

INCEPTION / PROJECT LAUNCH REPORT
**"BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE VIA TRANSFORMATIVE ADAPTATION
(ENHANCED DIRECT ACCESS)" PROJECT**

Financed by:

Adaptation Fund

Executed and implemented by:

Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT).

Date of project start: February 12th 2024

Date of project launch: March 12th 2024

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Submitted to:

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1. Introduction and Background

Belize is a small low-lying developing state highly vulnerable to the climate change impacts such as sea level rise, erosion, storm surges and flooding. A 2014 assessment categorized Belize's vulnerability index to climate change as extremely high: ranking 9th on the list of 38 other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF, 2014). The assessment highlighted the country's high risk to climate change based on its adaptive capacity linked to the vulnerability of the agriculture sector. Belize is seasonally affected by tropical storms and hurricanes, which on average, according to scientific reports, are becoming more intense each year because of human-induced global warming and higher sea surface temperatures. Belize is also highly exposed to other natural hazards such as flooding and drought, more pronounced in inland areas. These can lead to infrastructure and economic losses, especially in agricultural and inhabited areas during the hurricane season.

There has also been evidence that the average annual temperature of Belize has been rising and is projected to rise further. To effectively address these issues, the threat of climate change requires multilateral action from policy makers, technical experts, the private and public sector as well as local communities, in order to seek solutions and make changes to effectively adapt to climate change impacts. To reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience to future climate risks and hazards Belize must devise mechanisms to adapt to the imminent changes affecting economic sectors, livelihoods, and natural ecosystems.

The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) has received grant funding from the Adaptation Fund (AF) for the project "Building Community Resilience via Transformative Adaptation," under the Enhanced Direct Access (EDA) funding window. The goal of this project is to improve Belize's long-term capacity to protect communities from climate threats posed by drought, unpredictable water availability, floods, and improper wildfire management. The Project is being executed by PACT and will function as an on-granting mechanism for climate finance in country, targeting the following five interlinked project components:

- Component One: Safeguarding Forest and Water Resources through Strategic Protection and Restoration Solutions.
- Component Two: Combating Wildfires through Adaptive Management.
- Component Three: Creating Opportunities to Support Alternative Livelihoods.
- Component Four: Building National Capacity to Access Adaptation Finance.
- Component Five: Community Disaster Risk Management.

In January of 2023 the Government of Belize endorsed the project. The endorsement also confirmed that the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) would be the Implementer and Executer of the project. Following the endorsement, the finalization of the project proposal was completed via virtual and in person consultations with stakeholders at the community level and with relevant National Government Entities. The project was

approved by the Adaptation Fund during AFB 41, in October 2023 for a duration of five years.

On February 12th, 2024, an inception meeting was held with the project manager, technical assistant and PACT's project officers and other relevant project related personnel. The project was then launched on March 12, 2024 which brought together all relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector, including Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (Forest Department and National Biodiversity Office); Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Enterprise; Ministry of Economic Development; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); Belize Trade and Investment Development Services (BELTRAIDE); the University of Belize; and PACT. Of the fourteen (14) participants only four were females which included the project team.

2. Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the inception/launch of the project workshop were to:

- Present the project work plan and budget for the five components.
- Share the governance structure of the project with the participants, and
- Review and approve the terms of references for the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and for the Project Implementation Agency Group (PIAG).

The purpose of the meeting was to officially launch and commence project implementation. Furthermore, it was to ensure commitment, support and ownership of the project by relevant partners, for which they had previously agreed and committed to, during the consultations. The level of participation and interest among governmental stakeholders during the launch was very positive, and participants insisted that the project continues to accelerate delivery to build on this interest and support.

3. Presentations and discussion

I. Welcome remarks – PACT representative, Mr. Eli Romero

Mr. Romero delivered the welcome remarks on behalf of the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. During his remarks he stated the urgency of the project to equip communities with the tools and skills to adapt to climate change and highlighted the importance of active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders for the successful implementation of the project. He also emphasized the vital importance of the implementing agencies working closely with the project management team and the direct beneficiaries (communities) of the project. He reiterated the importance and urgency of working together to achieve the objectives of the project within the timeframe specified and thanked everyone for their time and interest in attending the meeting.

