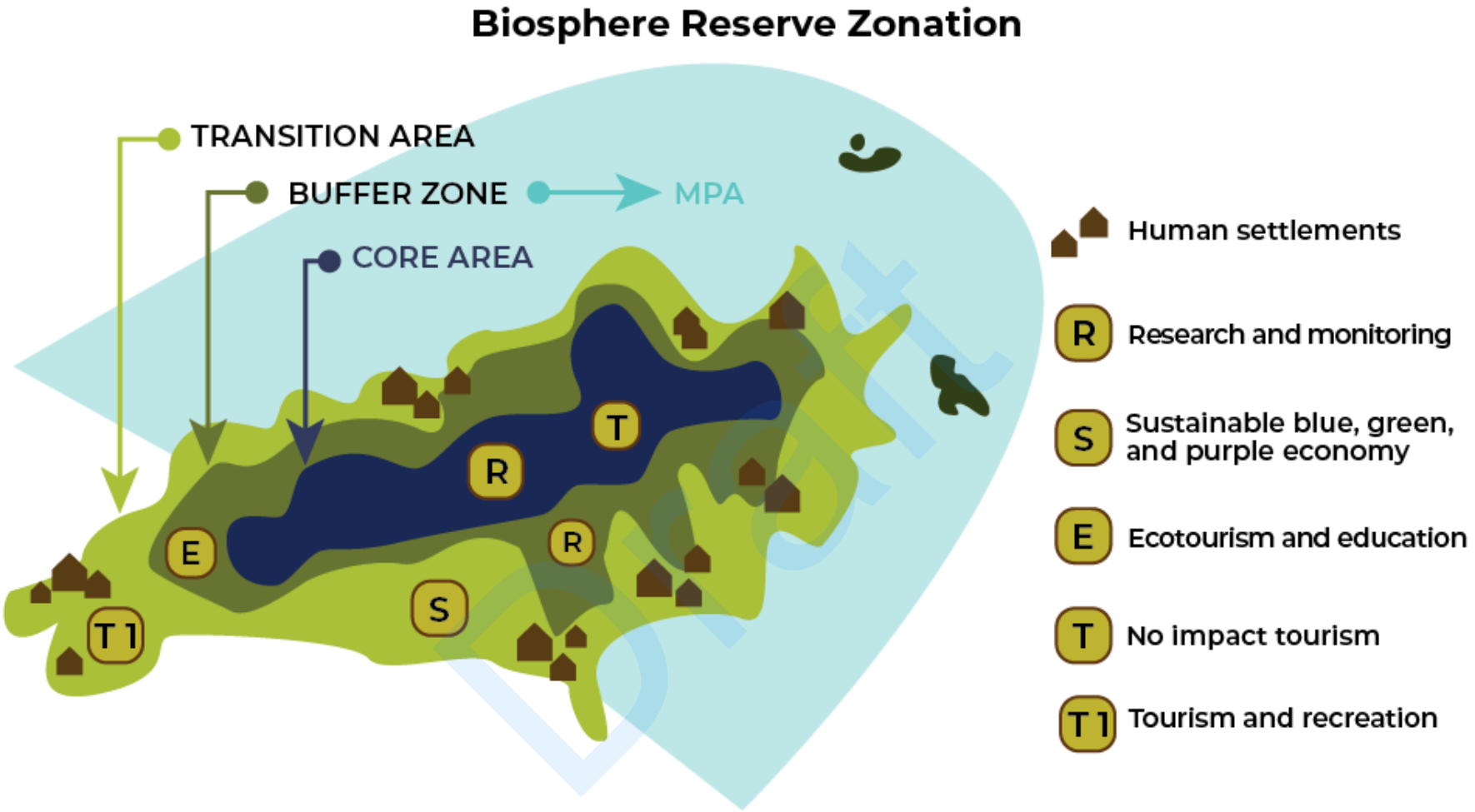


Figure 5. Schematic overview of NE Tobago Biosphere Reserve zonation (ERIC 2021).

