



FUTUREFISHERS



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



2025



CLIMATE &
ENVIRONMENTAL
SHIFT

SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES

RISING
OPERATIONAL
COST

Key
Impact
Drivers

Data-Driven
Technology &
Mapping

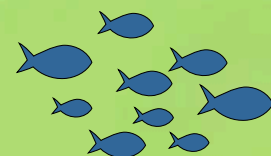
COOPERATIVE
EMPOWERMENT

POLICY &
LEGISLATION

Impact Report

Medium Term

2020-2025



THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER PHOTO:

The Interaction. Toco, Trinidad

Jester Sandy, a leading local fisher and a key voice in coastal stewardship, shows the huge hole in his damaged fishing net after leatherback turtle interaction.

Photo credit: Future Fishers



Our Partners



The GEF
Small Grants
Programme



Preface

Future Fishers is honoured to present our 2025 Impact Report, a comprehensive reflection on the transformative results achieved over the last five years. Our Mission remains steadfast: to cultivate robust fisheries management, uplift coastal livelihoods, and safeguard the precious marine resources of Trinidad and Tobago. This milestone is not ours alone; it is the direct result of a shared vision with our partners and supporters.

This report illustrates how strategic investment has been converted into measurable systemic change. Through governance reform, targeted capacity-building, and the integration of digital tools for data-driven decision-making, we have moved beyond traditional aid to foster genuine self-reliance. For Future Fishers, every data point and mapped reef represents the enduring value of your partnership.

Your commitment has served as the catalyst for life-saving safety-at-sea training, the strengthening of fisherfolk cooperatives, and the empowerment of community leaders to spearhead local collaboration efforts. Furthermore, your support has underpinned the rigorous research and participatory planning essential for shaping national sustainable fisheries strategies.

At the heart of our progress is a fundamental shift in how we value our oceans, moving from a model of extraction to one of responsible stewardship. By bridging the gap between traditional community-based maritime knowledge and modern evidence-led policy, we are ensuring that fishers are no longer just resource users, but are recognized as the primary guardians of our blue economy. This community-centred approach is the bedrock of our theory of change, ensuring that as our ecosystems recover, our coastal economies thrive in tandem.

Looking ahead, we are committed to scaling our successes through deepened collaboration and innovation. Together we will continue to expand opportunities for our coastal communities while ensuring the vibrancy of our marine ecosystems for generations to come.

Thank you for your unwavering trust and partnership. Your support is the tide that raises all boats.

Board of Directors,
Future Fishers

KEY IMPACT FOCUS AREAS



**Improve habitat/
nursery areas**



**Manage Cost of
Fishing**



**Develop
Sustainable Fishing
Policy**

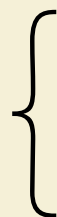




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Sustainable Impact: 2020-2025 Strategic Summary

1. Social Impact: Building Resilient Communities

We carefully selected suitable fisherfolk and through sustained capacity building and dialogue, helped them evolve by changing the way they seeing themselves from simple operators to important guardians of national resources. Further, we systematically integrated safety protocols and participatory monitoring into the heartbeat of every port.

We have engaged in the important work of translating traditional fisherfolk wisdom into data and hard science, a fundamental step to bridging the gap between generations, and for unifying academia, policy and society. This ensures that the future of fisheries management is built on both lived experience and modern scientific monitoring.

2. Environmental Impact: Harmonising Livelihoods with Nature

Through the deployment of the FISHNET tracking system for changes in gear use, we have shifted the narrative from 'fishing vs. conservation' to 'fishing for conservation.' By promoting and adopting best-practice fishing gear, our community is actively reducing biodiversity loss while maintaining productivity.

We've championed the development of reef and habitat maps which serve as baselines for local sovereignty over natural resources. These tools empower fishers to act as primary advocates for their own marine 'blue heart' using data to protect critical nurseries from external threats and climate shifts.

3. Economic Impact: Pioneering Sustainable Blue Wealth

We have catalysed a transition from volume-based subsistence to quality-driven premium production. By scaling value-added infrastructure, such as specialised smokers or kilns for producing smoked fish, we are empowering fishers to command the full value chain-delivering higher household returns from lower total extractions.

The registration of the East Trinidad Cooperative Society Limited marks the transition from individual competition to collective power. This institutional foundation provides fishers with the 'Economic Sovereignty' needed to access markets, secure fair pricing, and manage their collective destiny.



