



SLUNCF

SAINT LUCIA NATIONAL
CONSERVATION FUND

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NEWSLETTER

PAVING THE WAY TO A BRIGHTER SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



The Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) seeks not only to school its learners to academic excellence but also wishes to ensure that its graduates are able to integrate smoothly into the socio-economic fabric of society whilst making meaningful contributions to the national sustainable development agenda of Saint Lucia and its sister territories.

The SLUNCF presented the equipment at an official handing over ceremony on November 16th, 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the ceremony took place in both in-person and virtual formats. In attendance were Dr Keith Nurse, Principal, SALCC, Mrs. Karolin Troubetzkoy, Chair of the SLUNCF Board of Directors and Karen McDonald Gayle, Manager of the Conservation Finance Programme Caribbean Biodiversity Fund and Mr. Craig Henry representing the SLUNCF Secretariat, who all expressed messages of congratulations and fond anticipation noting the prospective impacts of this invaluable donation.



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Moisture, ammonium, nitrate and phosphate levels in soil and water, flow rates, conductivity, total dissolved solids and turbidity, commenced in October 2020 at the SALCC with first year Environmental Science students. Students undertook first-hand, in the laboratory, the assessment of rain, surface run-off, and sea water from multiple sources. Students also used equipment to measure air quality in several indoor and outdoor areas of the College



On December 4th, a small but significant milestone was achieved as, for the first time, twenty-four 2nd year Environmental Science College students undertook their first semi-professional analysis of ecosystems.



The term semi-professional is used as students utilized river sample nets and techniques, multi-parameter water quality equipment, dissolved oxygen meters, air quality analyzers, portable turbidity meters and flow rate meters to assess the biophysical environments of the Marigot Mangrove and the mid to lower ranges of the Anse-La-Raye river. The range and levels of accuracy of the data collected far exceed anything that the SALCC has been able to do in the past.



"It is our hope that this initial investment in the education and training will contribute positively to enhance skills and knowledge of our students and citizens at large in this environmental field, with the added benefit of a more substantive and nationally defined set of information on our ecosystems and their condition for the more effective management of these resources."

Mrs Karolin Troubetzkoy
SLUNCF-Chairperson

Future Plans

The College is seeking to engage and collaborate with national and regional organizations involved in environmental research and or management to facilitate the SALCC making meaningful contributions to Saint Lucia's Sustainable Development targets. It is the hope that students will engage in data collection not simply as a learning exercise but to become more aware and involved in national and regional environmental programmes and projects. This pathway is expected to enable the SALCC to truly meet the demands of the local and international job markets, by producing young stars who can aptly step from the classroom into the workplace. The SALCC is truly grateful to the SLUNCF and the CBF for the timely support to its Environmental Science and Pure Science Programmes through the provision of the environmental monitoring and analytic equipment and tools. Dr. Marie-Louise Felix

STRATEGIC HOLDINGS INC ALTERNATIVE & ECO FRIENDLY PACKAGING

When the Government of Saint Lucia announced in 2018 that Saint Lucia would be taking steps to reduce the country's dependence on selected single-use plastics, as well as other food service containers made of Polystyrene (PS) and Expanded PS (EPS), also known as Styrofoam®, this news were welcomed by many but it also brought up a lot questions. What would we use to replace Styrofoam? Where would we get this material? Would it raise the price point of goods, packaged meals and beverages? The partners at Strategic Holdings Inc (SHI) viewed these uncertainties as opportunities for filling in a new niche. Fast forward to 2020, with the introduction of cutting-edge research and development using sugar cane bagasse, silver grass and other plant materials catalyzed an inflection point in the production of food packaging material. As a consequence, SHI is embarking on an exciting journey with the support of Massy Stores Saint Lucia and the Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund (SLUNCF) to provide solutions to these challenges and solutions to the related environmental problems.



This project will combine scientific research with innovation and technology to create a truly sustainable packaging material, made from one of the most abundant plants on our local landscape - banana. The grand vision is to apply the technology on any available plant material to create a durable, toxin-free, paper material which can be used in the construction of paper plates, boxes and food containers, that are affordable and safe for the retailer and for the consumer.

Strategic Holdings Inc was founded in 2015 with the aim of addressing the Caribbean's environmental problems through the use of scientific research and innovation. Our early exploits focused on renewable energy as a means of reducing production costs and improving business productivity. With the passing of legislation to phase out styrofoam, SHI has pursued means of providing affordable locally made alternatives.

SHI will be adapting the technology to accommodate the use of banana plant tissue along with other locally grown plants and , in order to enhance local productive capacity, a targeted group of persons will undergo training in the use of this technology and product development methods. Apart from the obvious environmental and health benefits, the aim is to generate income for

farmers and food processors as plant material (primarily banana, coconut and dasheen leaves) which will be sourced from the local community. In addition, this initiative can potentially create employment for youth and rural women who may want to explore the livelihood opportunities associated with this activity.



