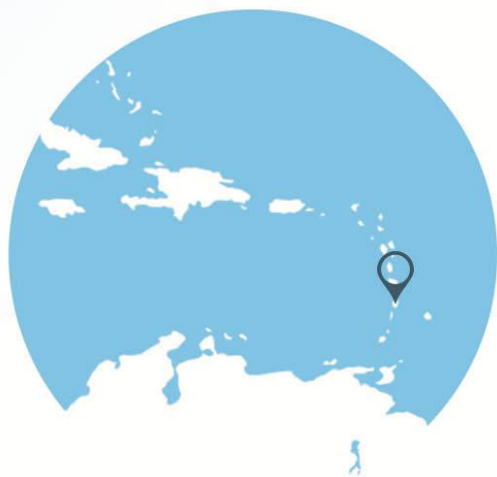


# POLICY BRIEF

**LESSONS FROM ST. LUCIA: BUILDING LOCAL ADAPTIVE CAPACITY  
THROUGH COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT, STAKEHOLDER  
PARTNERSHIPS, AND INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY**

**#7: SEPTEMBER 2015**



## POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 Saint Lucia's resource dependent economy is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and weather-related disaster with implications for human welfare, livelihoods, and economic development.
- 7 The GIVRAPD project focused on three main areas for adaptation planning and coastal resilience including biophysical and vulnerability assessment, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory planning, and the use of micro-insurance as an adaptation strategy.
- 7 Institutional partnerships amongst various levels of government and stakeholder networks could further improve community resilience through local leadership and adaptive governing capacity.

## COUNTRY VULNERABILITY PROFILE

Saint Lucia is a middle-income Small Island Developing State (SIDS) located north of Martinique in the Eastern Caribbean. Climate models predict St. Lucia will experience sea level rise and storm surges, coral bleaching, increased tropical storms and heat waves, prevalence of pests, disease and invasive species. The country's climate is characterised by variable dry, wet, and hurricane seasons. St Lucia is not climate ready to cope with extreme weather events such as floods and drought, which may lead to concerns about human well-being including water access and availability. Knowing also Saint Lucia's economy depends on coastal resources; any future climatic changes that impact the country's biodiversity, coastline, coral reefs, fisheries and other tourist attractions may significantly impact its economy development and prosperity. Due to its small size and relative lack of geological resources, the economy of Saint Lucia relies primarily on the sale of banana crops, and the income generated from tourism. With incidence of negative GDP growth in the past, Saint Lucia has had additional input from small-scale manufacturing and fisheries. Despite the government's effort in mainstreaming climate change into development planning, several barriers and human resource constraints thwart these efforts.

Soufriere quarter on the SW coast of Saint Lucia was chosen as a GIVRAPD project focus area (Fig 1). It is the westernmost town and district of St Lucia and has become particularly specialised in eco-tourism in addition to traditional agrarian livelihood activities. Much of Soufriere's physical capital is unable to deal with current climate pressures such as increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes. Furthermore, Soufriere's agriculture and tourism industries depend on freshwater supply and fisheries, both of which are threatened by climate change impacts. In addition to high unemployment and poverty, Soufriere also contends with other development challenges such as gender inequalities, crime and brain drain.



Figure1: Soufriere Quarter in Saint Lucia, one of the several vulnerable regions in Caribbean SIDS

Given this, the GIVRAPD project for St. Lucia focused on three primary objectives: i) assess the adaptive capacity of Soufriere region through interviews using the Local Adaptive Capacity (LAC) framework, ii) identify the multi-scale socio-cultural, economic, institutional and ecological factors that shape local vulnerability and adaptation barriers and how to overcome them through participatory planning; and iii) examine the utility of micro-insurance as an adaptation tool for those most vulnerable to severe weather events.

