



# International Projects

## St Lucia: Increasing global competitiveness through international standards

### The story at a glance

- St Lucia had untapped potential to carry out more international trade. The government wanted to improve the quality of St Lucia's products to grow the island's economy and increase its competitiveness.
- BSI's International Projects team worked with the St Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS) on a three-year project to help the country adopt international standards and improve the island's quality infrastructure.
- This capacity building action was part of the Commonwealth Standards Network, which supports trade, economic growth and prosperity throughout the Commonwealth by encouraging the use of international standards.
- The project has helped St Lucia to remove trade barriers, increase exports, and stimulate domestic economic performance.

### The starting point

St Lucia is an island in the eastern Caribbean Sea with a population of just over 180,000. Despite its small size at just 616 km<sup>2</sup> (238 square miles), the island has strong trade capacity with its main exports including petroleum, beer, bananas and cocoa.

Overall, St Lucia's exports are worth approximately \$185m (£142m) a year, and the island has consistently achieved positive GDP growth (IMF, 2019). But with the global marketplace becoming more competitive, the country needed to improve its economic performance and strengthen its position in international trade

**“The project has been highly successful in helping to facilitate increased trade, enabled by excellent training in standardization practice and legal approximation; good regulatory practice; regulatory impact assessments; and greater stakeholder engagement in our national quality policy.”**

**Verne Emmanuel,**  
Director, St Lucia Bureau of Standards

## The challenge

St Lucia's government was seeking to make the country's economy more competitive to stimulate economic growth. Exports are vital to the economy, but a lack of conformity to international standards was hampering trade with other nations.

The St Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS), which is based in the capital Castries, wanted to strengthen its capacity to improve the country's quality infrastructure and raise awareness of how standardization benefits people, businesses and the economy.

## The solution

**To address this challenge, BSI's International Projects (IP) team worked with the SLBS on a bespoke three-year Technical Assistance programme.**

Funding for this programme came from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) via the Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN) – a platform that encourages the use of international standards throughout the Commonwealth, with the aim of facilitating trade, fostering innovation and reducing poverty.

The CSN project was funded by UK Aid Official Development Assistance funds managed by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by BSI. Phase 1 ran from

May 2018 to March 2020 and Phase 2 from April 2020 to March 2021. The project worked with National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and key related stakeholders across the Commonwealth to support the increased use of international standards as a tool to stimulate domestic economic performance and export potential.

Nine developing countries within the Commonwealth have also been provided with focused Technical Assistance aimed at equipping them with the skills to support domestic standards development; use international standards effectively for trade; and be empowered to take an active role in standards development. St Lucia is one of them.

The St Lucia project's three main objectives were to:

- Increase trade through the adoption of international standards
- Strengthen the country's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)
- Improve awareness of standards

“We provided a senior technical quality infrastructure consultant, who worked closely with SLBS in Castries to oversee the project,” says Riccardo Benvenuti, BSI's Lead Project Manager. “Other international standards experts were brought in where necessary.”



## A seven-part programme

The IP team designed a strategy to address these objectives, based on seven components:

### 1. National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)

The IP team conducted a NQI situation analysis, and developed a national quality policy and implementation plan to lay a strong foundation for trusted international trade partnerships.

### 2. Legal approximation

“We began by reviewing existing standards legislation in St Lucia, to see how it could be brought into line with international standards legislation,” says Riccardo Benvenuti. Subsequently, the team helped to strengthen national ability to produce technical regulations and introduced training on good regulatory practice and regulatory impact assessment.

### 3. Standards adoption

The team developed a strategy that proposed the adoption of specific, relevant standards based on the UN SDGs and sector requirements. In addition, the team provided technology support to enable businesses to:

- Shape standards as they're being developed through the SLBS website.
- Purchase standards from the SLBS website through a shop tool.

### 4. Certification

Upgrading SLBS certification was vital to help St Lucian exporters sell more to other Caribbean and Commonwealth countries. This included training in ISO/IEC 17025 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories and ISO 15189 - Medical laboratories – Requirements for quality and competence.

### 5. Standards awareness

We created a series of TV adverts and explanatory videos, a radio infomercial, and 20 videos on NQI for the SLBS website. All these highlighted why quality and standards are valuable to both businesses and people.

The team also trained the SLBS communications department in how to develop customer-centric communications materials, “We want people to see the SLBS as their partner,” says Riccardo, “One that they can work with to sell more at home and overseas.”

### 6. Information technology

A technology expert developed an online software package for SLBS to publish national standards by converting them from international standards.

### 7. Training

A comprehensive training programme on calibration skills, compliance and certification was carried out over 27 days. The training content was tailored to different departments within SLBS and included training by the UK's national accreditation body UKAS.





## The result

- St Lucia has now adopted over 400 international standards, and the process for adoption and publishing is simpler and more user-friendly.
  - The SLBS standards department has become more efficient and effective, enabling it to adopt any number of international standards in accordance with its economic needs.
  - New technology support has enabled the SLBS to adopt international standards faster, helping them to embed international best practice.
  - There is enhanced capacity for ISO member services and standardization.
  - Improved calibration skills enable the SLBS to provide measurements required for exports, which are essential for global trading.
  - Domestic consumers are benefiting from strengthened market surveillance that improves product quality and safety.
- Over the three-year project, 155 people received training via 23 training courses, equipping the SLBS with the necessary skills for success.

In addition, as a result of meeting ISO/IEC 17025 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories, requirements, the SLBS became the first accredited calibration laboratory in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) when it was awarded the Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation's first testing and calibrating laboratory accreditation certificate.

## About the client

Established in 1990, the St Lucia Bureau of Standards operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Commerce, Tourism, Investment and Consumer Affairs. It is responsible for developing and promoting standards for products and services to help enhance the economy of St Lucia.

# Why BSI?

BSI is a global thought leader championing business excellence, innovation and best practice – whether by developing agile standards or offering quality management advisory services. BSI's International Projects team works with developing countries and transition economies to improve their quality infrastructure, trade and investment flows and market access, with the goal of boosting economic growth and prosperity.

## Our aim

BSI's International Projects (IP) department was formed with a specific mission – to help overseas governments to improve their trade policy-making processes, unlock prosperity and boost private sector competitiveness. For over 20 years, we've been providing regular 'best-in-class' expertise on trade promotion, regulatory compliance and export readiness on a range of technical assistance programmes in more than 100 countries.

Find out how International Projects can benefit your country

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