Preparation stage



Initial processing



Early mould forms for bowls and plates

[Photos of banana leaf technology being tested on leaves- after 12 days](#)



SUCCESSFUL UNDERWATER CLEAN-UP HOSTED IN SAINT LUCIA

Cognizant of the negative impacts of inappropriately discarded waste on the country's environment, environmental integrity, aesthetic and recreational values, the Department of Sustainable Development, in collaboration with the St. Lucia Dive Association, several hotel establishments and certified divers undertook an Underwater Cleanup on Friday, September 18, 2020.



Sites in both the north and south of Saint Lucia were selected, with cleanups scheduled for both the dive sites and the adjacent land spaces, from which single-use plastics and other materials are introduced to the marine environment, to the detriment of marine ecosystems and wildlife. Hotel guests, beach goers and residents of nearby communities joined in on the land cleanups.



The activity was hosted on multiple days (given the inclement weather affecting divers' visibility in the island's north on September 18), and resulted in the collection and proper disposal (with assistance from the National Conservation Authority) of over thirty (30) bags of debris, each weighing approximately fifteen (15) pounds. The activity aimed to promote environmental stewardship and good practices through widespread sensitization, education and on-the-ground actions, raising awareness of the negative effects of marine litter (especially single-use plastics) on the marine and coastal environment.



Did you know? 💡

The Caribbean is home to 10% of the world's coral reefs, 1,400 species of fish and marine mammals, and extensive coastal mangroves. For many, the clean beaches, vibrant coral reef systems, exotic marine life, and abundant seafood represent paradise.

The marine and coastal resources of this region, its coral reefs, beaches, fisheries and mangroves, serve as an economic engine, supporting jobs, income and economic prosperity. Perhaps more than any other region, the Caribbean is highly dependent on its marine and coastal resources. 70% of its population lives along the coast and tourism, the region's largest economic sector, is inextricably linked to a healthy and thriving marine and coastal environment.

In recent decades, the growing impacts of unsustainable coastal development, climate change, overfishing, and land-based sources of sediment and pollution threaten the viability of the region's marine and coastal ecosystems. A number of authoritative studies document a dramatic decline in the condition of the region's marine and coastal ecosystems. Many experts have concluded that we have reached a critical crossroads for action.

- 75% of coral reefs across the Caribbean currently face medium or high levels of threat, (World Resources Institute, 2011).
- Coral reefs across the region are on the verge of collapse, with less than 10% of the reef area showing live coral cover (World Conservation Union, IUCN, 2012).

- 70% of the beaches in the region are eroding at a significant rate, in part due to declining coral reefs

- Tourism developments can result in loss and degradation of critical marine / coastal ecosystems. Unsustainable tourism can strain natural ecosystem limits, sometimes to a point beyond recovery (Caribbean Sea Ecosystem Assessment, 2007).

- All major commercially important fishery species are "fully developed" or "over-exploited", and 70% of reefs across the region are threatened with overfishing (Caribbean Sea Ecosystem Assessment, 2007).

- 100,000 turtles and marine mammals, such as dolphins, whales and seals, are killed by plastic marine litter every year around the world.

- Plastics are the most common man made objects sighted at sea, with 18,000 pieces of plastic litter floating on every square kilometre of the world's oceans!

- Six million tonnes of debris enters the world's oceans every year, weighing about the same as a million elephants!

- More than 260 animal species worldwide have become entangled in or consumed fishing lines, nets, ropes and other discarded equipment.



THE SAINT LUCIA NATIONAL CONSERVATION FUND AND THE INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (IAF)

'Building communities, building capacities.'



On September, 4th, 2020, the SLUNCF signed a cooperative agreement with the Inter American Foundation (IAF) in pursuance of a three-year initiative entitled - Strengthening the Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund to be an effective and efficient Community Foundation. The IAF is a nimble and transformative U.S. government agency that invests in community-led development across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), by directly engaging local leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs in underserved areas to create more prosperous, peaceful, and democratic communities. IAF interventions go beyond grant making but emphasize the idea of community led development (grassroots or bottom up) by strategically increasing the impact of their work through cost-effective ways.