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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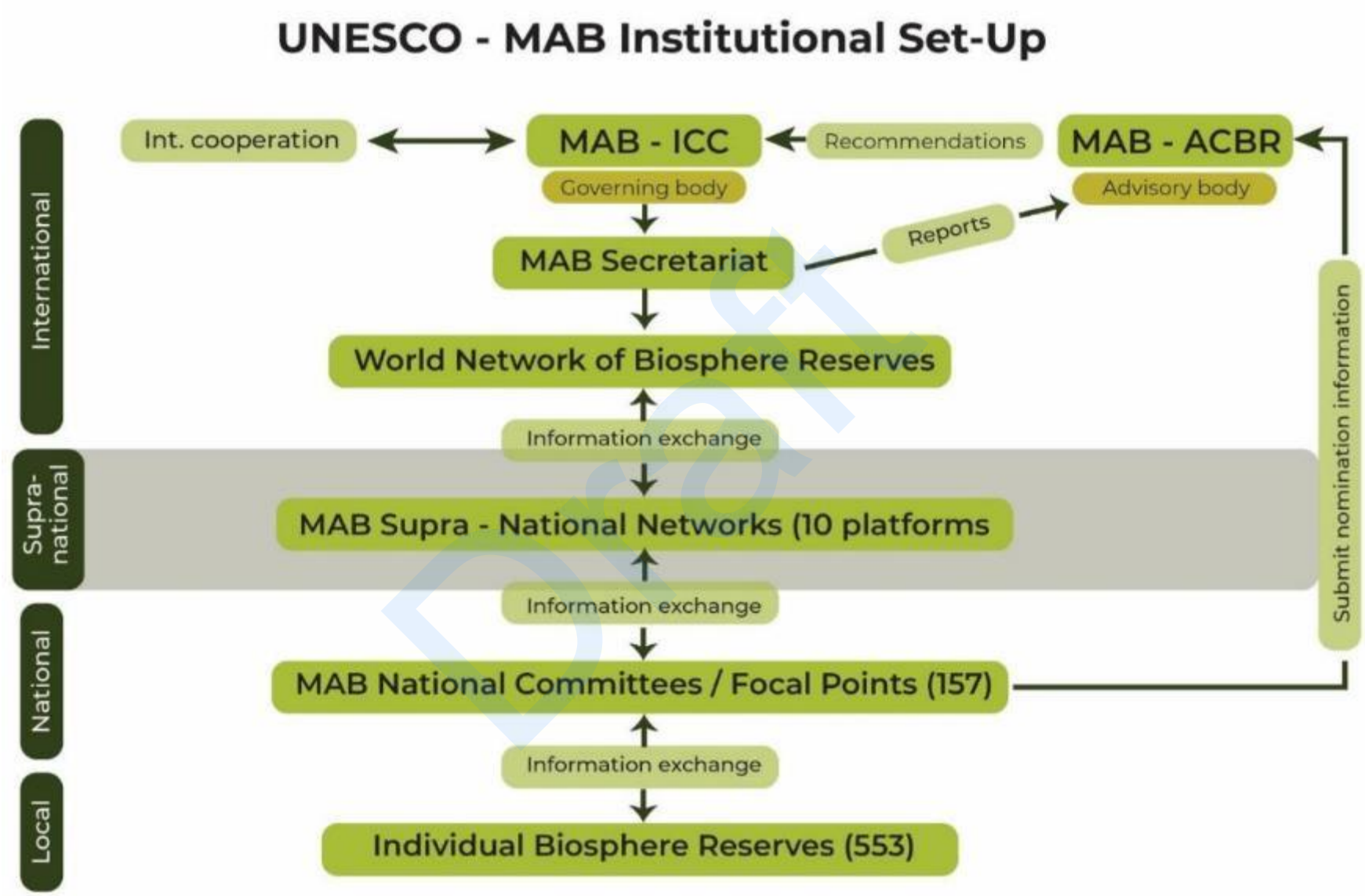


Figure 6. Diagram of the MAB institutional structure adapted from Schliep (24).

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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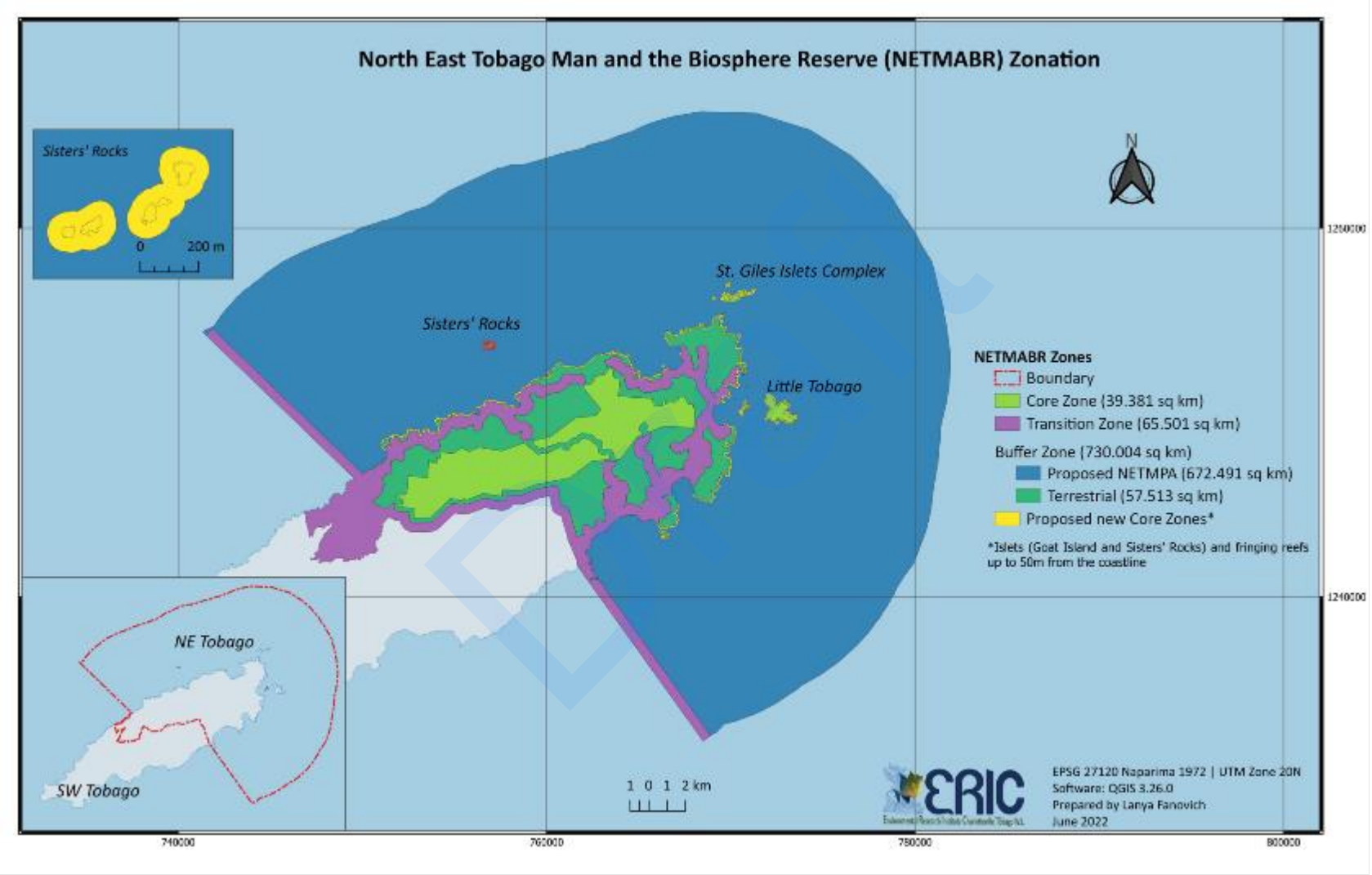