Introduction



5-Pillar Strategic Approach to Sustainability in the Fishing Sector

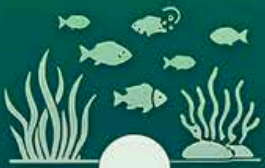


Building sustainability in the fishing sector is essential for the long-term well-being of our communities and marine resources. Future Fishers addresses this need through a comprehensive five-pillar approach:

IMPROVING HABITAT AND NURSERY AREAS



Protecting habitats with advanced mapping and local engagement.



MANAGE COST OF FISHING



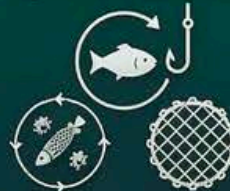
Helping fishers manage costs through cooperation, collective bargaining, and better resource use.

EXPANDING DOWNSTREAM TO INCREASE VALUE



Developing new products and business hubs to increase value and better facilities.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY CATCH



Promoting sustainable practices with selective gear, improved handling methods, and responsible fishing methods.

IMPROVE POLICY AND LEGISLATION



Supporting effective policy and legislation with data-driven methods for responsible resource management.

“



A UNIFIED FOCUS

A practical pathway that links healthy habitats, safer boats, higher value, responsible practices and better rules-measured through collaboration and governed by clear policies.

”



This strategy ensures that our actions deliver lasting benefits for both people and the environment.



Theory of Change

Building a Fair Evidence-led Fisheries Sector in T&T



Our Theory of Change serves as a strategic roadmap to transform fisheries into a fair, evidence-led sector by empowering fishers as key partners in conservation, governance, and economic resilience.

1. THE CHALLENGE: SMALL-SCALE FISHING COMMUNITIES FACE INTERSECTING RISKS

- Declining fish stocks
- Damaged habitats
- High costs & unsafe conditions
- Weak organisations & Low fisher participation

These pressures reduce incomes, weaken compliance, & undermine trust.

4. KEY OUTPUT DELIVERED

- Trained fishers & youth
- Functioning Cooperative
- Gillnet dependency alternatives
- Data System - FISHNET
- Value-added products & markets
- The Fishers Business Hub

THIS CHANGE DEPENDS ON (CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS)

- Continued fisher participation & trust
- Institutions willingness to use evidence
- Policies open to adaptive management
- Investment in long-term systems (not short projects)

2. OUR CORE BELIEF

Sustainable fisheries require recognising fishers as rights-holders, data contributors, and economic actors, not just resource users.

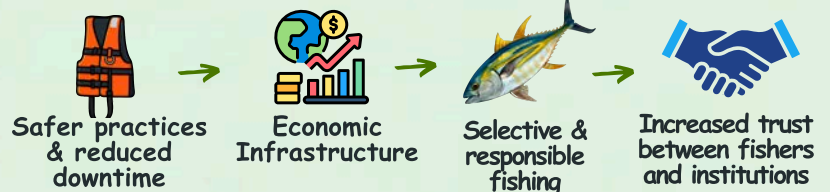
WHY THIS MATTERS



3. INPUT INTERVENTIONS (THE 5 PILLARS)

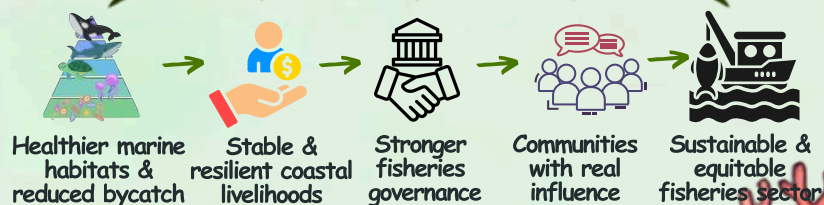
PILLAR 1: IMPROVE HABITAT & NURSERY AREAS	PILLAR 2: MANAGE COST OF FISHING	PILLAR 3: EXPAND DOWNSTREAM	PILLAR 4: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY CATCH	PILLAR 5: IMPROVE POLICY & GOVERNANCE
Advance mapping technology Habitat protection and Monitoring Training and community engagement	Cooperative bulk buying Minimise Cost of operational Business management Training Regular equip.. maintenance Safety at sea	Smoked Fish Products Cooperative development Fishers Business Hub Partnerships Access to finance	Sustainable fishing methods Bycatch reduction Ice access Data collection Incentive programs	Stronger rules Data driven decision-making Involve stakeholders Data Collection FISHNET development

