



Sint Maarten

Reconstruction, Recovery and Resilience Trust Fund

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT
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the Netherlands



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Sint Maarten

Reconstruction, Recovery, and Resilience Trust Fund

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Prepared by

Sint Maarten Trust Fund Secretariat
Caribbean Country Management Unit
Latin America and Caribbean Region
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Acronyms

AF	Additional Financing	MSWDS	Municipal Solid Waste Disposal Sites
ASA	Advisory Services and Analytics	MTR	Mid-Term Review
ATRP	Airport Terminal Reconstruction Project	NCPP	National Child Protection Platform
BETF	Bank-Executed Trust Fund	NRD	Norway Registers Development
BZK	Netherlands Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties)	NRPB	National Recovery Program Bureau
CBTP	Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Plan	NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
CLB	Charles Leopold Bell School	OR	Operating Rooms
CPPR	Country Portfolio Performance Review	PAPs	Project-Affected Persons
CRPP	Child Resilience and Protection Project	PFI s	Participating Financial Institutions
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	PJIA	Princess Juliana International Airport
CSPFRP	Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project	PJIAE	Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company N.V.
DGTP	Digital Government Transformation Project	PIUs	Project Implementation Units
DLT	Digital Leadership Team	PDO	Project Development Objectives
DRF	Disaster Reserve Fund	POC	Project Oversight Committee
DTM	Distress Tools Manual	POM	Project Operations Manual
EA	Enterprise Architecture	PPG	Project Preparation Grant
ECC	Education Care Center	PSG	Public Service Center
EDMP	Emergency Debris Management Project	RAP	Resettlement Action Plan
EDPP	Emergency Disaster Preparedness Plan	R4CR	Resources for Community Resilience
EISTP	Emergency Income Support Training Project	RE	Recipient-Executed Trust Fund
EIB	European Investment Bank	SBA	Small Business Academy
EP	Equipment Packages	SF	Strategic Framework
ERP I	Emergency Recovery Project I	SIP	Service Information Passport
E&S	Environmental & Social	SMHDF	Sint Maarten Housing Development Foundation
ESP	Enterprise Support Project	SML	Sister Marie Laurence School
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment	StML	Sint Maarten Library
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan	SMMC	Sint Maarten Medical Centre
F&A	Fire and Ambulance	SRI	Sustainability and Resilience Initiative
FM	Financial Management	SWMP	Sint Maarten Wastewater Management Project
FRLP	Fostering Resilient Learning Project	SXM DRF	Sint Maarten Disaster Risk Financing
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SXM TF	Sint Maarten Trust Fund
GEBE	Sint Maarten Water and Electricity Utility Company (Gemeenschappelijk Elektriciteitsbedrijf Bovenwindse Eilanden)	TA	Technical Assistance
GoSXM	Government of Sint Maarten	TEATT	Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications
HEIS	Hands-on Implementation Support	TDSR	Temporary Debris Storage and Reduction Site
HRPP	Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project	TF	Trust Fund
ICT	Information, Communications, and Technology	ToR	Terms of Reference
IDS	Irma Disposal Site	VNGI	VNG International (International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities)
IMHSP	Improving Mental Health Services Project	VROMI	Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening, Milieu en Infrastructuur)
ISRS	Integrated Social Registry System	VSA	Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Sociale Ontwikkeling en Arbeid)
MCTA	Multi-Criteria Technical Assessment		
MECYS	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports		
MHF	Mental Health Foundation		
MMIS	Ministry of Management Information System		
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises		

Executive Summary


The Sint Maarten Trust Fund (SXM TF) Program supports the country's recovery, reconstruction, and long-term development priorities to strengthen its resilience to disasters, based on the principles of building back better and sustainability. This report describes the SXM TF's achievements, activities, challenges, and actions from January 1 to June 30, 2023, as the island continues to recover from the global economic contraction exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Milestones achieved in the first half of 2023 served to eloquently underline the program's transition into a mechanism conducive to sustainable long-term outcomes above and beyond the initial short-term emergency response. The Steering Committee gave the green light to three new projects—worth US\$38 million—for which preparations proceeded apace. The Improving Mental Health Services Project (IMHSP) was successfully negotiated between the World Bank and the National Recovery Program Bureau (NRPB) to strengthen the national mental health system. The Housing Project involved consultations with key stakeholders to shape the final design, which will increase access to affordable housing and develop institutional capacity. Meanwhile, the Wastewater Management Project, which will increase access to safe sanitation and wastewater disposal, finalized its concept stage documents, in readiness for the decision stage.

The SXM TF's emergency response projects continued to deliver important results as they matured in implementation. The Emergency Debris Management Project (EDMP) progressed in its resettlement activities, on track to complete the resettlement of project-affected persons (PAPs) within the planned schedule. The Emergency Recovery Project I (ERP I) completed extensive repairs to the Fire and Ambulance (F&A) building followed by an official handover to the relevant department. ERP-I finished a vital package of works: installing 8 km of underground low-voltage electric cables, telecom cable conduits, and potable water pipes. The program also advanced strategic commitments to the emergency response projects, providing a second Additional Financing (AF) package of US\$19.5 million to ERP-I, bringing the project's total allocation to US\$119.7 million. This funding will contribute to repairing and renovating 12 school gyms and 13 sports facilities. The AF package for EDMP of US\$60 million approved in December 2022 was officially signed in February 2023.

Furthermore, with the Emergency Income Support Training Project (EISTP) closing in August 2023, the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor (VSA) endorsed the operationalization of the Integrated Social Registry System (ISRS), displaying a solid commitment to the initiative's sustainability. The ISRS will streamline the social protection system through support for identifying and selecting the most vulnerable people, registration, and assessing the socio-economic needs of households.

The SXM TF's trajectory remains positive despite the complex environment; ongoing investment in Sint Maarten's essential infrastructure continues to yield tangible results. With its final essential upgrade activities completed, the Sint Maarten Medical Center (SMMC) now has four operating rooms (ORs) and can expand its medical services, providing quality care close to the patient's home, and thus reducing medical referrals overseas. The second AF package of US\$7 million for the Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project (HRPP) will directly bridge budget overruns and construction costs of the new General Hospital. The continued reconstruction of the Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA)—a regional hub and centerpiece of the tourism-based economy—was marked notably by completion of the façade of the passenger terminal building, and complicated debris management concerns were addressed. Work on the departure hall is well on track for the opening expected in November 2023.



The SXM TF maintains its focus on citizens and resilient communities while promoting sustainable economic recovery. The Civil Society Partnership for Resilience Project (CSPFRP) increased its support to civil society organizations (CSOs) implementing subprojects at the community level. The National Child Protection Platform (NCP), facilitated by the Child Resilience and Protection Project (CRPP), is empowering community members with the tools necessary to ensure children's safety during emergencies. Five schools began piloting a Distress Tools Manual for screening, and 58 training facilitators for positive parenting support have been certified. The Enterprise Support Project (ESP) enabled more micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to access finance, as 19 additional MSMEs (18 of which are women-owned or managed) received funds through the project during the reporting period.

On-the-ground engagement and fund disbursement advanced substantially between January and June 2023, with every project under implementation and preparation fielding missions to Sint Maarten. Critical workshops, meetings, and engagements fostered collaboration between TF management, technical teams, and Project Implementation Units (PIUs). In February 2023, the World Bank and the government of Sint Maarten (GoSXM) held a Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPR) to review the performance of ongoing projects and identify unresolved implementation issues, resulting in a time-bound improvement action plan. The tripartite leadership of SXM TF (the government of the Netherlands, GoSXM, and the World Bank) convened twice for an official Steering Committee meeting and a technical update, respectively, to deliberate on constructive solutions to resolve bottlenecks, address emerging risks, and identify opportunities to strengthen SXM TF activities. The results of this engagement are visible in the strong disbursement performance compared to the same period in 2022.

The SXM TF entered its fifth year of implementation in 2023, marking the program cycle's mid-point from inception. The program generates a wealth of knowledge that can benefit stakeholders in Sint Maarten and the wider world. In April 2023, the TF supported a South-South knowledge exchange forum for a Surinamese delegation facilitated by the World Bank Country Office for Guyana and Suriname and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) office in Suriname. The exchange allowed the delegation to engage with the NRPB team, delving into the fundamentals (legal framework, internal structure, and monitoring and evaluation mechanism) necessary to set up and run an effective centralized PIU. Additionally, as a follow-up to the 2022 SXM TF Mid-Term Review (MTR), the World Bank launched a Sustainability and Resilience Initiative (SRI) in March 2023 to assess the viability of TF investments beyond the program's timeline. The comprehensive study gauged the capacity of GoSXM and PIUs to maintain the infrastructure, services, and procedures developed and delivered through the TF. The World Bank will continue to seek more opportunities to support Sint Maarten in undertaking capacity-building exercises to promote sustainability.

The first six months culminated memorably on June 30, 2023, when the World Bank opened its 144th worldwide country office in Sint Maarten. The Sint Maarten office reinforces the Bank's commitment to its administrator role and partnership with the country for the TF's implementation. This office will allow the program to place staff in the field to provide real-time implementation support, swiftly address operational issues, and streamline decision-making. The local office will also strengthen dialogue with the GoSXM and other relevant stakeholders, focusing on policy and administrative measures needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of SXM TF investments, its overall impact, and its long-term strategic direction.

01 Introduction





1. Introduction

This semiannual report presents the results, activities, and unaudited financial data of the Sint Maarten Trust Fund (SXM TF) from January 1 to June 30, 2023. Unless indicated otherwise, data are as of June 30 (the end of the World Bank's fiscal year).

The report is in six sections. *The first* section presents the country context, and macroeconomic developments in 2023; the *second* section outlines the program strategy, structure, strategic framework, and guiding principles; *the third* lays out the portfolio status in June 2023 and details the achievements of projects under implementation, including the World Bank's assessment of the development objective and implementation progress ratings (Appendix a); it also describes progress on project preparation; *the fourth* discusses cross-cutting implementation capacity and constraints; *the fifth* describes the half-year outreach and communications activities; and the final section comprises the *appendices*, including details referenced in the main text and additional information about the portfolio, as well as overall financial and operational performance.

a. Country Context

Sint Maarten is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Caribbean. It occupies the southern half of an island shared with the French overseas collectivity of Saint Martin. Spurred by economic development, the country's population (estimated at 41,177 in 2019) has steadily increased over the past several decades, making Sint Maarten one of the most densely populated countries in the Caribbean.

Sint Maarten is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and adverse climatic events because of its location within the hurricane belt. Within living memory, the country has been repeatedly battered by high winds and hurricanes: Donna in 1960 (Category 3), Hugo in 1989, Luis in 1995, Lenny in 1999 (all Category 4); and then in the single month of September 2017, Irma, Maria (both Category 5), and Jose (Category 4). In this small country, a single storm can swiftly impact the entire population. High winds, rainfall, and flooding are the principal risk factors (and the country is also vulnerable to earthquakes). Coastal areas are exposed to flood risk from sea level rise, storm surge, and potential tsunamis. Sint Maarten's vulnerability to natural hazards is complicated by increased urbanization, climate change, and the limited capacity of the country to build resilience. The World Bank estimated that Hurricane Irma caused damages and losses of US\$1.38 billion and US\$1.35 billion respectively (about 129 and 126 percent of GDP), affecting 90 percent of infrastructure and large parts of the natural environment.

Sint Maarten's economy depends on tourism. Restaurants, hotels, and other tourism-related sectors account for about 45 percent of GDP. Tourism accounts for 73 percent of foreign exchange income, and the jobs of roughly one-third of the employed population. Sint Maarten primarily caters to cruise tourists, who use the island's only deep-water port in Philipsburg. About 80 percent of visitors to the island are short-stay cruise tourists.

b. Macroeconomic Developments

Sint Maarten is recovering from successive shocks to its tourism-based economy. The devastation unleashed by hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017 led to a sharp economic downturn in 2017 and 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in an even sharper downturn in economic activity in 2020 due to the global effect on international tourism, and strict containment measures.

GDP did recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 but is unlikely to return to pre-hurricane levels until at least 2024. The tourism industry continues to recover, stimulating annual growth rates. Sint Maarten saw an expansion of real GDP by 9.8 percent in 2022, exceeding projections, due to higher stay-over tourism and lower inflation than anticipated. The restaurants and hotels, transport, storage and communication, real estate, renting and business activities, wholesale and retail trade, and construction sectors were the main drivers of the real GDP expansion seen in 2022.¹

Real GDP is expected to grow by 3.2 percent in 2023. The forecast exceeds previous ones due to stronger projected increases in private and public demand. Government consumption and investments are also expected to increase. Growth is expected to slow down to 2.8 percent in 2024 and level out to 1.8 percent over the medium term.

Consumer price inflation accelerated in 2022, driven by global commodity prices and higher U.S. inflation. Sint Maarten recorded an inflation rate of 3.8 percent in 2022, due to higher energy and food prices. Inflation will remain high at 3.7 percent, particularly because of the impact of U.S. inflation and international commodity prices on domestic prices. Inflation is expected to fall to 2.2 percent in 2024 and stabilize at 1.8 percent over the medium term.

c. Summary of Program Achievements from January to June 2023

Projects Under Implementation



Airport Terminal Reconstruction Project (ATRP). The façade of the passenger terminal of the Princess Juliana International Airport was completed and significant progress has been made on finishing the departure hall.



Emergency Debris Management Project (EDMP). Phase I-III resettlement progressed steadily; the NRPB aims to complete resettlement for the remaining project-affected persons (PAPs) within the planned schedule. The AF of US\$60 million approved in December 2022 was officially signed in February 2023.



Enterprise Support Project (ESP). Of the 19 additional MSMEs that received financing packages for assets, repairs or working capital, all but one are owned or operated by women.



Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project (HRPP). Final essential upgrades were completed on SMMC, namely, cosmetic improvements of the existing operating rooms and the installation of a new medical gas distribution system. A new fiber optic internet connection was fitted. A successful decision review for the second AF package of US\$7 million was held.

¹ Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten, Economic Bulletin June 2023.



