

Widening the Circle of Leadership

Strengthening Conservation NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean



By Judith A. Towle

A Publication of
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August 1995

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- **THE DONOR DIRECTORY (1995):** Donor Organizations and Technical Assistance Programs. A Guide To Who Is Supporting Sustainable Resource Development in the Eastern Caribbean. (86 pp.)
- **THE NGO DIRECTORY (1995):** A Guide To Environmental Non-governmental Organizations Supporting Conservation and Resource Management Programs in the Eastern Caribbean. (54 pp.)

Additionally, the following publication is available at a cost of US\$12.50:

- **FISCAL MANAGEMENT FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.** A Manual To Assist Environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean. (41 pp.)

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Bruce Horwith has served as director of Island Resources Foundation's NGO Institutional Development Program from 1990-1995. He assisted with the overall design and intent of this publication and provided valuable insights based on his extensive experience working with Eastern Caribbean non-governmental organizations. He also prepared the case study on the Environmental Awareness Group of Antigua-Barbuda. Giles Romulus, Director of Natural Heritage at the St. Lucia National Trust, assisted with a comprehensive history and analysis of the Trust, and we only regret not having sufficient space to include more of his input. Reynold Murray provided background information on the JEMS Progressive Community Organization of St. Vincent, and we thank him for his contribution. Appreciation is also extended to Michael Dively for reviewing the Mukti Fund case study, and to Edward Towle and Bruce Potter of Island Resources Foundation for their review and input for the entire document.

The Foundation's nine-year NGO Program for the Eastern Caribbean first took shape as a program concept originated by Ed Towle and Michael Wright in the offices of World Wildlife Fund in Washington, D.C. in 1985. Their idea evolved as Island Resources Foundation's pilot NGO program from 1986 to 1989, funded initially by WWF and -- through the good offices of William Moody -- the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Our program officers at WWF and RBF, Gus Medina and Bill Moody, were consistently supportive and helped to keep the program moving forward. Edward and Judith Towle were co-directors of the pilot program, assisted by Bruce Potter and LaVerne Ragster as periodic program consultants.

Bruce Potter of Island Resources Foundation assisted in expanding the scope of the pilot program and drafted a five-year program plan for NGO institutional assistance in the Eastern Caribbean. The program plan was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1989 under a Cooperative Agreement with Island Resources Foundation. James Hester, then the Chief Environmental Officer for AID's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, was instrumental in identifying AID funding for the program, and Marquerite Potee, of AID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, served as the Foundation's project officer during five of the six years of the Cooperative Agreement.

Dedicated to

the region's environmental NGOs,
their leaders, staffs, governing boards and members,
to whom we extend our appreciation for sharing
the last decade with Island Resources Foundation.
It has been a challenging, learning experience for us all,
and we wish you well in the journeys ahead.
Hopefully, we shall share some of them with you.

Foreword

This report represents a distillation of Island Resources Foundation's experiences and findings following almost a decade of focused assistance to conservation non-governmental organizations in the Eastern Caribbean. This work has constituted a major program initiative by the Foundation for almost a decade, and is one in which substantial resources have been invested by IRF and sponsoring donor organizations. Through this long-term initiative, Island Resources Foundation has supported the development of private sector environmental groups in the Eastern Caribbean and has influenced the participation of Caribbean people in the kind of decision making that is critical for balanced development. As stated by the Foundation's president in our 1994 Annual Report, "Governments make political judgments, but until someone raises the social and environmental implications of those judgments, they tend to stay political."

This document is more than a final report to the U.S. Agency for International Development, which provided primary program funding during the last six years of a nine-year program. It is also a continuation of the dialogue with our NGO partners and other organizations in the Eastern Caribbean, designed to share with them the experiences and insights accumulated by IRF during the last nine years. It is also intended for the donor community working in the Eastern Caribbean, for many of the most significant findings focus on international development assistance as it is directed to and impacts upon small conservation NGOs in the region. Finally, the document is for resource managers in Caribbean government ministries, departments and other public sector institutions, for the expanding potential for collaborative public and private sector partnerships in the environmental sector is one of the program's most promising conclusions.

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Introduction to IRF's NGO Program

For almost a decade, Island Resources Foundation (IRF) has supported a focused program of assistance for environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the English-speaking Eastern Caribbean.

The program had its origins in the Foundation's experience in the Eastern Caribbean in the 1970's and into the 1980's. During the course of our work we were often asked by indigenous non-governmental organizations for counsel and technical assistance regarding project design and proposal writing, fund raising, and structuring local conservation initiatives.

At the same time, we were often asked by donor groups from the North to review project proposals from Caribbean institutions and, on occasion, to comment on the institutional capacity of the very same organizations which were seeking our technical support and assistance. Over time, this informal dialogue with both the NGO and the donor communities became indicative of a broader regional need.

As a result, in the mid-1980's the Foundation joined with the World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF-US) to develop a pilot NGO institutional development program for the Commonwealth Eastern Caribbean. For donors like WWF working in the region, the need for a NGO strengthening program was obvious.

For too long institutional development had been included (if included at all) as a secondary component of funded environmental projects which had other, more specific program objectives. Thus, too many promising Caribbean NGOs with environmental agendas remained institutionally weak and had limited organizational experience with program design, fund raising, project management, reporting and evaluation.

Objectives and Findings Of The Pilot Program (1986-1989)

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) soon joined WWF as co-sponsors with IRF of a three-year pilot project designed to:

- (i) survey and assess a broad range of NGO experience and capability in the Eastern Caribbean;
- (ii) identify those NGOs whose leadership qualities, overall program objectives and apparent long-term viability justified further institutional assistance; and
- (iii) experiment with a variety of program strategies and select those most effective in meeting longer-term goals for NGO institutional support.

One of the clear findings from the pilot program was that the non-governmental sector in the Eastern Caribbean had an important role to play:

- as agents for sustainable development and planned growth strategies,
- as “quality control” intermediaries for monitoring development impacts,
- as collectors and repositories of information about the environment, and
- as institutional forums for consensus-building about national development goals.

Expanded Program (1989-1995)

In 1989, the Foundation’s NGO Program entered a new and expanded phase of activity with the awarding of a matching fund grant by the U.S. Agency for Interna-

tional Development (USAID) Under this broader program, Island Resources expanded the kinds of services and assistance available to NGOs and established a program office in Antigua under direction of a new NGO program director, Dr. Bruce Horwith. Our overall objectives remained those first identified under the pilot program:

- (i) to strengthen the organizational management skills of environmental NGOs at the national and regional level, and
- (ii) to improve the ability of NGOs to plan and implement major conservation projects, with an emphasis on projects with a biodiversity theme.

Caribbean countries initially eligible for assistance within the scope of the program were: Antigua-Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The British dependencies of Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, and Montserrat were later added as participants.

Promoting NGO Development

The approach used for collaboration between Island Resources Foundation and participating NGOs included a mixture of both direct and indirect technical assistance, training, and program planning services. Given the size of the region, of the target NGOs, and of the Foundation,

IRF employed individualized formats for collaboration with NGO partners and relied heavily on frequent in-country consultations with NGOs to identify and define a program of assistance.

We found that working directly with the leadership core (usually some portion of the governing board plus paid and volunteer professional staff) has generally provided the most effective training forum. This allowed the Foundation to apply a customized approach in promoting institutional development and in shaping a regime of incremental assistance geared to the special needs of participants.

One irrefutable fact about this approach to institutional development assistance is that it is very resource intensive. Nevertheless, as a result of its nine-years of experience, the Foundation maintains that

- an investment in collaboration,
- an emphasis on incremental growth, and
- a gradual allocation of resources and support to beneficiary groups

will yield more substantial long-term growth than an approach with shorter-response time frames and a more rapid distribution of benefits, quite often at a faster pace than the NGO can effectively absorb.

Building NGO Capacity

The mix of direct and indirect program assistance provided under the NGO Program included the following key components.

(1) ***Financial assistance in the form of small institutional development grants.*** IRF awarded over US\$75,000 in grants (ranging in size from US\$400 to US\$5,600) to two regional and over three dozen national NGOs in nine Caribbean countries. Applications for funding were limited to proposals that enhanced long-term institutional development, and both IRF and the grantees recognized that such grants were only one step in a longer-term process of organizational development.

Approximately a third of the awards were for the purchase of office equipment, particularly computers. During a period when most Caribbean institutions were computerizing for the first time, the IRF Program made this a reality for many of its NGO partners. This was by design, for the Foundation recognized that in small organizations with limited staff, computer capability would help to move the organization ahead — the computer functioned almost like another staff person.

