

Sustainable Tourism that Benefits All

Belize Marine Fund Case Study



(c) Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

Sustainable Tourism that Benefits All

Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

SACD recognizes the need to improve its income diversification for improved financial sustainability...but also wants to ensure the benefits are shared with its stakeholders.

Building the capacity of the community tour guides is as important as building it's own financial sustainability from tourism - so that they, too, can benefit from the financial opportunities provided by the SACD groups.



Photo: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

BELIZE MARINE FUND

Thematic Area 1: Effective Marine Protected Areas Contributing Towards a Functional National Protected Areas System

The BMF Investment Strategy flagged the need for increasing financial sustainability and diversification of income streams for protected area management organizations. The Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development has taken this a step further, and provides a model of financial sustainability while generating income diversification opportunities for its stakeholders in the largest fishing community in Belize.

2022 -2023

Total number of Grants

2

Number of individuals benefitting from tourism-related training

66

Total number community members benefitting from CBEA tourism

47



With the investments in infrastructure and training from BMF, the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD) has been building its capacity for hosting international groups as one of its financial sustainability strategies - and has managed to spread the benefits to its stakeholders through direct employment, and by providing a blend of environmental and cultural activities that generate incomes for tourism stakeholders - a win-win situation!

Based on the river-to-reef seascape of the Northern Belize Coastal Complex, the expeditions explore the biodiversity and culture of the area in the company of local experts, ready and willing to share their traditional knowledge.

The Belize Marine Fund investment supported the construction of the SACD Tourism Expedition Hosting Facility, managed under CBEA. This provides space and a kitchen for both day and overnight visits by student groups.

It overlooks Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, providing a starting point for river-to-reef adventures led by Sarteneja tour guides



Photo: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

“Immersed in Belize's diverse river-to-reef ecosystems, the students discovered a wide array of wildlife and cultural treasures, from ancient Maya ruins to the vibrant community of Sarteneja. Venturing into the Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve, they marveled at the wonders of the barrier reef. Their commitment to sustainability shone through as they participated in a community clean-up and planted mangrove and mahogany trees, leaving a greener legacy.”



Photo: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development



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Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development provides training, support and marketing for local tourism businesses, ensuring they are able to provide a high quality of service for international visitors.

Through BMF investments in the CBEA, SACD has been able to bring student groups to Sarteneja, with the income they represent directly benefitting not only the management of Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, but also households in the fishing community.



Photo: Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

[Leading by Example: Sustainable Tourism Development in Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, a role model for Belize!](#)

[Find out more](#)

The strengths of collaboration and partnership with the local tourism sector can be seen in the development of the Sarteneja Beach Trap Pesca Tour Association. With the support of SACD, the beach trap fishers have been able to develop their traditional fishing activities as a tourism package for visitors, weaving in their local knowledge on the fish caught and the need for sustainability.

Their wives also participate, hosting the groups and preparing the fish for a traditional Sarteneja breakfast, demonstrating the art of making tortillas and fried jacks, and encouraging their guests to take part in the meal preparation.

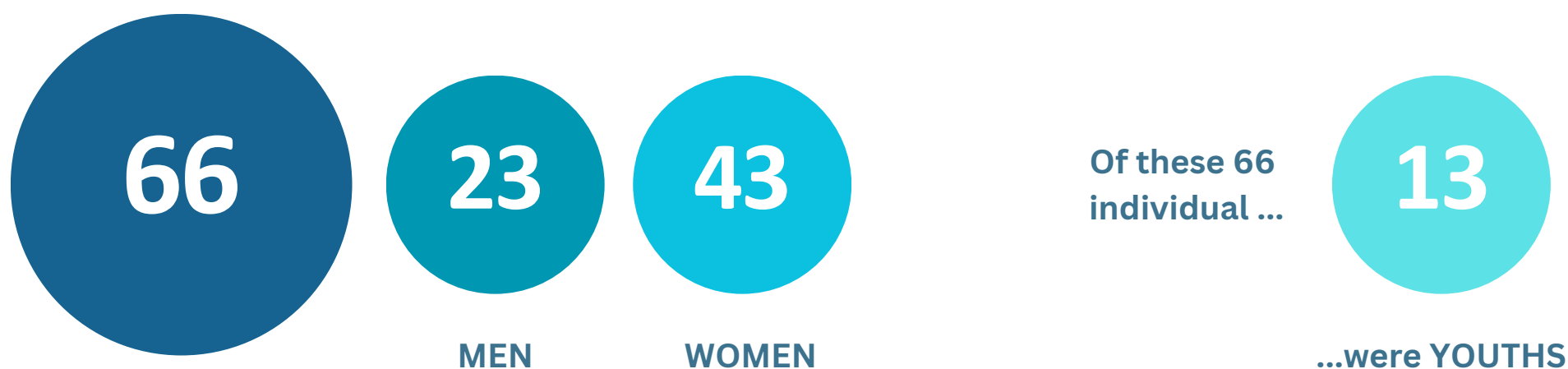
This is all backed by SACD support and mentoring, providing access to opportunities such as tour guide and food handling training and certification.