Emergency Income Support Training Project (EISTP). The Ministry of VSA welcomed the completed ISRS modules, handbook, and operational manual.



The Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project (CSPFRP). The project finished its fifth round of grants, funding 63 subprojects for 42 CSOs, and reporting 8,507 beneficiaries to date. The activities are well on their way to achieve their targets, and 100 percent of beneficiaries have expressed satisfaction with subproject outputs.



The Child Resilience and Protection Project (CRPP). The project achieved significant outputs, particularly finalizing distress screening tools and certifying 58 training facilitators, progressing toward completing the NCPP.



The Emergency Recovery Project 1 (ERP-I). Extensive repairs, and an official handover of the Fire & Ambulance Department building were executed. The underground installation of 8km of low-voltage electric cables, telecom cable conduits, and potable water distribution pipes was completed. Additionally, 10 drivers and 11 medical staff have been trained to use vehicles and equipment. The Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) received four specialty trucks and a trailer through the project. Furthermore, the second AF package of US\$19.5 million, approved in May 2023, will facilitate the repair and renovation of 12 school gyms and 13 sports facilities and boost NRPB's operational and administrative budget.

Projects Under Preparation



Sint Maarten: Wastewater Management Project. The project finalized its concept stage documentation and progressed to the decision stage of preparation.



Improving Mental Health Services Project. The World Bank and NRPB successfully completed negotiations to determine the range of activities the project will cover. The project will bolster the national mental health apparatus through better governance, financing, and service delivery. The physical infrastructure for mental health service delivery will also be improved.



Housing Project. The team identified important activities for the project to consider and initiated preparation.

Knowledge



Sustainability and Resilience Initiative (SRI). This began in April 2023 with a comprehensive assessment of the viability of SXM TF investments beyond the program's timeline. The resulting study gauged GoSXM and PIU capacity and delivery mechanisms for maintaining infrastructure, services, and procedures developed and delivered through the TF Program.



Suriname Knowledge Exchange. A knowledge exchange forum facilitated by the World Bank and the IDB for Suriname officials allowed the delegation to engage with the NRPB team to learn about establishing a centralized PIU. The forum was a cross-learning exchange focusing on implementation and delivery experiences and challenges.

Engagement and Enabling Environment



Country Portfolio Performance Review. The World Bank, GoSXM, and PIUs held a CPPR to review the performance of ongoing projects and identify unresolved implementation issues, resulting in a time-bound improvement action plan.



Steering Committee. The SXM TF Steering Committee convened twice: for an official meeting, and a technical update, to deliberate on constructive solutions for addressing bottlenecks, emerging risks, and opportunities to streamline SXM TF activities. The Technical Working Group, chaired by the World Bank's program secretariat, with the Netherlands Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) and NRPB representatives, prepared the meetings.



World Bank Office. The World Bank opened its 144th worldwide country office in Sint Maarten. This development underlines the Bank's steadfast commitment as SXM TF administrator to its partnership with the country for the fund's implementation.



Enterprise Support Project

Project: P168549

Start Date: April 4, 2019

End Date: June 30, 2025

Total Financing: US\$35 million

Highlights

- The Enterprise Support Project (ESP) has invested US\$14 million in grants and loans to date, supporting the recovery of 190 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), 80 of which are owned or operated by women.
- A complementary training program targets existing and new MSMEs to build capacity, with topics ranging from business planning and entrepreneurship to marketing and taxes.
- Direct financing packages support asset and repair expenses, operational expenses, and loan refinancing.



"I already had in my mind that I wanted to be a seamstress full-time. It took me about a year and a half to lay the groundwork. I really wanted to do my research, find out what I needed to apply to the Enterprise Support Project, and have a workspace prepared. I wanted to be ready."

—Jo-Ann Schet, owner of Leighloe Designs, a small business supported by the Enterprise Support Project

02 Program Context



2. Program Context

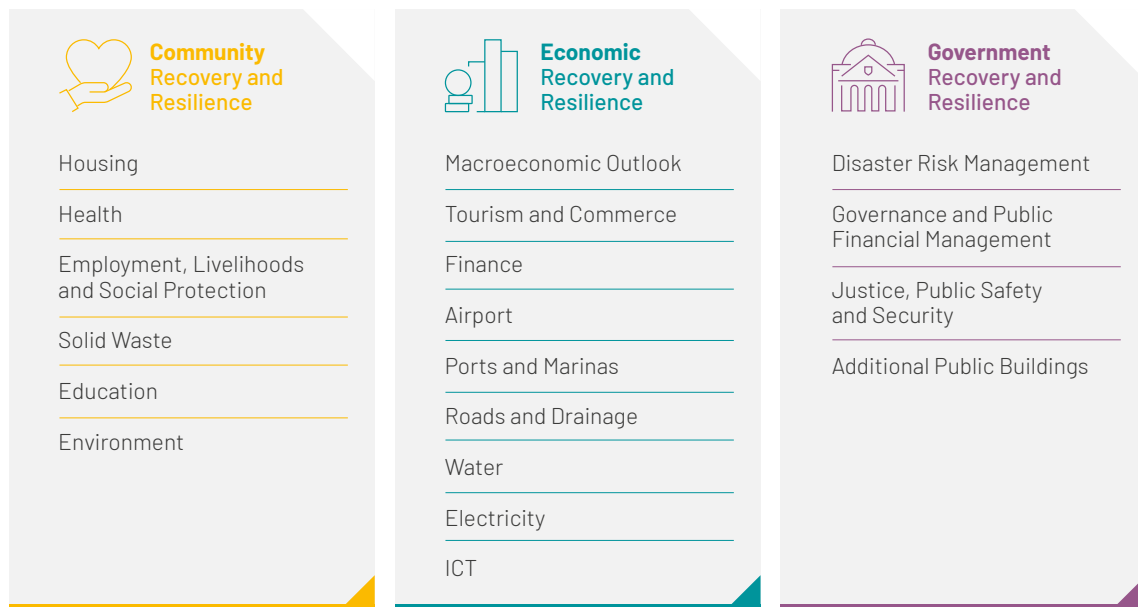
a. Strategy

The government of the Netherlands requested the World Bank’s assistance in establishing the Sint Maarten Trust Fund, launched on April 16, 2018, to support reconstruction and recovery efforts. In August 2019, the Sint Maarten Trust Fund Steering Committee approved the priorities identified in the Sint Maarten Trust Fund Strategic Framework (SF) 2019–2025, based on Sint Maarten’s comprehensive National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) developed in 2018. The NRRP aims to restore, secure, and strengthen the well-being of Sint Maarten’s people following the country’s devastation by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. The NRRP’s guiding principles—which are aligned with the Guiding Principles set out by the Netherlands regarding the execution of this trust fund (see below)— provide a framework for emergency projects prioritized by GoSXM and the government of the Netherlands, with technical guidance from the World Bank.

b. National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The NRRP identifies three priorities: (1) supporting the basic needs of the community; (2) restarting and revitalizing the economy; and (3) preparing the country and government for future hurricane seasons (Figure 2.1). The NRRP projects that US\$2.3 billion will be required under these pillars to respond to Sint Maarten’s recovery and resilience needs.

Figure 2.1 – Three Pillars of the NRRP



c. Strategic Framework

The SF aims to address the post-disaster recovery needs and selected medium-term challenges for Sint Maarten’s sustainable resilience and prosperity, and groups its priorities into three focus areas (Figure 2.2):

- Promote sustainable economic recovery;
- Invest in citizens and resilient communities; and
- Build the foundations to improve long-term resilience and good governance.

Figure 2.2 – Sint Maarten Trust Fund: Strategic Focus Areas and Objectives



The SF identifies the objectives to be achieved in these focus areas through approved projects and outlines future avenues for action (Figure 2.3). The SF’s principles of engagement include modalities to strengthen local capacity and partnerships. While the SXM TF finances many SF priorities, the SF expects additional funds to be leveraged from other partners to fill sector gaps and complement current and planned activities, where appropriate.

Figure 2.3 – Focus Areas & Projects



d. Structure

A three-person SXM TF Steering Committee, composed of GoSXM, the government of the Netherlands, and World Bank representatives, is responsible for allocating Trust Fund resources to activities. The SXM TF Program Secretariat is part of the Caribbean Country Management Unit within the World Bank’s Latin America and Caribbean regional unit. Recipient-executed (RE) projects implemented by GoSXM, or its designated implementation agencies comprise the bulk of activities. On the specific request of the government of the Netherlands, the World Bank provides additional technical assistance (TA) to GoSXM to implement the SXM TF projects. The World Bank directly executes activities such as hands-on implementation support (HEIS), analytical and knowledge work, and project preparation and implementation advice. In addition, where appropriate and feasible, the government of the Netherlands and the World Bank jointly provide further complementary technical assistance and expertise to the SXM TF program.

The five PIUs responsible for implementing or managing SXM TF projects comprise:

- NRPB;
- Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company N.V. (PJIAE);
- SMMC;
- UNICEF Netherlands (UNICEF NL); and
- VNG International (VNGI).

e. Guiding Principles for Trust Fund Use

With the establishment of the SXM TF, the objectives of the Netherlands are to support the material and nonmaterial reconstruction and recovery of Sint Maarten wherever necessary, restore vital infrastructure, and sustainably boost the country's resilience to handle possible future disasters, natural, and otherwise.

The Netherlands' guiding principles state that activities will: (a) address the damage caused by Hurricane Irma; (b) make significant improvements to the pre-hurricane preparation of the island; and (c) restore vital infrastructure whose breakdown would threaten social peace or national security.

The SXM TF support aims to boost resilience by improving crisis management and disaster preparedness, promoting economic diversification, enhancing good governance, and strengthening civil society. A preference is expressed for projects "with a long-term vision that respects both people and the environment."

According to these principles, projects are assessed on six criteria:

- **Necessity** (no other sources of funding);
- **Additionality** (bring in private or other public international financing where possible);
- **Suitability** (appropriateness in scale considering capacity);
- **Effectiveness** (ability to attain the objective and consistency with Sint Maarten's long-term policy orientations);
- **Efficiency and Legitimacy** (safeguards are in place to ensure both); and
- **Good Governance** (central to all activities undertaken by the SXM TF, particularly outcomes and methods of implementation; this is underpinned by the strict application of World Bank processes and procedures for financial management, procurement, safeguards, and Environmental and Social standards).

Child Resilience and Protection Project

Project: P172582

Start Date: October 22, 2020

End Date: July 31, 2024

Total Financing: US\$4.49 million

Highlights

- The Child Resilience and Protection Project (CRPP) development objectives focus on strengthening the capacity of Sint Maarten's child protection system, nurturing the well-being of children and adolescents, and equipping schools to better respond to future disasters.
- During the first six months of 2023, the project has made significant headway in distress screening, psychosocial support, parenting support, child protection, and school safety.

"I think children should play this game because they will learn that when a hurricane is happening, to have everything prepared."

—Alexander Williams, age 10, a pupil of Asha Stevens Hillside Christian School and a big fan of HURRYcane Run, a board game developed by the Sint Maarten Student Support Services Division (SSSD) in collaboration with UNICEF the Netherlands (United Nations Children's Fund the Netherlands), which teaches children how to prepare for a disaster.



03 Project Results and Implementation Progress

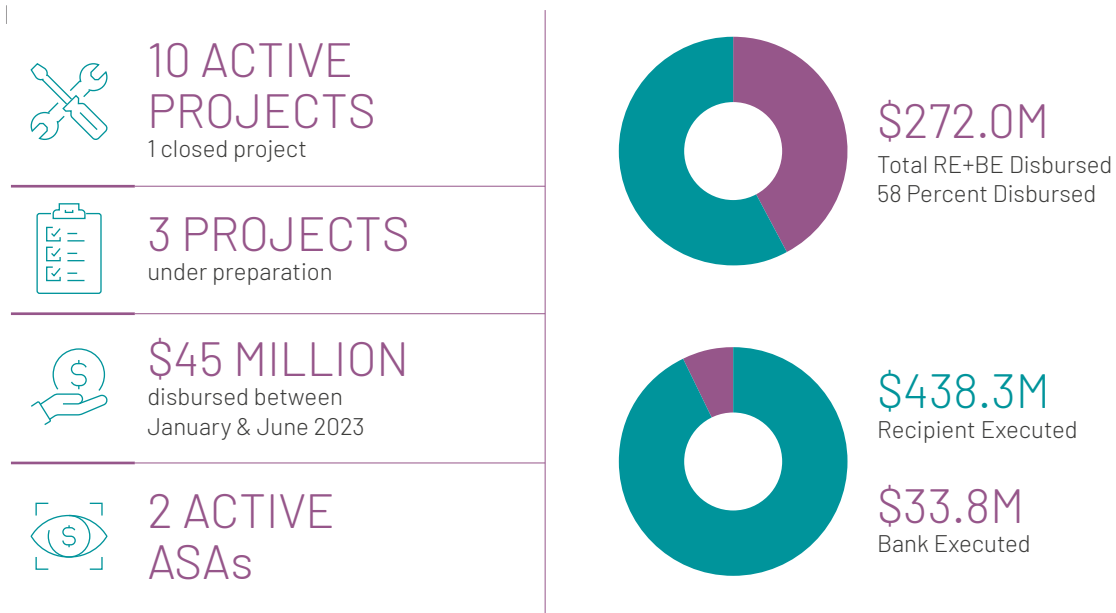


3. Project Results and Implementation Progress

a. 2023 Portfolio Status

Commitments: By June 30, 2023, the SXM TF had received €445.11 million (US\$519.42 million) from the Netherlands. Factoring in investment income of US\$25.37 million and US\$12.60 million World Bank administration fee to date, the total TF envelope was US\$532.19 million as of June 2023.

Since 2019, the TF has supported 11 recipient-executed projects and has substantially expanded commitment volume. Ten projects in the total amount of US\$434.6 million² remained 'active' or under implementation in June 2023, and one project—the Red Cross Roof Repair Project (US\$3.7 million)—was completed in December 2020. On June 2, 2023, the World Bank and NRPB signed the grant agreement for the second AF package for ERP-I. This agreement increased the total amount committed for recipient-executed (RE) activities to US\$438.30 million,³ and US\$4.6 million for two Bank-executed (BE) advisory services and analytics (ASAs) as of June 2023.