(2) ***Assistance to NGOs for third-party funding.*** The original NGO program design called for IRF to assist its

primary NGO partners in identifying and securing third-party funding. Through this process, many NGOs gained much-needed experience and credibility in preparing proposals and administering grants. Island Resources collaborated with seven NGOs on 22 third-party grants which generated over US\$300,000 in direct funding to NGOs for projects focusing on agroforestry, biodiversity conservation, ecotourism, and institutional development.

In an effort to enhance the quality of information available to Caribbean NGOs about donor support in the region, in 1989 the Foundation published the first directory of donor organizations and technical assistance programs supporting sustainable resource development in the Eastern Caribbean. This directory, with over 300 copies distributed, was revised and updated in 1995.

(3) **Internships.** Ten interns were assigned to one regional and six national NGOs. In some cases, the IRF Program introduced NGOs for the first time to the advantages of using interns and overseas volunteers to augment their personnel requirements. Interns were placed only in response to requests from organizations able to identify a specific work agenda for the intern.

(4) **Communication and information services.** The first comprehensive survey of conservation NGOs in the East-

ern Caribbean was undertaken by Island Resources Foundation in 1986-1987. Over 125 NGOs were contacted and assessed in the islands of Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. The survey included not only traditional conservation organizations but also other civic, non-profit, service organizations with some demonstrated interest in environmental public policy issues.

Information on this spectrum of Caribbean NGOs was computerized and an electronic data bank established. (A counterpart data bank was also created for donor groups working in the Eastern Caribbean in support of sustainable resource development.)

In 1991 the Foundation published the first *Directory of Environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean*, a publication updated and reissued in 1995 with more than 50 entries for 12 Caribbean island areas plus data on regional environmental NGOs.

In 1987 Island Resources inaugurated a new publication for environmental NGOs. *NGO NEWS for the Eastern Caribbean* was a periodic newsletter (20 issues published) designed to meet the need of NGOs for a more timely and orderly means of obtaining information. Often the NGOs were receiving not too little but too much complex information, and many of these

smaller organizations were suffering from information overload.

The newsletter therefore focused on communicating information about the program and NGO activities in the region, providing news about donor group programs and assistance, and concentrating on a variety of institutional development topics from "how to run an effective meeting" to "how to buy the right computer" — or topics with more complex themes like "financing strategies and techniques for NGOs" and "leadership and managerial skills for NGO leaders".

(5) Targeted technical assistance.

Island Resources also utilized more traditional training forums during the course of the NGO Program — for example, workshops for multi-island participants on institutional topics such as program design, proposal writing, fund raising, board development, and land trusts.

However, we did not overuse the workshop format because we realized early on that the Caribbean region is already saturated with training workshops and that environmental leaders, whether in the public or private sector, are overextended in their commitments to donor groups for participation in a seemingly endless stream of meetings, conferences and seminars. Instead, Island Resources relied heavily on more focused one-on-one training, usually

with NGO boards or some component of the NGO leadership structure.

We concentrated on institutional development needs identified either by NGOs or IRF project staff. NGOs defined their own needs through:

- periodic on-site interviews and visits by project staff;
- periodic questionnaires and survey forms distributed by the program,
- grant applications for financial assistance, and
- reactions to articles and information in *NGO NEWS*.

A key priority frequently identified by NGOs was the need for more effective fiscal management training and assistance. To this end, the Foundation provided individualized financial management training sessions for regional and national NGOs, focused on financial management in several issues of *NGO NEWS*, and produced the first-of-its-kind, "how to do it" manual on fiscal management written specifically for environmental non-government organizations.

Emphasis On Strategic Planning

An early issue of *NGO NEWS* carried the title "Planning for Success", and

throughout the course of the nine-year NGO Program the importance of strategic planning for NGOs, whatever their size and whatever their mission, has been a key theme of the program. Our approach recognized that while no organization can make detailed plans for every aspect of the future, commonsense planning can help the NGO match limited resources to priority needs.

Most conservation NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean are small- to medium-sized, and when IRF began its program in the late

1980's most regarded strategic planning as something they didn't have time for — a distraction from the central mission and program of the NGO. We hope we have helped to alter this perception, for unless strategic planning — as a process of consensus building that helps to set priorities — is well integrated within the organization, Caribbean environmental NGOs, with limited human and financial resources, will be less effective, less productive, and less able to assume the leadership roles increasingly expected of them in their own countries and regionally.

Who Are the Conservation NGOs?

The target islands for the Foundation's NGO Program are nine of the smaller Eastern Caribbean states clustered along the Lesser Antillean island chain extending from the Virgin Islands in the north to Trinidad in the south: The nine are:

- Anguilla
- Antigua-Barbuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Commonwealth of Dominica
- Grenada
- Montserrat
- St. Kitts-Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Six of the islands are independent former British colonies, full members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Three (Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat) are British dependencies.

These islands are small in size and population, although population densities are high. Collectively, they share a history of colonialism, slavery and emancipation,

and exhibit cultural similarities which merge traditions from their Afro-European past. Although English is the official language, the people also speak a Creole dialect. Their economies, constrained by small populations and a limited natural resource base, are dwarfed by their continental neighbors, particularly those to the north.

Like most small island systems, those in the Eastern Caribbean are environmentally fragile, with closely coupled terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Historically, the islands have experienced prolonged natural resource exploitation, widespread deforestation, and large-scale export monocultivation (most recently bananas), all of which have contributed to a heritage of environmental neglect. Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector, and therefore loss of environment quality — especially in critical areas like the coastal zone — is increasingly of concern.

The islands of the Eastern Caribbean are learning to live with modern development (particularly burgeoning tourism) and with the side effects of development, including those impacting on the environment and

on the quality of life for island residents. In the process, it has become clear that governments need help — in focusing on environmental issues, in addressing environmental exploitation and neglect, and in marshaling public participation in the maintenance of environmental quality. Non-governmental organizations are coming to the forefront in this search for workable solutions. They can — by being both professional and innovative — assert a positive leadership role.

Early Focus On Historical Resources

The emergence of a private-sector “conservation” movement in the Commonwealth Eastern Caribbean generally dates to the mid-1960’s and into the early 1970’s when several national trusts (based on the British model) were established. Although created by governments and with statutory authority to conserve natural and cultural heritage, the trusts would function very much like NGOs in that they had independent governing bodies, were membership based, and were responsible for raising funds.*

The early focus of the trusts was on the preservation of historic buildings, monuments, and related historical and cultural artifacts. Many of the NGOs established in addition to or in place of a national trust also took historic site restoration and archaeological conservation as their initial mandate (for example, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, the Grenada Historical Society, the Society for the Restoration of Brimstone Hill in St. Kitts).

A widely held public perception about many of the early conservation groups was that they were elitist and associated with wealthy “do-gooders” or expatriates. Their activities were viewed as “nice” but diversionary, something akin to a hobby and irrelevant to more demanding and immediate economic development priorities.

Furthermore, there was a perception that the “historical conservation” NGOs glorified the colonial past at a time when the islands were emerging from colonialism into nationhood. It would be many years before “interpreting the past,” as an organizational focus, would be more widely appreciated as a means of enabling a society to feel its heritage and the human side of the development process.

Emerging Voices For The Environment

By the decade of the eighties, several of the early national trusts had emerged as

* For purposes of the NGO Program, national trusts were treated as NGOs.

important voices for conservation concerns in their countries, for example, in the British Virgin Islands, Barbados and St. Lucia. Additionally, most of the trusts were taking on more broadly-defined environmental agendas.

At the same time, the non-trust conservation organizations (with no statutory authority and operating totally in the private sector) began to succeed in several islands, such as Antigua and Nevis. Many were accepting responsibility for a variety of environmental activities and programs which, in larger countries, might be dispersed among several groups and/or government agencies.

In these small islands (with populations ranging from 10 000 to not more than 150,000), there was not a proliferation of conservation organizations. The groups that did emerge had to take on a full agenda of environmental issues; often the use of "historical" or "archaeological" in the NGO's title hid a broader spectrum of resource management concerns. Many of the groups also established museums, a responsibility assumed by the NGO community in the absence of publicly supported museum facilities.

During the initial growth years, the NGOs tended to focus on catching up, that is, on urgent, high priority conservation activities or projects to "save" local species

or sites or areas at high risk. For most, institutional development was not a specific objective but something it was assumed would occur naturally or automatically as the organization carried on with its more important and demanding work schedule.

Taking On Too Much ?

