



Developing sustainable businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago and improving livelihoods through enterprise development

Evaluation Report
30 June 2014

Executive summary

This report presents the results of a participatory evaluation of a programme to support the development of sustainable livelihoods in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago, being implemented by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) with support from the J.B. Fernandes Memorial Trust. The evaluation assessed relevance, results, efficiency and effectiveness, and sustainability.

Representatives of seven community groups from Trinidad and Tobago who were involved in the project (see Appendix 1) were involved in design of the evaluation framework during a workshop held at the Malabar Community Centre in October 2013. The final evaluation was conducted by an independent consultant and input from community groups participating was facilitated during a meeting held at the Malabar Community Centre in Trinidad in May 2014. The seven community groups were able to articulate in an open, honest and interactive way measures that worked well, their top lessons learnt, the big changes made within themselves and their groups and recommendations to improve the programme in the future.

The evaluation demonstrated that the programme was highly relevant as it targeted specific needs of the communities, which were assessed in the early stages of the project and continued to be identified and addressed as the programme evolved.

The programme achieved the desired results outlined in the project objectives, and all groups made significant progress towards the development or strengthening of community enterprises. Almost all of the groups involved were able to use in some way the natural resources available within their community to start, grow and develop their community enterprises. From the inception of this programme to the conclusion, three community groups out of seven have actually been able to earn revenue from their community groups and resource business. Particular areas where significant results were achieved were in strengthening of community leaders, strengthening of community groups, and catalysing partnerships among community groups and with support agencies. Entrepreneurship capacity was built in skills such as finance, marketing and quality control as well as soft skills such as leadership, confidence building, communication and articulating a vision. However, further support is still needed for the community enterprises to become independent. There is also still a need for the programme to focus on wider policy influence and engaging other community groups and other communities.

The processes used in the programme were found to be very effective. Community participants highly praised the participatory approach and the combination of training, mentoring, exchange visits, networking meetings and small grants.

A good foundation has been built for sustainability of results but the participating groups mostly do not seem to yet be at the stage where they no longer require support and they requested continued mentoring and targeted capacity building to help them to develop strong and sustainable community enterprises.

Introduction

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) initiated a programme in 2010 that seeks to influence policy and practice to support the development of rural livelihoods in Trinidad and Tobago based on the sustainable use of natural resources to contribute to poverty reduction and rural development. This programme is being funded by the J.B. Fernandes Memorial Trust and has so far comprised three phases of work, each managed as a discrete project funded by the Trust.

The objectives of each phase of work are identified in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Programme objectives

<p>Phase 1: Improving livelihoods in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago by developing small business ideas based on the sustainable use of natural resources</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build the capacity of six rural communities to engage in strategic visioning and planning and the identification of revenue-generating activities based on the sustainable use of natural resources.2. To catalyse and support the development of small and micro-enterprises, either run by individuals, community organisations, or collectives, in six communities.3. To facilitate greater sharing of experiences and collaboration by six rural communities with other communities and stakeholders within Trinidad and Tobago and the islands of the Caribbean about how they can more effectively develop livelihoods based on the sustainable use of natural resources.4. To empower six rural communities to better network with technical and financial support agencies and to advocate for enhanced support of their efforts for livelihood development.
<p>Phase 2: Making it happen: Developing sustainable small businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago (Phase II)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To enhance communication and partnerships between four rural communities and agencies that can provide funding and technical assistance through facilitation of a joint workshop focusing on communication, networking and building partnerships.2. To support the start-up of small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources in four communities through providing mentoring, coaching and small grants.3. To explore the idea of collective marketing by communities including via development of a “community sustainable livelihoods” brand.
<p>Phase 3: Making it happen: Developing sustainable businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago and improving livelihoods through enterprise development (Phase III)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To catalyse support for the start-up of small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources by assisting communities to develop proposals to seek assistance from support agencies.2. To facilitate networking among rural communities and support agencies to improve understanding of best practices to establish small businesses in rural communities.3. To evaluate the results and lessons learnt on establishing small businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago.4. To document and disseminate lessons learnt on establishing small businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago to key target audiences.