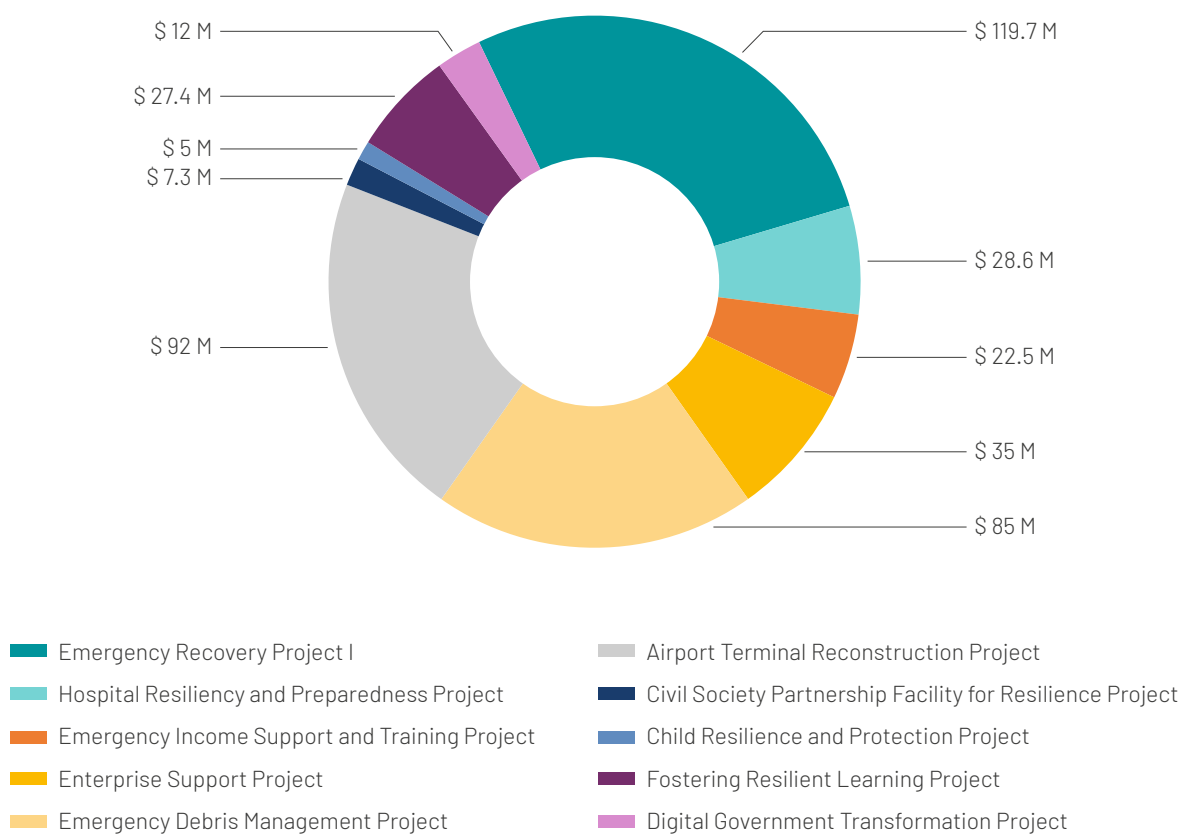


² Includes project preparation grants.

³ Discounts amount canceled from FRLP Project Preparation Grant.

In mid-2023, the SXM TF had three additional projects in its pipeline—the IMHSP,⁴ the Wastewater Management Project, and the Housing Project—totaling US\$38 million. These projects will further the SXM TF SF objectives of promoting sustainable economic growth and investing in citizens and resilient growth.

Figure 3.2 – Projects under Implementation (US\$, millions)



Disbursement: The half-year performance for the first six months of 2023—during which US\$45 million of the SXM TF was disbursed to implement RE projects—far exceeded that recorded at this stage the previous year (US\$21 million). World Bank-executed activities (project implementation support, preparation processes, ASA, and program administration) disbursed 84 percent (US\$28.32 million) of the allocated US\$33.79 million.

Appendix b presents a financial overview, including program management costs. Program management costs cover all support to date, including retroactive financing for delivering the NRRP.

⁴ Approved by the World Bank’s Latin America and Caribbean Vice President on July 28, 2023.

b. Projects under Implementation

FOCUS AREA 1: Promote Sustainable Economic Recovery

Airport Terminal Reconstruction Project

Project Development Objective: To restore the passenger capacity of PJIA to pre-Hurricane Irma levels with improved resilience against hurricanes.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan – June 2023 Disbursement
US\$92 million	September 18, 2019	December 31, 2023	US\$24.6 million

The ATRP contributes to restoring the passenger capacity of PJIA to pre-Hurricane Irma levels with improved resilience to hurricanes. The PJIAE implements ATRP, supported by NRPB. The ATRP is part of a more extensive PJIAE reconstruction program, financing the reconstruction and reequipment of the passenger terminal, improving the building's resilience against natural disasters, capacity building, and project management. It also supports the operational expenditure of PJIAE in case of major external shocks during the reconstruction period.

The project has leveraged an additional US\$50 million from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and US\$7 million from the airport operating company to reconstruct the airport.

Highlights

Progress toward the development objective and implementation is considered moderately unsatisfactory by the World Bank. However, in January 2023, GoSXM formally requested the Bank to extend the project closing date by 18 months, from December 31, 2023, to June 30, 2025. This action will enable the project to complete planned activities, achieve the project development objective (PDO), and thus improve the project's progress ratings. The extension has been processed for approval in July 2023. This second closing date extension leads to a total project duration of five years and nine months.⁵

In May 2023, PJIAE completed the terminal façade and installed the passenger boarding bridges. The project has also made significant progress with the Equipment Packages (EPs), as PJIAE signed six out of seven EP contracts now under implementation.⁶

The project received the green light to construct a temporary terminal facility using PJIAE's own resources to accommodate arriving passengers. This facility would give the contractor the space needed to speed up and complete the work without obstructing the ongoing terminal operations. The temporary terminal facility is expected to be operational by September 2023 and in use until Package 2 (P2—Reconstruction of the Terminal Building) works are completed in April 2024.

⁵ The World Bank approved the project extension on July 6, 2023.

⁶ EP1 (Passenger Boarding Bridges) and EP2 (Baggage Handling System) were signed in April 2022. The contract for EP3 (Security Screening Equipment) is being finalized.

Development Objectives Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2019)	Target (2023)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Passenger handling capacity of the terminal	1 million	2.5 million	1 million	1 million
Resistance of terminal building to Irma-level hurricanes (Yes/No)	No	Yes	No	No

Results

Component 1: Reconstruction of the PJIA Terminal Facilities.

The main work of the terminal building reconstruction comprises P2 and seven EPs. The main works are carried out in a four-phased approach given the co-location of the Airport's operations and construction. As of June 30, 2023, the cumulative progress of the main works and the EP installation is at 42 percent, with progress reported on all levels of the terminal building and the external façade already completed.

During the reporting period, EP1 (Passenger Boarding Bridge) was satisfactorily installed and tested, with relevant training. Several other shipments were also received and inspected: EP3 (Security Screening Equipment), EP4 (Self-Service Baggage Drop System) and EP5 (Digital Signage Systems). Finally, PJIAE signed the contract for EP6 (Hold Room Seating) and secured seven lots within EP7 (Fixtures and Appliances). PJIAE also received the green light to commission a new debris staging site (and decommission the prior location) to prevent interruption to works and project timeline.

Component 2: Capacity Building of and Project Management by PJIAE.

Implementation of Component 2 is on track. The 2022 Project Audit report was finalized and signed in June 2023, with a clean opinion received.

Component 3: Capacity Building of and Project Management by the Government of Sint Maarten.

PJIAE and NRPB have discussed potential capacity-building and training activities with the World Bank team and are developing a training plan. Training activities are expected to begin in Q3 2023.

Component 4: Support for PJIAE Operations.

With the continued recovery of passenger traffic, support for operating expenditures of PJIAE is no longer expected under the component, unless another crisis occurs.

Issues and Plans

- Undertaking construction work in a fully operational international airport can be challenging. To address this, the arrivals terminal in the main building will be temporarily relocated to a standalone facility. The construction of this facility is expected to start in July 2023.
- Obtaining clearance from the GoSXM Departments of Labor Permits and Landing Permits, followed by the Dutch Embassy/Consulate for long-stay Caribbean Visas remains time consuming. To avoid delays in project implementation, the Immigration department within GoSXM has been requested to find immediate solutions for the issuance of appropriate visas and permits.

Emergency Debris Management Project

Project Development Objective: To manage debris from the hurricane and reconstruction activities to facilitate recovery and reduce risks.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$85 million	December 21, 2018	December 31, 2026	US\$1.4 million

The EDMP works toward improving Sint Maarten’s capacity to manage debris from Hurricane Irma and reconstruction activities to facilitate recovery and reduce risks. The NRPB implements EDMP in collaboration with three ministries: VROMI, the Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication (TEATT), and the Ministry of VSA. VNGI provides additional technical assistance, grant-funded by the Dutch government.

Highlights

Progress toward achieving the development objective and implementation remains moderately satisfactory. A US\$60 million AF package was approved in December 2022 and became effective in March 2023. Through the AF, the project has been planning several major activities, including artificial reefing, establishment of a temporary debris storage and reduction site (TDSR) with a specific focus on tire shredding and weighbridge installation, and a Design-Build-Operate activity for Municipal Solid Waste Disposal Sites (MSWDS). The project continues to improve landfill operations and management by ensuring the optimal functionality of heavy equipment and providing training to the technical staff at VROMI. Additionally, Phase I-III resettlement has been progressing steadily, and the NRPB aims to complete resettlement for the remaining project-affected persons (PAPs) within the resettlement areas of impact within the planned schedule.

The Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) for artificial reefing activities, the preliminary ESMP and the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for landfill management, and the Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP) for Phase I and Phase II resettlement were finalized and disclosed.

Development Objectives Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2019)	Target (2026)	Actual (2022)	Actual (March 2023)
Number of metal wrecks collected and processed	0	100	0	0
Simpson Bay area cleared of shipwrecks and shoreline debris (Hectares)	0	200	200	200
Debris and Waste Processing Facility Established (Yes/No)	No	Yes	No	No

Results

Component 1: Debris Clearance and Management.

Implementation of the phased Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) commenced in September 2022. Since then, a total of 44 PAPs (including all 36 PAPs from phase I and II of resettlement) have signed legally binding compensation agreements and all compensation payments for phase I and II have been processed. Phase III implementation started in April 2023 and compensation payments are being processed. The LRP will be implemented after PAPs physically relocate. In the meantime, NRPB is working closely with real estate agents to identify feasible options in the housing market for in-kind compensation.

VROMI has been implementing its own car wreck removal project since October 2021. However, from a technical perspective, the activity is considered a low priority for EDMP.

The project finalized Terms of Reference (ToR) for the MSWDS feasibility study and preparation of the Design-Build-Operate bidding package for upgrading the MSWDS. The operational arrangements are aligned with the National Vision, a broad vision for the waste management sector in Sint Maarten completed in June 2023.

A malfunctioning bulldozer was repaired in January 2023. Consequently, the NRPB is developing an annual maintenance schedule to inform equipment maintenance.

Component 2: Technical Assistance.

VNGI has been supporting strategic planning to advance the sector reforms under its TA funded by the Netherlands. During the reporting period, the chapters related to waste management in the current VROMI Ordinance were being updated; the financial framework for waste management was carefully considered, and work began on drafting a concept note for an Integrated Waste Authority.

Component 3: Project Management and Implementation Support.

The project continues to strengthen its capacity to support implementation, and NRPB completed the selection process to hire a project officer. The World Bank will continue providing HEIS as necessary.

Issues and Plans

- The disbursement of funds under the AF is tied to critical legal, financial, and institutional reforms that must be completed before certain MSWDS implementation milestones can be met. The government's highest attention is needed for the completion of necessary reform actions to meet the disbursement conditions of the additional financing.
- The market response to requests for bids for activities remains muted. The project has taken measures to conduct market research to identify potential bidders, increase market outreach, and fine-tune bidding documents where appropriate.

Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project

Project: P167532

Start Date: August 16, 2018

End Date: July 31, 2024

Total Financing: US\$28.61 million

Highlights

- Overseas referrals have dropped 91 percent in five years.
- The Emergency Disaster Preparedness Plan and an Evacuation Plan have been developed.
- Existing services have been expanded (such as dialysis, or chemotherapy), operating room capacity increased, and new specialty care units set up, including ophthalmology, neurology, and urology.
- A new fiber optic internet connection has been established, providing improved connectivity and faster internet speeds for medical center staff, enabling them to enhance their digital infrastructure and support various health care services and operations.



“We work to a certain quality standard, and we want the Sint Maarten people to know that—not because it is the only hospital, or the only choice they have—but to assure them that we have a certain standard, so it is safe to be hospitalized or get treatment here. We provide the best care to our ability.”

—Giovani Diran, Operating Room Assistant Staff Supervisor

Enterprise Support Project

Project Development Objective: Support the recovery of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises through direct financial assistance to contribute to the restoration of economic activity

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$35 million	April 4, 2019	June 30, 2025	US\$1.37 million

The Enterprise Support Project continues to improve access of MSMEs in Sint Maarten to finance for economic recovery and business restoration. NRPB implements the project in collaboration with select financial institutions in the private sector, TEATT, and the Ministry of Finance.

Highlights

Progress toward the development objective and implementation performance remain moderately satisfactory. As of June 30, 2023, ESP has provided access to finance to 190 MSMEs, with 19 MSMEs receiving financing packages for assets, repairs, or working capital in the past six months. Women own or operate 80 of the MSMEs supported since the project started (meanwhile, all but one of the above-mentioned 19 are owned or managed by women). Cumulatively, MSMEs have received US\$13.20 million of the targeted US\$32.50 million, of which US\$5 million has been received by women-led MSMEs. Extensive handholding—involving support to MSMEs to complete and submit applications—has proved critical. A 2022 customer engagement survey revealed that 97 percent of the beneficiaries felt the project activities reflected their needs.