Having begun with a single-issue or sector-based institutional focus, most NGOs adjusted, further refined or enlarged their focus over time (thus, the region boasts conservation NGOs dealing with economic issues, historical societies involved with tourism promotion). While there is a tendency among environmental NGOs in the North to specialize or focus program agendas (where the potential for a support base is larger), this is not as readily an option in small islands.

It is difficult for NGOs, when they are among the one or two private-sector conservation organizations in the entire country, to fix priorities and concentrate objectives. Thus, they appear to be all over the place when trying to define who they are and where they are headed.

A logical extension of this characteristic is that many of the NGOs are taking on more than the organization can effectively handle. This is because understaffed government agencies turn to them for assistance; donors seek NGO input in aid pro-

grams with environmental objectives; and local communities have no where else to turn as populations become more sensitized to environmental issues and concerns. Thus, too many NGOs — whether well-funded larger groups or volunteer-based smaller groups — are exhibiting signs of being overextended and overcommitted.

And this will continue to be the case as long as most donor-supported programs fund only project-specific activities while largely ignoring the basic institutional requirements of the implementing environmental NGOs.

NGO Advocacy Role

Generally, environmental groups in the Eastern Caribbean have not functioned as activist “pressure groups” like their North American counterparts which during the 1970’s and 1980’s exerted enormous influence on the public policy agenda in Canada and the United States. Instead, the environmental NGOs of the Eastern Caribbean sought to increase public awareness about environmental issues through education, research, training and outreach programs. Using this approach, their influence in placing “the environment” on the political and public agenda has been significant.

To varying degrees, some of the NGOs have assumed a modified “watchdog” role, particularly as the pace of development in the 1970’s and 1980’s placed increased

pressures on limited resources and as particular development projects engaged community attention.

At times this has caused perhaps unavoidable tensions between NGOs and governments in the region, where the latter remain cautious, if not skeptical, about the role of non-governmental organizations. Thus, environmental groups are viewed by some in the political establishment as eager critics but less able problem solvers, a dilemma confronted by most Eastern Caribbean conservation NGOs at one time or another.

Conservation NGOs Targeted by the NGO Program

Although in 1986-87 Island Resources identified over 100 NGOs in eight Eastern Caribbean states with some interest in environmental public policy issues, the fact remains that the number of non-governmental organizations actively engaged at the national level in conservation and resource management programs is quite small — usually one or two key organizations per country. These groups were the primary beneficiaries under the NGO Program, although the Foundation offered limited services and assistance to a wider spectrum of NGOs both in the Eastern Caribbean sub-region and in the Wider Caribbean.

A listing of the primary environmental NGOs targeted by the NGO Program fol-

lows. The reader is also referred to the 1995 edition of IRF's *Directory of Environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean* which profiles over 50 national and regional environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean.

ANGUILLA

- Anguilla National Trust
- Archaeological and Historical Society

ANTIGUA-BARBUDA

- Environmental Awareness Group
- Historical and Archaeological Society

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

- BVI Botanic Society
- EVI National Parks Trust

DOMINICA

- Dominica Conservation Association

GRENADA

- Carriacou Historical Society
- Grenada National Trust and Historical Society

MONTSERRAT

- Montserrat National Trust

ST. KITTS and NEVIS

- Nevis Historical and Conservation Society
- St. Christopher Heritage Society

ST. LUCIA

- St. Lucia National Trust
- St. Lucia Naturalists' Society

ST. VINCENT

- JEMS Progressive Community Organization
- St. Vincent National Trust

Four detailed case studies are presented in this document, beginning on page 23. The four organizations selected are:

- (1) Antigua's **Environmental Awareness Group (EAG)**. The EAG case study highlights the early development of a relatively new NGO, its successes and difficulties, and options for the future.
- (2) St. Vincent's **JEMS Progressive Community Organization**. JEMS is rural-based and enjoys strong grass-roots ties with the community. Both of these characteristics make JEMS a different kind of environmental NGO in the Eastern Caribbean.

- (3) **St. Lucia National Trust (SLNT).** Focusing on the most developed of the national trusts in the nine target islands, the SLNT case study profiles the organization's development and examines the basis for its effectiveness.
- (4) **Mukti Fund.** A fourth case study examines a unique donor organization. The U.S.-based Mukti Fund is included not only because its focused program in St. Kitts-Nevis provides an opportunity to profile NGOs in that country, but more importantly because Mukti's sustained grant-making on behalf of environmental organizations in St. Kitts and Nevis is illustrative of a well-conceived donor program.

In Search of Institutional Potential

After almost a decade of focused institutional development assistance to Eastern Caribbean environmental NGOs, Island Resources Foundation believes there are lessons to be extracted. Some of these lessons (or accumulated insights) are summarized in this section of *Widening The Circle of Leadership*.

1. Sound Management Capacity

The critical importance of a strong management team (generally some combination of the board plus key professional staff, whether paid or volunteer) cannot be overemphasized. The organization's governing board is particularly important in smaller, heavily volunteer NGOs as the board must assume some operational responsibilities (while avoiding the worst effects of micro-management).

The strength of the NGO's management capacity can include everything from being able to run effective meetings to understanding the importance of financial accountability and keeping records. Certain

management principles, however, seem to stand out as being particularly important:

- ensuring that decision-making actually results in effective actions;
- clearly identifying roles and responsibilities and insisting on accountability;
- confronting problems early and candidly;
- promoting mutual trust and confidence (which makes confronting problems easier);
- working together productively, creatively and democratically;
- understanding that good management is preceded by good planning.

2. The Leadership Factor

The evidence is clear that focused leadership, particularly in the early years, was essential to the successful development of Eastern Caribbean environmental NGOs. Without the kind of aggressive, visionary leadership that characterized the emergence of JEMS and the St. Lucia National Trust in our case studies, NGOs have found it

substantially more difficult to grow and move forward.

What seems to be required are a few strong and enthusiastic personalities, with enough vision, commitment, drive, patience, and hard work to give the organization that energizing spark and central focus required in its developmental years. Later, other leadership skills come forward:

- the ability to think in the longer term and plan strategically, beyond the day-to-day operations of the organization;
- the skill to cope with conflicting demands as the organization grows;
- the ability to attract and mobilize others;
- the ability to build alliances and extend the group's legitimacy outside of the organization.

Whether the NGO can achieve an orderly process of succession and continuity, beyond the tenure of the founder or early leadership core, may be of concern within organizations with strong leaders. There is also a risk that dominant leaders will inhibit internal give-and-take and limit the potential for a participatory, more democratic organization. As the case studies suggest, however, an organization can benefit from strong leadership without suffering these problems.

3. Adapting To Change By Growing Incrementally

The development of this sub-set of Caribbean NGOs has almost universally been marked by periods of highs and lows and by swings in fortune which seem as certain as they are complex.

Thus, the technical, financial and organizational needs of the NGOs change — often substantially — over time. Likewise, their capacity to respond to membership concerns, to donor requests, to the larger environment in which they operate, even to their own institutional mandate, also changes over time. In such circumstances, different organizational capacities are needed by NGOs at different times in their life cycles.

The most successful NGOs are those which have best adapted to the cycle of change, and have weathered the inevitable ups and downs of institutional growth by *taking advantage of the opportunities offered during the prosperous years to help the organization survive the lean years*. This seems best accomplished by a process of incremental but steady growth, rather than spurts of unrealistically heightened activity and spending. Continual forward momentum appears more critical to sustainable growth than dramatic change which cannot be supported over the long term.

During the last ten years, two environmental NGOs within the IRF network were recipients of donor funding to support a new executive director position. In both cases, the NGOs moved rapidly from virtually zero activity to acquisition of professional staff. What was left behind when the donor funding ended were financially strapped organizations with unrealistic expectations about what it takes to develop and maintain an institution. These NGOs still face enormous challenges, once again in search of identity and vision.

JEMS and the St. Lucia National Trust are excellent examples of NGOs that resisted the trap of moving too quickly or absorbing too many new resources before setting well-defined goals and strategies. *Balanced* growth across a broad front of institutional development sectors is what is required. Funding professional staff — while important — will not in and of itself insure organizational growth.

4. Focusing On A Limited Number of Connected Projects

NGOs carrying out a limited number of connected projects have performed better than NGOs that (1) attempted to do too much too soon or (2) could not get started because they were unable to determine what was strategically important to the organization.

The most effective NGOs have a clearly defined *central focus* (one which goes beyond a general mission statement like wanting to “protect the environment”), *around which* the group is able to assemble its activities and projects *and* acquire more specialized professional skills and institutional competence.