This is accomplished primarily by supporting peer-to-peer learning, grantee exchanges, networking, capacity building and community asset mobilization. In cooperation with the IAF,

the project will support the organizational strengthening of the SLUNCF to enhance its capacity as a community foundation in order to be more responsive to the community development agenda that is based on the philosophy that community groups are partners who can find creative solutions to address their unique development needs. In congruence with the latter, the project will also fund environmentally-based community development projects that empower community organizations and enhance the practice of private social investment. This will be executed through a subgrant programme which will boost investment in grassroots development projects. And finally, the project will facilitate learning exchanges among seven other Caribbean region National Conservation Trust Funds (NCTFs) with a view to promoting peer to peer learning opportunities as they strive to support their respective community development agendas.

(To learn more about the IAF, please visit <https://www.iaf.gov/>)



OUR CEO DR VASANTHA CHASE HAS RETIRED. HERE IS OUR OPEN LETTER OF APPRECIATION



Dear Dr. Chase,

The Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund extends our highest commendations to you for your sterling contributions, passion and exemplary dedication to the work of the SLUNCF since its formation in 2015.

The organization owes you a debt of gratitude for spearheading its formation and tirelessly working towards stakeholder engagement and partnership to ensure its success. Cradled with this support, the SLUNCF has surely had a head start in meeting its purpose to support

projects in St. Lucia dedicated to the sustainable use of resources, the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and natural resources and the creation of sustainable alternative livelihoods.

Leadership demands sacrifice and the numerous hours committed to nurturing team members, recruiting fresh talent, mediating stakeholder conflict and guiding the Board of Directors are testament to your commitment to ensure the SLUNCF meets its international obligations. From community-based stakeholder engagement to forging global partnerships with organizations of international repute, you have set standards few of us will ever meet or surpass. The SLUNCF is honoured to have your sweat and tears form part of our formative years and will forever be in your debt. Our communities and our nation are better for your creative problem solving skills and dedication to consensus building.

As international resources become more challenging to attract, your tireless appeals have bridged this divide, forming key alliances with Massy Stores and the SLHTA's Tourism Enhancement Fund for financing of community initiatives. We will long remember your vision for amelioration of national debt and building coalitions to ensure sustainable financing of the SLUNCF, long after your departure.

Your departure will be sorely missed and those of us who have had the opportunity to serve with you, have been truly blessed by this experience. Your wise council has made my service to the SLUNCF a personal achievement and inspired my dedication to guard its evolution in the competent hands of your successor. I have no doubt all other Directors feel the same.

On behalf of the SLUNCF's former and current Chairpersons, Board of Directors, Management, Staff, Community Partners, Private and Public Sector Stakeholders and the Environment we serve, we extend to you our most profound gratitude, respect, admiration and appreciation for your many years of sacrifice and service. We wish you the absolute best in your future endeavors and hope that our paths will cross again, as we dedicate our lives to the welfare of Fair Helen and fulfilling our purpose as the Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund.

Be assured of our highest esteem at all times.

Noorani M. Azeez

CEO

Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association

Immediate Past Chairman, SLUNCF

MEET OUR OFFICER IN CHARGE: CRAIG HENRY



Mr. Craig Henry is the Officer in Charge (OIC) following the departure of former SLUNCF CEO Dr. Vasantha Chase as of December 31st, 2020. Mr. Henry formally joined the SLUNCF team in March 2020 as a Programme Officer (PO). His main responsibilities fell

under the grant making programme which included overseeing the calls for proposals process, reviewing applications for grants; issuing grant agreements and critically,

monitoring and evaluation of grant implementation. He also provided support to the CEO to expand the sustainable finance portfolio of the SLUNCF which encompasses all activities related to securing finance and other support mechanisms for the organisation's operations and grant making programmes. Prior to joining the SLUNCF, Mr. Henry worked for over 6 years as a PO within the Conservation Department of the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) where he garnered a wealth of experience working with local communities; developing and implementing conservation and sustainable development-oriented initiatives and importantly, sustainable finance for more effective protected areas management. Mr. Henry has the full confidence and support of the Board and Secretariat of the SLUNCF as the organization continues to consolidate its role in the sustainable development and conservation management landscape in Saint Lucia.

HAPPY New Year!



Dear Friends Colleagues and Business Associates of SLUNCF, 2020 has been a year of mixed fortunes for many. The most obvious and impactful event of the year of course is the COVID – 19 global pandemic that brought the world to a standstill and affected lives, businesses, governance and even the environment. There is much that has been said and remains to be said about this pandemic but one cannot ignore the severe challenges and associated losses globally endured. While those were innumerable and for some unbearable, there were

also silver linings; we rediscovered family, self and a much larger sense of purpose – a collective awakening from which springs hope. And while recovery may be slow, it is certain. This is why, the SLUNCF has pledged to be a dedicated partner as the nation journeys to a full recovery moving into 2021. The Board and Secretariat of the SLUNCF wish all of Saint Lucia the best of the season and a new year full of promise and prosperity.

Craig Henry
Officer in Charge

