

**Final report on activities conducted under  
Letter of Agreement for provision of funds from the Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations, to the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) signed 30<sup>th</sup>  
December, 2011**

**Piloting community-based management planning for the sustainable use of forest  
resources in Trinidad and Tobago**

*Submitted 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2012*

## **1.0 Background and introduction**

In 2011, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago approved a new Forest Policy giving stakeholders the opportunity to participate in management of the nation's forests. There are many communities engaged in forest-based livelihoods in Trinidad and Tobago, but none had attempted to develop a formal plan to sustainably manage the use of the resources on which their livelihoods depend. Further the government has not developed any formal forest management plans with communities.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization provided a grant to CANARI to implement a pilot project for the formulation of a community-based site plan for sustainable use of forest resources in Trinidad and Tobago. CANARI worked with the Forestry Division (FD) of Trinidad and Tobago to undertake this pilot project in the community of Brasso Seco in the Northern Range of Trinidad.

The duration of the project was approximately three months. The project utilized an innovative community-based approach to forest management planning through the production of interactive maps. The process for the production of the maps included:

- facilitated discussions to identify forest resources;
- building the capacity of villagers to use Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers to plot the location of forest resources;
- documenting plans for forest resources through the facilitated use of video and photography in the field/forest; and
- facilitated discussions to generate forest resource profiles which included a description of each resource and a plan inclusive of measures for monitoring and evaluation.

## **2.0 Project Activities**

### 2.1 Overview

The activities for under this agreement comprised:

- a) Formulating criteria and selection of a community
- b) Hosting an introductory and planning workshop
- c) Conducting training on the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers to plot the location of forest resources and field work
- d) Hosting a second workshop with the community to analyse data and prepare a plan, including digital maps
- e) Documenting process, lessons learned and experiences

All activities were successfully completed as outlined below.

A meeting was held with FD to draft criteria for selection of a community to conduct the project. A draft document was produced by CANARI from the discussions at the meeting and sent to FD for review. The criteria were finalised and used to select the community of Brasso Seco in the Paria Valley on the southern slopes of the Northern Range in Trinidad and Tobago.

FD initiated contact with the Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee (Brasso Seco TAC) and informed them about the project. The Executive of Brasso Seco TAC then invited CANARI and FD to present the project to the Executive on 19th January at the Brasso Seco Visitor's Centre in Brasso Seco. At that meeting, the Executive accepted the invitation to implement the project and suggested dates for the introductory and planning workshop. The workshop report is available [on the project website](#).

Nine members of Brasso Seco TAC, one representative from the Farmers Association and one from the Brasso Seco Village Council attended the introductory and planning workshop which was held on 7th February 2012 at the Brasso Seco Visitor's Centre. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- introduce the project to residents of the community of Brasso Seco;
- identify forest resources in the Brasso Seco community that are important for maintaining their livelihoods;
- facilitate the selection of the site for the execution of the project; and
- draft a work plan for the project.

When the project description was presented the community members proposed five sites. CANARI and FD then facilitated the development of agreed selection criteria for a project site. Brasso Road was subsequently selected as the project site. CANARI and FD then facilitated a brief session to identify forest resources in the project site. Six resources were identified. FD culminated the meeting by developing a draft work plan with the community to execute the project activities.

Initial training on use of GPS receivers to plot the location of forest resources was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012 by FD. FD also led on the collection of data with the community over seven field days during the months of February and March 2012. FD also facilitated two meetings during the collection of the field data. The first meeting was held to draft the profiles on the chosen forest resources and the second to update community members on the progress of the project.

A final workshop was held on 4th April 2012 at the Brasso Seco Visitor's Centre. There were twenty-seven participants most of which were representatives from the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme (NRWRP) invited by the Brasso Seco TAC. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- present the forest management plan to the Brasso Seco community and other key stakeholders;
- elicit feedback on the plan from the Brasso Seco community and other key stakeholders;
- assist with clarifying and documenting lessons learned and experiences from the process; and
- prioritise actions for the implementation of the plan.

Members of Brasso Seco TAC described the project as enjoyable and educational. They commended the approach and explained that the project not only involved improving their

technical skills in the collection of waypoint data with GPS receivers but has also contributed to improving their event planning and project coordination skills. They were also pleased with the amount of field data generated in the allocated time. The President of the TAC in his presentation reported that the project was timely and helpful as it came at a time when the group was preparing for a business planning exercise. The mapping and resource profiles were seen as major tools to facilitate this activity. He went on further to say that he thought that this project was a means of empowering the Brasso Seco TAC. Lessons learned and experiences identified at the workshop are included in section 4 below. Finally, members of the community identified four priority actions for implementation. The workshop report is available as [on the project website](#).

