

# Evaluation of the Caribbean Development Bank Saint Lucia Country Engagement Strategy 2020-23

Summary Brief



Office of  
Independent Evaluation



## Background to the Evaluation

The Evaluation of the Caribbean Development Bank’s Saint Lucia Country Engagement Strategy 2020-23, conducted by the Office of Independent Evaluation (OIE), provided a structured assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of the Caribbean Development Bank’s (CDB) programming under the 2020-23 Country Engagement Strategy (CES) for Saint Lucia. A review of disbursement levels for all projects under the CES was conducted, along with an in-depth review of a sample of 17 projects cutting across social sector, private sector, economics department, economic infrastructure and environmental sustainability. The evaluation prioritised accountability, learning and utility, to inform design of the next CES through actionable recommendations specific to Saint Lucia.

## Methodology

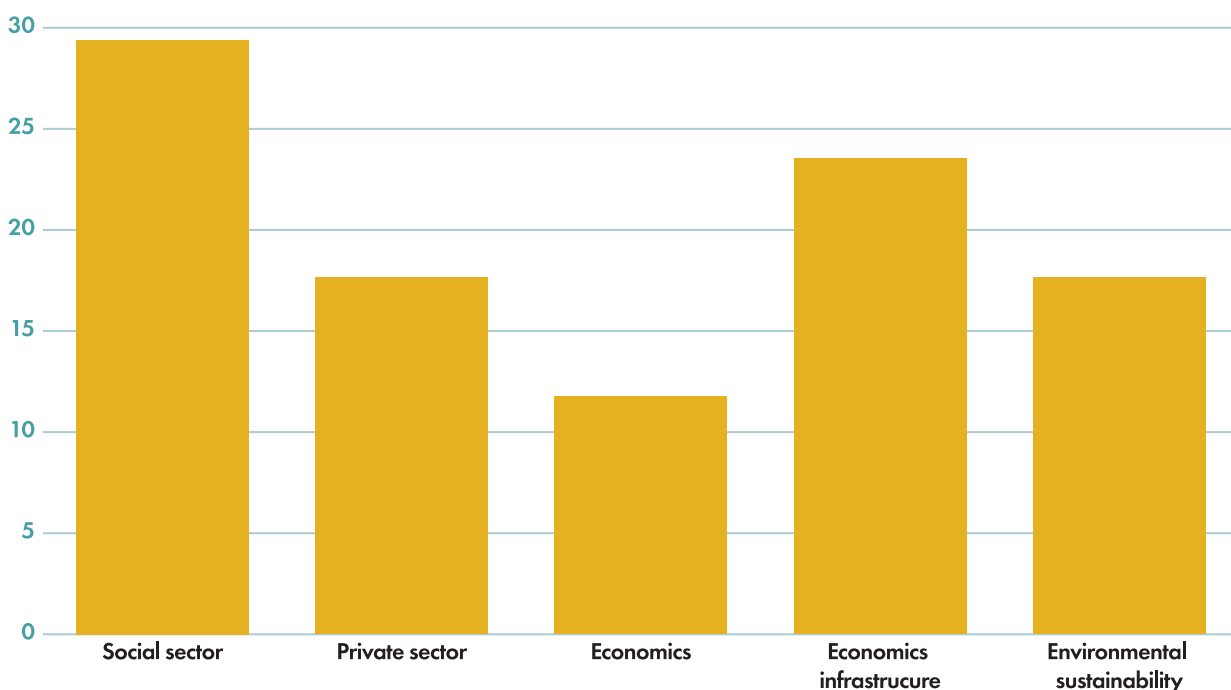
The evaluation was utilisation-focused, based on Evaluation Cooperation Group Good Practice Standards for Country Evaluations.<sup>1</sup> A mixed-methods approach was used combining qualitative analysis from document review and key informant interviews (KII) and quantitative analysis of administrative/

financial data. Findings are based on triangulated data from the following primary and secondary sources:

- Secondary documents:
  - 132 CDB documents (strategy and project level)
- Primary data collection:
  - 12 inception phase scoping KIIs (with 9 CDB and 3 Government of Saint Lucia staff)
  - 45 main phase KIIs with 68 stakeholders (via individual and group KIIs)
    - » 21 CDB staff
    - » 9 International Donor Partner representatives
    - » 22 GOSL staff
    - » 15 Statutory Body staff
    - » 1 NGO representative

Analysis was conducted against agreed evaluation questions and a reconstructed Theory of Change which was collaboratively developed during the inception phase, and which enabled a mapping of evidence from CES interventions to outputs and outcomes.