5. FORESEEN OUTCOMES (Short-Medium Term)

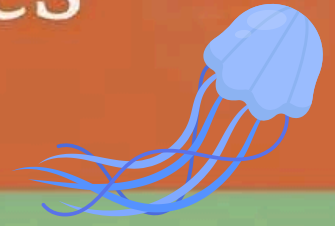


IMPACTS

6. LONG-TERM



Habitats and Nurseries



Participatory Mapping

This exercise produced habitat maps and shapefiles in 2025 that form a baseline for deeper research and allows analysis of habitat distribution, connectivity, overlap, suitability, change and restoration to support conservation decisions. These outputs can be compared with other datasets such as the FISHNET database, to assess habitat use and suitability and explore how diversity relates to fish populations.

Mapping the Toco Coral Reef produced georeferenced products by integrating side-scan sonar surveys, drone mapping, and GIS digitisation and classification. The initiative facilitated site validation and activities with student volunteers and fishers to confirm habitat features.

OUTPUTS



Participation - 87 fishers



Training - 26 fishers/youth



Map Products - 4

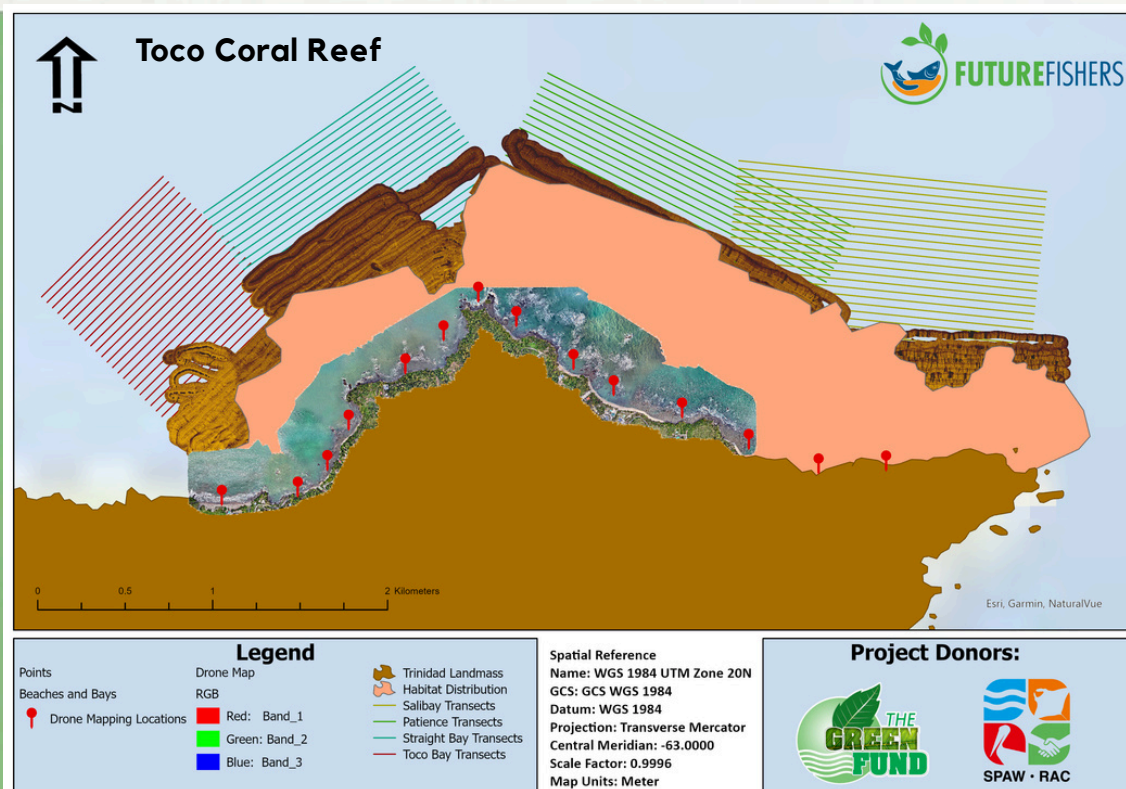
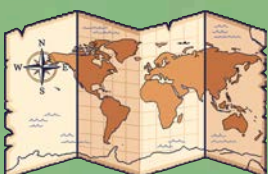
Baseline Established



