



# Report on the SDGs Catalysts Network 8th Quarterly Meeting

*under the project*

## ***CSOs For Good Governance: Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago (CSOs4GoodGov)***



September 27, 2019

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, Barataria, Trinidad & Tobago

## 1 Introduction

This report presents the outcomes of the *SDGs Catalysts Network's* 8<sup>th</sup> Quarterly meeting held on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at Caribbean Natural Resources Institute's Office, Barataria, Trinidad. The report provides an overview of the participants, objectives and methods, and recounts the main activities of the CSOs4GoodGov project. The following key items were addressed in the meeting:

- progress reporting by component leads and opportunity for Catalysts to share on any key initiatives
- sharing latest news on government preparations for the Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2020 and engaging Catalysts in action planning for CSO engagement/contributions;
- a facilitated session to engage Catalysts in reviewing the project results to date (referencing the Year 2 annual report) against the project monitoring and evaluation framework developed with Catalysts

### Participants:

Thirteen (13) persons attended the meeting including participants from 11 SDGs Catalysts Network member organisations.

*See Appendix 1: List of participants.*

## 2 Meeting Objectives

The specific meeting objectives were:

1. To share latest CSOs4GoodGov progress reports and provide Catalysts with updates on key actions and activities for their participation and inputs
2. To update Catalysts on the T&T Voluntary National Report 2020 process and develop an action & implementation plan for CSO engagement/contributions
3. To facilitate participation of Catalysts in a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercise of the project and wider impacts
4. To provide opportunity for Catalysts sharing on key activities and opportunities

*See Appendix 2: Specific workshop agenda.*

## 3 Methodology

Component leads made short verbal presentations to share progress reports.

CANARI made short presentation to update on the status of preparation of the VNR and used plenary discussions to facilitate inputs by Catalysts in an action plan for engaging in this process.

CANARI also used a presentation referencing project results against the project log frame and the M&E framework, and engaged Catalysts in plenary discussions to review results to date.

## 4 Review of Key Sessions

This section covers review of main discussions and findings from each of the key meeting sessions.

### 4.1 CSOs4GoodGov Progress Reports & Updates

#### United Way TT

- A 6-month Pilot NPO Online Registration project will be launched that will implement recommendation 1 of the CSO Advocacy Paper: streamlining the registration of NPOs. Due to the release of the mandatory NPO Self-Assessment Questionnaire by the Attorney General's Office, this project will align with the questionnaire by

helping NPOs complete the questionnaire before the deadline of June 2020. One workshop was held September 26<sup>th</sup> (the report will be shared) another two will be held and will include NPOs registered with UWTT.

- All Small Grant projects are carded to end by December 2019 with a grace period to January 2020 for any deadline slippage. To date, 19 projects were awarded. Ten (10) of these have been completed, eight (8) are ongoing and one (1) was cancelled. Overall 10 CSOs benefited from small grants. There have been deadline delays in most of the projects. UWTT has been documenting lessons learnt and modifications have been made for each round of the Small Grant Facility.
- Small Grant awardees have been asked to provide submissions to the Knowledge Platform. CANARI and UWTT will potentially host a meeting with the project grantees to discuss communication products from the projects, at least to share results and achievements. CANARI will look at simplifying the form and a revised deadline for submissions.

### **Veni Apwann (VA):**

- VA recapped that the SHIFT Caribbean Leadership training was completed in May 2019 and VA also recently completed two Veni Partaje sessions: Fund Development and Succession Planning. 6 CSOs participated in the Veni Partaje sessions and the summary report is being completed.
- VA will continue to do monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building actions under the project, including participatory sessions with Catalysts at quarterly meetings.
- Update was shared that the Transformative Advocacy Action Learning Group<sup>1</sup> will host its first meeting in October 2019. The group will invite selected Catalysts members and other CSOs focused on advocacy to participate. The plan is to merge the Sexual Justice EU funded project resources with this initiative as that project has an advocacy action group. Products from the advocacy actions as well as reflections on the action learning process are expected to be uploaded onto the Knowledge Platform. Meetings are scheduled for October 2019, November 2019 and January 2020, with the project carded to end in February 2020.
- CSOs Alliance For Laws for All<sup>2</sup> has been operating with two committees - the Legal and Fiscal Working Group and Communication and Engagement Committee. Notably, CAISO, IGDS and ACSOTT were awarded a small grant for a coordinator of activities that works closely with The Legal and Reference Group. Brianna Pierre, the project coordinator, and J. Drayton have been meeting with the Attorney General's Office on the technical aspects of the NPO Act and strategies to reach NPOs. The Communication and Engagement Committee was taking a more proactive approach and looking at future advocacy. There were challenges given work on a volunteer basis and options for increasing efficiency and sustaining members' involvement are being explored.