The seven community groups involved in the programme are:

1. Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee (BSTAC)
2. Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers- Association (BSMLFA)
3. Speyside Eco Marine Park Rangers (SEMPR)
4. Aripo Youth Development Organisation (AYDO)
5. Blanchisseuse Environment and Arts Trust (BEAT)
6. Blanchisseuse Fisher Folk and Marine Life Association (BFMLA)
7. Blanchisseuse Aquaculture and Producers Association (BAPA)

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation sought to assess:

- a. **Relevance:** The extent to which the initiative that was conceived and the activities that were planned were consistent with the needs, expectations and capacities of the various stakeholders and responded adequately to identified needs, goals and objectives.
- b. **Results:** What are the results of the initiative, i.e. what are the measurable (quantitative and qualitative) outputs and outcomes? Results achieved were assessed against:
 - Objectives and desired results outlined in the Fernandes project proposals
 - Desired behaviour changes in the Outcome Map developed by CANARI and validated by stakeholders at the final evaluation meeting held in May 2014 (see Appendix 2)
 - In addition to assessing against these specific targets and indicators, an open question was asked using the “Most Significant Change” technique to identify what stakeholders judged the most significant result, positive or negative, to be. The question used was: *“In your opinion, what do you think has been the most significant change in terms of **developing sustainable businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago and improving livelihoods through enterprise development** due to the J.B. Fernandes Memorial Trust programme since it started?”*
- c. **Efficiency and effectiveness:** The extent to which activities have been executed as planned and have produced the desired outputs, as well as the extent to which they have been implemented with the optimal use of financial, human and technical resources and in a timely fashion, looking also at the suitability of project management arrangements.
- d. **Sustainability:** The extent to which the outcomes and outputs have been, and are likely to remain, sustained beyond the time frame of the project and its various activities, as well as the requirements for future activities that can help build such sustainability.

As part of the evaluation process, a workshop was held with representatives of the seven participating community groups at the Malabar Community Centre in October 2013. During this workshop, participants were introduced to the purpose of doing an evaluation and reviewed a draft Outcome Map developed by CANARI to specify desired changes in behaviour and relationships as a result of the project. Participants inputted into revision of this Outcome Map, which was then used during the final project evaluation exercise.

In addition to review of reports and brief interviews with participants, a final evaluation meeting was held on May 15th 2014 at the Malabar Community Centre with representatives of the seven community

groups chosen by the project. The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the programme from inception to its conclusion using an interactive approach with activities and open discussion.

The following activities were conducted as part of the evaluation meeting:

1. A group discussion was facilitated to assess the Most Significant Change by answering the question “In your opinion, what has been the most significant change in you and your group since participating in this programme.” This also involved each participant writing a story on their top change and most significant lesson. Participants then chose the story that resonated most with the entire group.
2. Completion of the “Indicators of behavioural changes” Outcome Map (see Table 3) to assess changes in behaviour and relationships (see Appendix 2). This includes 19 questions that gauge the changes which occurred that improve the group’s business.
3. A group discussion was held on “what worked well” and “top recommendations for CANARI.”
4. Each group completed an exercise to answer the question “If you had to get something to kick start the business or move it forward, what would it be? What would it take to move forward?”

Findings

Relevance

Rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago are in need of development; there are various methods through which this development can be achieved. Supporting community-based organisations to developing micro and small enterprises using the natural resources in the community is one method which in recent times has been used with successful results throughout the world. This involves both internal (members of the community) and external (government and other support agencies and the wider community) stakeholders. The development of businesses incorporates more than providing training in entrepreneurship skills, it is also important to focus on building capacities in visioning, taking risks, communication, self- motivation and empowerment. All of these are needed to run a successful enterprise, whether community-based or not.

The approach taken under this programme was relevant as it incorporated the views, needs and expectations of the internal stakeholders. These were identified through the time spent at inception in determining the rural communities’ suitability to participate in the programme and more so through spending the time to meet with the members of the community in the community to listen to their views before commencement of the programme. In this way, the capacity of the groups and its members were gauged and this allowed CANARI to plan its programme to ensure relevance to the needs of the communities.

Capacity building training was relevant as it incorporated the skills needed to start, run and grow a business. Addressing all of these stages of development is absolutely critical. In addition, meetings were designed to allow for building softer competencies such as communication skills, networking capacities and personal accountability.

Using a participatory approach coupled with different community groups coming together and at times with support agencies further broadened the capacity building exercise. This participatory approach purposely included both internal and external stakeholders. A range of support organisations from government, inter-governmental technical support agencies and civil society organisations were engaged in the programme. These included the Ministry of Community Development through its

Community Development Fund (CDF), the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board of Trinidad and Tobago, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Veni Apwann (a non-governmental organisation), which all played a part in making this programme a success. These organisations provided both technical and financial support in keeping with the project's objectives to forge greater ties and partnerships with support agencies.

Against this background, the project's intent and design appears entirely relevant.

Results

The programme has achieved all of the objectives set for each phase of work, except that there was limited promotion of community enterprises and collective marketing was not pursued due to lack of interest by the community groups. See Appendix 2 for detailed analysis of results achieved against objectives set.