In July 2023, a project restructuring will be approved.⁷ Through this, the ESP will: (i) extend the closing date of the project to June 30, 2028, to reduce the estimated monthly debt burden and improve the repayment capacity of entrepreneurs; (ii) revise the Project Development Objective (PDO); (iii) increase the focus on capacity building, monitoring and support to beneficiaries, especially smaller ones, for greater impact and sustainability; (iv) cancel Component 2, given that the World Bank supports ongoing TA on disaster risk finance; (v) reduce the total project amount by US\$10 million to fund other TF priorities; and (vi) revise the results framework to scale down some targets, add a new PDO indicator on job creation, and better capture capacity building of MSME beneficiaries.

⁷ The World Bank approved the project restructuring on July 27, 2023.

Project Development Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2025)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Cumulative number of MSMEs in receipt of packages for assets, repairs or working capital	0	600	165	190
Cumulative number of MSMEs owned or managed by women in receipt of packages for assets, repairs or working capital	0	240	62	80
Volume of grants and loans supported through the project over its lifetime (US\$, millions)	0	33	11.7	14
Volume of grants and loans supported through the project over its lifetime to MSMEs owned or managed by women (US\$, millions)	0	13.2	3.8	5.0

Results

Component 1: Direct Financial Support to MSMEs for Investment and Working Capital.

MSMEs with approved grant/loan packages increased from 171 to 190 between January 2023 and June 2023. Applications for an additional 11 (total value: US\$1 million) were also approved. This progress is reflected through a stronger PIU team, improved Participating Financial Institution (PFI) capacity to process loan requests, a streamlined application process, and better communication. The project continues with financial disbursements through four PFIs via signed Subsidiary Agreements with Qredits Microfinance Netherlands, Windward Islands Bank, Banco di Caribe and OBNA Bank (Ontwikkelingsbank van de Nederlandse Antillen N.V.). The processing and approval of applications was put on hold while the project completes its restructuring process.

Before disbursement, ESP requires approved beneficiaries to attend an information session to inform them about reporting obligations and raise awareness on the project's environmental and social (E&S) requirements. During the reporting period, six of these mandatory information sessions were held with 30 ESP applicants, strengthening compliance in using funds as intended.

MSMEs must submit an annual project-related report, covering environmental matters and occupational health and safety. During the reporting period, 83 percent of beneficiaries submitted their E&S annual report obligations, revealing increased compliance and attention to beneficiary obligations. No major incidents were reported, and several beneficiaries have taken steps toward more sustainable business practices.

Component 2: Study of Financial Solutions for Improved Disaster Resilience.

This component intended to explore instruments, markets, tools, and solutions to improve disaster resilience in Sint Maarten. However, the NRPB and World Bank canceled these activities as another World Bank Group TA program implements similar disaster resilience interventions. The SXM TF's 2023 Annual Report will reflect the changes.

Component 3: Training, Project Implementation, Audit, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Qredits' Small Business Academy (SBA) received further support in 2023, with two 10-week sessions conducted. During this reporting period the SBA had 35 participants, of whom 24 completed the entire program. Since its inception, the SBA has had 115 participants, of whom 92 have completed the training. Although ESP was not part of the first SBA, the combined SBA and ESP training programs have trained 164 people to date.

A focus group session was held with participants who attended the ESP training programs in 2022 to better understand the scope of future technical support and training that is needed. Feedback received will be used to improve training and other support provided to MSMEs.

Issues and Plans

- Beneficiaries face procurement challenges and delays. Various sectors have been affected by the supply chain crisis, whereby assets requested are either simply unavailable, or not available until 2024. The NRPB procurement team has been assisting by conducting market research to find suitable comparable options with delivery dates for assets before 2024.
- The quality of applications will need to continue to be improved through training provided by the project.
- Currently, new and micro businesses comprise over 36 percent of the ESP portfolio. However, only mature and medium-sized businesses can apply to ESP due to the short repayment term and high monthly repayment amounts. With the project's closing date extension, more MSMEs can take advantage of extended loan tenures, lower monthly repayments, and affordable loans.
- Increased stakeholder collaboration, better data collection and research, and improvements to the policy and regulatory framework are necessary to strengthen the MSME ecosystem.

FOCUS AREA 2: Invest in Citizens and Resilient Communities

Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project

Project Development Objective: To improve the preparedness and capacity of hospital services in Sint Maarten.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$28.61 million	August 16, 2018	July 31, 2024	US\$1.3 million

The Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness Project (HRPP) co-finances the building of the new Sint Maarten General Hospital and ensures its resilience against Category 5 hurricanes (such as Irma). The new hospital will substantially increase service capacity and enhance health services. The project also finances critical upgrades to the existing hospital and enhances the quality and scope of hospital services, including updating clinical guidelines and carrying out routine technical audits of their application.

Highlights

Progress toward achieving the development objective remains satisfactory as one of the three PDOs has already been achieved. The implementation progress was downgraded to moderately satisfactory in March 2023 due to the delays in the construction of the hospital.

After a year of negotiations, and significant market disruptions resulting in extraordinary increases in prices of construction materials and shipping, a fourth amendment to the hospital construction contract was signed in February 2023, increasing the total budget of the new General Hospital to US\$40 million. To contribute to this additional investment, the Steering Committee allocated US\$7 million AF to the project. Approval of the AF package is expected by August 2023.⁸

During the reporting period, the final essential upgrades were completed, including a cosmetic upgrade for the existing ORs and installation of the new medical gas distribution system. These advancements enhance the functionality (and aesthetic appeal) of the OR, ensuring a more efficient and modern surgical environment. SMMC now has four ORs and can expand its medical services, providing quality care close to home, and reducing medical referrals overseas. These accomplishments demonstrate the commitment to excellence in health care infrastructure and the dedication to providing the highest quality surgical services.

In June 2023, a new fiber optic internet connection was installed, providing improved connectivity and faster internet speeds for the medical center, enabling it to enhance digital infrastructure and support for various health care services and operations.

⁸ World Bank management approved the AF on August 22, 2023.

Project Development Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2025)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Percentage of overseas medical referrals reduced ⁹	0	45	93	91
Percentage of Emergency Disaster Preparedness and Evacuation Plans implemented in compliance with updated procedures ¹⁰	60	90	81	83
Percentage of technical audits to evaluate quality and preparedness of service delivery that are rated satisfactory	0	90	0	0

Results

Component 1: Building and Launching of the New Hospital.

SMMC signed the fourth amendment to the construction contract, increasing the new Hospital's total budget to US\$40 million. The contractor subsequently submitted its revised schedule for fast-tracked activities. In this reporting period, builders have installed the base isolators to protect against earthquakes and started the construction of the main building's first floors. The retaining wall surrounding the construction site and installation of the water tanks were also completed. Additionally, in June 2023, a technical session was held for relevant SMMC staff on medical waste management, with the aim of sharing best practices and lessons learned from the use in other settings of incinerators, autoclaves and radiation.

Component 2: Transition and Contingency Plan for Sint Maarten Medical Center.

SMMC completed the OR renovation project. The key activities involved a needs assessment, cosmetic repairs, and lighting system upgrades—these outputs played a crucial role in achieving the overall project outcome of enhancing OR functionality and aesthetic appeal.

The project also completed a new medical gas distribution system. Installation of anesthesia pendants and a new bedhead unit improve patient care and monitoring during recovery. The system underwent thorough testing and quality assurance checks to ensure compliance with safety regulations, guaranteeing optimal functionality. The upgraded system contributes to overall patient safety and positive surgical outcomes.

The successful delivery of the fiber optic project is a significant step toward establishing a robust and high-performance fiber optic network, essential for the transition to the Sint Maarten General Hospital. The SMMC Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT) infrastructure has partially incorporated the new flow fiber into the existing network, enabling SMMC to evaluate the fiber connection for its stability and quality.

⁹ This indicator takes as referral date the day when SMMC determines it is unable to provide the relevant treatment on site.

¹⁰ This indicator measures how well the updated plans are implemented through the application of a scorecard which was applied in January 2022 to grade the performance of each area of the plan.

While making strides in fully integrating the fiber into the entire network, SMMC is also actively working on segmenting and prioritizing the traffic to optimize the high-speed fiber connection use.

A comprehensive selection process was conducted to identify and appoint a qualified and experienced professional for the role of clinical auditor.

Issues and Plans

- The second AF package of US\$7 million to contribute to cost overruns for the new General Hospital was on track for approval.
- For the next six months, the project will start the construction of the Technical Building and Wastewater Treatment Plant, including the ground floor of the main building.
- The clinical auditor will engage in various critical activities to ensure and improve the quality and compliance of clinical processes and high-quality health care services to promote patient safety.
- SMMC will undertake a comprehensive assessment of staff training needs to prepare for their transition to the New General Hospital.



Emergency Income Support and Training Project

Project Development Objective: To provide temporary income support, improve the employability of affected beneficiaries in targeted sectors, and strengthen the social protection system's capacity for shock-response and protection of the poor.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$22.5 million	Aug 2, 2018	Aug 31, 2023	US\$0

The EISTP was prepared as an emergency response to mitigate the economic impacts of Hurricane Irma by protecting poor and vulnerable people impacted.

Highlights

Progress toward achieving the development objective and implementation remains moderately satisfactory. The project has disbursed 97 percent of the total grant. All activities under Component 1 were completed in 2020 and have fully achieved their objective, surpassing the targets set in the PDO indicators. The project's closing date was extended from February 28 to August 31, 2023, to complete activities under Component 2.

The project is in the process of preparing closing procedures. It is assessing the overall implementation progress, particularly the implementation and sustainability of the Integrated Social Registry System (ISRS), which will support registration, and assessing socio-economic needs of households, identifying and selecting the most vulnerable people to improve the social protection system's coordination and efficiency.

During the reporting period, VSA accepted the completed ISRS modules, handbook, and operational manual. The cabinet's approval indicates the highest level of support for the initiative by approving a multi-annual budget for 2024–2026 to support the continuation of the ISRS.

Project Development Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2018)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Number of Beneficiaries enrolled in the EISTP receiving income support on a monthly basis in exchange for their participation in EISTP training and achieved the minimum attendance rate	727	1,155	1,960	1,960
Number of Beneficiaries enrolled in the EISTP receiving income support monthly in exchange for their participation in training and achieved the minimum attendance rate – female	420	670	1,350	1,350
Percentage of beneficiaries who complete training in an occupational area	0	50	93	93
Percentage of beneficiaries who complete training in an occupational area – percentage female	0	50	62	62
Number of records in the Social Registry	0	1,000 (Feb 2023)	0	221

Emergency Income Support and Training Project

Project: P167368

Start Date: August 2, 2018

End Date: August 31, 2023

Total Financing: US\$22.5 million

Highlights

- The Emergency Income Support and Training Project (EISTP) achieved its objective of building and upgrading skills and enhancing the employability of unemployed and underemployed workers affected by Hurricane Irma.
- As of June 2023, nearly 2,000 people have enrolled in the program—70 percent of them women—and have received income support and skills training.



“Take the chance. Take advantage of the knowledge you will gain. You can use it wherever you go, to other employment, or even to build your own house... You’re not just developing yourself; it affects the people around you, people in need. The home repairs project, for example—to me that was an exciting project because not only was it construction-related, but also you are giving back to the community.”

—Shannon Bell, project beneficiary

Results

Component 1: Supporting the Implementation of the EISTP

All activities were completed and fully achieved their objective of providing temporary income support and training. The component also surpassed its targeted number of eligible beneficiaries in September 2020. Given the program's relevance in the COVID-19 context and its strong results, the government extended the training program until April 2021, using its own funds.

Component 2: Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Enhance the Social Protection System

During the project's extension period, VSA focused on piloting, rolling out, and establishing the ISRS to achieve the project's development objective and enhance its sustainability.

The ISRS will provide the necessary tools and functionalities to effectively categorize and target households needing social protection after registration. It will also contribute to improving the targeting and coordination of social programs, and enhancing the government's capacity to administer social protection services.

In the reporting period, extensive outreach efforts were made to raise awareness about the ISRS among key internal and external stakeholders, including community officers, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations (NGOs; FBOs) and other staff members who were not directly involved in the immediate project team. Additionally, a second draft of the ISRS operations manual and handbook has been completed. A new targeting tool (based on predictions of consumption levels and observable characteristics linked to poverty status, such as dwelling, education, and health) has been developed for VSA. It will provide a list of households—already assessed and ranked by socio-economic status—to support the selection of potential beneficiaries for social services.

Issues and Plans

- Delays in the roll-out of the ISRS registration process are due to prolonged internal consultation and validation of the Socio-Economic Needs Assessment 2 survey tool, competing priorities, and stretched capacity of VSA's staff. Consultants financed by the project were expected to reinforce VSA, but none were hired, for lack of qualified candidates.
- The project is preparing to close¹¹ and is finalizing all agreed actions toward supporting full implementation and sustainability of the ISRS.
- The VSA has committed to finance the ISRS registration process planned for August 2023. This is important for supporting the sustainability of the ISRS.

¹¹ The project closed on August 31, 2023.

Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project

Project Development Objective: Improve the capacity of civil society organizations and support implementation of reconstruction and resilience subprojects at the community level.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$7.20 million	June 26, 2020	June 28, 2024	US\$1.39 million

The CSPFRP continues to improve the capacity of CSOs in Sint Maarten and supports the implementation of reconstruction and resilience subprojects at the community level. The project is locally known as Resources for Community Resilience (R4CR) and is implemented by VNGL, through provision of subgrants to local CSOs that implement activities at the community level. R4CR is implemented in coordination with relevant government institutions and CSOs.

Highlights

Overall implementation progress is satisfactory. An assessment of performance indicators suggests the project will achieve (and in some cases exceed) end targets (some as originally set, others as subsequently revised). Progress toward the development objective remains Moderately Satisfactory.

