



Report on the workshop on communication, networking and building partnerships

May 16-18, 2012

Asa Wright Nature Centre, Arima Valley, Trinidad and Tobago



Prepared by:

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

With funding from:

JB Fernandes Memorial Trust I

**JB Fernandes
Memorial Trust I**
administered by **ROCKEFELLER**
FOUNDATION

1 INTRODUCTION

Rural communities in the Caribbean are highly dependent on natural resources for subsistence use, informal enterprises, small businesses, and the provision of essential ecological goods and services. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) has been working intensively with four rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago to develop small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources. These communities are Blanchisseuse, Brasso Seco, Heights of Aripo and Speyside. The project, which is funded by the JB Fernandes Memorial Trust I began in 2010. Groups within the rural communities identified natural resources and possible small businesses based on the use of those natural resources. The community groups also assessed the feasibility of those businesses. The groups identified communication - especially with support agencies - as a gap in their skills. This need was addressed in this workshop. The agenda is shown in Appendix 1.



Figure 1 Participants from Blanchisseuse and Heights of Aripo discuss points on communication

2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- improve communication between community members and agencies that can assist them;
- enhance the communities' ability to communicate with agencies that can assist them;
- enhance the communities' ability to network with each other, other communities in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region;
- enhance the technical and financial agencies' ability to effectively work with communities to deliver goods and services;
- increase the communities' awareness of services available to establish and develop small and micro-enterprises based on the use of natural resources; and
- build partnerships between the invited agencies and the communities.

3 PARTICIPANTS

The list of workshop participants is shown in Appendix 2. Three communities participated in the workshop - Blanchisseuse, Brasso Seco and Heights of Aripo. Speyside representatives were unable to attend the workshop as they were scheduled to begin another workshop at that time. Each of the three communities had at least four representatives participating on each day of the workshop.

On the final day of the workshop, eight support agencies attended the sessions to learn of some of the difficulties communities have in communicating with them and to discuss solutions to these challenges.



Figure 2 Participant from Brasso Seco shares information about his group

4 METHOD

The three-day workshop was highly interactive. Ice breakers, group sessions, plenary discussions, lecturettes and role plays were used to ensure that the participants understood learnt the information and were able to achieve the objectives.

4.1 Day 1

4.1.1 Introductions

The first day of the workshop began with a welcome to the workshop from the facilitators and a security briefing from the staff at the Asa Wright Nature Centre. The groups were then given an exercise called “The Visiting Ambassador” to learn about each other. Each group appointed an ambassador to visit a neighbouring group to share information about the group. The Ambassadors visited the groups and shared information. The groups visited had to note information about the Ambassador’s organisation (e.g. where the group is located, its activities, its size) and the type of presentation (e.g. was it clear, was it appealing). The Ambassadors reported to their own groups and then the groups appointed a spokesperson to share information with plenary.

4.1.2 Visual, verbal and written communication

The facilitator asked the participants to describe what was communication and why do they communicate. This information was written on flip chart paper. The participants were then divided into three smaller groups. One person was selected from each group and asked to stand outside the room and face away from the room until instructed otherwise. Each group was asked to invite the group member that is standing outside the room to re-enter, and stand in a specific corner of the room, but the group was required to do so using a specific method.

The first group to send the invitation did so by wiring the instructions. The second group sent the invitation verbally. The third group had to send the invitation using non-verbal means (e.g. using gestures, noises etc. only). The session was debriefed by discussing the 5Cs of communication (clear, concise, correct/credible, comprehensive and consistent), understanding who we want to communicate with (our target audience) and how do we communicate (where, when and what tools are used to communicate). This information was noted on a flip chart.



Figure 3 Pairs of participants in an exercise on feedback

4.1.3 Feedback and evaluation

The facilitator began the session by explaining that feedback is how we get a response to the information that was shared. The participants also took part in three short role play exercises to understand feedback.

Three pairs of participants demonstrated different aspects of feedback. The first pair sat back to back, so there was no interaction between them and communication was indirect. The second pair sat face-to-face and there was direct interaction, but the body language of one of the pair was non-responsive. The last pair sat face-to-face so there was direct communication and both persons were responsive. The facilitator debriefed by asking the pairs to describe their activities and their feelings about the feedback given.

The facilitator used an analogy of an advertisement in the newspaper for a flashy, red sports car with a woman to evaluate if it was effective. She asked the participants to determine how they knew that the advertisement was effective and how was success measured. This information was noted on a flip chart.

