



Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project:

A local green-blue enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago 2019

CASE STUDY #3: Local Green-Blue Enterprises in the Caribbean

This case study reflects findings of a process using CANARI's **Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar**¹. This is a tool to help local community small and micro-enterprises assess how they are delivering 'triple-bottom line' benefits (economic, environmental and social) and good governance, and what are possible areas for improvement. A focus group session is facilitated with members of the enterprise and they are asked to assess how they think that the business is doing based on a set of indicators. Each indicator is discussed, and members agree on a ranking for each. The ranking for each indicator is placed on a spider diagram, which visually represents a snapshot of how the enterprise is delivering benefits. The rich discussion helps members of the enterprise work together to assess how they are doing and areas where they want to grow.

Introduction to the enterprise

The Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) is a community-based environmental conservation non-profit organisation located in the Fondes Amandes watershed of St. Ann's valley in Trinidad's Northern Range, not far from the capital city of Port of Spain. It was founded in 1982 by local

farmers to fight dry-season fires that had been ravaging the Northern Range on an annual basis. Preventing forest fires, reforesting degraded hillsides and protecting the area's biodiversity through sustainable community forestry are its main goals.



The view of Port of Spain from the hills of Fondes Amandes, St. Ann's where FACRP is based. PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.

Every year, FACRP has become known for its annual dry-season Gayap (a word meaning "a helping hand given by friends and neighbours for a common purpose"), where staff, community members and volunteers come together to plant trees and prepare the land to withstand fires in the Fondes Amandes watershed while also raising awareness on environmental conservation and forest fire prevention.

¹ See here for more information on the Local Green-Blue Enterprises Radar and CANARI's work:
<http://www.canari.org/programmes/issue-programmes/green-economy>

Through its decades of work, FACRP has successfully transformed the Fondes Amandes watershed from a denuded hillside to a forested and healthy ecosystem when fruit trees and flowering plants grow, and wildlife return every year (including owls, snakes, agouti and even ocelots). The system of fire traces and the community action plan that FACRP has developed and implemented over the years continue to protect the watershed from annual bushfires.

On average, 120 to 140 people live in the community, many of them from the 10 or so families that call Fondes Amandes home. FACRP is appropriately named, as 90% of its workforce are from Fondes Amandes and the greater St Ann's area while its supervisors all reside in Fondes Amandes. Local employees have a deep appreciation of the impact forest fires can have on their community and why it is important to both reduce these and to reforest affected areas for the benefit of the plants, animals and fellow human beings who are their neighbours. Those not employed by FACRP tend to work in Port of Spain and environs in a variety of jobs, depending on their skill sets.

FACRP uses a variety of methods – from workshops to educational tours and entertainment – to educate the population on the importance of forest fire prevention and reforestation while generating a sustainable source of income for its members and local artisans. In addition to its work in forest fire prevention and suppression, the FACRP provides several revenue generating services including tours, workshops, venue rental, catering and beauty products made from natural materials grown in Fondes Amandes.

FACRP has earned recognition across the Caribbean as a model of sustainable community forestry. The organisation has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Trinidad and Tobago Humming Bird Gold Medal Award in 2007 for its continued work in community development.



A forest fire along Dundonald Hill on the western part of Trinidad's Northern Range in March 2016. PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.



Primary school students learning about forest fire prevention and biodiversity protection techniques during a tour of FACRP. PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.

Economic benefits of the enterprise

FACRP provides full-time and part-time employment to 29 Fondes Amandes residents through its various programmes. This creates greater buy-in from locals on the importance of forest and biodiversity protection while providing a reliable source of income that does not require residents to travel far for work.



Akilah's Jewelry earrings on display at the organisation's office in Fondes Amandes, St Ann's. PHOTO BY CANARI

FACRP members agree that the organisation is very good at sharing benefits because whenever a surplus is made, that money is used to improve employees' livelihoods and strengthen the enterprise. FACRP also facilitates members promoting their own ventures, such as Akilah's Jewelry – a separate, for-profit business – owned and operated by co-founder, Akilah Jaramogi.

However, building financial sustainability is a priority for the organisation since it usually only breaks even on its projects and activities.

school tours; leisure tourism such as tea and bread making classes; venue rental of its compound; hikes to the ridge top; culture nights featuring drumming, Ital food (practiced by Rastafarians), reggae music and live entertainment; and hosting field research tours with international universities. The first university field research tour was held in 2016 and is an activity that FACRP members agreed should be expanded. This will help the organisation to generate steady income as well as build its reputation as a community forestry leader in the Caribbean.

Tours are also one of FACRP's most popular and revenue-generating activities. The organisation is working with advertising agencies and tour operators to better promote its tours, to generate a more reliable income and increase the surplus generated from these activities. Wanting to do their part to help the environment and promote sustainable employment, the agencies and operators have agreed to provide their services at minimal or no charge.

