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Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP)

Principle Addressed	Combining private and public funding and establishing partnerships
Project Name	Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program*
Location	OECS – Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Date	2012-2020
Partners	The World Bank Government of Grenada Government of Saint Lucia Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Caribbean Telecommunication Union (CTU) Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) Private sector telecommunications operator

**Information provided to ITU by The World Bank, 17 Aug 2020*

Situation/Challenge

When CARCIP was initiated (2012), telecommunications in the three countries were plagued by low bandwidth, high prices, and poor service quality due to a reliance on legacy copper networks. **There were also several large coverage gaps. Governments were often paying high prices for obsolete services and equipment, and citizens had to deal with substandard services and limited access to global networks.** Schools in the three countries had serious network capacity problems. Many had limited Internet connection to support up to a thousand students. Weak connections made the service so slow that it was generally unusable.

Aim of Project

Project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase access to regional broadband networks and advance the development of an ICT-enabled services industry in the Caribbean Region.

Project Details

The basis of the project is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) to Design, Build, Operate, Finance, and Transfer (DFBOT) broadband Internet services for government administration buildings (Government Wide Area Network - GWAN), schools, community centres and other locations. The innovative contracting process and resulting PPP structure is a first for digital infrastructure in the region. It is also the first of this magnitude, requiring approximately US\$45 million from governments and private partners.



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This is possibly the first joint tender by three countries for such wide-ranging infrastructure, including both new construction (then transferred upfront to the governments) and service provision over a 15-year service period. The unique contracting approach allowed all three governments to obtain substantial economies of scale, allowing lower pricing and better quality of service than if they had purchased the networks separately. In addition, governments will own the GWAN networks upon completion and have guaranteed access to large amounts of capacity.



Results

Through an international public tender, the three countries signed contracts with a private operator for the construction of new GWANs, educational networks for schools, libraries, and community centers; and a new submarine cable. Fiber optic connectivity to outlying small islands (e.g. Grenadines islands) will introduce modern telecommunications services for the first time, enabling affordable Internet services.

More than 500 government buildings will be connected (government administration, health clinics, police stations, post offices, and community centers), advanced data centers will be installed, and approximately 350 primary and secondary schools will have access to fiber based high-speed Internet. Security will be ensured, as contracts include technology updates.

Building the digital economy is not just about providing connectivity. CARCIP focused first on creating an updated policy and regulatory environment managed by the CTU and the regional regulatory authority, Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL). The program also includes skills development for women and youth, employability, and digital entrepreneurship.