

RELEASE

1st Quarterly Meeting of the SDGs Catalysts Network in Trinidad & Tobago: Laying the ground work for civil society engagement in national development

Port of Spain, January 22, 2017 - Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) continues to lay the groundwork for supporting national development and implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the hosting of 1st Quarterly Meeting of the SDGs Catalysts Network in December 2017, under the European Union-funded project 'CSOs for Good Governance: Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago' (CSOsForGoodGov).



Members of the SDGs Catalysts Network reconnect at the 1st Quarterly Meeting in December 2017.

Following the official launch in September 2017, the first Quarterly meeting of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* was held on December 07, 2017 at the UWI-SALISES Conference Room, St. Augustine, Trinidad. Convened under the *CSOsForGoodGov* project, this network has to date brought together 23 leading CSOs working across various sectors to catalyse action and amplify civil society voice on the SDGs through knowledge sharing, strategic partnerships and collective advocacy.

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) facilitated the half-day meeting in collaboration with project consortium members, Veni Apwann (VA) and United Way TT (UWTT). The aim of the meeting was to continue to lay the groundwork for effective civil society engagement and participation in national governance and development processes, in particular, implementation of the SDGs in Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was also an opportunity for *Catalysts* to continue to connect and find synergies and prospects for strengthening relationships.

The meeting focused on two areas – ***CSO capacity building*** and ***participatory monitoring & evaluation (PM&E)***, which were recognised as critical grounding activities to ensure strengthening of CSOs so that civil society could be seen as a credible contributor in the wider national sphere. The results of CSO capacity building needs assessments coordinated by VA were shared and priority areas for peer exchange and mentoring were identified and discussed. *Catalysts* were very interested in improvements in the areas of strategic planning, financial management, strengthening human resources and effective communications and advocacy. As part of the recognised need for capacity building, *Catalysts* were also engaged in brainstorming and peer exchange for



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identifying and sharing productivity tools and ideas for improving internal communications. In addition, CANARI introduced *Catalysts* to participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) concepts and presented a draft PM&E framework for the project for inputs. *Catalysts* were eager to incorporate and begin to use the combined approach to monitoring and evaluation which included the log frame, outcome mapping and most significant change methods. Notably, a small team of interested participants agreed to form a sub-committee to work with CANARI on refining the draft PM&E framework for the project.

Overall, *Catalysts* expressed satisfaction at having gained a greater sense of how they will work together and continued to commend the value of the collaborative approach and acknowledge the necessity of networking among civil society in T&T.

Next major steps for the *SDGs Catalysts Network* include planning for a national workshop to distil a collective civil society position on the SDGs in T&T, including priorities for the national SDGs agenda. At this workshop *Catalysts* will also begin working on a **CSO Advocacy Strategy** to help guide clear advocacy actions.

Under the *CSOsForGoodGov* project, CANARI along with the project consortium will continue to work together with *Catalysts* and other government, private sector and civil society actors over the next 2-3 years to ensure civil society can make meaningful contributions and has a greater voice in development issues in T&T.

Quote

“The content of the meeting was quite relevant to my organisation’s current direction...change is needed in how CSOs impact the government and the content from today is helping us take the first steps in achieving this” –
Participant sharing thoughts at 1st Quarterly meeting of the SDGs Catalysts Network

About the project: The [CSOsForGoodGov](#) project is spearheaded by a consortium of seven¹ leading civil society organisations (CSOs) in Trinidad and Tobago. The main objective of the project is enhancing civil society’s contribution to governance and development processes in T&T and specifically, to support the effective involvement of CSOs in national implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the heart of the effort to do this, the project consortium convened and officially launched the SDGs Catalysts Network in September 2017. CANARI is serving as convenor and coordinating activities of the Network under the CSOsForGoodGov project.

About CANARI: The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional, technical, non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 20 years. Our mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing natural resources critical to development. Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships. For more info on CANARI see www.canari.org

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