The inertia which seemed periodically to overwhelm many of the NGOs can often be found in an inability to understand the importance of growing strategically which does not necessarily mean growing on a grand scale, even though the potential work agenda before the NGO is considerable. Improved strategic planning — as can be seen in the St. Lucia National Trust case study — helped the stronger NGOs to choose among program options and then to deepen and extend those programs rather than initiating more and different activities.

5. Finding Ways To Meet Core Costs

A recurring problem among the NGOs is the uncertainty associated with funding the organization’s core costs — an uncertainty that impairs the capacity of the organization to grow.

It is unfortunate, but nevertheless true, that donors and aid agencies finance “projects” (which usually means the costs of *new* activities) but are often reluctant to

carry any of the NGO's recurrent core costs (see the Mukti Fund case study for an alternative approach). It is assumed that some other donor will pick up these costs or that the NGO has sufficient fund-raising capabilities to meet such costs. This is usually not a very realistic assumption.

Many NGOs are therefore turning to donor-funded projects not only to finance program activities but to generate needed indirect costs to finance headquarters costs (see the EAG profile for a case in point). This is not an inappropriate option for environmental NGOs in countries where their "cause" does not enjoy widespread support from the local corporate or philanthropic community. Other NGOs look to government to provide subventions, services or facilities (see the St. Lucia National Trust profile for a discussion of this option).

Both options — donor-financed grants and/or contracts or government-contributed support — carry risks for the NGO. The first can overwhelm the voluntary, public service character of the NGO, influencing it to take on more than it can effectively handle or to be diverted from its own agenda. The second, by potentially increasing the organization's dependency on government, can lessen its effectiveness as an independent environmental observer, advocate, and educator.

There is no easy answer to the issue of core cost financing. All of the NGOs in the IRF network continue to strive for appropriate balance, diversity, and security.

6. People-centered Growth

Two highly effective NGOs profiled in the case studies (JEMS and the St. Lucia National Trust) attribute their success, at least partially, to a people-centered approach to institutional and programmatic development. (In one sense this moves the conservation NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean full circle from the elitist image of some of their predecessor organizations.)

There is greater professionalism and direction in the NGOs today, particularly in the older, more seasoned groups. There is also a growing commitment to fostering more open and democratic environmental organizations. The most effective NGOs in the nine target islands actively promote an interactive style of participation — in their memberships, governing boards, and staff. In these organizations there is a combination of idealism, creativity, individual energy, and personally supportive relationships that in an intangible way contributes to the internal dynamics of successful institutional development.

The Challenges Ahead

By the decade of the 1990's, governments in the Eastern Caribbean had developed their own environmental agendas (in part, at the urging of multilateral and bilateral aid agencies). Public sector responsibility for the environment is generally decentralized among several ministries and statutory bodies, although a small core within each government can be identified as having lead responsibility for environmental management issues and policy formulation.

Eastern Caribbean donor activity is changing. USAID will close its regional mission in Barbados in 1996, and two major U.S. foundations, actively involved in the support of environmental programs in the Caribbean in the last two decades, have either completely withdrawn or are in the process of downsizing their Caribbean focus. On the brighter side, British support for environmental activities in the remaining British territories is increasing, and UNDP's NGO Small Grants Program under the Global Environment Facility offers an opportunity for project financing in all OECS islands. Additionally, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States' Natu-

ral Resources Management Unit is promoting the participation of non-governmental and community-based organizations in natural resource management.

Within this new climate, what can be said about the future role of the region's environmental NGOs?

NGOs and Governments

Although there is evidence of anti-NGO bias on the part of some Eastern Caribbean governments, many conservation NGOs have successfully pursued effective working relationships with their respective governments, particularly for shared environmental interests and objectives. Several NGOs are especially adept at cultivating and maintaining institutional relationships with the public sector, albeit these tend to be informal and *ad hoc* and are not characterized by formalized associations or alliances.

Some examples of government/NGO "partnerships" include the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society which has a long-established relationship with the Nevis Is-

land Government, including Government's partial support of museum staff. The St. Lucia National Trust receives substantial financial assistance from the Government of St. Lucia; other national trusts, like the trust in St. Vincent, receive government support but to a lesser extent. The British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust manages an extensive system of parks and protected areas for Government, and the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society manages that historic monument under the provisions of national conservation legislation.

While important to each NGO, these relationships at times oblige the organization to balance what can be conflicting responsibilities. When building collaborative associations with Government, the NGO must simultaneously maintain sufficient autonomy and integrity to move its own environmental priorities forward.

Complementary Roles

The character of the relationship between Eastern Caribbean environmental NGOs and their governments is essentially a complementary one, with NGOs extending or supplementing the reach of government agencies. They may at times apply pressure for the public sector to perform better, but more often the NGOs seek to balance or augment the government's activities and responsibilities.

For example, the St. Christopher Heritage Society and the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society participated with Government in an OAS-supported tourism planning project, a major component of which was to identify cultural and natural attractions in the country. In St. Lucia, two NGOs, the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), collaborated with the Government's Department of Fisheries to establish a reef monitoring program on the west coast of the island. In Montserrat, the National Trust is working with the Forestry Division to develop nature trails at Galways; and in Antigua, the Environmental Awareness Group is assisting Forestry to develop trails and guided walks at the Wallings Reservoir -- both projects extensions of national ecotourism planning and forestry management.

On a broader scale, Island Resources Foundation's Biodiversity Program specifically supports a linking of public and private sector institutions to extend biodiversity conservation objectives in the Eastern Caribbean. In the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Resource Management Cooperative (VIRMC) was established by more than two dozen public and private sector institutions who recognized the need for a cooperative approach to environmental research and the management of natural resources in the two territories.

This partial list will likely grow longer in the 1990's, for there is greater optimism about collective action by governments and conservation NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean. Collaboration seems to enhance the impact of the efforts of both, and therefore the potential for further cooperative action is promising.

NGOs and Donors

Eastern Caribbean environmental NGOs will continue to depend on outside assistance, certainly in the foreseeable future. At present, there is not a sufficiently broad base of financial support for environmental NGOs at home, and thus they continue to seek financial assistance abroad.

Donor support — overwhelmingly for project activities — is not just an important revenue source. Donor funding also strengthens the NGO by increasing its credibility and visibility (at home and in the region), and helps the organization gain needed experience in designing, implementing, reporting on, and evaluating projects (see, as an example, the EAG case study).

As discussed elsewhere in this document, the way a donor does business can enlarge or diminish the impact of the money or technical assistance provided; in some cases it can strengthen or inhibit the organizational development of the recipient NGO.

While donor support may be critical, there are also recurring difficulties. Some of those most often noted in the Eastern Caribbean include:

- (i) Careful scrutinizing by donors of prospective grantees *before* a grant is made but less attentive contact and supportive dialogue with NGO grantees *after* an award is made.
- (ii) Emphasis on project-specific performance as critical outcomes and far less concern about organizational outcomes.
- (iii) Short-term relationships between donors and grantees, precluding the kind of continuity and nurturing which may be as essential to the institutional development of small NGOs as the actual flow of money.
- (iv) The reluctance of many donors to fund the NGO's indirect institutional costs as well as the project's direct costs.
- (v) The level and pace of project-specific funding exceeds the institutional competence of the recipient NGO.

Environmental Profile Project as NGO Strengthening Vehicle

An instructional example of how one donor project interwove NGO institutional strengthening objectives into a technically focused activity is afforded by the five-year (1986-1991) Environmental Profile Project funded by USAID and implemented by the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) and Island Resources Foundation. In six Eastern Caribbean countries (Antigua-Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent) a "country environmental profile" (CEP) was prepared, detailing the state of the environment and providing an assessment of priority environmental issues.

A lead environmental NGO was selected to assist with CEP project implementation in target countries, and a grant was awarded to each NGO to enable it to carry out project responsibilities without obstructing other organizational priorities.

In fact, grant funding permitted some NGOs to flourish. CEP funds were used to upgrade NGO staffs, services and office operations, and to help NGOs establish or improve environmental reference libraries. When the project ended, a considerable body of literature and documentation, gathered during the CEP research phase, was left behind with participating NGOs. The intention was to improve NGO capacity for

collecting, archiving, disseminating and managing environmental information in each country.

By planning for substantial NGO support and involvement in this technical project, project sponsors accomplished the following:

- energized NGOs and encouraged them to think strategically about environmental resource management in their countries;
- helped to focus the agenda of participating NGOs on key environmental issues and priorities;
- increased the opportunity for NGO involvement in a national definition of sustainable growth policies.

