

New reports highlight opportunities for sustainable blue economy in the Caribbean

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A new set of reports from the Commonwealth Secretariat have highlighted the potential for a more sustainable future in the Caribbean.

The Rapid Readiness Assessment (RRA) has been trialed in selected Caribbean islands over the last few months. The results will inform the Islands on their next steps towards becoming a sustainable 'blue'

[economy](#). This means the Islands will be able to effectively tap into [ocean resources](#) and support long-term [economic growth](#), while also protecting marine and coastal ecosystems, and ensuring societal well-being.

The [assessment](#) has been conducted as part of a pilot project in the Caribbean Islands of Antigua & Barbuda and Trinidad & Tobago. Through research and workshops, researchers evaluated how ready the Islands' national systems, structures and stakeholders are to make the transition to becoming a sustainable blue economy. Building on progress already made in each country, it will help governments and stakeholders understand their current situation and identify both opportunities and gaps.

Researchers at the University of Portsmouth have been leading the work in Antigua & Barbuda. They found these islands have significant potential for growth in areas such as sustainable fisheries, marine renewable energy, and ocean-based tourism. However, they also identified a number of challenges that will need to be addressed in order to achieve a successful transition, including the need for more comprehensive marine planning and stronger governance frameworks.

Antaya March from the University of Portsmouth has led the work being done in Antigua & Barbuda. She said, "This is a critical time to bring together all of the valuable, existing work in each country and identify how to harmonize approaches and avoid duplication of efforts. A sustainable blue economy presents the opportunity for Antigua & Barbuda and Trinidad & Tobago to truly tap into the wealth of resources the ocean offers, provide equitable sharing of the benefits and reduce their economies' over reliance on tourism and oil respectively, for an equal operating system."

"By identifying key opportunities and challenges, we can begin to

develop strategies that balance economic development with environmental sustainability."

The assessments have been coordinated under the Commonwealth Blue Charter program, with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Howell Marine Consulting and the University of Portsmouth.

Lead Advisor for the Commonwealth Blue Charter program at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Dr. Jeff Ardon said, "The Rapid Readiness Assessment provides a clear picture of a country's existing policies, legal frameworks, systems and political landscape and how these would facilitate a sustainable blue economy transition. They also identify the gaps and outline recommendations for next steps, including the types of resource required."

UNEP's Head of Marine and Freshwater, Leticia Carvalho, said, "The utility of the Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework, and the available assessments, will go a long way in helping countries to take the first steps towards a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to mainstreaming biodiversity into comprehensive ocean and coastal policy as a prerequisite for sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economies.

"This framework can support countries to practically address the critical importance of marine and coastal biodiversity in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework."

More information: Reports: [thecommonwealth.org/publication ... ilot-project-antigua](https://thecommonwealth.org/publication/rapid-readiness-assessment-ilot-project-antigua)

Provided by University of Portsmouth

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