CSPFRP has implemented five rounds¹² of grants, yielding strong results: (i) cumulatively, 30 CSOs are benefitting from the project grant scheme, 84 percent of the revised end target; (ii) 63 subprojects have been funded, equivalent to 79 percent progress toward the end target; (iii) 8,507 direct project beneficiaries have been reached; and (iv) 100 percent of beneficiaries express satisfaction with subproject outputs, exceeding the end-of-project target of 70 percent.

Project Development Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2020)	Target (2024)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Percentage of subprojects approved which are fully implemented and functional	0	75	72.97	61.90
Percentage of CSOs participating in the project with improved capacity for grant management and implementation	0	70	72.97	88.09
Percentage of beneficiaries expressing satisfaction that subprojects reflected their needs	0	75	100	100
Number of beneficiaries of subprojects	0	10,000	2,453	8,507

¹² A sixth round of grants was approved in August 2023 and launched in September 2023.

Results

Component 1: Small grants to civil society organizations for reconstruction and resilience.

In the reporting period, the CSPFRP completed its fifth round of grants in which 17 new grant projects were approved and contracted. This new grant round included six new contracted applicants (CSOs that had never received and contracted a grant project) and new engagement in areas such as illiteracy, food security, care for the elderly, art, and access to job opportunities. Additionally, R4CR launched the call for applications under grant round six, with a deadline for CSOs to submit proposals by June 5, 2023. The project team completed an assessment of the applications, which resulted in the approval of grants to 14 new subprojects and 10 new CSOs who had not received R4CR grants before. The assessment of round six suggests that the enhanced capacity-building efforts by VNGI are yielding positive results, given that this is the largest number of new CSOs in one grant cycle since the project was launched.

Component 2: Technical Assistance and Capacity Building to CSOs.

CSPFRP continues to provide critical capacity-building support to local CSOs through training and knowledge sharing. As of June 30, 2023, 61.9 percent of local CSOs reported increased capacity for fiduciary management of grants. The decrease in percentage from the last reporting period is attributed to new CSOs that are yet to report the impact of capacity building on their performance. In addition, a total of 39 training sessions were provided to local CSOs. Cumulatively, a total of 356 individuals have received trainings since the project started, 20 of whom were trained during the reporting period.

Since the completion of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) in 2022, VNGI re-assessed the CSOs' needs and updated the Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Plan (CBTP). Innovations for intensive coaching, mentoring, and awareness creation that are part of the updated plan have partly contributed to the increased uptake of subprojects (17 and 14 grantees were realized in rounds five and six respectively, representing the largest number of subprojects to date).

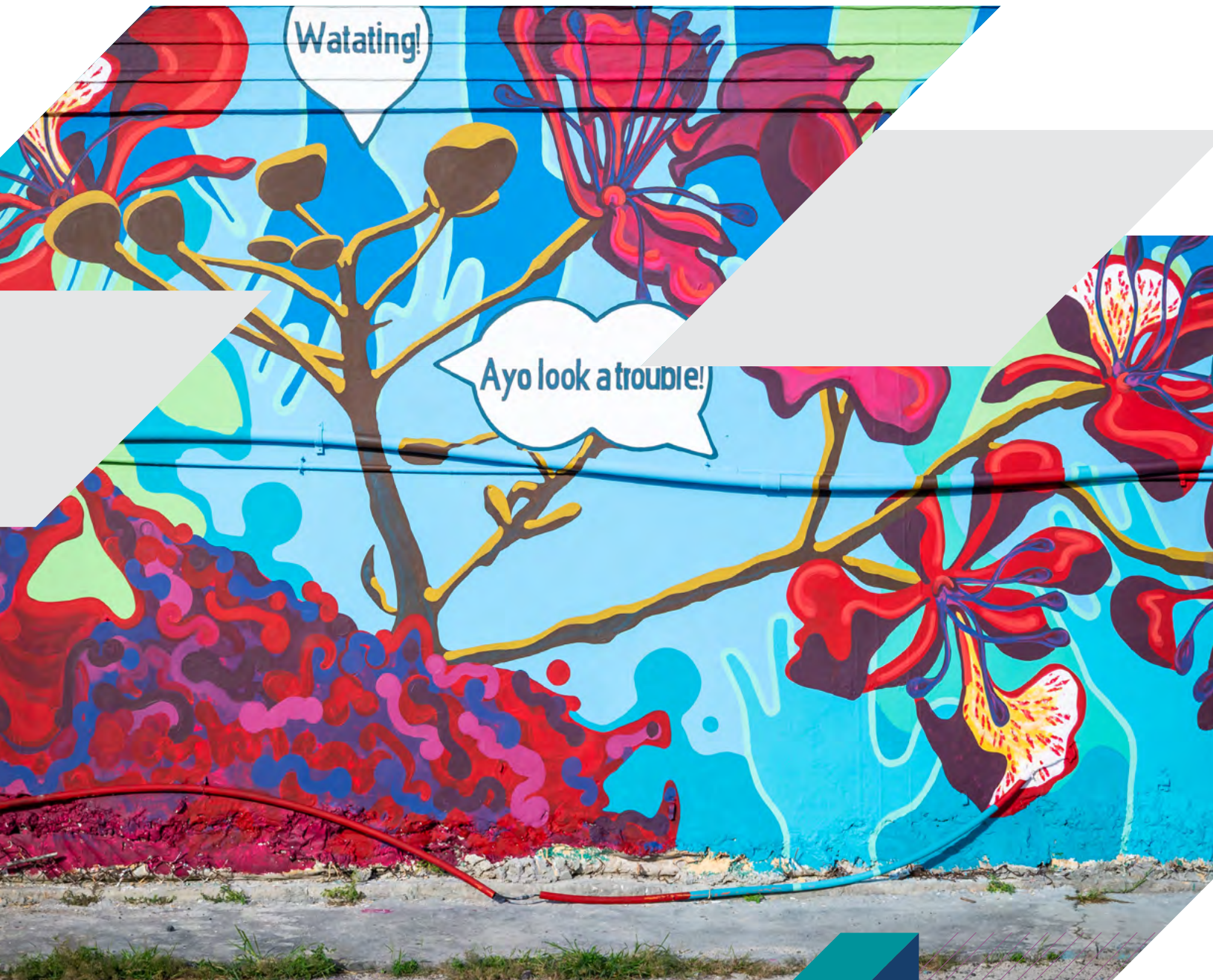
Component 3: Project Management and Coordination.

VNGI's presence and its hands-on approach underpins sustainability and improvements in implementation on the ground. The PIU continues to prepare and submit improved six-month progress reports that consider cumulative feedback including insights from the MTR. VNGI also submitted the updated Project Operations Manual (POM) and Grant Manual, which the Bank approved. In addition, the Grievance Redress Mechanism was operationalized, involving the documentation of grievances received and resolved. Finally, the project undertook a second beneficiary assessment, details of which will be analyzed and disclosed in the next reporting period.

Issues and Plans

- The remaining two rounds of grants may not attract many new CSOs, given the difficulty in fulfilling the minimum requirements despite intensive project support. The PIU team is optimistic that the coaching, mentoring, and awareness activities envisaged for implementation under the revised CBTP (2023) will improve the likelihood of meeting the end-of-project targets.
- The PIU will continue implementing a range of general and specific capacity-building and training activities for new, prospective, and implementing grantees. The training will also cover those dealing with closure and final reporting issues.

- VNGI has requested a no-cost extension of the project to give CSOs more time to complete their grants.
- Qualitative and quantitative beneficiary assessments should be sustained based on lessons from the first two undertaken, because they illuminate and explain the needs of the community and beneficiaries, thereby boosting project performance (and its reflection in the Results Storybook published every six months).



Fostering Resilient Learning Project

Project Development Objective: to restore access to an adequate and inclusive learning environment and to re-establish library services, and improve the availability of quality data for decision-making.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$ 26.78 million	June 9, 2022	June 30, 2025	US\$0

The Fostering Resilient Learning Project (FRLP) contributes to restoring access to an adequate and inclusive learning environment, re-establishing library services, and improving the availability of quality data for decision-making. NRPB implements FRLP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (MECYS).

Highlights

Progress toward the development objective and implementation performance is considered moderately satisfactory. The project experienced significant delays during its preparation phase, affecting the implementation schedule.

Project Development Indicators

Indicator	Baseline (2009)	Target (2025)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Students with restored access to an adequate learning environment through the reconstruction of Sister Marie Laurence School (Number)	0	200	0	0
Students benefitting from a package of interventions at Charles Leopold Bell primary school to address chronic behavior challenges (Number)	0	120	0	0
Library open and operating at full capacity for Sint Maarten's population and visitors (Yes/No)	No	Yes	No	No
Availability and use of an integrated database at MECYS for evidence-based decision-making in education, culture and sport sectors	Current system does not facilitate use of data for decision-making	New system is operational and rolled out	No change from baseline	No change from baseline

Results

Components 1 & 2: Rebuilding Inclusive Schools & Restoring Library Services.

The architectural design for the Sister Marie Laurance School (SML) was validated and the demolition of the existing structure is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. NRPB launched the supervision of works tender for SML, with a contract expected to be signed in Q3 2023. ToRs for the design and supervision contracts for the Charles Leopold Bell School (CLB) and the Sint Maarten Library (StML) have also been completed.

Component 3: Strengthening Management Information System of MECYS.

The Ministry Management Information System (MMIS) diagnostic was completed, and its bidding packages were finalized. The Learning Outcome assessment activity is ongoing and benefits from MECYS' ownership. Twenty-two enumerators were trained, and material was purchased (tablet computers) for the surveys conducted in March 2023. The exercise aimed to measure learning outcomes (in reading and mathematics) in early grades and secondary school. When the assessment report is completed in September as expected, it will be the country's first complete learning assessment.

Component 4: Project Management.

NRPB is working on a staffing plan which will help more efficient project implementation. NRPB hired a Project Engineer and will hire a new MECYS Project Coordinator. The current MECYS Project Coordinator will move into the role of MMIS implementation support advisor. In collaboration with NRPB, the World Bank developed a monitoring tool allowing a clear definition of the next steps, deadlines, and key responsibilities for following up closely on all project activities and ensuring timely implementation.

Issues and Plans

- The NRPB requested a 22-month project closing date extension, which the World Bank is considering. If approved, the closing date will be extended to April 30, 2027.
- The preparation of construction contracts (design, supervision, works) needs to continue to be prioritized to avoid delays in starting construction works, to accelerate the procurement process.
- NRPB and relevant MECYS departments must maintain a close relationship by: (i) setting up MMIS focal points in each department; (ii) building on the POM to formalize the relationship with project stakeholders; and (iii) holding regular meetings with key stakeholders. This will be particularly important to ensure schools are inclusive, and construction meets the design criteria for planned inclusive and special needs education programs.

Child Resilience and Protection Project

Project Development Objective: to strengthen the capacity of the education and child protection systems to address and respond to the needs of children and adolescents resulting from natural disasters and external shocks.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Jun 2023 Disbursement
US\$4.49 million	October 22, 2020	July 31, 2024	US\$0.7 million

Highlights

Based on the findings of the Mid-Term Review mission conducted in March 2023, Components 1 and 2 of the CRPP are not fully on track to achieve their respective PDO indicators, whereas Component 3 is expected to be completed by the current closing date, achieving its PDO indicator. The project is expected to be restructured in 2023 to extend the closing date by five months to provide more time to achieve the indicators. However, the project continues to make progress and achieve significant milestones.

During the first six months of 2023, the project has advanced in distress screening, psychosocial support, child protection, and school safety. The ongoing training, support, and coordination efforts have been instrumental in advancing the project's objectives and strengthening the capacity of education and child protection systems in Sint Maarten. Noteworthy achievements are: (i) the Distress Tools Manual (DTM) for distress screening is finalized for online distribution and piloting has begun in five selected schools; (ii) 58 Training Facilitators have been certified for the positive parenting support program; and (iii) the establishment of the NCPP marks continuous progress on child protection and school safety.



Project Development Indicators

Indicator	Baseline (2009)	Target (2024)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Project beneficiaries suffering from post-hurricane distress symptoms referred to adequate services	0	100% of identified cases are referred in a timely manner	Two school-based screening tools for the detection and reporting of distress symptoms and manuals have been developed.	Two school-based screening tools for the detection and reporting of distress symptoms and manuals are being piloted in five schools.
Implementation of the integrated child protection case management system	No comprehensive case management system	90% of the cases are processed according to Standard Operating Principles	The assessment of existing resources and mechanisms has been completed. The road map has also been developed. Implementation of these tools is expected next.	Implementation of these tools will commence now that the Child Protection Specialist is on board.
Implementation of a Contingency strategy for the sector	Preliminary National Contingency plan available	95% of the contingency implementation tests evaluated as satisfactory	The contingency plan has been finalized and submitted to MECYS for approval.	The contingency plan has been finalized and submitted to MECYS for approval.

Results

Component 1: Nurturing the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents.

Progress has been made in implementing distress screening tools in schools. Teacher training was successfully completed in November 2022, and the piloting phase began in January 2023 in five selected schools. Ongoing support has been provided to schools to integrate the tools into their activities throughout the year. The DTM is finalized for online distribution, and training on psychosocial support and well-being for care teams and teachers is ongoing. The Positive Parenting Program has also made strides with the certification of 58 positive parenting training facilitators and the submission of final versions of training manuals and an activities compendium.

Component 2: Strengthening Child Protection Systems.

Efforts have been focused on strengthening child protection systems. The NCPP's establishment is progressing, with pending approval from different ministries. Child safety codes have been revised, and workshops conducted by the Child Protection Working Group; the Court of Guardianship has undergone training on safety planning and risk analysis. A child protection information system is being developed, and checklists drawn up for signs of abuse and child safety. Training and sensitization on child rights and protection protocols in emergencies will be completed by December 2023.

Component 3: Strengthening the Resilience of Schools and MECYS to Disasters.