Figure 1. Percentage (%) of Projects by CDB sector.



Source: CDB project portfolio data for Saint Lucia

1 [Good Practice Standards for Country Strategy and Program Evaluations](#)

# Highlights from the Evaluation of the Caribbean Development Bank Country Engagement Strategy 2020-23

## Findings

### Did the CES achieve the intended results

**There was clear measurable progress against GOSL development outcomes, but some gaps remained. CDB's contribution to this progress was significant, with the most significant results occurring in relation to crisis response and good governance.**

- CDB catalysed positive long-term policy shifts in social protection, though some negative unintended outcomes, including perceived inequities and added fiscal/capacity pressures for GOSL, were identified.
- CDB engagement supported GOSL/CES outcomes, but its full potential was not realised: constraints with CDB staff bandwidth/time meant engagement was intermittent and guidance was not always timely or clear, leading to some uncertainty and delays around CDB processes.
- There has been a strong effort to embed sustainability within projects for lasting impact, however the likelihood of sustainability remains fragile. Sustainability is stronger where institutional capacity, ownership, and coordination were built. The main risks to sustainability related to changing political priorities and fiscal limitations.

### Was the CES design appropriate?

**The CES was highly relevant and broadly coherent, reflecting strong early alignment with Saint Lucia's development strategies at the design stage. High-level alignment with GOSL priorities was maintained through successful adaptation to changing GOSL priorities related to COVID-19 and a change of administration.**

- The CES overestimated national implementation capacity (encompassing technical capacity,

human resources, and staff time) and only partially integrated CDB cross-cutting priorities such as digitalisation and governance.

- Coordination with other development partners occurred in some cases, but overall coherence largely depended on GOSL, with CDB's donor coordination role limited.
- Weak results monitoring and limited use of the CES Results Monitoring Framework constrained strategic learning and adaptation, with weak data availability, limited use of disaggregated data, and insufficient adaptive monitoring and risk management processes.

### Was CES implementation efficient?

**CDB engagement supported implementation, particularly where strong Project Implementation Unit or Resident Implementation Officer (RIO) support existed, but was inconsistent across sectors and at community-level.**

There were widespread delays driven by procurement, CDB and GOSL capacity (primarily bandwidth) and coordination challenges, meaning overall efficiency varied across the portfolio and was constrained overall.

## Conclusions

### Conclusion 1 (Relevance)

Strategic relevance remained high, but portfolio realism was low. The CES stayed strongly aligned with Saint Lucia's Medium-Term Development Strategies, and evolving national priorities (resilience, social protection, health). Rapid adaptation during COVID-19 demonstrated responsiveness. However, CES design over-estimated national implementation capacity, which needs to be better assessed and accounted for in future CES cycles.

## Conclusion 2 (Coherence)

Engagement by CDB was uneven due to variable staff availability. The 2020–23 CES piloted a new engagement approach, which received positive initial feedback. But limited CDB bandwidth especially during COVID-19 and staff transition meant opportunities to sustain engagement during implementation were sometimes missed. The advent of COVID-19 strained CDB's ability to maintain increased levels of engagement with GOSL and others, and engagement thus dropped off during CES implementation. The introduction of a Regional Implementation Officer (RIO) partly mitigated this drop-off, but focusing of RIO resources on big-ticket infrastructure projects limited opportunities to identify and address cross-cutting bottlenecks and coordinate engagement across the CES portfolio.

## Conclusion 3 (Efficiency and Effectiveness)

Efficiency and effectiveness were constrained by systemic bottlenecks and external shocks. Projects with strong Project Implementation Units and RIO support operated more smoothly, and where CDB was able to demonstrate flexibility, implementation was more efficient. Persistent procurement and approval bottlenecks, limited use of the RIO, and contextual shocks (elections, fiscal stress, COVID-19) disrupted delivery and weakened the link from outputs to outcomes.