### **CANARI**

- Knowledge Platform – CANARI recapped that a launch event was held in July 2019 for the Knowledge Platform with the support of the EU and the Ministry of Planning and Development. Actions were currently being undertaken to ramp up population of the platform; submissions were invited from Catalysts. Challenges with receiving submissions were noted and possible solutions discussed including holding specific information session with Catalysts, doing calls for more specific items e.g. call for photos, providing templates, direct invites to key persons share blogs
- CSO Advocacy Toolkit – CANARI was actively working on this now to develop an outline and product communication plan. CANARI will engage others including for inputs for case study boxes i.e. examples to illustrate key points/steps

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<sup>1</sup> a collaboration between Veni Apwann, UWI Institute for Gender & Development Studies & the Civil Society Hub for Innovation, Collaboration & Leadership (an initiative of CAISO & the Cropper Foundation)

<sup>2</sup> network of organizations was born out of the NPO 2019 Bill advocacy action

- VNR - The MoPD had previously indicated that the government led VNR stakeholder consultation was scheduled for September 2019 but this did not take place. CANARI wants to ensure the project is ready to input into the national Voluntary National Report (VNR) and will proceed to engage Catalysts accordingly (see 4.2 below)
- Other
  - CANARI shared news of their appointment of an SDGs Champion, Dr. Dessima Williams, who is a former Ambassador to the UN and currently on CANARI's board.
  - CANARI was co-leading a joint advocacy campaign on the Escazú Agreement, alongside the Cropper Foundation, EquiGov, and Environment Tobago. Catalysts were thanks for their endorsement of the campaign.
  - CANARI was contacted by the Ministry of Planning and Development about their Awareness Campaign – Vision 2030 Roadshow; this was flagged with Catalysts as possible opportunity for their participation, to highlight civil society contributions. The Ministry would be reaching out to CSOs

#### **4.2 Trinidad and Tobago Voluntary National Review (2020) – Updates & Action Planning**

- CANARI shared brief background information and recapped what was known on the Trinidad and Tobago VNR process i.e. the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD) had previously shared Trinidad and Tobago is one the countries that has been granted approval to present its VNR at the 2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), New York. SDG themes T&T will be presenting on at the VNR include SDGs 3,4,5,8,10, 13,16,17. At present, little other information had been made available, including on intended consultations with civil society. The consultant for the VNR process is identified but the activities may not be implemented until the next fiscal year (October 2019). The VNR is due in May 2020.
- CANARI recapped the idea discussed at the last quarterly meeting to prepare a civil society report/s along any or multiple of these themes.
- Based on agreement by Catalysts for doing a civil society report, proposal was made for:
  - CANARI to draft and share template for doing shadow reporting, for Catalysts inputs
  - Catalysts to indicate interest and/or commitment regarding SDG themes they want to work on.

Summary of interest/commitments noted in the meeting:

- CANARI commits to working on shadow report for SDG 13 climate action, including. convening their networks and working with other interested Catalysts for inputs
- ET and TTTI – interested in SDG 16
- VA/Network interested in SDGs 5, 10
- IAMovement-Talya – SDG 4, SDG 12 – not included by govt.

Confirmations and commitments welcome by others

N.B. Over mid-October-November, the intention is that Catalysts will use templates as a guide for capturing the needed info for the shadow reports on the various themes. This can include calling dedicated meetings to discuss, or more organic arrangements including drawing out info from engagements/activities already in stream/planned. The December quarterly meeting will be used to review and discuss all findings and come to consensus on any key overarching messages.

See copy of CANARI's supporting presentation for the session [here](#)

#### **4.3 Participatory monitoring and evaluation exercise (M&E)**

CANARI conducted a participatory monitoring and evaluation exercise with Catalysts focused on review of project results to date. Referencing the Year 2 annual report, Catalysts were facilitated to review results against the

project log frame and in relation to outcome statements made in the project M&E framework developed at the beginning of the project.

The presentation used to facilitate the discussion can be accessed [here](#)

During the review, Catalysts were able to draw out some examples and stories of how progress was being made or results were being achieved under the various project outcomes.

**Outcome 1.1 CSOs engaged in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the national agenda for SDGs as model for CSO engagement in development and policy processes**

- Catalysts aligning work to SDGs
  - United Way aligning small grants mechanisms to SDGs
  - YBTT aligning proposals with SDGs and SDGs links being made in projects e.g. Shell Livewire. Many proposals now require aligning activities with SDGs. Donors, banks and insurance companies are paying attention to SDGs linkages.
- Some progress was noted in catalysing other CSOs to recognise and align work to SDGs – groups Veni Apwann members engage with including on an individual basis, have been buying in and taking action to align with SDGs e.g. churches and women’s groups, Toastmasters
- The model of using a network of leading Catalysts to connect to many networks was thought to be effective in general e.g. for building awareness of opportunities and level of trust to be able to collaborate effectively. The foundation laid and relationships built under the Catalysts Network allowed for level of trust in CAISO during the NPO Bill advocacy campaign, where CSOs were comfortable with CAISO representing/speaking on their behalf.