The project has been strengthening schools' and MECYS' resilience to disasters. Several exercises have been reviewed, and a country-wide drill initiative is planned for the second half of 2023. Efforts are under way to train school safety and emergency teams in disaster risk management, focusing on school risk assessment and the development of standard operating procedures.

Issues and Plans

Most key challenges experienced by the project, such as recruiting and fielding the required staff, have now been handled, as the project is past its midpoint. The following are critical activities being planned across the three components, demonstrating the project's commitment to nurturing children's well-being, strengthening child protection systems, and enhancing schools' resilience to disasters:

- The screening tool for distress symptoms is nearing completion, with final adjustments and refinements being made. Once finalized, the tool will be rolled out to schools for implementation.
- The piloting phase of the Violence Prevention Program in and around schools is set to begin. Selected schools will participate in the program to assess its effectiveness in promoting safe and supportive learning environments.
- The development of a MECYS youth website is under way. This platform will serve as an online resource for youth, providing information on various topics related to their well-being, rights, and opportunities.
- Communication materials on referral and case management are being developed. These materials will provide guidelines and instructions for professionals working with children to ensure effective and appropriate handling of child protection cases.
- Policy inputs are being prepared for the child protection information system. These inputs will help shape the system's design and functionality, ensuring its alignment with the specific needs and requirements of Sint Maarten's child protection sector.
- A capacity-building exercise on child protection in emergencies is planned. This training will enhance the knowledge and skills of professionals in responding to child protection needs during emergencies, equipping them with the necessary tools and protocols.
- A contingency planning workshop will be conducted to enhance preparedness and response capabilities in the event of a disaster. This workshop will bring together relevant stakeholders to develop strategies, protocols, and action plans for effective and coordinated disaster response.
- Support will be provided for an island-wide emergency drill, involving 24 schools.
- A disaster preparedness campaign will be launched to raise awareness among schools, students, parents, and the wider community about the importance of being prepared for emergencies. The campaign will provide information, resources, and practical tips on disaster preparedness, emphasizing the role of schools and education in building resilience.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Build the Foundation and Capacity to Improve Long-term Resilience and Good Governance

Emergency Recovery Project I

Project Development Objective: Contribute to Sint Maarten's immediate emergency recovery needs and strengthen institutional capacity to manage resilient recovery and reconstruction.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan-Dec 2023 Disbursement
US\$119.70 million	July 10, 2018	December 31, 2025	US\$14.5 million

ERP-I contributes to Sint Maarten's immediate emergency recovery needs and strengthens institutional capacity to manage resilient recovery and reconstruction. NRPB implements ERP-I with technical support from specialized agencies within the Ministry of General Affairs, TEATT, VSA, Ministry of Justice, MECYS, the Sint Maarten Housing Development Foundation (SMHDF), and the utility company NV GEBE.

Highlights

The project is on track to meet its development objective with a satisfactory rating and overall implementation progress remains moderately satisfactory. A second AF package of US\$19.5 million was approved in May 2023, increasing the total project allocation to \$119.7 million. The second AF will contribute to the repair and renovation of 12 school gyms and 13 sports facilities and NRPB's operational and administrative support.

Project Development Indicators

Indicator	Baseline (2020)	Target (2025)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Share of households with electrical services resilient to hurricanes (percent)	80	89	86	86
Water storage capacity of Sint Maarten utilities (average daily demand)(days)	0.70	1.70	1.70	1.70
Number of citizens benefitting from the investments in emergency response system strengthening	0	40,000	40,000	40,000
Percentage of beneficiaries that are satisfied with the quality of housing repairs	0	80	0	0 ¹³
NRPB is established and fully operational (Yes/No)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of citizens directly benefitting from the project investments	0	10,000	-	5,833

¹³ Results will be reported based on upcoming beneficiary feedback surveys.

Results

Component 1: Emergency Measures for the Recovery of Disaster First Responders and Preparedness Facilities.

In the reporting period, significant activities were completed to improve Sint Maarten's resilience and capacity to respond better to future disasters. Extensive repairs to the F&A building were completed, followed by an official handover to the F&A department. Additionally, drivers and medical staff were trained to use ambulances and equipment, and VROMI received four specialty trucks and a trailer.

Component 2: Restore Utility Services after Hurricane Irma.

The underground installation of 8 km of low-voltage electric cables, telecom cable conduits, and potable water distribution pipes was completed in February 2023. GEBE and NRPB are currently finalizing a second package, which will include the underground installation of approximately 3 km of high-voltage electric cables and potable water pipes. This package also includes up to 6 km of low-voltage electric cables, potable water distribution pipes, and telecom cable conduits. The previous estimated length of 12 km has been reduced to 6 km due to increased material prices. GEBE will install the remaining length based on priority and funding availability.

Funds have been allocated in the original ERP-I to support GEBE in developing a Sustainable Business Plan. NRPB has been developing the ToR and will contract a firm at the earliest opportunity to develop the business plan by the end of 2024.

Component 3: Housing Repair and Public Buildings Repair and Reconstruction.

Of the roughly 512 target homes, 493 have been repaired; 64 social housing units that SMHDF repaired were handed over to beneficiaries in February 2023. The final phase of single-family home repairs for 18 houses is contracted and the works are progressing satisfactorily. Repairs to three additional schools were also completed, bringing the total number of schools repaired to six. Repairs of 13 schools under phase III are under way and expected to be completed by June 2024.

Component 4: Institutional Support for Reconstruction.

The second AF package included US\$7 million toward institutional support and NRPB operating costs. This amount will only be sufficient until Q3 2024. The Trust Fund management is working with NRPB and the government to explore other funding options.

Issues and Plans

- The allocation of land plots should be finalized for installation of weather equipment for the Meteorological Department. With the support of an expert hired by the Bank, a network of weather instruments has been finalized, including technical specifications. Once land allocation has been confirmed, the procurement process for supply, installation and training will commence.
- Beneficiary feedback surveys need to be conducted on several completed investments. These will help strengthen future investments and contribute to the effective monitoring of project activities. The survey results are expected to be available before the end of 2023.

Digital Government Transformation Project

Project Development Objective: To enhance the access, efficiency, and resilience of selected administrative public services for citizens and businesses.

Financing	Approval Date	Closing Date	Jan–Dec 2023 Disbursement
US\$12 million	March 18, 2021	May 30, 2025	US\$0.2 million

The Digital Government Transformation Project is strengthening the digital infrastructure of Sint Maarten by improving access to and efficiency of public administrative services for citizens and businesses and the resiliency of government systems. The NRPB implements DGTP in close coordination with a Digital Leadership Team (DLT) established by the Ministry of General Affairs to provide technical oversight, coordination, and implementation support government-wide. The DLT reports, and is the secretariat, to a high-level government Project Oversight Committee (POC)—chaired by the Prime Minister. The POC has been formed by the government to monitor implementation progress and provide strategic guidance.

Highlights

Progress by DGTP toward its development objective and implementation performance remain moderately satisfactory. In the reporting period, implementation has focused on foundational elements of the project, namely developing ToRs for the procurement of firms to implement a whole-of-government Enterprise Architecture (EA) and the interoperability platform. The digitization of records activity is advancing, with procurement under way, and a contract with a firm is expected to be signed in September 2023 to digitize approximately one million government records, a significant step in streamlining government service processing.

Upon GoSXM's request, DGTP is being restructured to: (i) reflect new priorities on the ground, including increasing the resilience of the communications infrastructure to natural and man-made disasters; (ii) update the results framework to strengthen the measurement of evolving project activities; and (iii) extend the project duration to align with the time originally needed to complete the core activities.

Project Development Indicators

Indicator	Baseline (2020)	Target (2024)	Actual (2022)	Actual (June 2023)
Increase in Certificate of Good Conduct service transactions processed digitally (percent; disaggregated by sex/vulnerable group; cumulative)	0	10	0	0
Increase in economic license applications processed within a six-week period (percent; cumulative)	16	65	16	16
Registries connected with the interoperability platform (number)	0	5	0	0
Increase in the time per year that the six selected public services are available to the public (percent)	15	99	15	15

Results

Component 1: Strengthening the Legal, Regulatory, and Institutional Environment.


The management firm, Norway Registers Development (NRD) Companies, completed the EA repository report. This will help streamline the plans for the restructuring of the ICT Department. A new organizational structure has been drafted and needs to be formally proposed for approval. This will assist the government in managing the ICT agenda across all government administration and ensure strategic alignment of key ICT and digital transformation initiatives.

The DGTP continues to work with the government and other key stakeholders to improve communication and build capacity within institutions. The DLT is working with the Netherlands Temporary Work Organization (TWO) experts and Secretaries General (SGs) to examine how to strategically coordinate and manage digitization efforts across the whole of government over the medium term. There have been preliminary discussions to establish an “Agile Board” consisting of SGs to provide oversight on ICT issues. This body’s ultimate goal would be to ensure that projects across government are aligned, not duplicated, and are completed.

The NRPB and the DLT continue to work collaboratively on the project’s communications strategy, including training and engagement with government, citizens, and businesses. The draft communications strategy will be shared with the World Bank by September 2023.

Component 2 - Building Digital Platforms to Enable Service Delivery.

The DGTP prepared an EA Vision document, endorsed by the ICT Department, to be used in the interim to guide future ICT developments across the government, including outside the project. The Vision is one of several documents that will inform the procurement of a firm to implement EA. In parallel, the DLT is in the final stages of procuring a firm to assist it in digitizing millions of archival records that are currently retained in paper format.



The management firm and GoSXM continue to advance the activity related to the implementation of the Interoperability Platform. GoSXM has selected Microsoft BizTalk as its interoperability platform, given its existing licensing agreement with Microsoft, with a firm to be contracted to implement the system. Industry-standard reference architectures will be used when deploying the platform on existing government infrastructure to ensure resilience and business continuity. As a final step, GoSXM will integrate base registries and selected services with the platform.

Component 3: User-centered Public Services.

A pilot eSXM Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire was administered to 98 customers at the Public Service Centers (PSCs) in both the Philipsburg and Simpson Bay locations. The DLT will continue to collaborate with the Department of Statistics to revise the survey before being re-administered.

A registration form request is now available online. However, while the request can be submitted online, much of the business process remains manual. The digitization of the long and short registration form will remain within the project's new scope and be reflected in the updated results framework.

Issues and Plans

- The DLT and NRPB are recruiting a change management specialist and a legal officer. Both positions will support the DLT to create an enabling environment for the successful implementation of project activities and the adoption of e-services. The legal officer will work directly with the Legal Department of GoSXM to support the advancement of legal and regulatory instruments needed to support the digital transformation.
- The NRPB, DLT, and the government's Department of Communications continue to work collaboratively on the project's communications strategy. This output is critical given that information about DGTP is often technical, necessitating the use of various avenues and tools to ensure effective communication with different stakeholders.
- Preparing a ToR for an EA firm needs to be prioritized, given that it will guide GoSXM's future ICT investments and ensure alignment of standards. Implementation delays could jeopardize other major ICT initiatives. Since the EA functions as an overarching strategic blueprint, it should, in principle, be established before other ICR initiatives are advanced.
- The restructuring package is expected to be submitted for approval in September 2023.

c. Projects under Preparation

FOCUS AREA 1: Promote Sustainable Economic Recovery

Wastewater Management Project

Progress

In 2022 preparation commenced on the Sint Maarten Wastewater Management Project (SWMP). The World Bank conducted the Concept Note review meeting in December 2022 and a project preparation mission in March 2023. Following the mission, the World Bank prepared a Project Appraisal Document and conducted a Quality Enhancement Review on June 26, 2023. The pre-appraisal mission will be conducted in July 2023 and a Decision Meeting scheduled in August 2023. The Steering Committee allocated US\$10 million for the project, and GoSXM confirmed that a US\$15 million co-financing loan from the government of the Netherlands is available. Validation of this loan is expected before December 2023.

The proposed PDO is to “increase access to safe sanitation services; and improve sustainability and resilience of wastewater management.” The project will be organized into three main components:

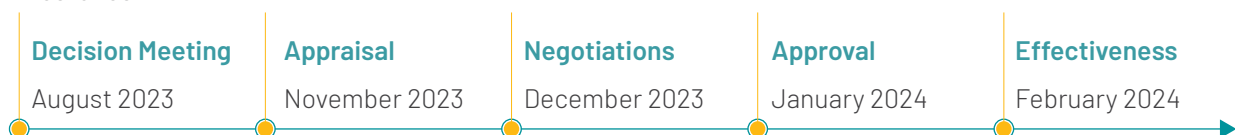
- Wastewater infrastructure investment;
- Institutional development and coastal seawater and surface water quality monitoring; and
- Project management.

The envisaged outputs include:

- Constructing, rehabilitating, and modernizing sewerage networks and on-site sanitation in the project coverage area (a) Cul-de-Sac, (b) Greater Philipsburg, and (c) Lower Prince’s Quarter;
- Upgrading the wastewater treatment plant at A.T. Illidge Road;
- Strengthening VROMI’s capacity to plan, execute, and manage wastewater services;
- Establishing a legal and regulatory framework for sustainable and resilient wastewater service delivery;
- Adopting a medium- to long-term sector strategy; and
- Developing a seawater and surface water quality monitoring system.

While the direct project beneficiaries from new sewerage access are expected to be approximately 25 percent of the country’s population residing in the project’s coverage area, the entire population of Sint Maarten will benefit from a safer environment and improved sea and surface water quality.

Milestones



FOCUS AREA 2: Invest in Citizens and Resilient Communities

Improving Mental Health Services

Progress

The Steering Committee allocated US\$8 million for the Improving Mental Health Services Project in December 2021. During the reporting period, the World Bank and the relevant counterparts successfully completed the preparation, appraisal, and negotiation stages. The project is on track for approval in July 2023.¹⁴

The proposed PDO is to “improve the capacity of mental health service delivery in Sint Maarten.” The project is organized into three main components:

- Supporting the strengthening of the national mental health system;
- Supporting the construction of a new Mental Health Foundation (MHF) facility; and
- Project management, monitoring and evaluation.