After testing the waters through a pilot phase pre-covid, SACD has recently fully launched its financial sustainability arm - the Corozal Bay Eco-Adventures (CBEA). Through BMF investments, it has been able to construct hosting facilities (the Tourism Expedition Hosting Facility) to support not only itself, but also to expand income-generating opportunities in tourism. SACD has built the capacity of local tour guide associations, tour guides and other service providers in the community to ensure Sarteneja is recognized as a green tourism destination that cares about the environment and the marine resources that support household incomes.

Sustainable tourism opportunities in the community provide a mechanism for fishing families to reduce their reliance on fishing, and their pressures on the marine resources.

In 2022, SACD were able to provide tourism-related training to 66 individuals from Sarteneja, ranging from tour guide training and fly fishing training to financial management, customer services training, food handling, culinary arts and marketing and sales.

So what does the figure '66 individuals' represent?



In 2023, SACD was able to generate US\$28,271 in unrestricted revenue through its financial sustainability strategies, and a further US\$28,471 being paid into the community for goods and services, benefitting 45 stakeholders from the fishing community.

So what does the figure '47 community members benefitting' represent?

Between March and December, 2023, when expeditions were being hosted, CBEA provided:

- Direct employment for 16 people (9 men, 7 women) as cooks, tour guides and boat captains
- Employment of 2 administration assistants
- Employment of 2 caretakers for the hosting facility
- Engagement of 15 service providers (catering and accommodation)
- Purchase of expedition supplies (groceries, vegetables, fruit, fuel) from 12 local businesses

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

For the Corozal Bay Eco-Adventures / SACD

- Developing a financial sustainability mechanism through tourism that does not conflict with existing local tourism ventures
 - > SACD, through CBEA, has focused on marketing to international student groups that would otherwise not have visited Sarteneja, ensuring they are not vying for the same tourists as local tour guides
- Fully engaging community tourism providers
 - > SACD has been able to assist different community groups in developing their tourism products. The Pesca Tours, for example, showcase their traditional fishing methods, and the Sarteneja Homestay Group provide the cultural experience of staying with a local family
- Building organizational and business capacity for community tourism providers
 - > Tourism providers need to be fully licensed and compliant with national regulations. SACD provides access to the relevant trainings, finance software and funds for organization registration to ensure the collaborations and partnerships are based on a strong foundation
- Ensuring local tourism partnerships strengthen the understanding and support of conservation, protected area management and sustainable resource use, building local stewardship and participation

For the Belize Marine Fund

- BMF has played an important role in scaling successful projects towards financial sustainability - identifying and investing in models for protected area financial sustainability with added community benefits, that can guide other protected area management organizations across the regional seascape

THEMATIC AREA 1: Effective Marine Protected Areas Contributing Towards a Functional National Protected Areas System

PROJECT	ORGANIZATION
2022: Increasing Financial Sustainability and Generating Income Diversification Opportunities for the Improved Management Effectiveness of Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary	Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development
2023: Construction of a Tourism Expedition Hosting Facility (TEHF) as a Critical Component of Community Tourism Development in Sarteneja	Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development