Figure 7. Zonation of the NE Tobago MAB Reserve (ERIC 2022)

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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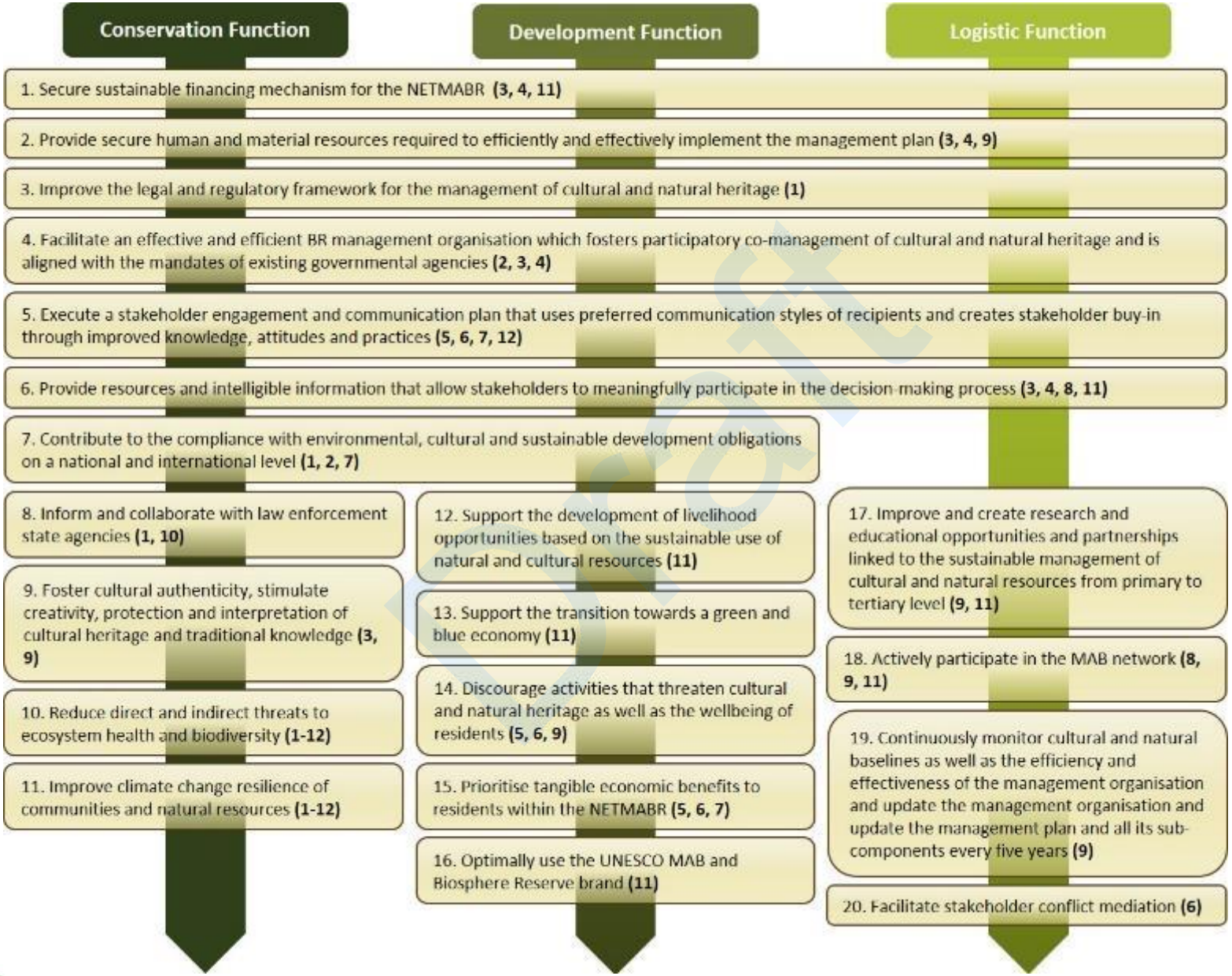


Figure 9. Proposed Main Strategies for the BR Management Plan, Addressed Key-Barriers in (brackets)

11 TWINNING

INTRODUCTION

Objective IV.2 of the MaB Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO, 1996) addresses the strengthening of biosphere reserves through the promotion and facilitation of twinning.

