

EF-to-EF Mentorship program between MAR Fund, Pacífico, and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund

Project K: RedLAC-CAFÉ Knowledge for Action Project

Mentor Fund:

MAR Fund

Mentee Fund:

Pacífico and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund

Theme:

Governance

Author (s):

Paquita Bath of Aligning Visions

Date of elaboration:

2016-2017



Case Study

Governance Mentorship Project with MAR Fund, Pacífico, and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund.

This report to Project K is accompanied by two other products:

1. *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study*. This is a full case study analyzing the governance practices in the three regional platforms. This was the basis for platform self-analysis reflection and ultimately decisions to strengthen their governance standards; and
2. A Capacity-Building Plan to strengthen the three marine regional platforms for conservation through the *Caribbean-Pacific Alliance for Marine Conservation Finance* – made up of all three REDLAC Marine Regional Conservation Finance Platforms.

This study and the emerging learning and mentoring opportunities were made possible thanks to the support of *Project K, Building Capacity in Conservation Trust Funds in RedLAC and CAFÉ*, managed by FUNBIO and funded by FFEM (French Fund for the Global Environment), the GEF (Global Environment Facility), Mava Foundation and matching contributions from the 40 environmental funds in 28 countries along with RedLAC and CAFÉ. Members of the three regional platforms generously gave of their time and experience to develop the comparative case study and the accomplishments reported herein.

1. Executive Summary

This mentorship program between the Mar Fund, Pacífico, and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, focused on governance issues common to all conservation trust funds, but also specific governance challenges that are unique to regional platforms. By systematizing the governance experience of all three platforms in a comparative case study, a very fruitful two-day discussion ensued. With a commitment to apply the learning, all three platforms considered different possibilities for improving their governance and made commitments to each other to advance these goals. The long-term experience of MAR Fund was a useful counterpoint to the start-up phase being experienced by CBF and Pacífico. This was great opportunity for the newer regional platforms to launch their governance efforts using the best practices and strong advice from their peers.

In addition, the mentorship experience strengthened the ongoing collaboration among members of the “*Caribbean-Pacific Alliance for Marine Conservation Finance*”. They have committed to continue sharing their experiences and coaching each other to continually apply new learning on effective conservation finance techniques and improve their impact in their respective marine regions.

2. Mentorship Objectives

Three regional marine RedLAC funds (Pacífico, MAR Fund and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund) submitted a proposal to Project K to build a mentorship experience around governance systems. While the initial analysis focused on the MAR Fund, given its longer experience, this program was designed to be a learning and reflection opportunity for all three funds as they professionalize their boards and build their capacity to expand their impact.

Specific objectives were all reached.

- A set of criteria to be systematized in the governance systems of the three platforms. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study*.
- MAR Fund experience in governance described, with lessons and challenges highlighted. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study*.
- CBF and PACIFICO governance schemes described. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study*.
- A comparative analysis of the three platforms' governance systems, including a SWOT analysis for each one. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study* and *Minutes of the Workshop*
- A report on main points in common and possibilities for future improvements in the three governance systems. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study* and *Minutes of the Workshop*
- An assessment of strengthening needs and a capacity building long term common plan for the three platforms, highlighting individual needs and exchange opportunities, accompanied of a fundraising proposal to support the exchanges in the long term. See *Alliance Capacity Building Plan*.
- A case study following Project K guidelines, to share with the other RedLAC and CAFÉ members the lessons learned and the mentorship experience details. See *Governance in Regional Conservation Finance Platforms: A Comparative Case Study* and this report that follows Project K Guidelines.

3. Our Methodology

The regional platforms contracted Paquita Bath of Aligning Visions, a facilitator with extensive experience with national conservation trust funds and governance issues. Additionally, Camila Monteiro, founder of Convergencia Sustentabilidade, was working with the platforms to support their communication and fundraising efforts. The two contractors worked together to interview representatives from the three regional platforms and reflect on the similarities and differences between their governance systems. Paquita then took the lead in identifying the unique issues that affected regional funds and used the experience of the three platforms to write the enclosed case study.

At the same time, a meeting was organized in Miami for representatives of the three platforms to meet face to face. The objectives of the workshop were to discuss the case study and learning to date, lay out priorities for governance improvements, and develop mechanisms for mentoring, exchanges, and ongoing collaboration to stimulate each other to improve regional conservation impact.