The outcomes included engaging under-represented local groups; demonstrating a low-cost and repeatable community-partnered monitoring model; and sharing results with stakeholders to support protection and monitoring under SPAW and national frameworks

Future Initiative

The PGIS findings identified key habitats, such as the Toco coral reef, and established the need for long-term mapping





REDUCING THE COST OF FISHING

Key Challenges and Collaborative Solutions for Small-Scale Fisheries

THE CHALLENGE

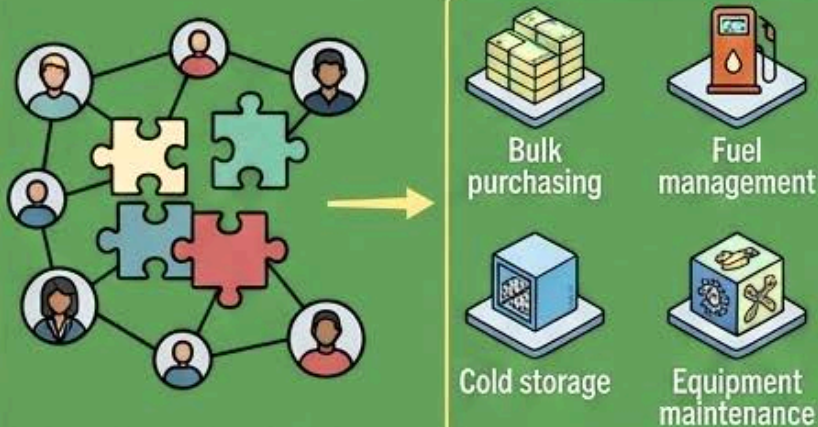
High fishing costs reduce profitability and increase vulnerability in small-scale fisheries. In 2022, the leading expenses stem from vessel damage, equipment theft, and lost fishing days. This economic strain limits fishers ability to invest in sustainable gear, creating a cycle of poverty and resource depletion



46% of damaged assets remained unrepaired due to financial constraints, which prolongs downtime and keeps fishers out of work.



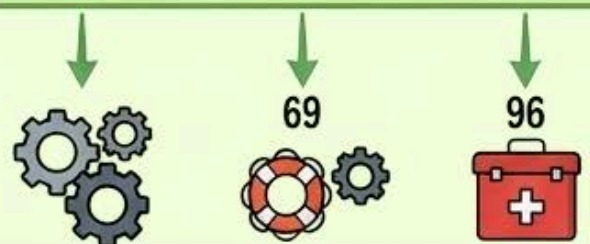
FUTURE INITIATIVE: COOPERATIVE MODEL



STANDARDISING SAFETY, BUILDING GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

TRAINING OUTPUTS

Engine Repair	-	22 fishers
Safety at Sea	-	69 fishers
First Aid	-	96 fishers



Expanding Downstream



VALUE ADDING

Expanding downstream strengthened community livelihoods by moving fishers and processors beyond raw sales into organised, value-added production and marketing. Future Fishers trained 22 persons (14 women and 3 youth) in Smoked and Salted Fish production and built and distributed smokers or kilns to each participant.

A business plan for the newly registered East Trinidad Cooperative Society Limited was created, giving members a clear operating structure to attract funding, improve transparency and launch pilot post-harvest enterprises. Market research showed strong demand with over 75% of respondents valuing local products, while also identifying gaps in infrastructure that need targeted investments. Market access improved through activities such as the Smoked Fish Expo which created direct sales opportunities and reinforced the importance of product quality.

OUTPUTS



Smoked and Salted Fish
Value-added Products Created



22 Smoked Fish
Producers Trained



Fishers Business Hub Designed
to Expand Production



Established the East Trinidad
Cooperative Society Limited



36 Business Plans
completed for fishers



Replication Pathways and Future Initiatives

- Replicate smoked and salted fish production
- Test and scale market access
- Build the Fishers Business Hub to facilitate sale to wider national market.
- Expand product lines beyond smoked and salted fish
- Strengthen cooperative-led management



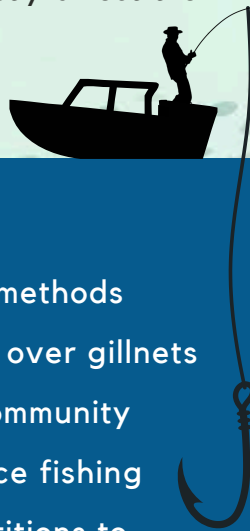
Sustainable Practices



Challenge

Small-scale fishers in Trinidad and Tobago face a compounding set of challenges driven by heavy reliance on gillnet fishing and limited access to practical alternatives. Low fish prices persist due to poor catch quality, oversupply, and post-harvest losses. Additionally, damaged gear from turtle entanglement and sargassum influxes increase operating costs and keep fishers off the water for extended periods.