Based on the Seville Strategy, the Nomination for NE Tobago's application to the MaB Programme recommended twinning of the planned NETMABR with another BR preferably in Europe or North America facilitating youth communication and exchange programmes related to sports, culture/arts, religion, education, etc.

Twinning can be seen as intensified networking between two specific BRs with deepened relationships. It is an instrument to facilitate cooperation between management organisations, governmental agencies, private sectors, academia, and civil society organisations of two BRs with the aim of achieving concrete operational results through peer-to-peer activities.

Successful twinning should

- emphasise professional exchanges and mentoring for the effective sharing of information, knowledge, and technology;
- tap into voluntary contributions of knowledge, time, expertise, and equipment, reference material, and other contributions to effectively leverage resources; and
- help develop inherently sustainable systems and capacity building to encourage local ownership and synergy with host country goals and strategies.

Partner BRs must be able to sustainably provide HR and other resources for the twinning process, demonstrate enduring commitment and ownership, and take on board changes and best practices in a sustainable way.

For over a century, the benefits and challenges of twinning can be observed in the relationship between the sister isles of Tobago and Trinidad within the twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago; much can be learnt from this historical experience for future arrangements with an international twinning partner.

As of 2023, Tobago, and specifically the NE Tobago UNESCO MaB Reserve do not have a formalised, international twinning agreement; the only existing BR networks are the Ibero-American MAB Network and the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves (see Networking chapter).

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An interesting example is the twinning between the North Devon's Biosphere Reserve and the Malindi-Watamu Biosphere Reserve in Kenya (https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/our-twin-biosphere.html and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6LHOclbm0w)
There, the twinning process has strengthened the profile of Biosphere Reserves in Kenya, helped in the formation of a management committee for Malindi-Watamu, encouraged community participation, helped communities in North Devon's Biosphere Reserve understand the shared challenges of adapting to the impacts of climate change.
It is important to understand that twinning is not a one-way technical assistance instrument but a shared commitment to mutual support and exchange.
Strategically, the TOBIMA should be clear that BRs in economically less fortunate countries actually compete for twinning with BRs that offer and possibly have funding for access to markets, knowledge exchange, education, cultural exchange, etc.
The TOBIMA must also be clear that the NETMABR (in its current state) has not much to offer to a potential twinning partner; a sales pitch needs to be developed and substantiated by actual and mutual benefits to make twinning with the NETMABR attractive.
Furthermore, the TOBIMA should consider establishing one North-South and one South-South twinning cooperation, with each fulfilling similar but also complementary functions and ideally resulting in a substantiated and successful triangular cooperation. According to UNESCO (Source: https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/south-south-cooperation) "*South-South Cooperation represents the exchange of knowledge and resources between governments, organisations and individuals in developing countries, or those from what is known as the Global South. This may be based on individual or shared development objectives. North-South-South Cooperation or Triangular Cooperation describes two or more developing countries collaborating with a third developed country which contributes knowledge, technology and resources*.
However, this description does not represent a true, mutually beneficial partnership, since the "third developed country" partner is still described as the "providing partner" and the developing countries as "receiving partners" in terms of "*knowledge, technology and resources".* Therefore, it is strongly recommended that TOBIMA and other, twinning process stakeholders identify and formulate clearly the benefits provided by the developing country to the developed country; this will contribute to a more balances relationship and be a response to real or perceived development colonialism.
Establishing twinning arrangements may take several years and should not be rushed; honest and critical self-reflection regarding the NETMABR's needs and offerings is important to identify a suitable twinning partner.
Such partnership arrangements may vary with respect to commitment from a twinning "light" (feeling out whether the partnership actually works) to binding contracts between two governments or two BR management organisations.

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Many twinning related activities can be implemented without formalised arrangements and should include shared positive experiences of 'learning by doing' including, but not limited to:

- workshops,
- conferences,
- training sessions,
- expert missions,
- study visits,
- student and vocational exchange programmes,
- cultural, religious, and sports visits,
- internships,
- mentoring,
- fairs, and
- business to consumer (B2C), business to business (B2B), and business to government (B2G) interaction.

Specifically, the **UNESCO Transcultura Programme** (https://en.unesco.org/node/345848) aims to foster cultural collaboration and the exchange of good practices between individuals, artists' associations, initiatives and individual or collective projects from the Caribbean and Europe. In particular, twinnings correspond to short-term exchanges between cultural events and festivals in the Caribbean and European countries, while partnerships refer to strategic associations with high-level international initiatives to provide timely showcases and launching platforms for emerging artists and professionals from the cultural and creative industries sector.
By encouraging and harnessing these modalities of people-to-people cooperation, based on mobility and exchange, this component promotes long-term knowledge transfer and peer learning in the cultural and creative industries and facilities access to markets.

SUMMARY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

As of 2023, there are no twinning agreements between the NETMABR and other BR's. First contacts were made with the South-Rügen Biosphere Reserve in Germany, and the German UNESCO Commission. Further initiatives should be advanced by TOBIMA directly and ideally once the NETMABR can demonstrate certain aspects of successful implementation of the MaB programme.