II. Overview of project goal and objectives

The project manager Mrs. Saqui presented a quick overview of the goal and objectives of the project Building Community Resilience via Transformative Adaptation which is

being funded through the Adaptation Fund's (AF) Enhanced Direct Access funding window. She reiterated that the AF focuses on helping developing countries to build resilience and adapt to climate change, stating that through the EDA model, beneficiaries at the community level can access climate finance and develop inclusive and responsive climate adaptation measures that are part of broader adaptation strategies.

An overview of the project components was done, which provided an opportunity for stakeholders to recall the proposal development process, their commitment in each component and the potential for collaboration among one another in the implementation of the different components.

III. Overview of the project's governance structures.

Three governance structures are in place to ensure effective project implementation. These were presented to the stakeholders who are either members of the PSC or the PIAG and are the following:

- a. **The Project Management Unit (PMU)** consist of the Project Manager and Technical Officer. The PMU will provide daily project management support, oversight, management of fund flow, and executing partners' delivery. Also, be responsible to provide guidance for the operationalization of the project activities and ensuring compliance with the commitments set out in the project document, Environmental and Social Policy, with the fifteen principles of Adaptation Fund, as well as providing day-to-day support to all partner institutions.
- b. **The Project Implementation Agency Group (PIAG)** will carry out the day-to-day management of the project including the coordination, supervision, monitoring, quality control, socio-environmental management, and reporting.
- c. **The Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will provide oversight and technical guidance by approving and reviewing the annual working plan, contractual agreements, budgets, and funding proposals etc. for the implementation of the project. The PSC will be chaired by the Chief Forest Officer as assigned by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change & Disaster Risk Management (MSDCCDRM).

Some of the stakeholders affirmed their participation in these structures as the meeting progressed.

IV. Presentation of workplan 2024-2028

During the workplan presentation Mrs. Saqui presented the project components, emphasizing the expected outcomes and concrete outputs, the deliverables and the budget assigned for year one of the project. As component one was explained, Mr Emilio Montero from the Ministry of Agriculture highlighted that the Mopan/Macal Rivers are exposed to several negative impacts from human use and development. He recommended that collaboration with the Chiquibul-Succotz Watershed Alliance for Water Quality Monitoring Group supported by the Friends for Conservation and Development

be considered as a stakeholder since they have worked in that area for the past ten years. His input was acknowledged, and he was informed that since the beneficiaries of the project are the communities along the Mopan and Macal Rivers these groups will play an important role in the implementation of component one of the project.

Component 2,3,4 and 5 were presented next. It was explained that the target beneficiaries have been identified for components 1 and 2. For components 3, 4 and 5, however, the final selection of beneficiaries will be done with the help of the PSC and the PIAG. However, it is very important to keep in mind that this project is for communities who are vulnerable to climate change so all beneficiaries / communities will be those that fall within this category and adhere to the criteria stipulated for selection.

Some concerns arising from the workplan presentation were on the type of funding modality. One of the stakeholders asked if counterpart contribution is expected or is this going to be an on-granting basis. The response was that an on-granting mechanism will be used and that the Implementing Entity should consider including in-kind contribution which shows their commitment and ownership of the project as well. Another question was whether an overhead cost will be allowed. The response was that yes it will be allowed but that the percentage will need to be discussed and finalized with the PMU and the PSC. This was in response to Mr Wilber Sabido's - Forest Department, Chief Forest Officer concern that the preparation of proposals is time-consuming, especially when several implementing entities are involved.

The project manager informed those present that the project intends to start with the Call for Proposals (CFP) for Component Four: Building National Capacity to Access Adaptation Finance. The reason for this is to provide the beneficiaries an opportunity to start formulating their proposal through the capacity building component. However, the participants recommended that the CFP be sent out for the different components simultaneously since most of the participants have already been exposed to proposal writing, and doing this will also allow them to work on their proposals while participating in the capacity building program. If the project was to wait until component four is underway there will not be enough time for the development of the other proposals thereby the project would not be able to meet its first-year goal of investing the funds received for year one.

Another concern voiced by Mr. Sabido was that there are several projects that have similar activities, so the projects need to collaborate with one another to ensure consolidated investment and avoid duplication. In response to this Mr Romero mentioned that this will be the responsibility of the PIAG upon revision of the proposals since they are the ones who should know what their department or organization is engaged in. Hence, the active involvement and recommendations of the members of the PSC/PIAG is going to be vital to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts in the implementation of the different components.

V. Presentation of project budget

The project manager presented a more detailed and clearer summary of the budget. It was highlighted that funds for year one has been received and the budget cycle for year one is from February 2024 to January 2025. However, it is important to note that 80% of the budget for year one must be committed or used in order for PACT to request funds for year two.