Seven community groups in four rural communities participated and completed the programme. Each group identified the resources within their communities to be used to start, grow or develop a rural community-based business. Each group's main activity eventually included using resources originating in their community for their business. For example, in Brasso Seco where cocoa and coffee is in high supply, both groups incorporated these resources to further develop their business and community. From the inception of this programme to the conclusion, three community groups out of seven have actually been able to earn revenue from their community groups and resource business.

The project successfully catalysed and enhanced technical and financial support provided by support agencies. Support agencies were invited to meet with the community groups at a specifically designed forum and workshop. This workshop was intended for support agencies to link with the community groups and proved quite a success. From this, partnerships were formed with four groups being able to complete their business plan with the assistance of the support agencies. Technical training was offered by IICA, Veni Apwann and the Cocoa and Coffee Board. Financial support was obtained from the Ministry of Tourism and the Community Development Fund.

The small grant programme was instrumental in moving the community businesses forward towards being fully operational. Six community groups were given awards and signed contracts for a small grant issued under the programme, and were given three months to complete the activities (which was further extended by two months to allow for completion of activities). Through these small grants, AYDO was able to purchase tools to clear the cocoa field to be able to harvest a crop in 2013. The BFMLA was able to build a smokehouse to be able to smoke and sell processed fish to the community. SEMPR used its equipment to conduct a training session and a marine tour with children in the community while BSTAC used the computer and printer to design promotional material for its ecotourism business and to digitise its operations. Both BSMLFA and BAPA experienced challenges with access to their sites that prevented them starting their small businesses. Both purchased equipment that would be used later. The BSMLFA plans to rent the equipment to its members while access to land is being sorted out while BAPA will use the tools after the road is paved and there is electricity on the road.

Increasing the profile of community initiatives with policy makers has proven a challenge. This objective is still a work in progress with little tangible evidence to show that it has indeed increased.

Overall, the participants of the programme are increasingly more confident; more equipped to manage their businesses and have built and established networks which can assist in growing their enterprises and their communities. BSTAC is growing its business at steady pace with growth in sales of its coffee and cocoa products. AYDO has started doing eco-tours and the BSLFMA has bedded over five hundred and fifty cocoa seedlings and 100 tangerine seedlings for sale as at the end of May 2014. The other groups are not yet selling or providing any products but are in advanced stages of preparing to do so. BFMLA is nearing completion of its smokehouse, BAPA has also started planting agricultural produce and SEMPR has started marketing its eco-tours in Tobago. BEAT is the only group which has yet to make substantial moves towards starting or continuing its business enterprise based on the sustainable natural resource chosen.

The programme contributed to building essential softer skills for entrepreneurship. Of particular note were the responses of the participants on the softer skills developed, such as the ability to communicate easier and better, the importance of having a vision, the importance of building up one’s personal education especially as community group leaders.

The most significant changes included, the way in which the participants have changed the way they run or operate their business and communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

The programme contributed to changing behaviours and relationships. The results indicate that within the time of the programme, some groups have made some progress towards achieving the desired changes outlined in the Outcome Map, whilst others are still finding their way through the training materials and the community dynamics present when starting a community based business (see Appendix 2 for details). It is evident that all participating groups have identified and used natural resources from within their community to start and grow their businesses. Almost all groups have formed partnerships and worked with support agencies to assist them in achieving their goals. A number of technical trainings have been conducted with support agencies where members transferred the knowledge that was gained. Business plans have either been started or completed (apart from the BAPA group). However, for groups with business plans prepared, these were not being effectively used, were not being shared with others and were not completely understood. It was also clear that although all groups are registered as community based organisations, this is not a legal registration and few of them are not yet registered with the Ministry of Legal Affairs as either a Limited Company or a Not-for-Profit organisation. A detailed report of progress towards behaviour changes is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Outcome Map – reports on behaviour change

Indicators of behaviour change (progress markers):	Indicators	Reports of progress towards behaviour change
1. Individuals and groups within rural communities demonstrate strong leadership skills and organisational capacity including good financial management and strategies for growth and development.	Holding regular meetings Developing organisational management plans, including for financial management Conducting effective communication	Achieved by four groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEAT is having more regular meetings • BSTAC has a good management plan, which was drafted and finalised. This is being followed. It includes a financial plan that can be simplified for easier use. Communication skills have progressed resulting in more effective communication to the group and external agencies and parties. • BFMLFA meetings are now held with the persons who are present, rather than postponing the meetings when members are absent. The group now works with those