The Funding Challenge

With the CEP project as one illustration, and the Mukti Fund's style of grant-making (see case study) as another, there is evidence of a new donor/grantee paradigm in the Eastern Caribbean. There remains, however, the nagging issue of how Eastern Caribbean environmental NGOs are to achieve a better mix of revenue sources. Some are excessively dependent on government subventions or project-related donor support; too many are weakened by inadequate financing of recurring operational costs. It is an unresolved issue and

one which the NGO community and the donor community should consider together.

The funding challenge essentially focuses on four related issues:

- (i) NGOs must learn to live with project funding without jeopardizing the institutional growth of the organization.
- (ii) NGOs must learn to live with government contributions without allowing such support to compromise their voluntary and independent character.
- (iii) NGOs need to work harder and be more creative in identifying a diversified portfolio of financial resources, especially for core operational costs.*
- (iv) NGOs need to remember that a precondition for achieving financial stability is effective strategic planning.

The Credibility Challenge

Finally, as they become increasingly effective environmental leaders, Eastern Caribbean NGOs are taking on a corre-

sponding responsibility to speak with a credible voice in all that they do. NGO arguments and positions on environmental issues must not only carry conviction and passion, they must also be sufficiently sound to withstand critical analysis and opposition. Challenges to NGO positions are inevitable, and environmental NGOs — like all persuasive advocates — will most effectively exercise leadership if they are armed with facts, solutions, and passion balanced with purpose.

As many of these conservation NGOs enter their second and third decades as environmental leaders, they are well positioned to do just that.

* A helpful overview on this subject is provided in "*Financing Strategies and Techniques for NGOs*" (NGO NEWS, May 1992).

Environmental Awareness Group

The Environmental Awareness Group of Antigua-Barbuda displays characteristics typical of non-governmental organizations in the Eastern Caribbean. Most significant is the organization's small size — whether measured in terms of membership, budget or staff. Even its 100 plus membership and one employee exaggerate its "functional" size. In reality, a half dozen volunteer members at most manage the EAG's organizational affairs and implement its programs. The success or failure of the organization, perhaps its very survival, is in the hands of this small, but critical core group.

Much Is Expected

Although understaffed and underfinanced, much is expected of the Environmental Awareness Group. Like most environmental NGOs in the region, it is the focus of unrealistic expectations from a national population that believes it has nowhere else to turn. Additionally, the international community routinely underestimates the impact of the conditions it imposes. As "the environment" increasingly

takes center stage in global affairs, groups like EAG find that more and more time is expended responding to requests for information on their country's environment or attending numerous meetings and workshops where the environment is under discussion.

Balancing Advocacy and Effectiveness

The Environmental Awareness Group is the only NGO in Antigua-Barbuda whose primary mission is to protect the environment, a situation not dissimilar to that in many smaller Eastern Caribbean islands. Groups in this position face an ever present tension — as the only formal organization functioning like an environmental "watchdog", EAG has to keep a vigilant, and sometimes critical, eye on Government and the business community (because of their potential to significantly impact the environment). At the same time, the NGO must balance any possible environmental advocacy role with its need to forge effective working partnerships with these same players.

While the experiences of the Environmental Awareness Group may be unique to its situation, it nevertheless serves as an instructive case study that is illustrative of many other small environmental NGOs in the region.

Offspring of Established Conservation Group

As occurred elsewhere in the Eastern Caribbean, early "conservation" interests in Antigua-Barbuda emphasized historical heritage and the preservation of colonial sites and architecture. Although promotion of the natural heritage was included in the mission of the country's oldest conservation organization -- the Historical and Archaeological Society (HAS), established in 1956 -- this was not its primary objective. Therefore in 1988, in an effort to address a broader range of environmental concerns, a sub-group of the HAS formed an affiliate organization which they named the Environmental Awareness Group.

During the next year and a half, the EAG sponsored periodic lectures and field trips, but otherwise retained a very low profile. Although there were proponents in EAG and HAS supporting greater autonomy for both groups, the EAG remained in an undefined state. It often viewed itself as an independent organization, but at the same time lacked legal status and remained dependent on the Historical and Archaeo-

logical Society in a committee-like relationship with the larger organization.

An important development occurred in early 1990 when the EAG received its first independent, project-focused funding. In March of that year, the organization provided logistical and technical support for an externally funded National Conservation Strategy Workshop. Shortly thereafter, the EAG was asked by the Caribbean Conservation Association to serve as the in-country NGO coordinator for the USAID-funded Country Environment Profile project in Antigua-Barbuda.

In both cases, the group's primary responsibility was to provide logistical support. Nevertheless, the projects gave EAG members an opportunity to contribute actively to identifying and prioritizing environmental issues in their country. Additionally, these activities generated revenue and significantly heightened the credibility and visibility of the EAG.

Project-linked Growth

During the 1990's, projects continued to play an important role in the organization's development. The group's primary accomplishments focused on training and field work associated with an agroforestry project. More recently, the EAG has been involved in a biodiversity conservation project and another specifically targeting the Wallings Reservoir conservation area.

All of these activities were funded by external aid agencies.

Despite these early successes in attracting donor funding and in project implementation, the group has not fared as well in building a strong organizational structure. Membership and revenue have increased slightly, and office infrastructure improved somewhat. But in 1995, as in 1990, the sole paid staff position is temporary, supported exclusively by project-based funding. And relatively little progress has been made in securing adequate unrestricted funds to cover administrative salaries and other recurring operational costs.

Fund Raising! (the NGO's Achilles' Heel)

The Environmental Awareness Group, like most small, membership-based NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean, faces an almost continuous struggle to generate sufficient funds to cover operational costs and to enable the group to carry out its work. Like other conservation NGOs, EAG employs a wide variety of income-generating schemes, with varying degrees of success.

The membership of EAG is small, and these fees contribute in only a limited way to meeting the organization's recurring operating costs. Some other NGOs in the region have been more successful in this regard. For example, in Antigua, the His-

torical and Archaeological Society has a membership exceeding 300, despite higher membership fees than EAG. The Nevis Historical and Conservation Society and the Montserrat National Trust have memberships in excess of 500, even though the population of Nevis and Montserrat is approximately one-sixth the size of Antigua's.

NGOs that develop gift shops, especially those located in museums, can generate substantial revenues from this source. For example, the Historical and Archaeological Society of Antigua-Barbuda consistently raises about 25 percent of its revenue from the sale of gift items.

Several environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean receive a government subvention. Although the Environmental Awareness Group does not, it benefits from the Antiguan Government's support of the Historical and Archaeological Society. Initially, the EAG was allowed to share space with the research division of the museum operated by HAS. Currently, it has its own office in the museum and receives free utilities in exchange for which it offers a small contribution to the Society to offset maintenance costs. During its early years, and to a considerable extent even today, the support that the EAG receives indirectly through its association with the Historical and Archaeological Society is critical to the smaller organization's survival.

EAG receives virtually no financial support from the business community — a situation that is replicated in the region. The group has managed to solicit in-kind contributions but very little direct financial assistance through corporate memberships or contributions. The tradition of corporate philanthropy for environmental causes is not well developed in Antigua-Barbuda, or elsewhere in the Eastern Caribbean.

Recovering Institutional Costs For Project Work

EAG's relative lack of success with more traditional fund raising measures underscores the importance of donor-driven projects for the organization. Although these funds were utilized in support of project activities, there were indirect institutional benefits:

- (i) During periodic lulls in project scheduling, the project staff person was able to assist volunteers with preparation of newsletters, answering the telephone, greeting visitors, and carrying out other more general organizational work.
- (ii) Indirect (or administrative) costs associated with projects were an important unrestricted revenue source.

Few NGOs fully appreciate the extent to which donor-funded projects can help support the organization's operational costs if

indirect or administrative costs are allocated as a part of total project budgets. Establishing performance-based relationships with donors and with contract employers for which the NGO provides services carries risks. But these also represent a potentially valuable mechanism for recovering costs associated with institutional overheads.

EAG Looks To The Future

A central paradox faces many small NGOs like the EAG. A small group of dedicated volunteers basically "runs" the organization, but they are severely overextended. This core group may find it difficult to divert limited human resources from what is considered the organization's "real work" to the often more difficult task of generating enough basic funding to allow the organization to stay in business (in other words, to meet its recurring operating expenses). Yet both are essential if the organization is to survive.

The Environmental Awareness Group of Antigua-Barbuda is a relatively young, still evolving NGO. It has demonstrated that it can successfully attract donor-supported funding which, at least in the short term, will continue to be a key source of revenue. The challenge for the organization at this time is to leverage project-based funding so that it serves as a catalyst for organizational growth and institutional development.

