



# Project Information Document (PID)

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Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 29-Apr-2020 | Report No: PIDC29007



**BASIC INFORMATION**

**A. Basic Project Data**

Country St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Project ID P172980	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name SVG: Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Strengthening Project (P172980)
Region LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	Estimated Appraisal Date Feb 24, 2021	Estimated Board Date Jan 28, 2021	Practice Area (Lead) Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development and Information Technology	Implementing Agency Sustainable Development Unit, Economic Planning and Sustainable Development Division	GEF Focal Area Biodiversity

**Proposed Development Objective(s)**

To strengthen the management of coastal and marine ecosystems of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Total Project Cost</b>	3.65
<b>Total Financing</b>	3.65
<b>of which IBRD/IDA</b>	0.00
<b>Financing Gap</b>	0.00

**DETAILS**

**Non-World Bank Group Financing**

Trust Funds	3.65
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	3.65



Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

Other Decision (as needed)

## B. Introduction and Context

### Country Context

1. **St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) is a small island developing state (SIDS)** consisting of 32 Islands and Cays and a population of over 110,797 (2020)<sup>1</sup>, approximately 52.9% of which live in urban areas. With a total land area of 389 square kilometers and 84 kilometers of coastline, the coastal zone and marine environment make the significant contribution to the country's economy. The tourism sector mostly based in coastal zone and marine environment is one of the largest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Agriculture and fishing also remain important sources of jobs and incomes.

2. **In an environment of low growth, unemployment has remained persistently high.** The unemployment rate is estimated at 20 %, reflecting few employment opportunities provided by large companies but also labor skills mismatches. The authorities continue efforts to address the skills problem by improving labor market policies, including vocational education and training, apprenticeships, and job counseling. Unemployment among females and youth exceed the estimated national unemployment rate. Public employees accounted for 27 % of the labor force, of which 72 % were skilled workers.

### Sectoral and Institutional Context

3. **The country has recorded some 14 endemic animals, 19 endemic plants and 29 regionally endemic tree species in its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020).** Five mammals are Lesser Antillean endemics, two of which are restricted to Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In addition to the endemics, there are over 1,150 species of plants and 163 species of ferns, including 15 endemic flowering plants and 4 ferns. The faunal diversity consists of all five groups of faunal vertebrates, including 7 species of amphibians, over 20 species of reptiles, over 170 species of birds, 22 species of mammals, and 516 species of marine animals. Added to these are thousands of invertebrates, of which approximately 500 have been identified. The coastal and marine habitats include sea grass and lagoons, areas of mangrove and a variety of patch, fringing and bank barrier reefs. These habitats provide many commercially important marine resources such as conch, lobster and reef fish, as well as several ecosystem goods and services for the coastal communities.

4. **Coastal and marine resources offer an opportunity for accelerating inclusive sustainable growth and productivity.** According to the international maritime law, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has declared a 200 nautical

<sup>1</sup> Worldometer elaboration of latest UN figures



mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>2</sup> The country's diverse endowment of biological resources has played a critical role in the provisioning of services such as the availability of high-quality food. Approximately 7 % of the total labor force is engaged directly or indirectly in the fishing industry, which creates employment for an estimated 2,500 fishers and more than 500 others in supporting services. Approximately 1.8 million pounds of fish are landed annually, of which 0.2 million pounds are exported.<sup>3</sup> The coral reefs of SVG provide significant benefits, which serve as a habitat to a multitude of different species of fish, invertebrates and sea mammals. SVG's reefs provide a location for spawning, nursery, refuge and feeding for multitude of marine organisms. The country's coral reefs' also make it a powerful attraction for tourism. Tourism related activities result in the creation of jobs for the local, surrounding communities and a means of earning foreign currency.

5. **SVG's commitment to protection of its coastal and marine ecosystems is evidenced by several initiatives.** SVG National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) 2013–25 includes a specific set of strategic goals, objectives and targets, including Goal #4 of "Improving Physical Infrastructure, Preserving the Environment and Building Resilience to Climate Change," which seeks to preserve the country's delicate environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. One specific target is to protect 20 % of its near shore marine and coastal resources by 2020. SVG is a signatory to Marpol<sup>4</sup> and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These conventions make provision for the delineation of marine borders.

