Project Progress Report on the Institutional Strengthening (IS) Project Activities for 2025

Project Background

The Institutional Strengthening (IS) project for Trinidad and Tobago is a continuation of efforts to enhance the capacity of the National Ozone Unit (NOU), located within the Ministry of Planning and Development, from 2025 to 2030. The project is crucial for managing the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) and the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in line with the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment, which Trinidad and Tobago ratified in 2017. Phase XII (12) of this project (October 2023 – December 2026) aims to sustain the necessary systems, policies, and coordination to meet international obligations, providing financial, technical, and administrative assistance to the NOU. The total funding allocated for this phase is USD 180,000 from December 2024 to December 2027.

KEY OUTPUTS

The INS project operates through several key objectives aimed at supporting Trinidad and Tobago's Montreal Protocol commitments:

1. **Adoption/Implementation of Legislation and Regulation**: To control and monitor the imports and use of Montreal Protocol controlled substances.
2. **Accurate and Timely Data Collection and Reporting**: To ensure compliance with reporting requirements for all Montreal Protocol controlled substances.
3. **Efficient Coordination**: To foster collaboration between national agencies and stakeholders to achieve Montreal Protocol objectives.
4. **Supervision of Timely Implementation**: To oversee the execution of HCFC phase-out and HFC phase-down activities and monitor consumption reductions.
5. **Promoting Awareness Raising and Information Exchange**: To educate the general public and specific sectors on relevant Montreal Protocol issues.
6. **Regional Cooperation and Participation**: To ensure Trinidad and Tobago's active involvement in regional and international Montreal Protocol meetings.
7. **Integration of MLF Gender Policy**: To mainstream gender considerations into all Montreal Protocol activities.

Key Achievements and Status for Each Output (Planned for 2025) Activities planned for 2025 demonstrate the NOU's ongoing efforts to fulfill the IS project's objectives:

Objective 1: Adoption/Implementation of Legislation and Regulation:

◦ Training sessions for border control agencies including the Ministry of Health, Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals (5 officers, 3 females) Jan], Plant Quarantine (26 officers, 18 females) Jan], TTBS on energy efficiency and Long-term Refrigerant Management (27 officers, 18 females) Aug].

◦ Training with Government procurement regulators on refrigerants and cooling equipment, involving 33 senior officers (28 females) Feb.

◦ Customs Training with a new practical component using refrigerant analysers for 26 Customs Officers (18 females) June.

◦ A meeting with the Fire Prevention Unit (12 officers, 1 female) Aug.

◦ Coordination meetings with TTBS on the Collection mechanism for Long-term Refrigerant Management Sep.

◦ Issuance of letters for HCFC quotas and HPMP Controls, and HFC controls for import and export Dec.

◦ Ongoing review and update of legal measures and regulatory impact assessment, including training for customs, brokers, and importers on HFC import/trade control and data reporting.

◦ Updating and implementing the Customs Registry System and Harmonized Codes and developing a border control handbook.

Objective 2: Accurate and Timely Data Collection and Reporting:

◦ Issuance of letters for HCFC and HFC controls (relevant for monitoring and data reporting)

◦ Training sessions for brokers, importers, and authorities on HFC data reporting.

Objective 3: Efficient Coordination between National Agencies/Stakeholders:

◦ Multiple Curriculum Development meetings with NEC, ARIA, SORAC, NOU, UWI, and NTA for updating the RAC Curriculum [Feb, Apr, May, Aug, Oct].

◦ Update sessions on professional certification at MIC-IT and with MIC for the Professional Certification Program [May].

◦ A World Refrigeration Day Forum with stakeholders and academic training institutions [June].

◦ A Stakeholder Forum Session with importers to inform them of HCFC quota reductions.

Objective 4: Supervision of Timely Implementation:

◦ The NOU's involvement in curriculum development meetings and stakeholder forums contributes to the overall supervision and coordination of HPMP/KIP activities.

Objective 5: Promoting Awareness Raising and Information Exchange:

◦ Public Awareness activities at Atmosphere LATAM 2025 and the Trinidad and Tobago Energy Conference [Feb].

◦ Public Awareness at NESC Open Day [Mar].

◦ School talks and career fairs at SAGHS and UWI ([Apr].

◦ TV and Radio sessions on national Montreal Protocol initiatives [May].

◦ A School Mural at Patna River Estate Primary School (explicitly mentioning INS) [June].

◦ Ozone Talks at Nalis Library Camps [July] and Summer camps in Tobago [Aug].

◦ Ozone Talks and Murals at secondary schools (El Dorado West, Tunapuna) [Sep, Oct].

◦ Participation in SAGHS – Big Sister – World of Work mentorship day [Oct].

◦ Science and Career Fair at Lakshmi Girls Hindu College [Oct].

◦ Awareness activities at the Mucurapo Muslim Association Community Fair [Nov].

Objective 6: Regional Cooperation and Participation:

◦ Participation at a Caribbean Network Meeting with Academic Trainers [June].

Objective 7: Integration of MLF Gender Policy:

◦ Information Sharing on female technicians in the sector [Mar].

◦ Significant female participation in training for government procurement regulators (28 females) [Feb], Customs Training (18 females) [June], and Border control training for TTBS (18 females) [Aug].

◦ Female participation in Hydrocarbon Training (2 females) [June], Train the Trainer Session on Digital Tools (2 females) [May], and Professional Certification Program update (7 females) [May].

Risks/Issues for the Project

The IS project faces several challenges, including limited capacity within the NOU and insufficient funding and resources. Broader systemic issues such as weak institutional frameworks, inadequate capacity for regulatory enforcement, and a lack of robust public engagement strategies also pose risks. The dual phase-out of HCFCs and the transition to HFC alternatives complicate implementation. External factors like natural phenomena (e.g., hurricanes) or atypical sanitary situations (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) can impact project timelines and deliverables. Furthermore, changes in government policies, delays in obtaining necessary equipment or software, high upfront costs for low-GWP alternatives, and potential lack of stakeholder buy-in from importers and retailers are significant risks.

Lessons Learned

Institutional Strengthening projects have proven pivotal in enhancing the capacity of Article 5 countries for Montreal Protocol compliance. The successful implementation of previous stages highlights that long-term, sustained support for national bodies like the Border control agencies and the NOU is critical for effective environmental enforcement. The Kigali Amendment has emphasized the necessity of robust institutional frameworks to manage new commitments. By building on past initiatives and integrating lessons learned, the current phase aims for a multi-pronged approach to address new challenges. Strengthening national systems and capacities, particularly in monitoring and legislative updates, is crucial for sustained compliance. This approach ensures that environmental policies can be implemented efficiently and sustainably beyond the initial project duration.