A decision review meeting was conducted in February 2023, authorizing the project team to move forward with project appraisal. The meeting endorsed the overall project design and noted areas for further discussion with GoSXM counterparts during appraisal. During the appraisal stage in March 2023, the World Bank held discussions with counterparts from VSA, NRPB, MHF, and other relevant stakeholders to confirm the project design, risk assessment, institutional and implementation arrangements, and results indicators.

NRPB and World Bank representatives held negotiations in May 2023 and confirmed the final project design, which covers strengthening the national mental health system via enhanced governance, financing, and service delivery across the mental health care continuum. The project will also construct improved physical infrastructure for mental health care, ensuring a safe, patient-friendly environment with increased capacity to meet the population’s needs. This much-needed infrastructure requires additional funding, which is a prerequisite to starting the civil works.

After the World Bank approves the project, disbursement effectiveness will follow when several conditions are fulfilled. It is anticipated that the project will become effective in September 2023, triggering prompt implementation.

Milestones



¹⁴ World Bank management approved the Improving Mental Health Services Project on July 28, 2023.

Housing Project

Progress

Sint Maarten Housing Project preparation progressed satisfactorily in the reporting period. A pre-appraisal mission is scheduled for September 2023 with a consequent decision review in November 2023. This project focuses on increasing the supply of resilient and affordable housing being managed by SMHDF, while improving SMHDF's financial, technical, and operational capacity to become Sint Maarten's social housing engine. Furthermore, the project seeks to enable development of the wider housing market in Sint Maarten by assisting VROMI and other government stakeholders to overcome the significant obstacles throughout the housing value chain, including the support to develop a national housing policy.

The proposed PDO is to *"increase access to social and affordable housing in Sint Maarten and strengthen the institutional capacity of the housing sector."* The Project is organized into three main components:

- Institutional strengthening and enabling of the housing market;
- Social and affordable housing development; and
- Project management.

GoSXM and SMHDF attained critical milestones before the Steering Committee Meeting in March 2023. These include signing a memorandum of understanding to negotiate a new Performance Agreement, appointing a VROMI focal point, confirming land availability, conducting an initial housing development massing study, and preparing a financial proforma that includes a market analysis of housing development financing options.

The Steering Committee meeting marked the point at which the World Bank team and NRPB began formal project preparation, primarily focusing on negotiating the Performance Agreement, which is on schedule. In June 2023, an experienced facilitator was hired to guide the process successfully. In June 2023, NRPB also hired a Project Manager to manage project preparation and implementation on behalf of the government.

The teams are currently defining the activities to be financed under Component 1 (Institutional Strengthening and Enabling of the Housing Market) and Component 2 (Social and Affordable Housing Development). For Component 1, detailed discussions have taken place with both SMHDF and VROMI on the institutional strengthening activities the project will finance. For Component 2, NRPB conducted a land appraisal and has already begun developing the ToR for the design of the affordable housing development.

Milestones



d. Advisory Services and Analytics

FOCUS AREA 3:

Build the Foundation and Capacity to Improve Long-Term Resilience and Good Governance

Digital Government Transformation Technical Assistance

Progress

The DGTP includes a Bank-Executed Trust Fund (BETF) through which technical assistance is provided to the DLT and NRPB to implement activities under the Recipient-Executed DGTP. The technical assistance reinforces several foundational project initiatives: (i) Council of Ministers' approval of the government's digital transformation strategy and the interoperability policy; (ii) a review of interoperability platforms available on the market; (iii) preliminary development of the EA vision, (iv) terms of reference for archival record digitization, and (v) re-scoping the project's digital activities for restructuring.

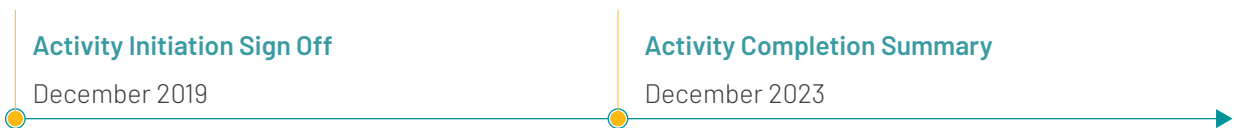
Between January and June 2023, the BETF provided technical inputs for strengthening the options assessment of interoperability platforms that could be used in the Sint Maarten context. The review highlighted the need for the DLT to establish functional requirements for the platform as part of the EA development. An interoperability platform is an essential part of a GoSXM EA.

Through the TA, two legislative reviews for electronic transactions and signatures were completed to assess the legal validity of e-signatures, what qualifies as an e-signature, and the legal landscape governing electronic transactions. The review included benchmarking against other countries, identified gaps in both legislations, and provided recommendations for strengthening the legal framework to better enable the digital government transformation.

The TA provided guidance to develop a fact-based survey of customers' experience at the PSCs to inform the transition into modern one-stop shops.

Finally, the TA helped prepare a ToR for a critical digitization of archival records activity. Technical inputs on how other countries have approached the digitization of archival records served as models for consideration by DLT and NRD. This will be one of the DGTP's first major procurements since project effectiveness and will provide a foundation for improvement of service delivery.

Milestones



Disaster Reserve Fund

Progress

In July 2021, the SXM TF Steering Committee asked the World Bank to support GoSXM in designing a Disaster Reserve Fund (DRF) and associated instruments to be capitalized by the substantial airport reconstruction reflows expected from GoSXM's loans to PJIAE.¹⁵ Work on the DRF started in 2022.

The World Bank DRF team presented some options to the Steering Committee in March 2023 for consideration and deliberation. The objective of the options is not to cover every possible future risk, but to reinvest the airport reflow, securitize the DRF, and clarify the circumstances under which the government can release the funds. The Steering Committee agreed that the team proceed with a specific focus on establishing the DRF as a fully independent entity specializing in fund management—an 'off-budget' option, with reporting to GoSXM. This option requires a thorough analysis of the taxation system to understand:

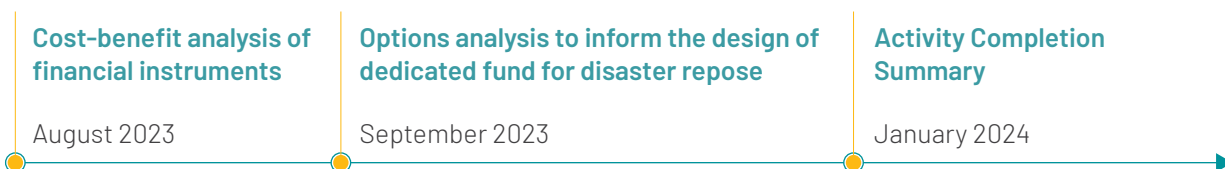
- The treatment of income generated by the entity and the treatment of offshore income returning to Sint Maarten;
- The most efficient fund structure to minimize tax and legal costs; and
- How existing laws can support the fund's establishment and operation.

In addition, thorough consideration would be needed on governance for such an independent entity and selecting and establishing the Fund Manager.

An options paper will provide options for the government to consider before it makes its ultimate choice, helping it to weigh up approaches to:

- Entity structure;
- Taxation treatment;
- Governance;
- Additional sources of finance to complement airport reflows;
- How the fund manager will be selected or established; and
- How the reserve fund will complement a wider DRF strategy.

Milestones



¹⁵ Reflows pertain only to the principal part of the loans and are expected to begin accruing in 2027 and accumulate gradually over more than a decade.

Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project

Project: P172339

Start Date: June 26, 2020

End Date: June 28, 2024

Total Financing: US\$7.2 million

Highlights

- The project continues to improve the capacity of Sint Maarten's civil society organizations (CSOs) and supports the implementation of reconstruction and resilience subprojects at the community level.
- To date (as of June 2023), more than 5,000 Sint Maarteners have benefited (roughly half of the overall project target), and all of them, without exception, have expressed their satisfaction.



"I started the foundation so we could continue having the children. I am not the going-out type. They keep me company. I treat them well, and we exchange—I am not doing anything for them that they are not doing for me..."

I always say when you come here on Earth, whatever you have to do, you have to do it before you leave. And I guess this is it."

—Veronica "Miss Sally" Benjamin, Director, New Start for Children Foundation, a CSPFRP grant recipient

04 Implementation Capacity and Constraints





4. Implementation Capacity and Constraints

a. Capacity

Human Resource Capacity

Human resource capacity is critical for successful project implementation. The growing portfolio is centered on construction projects that require essential engineering, E&S policy, waste management, and digital development capacities that are scarce and costly. When qualified people are eventually identified, the requested remuneration is typically high (and unaffordable for the concerned project), considering SXM's high cost of living and time needed for obtaining immigration permits. For contractors, it would be critical to widen the procurement reach beyond Sint Maarten. There is a commitment among stakeholders to address the gaps in capacity through collaboration between GoSXM, PIUs and the World Bank.

The SXM TF implementation has created considerable demand for in-country project management and technical skills. Human resource capacity in Sint Maarten is limited, and the shortfall in relevant skills has necessitated looking abroad for staffing to maintain timely implementation progress. However, nonresident firms and individuals find it difficult to access the island because of cumbersome administrative agreements and processes. The restrictive laws impede the NRPB's ability to hire temporary workers and recruit more local staff at cost-effective pay scales, while contracts with international employees continue to pose significant obstacles for all projects. In addition, the remoteness of Sint Maarten for international firms makes shipping supplies, recruiting staff, finding skilled local labor, and setting up local offices more expensive.

Government Ownership

Senior government officials continued to demonstrate increasing ownership and buy-in for the SXM TF objectives. Line ministries have also taken a more active interest despite continued capacity limitations. They have benefited from frequent engagement on project progress, including the CPPR, and are actively engaged in project preparation and implementation. The government has collaborated with the NRPB and the World Bank to address implementation bottlenecks and identify corrective action.

During the CPPR in February 2023, the SXM TF Program Secretariat, World Bank task teams and PIUs conducted a Multi-Criteria Technical Assessment (MCTA) of SXM TF projects. The World Bank prepared an overview of the MCTA findings, detailing information on the impact of the global economic contraction, potential changes in scope, possible closing date extension and rationale, and potential savings from fund cancellation.

Sharing Best Practices

The CPPR also highlighted the opportunities within the SXM TF to curate and share the growing implementation experience and lessons in Sint Maarten, the region, and beyond. Considering the maturing portfolio, with the average project age between three and four years, and one more project nearing its closing date, it is vital to ensure new projects learn from the experience of mature ones.

The Sint Maarten partners had a practical opportunity to share their knowledge beyond borders during the reporting period. In April 2023, the World Bank Country Office for Guyana and Suriname and the IDB office in Suriname collaborated with the SXM TF Program Secretariat to support a South-South knowledge exchange forum for the Suriname Government delegation. The exchange allowed the delegation to engage with the NRPB team, delving into the fundamentals (legal framework, internal structure and monitoring and evaluation mechanism) of setting up and running an effective PIU. On the other hand, NRPB had the opportunity to learn about Suriname's different implementation approach.

b. Constraints

Implementation Context


The implementation context evolved during the reporting period. Although Sint Maarten's limited capacity and market size remained significant, strengthened government ownership and involvement in the program drove implementation progress, which advanced steadily in the first half of 2023 as tourism edged back up toward pre-COVID levels. However, much work remains to be done to anchor project outcomes in national policies and financing plans such that their long-term sustainability is assured beyond the SXM TF's lifespan.

Several TF projects received AF and others were re-engineered to deal with cost overruns. A few others will require time extensions to address implementation delays caused by supply constraints stemming from macro-level inflation and the prolonged overlapping crises with global impacts. The World Bank and implementing partners are actively reviewing solutions, including extension, and restructuring, to support the needed course corrections.

Sustainability and Coordination

Ensuring Sustainability Beyond the Trust Fund. The need for projects to have a sustained impact in Sint Maarten after the TF ends is a cross-cutting concern. The Bank and NRPB ensured that new projects are designed intentionally to include elements that ensure investments continue beyond the SXM TF. Projects under implementation can also integrate sustainability through restructuring. GoSXM can play a strong role by strengthening policy (which is already happening in several sectors—solid waste, digital development), investing in capacity expansion, and private sector partnerships where feasible opportunities exist.

Recognizing the need to enhance GoSXM's delivery mechanisms and capacity for maintaining infrastructure, service, and procedure resilience across program sectors, the World Bank launched the SRI in March 2023. The initiative was also based on the SXM TF's MTR that indicated the need to ensure SXM TF investments remain sustainable and resilient beyond the program. A comprehensive desk-based review provided a



baseline assessment of GoSXM and PIU capacity levels for ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the SXM TF outputs. The literature review included an assessment of the status of all projects currently delivered under the SXM TF. From May 15 to 26, 2023, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Sint Maarten with key stakeholders involved in delivering the SXM TF. The findings identified issues and gaps in capacity, determined the type and number of interventions, capacity building, and similar mechanisms needed for GoSXM to sustain the SXM TF outputs (services, infrastructure, and procedures).

The literature review identified three focus areas also confirmed in the interviews: (i) a need for strengthened coordination of existing capacity-enhancing initiatives delivered by other stakeholders in Sint Maarten, (ii) capacity-building initiatives for GoSXM and PIUs, and (iii) a mentoring program utilizing the resources and knowledge within the SXM TF projects.

Furthermore, international and regionally significant best practices investigated will allow the World Bank to present evidence-based recommendations for the SRI plan. The World Bank plans to consult with stakeholders on potential priority areas requiring capacity-building support and project-specific sustainability in the next half of 2023.



Emergency Recovery Project 1

Project: P167339

Start Date: July 10, 2018

End Date: December 31, 2025

Total Financing: US\$119.7 million

Highlights

- Over 5,800 citizens have benefited from project activities, including through the provision of more hurricane-resilient public utility services, with 8km of low-voltage electric cables, telecom cable conduits, and potable water distribution pipes installed.
- Nearly 493 homes have been repaired so far and 13 schools are under repair.
- Local first responders' disaster preparedness capacity has increased.



“That all the stakeholders and the World Bank were able to come together to help the people who can’t help themselves—especially senior citizens—there is no word in any language big enough to say thank you.”

