

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

The SDGs Catalysts Network at a glance



What is the SDGs Catalyst Network?

Under the [CSOs4GoodGov](#) project, the SDGs Catalysts Network was conceptualised as the mechanism to support civil society organisations (CSOs) to effectively participate and engage in implementation of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) in T&T, in partnership with Government and other stakeholders.

The SDGs Catalysts Network is an informal network of 20-25 leading CSOs working across sectors in T&T to address the full range of development priorities encompassed by the 17 SDGs (e.g. environment, poverty, inequality, gender, youth, health, education, social and community development, culture and heritage etc.), with some CSOs working across several goals.

In essence, CSO members of the Network act as Catalysts to engage other CSOs and CSO networks in their respective sectors, as well as to promote and support civil society engagement with government, private sector and other development actors. The resulting 'network of networks' enables broad-based, cross-sectoral collaboration among civil society and with their partners for development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs and more inclusive national development in T&T.

Who are the Catalysts?

[Members](#) of the Network include the seven CSOs4GoodGov project co-applicants¹, as well as other community-based organisations and national and sectoral CSOs and CSO networks. Four main criteria define Catalysts - they are CSOs that

- ▶ Are credible and respected in their sector by fellow CSOs and government
- ▶ Possess capacity to engage
- ▶ Demonstrate ability and willingness to work with other CSOs, including in other sectors
- ▶ Are willing to engage in advocacy

Catalysts are discovered through a collective process designed under the CSOs4GoodGov project, to identify an initial manageable sized group of strong CSOs who can then further engage and support wider civil society

The objectives of the SDGs Catalyst Network are in the following areas:

▶ ADVOCACY

Develop collective civil society positions and facilitate and promote joint advocacy to influence sectoral and national policy for implementation of the SDGs

▶ ACTION

Mobilise and encourage civil society action for implementation the SDGs and support reporting on civil society contribution to delivery of SDGs

▶ PARTNERSHIPS

Improve capacities for more effective partnerships among CSOs and between civil society and government and other development partners

▶ PARTICIPATION

Ensure effective civil society engagement in the prescribed national coordination mechanism for the SDGs being led by the Government

¹ Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Environment Tobago (ET), Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, United Way Trinidad and Tobago (UWTT), University of the West Indies-Institute for Gender and Development Studies (UWI-IGDS), Veni Apwann (VA), Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD)

“Not without us!”

Why is this work important? Given the scope and ambition of the SDGs, and despite the recognition that governments alone cannot achieve the agenda set out, civil society is in danger of being only marginally engaged and there is wide consensus that unless civil society actively informs and mobilises itself and builds capacity to engage in national SDGs processes, participation will be weak and meaningless.

The overall **purpose** of the SDGs Catalyst Network therefore is to foster collaboration and strengthen participation of CSOs in the national development process Trinidad and Tobago focusing specifically on the SDGs. The **primary role** of the Network will be to ensure

- ▶ the consultative process determining the national priorities within the SDGs framework is inclusive and transparent
- ▶ government is held accountable for its commitments and actions to deliver the SDGs and
- ▶ civil society is formally recognized and actively participates in decision making

Changing the narrative

How will the SDGs Catalysts Network engage?

Members of the SDGs Catalysts Network are guided by a [Terms of Reference](#) and act together to achieve the purpose by:

- ▶ Participating in meetings of the Network
- ▶ Participating in CSOs4GoodGov project activities (e.g. national consultation workshop, joint advocacy campaign, technical working groups, SDGs knowledge & advocacy platform etc.) as needed and as far as feasible to support role in coordinating and fostering collaboration of CSOs
- ▶ Participating in the Advocacy Action (Small Grants) Facility under the CSOs4GoodGov project including review, advice on and submission of joint proposals
- ▶ Convening meetings of CSOs and CSO networks in their sector and organising into thematic clusters to discuss and act on specific issues
- ▶ Participating in sectoral and national meetings, the SDGs national coordination mechanism and other processes led by Government, inter-governmental agencies and other development actors



The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) functions as the secretariat and acts as convener of the Network and provides technical support to support its operation

Desired outcome and impacts

The **desired outcome** is that CSOs are engaged in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the national agenda for SDGs, as model for CSO engagement in development and policy processes.

Impacts: It is anticipated that establishment of the *Network* will strengthen participation and overall impact of CSOs in the national SDGs process by presenting a united voice, increasing visibility of CSO contributions and highlighting and reinforcing their tripartite role as implementers, advocates and watchdogs.

Not only will the formation of the *Network* help better define the size and reach of the sector and help normalise the practice of including civil society in development and policy processes, the learning from this experience will provide a useful model and foundation for other CSO networks in T&T as they continue their engagement on other national and sectoral development issues.

For more information please contact Candice Ramkissoon, Technical Officer, CANARI at (868) 626-6062 or candice@canari.org