



BIOPAMA



## Protection of AWNC lands and biodiversity and continued long term monitoring of key indicator species

### Type of priority area

Terrestrial Protected Area

Private Protected Area

### Primary objective

Management Effectiveness

### Target groups

Local Communities

Private Sector

### Main activity focus

Enforcement

Illegal Activities

Threatened Species



**Duration**  
15.10.2021 – 14.10.2022



**Type of grant & budget**  
Rapid Response Grant | EUR 49,917.55



**Location**  
Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean



**Protected & Conserved Areas**  
Asa Wright Nature Centre (AWNC)



**WDPA ID**  
n/a



**BIOPAMA RRIS Link**  
<http://rris.biopama.org/country/tt>



**Key Conservation Landscape**  
n/a

### Project Lead

Asa Wright Nature Centre (AWNC)

### Description of the project:

The project activities include:

1. Continued monitoring and patrolling of the AWNC protected lands (5.4 sq km) through a combination of compound, mobile and forest patrols. Specifically, the grant will be used to fund the continued employment for 4 security officers for 12 months and the purchase and strategic installation of identification and deterrent signage in all areas where needed.

2. Continuation of key conservation/wildlife monitoring programmes such as include oilbird counts, servicing of deployed camera traps and bat acoustic recorders. Voluntary Board Members will take over these activities in conjunction with various volunteers and other nongovernmental organisations. BIOPAMA funding support is required to maintain access to the survey locations. Each month 2 persons from the nearby community will be hired to clear and maintain the paths and areas around the survey equipment to prevent forest overgrowth and remove any hindrance to the monitoring personnel. They will also contribute to any preventative maintenance required to minimise threats from external pressures such as forest fires.





### The BIOPAMA AC Objective(s) Addressed

Enhance the management and governance of priority protected areas by addressing existing limitations.



### Priority Need Addressed

The AWNC is a local NGO established in 1967 as a wildlife sanctuary and nature centre by a Trust Deed. The objectives of the AWNC are to protect the area, preserve the flora and fauna of the country, and continue and encourage its sustainable use for agriculture, scientific research and environmental education. The Trust was established without an endowment and it depends upon grant funding from donors and income derived from the operation of its lands and buildings, primarily the eco-lodge. The AWNC is not in receipt of any funding from the Government.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the borders of Trinidad & Tobago, the AWNC's eco-lodge was closed to visitors in March 2020, and the consequent total cessation of the AWNC's eco-lodge business occurred in mid-January 2021 in an effort to avoid insolvency. Even if the entire financial reserves of the Trust are drawn down, the basic expenditure required to provide continued protection of the protected lands and support key long-term wildlife monitoring programmes cannot continue beyond early 2022.

If the security patrols are discontinued immediate threats are posed through irreversible damage from potential expansion of encroachment into the protected areas and by illegal hunting. AWNC's conservation of threatened species will be at risk through termination of ongoing monitoring of oilbirds, bats and other small mammals. Long-term ecosystem health is monitored through these key indicator taxa, which may be at risk of local extirpation (e.g. oilbirds). If lands of the AWNC have to be mortgaged or sold to ensure survival of the Trust, their protection will cease entirely.



### The change the project implementation will bring for the protected areas

The COVID-19 emergency highlighted aspects of the AWNC's operations which made the Trust vulnerable to external shocks and even threatened the very survival of the protected area. In the absence of adequate financial reserves, the failure of the eco-lodge business - the principal source of revenue for the Trust - was shown to have the potential to imperil the whole organization. In order to make its future operations more sustainable, thus sustaining the benefits of BIOPAMA RRG activities beyond the end of the project, the AWNC will undertake restructuring planning with a view to eliminating risks and enabling the Trust to fulfil its conservation mandate.

The "triple bottom line" objectives of the restructuring exercise are to secure the future of the AWNC by putting its operations on a sounder economic basis, whilst maintaining the positive social impact the AWNC has had on neighbouring communities - through the creation of good in-house jobs in conservation - and keeping the environmental objectives of the Trust at the forefront.

The AWNC has already commenced these restructuring activities, however the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the continued absence of any revenue and dwindling financial reserves, means the BIOPAMA funding will provide critical supplementary support for the continued protection of the lands and biodiversity monitoring whilst the Trust continues to work on a sustainable solution.

The project 'Protection of AWNC lands and biodiversity and continued long term monitoring of key indicator species' is financed by the European Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States through the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme.

BIOPAMA assists the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to address their priorities for improved management and governance of biodiversity and natural resources. BIOPAMA provides a variety of tools, services and funding to conservation actors in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The BIOPAMA grant-making facility is managed by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and supports projects on the ground to strengthen the management and governance of protected and conserved areas, with a total budget of 21 million Euros.

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