—Florentina Richardson, whose home was repaired with support from Emergency Recovery Project 1

05 Outreach and Communications



5. Outreach and Communications

Highlights

The SXM TF hit its mid-point milestone in 2023. This was an opportune moment to refine the communications approach, including messaging, look, and feel of the SXM TF brand, to incorporate a more collaborative effort among partners and more inclusivity among beneficiaries. This transition complements the SXM TF's evolution from a focus on immediate recovery and reconstruction to mid- to long-term planning for resilient and sustainable development.

The World Bank's strategic communications goals include increased visibility among key stakeholders, improved communications among TTLs and project teams, and more visible products and resources (photos, feature stories, websites, videos, and press releases). Fundamentally, strengthening relationships with partners on Sint Maarten is key.

During the reporting period, the World Bank collaborated with PIUs to produce and update the TF photo archives, adding more recent pictures of ongoing projects and beneficiaries. The [external World Bank website](#) was also updated to more accurately reflect the SXM TF's current context and house the latest reports, feature stories, fact sheets and press releases from the Trust Fund. The World Bank also initiated the donor-requested SXM TF dashboard update to provide a one-stop resource on all its projects and activities. This project is ongoing and will be completed by the end of 2023.

Showcasing the positive effect of the SXM TF on local capacity strengthening, the World Bank launched knowledge-sharing activities among partners in the region, focusing on building South-South partnerships and documenting lessons. The knowledge exchange between Suriname and Sint Maarten in April was the first session, with more planned for the near future.

Beneficiary testimonials are critical in allowing Sint Maarteners tell their stories in their own words. With this principle in mind, the World Bank produced a Results Storybook, featuring six beneficiary stories. The plan is to publish new editions of the Storybook every six months, working with PIUs to feature different beneficiaries. Complementing these stories are two-page factsheets giving a snapshot of each ongoing SXM TF project. These factsheets will also be updated regularly as projects evolve.

The World Bank's Sint Maarten office launch on June 30 garnered considerable publicity and was well covered in the local and regional media. Several high-profile guests participated in the event, including the Sint Maarten Governor and Prime Minister and the Dutch State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Ayat Soliman, the World Bank Director of Strategy and Operations for Latin America and the Caribbean, delivered the keynote address.

Over the next six months, SXM TF communications and visibility will remain fundamental targets to ensure smoother engagement, build bridges with partners, highlight SXM TF achievements, and gather relevant feedback from stakeholders about the SXM TF's impact.





Summary of Communication Products from January to June 2023

- [Press release on Steering Committee meeting](#) (March 2023)
- [Press release on ERP-I extension and AF](#) (April 2023)
- [Feature Story on Knowledge Exchange with Suriname](#) (April 2023)
- [Press Release on Sint Maarten Office Opening](#) (June 2023)
- [Sint Maarten Trust Fund Project Fact Sheets](#) (June 2023)
- [Sint Maarten Trust Fund Results Storybook](#) (June 2023)

06 Appendices



a. Development Objectives, Implementation Progress, and Risk Ratings

Project Name	Project Ratings DO	Project Ratings IP	Overall Risk	Bank Approval Date	Revised Closing Date
Emergency Income Support and Training Project	MS	MS	M	02-Aug-2018	31-Aug-2023
Sint Maarten Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience Project (CSPFRP)	MS	MS	M	26-Jun-2020	28-Jun-2024
Child Resilience and Protection Project	S	MS	L	22-Oct-2020	31-Jul-2024
Sint Maarten Hospital Resiliency & Preparedness Project	S	MS	IL	16-Aug-2018	31-Jul-2024
Sint Maarten Digital Government Transformation Project	MS	MS	M	18-Mar-2021	30-May-2025
Fostering Resilient Learning Project	MS	MS	S	09-Jun-2022	30-Jun-2025
Sint Maarten Airport Terminal Reconstruction Project	MU	MU	S	18-Sep-2019	30-Jun-2025
Sint Maarten Enterprise Support Project	MS	MS	S	04-Apr-2019	30-Jun-2025
Sint Maarten Emergency Recovery Project I	S	MS	M	10-Jul-2018	31-Dec-2025
Sint Maarten Emergency Debris Management Project	MS	MS	H	20-Dec-2018	31-Dec-2026

Development Objective (DO) progress rating – is the likelihood of achieving the Development Objective by the end of the Project given implementation progress and outcomes indicators:

S = Satisfactory

MS = Moderately Satisfactory

MU = Moderately Unsatisfactory

Implementation Progress (IP) rating – considers implementation progress level in all project management categories (components, FM, procurement, E&S, disbursement, project management, and legal covenants)

S = Satisfactory

MS = Moderately Satisfactory

MU = Moderately Unsatisfactory

Overall residual operational risk after considering mitigation measures

L = Low

M = Moderate

S = Substantial

H = High

b. Financial Details as of June 2023

Total funds contributions from the Netherlands to the SXM TF from April 2018 to December 2022 amounted to US\$519.42 million, paid in April 2018, November 2018, December 2020, December 2021, and December 2022. After adjusting for investment income of US\$25.37 million and US\$12.60 million administration fee, in total US\$532.19 million was available. Funds available for programming are US\$20.15 million after deducting committed grants of US\$472.1 million, US\$38 million allocation for projects under preparation, and projected administrative fees of US\$1.94 million. (Table B.1).

Table B.1 Flow and Use of Funds

US\$ millions

A	Received from the Netherlands		519.42
B	Investment Income		25.37
C	Actual Administrative Fee		12.60
D	Total Funds Available for Allocation (A+B-C)		532.19
E	Grants committed as of June 2023 (B.1)		472.10
E.1	Disbursements	272.04	
E.2	Undisbursed	200.06	
F	Projects under Preparation		38.00
G	Projected Administrative Fee		1.94
H	Funds Available for Programming (D-E-F-G)		20.15

Data are as of June 30, 2023

Commitment: Total grants allocated directly to operations amounted to US\$472.10 million for funds allocated directly to operations, analytical work, and client support (recipient-executed activities, ASA, preparation and implementation, and program management activities). This amount includes US\$438.3 million committed to 11 recipient-executed projects, of which one is completed; funds of US\$23.7 million finance Bank-executed implementation and supervision activities; HEIS support to the NRPB; analytical work and technical assistance to GoSXM; and US\$10.1 million for program administration (Figure B.1).

Use of Funds from January to June 2023: Cumulative disbursement was US\$272.04 million (56.7 percent) of the total commitment, of which US\$49.04 million was disbursed between January and June 2023. Over the period, US\$45.30 million was disbursed for recipient-executed activities, US\$2.38 million for preparation and implementation support, US\$0.15 million for analytical work, and US\$1.17 million for program management (Appendix c).

Figure B.1 Allocation of Funds (US\$, millions)

Project preparation and implementation support remained an area of significant focus during the reporting period. Implementation support received about 65 percent of the funds allocated for this expenditure segment, of which 7.5 percent supported HEIS. Safeguard support (environmental, social, procurement, and financial management oversight) amounted to 35 percent of the total preparation and supervision expenditures (Figure B.2).

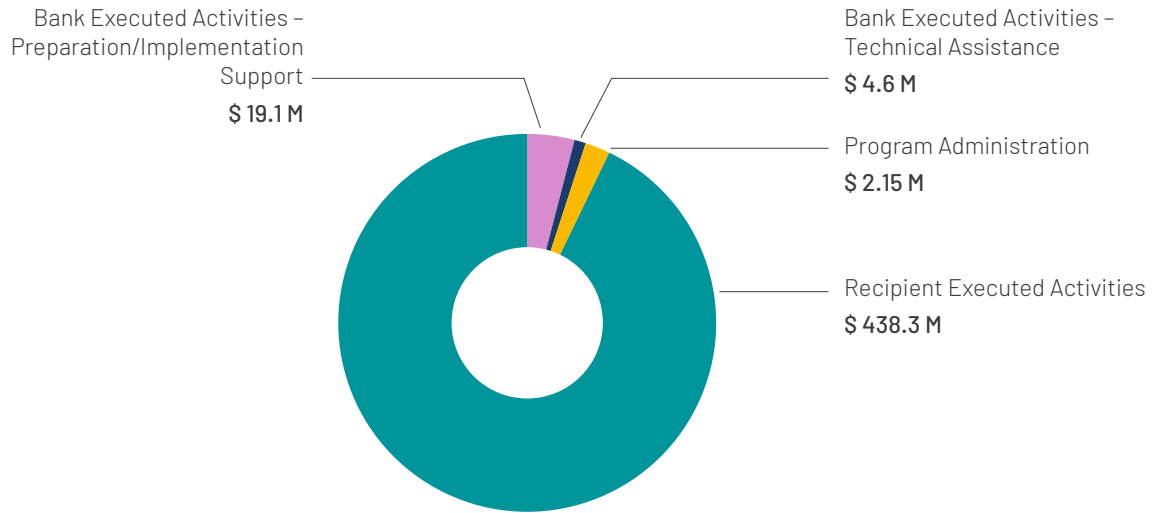
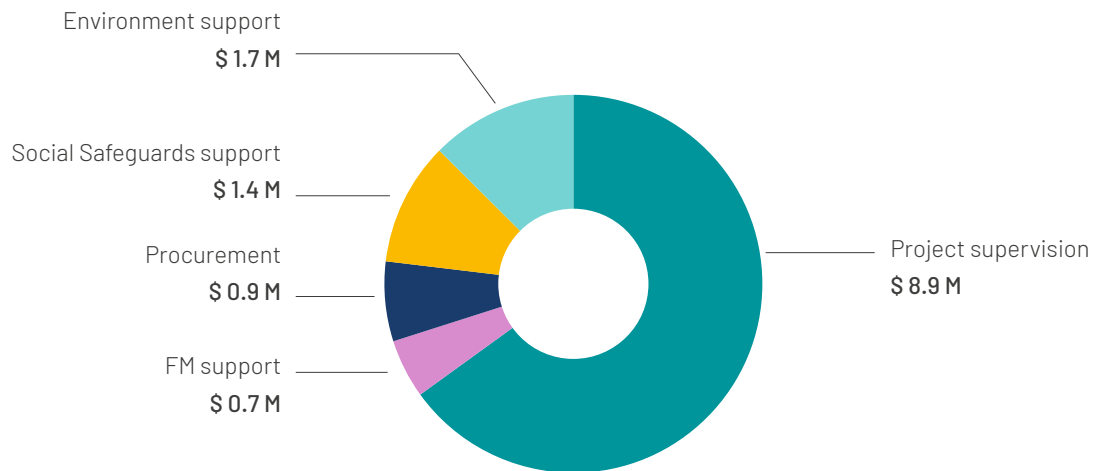


Figure B.2 Disbursement of Preparation and Implementation Support Activities by Category (US\$, millions)



c. Summary of Disbursements by Activities (Recipient Executed + Bank Executed)

Activities	Budget Allocated	Total Disbursed	Undisbursed (June 2023)	Disbursed Jan – June 2023
SXM TF Total	472,101,099	272,044,208	200,056,891	49,043,928
Recipient-executed activities	438,304,091	243,715,315	194,588,776	45,334,705
TF0A8079 Emergency Recovery I	55,200,000			
TF0B5199 Including Additional Financing	45,000,000	79,877,232	39,822,768	14,476,979
TF0B9747 Including 2nd Additional Financing	19,500,000			
TF0A8176 Hospital Resiliency and Preparedness	25,000,000	26,110,223	2,499,777	1,342,248
TF0B3788 Including Additional Financing	3,610,000			
TF0A8265 Emergency Income Support and Training	22,500,000	21,709,102	790,898	0
TF0A9223 Enterprise Support Project	35,000,000	15,708,346	19,291,654	1,368,060
TF0A9261 Emergency Debris Management	25,000,000	24,886,285	60,113,715	1,386,706
TF0B9747 Including Additional Financing	60,000,000			
TF0B0760 Airport Terminal Reconstruction	72,000,000	61,511,816	30,488,184	24,654,911
TF0B7571 Including Additional Financing	20,000,000			
TF0B2442 Red Cross Roof Repair Project	3,745,130	3,745,130		
TF0B3014 Civil Society Partnership Facility for Resilience (CSPFRP)	7,200,000	4,797,639	2,550,154	1,387,749
TF0B2229 Project Preparation Grant	147,793			
TF0B4140 Child Resilience and Protection	4,488,000	3,283,591	1,716,410	724,992
TF0B2513 Project Preparation Grant	512,000			
TF0B8048 Fostering Resilient Learning Project	26,780,000	1,064,668	26,336,500	-178,832
TF0B4914 Project Preparation Grant	621,168			
TF0B4218 Digital Government Transformation Project	12,000,000	1,021,284	10,978,716	171,892
Bank-executed activities	33,797,008	28,328,892	5,468,115	3,709,223
Preparation and Implementation Support	19,051,869	16,095,673	2,956,196	2,381,825
Advisory Services and Analytics	4,605,139	4,330,614	274,525	154,472

*Program management is not outlined in the table but is included in the Bank-executed activity details



d. Analytical Work and Technical Assistance

- **Ongoing Technical Assistance**
 - Technical Assistance for Disaster Reserve Fund
 - Digital Government Strategy (technical assistance with outputs)
- **Ongoing Studies**
 - Country Environmental Analysis (study in draft)
 - Sustainability and Resilience Initiative (in draft)
- **Completed Studies (before 2023)**
 - Support to Develop National Recovery and Resilience Plan (report)
 - Rapid Housing Sector Assessment (study)
 - Airport Corporate Governance Assessment (study)
 - Sint Maarten Hospitality Reconstruction Financing Due Diligence (study)
 - Tourism Sector Recovery Strategy Support (technical assistance with outputs)
 - Public Expenditure Review
 - Low-Income and Affordable Housing Technical Assistance (technical assistance)
 - Support to the Airport Corporate Governance Task Force (technical assistance)
 - National Risk Assessment (AML/CFT) (technical assistance and training)
 - Long-term waste studies
 - Mid Term Review (MTR) of SXM TF Program

Photos

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