## Conclusion 4 (Results Monitoring)

**Results monitoring frameworks (RMF) existed but were under-utilised and were overly focused on intervention/output level.** Limited use/ updating of the CES RMF meant that indicators were often no longer relevant and/or there was limited data to track progress against the RMF. As a result, CDB's contribution to Saint Lucia's strategic development objectives could not be easily tracked. A focus on performance tracking at project level means that there is no clear ongoing understanding of the link to Saint Lucia's longer-term development needs.

## Conclusion 5 (Sustainability)

**Sustainability prospects are strengthened by CDB's long-term relationships and flexibility but threatened by limited GOSL capacity (financial and technical).** Institutional and policy reforms initiatives integrated into CDB interventions (such as integration of climate resilience into agriculture and water policies and frameworks and Special Educational Needs into Ministry of Education policies) are more likely to endure due to alignment with government priorities. Sustainability of infrastructure projects is more fragile, constrained by limited GOSL human capacity and fiscal pressures. CDB's long-standing relationship with Saint Lucia and successful examples of adaptation and flexibility are positive for sustainability prospects, but these enablers are not yet systematised and depend heavily on individual relation

## What did OIE recommend?

**Six priority recommendations were derived from the analysis of evidence, findings and conclusions of the evaluation. The recommendations were co-developed with the CDB staff responsible for implementing the Country Strategy and for designing the next CES, with participation and inputs from the GOSL.**

### **Recommendation 1: Align the development of the new CES based on realistic national capacity, CDB value-add, and the new GOSL Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) development timeline (beginning 2026)**

Focus the next CES on a small number of priority themes where implementation capacity is strongest and CDB has clear comparative advantage. Adjust the CES development timeline so that it aligns with GOSL's MTDS development process scheduled to begin in 2026. Ensure that the CES portfolio is designed to be realistic by ensuring appropriate sequencing of interventions to avoid overloading ministries, systematically checking if agencies have the staff, time, and technical capacity to design and implement the proposed projects.

**Recommendation 2: Strengthen systemic GOSL implementation capacity through workforce planning, institutionalised Results Based Management (RBM), and targeted skills development**

Improve staff availability and technical capacity planning at project design (bandwidth assessments, surge-support rosters, consultant pools). CDB to support GOSL with RBM, procurement, and project-cycle training through the Public Service Training Division to build institutional capacity beyond project-specific roles. Develop sectoral skills pipelines aligned to anticipated project demand to reduce implementation bottlenecks.

**Recommendation 3: Strengthen CES results monitoring through MTDS alignment, a shared data repository, and joint performance reviews (including with other donors as appropriate)**

Co-design a simplified CES results framework aligned to MTDS indicators to reduce parallel reporting. Develop a shared digital repository for CES-related results and data. Conduct semi-annual joint CES performance reviews to assess progress, identify bottlenecks, and promote adaptive management. Where possible, (continue to) integrate these with other donor review processes.

**Recommendation 4: Strengthen coordination by leveraging the existing Performance Management Delivery Unit and creating a unified donor/project matrix**

Leverage and strengthen Saint Lucia's existing Performance Management Delivery Unit by reviewing its mandate in relation to CDB and other donor-funded projects. Enhance its resourcing and technical capacity (e.g., monitoring, coordination, escalation pathways) so it can serve as the central node for cross-government delivery monitoring. In parallel, develop and maintain a centralised donor/project matrix to ensure all partners are visible, aligned, and engaged throughout conceptualisation, design, and implementation.

**Recommendation 5: Introduce adaptive portfolio and strategy management to increase responsiveness and efficiency**

Institutionalise a mid-cycle CES review to recalibrate the project pipeline, risks and sequencing. Enable adaptive adjustments to the CES results framework when context shifts. Review RIO scope/terms of reference beyond the current infrastructure focus and increase their involvement in portfolio-wide monitoring including risk analysis and cross-portfolio problem-solving.

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen engagement, visibility, and communication to sustain ownership and momentum of the Country Engagement Strategy**

Develop and implement a Country Engagement Strategy communication and engagement plan to position it as a nationally owned tool. Hold annual briefings for Cabinet, permanent secretaries, and implementing agencies. Provide onboarding for new government officials and project managers, including orientation on CDB processes and the role of the RIO.





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