Empowering civil society through ICTs for advocacy

Port of Spain, October 15, 2025 – Since September, a diverse group of civil society actors including community organisations, youth advocates and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been taking part in a dynamic information and communication technologies (ICTs) training series led by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and implementation partner Environment Tobago under the EnviroRightsTT project. This project, scheduled for completion in November 2026, seeks to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and community members to advocate for and support vulnerable groups in accessing environmental information, participating in decision-making, and seeking justice.

Through this workshop series, participants are learning how to combine storytelling and digital tools to advocate for transparency, accountability and the right to a healthy environment - principles at the heart of the Escazú Agreement and reflected in the EnviroRightsTT project. During a series of interactive virtual sessions led by communications and digital marketing specialist Dizanne Billy, participants have explored how ICTs such as GIS mapping, drone imagery and digital media can make their advocacy more evidence-based and impactful.

Early sessions introduced the fundamentals of ICTs for advocacy and storytelling, with facilitators guiding participants to identify environmental issues they wished to spotlight. Guest speaker and senior career journalist Sunity Maharaj encouraged participants to think critically about how narrative can drive social change. Subsequent sessions enhanced participants' storytelling abilities through problem-tree analysis, stakeholder mapping, and multimedia integration. Award-winning international multimedia journalist Kayla Young provided expert guidance on framing and narrative structure, while Ryan Bachoo, author, journalist, and editor at Guardian Media, offered professional feedback on story drafts and shared valuable insights on ethical and multimedia storytelling.

The training emphasises participation and peer learning, each session building on the last, with participants refining their own advocacy stories while supporting one another through group discussions and feedback. The approach recognises that effective environmental advocacy depends not just on technical knowledge, but also on authentic, people-centred storytelling grounded in lived experience.

Earlier this week, participants gathered in person at CANARI's regional headquarters for the first time to bring the stories developed in earlier sessions to life. The in-person meeting offered a space to share work, build connections and explore strategies for amplifying their environmental justice messages through media and social platforms.

EnvirorightsTT ICT training participants at the in-person session. Credit: CANARI.

The training will continue in the coming months with sessions on citizen journalism, digital storytelling and GIS mapping, guiding participants to translate their stories into advocacy campaigns and policy engagement.

As part of the wider EnviroRightsTT project, this capacity-building effort is helping to ensure that civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is equipped not only to tell powerful stories, but also to use them to influence decision-making and secure justice for people and the planet.

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About CANARI: The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit institute which has been working across the Caribbean islands for more than 30 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean. Our work focuses on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Equity and Justice, Participatory Governance and Resilience. For more information, visit: http://www.canari.org/.

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