## COMMUNITY-BASED VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND BUILDING ADAPTIVE GOVERNING CAPACITY

A community-based vulnerability assessment was conducted in St. Lucia utilizing semi-structured interviews with key national and local level stakeholders within the tourism, fisheries and agricultural sectors in the Soufriere region (Fig 2). The results were analysed using the Local Adaptive Capacity (LAC) framework (see Hogarth et al. 2014), which characterises adaptive capacity based on five elements: asset base, institutions and entitlements, knowledge and information, innovation, and flexible forward-looking decision-making and governance. Additionally, the LAC framework was assessed to determine its efficacy in capturing important elements of adaptive capacity across different geographical contexts.

Findings indicate that Soufriere's adaptive capacity is significantly curtailed by its inadequate stock of financial, human, physical and social capital. The lack of social capital within Soufriere makes it difficult for individuals to work together to implement and scale-up adaptive options. Survey respondents recognized historical institutions of a plantation economy built on slavery which left those most impoverished with the least desirable inputs - a limiting factor in their current ability to adapt.

Other concerns preventing effective adaptation include poor risk awareness by those most vulnerable, unavailability of hazard maps related to coastal inundation and land use planning, limited enforcement of building codes, weak transparency in the EIA process, enforcement concerns towards marine reserves, and absence of innovative technologies to address environmental concerns. Conversely, the local adaptive capacity is enhanced by the community's rich natural capital as the basis capital assets that are the foundation of Soufriere's economy.



Figure 2: Soufriere coastal region, St. Lucia

Local organizations such as the Belle Vue Co-operative which has exhibited the ability to provide adaptive capacity to small-scale farmers, and the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) initiative continues to enhance Soufriere's adaptive capacity. Both the SMMA and the Department of fisheries continue to act as bridging organizations in coordinating multi-stakeholder conservation and planning activities as well as training fishers in stewardship initiatives. The Soufriere Foundation has also being a source of financial and social capital for community-level climate change adaptation initiatives especially in skills development and community empowerment. However, the Foundation's turnover rate in line with change in political powers is a potential limiting factor as leadership positions are often based on appointment rather than democratic election.

Although the LAC framework implicitly considers structures that constrain or enhance adaptive capacity through the category of institutions, it does not necessarily factor in how these structures have been shaped by the local history nor does it explicitly factor in a system's capacity to conserve diversity. It is important to consider not only the assets that agents have at their disposal to adapt, but also the processes whereby institutions guide private behaviour, coping mechanisms, knowledge co-production, and novel practices in governance decision-making. Additionally, institutions and governance processes must consider different scales in dealing with the 'problem of fit' of decision-making with regards to ecological boundaries and socio-economic activities (see Policy Brief 2).



## PARTICIPATORY PLANNING APPROACH TO ADAPTATION BARRIERS

Using stakeholder mapping tools (see Brief 1 and 4), local workshops participants in all key coastal sectors identified three adaptation barriers – two policy-related and one culture-based. Stakeholders worked collaboratively to identify potential adaptation barriers and potential actions to overcome them. The workshop captured opportunities for institutional linkages and stakeholder relationships as well as science advice, funding, and other governance ingredients such as “adaptation good practice action”. Findings indicate that there is a general concern towards national government agencies to be in full control in planning adaptation measures with limited inclusion of local actors and stakeholders in project design and implementation. The influence of local-level actors in adaptation governance is lacking vis-a-viz cooperatives, NGOs, disaster committees, and other community organizations. Workshop participants identified poor planning and coordination of land use policies without public consultation and long-term considerations (conservation, real estate, heritage, etc.).

For the tourism sector, participants identified the absence of incentives to address current concerns and on-going business as usual attitudes of deferring social costs to future generations. This “legacy issues of past planners decisions” has been a big challenge in meeting the expectations for current adaptation planning. Participants also emphasized on the need for comprehensive national land use management plan that includes both national and local level decision makers. In addition, such plans need to integrate climate change considerations and sustainable development needs to address co-benefits. Often times, political and institutional barriers are overcome during windows of opportunity created by external pressures through regional cooperation (CARICOM) and donor interventions. Multi-level institutions such as SMMA and other government agencies especially the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture have played a central role and continue to do so in influencing and social networks for collective action.