Profile of A NGO

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS GROUP

Organizational Dimensions

- Relatively small membership base
- Underfinanced relative to the scope of the group's mandate and the expectations of the community
- One paid staff person (intermittent, project funded)
- Established office
- Core group of volunteers who manage the organization's affairs and implement its programs
- Survival of the organization, at the present time, assumed to be in the hands of this small but critical core group

Organizational History

- Relatively new NGO (organized in 1988)
- Offshoot of larger, established conservation group
- Remains somewhat dependent on "parent" organization, particularly for basic infrastructure and related services
- Early activities emphasized environmental awareness-building through lectures and field trips
- Significant expansion in 1990 with the introduction of donor-financed, project-driven activities

Ingredients of Success

- Commitment of a small group of members (even though the composition of this core has changed over time), active in project implementation and willing to assume responsibility for daily operations
- Willingness and ability to forge partnerships with Government, even while sometimes needing to voice opposition to Government actions
- Demonstrated capability for attracting donor funding for project-based work, while using project funding as indirect support for operational expenses

JEMS Progressive Community Organization

The JEMS Progressive Community Organization was established in 1978 to provide leadership for the communities of Jnction, Enhams, McCarthy and the Surrounding villages (JEMS). Over time, a total of 15 villages and over 8,000 persons became involved directly as participants or indirectly as beneficiaries.

JEMS differs from most environmental NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean in that it is rural, not urban, based. It is also strongly community oriented and has broad grass-roots ties.

The group began as a youth organization 17 years ago, and as the original leaders matured, so did the organization. From a localized focus on villages in the southeast of St. Vincent, JEMS now functions as a national environmental network. In the Caribbean region, it is widely recognized for its innovative and effective approaches to community-based resource management.

An Environmental Movement Rooted In Economic Hardships

In the early 1970's the agricultural estates providing employment for most residents of 15 villages in the southeast of St. Vincent abruptly ceased to operate, resulting in widespread unemployment and severe economic dislocation in the area. With few alternatives, villagers began to exploit the resources of the nearby Kingshill Forest Reserve, considered to be the oldest legally protected natural area in the Caribbean.

Trees were cut for charcoal burning and firewood, land was cleared by squatters and a general decline in the resource base was apparent. Within this atmosphere, a group of young people organized JEMS in 1978 for the purpose of mobilizing their communities to take action for resolving their economic and social difficulties.

Not least among the goals of the early organizers of JEMS was the need to reestablish traditional links between the protected area at Kingshill and the surrounding

villages. JEMS proposed to work with the local communities — including the squatters — to find more appropriate ways to manage the Forest Reserve, ensure its ecological integrity and facilitate its role in contributing to the well being of the people living adjacent to the site.

A Voice To Articulate Community Needs

JEMS' development as an effective, some might even say a prototypic, NGO did not happen quickly. Almost a decade after its founding, the organization had a rent-free office but its infrastructure consisted of only one desk and a donated typewriter. It had an informal program agenda but had yet to formalize its constitution. It was ambitious and enthusiastic, but factionalism within the membership was not unknown. The Kingshill Forest Reserve was a priority interest, but critical linkages with the governmental ministry managing the Reserve had not been established. All of this would come with time.

It is interesting to note that early on, when the group had no central headquarters, it instead relied on the fact that members of the executive committee came from all corners of the JEMS service area. There was even some advantage to being nowhere and yet everywhere at the same time. As the group has grown and expanded — acquired a headquarters, computer and fax, staff and donor support —

there was a risk that the early unity of purpose and organizational cohesion would be lost. In the case of JEMS, this has not occurred.

From the beginning, the group's institutional strength has resided in its leadership core (young people with shared values who had grown up together) and in a self-styled organizational approach that endeavored to be both democratic and participatory. Much of JEMS early success was not directly linked to its project design capabilities. What JEMS was first of all good at was helping small community groups articulate some of their basic needs and problems within a supportive, secure environment.

Focus On Community Development

As part of its overall mission to assist community-based rural development in St. Vincent, education (both formal and informal) has been a JEMS priority. Over 300 persons graduated from its Adult Education Program from 1985 to 1992, with training in literacy and employment-generation skills. JEMS has also supported a day care and pre-school facility, housed in a building partially owned by JEMS and funded by CIDA.

Donor funding in 1986 enabled JEMS to launch its first environmental infrastructure project, the laying of a half mile of

piping to bring water for the first time to two rural villages, and the erection of public stand pipes and bath houses in those villages. Additional infrastructure projects have been implemented, all on a self-help basis, including village water projects at Choppins, McCarthy, Stubbs, Enhams, Argyle and Carapan in 1988-1991, road improvements, construction of recreational facilities and community center, and creation of a solid waste management program.

Focus On Community and The Environment

In support of community-based rural development, a specific JEMS objective has been to empower communities to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way, an objective with roots in the founders' early concerns about depletion of resources at the Kingshill Forest Reserve.

To this end, JEMS has supported village clean-up campaigns and community tree plantings. Members have also served as roving environmental educators, not only within the JEMS target area in St. Vincent but also to neighboring villages in the nearby island of St. Lucia. JEMS also supports environmental groups in the schools, including Youth Environment and Service (YES) Clubs.

JEMS employs a number of techniques to raise community consciousness about the environment. These include:

- popular theater,
- moonlight "wakes" — a traditional story-telling, game-playing, folk-singing village gathering,
- educational programs in the schools, and
- house-to-house visits and informal surveys to assess community attitudes about specific issues.

The Kingshill Forest Reserve continues to be a focus for JEMS. The group has worked to eliminate squatting in the area and feels that this is now under control. JEMS is currently in the process of developing a management strategy for Kingshill, exploring issues such as national park status, day visitor use, camping, and operation of a research facility with accommodations for visiting researchers. A key objective is to find ways to generate income for the surrounding communities while retaining the site's protected area status.

Focus On Community As Environmental Watchdog

Some villages within the JEMS beneficiary area have created "watchdog" committees to monitor activities with potentially harmful environmental consequences.

In some cases, protest marches and similar activities have been organized — as when a stone quarry, impacting on adjacent villages and the nearby Milligan Cay Bird Sanctuary, was established. More recently, JEMS took the lead for organizing public response to a dramatic increase in beach sand extraction in early 1995, the direct result of a proposed Government-imposed ban on sand mining announced in advance of the cut-off date.

Community Leaders Find A National Voice

From late 1994 to mid 1995, JEMS conducted a series of ten community consultations and four national workshops, the latter significantly enhancing the organization's growing reputation as a national environmental leader. Eight of the ten community consultations were geared at helping other community-based organizations in St. Vincent access funding under the Small Grants Program of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Two others were in direct response to the sand mining issue.

Local leaders identified through the community consultation process were brought together in three national workshops which trained 75 community leaders who then returned to their respective villages to train others in community-based natural resource management.

In March of 1995, JEMS organized a two-day national consultation at which time representatives from 100 Vincentian organizations gathered in the capital city of Kingstown to discuss national environmental issues. The feature address was delivered by the country's Prime Minister, and Andrew Simmons, the first president of JEMS, spoke on the need to protect resources without harming peoples' livelihoods.

JEMS now had a national voice. But it had also come full circle back to its founding incentive — namely, the imperative to protect resources while enhancing the well being of people.

Profile of A NGO

JEMS PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Organizational Dimensions

- Rural, community-based membership that is also the primary beneficiary group
- Secretariat is moderately well equipped and manned by one support staff person
- Volunteers from donor organizations and project-supported professionals augment the membership's technical skills to implement programs
- Experienced in raising funds to support activities; provides training to other community-based organizations to do the same

Organizational History

- Almost two decades old (organized in 1978)
- Founded by a group of young people concerned about the economic and environmental problems of their rural communities
- Successful management of traditional community development projects (e.g., education and training, provision of water infrastructure, self-help programs)
- Equally successful at raising the environmental consciousness of small rural communities and energizing their participation in resource management programs

Ingredients of Success

- Incremental, gradual development as an organization, with a self-styled institutional philosophy emphasizing democratic participation
- Strong leadership provided by the founding members who have grown with the organization and share leadership responsibilities
- Strategic planning in the organization carried out using participatory methods
- Ongoing training opportunities which enable those who want to grow with the organization to do so
- The ability of the group to link community needs with local resource management priorities

St. Lucia National Trust

The St. Lucia National Trust, like similar trusts in the Commonwealth Caribbean, is modeled on the British National Trust. Established two decades ago, the SLNT enjoyed a period of unusual growth and expansion in the late 1980's, resulting in its emergence as a well-respected conservation organization not only in St. Lucia but also regionally and even internationally.

The following case study looks at the Trust during four critical development cycles and examines its organizational approach and management style.