Indicators of behaviour change (progress markers):	Indicators	Reports of progress towards behaviour change
	with external audiences Participating in training and capacity building	who are present. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEMPR has started taking more opportunities to attend training and now has the ability to make tough decisions in the interest of the group.
2. Individuals and groups within rural communities communicate and share information on their business plan with other individuals and groups in their area in order to get feedback and buy-in.		Achieved by two groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEAT invited groups within the community to a strategic planning meeting to share the vision and the plan. • BSTAC members are part of other groups within the community so the vision is shared. Members are helping other organisations such as the Community Council to restart. Support agencies are being used to assist in working the business plan to move forward.
3. Individuals and groups within rural communities identify natural resources and their use for small businesses.		Achieved by all groups: All groups have identified and used natural resources for use of their small businesses. BSTAC with cocoa and coffee, the Blanchisseuse community with fish and seamoss, Aripo and SEMPR with eco tourism.
4. Individuals and groups within rural communities assess the feasibility of their businesses.		Partially achieved by only one group: The only group doing some sort of feasibility study is BSTAC.
5. Individuals and groups within rural communities collaborate on business and marketing plans for small businesses based on the use of natural resources.		Achieved by three groups: BEAT, BSTAC and BAPA all use natural resources and are communicating and sharing this throughout their communities.
6. Individuals and groups within rural communities negotiate with partners to get technical and financial support to establish and develop their small businesses.		Achieved by five groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEMPR worked with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), the Community Development Fund and CANARI for training, small grants and capacity building and technical support. • BFMLA partnered with the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute and CANARI. • BSTAC worked with Veni Apwann, CANARI, IICA, the Ministry of Tourism, FAO, and the Community Development Fund both for technical and capacity building training. • AYDO partners included CANARI, IICA, Veni Apwann and the Tourism Development Corporation. • BAPA's partners in accessing technical and financial support include IICA, CANARI, UNDP, Ministry of Agriculture. • BSMLFA worked with the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board of Trinidad and Tobago as well as IICA.
7. Individuals and groups within rural communities		Achieved by one group: BSTAC was able to secure funding from FAO to purchase equipment to automate their cocoa and

Indicators of behaviour change (progress markers):	Indicators	Reports of progress towards behaviour change
pursue opportunities to build capacity and obtain funding to establish and develop small businesses.		coffee processing facility allowing them to further develop what is already in operation.
8. Individuals and groups within rural communities preparing and submitting project proposals to financial agencies to receive support for resources needed to develop small businesses (e.g. material resources, staff, equipment)		Achieved by all but one of the groups: All groups have submitted a form of grant or proposal apart from SEMPR
9. Individuals and groups within rural communities register small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources.		Achieved by one group: The only group registered is BSTAC. Other groups have registered as Community Based Organisations with the relevant Ministries but legal registration has not been completed.
10. Individuals and groups within rural communities employ persons within communities and assign roles for persons in the small businesses.		Not achieved by any of the groups.
11. Individuals and groups within rural communities participating in training courses and receiving mentoring support in key areas of managing and working within small businesses.		All groups received mentors. Groups were assigned a mentor in between May and October 2013 and March 2014. One mentor has been trained in the FAO methodology for marketing businesses.
12. Individuals and groups within rural communities develop products and/ or services based on the sustainable use of natural resources and market them to their customers.		<p>Achieved by six groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSTAC has marketed and sold products and continues to do so. • BEAT is now in the early stages of choosing a product. • BSMLFA in May 2014 decided on the production and sale of exotic fruit, cocoa and citrus seedlings. • Both SEMPR and AYDO provide ecotourism tours. • BAPA has aquaculture and agriculture as their main areas of focus.
13. Individuals and groups within rural communities independently manage funds and negotiate the use of profits.		BSTAC is the only group successfully independently managing the use of its profits.
14. Individuals and groups within rural communities		Achieved by all groups: The networking meetings (which included all seven groups) promoted the sharing of ideas and

Indicators of behaviour change (progress markers):	Indicators	Reports of progress towards behaviour change
collaborate with each other to share lessons learnt and best practices within their communities and with other rural communities.		collaboration. Community groups are now assisting each other.
15. Individuals and groups within rural communities train and coach others to develop natural resources-based small businesses.		Achieved by one group: BSTAC has done this by training tour guides.
16. Individuals and groups within rural communities employ young people and empower them to become productive members of the community.		Four groups are focused on youth and youth development: BSTAC, AYDO, BEAT and BFMLA.
17. Individuals and groups within rural communities explore potential for business partnerships with others.		<p>Achieved by three groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BFMLA has partnered with BAPA to work together. They are both based in the same community. BAPA has started working with a national women’s fishing association. • SEMPR is in the process of developing an MOU with boat owners in the area to use their boats for reef tours. • BSMLFA is working with BSTAC for training, use of their facilities and other support.
18. Individuals and groups within rural communities collaborate on ideas to improve interaction with support agencies and develop joint communication products to improve the enabling environment.		Achieved by one group: BSTAC is training persons within the group, within the communities and within nearby communities in touring.
19. Individuals and groups within rural communities develop more products and expand to new businesses.		This is yet to happen but is a work in progress for BSTAC.