Within the agricultural sector, participants recognised how “conflicting values and preferences from stakeholders thwart consensus or agreement”, a potential barrier for collective action. The causes for this barrier are short term planning, poor understanding of cross-cutting issues, and special interest groups and vested interests. The development of formal mechanisms to integrate climate change considerations into local policies and plans of actions through existing activities and policy platforms could overcome these barriers. This culture-based barrier is more entrenched and more difficult to address than the policy-related barrier.

## ADAPTATION THROUGH MICRO-INSURANCE PROGRAMS

The increasing frequency and intensity of weather events in addition to the lack of insurance coverage for emergencies for vulnerable livelihoods indicate other measures are needed to deal with financial risks. Between 1990 and 2013, St. Lucia experienced five hurricanes, costing the government millions in US dollars. Hurricane Tomas in 2010, for instance, triggered high level of social vulnerability through landslides and destruction of property and critical infrastructure as well as death. The current asset depleting and high stress coping mechanisms currently utilized by those most vulnerable suggest the need for alternative coping mechanisms such as micro-insurance. Utilising demand surveys (see Brief 3), the GIVRAPD project sought to identify perceptions of risk, coping mechanisms utilised, and assessed the feasibility of alternative risk management approaches for low income persons in SIDS in general.

Various aspects of financial resilience were investigated including household and individual attributes such as income, education, economic indicators, risk perceptions, and recent experience with extreme weather. Findings in Saint Lucia and other Caribbean countries indicate that approximately one-third of respondents possess some form of insurance although few possess crop and livestock insurance. The poorest members of society were found to be most likely to cope with disaster through the use of savings and borrowing from friends and family kinships (Fig 3). In fact, respondents without savings were more likely to do nothing, a high stress response, after experiencing a severe weather event.)

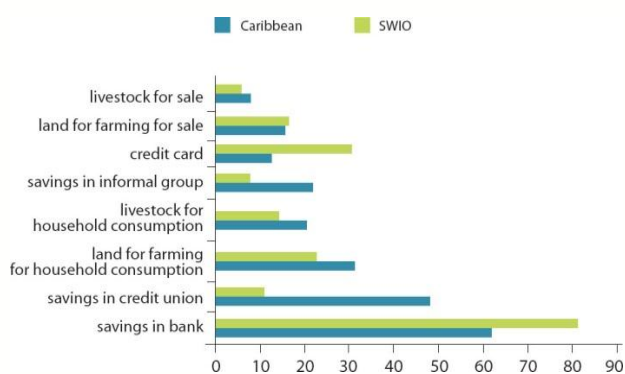


Figure3: Possession of financial and agricultural assets as percentage of respondents

The primary reason for not having agricultural or livelihood insurance was the high the cost of premiums, lack of trust between insurers and local resource users, and poor perception of long-term benefits to households. The opportunities for micro-insurance present itself to deal with the climate risks faced by St. Lucia through legal and institutional mechanisms, which facilitate participation from community members, client education on benefits and repayment conditions, and public private partnerships with financial institutions.

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Figure 4: GIVRAPD researchers conducting an interview, St. Lucia, 2012

## ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This policy brief is a product of research undertaken by the GIVRAPD project, a two year interdisciplinary research project funded by the Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) in collaboration with government agencies, community stakeholders and universities. The participating universities include University of Cape Town, University of Waterloo, University of Mauritius and University of Oxford. The project was led by INTASAVE/CARIBSAVE in partnership with the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI), Global Climate Adaptation Partnerships, in addition to the Governments of Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Mauritius and Seychelles. The project seeks to understand the multi-scale socio-economic, governance and environmental conditions that shape vulnerability and capacity to adapt to climate change in four learning sites. Brief 4 identify and assess enabling conditions to reconcile barriers and limitations associated with participatory planning, cross-sectoral partnerships, and governance fit at the local level.

GIVRAPD. 2015G. Lessons from Mauritius: Why participatory governance and micro-insurance are crucial for adaptation. Policy Brief no. 7. Global Islands Vulnerability Research Adaptation Policy and Development (GIVRAPD) Project. The INTASAVE-CARIBSAVE Group. Christ Church, Barbados.

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