FACRP has also received grant funding from government and corporate entities for specific projects and activities. In 2010 the FACRP was one of the first grantees of Trinidad and Tobago's Green Fund, the national environmental fund, for a reforestation project. However, project funding is not continuous, and the organisation needs to develop different revenue streams to ensure that its operations do not cease.

FACRP members agreed that knowing which activities earn the most money is key to the organisation's long-term financial sustainability. FACRP hopes to move from consolidating all revenue into one account

from which expenses are paid to managing each revenue stream (e.g. product or service and the associated vendors) separately. This way, FACRP can quickly and easily determine which activities need revamping to ensure better financial performance.

Environmental benefits of the enterprise

FACRP is committed to natural resource management and ensures that its operations do not pollute the soil, water courses or air while also conserving biodiversity of the Northern Range.

FACRP also utilises good water conservation and water reuse practices since the St. Ann's area experiences annual water deficits.

Some members believed that the organisation's energy use should be more efficient. This is because use of solar power has so far been limited by problems in finding a suitable location for solar panels that would not require trimming or cutting down trees. The organisation continues to look for a solution and hopes to have a regular supply of solar power in the medium term.



A woodpecker in the forest on the FACRP compound in Fondes Amandes. PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.

Social benefits of the enterprise

The organisation strongly supports buying local goods and services from the community and uses local businesses whenever it needs to outsource a product or service, such as catering or extra chairs.

FACRP members agree that the organisation strives to ensure decent work since it provides jobs and on-the-job training to residents who might otherwise struggle to find steady work because of their low level of formal education. Despite this, FACRP members agreed that the organisation needs to provide more opportunities for marginalised people. A challenge is that limited resources often prevents the organisation from providing more jobs to residents or training opportunities to staff.

FACRP has continued to build partnerships with academia, private sector, government agencies and other civil society organisations over the years to support their primary aims of biodiversity conservation and forest fire prevention. FACRP also emphasises environmental education and has partnered with several schools - from primary schools to tertiary institutions such as the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) - to serve as a resource for outdoor, hands-on learning on environmental conservation.



FACRP co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Akilah Jaramogi, addressing secondary school students during their visit to FACRP.
PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.

FACRP has since it has regular education campaigns about its goals of preventing forest fires, reforesting degraded hillsides and protecting Fondes Amandes – and the country’s – biodiversity through sustainable community forestry. It also holds training sessions for other communities, groups and at public events, to help educate people about why what it does is important and how they, too, can play a role. The organisation also takes part in public forums and has booths at major events such as Emancipation Day and Carnival, where a mix of educational material and jewellery are on display. FACRP members noted that members to these booths are often drawn by the handmade jewellery or crafts and end up leaving with not only a gift but with a greater appreciation of the importance of forest fire prevention.

Governance of the enterprise



Kemba Jaramogi, Technical Director of FACRP, speaking during a function at FACRP. PHOTO COURTESY FACRP.

FACRP identified governance as an area where improvement was needed. It ranked itself very well on building a common vision and engaging stakeholders. However, FACRP noted that there was room for improvement on shared ownership of knowledge and shared decision-making because at the time of FACRP’s Radar session in 2017, its board needed restructuring – not everyone was able to devote enough time to meet and therefore to provide proper oversight. Another reason for the lower ratings on these two aspects of governance was high staff turnover. FACRP’s was unable to match the salaries offered elsewhere so was unable to attract certain types of staff or to keep them for extended periods. FACRP identified that being able to pay staff more would help to retain more of them for longer periods. As previously mentioned, this is one reason why the organisation is putting things in place to earn more surplus from its activities.

FACRP members noted that sharing knowledge with its stakeholders and the public is a priority for the organisation. Starting in late 2017, the organisation increased its activity on its Facebook and Instagram pages, which resulted in more users of these social media platforms becoming aware of

FACRP's work and how they too can get involved. For example, posters with "Dos" and "Don'ts" on forest fires proved popular with many social media users who shared the information with their friends. Through its website and some social media posts, FACRP has documented knowledge gained through its experiences in executing projects. However, not everything is formally documented and whenever there is a change in staff, it takes time to rebuild that institutional knowledge.

Some members suggested there was room to improve on how the organisation captures and shares institutional knowledge because while some methods of doing things are formally documented, most knowledge transfer is usually via oral instruction, demonstration and practical sessions. FACRP co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Akilah Jaramogi, holds weekly meetings with staff to discuss and plan the work agenda for the following week and upcoming events/seasons. This includes developing advocacy initiatives and tools, firefighting plans, reforestation plans and tourism packages. FACRP intends to document as much of its methods and thinking as possible in manuals, so that no matter how new someone is, they can easily find out how things are to be done.