The Establishment Period

The St. Lucia National Trust emerged in the mid-1970's amid other regional and international events signaling the start of a new interest in the environment. In St. Lucia, a cluster of events occurred between the years 1970 and 1975 which formed the specific background against which the Trust took shape.

- (i) Pigeon Island, which figured prominently in St. Lucia's colonial history, became the focus of a development

scheme to build a causeway linking it to the main island and making it available for tourism development.

- (ii) The project was to be implemented by a company owned equally by the Government of St. Lucia, the Commonwealth Development Corporation and a private developer, and had the potential to seriously inhibit planning for the area as a significant historic site. This concerned some St. Lucians, including Mr. Julian Hunte, then Chairman of the Morne Fortune Beautification Committee and present Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. Hunte led a campaign to establish a national trust for the purpose of managing Pigeon Island as part of the national patrimony. He was actively supported by the 17-year-old St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society.
- (iii) In 1971 the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) convened its Annual General Meeting in St. Lucia, during which time the importance of Pigeon Island and the need for a trust-like organization were highlighted. Two years earlier, in 1969, a three-

person planning team from the CCA (headed by Sir Philip Sherlock, retired Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies) had met with the Government on the subject of Pigeon Island's future and establishment of a national trust, and in June of 1971, the Premier of St. Lucia had contacted the CCA specifically requesting assistance for restoration work at Pigeon Island.

- (iv) In 1971, a Government-appointed steering committee prepared a draft bill to incorporate a St. Lucia National Trust, which was officially established four years later.
- (v) Robert Devaux, a versatile and dedicated naturalist, historian and amateur archaeologist, became Secretary to the Council of the Trust, and in 1977 was appointed its first Director with a small annual budget of EC\$15,000.

Fortuitously, these events converged at approximately the same time to create a favorable environment for the Trust. No single event was the catalytic agent, but rather the collective force of this particular set of circumstances, people, and time merged to facilitate the formation of a new organization.

The Formative Years

During the years 1975 to 1978 the Trust began to fulfill its mandate as articulated in

enabling legislation. Several sites were leased, vested or donated to the Trust for management. The first and most important was the leasing of Pigeon Island, now the Pigeon Island National Landmark.

Research and publication activities began during this period, undertaken primarily by the Director. Foremost among the publications produced was the first national inventory of natural and cultural sites, now out of print but still used and in considerable demand.

Over time, the two linked programs — land and site management (including restoration work) plus research coupled with publication — began to build the reputation of the Trust as a source of credible information and sound accomplishments.

During the decade from 1975 to 1985, the SLNT forged important institutional links which were to serve it well in the years to come. At a regional level, this included a productive association with the Caribbean Conservation Association and its then program-implementation arm, the Eastern Caribbean Natural Areas Management Program. Through relationships with a variety of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, the Trust acquired needed technical skills which it could not at the time provide in-house. One collaboration enabled the Trust to establish the Maria Islands Nature Reserve and construct the Maria Islands Nature Center.

What is most definable about this period was the indefatigable leadership provided by the Trust's first Director, Robert Devaux, whose resourcefulness and initiative were backed by a supportive Council of volunteer members. Additionally, a focus on site restoration and land management coupled with a program of research and publication not only sustained the Trust but brought it recognition and support which enabled the group to accomplish even more in the years ahead.

The "Take-off" Years

In 1988, the SLNT embarked on a major project — development of the country's first Protected Areas Plan — which would help to set its agenda for many years. With assistance from the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, a proposal to develop simultaneously a Protected Areas Plan while building the institutional capacity of the Trust was submitted to the Government of St. Lucia and to USAID. The project prepared Government and the Trust for responsibilities in managing protected areas, and resulted, for the first time, in the Trust playing a significant coordinating role in the development of a national program.

From 1988 to 1992, the institutional capacity and capabilities of the Trust were strengthened, and the basic form of its operational management style emerged. Foremost was incorporation of participa-

tory planning as its basic approach to protected areas planning and management.

Additionally, as a result of three administrative studies commissioned by the Trust over a period of four years, a restructuring of the organization took place in 1992. New staff were employed including the first Area Manager, thus beginning a process of decentralizing Trust programs outside of the capital city.

Consolidation & Expansion

The year 1992 saw fruition of the Trust's protected areas planning project with publication of *A System of Protected Areas for St. Lucia*. It also brought a number of staffing changes. The post of Director of Natural Heritage was created and filled, and the Trust's long-time Director relinquished administrative duties to more aggressively pursue research and publishing, thus necessitating the hiring of a new Administrator.

Additionally, by the end of 1994, the SLNT had employed four Area Managers, each of whom is responsible for approximately one quarter of the island. These persons are not only resource managers but also play an important role as community facilitators. All of these changes meant that the expertise available to the Trust was now broader and more varied.

Among the first tasks of the new Administrator was initiation of a process leading to development of a Trust mission statement. Further, with assistance from the Council, the Administrator completed an internal review designed in part to redefine the Trust's primary program areas. After considerable consultation and discussion, new program areas were identified, and in 1995 the Trust began its first year working within the new programmatic sectors.

In sum, since 1992 important changes have occurred within the Trust, including a shift in leadership which can be a confusing time for any institution. In the case of the St. Lucia Natural Trust, the organization chose to disperse responsibility for growth and management among an expanding group of individuals, with shared responsibility by the entire staff and with no dominant figure.

The Foundation Stones

Much of the success of the St. Lucia National Trust can be attributed to a strong foundation provided by four separate blocks of support.

(1) Staff. Current employees number 55 full- and part-time individuals, with a mixture of professionals, administrative, technical and field staff. Personnel training remains an important ongoing activity. The staff is the driving force of the organization which, in turn, provides a working envi-

ronment in which innovation and new ideas are encouraged. Opportunities for training and creativity are viewed as being substantially responsible for retention of a largely dedicated and loyal staff.

(2) Membership. The total number of active members stands at 400, many of whom have served in a voluntary capacity for a number of years on sub-committees or the governing Council. While membership size and involvement are good, it could be more balanced as an excessive number of members are clustered in the Castries/Gros Islet area of the island.

(3) Government. The Government of St. Lucia has not interfered in the management of the National Trust, even though at times the organization took opposing positions. Government neutrality did not waver even when the Chairman of the Trust was leader of the Opposition Party in Parliament. At times, it appeared the Trust was the only arena where there could be consensus among political leaders.

The SLNT collaborates with government departments on various projects, and is viewed by the National Government as a major resource management organization in the country. This productive rapport with Government is due in large measure to the independent excellence of the Trust's work which is both visible and respected.

The Government of St. Lucia funds approximately two-thirds of the Trust's annual budget. Although the Trust is generally comfortable with Government providing some annual monetary contribution, at the present time it feels the subvention is too large a percentage of the organization's annual financial requirements. Quite aware of the potential consequences of such dependency, the Council and senior staff have drafted a new funding strategy which is presently undergoing refinement. The goal is to reduce the Government's subvention to less than 50 percent of the total budget, and then to continue to reduce that amount incrementally over time.

(4) Management. The Trust's management style also earns high marks as a factor contributing to the group's overall successful development. An emphasis on institutional collaboration with stakeholders in developing and carrying out projects keeps the decision-making process open and participatory. Frequent staff meetings, periodic reporting and review requirements, and ready access to senior staff all help to ensure that opportunities for learning have been integrated into the normal operations of the Trust and that the organization is able to innovate rapidly in order to take advantage of changing circumstances. It also means that information tends to flow more rapidly through the organization, thus minimizing response time.

A People's Organization

The St. Lucia National Trust, despite its past successes and substantial recent growth, is still an organization in transition. As it looks to the future, the SLNT's Director of Natural Heritage, Giles Romulus, believes the organization will continue to function as a participatory "people's organization," dependent on a staff of both generalists and specialists, on an open operational style that encourages creativity, and on an abundance of expertise that enhances the organization's ability to prepare for the unforeseen.