Most Significant Change stories chosen indicate a shift in thinking from dependency to independence and sustainability and the acceptance of responsibility of the group’s leaders for achieving the group’s goals and vision as some of the major changes that have occurred from the inception of the project to date and came from Arveon Debisette of BAPA and Winston Maraj of the BSMLFA.

Arveon Debisette represented BAPA at all of the training meetings held over the course of the programme. She has a big vision not just for the group but for the community as well. BAPA has a majority of women members. Studies have shown that women business owners and community groups face their own particular set of unique issues and challenges and BAPA is no different. The group aims to use aquaculture and agriculture to start and grow their community business. Since the start of the programme, the group has moved ahead with its vision by planting the relevant seedlings and doing the required technical training to start the aquaculture project. Arveon's top change is highlighted through her story (see Box 1).

Winston Maraj's group BSMLFA has gone through a number of changes since starting the programme. The representatives that initially started the training are no longer active in the group and with that change there has also been a shift in the overall vision of the group. As at May 2014, the group decided on a way forward and will pursue planting and sale of agricultural seedlings including exotic fruits, cocoa and citrus. These will be presented at a community meeting to be held on June 9th 2014. Winston's story is one of continuing to work with the community despite challenges (see Box 2).

Other stories of note include those by Evon Ramoo from AYDO on how he became a better leader during his time on the project and Carl Fitzjames from BSTAC which spoke of the importance of improving both the leaders' and members' capacities.

The top changes identified by participants at the evaluation meeting were:

- Improved my ability to talk to people
- Important to get mentors and to be aware of the vision and the value of resources

"You cannot successfully do community work without first understanding the community and its people"

The most significant change that I have accomplished is that I have learnt to do more self- searching whenever negative situations seem to be getting the best of me. Self searching was key in order to keep that balance between myself and my passion for helping others. I have learnt to put things into perspective only after fully examining the facts of the culture and tradition of my community and its people to successfully convince others to venture into new things in unity.

As an organisation, we have grown immensely because we have come to terms with the fact that not everyone shared in the ways in which we attempted to accomplish our vision. We have set one common ground and have agreed among the few of us that we shall work together with an aim to improve our livelihoods and by extension

Box 1: Arveon's self- searching journey

"Come what may I can't leave"

Beautiful, rustic, serene, spectacular, exorbitantly natural. These words fade into the low percentile when Paul thought of the village where the villagers existed. Exist because that is what it was. Governments over the years to retain political power, had infected the citizenry with charity and so destroyed their self of doing things for themselves, their initiative. Paul knew this very well so when the chance came to join the Farmer's group in his area he leapt at the chance. From there he knew he would change the dynamics of the village. Attendance at courses taught him lots of stuff, marketing, financial management and team building. Tough it was but he learnt. It was even tougher in the village as the people had almost lost their initiative. He wanted to leave the village group as not many of the villagers shared in his vision. One foot was out the door. And at the penultimate learning session the tutor casually remarked "you are leaders in your community; if you abandon your roles the community can come tumbling down." Almost nobody noticed the remark but not Paul, he suddenly felt scared, what would happen if the village was leaderless, what would the village look like 5-10 years from now? On his bed that night Paul said to himself, "Come what may I can't leave." He went to sleep happy.

Box 2: Winston's personal development

- I am now more assertive and able to make tough decisions
- It is now easier to communicate (via letters, etc.)
- Having a vision
- Group has changed focus now to entrepreneurship
- How to interact with members with humility and openness
- Stronger and knowledgeable leader- setting timelines for the organisation
- Focusing on personal education
- Personal dedication and commitment

Efficiency and effectiveness

The project has been generally effective and efficient. Detailed feedback from each group on what went well and suggestions for how the process could be improved are provided in Appendix 2.

The use of mentors in the second and third phases of the programme was effective. Mentors assisted the groups with completing business plans, guided the groups in finding new markets for their products through the use of produce markets (such as the Green market in Santa Cruz which is a weekly outdoor market selling organic goods). Additionally, the mentors assisted the groups in forging additional networks. The BFMLA have now met with another community group in Mayaro which specialises in smoked fish. Although mentors were used at various times throughout the phases of the project, it was felt that they could be more effectively if introduced at the earliest phase and used consistently throughout.