6. **The Cabinet approved the National Oceans Policy and Strategic Action Plan (NOP) on July 18, 2018.** The overall goal of the National Ocean Policy is to optimize the economic contribution and environmental benefits of ocean resources, through a sustainable, coordinated and integrated national governance framework. The policy and strategic action plan lay out the Government's vision and framework for optimizing the economic contribution of coastal and marine resources and developing a sustainable blue economy<sup>5</sup>.

7. **National Fisheries and Aquaculture policy (2018-2038)** was approved by Cabinet on January 09, 2019. The overall goal of the policy is to establish appropriate measures, consistent with regional and international standards, for the effective management, conservation, sustainable utilisation and development of fisheries and aquaculture resources and related ecosystems, to optimise the social and economic contribution from fisheries in collaboration with all stakeholders.

8. **Threats to Coastal and Marine Biodiversity.** Despite the government's several initiatives, infrastructural, socio-cultural and ecological problems have contributed to the declining quality of the land-based, coastal and marine biodiversity in SVG<sup>6</sup>. Anthropogenic threats to coastal and marine biodiversity, some of which are due to land-based activities, are numerous and include the climate change, habitat destruction and modification due to inappropriate land clearance for agriculture, fuelwood, illegal cultivation and settlement, and development in coastal areas; the introduction of exotic and invasive alien species; and inappropriate use of chemicals that eventually get leached to the coastal and marine areas. In addition, insufficient and/or lack/absence of implementation of environmental policies and legislation for coastal and marine spatial planning, tourism development without appropriate measures taken to mitigate negative environmental impacts, unregulated and illegal harvesting of already-threatened species of both marine flora and fauna and land-based pollution threatened marine biodiversity. Massive influx of Sargassum seaweed

<sup>2</sup> Section 7 of the Maritime Areas Act (Act No. 15 of 30 August 1983; CAP 464 of the 2009 Edition of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

<sup>3</sup> National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020)

<sup>4</sup> An international convention aimed at the prevention of pollution from ships caused by operational or accidental causes. It was adopted at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1973.

<sup>5</sup> This aligns with NESDP Goal 1 (objectives 1.1, 1.3) and Goal 4 (Objective 4.7).

<sup>6</sup> St. Vincent and the Grenadines: National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020), November 2017.



has also resulted in the potential disturbance of marine life living in the coastal zone. Land-based sources of pollution are mainly from sediments, agrochemical leaching, direct agrochemical influx, industrial and commercial discharge, liquid waste, and storm water runoff from city streets and construction sites. Ship generated waste is major issue in SVG, as it is known that some small ships and pleasure crafts traversing the waters of SVG dump their waste into the sea within the EEZ of the country and the poor surveillance system serves little as a deterrent.<sup>7</sup>

9. **Infrastructure Development in the coastal area:** More than 90% of the infrastructural development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines lies on a narrow coastal belt less than eight meters above sea-level. These include the island's main communication and emergency response structures - roads, airports, telecommunication, financial, and technical support centers<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, many of the coastal protection ecosystems such as dunes, mangroves and reefs have been removed or are degraded, which exacerbate vulnerability of coastal infrastructure to storm and hurricane activity (particularly wind and storm surges). Much of the physical infrastructure was not necessarily developed with any regard to the vulnerability or value of the natural systems. Coastal management efforts need to manage both the physical environment to reduce climate change and other threats.