4.1.4 Value of networking to small businesses

The facilitator began the session by asking the participants their thoughts on the term 'networking'. She highlighted that the 'ing' shows that networking is an active term. The facilitator explained that part of networking was building partnerships with others. The participants were then divided into four smaller groups. Each group represented a different type of community member. The four community members were: a new landowner, a community group, a family and a grocery owner. They were shown a map and given the following scenario:

The bridge on main access road into the community has collapsed. The community group relies on family with a panel van to get goods to grocer. The family with the panel van relies on the community to get work. The new landowner does not know anyone in the community, but has an access road at the back of the farm. The grocer needs to have supplies at his store. Re-building of bridge will take some time. What can the individuals in this community do to address their individual situations while the bridge is down? The features and needs of each group are shown in the table below.

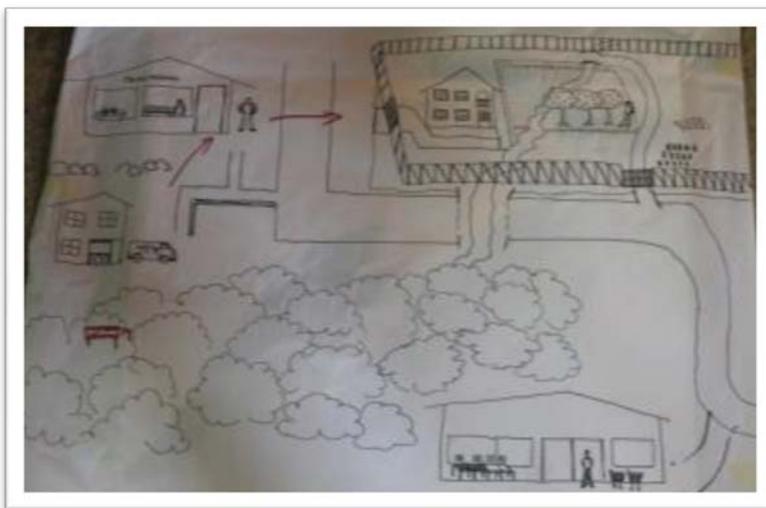


Figure 4 Map used to demonstrate networking

Table 4.1 Descriptions of community members - features and needs

Community Member	Features of member's situation in the community	Needs
New landowner	Has farm with a back access road Has fresh produce Has not identified market for produce Does not currently have a vehicle Does not know anyone yet	Needs to find a market for the produce Needs transportation for produce
Community group	Supplies fresh baked goods and preserves to village grocery and others Has building with small kitchen Does not currently have a vehicle	Needs to get goods to grocery to fill orders Also needs to get supplies from grocery
Family	Has panel van Does transportation	Cannot get out of the community to do transport
Grocer	Relies upon community group for some goods (fresh baked goods and preserves) When farmland was sold, lost supply of fresh produce	Is not receiving fresh produce since farm was sold to new owner Has not been getting goods from community group since bridge broke down

Each group had five minutes to discuss what they needed to do to achieve their objective. This was discussed in plenary.

The day ended with the facilitator explaining the process for the second day of the workshop.

4.2 Day 2

4.2.1 Case study on Nature Seekers' experiences on the importance of communication, networking and partnerships

Dennis Sammy from Nature Seekers was invited to the workshop to discuss the value of effective communication, networking and partnerships with the participants. He stressed the importance of leadership skills to achieving business objectives.

4.2.2 Preparation for communication with support agencies

The afternoon session was devoted to preparing for the participants' interaction with the support agencies on the following day. The communities worked in groups to discuss what their objectives were for their business, what products and pathways were being using, if those were effective and the

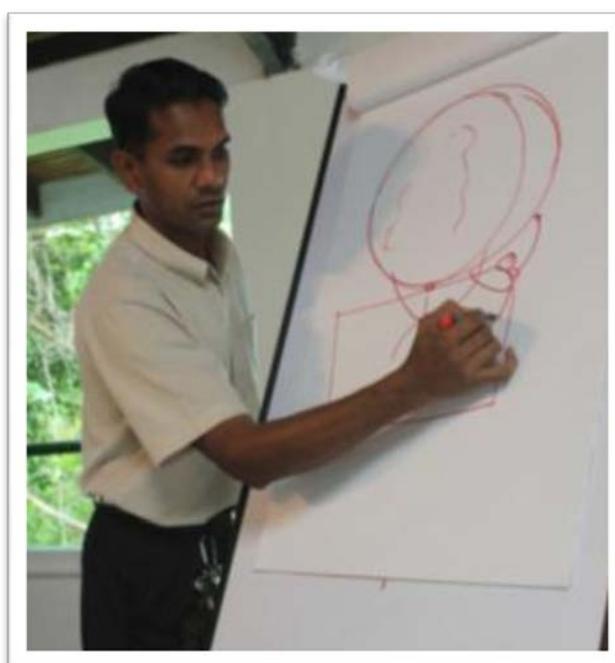


Figure 5 Dennis Sammy tells of Nature Seekers' experiences with communication and building partnerships

