

Long-term financing of Marine Protected Areas

Digital Payment Gateway for Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP)

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Digital Payment System

The GIZ-Sustainable Marine Financing (SMF) Project assisted the TCMP in implementing an internet-based system of fee collection. This is the first of its kind in the four countries where the SMF Project is active. The new system helps TCMP optimize revenue collection, incorporate cashless transactions, and develop a database management system for targeted marketing. In addition, the system allows for greater transparency and accountability as it can be easily supervised by marine rangers and managers of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through the SMF Project assisted the TCMP with the technical support and equipment to design and operationalize the payment system.

About the Tobago Cays Marine Park

The Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP), located in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, houses several globally significant habitats including coral reefs, sea turtle nesting sites and feeding areas, and small mangrove systems. The marine portion of the park circumscribes five uninhabited cays, the populated island of Mayreau, and three islets. The four-kilometer-long Horseshoe Reef, the longest of the four main reef systems in the TCMP, encloses four of the cays (Petit Bateau, Petit Rameau, Baradal, and Jamesby) with the fifth cay (Petit Tabac) lying just outside the reef to the east.

Revenue Collection

Over the past years revenue was collected by way of cash and card transactions. Park rangers via patrol boat would normally collect

the park user (XCD\$10 per per-son per 24 hours) fee along with mooring fee (if applicable XCD\$45.00 per 24 hours) from users when they arrive at the park and issue a hardcopy receipt. This was done on a daily basis with the patrol boat visiting each new arriving boat. The cash is then brought to the main office at the end of the day, checked off, counted and stored for deposit the next day.

TCMP PAY – System Overview

The TCMP PAY system is accessible via the TCMP web-site www.tobagocays.org. An information page informs about the Entry and Mooring fee structure and what they are used for at the park. The transaction process is a four-step process (Information collection > Orientation > Review > Payment).

The information section collects information on the boat and captain, an option is given to select the arrival and departure dates as well as if a mooring is needed. The user also enters the number of passengers on board. The users are then given an orientation of the park rules and are required to acknowledge that they agree to abide by the rules.

When a payment is made, an electronic receipt containing the transaction information summary, a QR-code and park rules are sent via email to the user. When the user arrives at the TCMP, the verification process involves the park rangers cross checking information from the vessel (vessel name and captain name) and verify on the backend of the system using a mobile device at the park.

User-friendly Payment Gateway

The digital fee payment gateway provides flexibility to visitors and users of the TCMP, allowing them to have the option of making



L. to r.: *Roseau, Dominica*; Tobago Keys National Marine Park.



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their payments online or via traditional analog processes. It also provides the MPA with an easily accessible and customizable database to facilitate their recordkeeping, payment reconciliation and decision-making.

Sustainable Marine Financing

MPAs are an important policy instrument to ensure biodiversity conservation in coastal and marine areas and to help marine ecosystems adapt to climate change impacts. As they provide vital ecosystem services, they are crucial to the Earth system, livelihoods and the sustainable economic and social development of island states. Yet, they are threatened by anthropogenic pressures and climate change. MPAs that support a sustainable blue economy require adequate financing vehicles that generate, invest, align, and account for financial capital to achieve sustained marine conservation and governance. However, the current finance gap is large; it is necessary to mitigate the key barriers to financing sustainable MPAs, to incentivize the kind of public and private investments needed for top notch science and management in support of a sustainable blue economy.

The Sustainable Marine Financing Project

The regional Sustainable Marine Financing Project contributes towards laying the foundation for the successful introduction of sustainable financing mechanisms for MPAs in Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This includes capacity building, drawing up national plans of action and developing human capacities of all relevant partners at the local, national, and regional level. This is a project funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH from 2021 to 2024.

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