**Outcome 2.1 Innovative approaches to civil society advocacy for strengthening Government transparency and accountability are developed and piloted in key areas, with potential for replication and scaling up.**

Collective advocacy / Partnerships for advocacy

- NPO Bill advocacy campaign 2019 - example of cross sectoral collaboration; the relationships built by the Catalysts was a major factor in the level of trust.
- Escazú advocacy campaign 2019 – focused on environmental advocacy but received support and endorsement from Catalysts and CSOs not traditionally focused on environmental issues. It was suggested that the opportunities for awareness/information sharing and collaboration provided by being part of the Catalysts Network contributed to this.
- The Agriculture Society of Trinidad and Tobago (ASTT) partnered with stakeholders from government and academia - WASA, the Agriculture Board, University of the West Indies etc. to implement a project relevant to water and climate change, involving introduction of hydroponic systems in schools. They were able to strengthen their advocacy in this area with the buy in and support from other partners.

**Outcome 3.1 Leading CSOs across sectors in T&T are individually stronger, more effectively networked and collaborating with each other, government and the private sector to advocate for and deliver sustainable development results under the SDGs.**

- The SHIFT Leadership training 2019 bore examples of CSO readiness to take on leadership roles e.g. by CYEN-TT. Post training, the CYEN-TT representative felt better able to mobilise members and help them understand their role.

- Catalysts generally felt that they were more organised and strategic about their work through their involvement in the SDGs Catalysts Network; they were aware of what others were doing, opportunities to work together, and could lean on other Catalysts for support.
- Collaborative advocacy around the NPO Bill 2019 helped build capacity of CSOs as practical aspects of advocacy and partnerships for advocacy came out

**Outcome 4.1 All CSOs in T&T benefit from a coherent legal, fiscal and funding framework that supports them to deliver and be accountable for results that contribute to national development and good governance.**

- The development of the CSO Advocacy paper was noted as an excellent opportunity to review the landscape, understand challenges for CSOs and make recommendations for improving governance and transparency. CSOs were able to use the findings to mobilise quickly and support collectively advocacy around the NPO Bill 2019.
- Formation of the CSO Alliance Laws for Us - seen as an opportunity for continued engagement with government on creating more enabling environment for CSOs to operate.

With respect to overall project management, it was noted that Component leads have been working collaboratively throughout the life of the project to ensure synergies. Information on the project was readily shared in meetings and via reports, and further facilitated via a Catalyst representative on the Project Steering Committee. The SDGs Knowledge Platform was now a major source of information on the project, and more so actions being taken by CSOs initially brought together by the project.

Catalysts agreed that there needed to be a mechanism beyond the project to allow continued awareness, collaboration and partnerships. Some ideas included identification of curators for the Knowledge Platform, identification and sharing of hashtags to maintain a collective identity, and sharing of list of social media sites to allow Catalysts to keep up to date with each other. Other medium/longer term options discussed include exploring possibilities for proposing further work, continuing voluntarily to have formal/informal face to face meetings e.g. brownbag sessions every 6 months, including with possible expansion of membership. Catalysts would continue to discuss ideas for project sustainability moving forward.

Overarching reflections by Catalysts on the results achieved by the project to date include that

- What Catalysts were able to capitalise on from networking is big! Collaboration was becoming very normal, and more comfortable.
- Demonstration of collective advocacy e.g. on NPO Bill 2019, has increased credibility as a sector, in the eyes of the government
- CSO readiness for advocacy is crucial; CSOs must continue to build capacity and expertise in their various areas, including through practical experiences, wide collaboration and consultation, knowledge sharing and research and documenting positions and recommendations, so as to be able to capitalise/leverage opportunities for engaging or advocating when they arise. For example, the CSO Advocacy paper meant CSOs were ready to input and have dialogue with government once the opportunity presented itself.
- Changes have definitely occurred at an individual level, but continued efforts are needed to fully enrol Catalysts at organisational level. Communicating the 'stories' of positive change and impact from the project is needed to help get others on board with the movement.

Overarching areas noted in the discussion for further strengthening include:

- Project governance - participatory approaches, communication effectiveness
- Effective strategies and tools for advocacy
- Communication on results and impacts (wider than project)
- Enrolling additional CSOs in aligning to SDGs (role of Catalysts)

- Sustainability – knowledge platform, additional funding

Due to time limitations, Catalysts were asked to follow up and respond to the following M&E question on most significant change:

***Looking back over the past two and a half years of the CSOs4GoodGov project, what do you think was the most significant change for you, your CSO or civil society in T&T because of the project?***

CANARI also encouraged Catalysts to record and share testimonials in other formats (e.g. written blurb, short video, quote) telling the stories of what impact the CSOs4GoodGov project has had.