agencies with which they interacted. This information was presented in plenary. The facilitators then pulled the information together into three categories of pathways and products: 1) those that worked 2) those that worked but needed further promotion to be successful and, 3) those that presented challenges for the rural communities. The communities each chose one of the three categories to present to the agencies. They worked together in their community groupings to prepare for the following day.

4.3 Day 3

4.3.1 Communities present on effective ways of communication

The groups continued to prepare for their interaction with the support agencies before the morning break. After the break, CANARI introduced the project and gave the agencies a synopsis of the previous workshop days. The agencies were asked to introduce themselves and the work they were doing. The communities then presented the information on: what methods were being used for communicating with the agencies, what needed further injection of funds and what received no responses. The agencies and the groups discussed the information presented in plenary after the presentations.

4.3.2 Evaluation and close

The participants were asked to draw faces to describe how they felt at the end of the workshop. The faces described their feelings. They were asked to discuss their drawings in plenary. After this evaluation exercise, the workshop was closed.



Figure 6 Communities interact with IICA representative

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Visual, verbal and written communication

The participants explained that they communicate to:

- get information
- give or share information
- achieve a specific goal or objective
- to get a response
- to effect change

- to get a message across

The facilitator explained that communication begins with the messenger. The messenger has a reason or objective for communicating. She explained that that the message being shared should always be consistent. The interpretation of the message is also important as different people will understand the message differently.

The participants believed that each type of communication could be effective depending on the objective of the communication. They also believed that in each communication it was important to be polite to improve the chance that the audience would be receptive.

The facilitator explained that the advertising industry uses communication a lot. In the car advertisement scenario, she explained, the advertisements consistently share the same message.

This introduced the 5C's of the communication:



Figure 7 Participants discuss points in plenary

- Clear = the information is easily understood
- Concise = the message gets to the point
- Correct/Credible = messenger and the audience need to believe the information so that the message can withstand scrutiny
- Comprehensive = message must be followed logically, and
- Consistent = the message must be the same.

She also included a sixth C: contagious as the messenger wants the message to be shared with others.

5.2 Feedback and evaluation

The exercises on feedback demonstrated the importance of direct communication. In the role play where there was no interaction between the pair, the messenger was frustrated and began making assumptions about her intended audience. The audience in the second pair was non-responsive and the messenger became frustrated as well. In the last pair, where communication was direct and the audience responsive, the messenger was able to get feedback and give different types of information as the audience needed.

5.3 Value of networking to small businesses

The participants explained that networking means:

- Coming together
- Groups connecting
- Sharing/exchanging information among groups with common interests
- Learning from each other
- Working together

The facilitator pointed out that having a common interest is important among members of the network. Networking also brings out new skills, effects change and makes work lighter.

In the exercise on networking, participants learnt that:

- Choosing the right person to represent your organisation in the network is critical to the success of the network
- There will always be areas of disagreement and agreement but it is important to come to a consensus
- Networking is 'work' and it is an ongoing activity

The facilitator gave the example of the Council of Presidents of the Environment (COPE) as an example of the network created by environmental non-governmental organisations to be able to share information among its members and to interact with the government while presenting a common view.



Figure 8 Dennis Sammy was able to share best practices learnt from Nature Seekers

5.4 Lessons learnt from Nature Seekers' experiences with communication, networking and building partnerships

Dennis Sammy began by saying that relationships are built on the understanding of the other person. This is the same in small businesses. He pointed out that Nature Seekers was not always the organisation that it is today. He also explained that the organisation went through several periods of growth. The growth of the organisation was a direct result of personal growth of its leaders. One of the more critical factors was the improvement in leadership skills among members of the organisation.

Dennis Sammy spoke of the importance of forming partnerships with persons within an organisation and with other organisations as well. He said that partnerships can provide resources to an organisation. It is important to understand your strengths, weaknesses, and those of your partner. A partner should be chosen to complement your organisation. In other words, choose a partner who can bring a quality that you lack to the relationship.