The 20 selected participants (see Annex I for the complete list of participants), including both board and senior staff members of each regional platform, were forwarded a copy of the case study to read in advance. The case

study information was the basis for the workshop that allowed participants to compare their governance systems, reflect on best practices and learn from the challenges and successes of their peers. The meeting, facilitated by Paquita and Camila, provided time for each Platform to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and commit to changes they would like to make going forward. The workshop agenda (see Annex 2) was built around participatory group interactions (see images below). The meeting was held in English, but the small group discussions and bilingual facilitators, allowed participants to use Spanish as well. Finally, the meeting also allowed the peers to identify other areas in which they could learn from each other, ultimately leading to the creation of a capacity-building plan for their Caribbean-Pacific Alliance for Marine Conservation Finance.

4. The Challenges

The attached comparative case study lays out the challenges and strengths of the three regional platforms. The biggest challenges, unique to regional conservation trust funds, were summed up as:

- How do we build regional coordinated conservation action and funding while strengthening the influence and capacity of national funds?
- How to avoid the regional platform competing for funds with the national conservation trust funds?

To address these challenges from a governance perspective, the case study laid out the different approaches the Regional Platforms took with:

1. Founding Documents;
2. Board Composition and Founding Member Powers;
3. Due Diligence and Conflicts of Interest;
4. Alignment with Government Regional Commitments;
5. Officer Roles;
6. Board Committees; and
7. Executive Director Support and Review

5. What Happened?

The successful two-day workshop concluded with a reflection on the changes that each platform hoped to make in their governance structure (culturally or legally through their articles of incorporation. Specific issues that the participants agreed to take back to their boards for review are listed below.



CBF participants shared the following commitments:

- We need to adapt and continue to be flexible to respond to unexpected scenarios. We want to build greater flexibility into our founding documents to facilitate renewal and adaptation;
- Work on a better way to ensure that we don't fight for resources between funds and between CBF and funds. This will be managed through better communications with each other over approaches to donors;
- To date we have solely focused on national conservation priorities. We recognize from the MAR and Pacifico experiences that we also need to build regional priorities for common projects. We will tackle this once more of the National Trust Funds are serving on the CBF Board;
- We need very strong ties with the political partner in the region. The Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) is an informal voluntary commitment, less bureaucratic than CCAD and CMAR. Nonetheless, we need to strengthen the relationship with CCI, so we have a strong political alignment and can work with the national governments;
- Governance and Conflict of Interest – we will share the experience of MAR Fund which we found particularly interesting for the CEO evaluation;
- Ensure that all CBF CTFs have a Conflict of Interest policy in place;
- We recognize the danger of a founding member potentially leaving their leadership role. We need to both continue building current donors' long-term commitment and engagement as well as plan for an exit strategy. This raises the need to continue bringing new major donors on board as well; and
- We recognize the value of learning together, among the CBF family, but with the other platforms as well.



Pacífico representatives decided to address the following issues in their next full board meeting:

- Articles require an absolute majority (4 of 4) to change the bylaws. We want to get rid of the veto power for this so we need to either add a member to the board (4 out of 5 votes) or change the 4 of 4 vote absolute majority to 3 of 4.
- Create 3 committees: investment/finance, fundraising, technical and consider the possibility of creating an Advisory Board.
- Describe the work of the committees. The Investment/Finance Committee already has tasks: to select a bank to invest the endowment; to determine how the committee will work
- Invite external people to become committee members (for example, Gwen Shirkey in the Fundraising Committee)
- Decided to work on a profile to select an entity in Ecuador to participate in one of the committees (not in the Board), to have Ecuador representation.
- Create Conflict of Interest procedures, especially for grant-making decisions that may affect Board members of the founding CTFs
- Describe the roles of the officers in details (not only the president as it is today)
- Continue supporting this opportunity for mentoring and S-S exchange.



MAR Fund representatives:

- Will take a closer look at identifying more local funding in the region;
- Sign the MOU with CCAD and structure a regional plan;
- Strengthen the communication lines with governments, in different levels of the government and by country;
- A number of board meetings have focused on changing the bylaws to eliminate the absolute veto power but there is still resistance. There is fatigue about the issue and so it is being postponed for further reflection. In the future, they may showcase the fact that Pacífico is changing their bylaws based on the lessons learned from MAR Fund and that MAR Fund could do it as well in the future.