For all components, a call for proposal (CFP) will be conducted. The CFP will follow the Conservation Investment Framework that is used as a guide for PACT's implementation of its Conservation Investments Strategy. The framework is used to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of funds provided by the Adaptation Fund (AF). Mr Romero reemphasize that funds do not necessarily need to be used but at least committed for the next disbursement to be requested.

The subgrant mechanisms/project organogram was presented. The expected period for the granting process is between three to four months. It is expected that it takes less time with the active participation and feedback from PIAG and PSC. Therefore, it is important that the technical support (PIAG) be engaged to ensure the relevant beneficiaries are identified and that proposals be reviewed as efficiently as possible. The PMU will support beneficiaries and will be the first reviewers of the proposals submitted.

Dr Victoriano Pascual, Chief Agriculture Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture reiterated the importance of having the commitment of the PSC and PIAG to provide guidance and recommendations on a timely manner to ensure the beneficiaries or implementing entities are engaged and the funds are used and committed as quickly as possible.

For component three, Dr. Stephen Williams asked if the CFP will be directed to specific implementing entities. The response was that the call for proposal is open to everyone. Any individual or organization can apply once they meet the requirements within the CFP. The primary focus is that these funds reach the identified or selected beneficiaries.

Mr Justino Palomo asked if there is a proposal template that would be used. He was informed that one will be available to facilitate the process, especially considering that communities may be involved in development of project proposals.

Mr Saul Cruz, Acting Director for the National Biodiversity Office reiterated that the review of proposals can be lengthy and that it is important to assess the risks when involving communities in community resilience projects. It was noted that the PMU will provide support to groups or community leaders who may need assistance in developing a proposal. It is also expected that the technical group will be able to provide support to these groups if and when needed.

The BELTRAIDE representative highlighted that the funds for Component four especially, is small per year hence, the Project Manager suggested that Implementing Entities should consider submitting proposals for a period of 3 to 4 years when applying for the grant, considering the funds allocated per year and per component. Prioritization of funds will also be done depending on the proposals. The details of activities and available funds for

each component can be discussed with the project manager before the preparation of the proposal.

The Project Manager asked that everyone in the PIAG and the PSC work together to ensure the successful implementation of the project. Participants agreed that due to workload the response from the technical support at the different departments is sometimes lengthy but that they were committed to working together to ensure that revisions and approval of documents are done in a timely manner.

VI. Revision and approval of terms of reference for the PSC and PIAG

The next item discussed on the agenda was the terms of reference for the PSC and PIAG. Due to time constraint, it was agreed that these terms of reference be emailed to the nominated or assigned person from each of the different offices for revision and feedback.

VII. Key outcomes and recommendations

- The CFP will be finalized and sent out within the next three weeks.
- CFP will be deadline oriented to decrease the amount of time as much as possible for the granting process.
- CFP will be sent out simultaneously to ensure deadlines are met for year one.
- Terms of reference for the PSC and the PIAG will be emailed to the respective persons.
- Names of members of the PSC and the PIAG that are still pending will be sought out by the project manager to finalize the composition of these groups.
- The approval of the ToRs will be the first item on the agenda of the first meeting of these groups.

VIII. Next Steps

Ms. Jeneen Leiva, the technical officer, then presented the next steps for the project which included: meetings with the members of the PSC and PIAG, meeting with the implementing entities and sending out the call for proposals.

The technical officer then extended a warm thank you to all participants (see annex 2) for their time, looking forward to their collaboration in the successful implementation of the project. The project manager also encouraged the participants to reach out to her and the project management team if they require further clarification, support, and guide in the development of the proposals. Those present were encouraged to have more women in their teams and to ensure that there is gender balance during the proposal implementation highlighting that there were only four females present at the meeting which included the PMU.

Annex 1: Agenda of meeting 1

Project launch for Building Community Resilience via Transformative Adaptation (Enhanced Direct Access).

Financed by: ADAPTATION FUND

Date, Time: March 12th, 2024; 2:00 pm

Location: Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Auditorium.

TIME	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Welcome remarks	PACT
	Introduction of participants	Project Manager
2:15 – 3:20 pm	Presentation of project and workplan	Project Manager
3:20 – 3:45 pm	Review and approval of terms of reference for the PSC and the PIAG	Project Manager
3:45 – 3:55 pm	Next Steps	Technical Officer
3:55 – 4:00pm	Closing remarks	Project Manager