Conflicts within organisations and within networks will always arise. Nature Seekers learnt to compromise and

to use consensus for decisions to be able to grow as an organisation and to improve the networks to which it belongs.

Miscommunication can hamper the growth of an organisation. It is important that the members of an organisation share the same vision so that the messages communicated will be the same/consistent. This makes communication within the organisation and outside the organisation clearer.

5.5 Ways to effectively communicate between support agencies and rural communities

The communities presented ways to effectively communicate with them. Heights of Aripo presented ways that worked. Blanchisseuse presented methods that have been working but needed further promotion. The community also presented its plans to brand one of the community groups - Blanchisseuse Environmental and Art Trust (BEAT). Brasso Seco presented ways that continue to present challenges. These are all shown in Appendix 3. Brasso Seco chose to do a skit to show what

has not been working. This can be seen on the CANARI YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWu3upeCo88>.

The communities and agencies discussed the presentations and came up with effective means of communication with each other. The support agencies asked for assistance to effectively support rural communities. The tips for communicating between the two groups are shown in Appendix 4. The support agencies also shared information on some of the services they offered. These are shown in Appendix 5.



Figure 9 AYDO representatives discuss the possibility of funding their recipe book with Community Development Division

6 CONCLUSION

The workshop was successful as its objectives were achieved. Communication between the support agencies and the rural communities was enhanced as both parties were able to agree on the best ways to communicate with each other. The rural communities were able to improve their ability to network with each other and other communities in Trinidad and Tobago. Because the communities over-nighted at Asa Wright Nature Centre there were more opportunities for networking. This formed stronger bonds among the communities.

The Blanchisseuse Environmental Conservation Organisation (BECO) planned to visit Nature Seekers a few weeks after the workshop to learn more of the group as they are both engaged in similar activities. The agencies were also able to share information about the support that they can offer.

As the group from the Speyside community was unable to attend the meeting, the workshop report will be shared with the group and efforts made to engage the community.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

Wednesday 16 May 2012	
Time	Topic
9:00am-9:30am	Registration of participants
9:30am-10:30am	Welcome, introductions, assignment of workshop roles, security briefing
10:30am-11:00am	BREAK
11:00am-11:30am	Value of communication
11:30am-12:00noon	Types of communication
12:00pm-1:00pm	LUNCH
1:00pm-2:00pm	Communication and the link to businesses
2:00pm-3:15pm	Communication for networking
3:15pm-3:30pm	BREAK
3:30pm-4:00pm	Panel discussion preparation

Thursday 17 May, 2012	
Time	Topic
9:00am-9:15am	Day 1 reports
9:15am-10:30am	Introduction to practical experiences using communication and networking tools to enhance businesses
10:30am-11:00am	BREAK
11:00am-12:00pm	Practical experiences using communication and networking tools to enhance businesses
12:00pm-1:00pm	LUNCH
1:00pm-2:30pm	Debrief
2:30pm- 3:00pm	Preparation for the communication with agencies
3:00pm-3:15pm	BREAK
3:15pm-4:00pm	Preparation for the communication with agencies (cont'd)
4:00pm-7:00pm	Small grant application

Friday 18 May 2012	
Time	Topic
9:00am-9:15am	Day 2 reports
9:15am-10:00am	Preparation for presentation to the agencies
10:00am-10:30am	BREAK
10:30-10:40am	Welcome and introduction

10:40am-11:30am	Communities present ways of effectively communicating with them
11:30am-12:30pm	Discussion on the presentation and tips for effective community engagement
12:30pm-1:30pm	LUNCH
1:30pm-2:00pm	Debrief communication, networking and building partnerships
2:00pm- 2:30pm	Evaluation
2:30pm-2:45pm	Wrap up and close

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

NAME	ORGANISATION	OCCUPATION	CONTACT NO.
Mr. Phillip Radix	Blanchisseuse Village Council	President	480 0153
Ms. Arveon Debisette	Blanchisseuse Aquaculture and Producers Association	President	769 4752
Mr. Jocelyn Lee Quay	Blanchisseuse Environmental and Art Trust	Vice President	374 7520
Mr. Dexter Black	Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk Cooperative	President	312 6814
Ornella Reyes	Blanchisseuse Aquaculture and Producers Association	Secretary	391 5861
Chrisse Ann Guilbert	Blanchisseuse Environment Conservation Organization	Public Relations Officer	483 6822
Dane Ellie	Tourguides		396 1629
Evon Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	President	369 5878
Elizabeth Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Asst. Secretary	345 8450
Emile Tenia	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Community Member	337 4742
Everest Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Community Member	373 6796
Nyla Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Community Member	382 6230
Janelle Martinez	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Treasurer	376 9136
Nesha Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Community Member	316 7699
Mr. Raymond Ferreira	Brasso Seco Farmer's Group	President	491 5873
Mr. Carl Fitz James	Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee	Public Relations Officer	493 4358
Facilitators			
Ms. Celeste Chariandy	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute	Senior Technical Officer	626 6062