These pressures contribute to declining fish stocks and repeated interactions with vulnerable species, particularly sea turtles, create both ecological harm and economic risk. At the same time, weak data systems and limited fisher participation in decision-making reduces the sector's ability to respond. Fishing communities are left with little influence over management actions that directly affect their livelihoods.



OUTPUTS

- Promoted selective fishing methods (trolling, banking, live bait) over gillnets
- Over 60 Depot talks and community engagement on best practice fishing
- Organised 2 trolling competitions to demonstrate viable alternatives
- Developed a Bycatch Awareness and Action Plan
- Implemented FISHNET to track methods, catch and bycatch
- Supported net illuminated and experimental gear trials

FUTURE INITIATIVES

To Expand support to 25 communities including Tobago

- Decreasing turtle entanglement
- Working with 600-800 registered fishers
- Improve catch value and livelihoods in 25 coastal communities
- Reduce bycatch and downtime



Policy and Legislation



Fisheries Governance

Future Fishers made a practical contribution to fisheries governance by promoting ecosystem-based thinking through stakeholder engagement through development of FISHNET. This work supports governance because it helps decision makers and fishing communities treat fisheries as part of a wider system, not only a licensing/registration issue. It also helps align community realities with management discussions which strengthens collaboration and improves the legitimacy of decisions.

By strengthening the foundations for participation and evidence-based decision-making through FISHNET, the availability of fisheries data for policy dialogue and governance discussions, was improved. This created favourable conditions for fisher engagement and support the justification for revised legislation.

OUTPUTS



Development of FISHNET - decision making



Improved fishers voice through the Cooperative



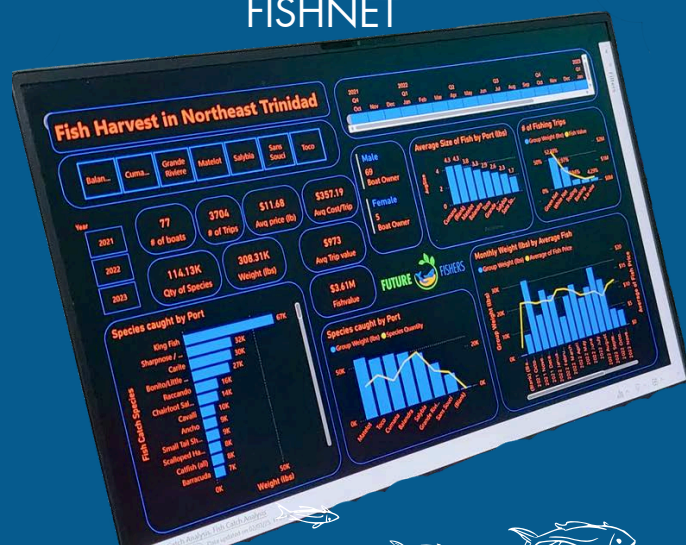
12 depot talks on legislation with fishers



Future Initiatives

- Implement data collection systems through electronic entry
- Involve stakeholders engagement in policymaking
- Promote representation in a transparent and accountable manner
- Advocate for the approval of the draft legislation.
- Through FISHNET, position communities as partners in governance

FISHNET



Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

Future Fishers aligns its fisheries work primarily with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14, and also contributes to SDGs 8, 13, and 16 through safer livelihoods, climate resilience actions, and stronger systems for participation and evidence-based governance.



SDG 14: Life Below Water

- Supported sustainable fisheries management through ecosystem-based approaches, habitat focus, and practical measures that improve responsible fishing practices and marine resource management.



SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- Improved working conditions and livelihoods in the sector through fisheries capacity support, including a focus on safer operations and stronger community enterprise pathways tied to fisheries work.



SDG 13: Climate Action

- Strengthen climate resilience in coastal fishing communities by linking monitoring, data, and practical planning to climate risks affecting fisheries and habitats.