10. **Climate change and associated threats to the coastal and marine ecosystems.** The country's location within the hurricane belt, and exposure to the rough Atlantic waves on the eastern shoreline, exposes the coastline to high risk of erosion, storm surges and flooding. These risks are exacerbated by climate change and sea level rise. Coastal ecosystems such as seagrasses, reef structures, and mangroves can provide important biophysical green belts or buffers and can provide economic functions such as pollution treatment. Management issues associated with use-conflicts include increased levels of land-based sources of pollution entering bays, as well as beach loss and erosion due to both natural forces and anthropogenic modifications to the coast such as those associated with sand mining or construction of seawalls. Adaptive management of coastal and marine resources in the islands of SVG- within the context of climate change- is a critical issue because of its fragility of eco-system and demand for growth.

### ***Challenges and barriers to management of the Coastal and Marine Environment***

11. **Inadequate policy framework and lack of appropriate institutional mechanism:** Although the Government of the SVG has taken some policy actions and initiative, the country still lacking key policy and strategy for effective coastal zone and marine ecosystem management. For example, there is no appropriate policy action to further degradation or overexploitation of coastal and marine resources except sand mining. There is also no pricing policy for tourist and other related facilities. Further to that, there is no effective institutional mechanism for overall coordination of coastal and marine resources planning and management. This is compounded by overlapping responsibilities over the management of coastal and marine resources.

12. **Unavailability and limited use of coastal and marine environmental information.** Currently, although some coastal and marine environmental data exists, they are scattered, underutilized or outdated. The information collected, and studies conducted by different agencies and projects are not stored scientifically in a central data recording system. To improve the situation, a conceptual framework should be developed for establishment of a publicly accessible data and knowledge platform/center for climate adaptation, coastal and marine resources. It should also focus on building capacity of the responsible agencies to analyze the interaction between physical, ecological and socioeconomic factors and for disaster risk reduction/ climate change adaptation planning in the coastal and marine resources.

<sup>7</sup> UNEP National Environment Summary 2010

<sup>8</sup> St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, Communicated to the UNFCCC on November 18, 2015.



13. **The state of the coastal zone and the marine environment is impacted by activities that affect the health of ecosystems upstream.** Around 52.9 % of the population now lives in urban areas, reflecting in part steady decline in the rural population. The result is an increased pressure on infrastructure and services range from inadequate waste disposal, sanitation and sewerage systems. In addition, the upstream activities that impact the health of coastal ecosystems include: deforestation, poor agricultural land management, the loss of riparian vegetation and change in stream flow dynamics, and increased river sediment loads. Coral reefs are particularly sensitive to the impacts of these activities. This is problematic because they act as natural barriers to wave action and are the substrate for production of white sand on beaches.

14. **Limited utilization of participatory approaches and appropriate pollution control options for coastal zone protection.** In response to global climate change impacts, there is a proclivity towards hard engineered solutions to coastal degradation/denudation. These options can be costly to build and maintain, and generally do not take the benefits of participatory approaches in ecosystem management into account. These hard structures can also have unintended negative impacts on coastal ecosystems and further exacerbate vulnerabilities in the long run. The participatory approaches, involving the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems are cost-effective solutions that can help people adapt to the impacts of climate change and harnesses biodiversity and ecosystem services to increase resilience and reduce the vulnerability of human communities and natural systems to climate change.

15. **The need for adaptive coastal management.** The absence of scientifically-informed plans can lead to maladaptive interventions in the coastal zone that eventually exacerbate vulnerability. The coastal environment is a dynamic place- sea level changes, natural resources shift, and pattern of human use vary. Due to this complex and dynamic nature of environmental problems, it is important to approach coastal planning and management as an adaptive process where plans and policies are viewed as flexible/living documents which are periodically reviewed and updated based on scientific data, practical experience and learning. Mechanisms must also be put in place to ensure accountability, transparency and sharing of information, both within government and with the public.

#### Relationship to CPF

16. **Bank programming in SVG is guided by the OECS Regional Partnership Strategy (RPS)** . The overall strategic goal is to support the OECS in laying foundations for sustainable inclusive growth through three areas of engagement: (i) competitiveness, (ii) public sector modernization, and (iii) resilience. The project will contribute to the area of resilience.