A bright future ahead

FACRP is an example of a successful local green-blue enterprise, using its profile to educate others on sustainable use of the environment while providing jobs to community members through its forest fire prevention and biodiversity protection activities.

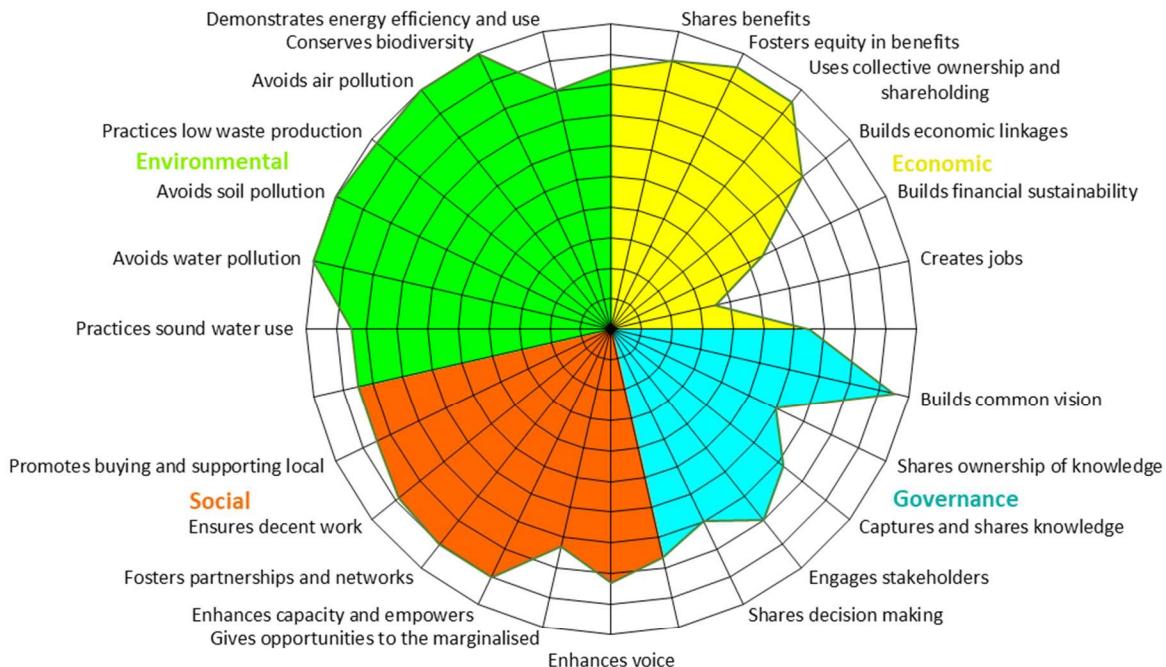
The organisation identified a few key areas for action to help strengthen its delivery of economic, environmental and social co-benefits and good governance, including:

- doing more frequent website updates, including tips on reducing carbon footprints;
- enhancing income-generating activities to better sustain operations year-round and improve income security for staff;
- reducing its reliance on fossil fuel-generated electricity through installation and use of solar panels;
- setting mandated dates for board meetings to improve operational oversight.

"The radar got us talking about how well we're doing as a green-blue enterprise. Doing a self-assessment as an organisation activity and having a visual representation of the results is very helpful. We could quite easily identify our strengths and areas for improvement simply by looking at the Radar." – Kemba Jaramogi, Technical Director of FACRP

FACRP is an organisation committed to continued growth and development. Shortly after doing the Radar exercise FACRP made some changes that helped to addresses these priorities. Later in 2017, FACRP restructured its board, with new members added who had the requisite time and experience to actively engage in fulfilling their duties. FACRP also reviewed and updated the legal requirements of its board, as well as amended its constitution because these had been identified as areas in need of strengthening in its Strategic Plan 2014-2019. FACRP is part of an inclusive, green and resilient economy where the local community is benefitting from multiple income-generating streams based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Realising that financial sustainability is key for the organisation, it is constantly looking for new opportunities and assessing markets and consumer demands. This drives development and refinement of products and services that are financially viable but help the organisation to fulfil its commitment to environmental education and forest protection through community forestry.

Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project Radar



The Radar for FACRP, developed by members of the enterprise based on their self-assessment in November 2017. This shows how members ranked the enterprise as being very strong in delivering environmental and social benefits. They identified opportunities for growth in funding, use of solar panels and more consistent documentation of institutional knowledge.

Contact information

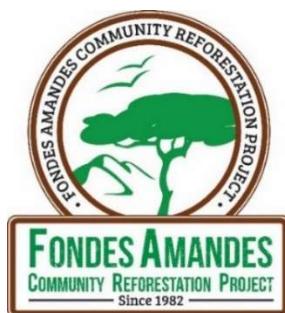
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