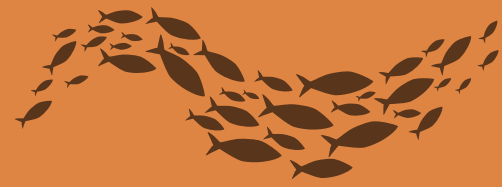


SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- Contributed by strengthening participation and evidence for inclusive engagement in decision-making, including governance discussions and improved data systems that support accountable fisheries management.



Key Lessons



These key lessons highlight essential strategies for fostering sustainable, collaborative, and equitable fishing communities.

1



Community-led approaches last longer.
Results hold when fishers help shape priorities, activities, and follow-up.

2



Capacity building changes behaviour when it is practical.

Training works when it links to real problems on the landing site and includes follow-up resources and support.

3



Cooperatives give fishers bargaining power.

Collective action strengthens voice, improves access to markets, services, and finance.

4



Data strengthens governance when it is translated to language that communities understand.

Governance improves when you can show evidence, track trends, and report results.

5



Safety must sit inside every fisheries activity.

Safety cannot be a stand alone project item. It must be part of training, gear support, and field engagement.

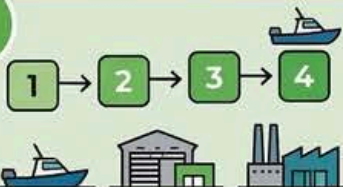
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Fishers want improvement when they see respect and fairness.

Many fishers engage when they feel heard and when the process is clear and consistent.

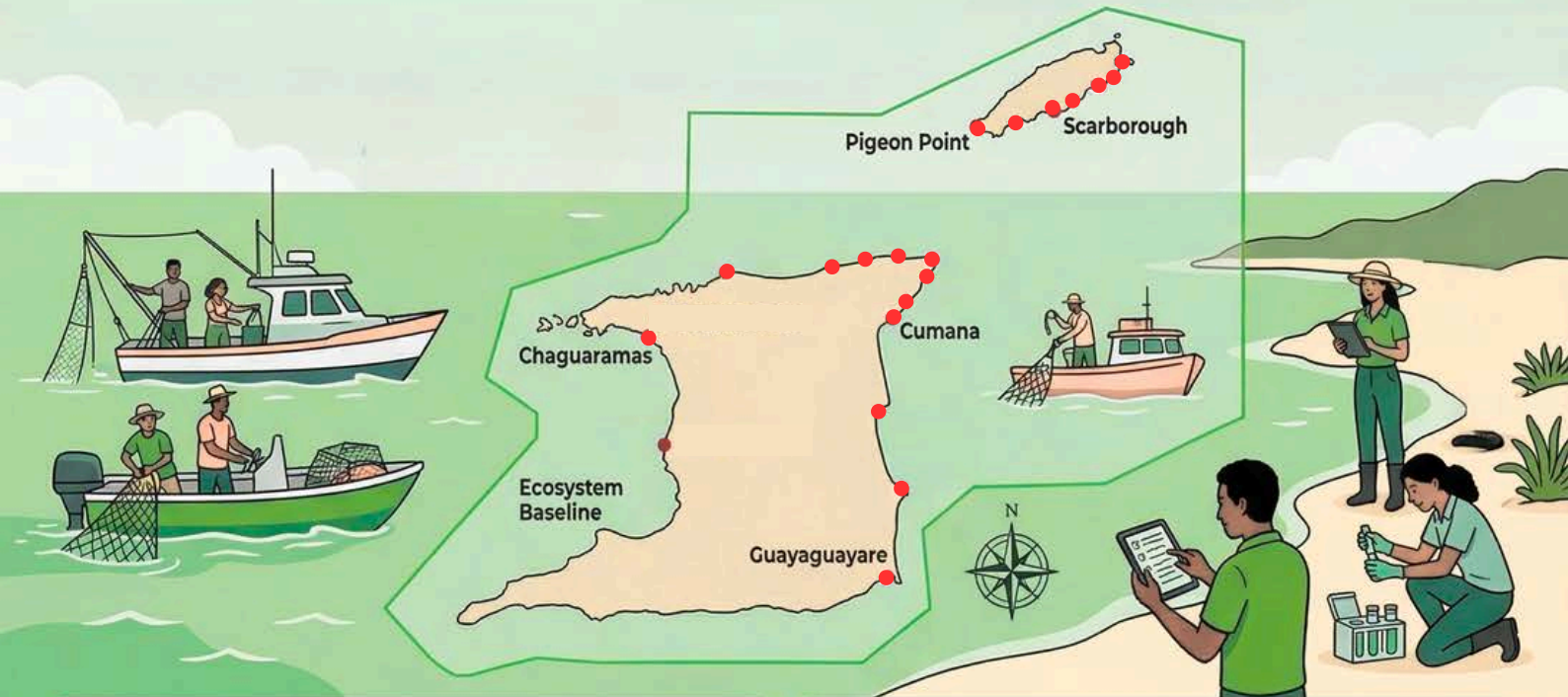
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Phased delivery improves sustainability and scale.