### C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

17. To strengthen the management of coastal and marine eco-systems of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

#### Key Results (From PCN)

18. The following key results are proposed for measuring achievement of the PDO:

- i. An integrated coastal and marine ecosystem management framework to promote sustainable development in SVG (number).



- ii. Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness (ha).
- iii. Area of coastal and marine seascapes under improved management practices (ha).
- iv. Establishment of a National Environmental Data and Information Platform (NEDIP) for information sharing and decision-making on the conservation and use of coastal and marine resources (Yes/No)
- v. Direct (those who receive direct economic benefit from project interventions) beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-beneficiaries (Nos).

#### D. Concept Description

19. **The proposed project “Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management project” aims to support the participatory approaches in coastal and marine environment of St. Vincent and the Grenadines** including: (i) institutional and policy support, and capacity building for coordination, spatial<sup>9</sup> and financial planning, and monitoring of the coastal and marine environment; (ii) setting-up a publicly accessible national knowledge platform (environmental data and information center) for an improved information base for decision-making on the use and conservation of coastal and marine resources; and (iii) demonstrating the effectiveness of spatial and financial planning approaches in selected pilot coastal and marine sites. The Project will be funded by a GEF Trust Fund grant in the amount of US\$3.65 million.

20. **Component 1. Institutionalization of Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management Program (GEF Contribution US\$1.0 million and Co-financing US\$2.0 million).** This component will support the enhancement of institutional capacity for mainstreaming coastal and marine ecosystem management within key development sectors that impinge on these resources.

21. **Component 2. Applying a participatory approach to effectively plan, manage, finance and monitor compliance in target environmentally sensitive coastal and marine sites (GEF Contribution US\$1.88 million and co-financing US\$3.05 million).** Component 2 activities complement processes in Component 1 to demonstrate spatial planning and innovative financing arrangements through on-the-ground investments in the 3-4 specific target coastal and marine sites. The initial identified sites<sup>10</sup> are: (i) Milligan Cay Wildlife Reserve, or Turtle Island; (ii) Brighton and Diamond Beach area; (iii) Union Island and Tobago Cays Marine Park; and (iv) Biabou Town.

22. **Component 3: Knowledge and data management, gender mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, documentation and dissemination of best practices and replication (GEF Contribution US\$0.6 million and co-financing US\$1 million).** This Component seeks the establishment of a National Environmental Data and Information Platform (NEDIP) dedicated to building the long-term coastal and marine data record. NEDIP will be integrated into an existing national institution/agency. This component will consolidate best practices and lessons learned resulting from project implementation and will support dissemination of lessons learned and experiences at the sub-national and national levels.

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<sup>9</sup> Spatial planning involves a national level ridge to reef (R2R) integrated coastal zone management plan to address conservation with regional development. This activity is already under preparation with support of World Bank’s OECS Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project.

<sup>10</sup> The sites will be further reviewed during the project preparation based on (i) available scientific/technical information on the sites; (ii) benefits in conservations of species, genes and ecosystems; (iii) conservation of environmental services; (iv) potential economic benefits focusing on creation of new jobs and improved quality of life; (v) conservation and promotion of traditional knowledge compatible with conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and (vi) potential and interest of local communities and private sector participation.



Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

23. **Environmental and Social Risk Rating is moderate** under the Environmental and Social Framework. The proposed project activities to be financed through Components 1 are improving policies, regulations and related systems to improve coastal and marine resource planning, management and monitoring. Component 2 entails piloting of participatory approaches in 3-4 pilot areas to facilitate restoration, rehabilitation and management of in SVG. Overall, the project will result in positive environmental and social benefits, but the project activities will have some environmental and social implications during the implementation phase depending on factors such as the number, location, footprint, and geographic dispersion of the activities. Based on the preliminary environmental and social assessment (ESA), the client will prepare the draft Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and draft Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) before appraisal. The Labor Management Procedure (LMP) will be prepared during the project implementation period. A project Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) will be developed that is accessible to all community members and resolves issues in a timely manner. Another GRM will be also designed and implemented for labor issues.

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**APPROVAL**

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