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HIGH LEVEL GOAL

NE Tobago and its future twinning partner(s) are empowered on their path to regenerative development, improved resilience and management of cultural and natural heritage through continuous socio-cultural, economic and knowledge exchange and capacity building.

PRIORITIES

- Management and residents of the NETMABR are equipped with the tools to build resilience, improve the status of cultural and natural heritage, and foster sustainable economic development while maintain authenticity;
- negative effects of myopia such as intolerance, stagnation, low resilience, and inadequate response to internal and external threats are counteracted;
- NE Tobago carefully opens to global partners, fostering progressive, democratic, and economic development while cherishing cultural and natural heritage.

STRATEGIES

1. Identify thematic areas and define desired results through which the NETMABR could benefit from twinning arrangements;
2. position the NETMABR as an attractive twinning partner; the related attributes may vary between South-South and North-South partnerships;
3. identify the most opportune moment to open the NETMABR for twinning opportunities;
4. market the NETMABR as a potential twinning partner;

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5. identify most promising twinning partners and gradually increase collaboration from loose contacts to contractual arrangements; and
6. provide resources for twinning activities.

PROPOSED ACTIVITES

1. Facilitate workshops with TOBIMA members to:
    - identify thematic areas of interest and desired results;
    - determine the schedule and activity path for twinning from loose arrangements to contractual agreements; and
    - determine the limits between acceptable and desired cultural change in NE Tobago's socio-cultural context related to twinning.
2. Facilitate expert workshops to:
    - identify thematic areas in which the NETMABR can provide benefits to potential partners (keep SS and NS partnerships separate), this could include successful examples for green, blue, purple economic development, site as a laboratory, the TOBIMA model for participatory governance, etc.
    - design a convincing triangular twinning model between NETMABR, one NS-, and one SS partner;
    - include a mandatory "Benefits for Potential Twinning" chapter into each project and programme implemented by TOBIMA.

3. The TOBIMA Board determines criteria that must be met in order to initialise the active pursuit of twinning partners; these should include inter alia:
    - proof of sustainably implementing the MaB programme in NE Tobago,
    - demonstrable success stories,
    - community benefits and buy in,
    - political stability,
    - financing stability, and
    - governance stability.

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4. TOBIMA MPU to develop twinning marketing material e.g., short videos, interviews, brochures, social media posts, and a well-designed, but very honest, portfolio that can be directly shared with potential twinning partner.

5. TOBIMA Board to develop selection criteria and ranking method for potential NS and SS twinning partners include inter alia:
    - easy and affordable to reach, close to an airport with maximum two connections to Tobago (especially for the NS twinning partner to support tourism and affordable travel for individuals),
    - presence of universities and research facilities,
    - presence of innovative industries that could provide applied solutions for Tobago,
    - culturally related,
    - English as a common language,
    - similar educational system,
    - access to high level medical facilities,
    - faced by similar issues ranging from socio-economic to conservation and sustainability issues,
    - contains a similar rural component,
    - potential for import and export, including subsidies, well-regulated trade, and trade facilitation programmes,
    - well-developed internet connectivity
    - time zone with respect to ease of communication,
6. Based on these criteria, the TOBIMA MPU should establish a shortlist to be verified by the board and thereafter contact potential partners.

    The PMU should include budget lines for exchange visits, business fairs, academic exchange, training, sports- and cultural exchange programmes as well as for a permanent twinning officer into its annual budget.

Please note: The International twinning agreement between the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network (Canada) and the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve (USA) as an example for a twinning contract can be found here: https://wikimab.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2019-10-FAB-CABR-Twinning-Agreement.pdf.