Start with pilots, prove what works, then expand with partners.





1. Enhance Safety Preparedness

Develop and distribute safety kits and conduct training workshops at targeted ports.



2. Information Management

Create a centralised, user-friendly data system for catch monitoring and ecological data.



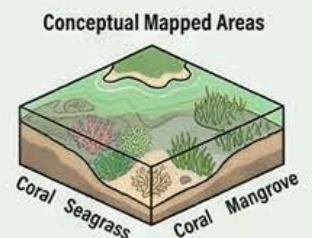
3. Public Engagement & Sustainable Practice

Launch community outreach programs and provide resources on selective and sustainable fishing techniques.



4. Habitat Mapping

Create a comprehensive map key habitats, including coral and seagrass nurseries, to identify critical spawning grounds.



5. Youth and Fisherfolk Involvement

Planned youth mentorship programs and skill-building workshops for new and experienced fishers.



6. Water Quality Monitoring

Targeting the establishment of a network of real-time monitoring stations at key ports.



Acknowledgements



Future Fishers thanks all donors and partners for supporting our work to strengthen sustainable fisheries and improve outcomes for fishing communities. Your funding and collaboration helped us deliver practical impact and maintain a clear focus on results.

Special thanks to the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for their leadership, technical guidance and continued engagement.



We also thank The Green Fund, Woodside Energy, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) and SPAW RAC for selecting our project for partnership.



We recognise Ecolibrium for its partnership in leading research activities in improving fishing gear that protects turtles and improves livelihood opportunities.

We value these partnerships and the shared commitment behind them. Future Fishers looks forward to continue working alongside you to deepen impact and support a fisheries sector that is well managed, fair, and sustainable.



Directors & Officers

Title	Name
Chair	Mr. Ibrahim Abdullah
Vice Chair	Mrs. Lori Lee Lum
Treasurer	Ms. Hannah Roberts
Secretary	Mr. Dennis Sammy
Director	Mr. Anderson Zoe
Director	Dr. Vivian Alexander
Director	Mr. Don Miguel Pavy





Our Mission

Our Mission is to create sustainable use and management of our coastal and marine resources while improving opportunities for better governance, economic growth and social advancement through an empowered fishing community.

Our Vision

We envision a nation where our coastal and marine ecosystems are sustainably managed by responsible fishers.

Programs

Future Fishers will continue to deliver its mission through these five pillar programs:

- **Marine Habitat Restoration:** Future Fishers shift from pure extraction to active stewardship by utilizing community-led monitoring and habitat mapping to restore the coastal ecosystems that sustain their livelihoods.
- **Economic Resilience:** By leveraging cooperative models and robust financial planning, Future Fishers navigate seasonal unpredictability to build long-term wealth and ensure economic resilience for their families.
- **Blue Business Incubator:** Operating with a blue economy mindset, Future Fishers act as entrepreneurs who add value to their catch and utilize localized hubs to secure stronger, more profitable positions within the market supply chain.
- **Sustainable Fisheries Management:** Future Fishers champion operational excellence on the water by adopting sustainable gear, reducing bycatch, and using digital information systems to make data-driven decisions about their harvest.
- **Policy & Governance:** Through collective bargaining and evidence-based advocacy, Future Fishers secure a powerful seat at the table to actively shape the governance, rules and policies that govern their sector.

Organisation Achievements

- **Annual Audits Completed:** Reinforced financial accountability and trust.
- **Project Accomplishments:** Delivered key milestones across fisheries programs.
- **Information System Development:** Implemented digital tools for data-driven decisions.
- **Networking & Collaboration:** Built strong partnerships to scale impact.





FUTUREFISHERS

Impact Report

2020-2025

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