The format of an open, participatory approach to meetings and workshops held with all the community groups contributing to networking and forging ties among them. For example, AYDO conducts tours in Trinidad and SEMPR in Tobago and the two groups have discussed the sharing of tours through offering discounts and linkages for tourists wanting to visit both islands.

Another effective methodology used in the project was the community outreach meetings, which involved going to the communities to conduct trainings and meetings. Each meeting or workshop was held was rotated among each of the seven community groups to allow for all participants to network and showcase their communities. The participatory and informal settings allowed more active participation of community groups.

The small grants was used with great effect and allowed the participants to put into practice some of the theory on marketing and finance as they all had to account for their purchases and use of the funds. This also allowed some of the participants who were not in a position to start a business to get one step closer to that goal and those who had already started their business to move further along.

Exchange visits were seen by participants as excellent ways to learn, for the benefit of both visitors and hosts. Several such visits were successfully organised. Participants visited Nature Seekers Inc., a community group based in Matura in May 2014. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Operations Manager of Nature Seekers hosted the participants at their venue and was able to share experiences in successfully running a community based business, including the challenges and lessons learnt. This visit allowed participants to compare their progress, share their experiences and ask related questions. Participants felt that this was more effective than having community leaders come to a meeting at another location and present. During the second phase a meeting was held at the Asa Wright Nature

Centre, and though this was useful and impactful, participants indicated that when they visited Matura and were able to see the business on the visit, it was more realistic and meaningful for them.

Social media and the Internet were used to disseminate reports and information. Participants indicated that this sometimes proved inefficient as some of the communities have limited access to the Internet. The project and findings have been well documented with interim and final reports, photos, and videos - stories which can all be used by not just the participants but for similar projects in the future. Video recording of sessions for participants to share upon return to their community is an avenue which could have improved the effectiveness of disseminating information.

The major limitation of the programme was that the development of the “community sustainable livelihoods” brand which the groups indicated was not a viable option at present. The groups also believed that video reports of the sessions should be produced as these would be easier for others in the communities to understand and share.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the processes and programme will rely heavily on the integration and implementation of the learning and lessons by the participants into their communities and businesses. Based on the evaluation, the programme has indeed impacted positively on the both the members individually and their organisations and a foundation has been laid for sustainability.

In discussions at the final evaluation workshop, participants from the community groups felt that further training in financial management, marketing and leadership would help to continue to move businesses forward. Getting market survey information was also identified as needed. Members of two groups believed that the immediate next step to propel the business forward is the completion of an appropriate market survey. Only one group mentioned that they needed money to advertise its services, which was interesting as it indicates that groups now believe that although money is important they can function and move ahead with other resources in the interim.

Lessons and recommendations

The top lessons community participants identified that they learnt from their involvement in the programme were:

- Start with and use people and resources that are available
- Trust and communication are paramount for good leadership
- Having a few committed members is important; this is better than a large group of uncommitted members
- Learning to communicate properly (internally and externally) is essential
- How to “kick butt”
- Kick out non performing members and delegate activities
- We are leaders in the community
- Having a vision
- The importance of self sacrifice

Other lessons can be identified that can guide implementation of programmes seeking to influence policy and practice to support the development of rural livelihoods in Trinidad and Tobago based on the sustainable use of natural resources to contribute to poverty reduction and rural development. These are outlined below.

- i. ***Catalysing and supporting development of community enterprises takes time.*** From the inception of this programme to the conclusion, three community groups out of seven have been able to earn revenue from their community groups and resource business. Others are still in the process of strengthening their groups and businesses. There is a longer lead time between formulation of idea and formalisation of businesses for a community group due to factors such as the groups are voluntary, many of its members have full time jobs, the little financial compensation given and fear of failure.
- ii. ***One of the most important ways to ensure sustainability is in the initial stages when community groups and participants are chosen.*** The dynamics of the group and persons leading the group is critical. Community leaders need to have the right attitude, persistence, determination and willingness to make a difference. Additionally, the vision of the group must be absolutely clear so that it can be carried on irrespective of the leadership or group members.
- iii. ***For entrepreneurship development, building up the soft capacity skills of community leaders is of paramount importance.*** Building the capacities of the leaders of the community groups is essential. Communication and leadership skills assist members to reach out to not just other members within the community but to support agencies and to other communities.
- iv. ***Mentors play a critical role in guiding community groups.*** Mentors can act as accountability partners for the groups. An accountability partner is one who ensures that tasks assigned are completed on time and, if applicable, on budget. One to one facilitation by mentors who went to the communities was very valued by community members. Follow up by mentors for a specific period after the initial project is completed can be a method of maintaining sustainability and this can be incorporated into the project workplans and budgets.
- v. ***Community groups with limited access to the Internet do not access and share the programme reports, videos and other information available via social media as much as intended.*** Other means of communicating project information need to be found and one option is video recordings of meetings and training sessions.
- vi. ***Networking with other community groups allows for synergies and lessons to be shared.*** Members from different groups involved in the programme were able to share resources and lessons, particularly those from groups within the same community. Working in partnerships with other communities was also suggested.
- vii. ***Community groups can focus on using the committed members in the group*** rather than opening up the group to more members who are “just making up the numbers” and are uncommitted.