NAME	ORGANISATION	OCCUPATION	CONTACT NO.
Ms. Keisha Sandy	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute	Technical Officer	626 6062

List of agencies participating in the workshop

Name	Organisation	Contact information
Nadia Joseph	Community Development Fund	(868) 627-3646/3650, 623-9161
Lisa Martinez	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)	(868) 625-0467/8
Alicia Mulzac	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)	(868) 645 4555/ 5020/ 8886
Susan Corbett	Ministry of Community Development	(868) 625 0639 ext 3022
Ms. Hazel Hospedales Julian	National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO)	(868) 821-5810
Anil Seepaul	National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO)	(868) 821-5810
Ain Earle	Tourism Development Company (TDC)	(868) 675-7034
Renee Dene	Tourism Development Company (TDC)	(868) 675-7034 ext.308
Maurice Fermin	Trinidad and Tobago Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board (CCIB)	(868) 672-1580 , (868) 671-1001
Joan Dasent	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	(868) 623-7056

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNICATION METHODS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS¹

Has worked	Further promotion needed	Continues to be a challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings • Notices in the community • Pictures • Reports • Exchange visits • Presentations • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures • Website • Call cards* • Facebook • YouTube • Video • Hosting events • Networks* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls • Letters • E-mails • Proposals • Training • Impromptu meetings*

Figure 10 Communication methods that have worked, have worked but need further promotion and that have not worked as presented by the rural communities

¹ * denotes uncertainty about the method's effectiveness

APPENDIX 4: TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORT AGENCIES

Suggestions from rural communities for engaging them

- Ignoring phone calls and e-mails from communities frustrates them with the result that they assume that their needs are unimportant.
- Simplify proposal forms. They are difficult to understand and support for completing them is often lacking.
- When an appointment is confirmed with the rural communities and must be cancelled, please inform the rural communities.
- Be polite and welcoming. Rural communities are often intimidated when walking into the offices of support agencies.
- Taking relevant information directly to the rural communities (e.g. placing information on community notice boards) is often a good way of getting information out to the communities.
- Rural communities are always interested in learning. Training and exchange visits are examples of ways of communicating that are effective.
- Provide feedback on proposals. This will ensure that rural communities do not make the same mistakes when re-applying or applying for similar proposals.

Tips from support agencies for engaging them effectively

- Communities should be clear about what their issues are when communicating with the agencies. It may help to break the information into separate issues so that they can be handled in a logical and structured way.
- Send letters to the agencies requesting visits. These may sometimes be lost so follow-up calls, letters and/or e-mails are also important.
- Make use of the Member of Parliament for your area. The politicians are influential and can cause the agencies to act.
- Maintain contact with persons within the agencies. Have at least two persons in the relevant agency with which you are regularly in contact. It is important to build relationships within the agencies.
- Once you have built relationships with the support agencies, become more familiar with their structure and procedures. This will make interacting with the agencies easier.

APPENDIX 5: SERVICES OFFERED BY THE SUPPORT AGENCIES

Name of agency	Support offered
Community Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for projects (especially businesses) that can alleviate poverty in communities
Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telefood Grant of USD10,000 • Projects can be linked to FAO's website. Communities can send letter asking for this
Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Health and Food Safety specialist on staff who can provide technical assistance • IICA can help groups undertaking agriculture related projects to develop business plans
Ministry of Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in structuring the organisations • Conflict management services
National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caravan can visit communities to share information on the services offered including loans
Tourism Development Company Ltd (TDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides technical advice on tourism products and services • Provides links to other agencies • Can provide training when requested
Trinidad and Tobago Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board (CCIB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance for development of cocoa and coffee products • CCIB can help to make links with other relevant organisations.
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Environment Facility- Small Grant Programme (GEF-SGP). UNDP offers support to develop proposals for funding

Please contact the relevant agencies for other services offered.