The reflection exercise was concluded by discussing next steps including presenting these ideas at future gatherings to see how the Platforms have evolved; distributing the minutes from this meeting and incorporating additional insights from the participants into the final version of the case study.

Finally, the group discussed their top priorities for future exchanges, the best ways in which they have learned as regional platforms and together. The framework of a Capacity Building Plan was developed and then fleshed out by the consultants.

6. Benefits Observed

The benefits of sharing experiences around the governance theme led to clear decisions about changes that need to be made at both legal and cultural levels for the Platforms. At the same time, the participants were so excited about the exchange that they asked themselves that if they continued to collaborate: "What can we do in the group that we cannot do alone as regional platforms?" Participants responded:

1. Potential for Hemispheric/Global Funding – possible donors interested in larger regional exchanges
2. Manage our investment portfolios at scale (pooling investments)
3. Work on marine policy international agenda at scale by trying to bring political alignment from governments to international forums
4. Marine practitioners sharing best practices across areas
5. Ties into broader sharing knowledge and lessons learned across the platforms
6. Think in wider geographies for aggregating and building – such as a Caribbean wide potential building on CBF and MAR Fund to also bring in the Caribbean work in the coast of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela etc.
7. Increase visibility and build trust in our platforms
8. Facilitate communication channels and outreach
9. Cultural Exchange between Caribbean and Pacific has already proven useful
10. The learning from these platform level exchanges helps all of the national member funds as well

7. Remaining Challenges

Institutional growth is never “done”, but substantial progress was made. Some challenges in the design of founding board member powers are still being addressed – and will no doubt run into some additional hurdles. The case lays out the biggest challenges facing the three regional platforms and the “what happened” section above lays out the Platforms decisions for moving forward.

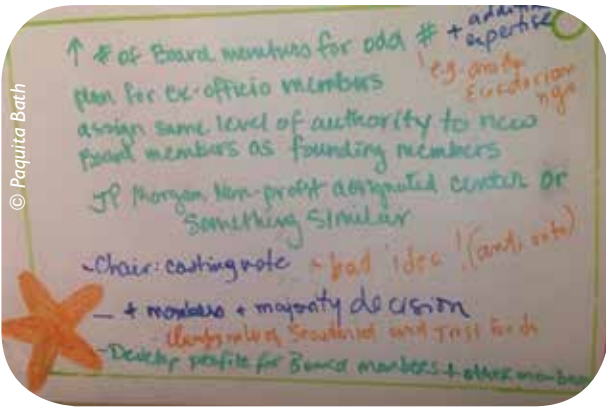
8. Key Lessons Learned

1. Contracted facilitators provided a needed external perspective in writing the case study, developing key powerpoints, designing the workshop agenda and facilitating group discussions;
2. The representatives of the Platforms came to the workshop prepared to lead information exchanges and share their challenges and successes. Specific presentations were made from leaders from all three platforms outlining an area where they are particularly strong: Working with regional government bodies— Pacifico; Executive Director Performance Review—MAR Fund; and Aligning founding documents—CBF.
3. On Day I the participants agreed to maintain total confidentiality so that the truly difficult issues in governance could be discussed openly.
4. Having the Executive Director/Platform Coordinator of each Platform attend the workshops along with board directors provided for even more exchanges that addressed governance tensions from both staff and director perspective.
5. The case study—and its built in questions—provided all participants with a solid background from which to have in-depth conversations. The author, Paquita Bath, had previously received training in writing Harvard case studies—a particular learning methodology. No black and white answers are provided in the case. It is up to the participants to think through the best solutions for their financial, cultural and political context. Participants were very enthusiastic about this methodology.
6. Two days were needed for the workshop. Day I enabled the full set of participants to interchange experiences and analyze governance issues together. The second day provided the platforms an opportunity to share take-aways and decide on how to apply the learning to improve their governance.

“Institutional growth is never “done”, but substantial progress was made. Some challenges in the design of founding board member powers are still being addressed – and will no doubt run into some additional hurdles.”

9. Images

The pictures represent the colorful graphics used by Paquita Bath of Aligning Visions in her facilitation practice. Throughout the workshop the group's comments were captured and the groups developed their own SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats) analysis as well as decisions on how to apply what they learned.



Every platform developed a SWOT – this is the Opportunities section for Pacifico.



An icebreaker on ground rules for ensuring a full and transparent exchange.