Conclusion

In evaluating the programme, aside from reports and brief interviews with its stakeholders, the evaluation meeting was also a useful exercise for both the participants and the facilitators. It allowed all to determine what worked well, top lessons learnt and how the programme can be enhanced and improved in a focused open environment. Community members were able to assess results achieved and in particular to reflect on their own learning and capacity built.

The evaluation demonstrated that the programme was highly relevant as it targeted specific needs of the communities which were assessed in the early stages of the project. Community members continued to be engaged in the programme as it evolved to address needs identified during the process.

The programme achieved the desired results outlined in the project objectives, and all groups made significant progress towards the development or strengthening of community enterprises. The evaluation found that almost all of the groups involved were able to use the natural resources available within their community to start, grow and develop their community enterprises in some way. From the inception of this programme to the conclusion, three community groups out of seven have been able to earn revenue from their community groups and resource business. Particular areas where significant results were achieved were in strengthening of community leaders, strengthening of community groups, and catalysing partnerships among community groups and with support agencies. The programme allowed the groups who participated the opportunity to build their capacity over the period and focus on improving their own leadership, communication and entrepreneurship skills and that of other members of the community. Groups were focused on ensuring that their business was not only up and running but also sustainable and an asset to their communities.

Entrepreneurship capacity was built and soft skills (such as leadership, confidence building, communication and articulating a vision) were ranked just as highly as entrepreneurship skills (namely finance, marketing and quality control). However, further support is still needed for the community enterprises to become independent. There is also still a need for the programme to focus on wider policy influence and engaging other community groups and other communities.

The processes used in the programme were found to be very effective. Community participants highly praised the participatory approach of having meetings and trainings within each community, and the use of site visits to other successful community-based operations within the country to meet, interact and hear of the challenges and lessons learnt. They felt that “CANARI used a grassroots approach.” Mentors played an important part in the growth and development of groups. It was very important to have a person who not only has the requisite skills but could ensure that tasks identified as critical for growth of the business have been undertaken. Training coupled with small grants also had an enormous effect in propelling the groups’ businesses forward and can be a methodology used in the future.

A good foundation has been built for sustainability of results but the participating groups mostly do not seem to yet be at the stage where they no longer require support. Key recommendations for continuation and improvement of the programme included: a request for more outreach into the communities incorporating the trainings and meetings; continuing mentorship; the introduction of computer training; and continuing the combination of small grants with the training. Participants requested continued mentoring and targeted capacity building to help them to develop strong and sustainable community enterprises.

Appendix 1: List of participants at the final evaluation workshop

NAME	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
Dexter Black	Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk and Marine Life Association	Lp#208 Paria Main Road Blanchisseuse	868 312 6814	dexblacks@yahoo.com
Treverlon Baptiste	Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk and Marine Life Association	Lp#208 Paria Main Road Blanchisseuse	868 322 6282	tbaptiste24@gmail.com
Evon Ramoo	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Heights of Aripo Via Arima	868 367 0688	
Janelle Martinez	Aripo Youth Development Organisation	Heights of Aripo Via Arima	868 376 9136	
Arveon Debisette	Blanchisseuse Aquaculture and Producers Association	Paria Main Road Blanchisseuse	868 769 4752/ 476 3096	arveondebisette2000@yahoo.com
Susan Suchit	Brasso Seco Morne LaCroix Farmers' Association	School Street Brasso Seco		
Winston Maraj	Brasso Seco Morne LaCroix Farmers' Association	School Street Brasso Seco	868 715 9039	
Francis Francois	Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee	Brasso Seco	868 759 6095	
Carl Fitzjames	Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee	Brasso Seco	868 493 4358	info@brassosecoparia.com
Rupert McKenna	Speyside Eco Marine Park Rangers	Windward Main Road, Speyside	868 762 2202	rupert.mckenna43@gmail.com
Joslyn Lee Quay	Blanchisseuse Environmental and Art Trust	Upper Village Blanchisseuse	868 374 7520	joslee_56@outlook.com
Ken Fournillier	Blanchisseuse Environmental and Art Trust	Upper Village Blanchisseuse	868 687 8039	kfour32@hotmail.com