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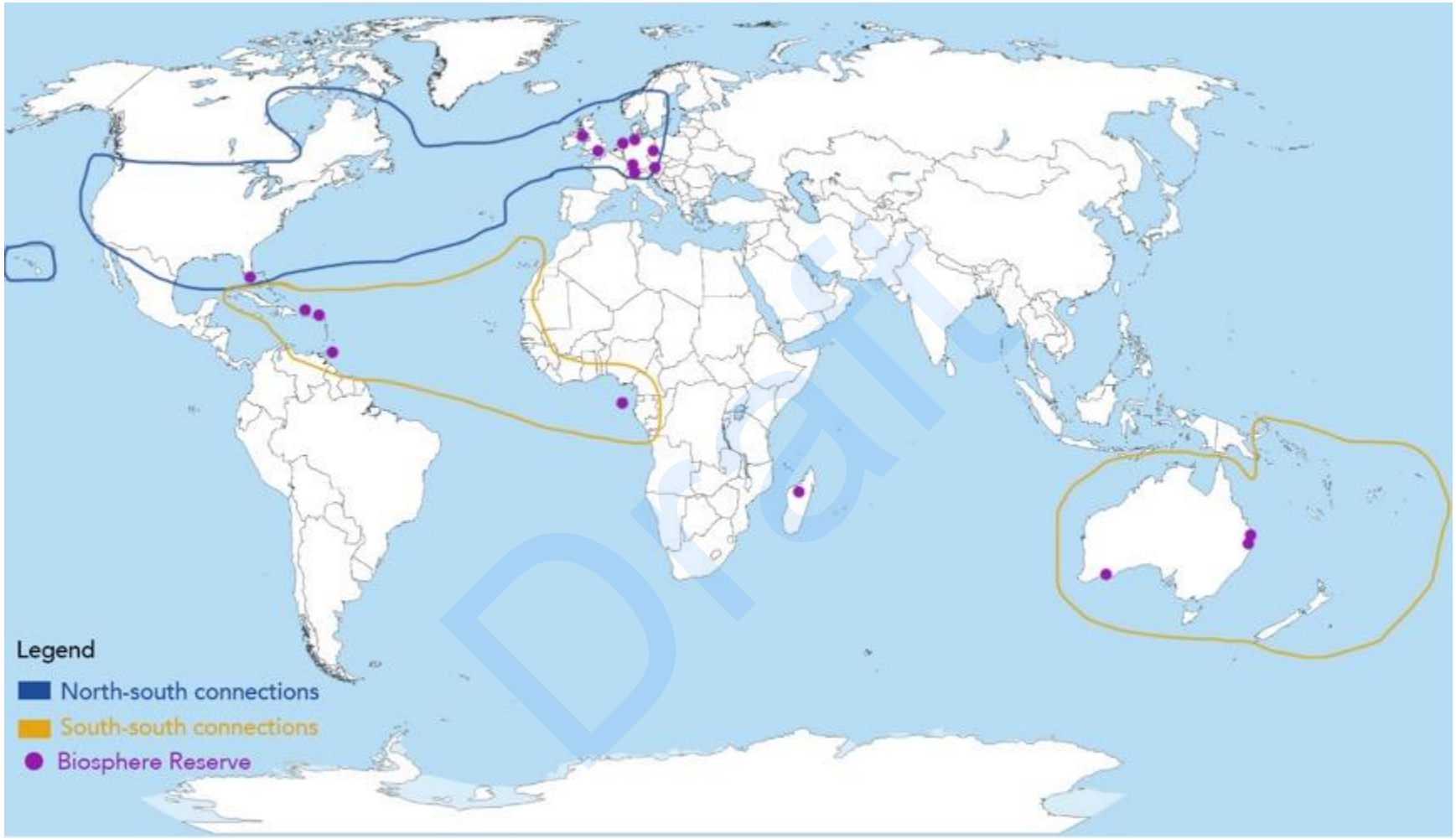


Figure 10 Prioritised geographical twinning areas

- **Put together a portfolio, profile**
- **Attend conferences and eyeball with representatives of interesting twin BR**

Short Description of selected Biosphere Reserves within the prioritised geographical area.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Luquillo Biosphere Reserve, Puerto Rico
https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/luquillo

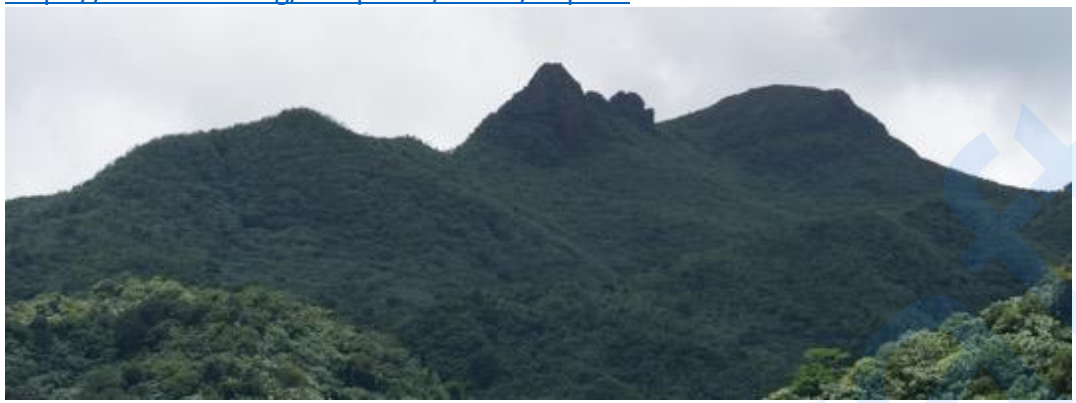


Figure 11 Luquillo Biosphere Reserve, USA (UNESCO)

- encompasses five subtropical life zones (moist, wet, rain forest; lower montane wet and rain forest);
- a Tropical Forest Research Station was founded in 1940 and became a centre for ecosystem research; forests are primarily used for research into silviculture, forest regeneration and other purposes;
- two other ecological research field stations;

Everglades & Dry Tortugas Biosphere Reserve, Florida
https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/everglades-drytortugas

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Figure 12 Everglades & Dry Tortugas Biosphere Reserve, USA (UNESCO)

- also a world heritage site and a wetland of international importance;
- the largest tropical wilderness in the United States and encompasses seven coral reefs called the Dry Tortugas National Park with three major banks (Pulaski, Loggerhead, and Long Key);
- 300 bird species; only eight species use the area as roosting and nesting sites (including sea bird species relevant to Tobago: bridled tern, brown noddy, brown pelican, magnificent frigate bird, masked booby, mourning dove, roseate tern and the sooty tern;
- nesting site for Loggerhead turtles;
- more than 84,000 visitors for snorkelling, diving swimming, sport fishing and touring the historic sites.