Some results on the ‘most significant change’ shared by Catalysts can be accessed [here](#)

N.B. The final Agenda item i.e. sharing by Catalysts on current or upcoming activities and opportunities was unable to be held given time constraints. However, some of this content was covered in previous sessions.

## **5 Wrap up and next Steps for the SDGs Catalysts Network**

Wrap-up points, including next steps included:

- Reminders to participants that the meeting report would be shared.
- As per usual, project component leads will continue to seek synergies and coordinate across components as most effective and efficient way of utilising project resources and supporting Catalysts’ participation in project activities.

The next quarterly meeting of the SDGs Catalysts Network would be scheduled for **December 2019**.



## Appendix 1: List of participants

	Name	Organisation	Email
1.	Kristen Francis	United Way Trinidad & Tobago (UWTT)	<a href="mailto:kfrancis@uwtt.com">kfrancis@uwtt.com</a>
2	Candice Ramkissoon	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)	<a href="mailto:candice@canari.org">candice@canari.org</a>
3	Nicole Leotaud	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)	<a href="mailto:nicole@canari.org">nicole@canari.org</a>
4	Colleen Davis	Veni Apwann (VA)	<a href="mailto:daviscolleen99@gmail.com">daviscolleen99@gmail.com</a>
5	Sandra Pyke-Anthony	Veni Apwann (VA)	<a href="mailto:sandrapykeanthony@ymail.com">sandrapykeanthony@ymail.com</a>
6	Bertrand Bikharry	Environment Tobago (ET)	<a href="mailto:bertrand@bhikarry.net">bertrand@bhikarry.net</a>
7	Mohamed Hallim	Agricultural Society of Trinidad & Tobago	<a href="mailto:mohamedhallim@hotmail.com">mohamedhallim@hotmail.com</a>
8	Angel Grant	Caribbean Youth Environment Network: Trinidad & Tobago (CYEN-TT)	<a href="mailto:cyen.tt.chapter@gmail.com">cyen.tt.chapter@gmail.com</a> , <a href="mailto:j.angelgrant@gmail.com">j.angelgrant@gmail.com</a>
9	Talya Mohammed	IAMovement	<a href="mailto:talya.mohammed.6@gmail.com">talya.mohammed.6@gmail.com</a> , <a href="mailto:tm.vetiverrtt@gmail.com">tm.vetiverrtt@gmail.com</a>
10	Valerie Remy	SERVOL	<a href="mailto:marketingservoltt2@yahoo.com">marketingservoltt2@yahoo.com</a>
11	Martin Farrell	Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute	<a href="mailto:martin.farrell@transparency.org.tt">martin.farrell@transparency.org.tt</a>
12	Shedron Collins	Youth Business Trinidad & Tobago	<a href="mailto:entrepreneur@ybtt.org">entrepreneur@ybtt.org</a>
13	Jacquie Burgess	Network of NGOs of Trinidad & Tobago for the Advancement Of Women	<a href="mailto:jacques123_98@yahoo.com">jacques123_98@yahoo.com</a>



## Appendix 2: Meeting Agenda



### **SDGs Catalysts Network 8<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting**

under the project

**CSOs For Good Governance:** Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago (CSOs4GoodGov)

CANARI Conference Room

September 27, 2019

9:00am – 12:30pm

#### Meeting Objectives:

5. To share latest CSOs4GoodGov progress reports and provide Catalysts with updates on key actions and activities for their participation and inputs
6. To update Catalysts on the T&T Voluntary National Report 2020 process and develop an action & implementation plan for CSO engagement/contributions
7. To facilitate participation of Catalysts in a monitoring and evaluation exercise of the project and wider impacts
8. To provide opportunity for Catalysts sharing on key activities and opportunities

#### **AGENDA**

<b>8:30am</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
9:00am	<b>Welcome and session overview</b>	CANARI
9:05am	<b>CSOs4GoodGov Progress Reports &amp; Updates</b>	Project Component leads - UWTT - VA - CANARI
9:45am	<b>T&amp;T Voluntary National Report 2020</b> - Update on actions by Ministry of Planning & Development - Working session to develop an action & implementation plan for CSO engagement/contributions	CANARI
11:00am	<b>Participatory monitoring and evaluation exercise</b>	CANARI
12:00pm	<b>Sharing by Catalysts</b> - Sharing on current or upcoming activities and opportunities	SDGs Catalysts Network Members
12:15pm	Recap of meeting and next steps Session evaluation Wrap up and close	CANARI