Camila Monteiro facilitating a part of the Governance Workshop.



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Group discussion – from left to right: Inés Cavelier (Program Director of Patrimonio Natural), Josefina Gómez (Planning Director of Fondo Marena), Juan Mate (Board member of Fundación Natura) and Alberto Galán (Executive Director of Patrimonio Natural)



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Group discussion – in the front, from left to right: David Arias (Program Director of Fondo Marena), Germán Botero (Finncial Director of Fondo Acción) and Carlos Vigil (Board member of MAR Fund)



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Group discussion – from left to right: Sasha Middleton (Program Director of MEPA Trust), Gina de Ferrari (Board member of MAR Fund), Gary Gore (Chairman of the Board of MEPA Trust), Gwen Shirkey (standing, consultant for Pacífico), Carlos Chacón (Pacífico Coordinator) and Pamela Castillo (Program Director of Forever Costa Rica)



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Group discussion – from left to right: Germán Botero (Financial Director of Fondo Accion), María José González (Executive Director of MAR Fund), Paquita Bath (standing, facilitator), Gina de Ferrari and Carlos Vigil (Board members of MAR Fund)

Annex 1 - Participants:

1. Carlos Chacón	Pacífico (Asociación Costa Rica por Siempre)
2. Zdenka Piskulich	Pacífico (Asociación Costa Rica por Siempre)
3. Pamela Castillo	Pacífico (Asociación Costa Rica por Siempre)
4. Alberto Galán	Pacífico (Patrimonio Natural)
5. Inés Cavalier	Pacífico (Patrimonio Natural)
6. Germán Botero	Pacífico (Fondo Acción)
7. Rosa Montañez	Pacífico (Fundación Natura)
8. Juan Mate	Pacífico (Fundación Natura)
9. Gwen Shirkey	Pacífico consultant
10. Carlos Vigil	MAR Fund
11. Gina de Ferrari	MAR Fund
12. María José González	MAR Fund
13. Yabanex Batista	CBF Executive Director
14. Gary Gore	CBF (MEPA Trust)
15. Sasha Middleton	CBF (MEPA Trust)
16. Norman Dorleon	CBF (Saint Lucia National Conservation Fund)
17. Egide Cantin	CBF consultant
18. David Arias	CBF (Fondo Marena – República Dominicana)
19. Josefina Gomez	CBF (Fondo Marena – República Dominicana)
20. Michael John	CBF (St. Vincent & the Grenadines Conservation Trust)

Facilitators

Paquita Bath	Aligning Visions
Camila Monteiro	Convergencia Sustentabilidade

Annex 2 – Workshop Agenda

The Caribbean-Pacific Alliance for Marine Conservation Finance:

Governance Mentoring

March 7-8, 2017

- Objective:** Develop and share insights into the governance of regional platforms by comparing models, successes and challenges. Use the momentum from the discussion to set wider capacity-building priorities and plan for future mentoring opportunities among the three platforms.
- Facilitators:** Paquita Bath, Aligning Visions; and Camila Monteiro, Convergencia Sustentabilidade
- Preparation:** Read *Three Regional Conservation Fund Platforms – A Comparative Case Study*
- Methodology:** This will be a highly participatory meeting, built around discussion in small groups, candid analysis of each Platform's strengths and weaknesses in the Governance arena. It is built on the active participation of all attendees for heightened learning and insights.

AGENDA

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

- 8:30 Objectives, Agenda and Confidentiality Icebreaker
- 9:00 Structuring Regional Platforms – Standards and Tensions
- 10:00 *Coffee Break*
- 10:15 Board Composition and Extraordinary Powers
- 11:30 Due Diligence and Conflicts of Interest
- 12:30 *Lunch*
- 14:00 Government Alignment
- 14:45 Officers
- 15:30 Committees
- 16:10 Executive Director Support and Review
- 16:45 Wrap up

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

- 8:30 Applying Learning to Platform Governance
- 10:00 *Coffee Break*
- 10:20 Why work together?
- 10:45 Priority Themes for Future Mentoring
(Review of the Conservation Finance Alliance Practice Standards/ SWOT analysis)
- 12:30 *Lunch*
- 14:00 The Process of Mentoring – How will we best mentor each other?
- 15:00 Next Steps: Supporters, Activities, and Commitments
- 15:45 Plus/Delta Evaluation
- 16:00 Conclude