Appendix 2: Feedback on effectiveness and efficiency

Community Groups	What would improve the programme?	What worked well
Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers Association (BSMLFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record all sessions using video and audio to take back to the community groups. • Include action plans as part of the group's deliverables • Include a course on computer literacy and apps • Facilitators should visit the communities more often • Akosua Edwards (assigned mentor) to stay with the group and continue training and mentorship • Have clarity among the group members • Set timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings in the community • One and one facilitation held within the community
Blanchisseuse Environmental Arts Trust (BEAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration of the project should be outlined and given at the outset; contact hours needed, topics to be covered at the start of the project • Print the documents and give to the representatives of the organisations • Video the sessions and put them on DVDs to share with the groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided good facilitators, some level of experience • Used a grassroots approach to the facilitation
Speyside Eco and Marine Park Rangers (SEMPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help delinquent groups. • Set timeframes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learnt how to be a stronger leader
Blanchisseuse Aquaculture and Producers Association (BAPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with each group before the start of the workshops so that they are aware of the importance of the workshops. This will help the other members to appreciate the effort it takes to have the representatives participate in their stead. [Pre-mobilisation in the communities before each workshop.] • Day-care facilities for participants with children. 	
Brasso Seco Tourism Action Committee (BSTAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the groups on a one-on-one basis during and after the training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing the appropriate representatives to the meetings • Offering themselves as trainers for nature tour-guiding in rural communities to other community groups • Networking with other rural community groups

		throughout the country.
Aripo Youth Development Organisation (AYDO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing much to improve on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped the groups to grow
Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk and Marine Life Association (BFMLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything was to our satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built the groups and enabled personal development • Workshops interactive, informative and easy to understand

Appendix 3: Results compared against objectives

Objectives	Results
<p>Phase 1: Improving livelihoods in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago by developing small business ideas based on the sustainable use of natural resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build the capacity of six rural communities to engage in strategic visioning and planning and the identification of revenue-generating activities based on the sustainable use of natural resources. • To catalyse and support the development of small and micro-enterprises, either run by individuals, community organisations, or collectives, in six communities. • To facilitate greater sharing of experiences and collaboration by six rural communities with other communities and stakeholders within Trinidad and Tobago and the islands of the Caribbean about how they can more effectively develop livelihoods based on the sustainable use of natural resources. • To empower six rural communities to better network with technical and financial support agencies and to advocate for enhanced support of their efforts for livelihood development. 	<p>Groups identified revenue generating activities based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Strategic visioning and planning is still a work in progress.</p> <p>Capacity building activities, technical and financial support were provided to all groups to achieve this milestone.</p> <p>Communities are now working together and sharing lessons, resources and expertise (in Blanchisseuse and Brasso Seco).</p> <p>Communities have forged partnerships with many NGOs and government agencies such as the Ministries of Food Production and Tourism, the Tobago House of Assembly, IICA, Veni Apwann and the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board of Trinidad and Tobago.</p>
<p>Phase 2: Making it happen: Developing sustainable small businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago (Phase II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance communication and partnerships between four rural communities and agencies that can provide funding and technical assistance through facilitation of a joint workshop focusing on communication, networking and building partnerships. • To support the start-up of small businesses based on the sustainable use of natural resources in four communities through providing mentoring, coaching and small grants. • To explore the idea of collective marketing by communities including via development of a “community sustainable livelihoods” brand. 	<p>Workshops were held in the communities with internal and external stakeholders making it easier for participants to communicate and work with these agencies in the future.</p> <p>Mentors were provided to all the groups; small grants were distributed to all but one group.</p> <p>Collective marketing was explored but not achieved as groups were not interested in pursuing this.</p>
<p>Phase 3: Making it happen: Developing sustainable businesses in rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago and improving livelihoods through enterprise development (Phase III)</p>	<p>All objectives were achieved.</p>

Objectives	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the capacity of seven rural communities to engage in strategic visioning and planning and the identification of revenue-generating activities based on the sustainable use of natural resources. • Catalyse and support the development of small and micro-enterprises, either run by individuals, community organisations, or collectives, in seven communities. • Facilitate greater sharing of experiences and collaboration by six rural communities with other communities and stakeholders within Trinidad and Tobago and the islands of the Caribbean about how they can more effectively develop livelihoods based on the sustainable use of natural resources. • Empower seven rural communities to better network with technical and financial support agencies and to advocate for enhanced support of their efforts for livelihood development. 	