FD led on the documentation of the forest management plan through the use of video and photography. FD provided guidance to the community on framing, composing and shooting videos, while FD staff captured still shots. CANARI lead on the drafting of the resource profiles, workshop reports, web text and donor reports.

### 3.0 Results

#### 3.1 Outputs

The outputs of this project are as follows. Those in bold were previously submitted to the FAO.

- a) **Criteria for selection of a community**
- b) **[Introductory and planning workshop report](#)**
- c) 200 waypoint readings, over 7,000 photographs and 250 video clips with about 50 captured by community members
- d) [Project webpage](#)
- e) [Face book album](#)
- f) [Edited videos for YouTube](#)
- g) [Update flyer](#)
- h) [Final workshop report](#)
- i) Five resource profiles
  - o [Cocoa house area](#)
  - o [Forest and forest trees](#)
  - o [River and springs](#)
  - o [Rustic lodge area](#)
  - o [Cocoa and coffee area](#)
- j) One Interactive map-based multimedia Adobe Flash Document (access via website)
- k) One Interactive map-based multimedia Adobe MS 2007 Word Document
- l) **[One Interactive map-based multimedia Adobe Acrobat Document](#)**

#### 3.2 Outcomes

Outcomes of the project are as follows:

- a) The partner community group reported that they felt empowered to engage in discussions or plans with other stakeholders.
- b) The partner community group (Brasso Seco TAC) built their capacity in the use of GPS, photography and shooting video, data capture and storage and event planning and coordination.
- c) Staff of the Community Forestry Unit of the FD gained experience in facilitating a community-based forest management planning initiative.

- d) Staff of the Community Forestry Unit of the FD built their capacity to communicate to varied target audiences through inputting into the drafting of different communication products.
- e) Staff of the Community Forestry Unit of the FD built their capacity to formulate and assemble electronic interactive documents for forest management.
- f) CANARI gained additional insight into how participatory GIS can be used to facilitate community- based management planning.

## **4.0 Key lessons learned**

### *4.1 Capacity of the target community*

- The partner community group must have the capacity for mobilization so that there is adequate representation from the wider community to participate in development planning.
- The partner community group had a high capacity for record keeping and event coordination which was crucial to successful collection and analysis of field data.
- The partner community group had members who were key informants from the Brasso Seco community who were able provide authentic local knowledge about the chosen resources.

### *4.2 Process*

- The mixture of tools used to facilitate the process coupled with capacity building, in the use of GPS and participatory video, was strategic in keeping the members of the community who participated in the project interested in the project.
- The video and pictures elicited immediate and greater feedback from the participants of the workshop than the written profiles.
- The facilitation methods used were key to drawing out specific information and contributed to the members of the community owning the plan.
- The project generated a large volume of data (over 200 way points, approximately 7,000 photographs and over 250 unedited and edited video clips).
- A project of this nature requires astute data management and a dedicated hard drive for storage.
- Multiple meetings with the community were necessary for the group to assume ownership of the plan.
- The data gathering exercises required follow-up facilitated sessions to review progress, identify gaps, plan action to fill gaps and maintain the interest of the community.
- Both genders of many different ages participated in the project and this contributed to creating a healthy, balanced environment of diverse perspectives for the execution of the project.
- The project required considerable technical support in terms of video capture and editing and information communication technology that was in this case available at no cost to the project from the Community Forestry Unit of FD.
- Identifying priority actions from the plan and potential sources of funding, particularly within CANARI's existing work, was strategic in contributing to implementation of the plan.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

This approach to participatory forest management planning should be promoted to forest managers in the region through preparation of a policy brief describing the approach and highlighting the benefits and preparation and presentation of a case study on the exercise in Brasso Seco at regional fora inclusive of listserv articles and power point presentations. Finally,

an activity sheet outlining this approach should be drafted and added to the CANARI publication "Facilitating participatory natural resource management: A toolkit for Caribbean resource managers."

## **6. Conclusion**

This approach to participatory forest management planning was successful in achieving the desired outcomes and also produced additional unanticipated positive outcomes. These included the quantity of data collected and contributing to the feeling of empowerment of the community.