Profile of A National Trust

THE ST. LUCIA NATIONAL TRUST

Organizational Dimensions

- Membership in excess of 600 with a good base of active participants (about 400), although heavily concentrated in the capital city area
- 55 employees including Area Managers who are dispersed around the island
- Excellent management infrastructure
- Active manager of property and sites which are leased, vested or donated to the Trust
- Well funded, including support from the donor community, the private sector and Government

Organizational History

- 20-year history as an institution (established by statute in 1975)
- Began small but concentrated early efforts on site management and restoration, research and publication, gradually building a credible reputation and performance record
- Enjoyed significant growth in the late 1980's, with subsequent expansion of the Trust's institutional capacity and program capabilities

Ingredients of Success

- Strong early leadership important for establishing a functional, credible organization
- Organizational commitment to a participatory approach and preference for a consensus decision-making style
- Dedicated staff of generalists and specialists, willing to critically review performance and learn from their mistakes
- A willingness to experiment with new ideas and to use an adaptive and proactive planning process
- Effective working relationships with the Government and other NGOs, with SLNT treated as a respected ally based on the independent excellence of its work
- Ability to improve and adapt internal administrative structure as circumstances change

Mukti Fund

The Mukti Fund is a private U.S. foundation whose primary long-term goal is to support nation building in the dual-island state of St. Kitts and Nevis. The foundation's assistance program is predicated on its belief that a small donor with limited financial resources can be effective by *focusing* its grant-giving efforts and by *sustaining* its philanthropic outreach over a significant period of time.

Mukti's founder, Michael Dively, established the foundation in 1983 and runs the organization without any staff and assisted only by four volunteer board members. With an endowment of over one million US dollars — which yields approximately US\$40,000 a year for its grant-making program — Mukti is by any definition a small donor group in the Eastern Caribbean. Yet Mukti has taken its "smallness" and used it to an advantage. As Dively has pointed out, "Our objective has been to demonstrate that you can do a lot of philanthropy with a small amount of money."

Searching For Focus

Finding its special niche, however, was critical. In 1985 Mukti took a major step in defining itself with the decision to concentrate on international grant making and then further to concentrate on only one country, with St. Kitts-Nevis finally selected as that target. Under the general-purpose theme of supporting "nation building" in St. Kitts and Nevis, Mukti launched its program with a series of experimental grants, including:

- a program to supply books to libraries, schools and prisons;
- a revolving loan fund for micro-businesses;
- another fund for small community grants administered by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

Dively likes to use one small community grant made during this period to illustrate Mukti's early philosophy of planting small amounts of seed money in many different places. In this case, Mukti made a US\$400 investment in a village bus stop for which the government gave the land, a youth

group built the shelter, a contractor donated the bricks, and Mukti paid for the roof!

By 1988, however, Mukti's board had become increasingly concerned about the foundation's shorter-term, project-focus approach to funding, an approach which might be limiting opportunities for influencing more comprehensive kinds of "nation building" in St. Kitts and Nevis. Following up on recommendations in an external evaluation which Mukti's board authorized in 1991, the trustees launched their own internal review which resulted in a new mission and policy statement, a sharper, more detailed focus, and a five-year strategic planning document.

Identifying Targets For Future Support

Under the same overall umbrella of promoting nation building, Mukti would now concentrate on finding ways to strengthen the capacities and performance of both public and private sector institutions engaged specifically in sustainable development and the conservation of cultural and natural resources. During its first decade in St. Kitts-Nevis, Mukti had indirectly supported institution building in its grant program. What it would now do, in its second decade, was explicitly identify institution building as a funding goal and make institution strengthening a primary theme of its grant making.

With this new direction, Mukti support for environmental NGOs in St. Kitts and Nevis emerged as a strategically defined program interest. In particular, Mukti's relationship with the country's primary environmental NGOs began to take a different form — fewer grants but more substantially funded and with longer time frames.

Nevis Historical and Conservation Society

The Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) is the largest NGO in Nevis and the largest membership-based conservation organization in the country. Established in 1980, the group's early program interests were history, archaeology and culture. By the mid-1980's, however, the Society had begun to assume a broader environmental agenda and become more of an activist group for the environment in Nevis.

Since its founding a decade and a half ago, the NHCS has established two museums, a research archives and an environmental library for Nevis. It has a solid membership base, a permanent staff of eight, and has attracted significant donor funding for projects (from OAS, UNEP, WWF, and USAID, among others).

By the early 1990's, the NHCS was a well-established organization, with substantial physical and institutional infrastructure. Mukti's more directed support

therefore would not take form as the kind of institutional development assistance required by a less established organization. What was needed, according to the Society, was support for projects and activities not readily “fundable” by more traditional donors.

Mukti saw its role then as (1) filling gaps in program funding and (2) providing grants for secretariat costs not easily funded through the NHCS’s more usual revenue sources. In keeping with these objectives, Mukti has purchased office equipment, helped employ part-time personnel, assisted in upgrading publication capabilities, facilitated the renovation of the Society’s oldest museum, supported planning for a field research center, and provided emergency funds following Hurricane Hugo.

St. Christopher Heritage Society

A counterpart organization to the NHCS did not exist in St. Kitts until 1989 when the St. Christopher Heritage Society (SCHS) was founded by a group of Kittitians concerned about safeguarding and preserving the island’s heritage. Within a relatively short period of time, the SCHS built a membership base, established a headquarters office, hired a full-time office support person, launched a magazine entitled *Heritage*, and secured external funding

to implement its first major program — serving as the St. Kitts partner for the USAID/CCA/IRF Country Environmental Profile Project for the Eastern Caribbean. This project helped to establish the Society’s identity as a viable organization and also provided an early working agenda for the group.

With aggressive and dedicated leadership from its founding officers, the Society made significant progress in its early years. However, like many volunteer-based NGOs, the SCHS was weakened by lack of professional staff — in particular, someone who could simultaneously be a program coordinator, fund raiser, and executive director, all responsibilities initially carried by the group’s over-extended volunteer board. While it was recognized that the organization would always rely heavily on the work of volunteers, the board believed that if the SCHS was to become as effective as it needed to be, it was important to fund a salaried position for someone whose responsibilities and energies were focused exclusively on the Society.

It was at this point that the SCHS turned to the Mukti Fund in 1993 to request a three-year institutional development grant to fund an executive director position and further support the Society in developing a long-term funding strategy and strengthening the organization’s financial base. This support — which may extend into a fourth

year of support — represented a new kind of commitment by Mukti, one which focused on more comprehensive development support for a single NGO over a longer time frame. Mukti was now allocating a significant portion of its limited resources to a single organization based on its belief that a Kittitian-based environmental NGO was important to advancing sustainable development in the country.

NGO Collaboration and Communication

Additionally, the Mukti Fund regards cooperation among the environmental NGOs in St. Kitts and Nevis as an important goal. To this end, Mukti has provided “collaboration” grants to the country’s conservation organizations (in addition to the NHCS and the SCHS, these include the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society and the Nevis Environmental Education Committee).

These grants enable the organizations to come together periodically in an environmental “retreat,” to discuss common goals as environmental advocates and to identify ways for mutually supportive conservation roles in the country. This kind of collaboration is particularly important in a dual-island state like St. Kitts-Nevis, where geographical barriers extend the more common organizational rivalries. Mukti also believes that providing incentives for collaboration will help insure that the NGOs have

a stronger, broader policy impact in the country.

Finally, Mukti recognizes the importance of interaction between St. Kitts-Nevis NGOs and regional environmental networks. It therefore provides travel grants to the country’s conservation NGOs for attendance at meetings and conferences which reinforce and enhance local conservation work. Mukti’s premise in this case is that group capacity cannot expand without providing opportunities for growth and learning by individual members and leaders.

Creating Partnerships

Mukti has stayed the course in St. Kitts and Nevis. Its constancy in and of itself is an important achievement that is appreciated in the country.

In the last analysis perhaps Mukti’s greatest strength lies in its adherence to a policy of sensitive and sensible guidance, where creating partnerships with its NGO beneficiaries is as important as allocating grants. In short, Mukti believes that while its financial contributions are important revenue resources for the environmental community in St. Kitts and Nevis, it also believes the traditional donor/beneficiary relationship can be enhanced by a collaborative, responsive partnership between the donor and the groups it supports.

Profile of A Donor Organization

THE MUKTI FUND

Organizational Dimensions

- Small donor with a focused grant-making program in St. Kitts and Nevis of approximately US\$40,000 per year
- Organization run by founder with no staff and only assisted by a volunteer board
- Interactive relationships with grantees reinforced by bi-annual working visits of the full board to St. Kitts-Nevis

Organizational History

- Established in 1983
- Decision made in 1985 to focus on international grantmaking, and then to concentrate on St. Kitts and Nevis
- Institution building explicitly identified as a funding goal during a ten-year organizational review in 1993

Ingredients of Success

- Long-term commitment to St. Kitts-Nevis
- Development of an interactive dialogue with recipient organizations — Mukti knows its beneficiaries and they know Mukti
- Capacity and willingness to be creative and experimental in its grant making, i.e., Mukti does not refuse to provide support for organizational expenses and activities normally excluded by donors
- A demonstrated willingness to convert project support into institutional support, where warranted
- Strong donor supervision role and grantee accountability balanced by a desire to promote an atmosphere of greater security for grantees