GERMANY

Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft Biosphere Reserve
https://www.biosphaerenreservat-oberlausitz.de/

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Figure 13 Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft Biosphere Reserve, Germany (UNESCO)

- high profile as a destination for soft, near-natural tourism.
- a fisherman's festival with a nature market of the biosphere reserve, show aquarium, mushroom exhibition. The festival usually attracts more than 10,000 visitors.

Wadden Sea and Hallig Islands of Schleswig-Holstein Biosphere Reserve
https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/visit/schleswig-holstein



Figure 14 Wadden Sea Biosphere Reserve, Germany (UNESCO)

- includes the entire German Wadden Sea: Hamburg, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein.

- one of the most important areas for migratory birds in the world.

Hamburg
https://www.hamburg.com/publicservice/info/11944759/



Figure 15 Wadden Sea of Hamburg Biosphere Reserve (Martin Elsen)

- smallest BR in Germany;
- marine area with mudflats, creeks, dune islands and salt marshes and the inhabited island of Neuwerk;
- the inhabitants of the Neuwerk island are dependent on fishing and tourism for their livelihoods.
- Annually 20 million overnight and day visitors come to the region.

Black Forest Biosphere Reserve
https://www.schwarzwaldportal.com/en/_black-forest-biosphere-area.html



Figure 16 Black Forest Biosphere Reserve, Germany (UNESCO)

- one of the most diverse low mountain ranges of Central Europe and is designated as a grassland rich forest landscape;
- approximately 70% of the area is forested; 25% is extensively used for agriculture (mainly grazing);
- high proportion of the 38,000 inhabitants is active in part time farming;
- fastnacht is a pre-lenten celebration that takes place before Ash Wednesday. Fastnacht represents an entire season of festivities leading up to Shrove Tuesday;
- use of elaborate carved wooden images, witches, animals, and other wild characters (Wilde Leute) is common. One theory state that this reflects the pre-Christian roots of the Swabian Alemannic carnival;

NETHERLANDS

Maasheggen Biosphere Reserve
https://www.maasheggenunesco.com/en/

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Figure 17 Maasheggen Biosphere Reserve, Netherlands (UNESCO)

- currently the only biosphere reserve in the Netherlands;
- oldest and largest network of natural hedges in the Netherlands;
- characterised by high biodiversity and special species, valuable habitats such as xeric sand calcareous grasslands, lowland hay meadows and vegetation associations.

SWITZERLAND

Entlebuch
https://www.biosphaere.ch/de/



Figure 18 Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve, Switzerland (UNESCO)

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- located at the foot of Alps in the central part of Switzerland;
- approximately 17,000 people reside in the area;
- the alpine cattle descent has been celebrated since 2003. seven alpine families walk in the month of September in beautiful costumes with 200 cows and oxen from the authentic alpine huts around Sörenberg down to Schüpfheim – accompanied by colourful folkloric groups. The festival gives guests the opportunity to experience live folk tradition.
- Presently, over 500 products are titled with the Echt Entlebuch (Genuine Entlebuch) label. Dairy, cheese, and meat make up a large portion of the product range. Other food products include pasta, tea, honey, etc. To be qualified for this label, at least 80% pf the raw materials must come from the region. Additionally, a minimum of two-thirds of the added value of the products must be generated in the biosphere reserve;
- idyllic hiking trails, including energy and fairytale trails;
- Erlebnis Energie Entlebuch – aimed at visitors who wants to find out more about all aspects of energy in an exciting way.

AUSTRIA

Grosses Walsertal Biosphere Reserve
https://www.grosseswalsertal.at/system/web/default.aspx?sprache=2



Figure 19 Grosses Walsertal Biosphere Reserve, Austria (UNESCO)

- approximately 3,400 people reside in the communities;

- main sources of income include organic farming and ecologically sustainable use of the mountain forests. Tourism also plays a major role during the summer and winter months;
- One success story of this region is the founding of the Walserstolz cheese brand. In 1998, Walserstolz created a common regional brand under which three alpine dairies produced high-quality mountain cheese made from silage-free hay milk. The growth of the Walserstolz brand has increased the level of awareness for the BR throughout Austria and has resulted in the preservation of jobs and agricultural practices.
- The Walserherbst is a cultural festival for contemporary art and culture in the biosphere reserve. The festival has been combining tradition and contemporary culture every two years and spans its programme arc over the entire valley for three Weeks. The festival stages encounters with music, visual arts, European cinema, literature, land art, theatre, cuisine, and folk culture.

Salzburger Lungau & Kärntner Nockberge Biosphere Reserve
https://www.biosphaerenparknockberge.at/



Figure 20 Salzburger Lungau & Kärntner Nockberge Biosphere Reserve, Austria (UNESCO)

- The diverse site comprises of marsh areas, alluvial forests, cultivated meadows and woodland areas;
- population of the BR is 33,350 of which 21,000 live in small towns;
- Tourism is one of the most important economic factors in the region; Lungau records around 1.5 million overnight stays annually.

- Salzburg festival, an important event typically takes place in July and August, for a period of 5 to 6 weeks. The festival features opera, drama, and concerts;
- The Samson parade takes place from June to September; historically documented since 1635 and symbolises the biblical figure. The Samson figure usually weighs around 85 kg and is usually carried by a strong Lungau man while dancing the Samson waltz. The man is accompanied by his two dwarves and a band. The festival has been listed in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage since 2014

UNITED KINGDOM

Isle of Man Biosphere Reserve
https://www.biosphere.im/



Figure 21 Isle of man Biosphere Reserve, United Kingdom (UNESCO)

- includes a varied coastline of cliffs, stacks, central hills, islets, and long beaches;
- approximately 85, 000 inhabitants;
- main economic activities include tourism, agriculture, forestry, and fishing;
- around 450,000 visitors frequent the area each year.
- Isle of Man Food and Drink festival, showcases the finest Manx produce and is among the biggest held in the island.
- art activities: a grant given to one artist or art collective to develop their community, funding will support the artist over the

course of a year with opportunities to deliver physical and or digital interventions across the island; Focused and socially engaged practice on the Island over the course of a year, with opportunities to deliver physical and/or digital interventions across the Island.

- Silverburn Art Trail Project aims to take in some of the cultural gems of the South of the Isle of Man and features a range of artwork of a range of artists in eclectic styles. The artwork will include street art, sculptures and ephemeral pieces made from natural materials that will disappear overtime.

Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve, United Kingdom
https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/brighton-lewes-downs



- Habitats include coastal chalk cliffs, sub tidal chalk reef, freshwater wetland, shingle beaches, deciduous woodland, river estuaries and chalk grassland.
- Three distinct but inter-related environments make up the biosphere reserve area; rural, coastal & marine and urban.
- Population around 358,500.
- The area is nationally and internationally renowned for its arts and culture, distinctive settlements, independent mindset and its links to the surrounding iconic English landscape of downland, white chalk cliffs and beaches.
- 12 million visitors per year which are attracted to the high quality natural environment, dynamic contemporary culture and significant and rich heritage, which includes a range of archaeological sites.

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AUSTRALIA

Great Sandy
https://greatsandybiosphere.org.au/



Figure 22 Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve, Australia (UNESCO)

- Renowned for its cultural and ecological significance, the reserve contains the Great Sandy Strait, a Ramsar-listed wetland, and Fraser Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- The reserve incorporates the largest Sand Island and coastal sand mass in the world.
- Surface area of 1,242,216 ha and resident population of 163,400 inhabitants.
- The world's tallest and most complex rainforest growing on sand.
- Traditional Owner groups live within the Great Sandy Biosphere proudly and enthusiastically embracing their culture.

Noosa Biosphere Reserve
https://noosabiosphere.org.au/

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Figure 23 Noosa Biosphere Reserve, Australia (UNESCO)

- Comprises littoral rainforests, lake systems and coastal dune heaths, a mountainous zone with elevations up to 450 meters, and an extensive system of saline and freshwater lakes, heathlands and marshes.
- Renowned for its large diversity in flora and fauna, and recognized for its effective conservation approach.
- Surface area of 150.000 ha and population of 60.000 inhabitants.

Fitzgerald Biosphere Reserve, Australia
https://www.fbg.org.au/



Figure 24 Fitzgerald Biosphere Reserve, Australia (UNESCO)

- Upland plains, a marine plain deeply incised by several rivers creating large valleys and tablelands, and a chain of small isolated peaks running close to the coast, forming the distinctive Barren Ranges.
- Sand dunes, inlets and rivers, swamps and lakes occur on the gently sloping marine plain.
- Rich diversity of plant species and communities in the core and surrounding areas, including dry sclerophyllous woodland, coastal woodlands and heath, and Kwongkan shrublands.
- Over 250 rare or geographically restricted plant and animal species, about many of which little is known. Of the 2,000 vascular plant species native to this area, around 130 are endemic to the reserve.
- Surface area of 329,039 ha and a resident population of 2,800 inhabitants.

MADAGASCAR

Sahamalaza-Iles Radama Biosphere Reserve, Madagascar



Figure 25 Sahamalaza-Iles Radama Biosphere Reserve, Madagascar (UNESCO)

- dry semi-deciduous forest, mangrove forest and coral reefs.
- the forest is one of the few remaining patches of dry littoral forest on the west coast of Madagascar.
- about 42% of the species are endemic here.
- the mangrove forests are made up of eight different species known to Madagascar and are inhabited by mangrove crabs, fish, shell-fish that are exploited by the local population.
- the marine ecosystem comprises coral reefs, sea grass beds, steep reefs, sandy-muddy sea beds and mud flats.

São Tomé and Príncipe
http://www.islandbiosphere.org/Contingut.aspx?IdPub=793



Figure 26 São Tomé and Príncipe Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO)

- the biosphere reserve includes the entire surface of the island of Principe and several islets with an extensive marine area.
- it houses a rich biodiversity, with many endemic species among vascular plants, molluscs, insects, birds, reptiles and bats.
- it contains a wide range of communities and habitats of international importance as tropical primary forests.
- inhabitants 7,324

ST KITTS AND NEVIS

St. Mary's Biosphere Reserve
https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/lac/st-marys

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Figure 27 St. Mary's Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO)

- the reserve is an important site in terms of biological diversity, comprising cloud forests, mangroves and coral reefs.
- includes the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park World Heritage site, which is of particular historical, cultural and architectural significance.
- the sandy beach forms the primary nesting habitat of the leatherback sea turtle.
- bats are the only native terrestrial mammals to be found in the country today.
- St. Mary's has a population of 3,541 with 1,171 households, representing approximately 10 per cent of the island's population.

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