

THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Trinidad and Tobago Newsletter, September 2018



WELCOME!

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another edition of the GEF SGP Trinidad and Tobago Newsletter. The last few months have been quite eventful and rewarding and we are excited to share our work with you! In March 2018 our National Steering Committee Term 2018-2020 was appointed; 4 new projects were approved for funding, 6 capacity building workshops were conducted, the IWECO Quarry Rehabilitation project was nationally launched, and we celebrated World Environment Day with SGP grantee, the Bridge Foundation.

In June 2018 at the 6th GEF Assembly in Vietnam, the SGP Global Family held a reception to celebrate the Programme's 25th Anniversary with civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities as global environmental stewards worldwide. Over 250 participants attended the reception including presidents and ministers, GEF council members, CSO partners, SGP grantee partners, and indigenous peoples.

So we invite you to read more about these stories, and be inspired by the work of our grantee-partners working towards achieving environmental sustainability in this newsletter!

About the GEF SGP:

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) is a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1992. SGP grant making in over 125 countries promotes community-based innovation, capacity development, and empowerment through sustainable development projects of local civil society organisations with special considerations for women, youth and indigenous peoples. SGP has supported over 20,000 community-based projects in biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, prevention of land degradation, protection of international waters, and reduction of the impact of chemicals, while generating sustainable livelihoods.



Cleaning Up Castara

by Castara Tourism Development Association

Situated on Tobago's Caribbean coast, the village of Castara is blessed with an abundance of prime natural resources such as rainforests, rivers, reefs and open seas as well as the aesthetic beauty of the our village. For this reason, Castara receives hundreds of tourists every year who crave its tropical beauty and rich cultural heritage. The livelihoods and wellbeing of the Castara community largely depend on the health of these natural resources, as many persons are directly engaged in fishing and eco-tourism.

However, these resources are under severe stress due to indiscriminate littering, high use of 'single-use plastics' and greywater outflow over recent years. This has contributed to declining aesthetics throughout the community, and a can tarnish Castara's image as a community-based eco-tourism destination.

For many years the Castara Tourism Development Association (CTDA) discussed these problems with their community and visitors alike. Their GEF SGP funded project 'Community Based Solid and Liquid Waste Reduction Project in Castara, Tobago' was designed to address these challenges. This project aims to link conservation efforts with eco-entrepreneurship at the community level.



The project activities aim to: substitute 10,000 Styrofoam food containers with compostable containers, substitute at least 40,000 plastic shopping bags with durable reusable bags, substitute 1,000 gallons of harmful detergents with more environmentally friendly detergents and make these eco-friendly products available to the community of Castara at their 'CTDA Sustainability Shop'. To commemorate World Environment and Ocean's Day 2018 the CTDA partnered with the THA and other Tobago NGOs to promote 'No Styrofoam Day'. In August, the CTDA hosted a 2-week summer camp for primary and secondary school children in the village. This was an inspiring success as now over 20 children have become the eco-guardians of this small village. The children produced decorative banners and art work that will be featured at the Sustainability Shop and on the reusable bags. Up next in September, the CTDA will host a series of community one day of lectures, beach, river, and reef excursions regarding waste management, engaging 40 persons in Castara, and 20 tourism operators on how to reduce their environmental footprint. Councillor Kwesi Des Vignes, Secretary of the THA Division of Infrastructure, Quarries and the Environment has expressed his support for this project and commended the CTDA for their progressive work as a village towards keeping Tobago 'Clean, Green and Serene.'



Welldon Mapp of ERIC (right) distributing eco-friendly containers to food vendors

A Rock Solid Future for Quarries

by Hanan Lachmansingh, SGP Volunteer

The Valencia region of North Eastern Trinidad is currently a scar-studded landscape. These visual scars from quarrying damage reveal negative environmental impacts on the biodiversity and eco-systems, such as dust pollution, and degradation of freshwater and forest habitats.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to effects of land degradation, pollution, biodiversity and ecosystem losses and climate change. This is due in part to our small size, fragile economies, heavy dependence on external resources, and rising populations. In T&T, unplanned and unregulated development has resulted in stressed aquifers, degraded forests and watersheds, decreased water quality and loss of habitats for our local wildlife.

The GEF UNEP IWECO regional project (Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States) was designed to address some of these challenges by implementing an integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems services management. In Trinidad the National IWECO project aims to develop restoration and reforestation plans for abandoned areas within operational quarries in North East Trinidad. The GEF Small Grant Programme will be implementing the community and sustainable livelihoods components of the IWECO project.



Quarry rehab site

The promotion of innovative solutions to reduce land degradation caused by quarrying began with the official launch of GEF IWECO National Project on May 20th, 2018 – the United Way National Day of Caring. In the presence of representatives from the Environmental Management Authority, National Quarries, and the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, over 300 volunteers from National Quarries and the non-profit organizations IAMovement, United Way Trinidad and Tobago, and the Trust for Sustainable Livelihoods engaged in tree planting, composting, mulching, and the preparation and planting of Vetiver grass.

Over the last 10 months the SGP has been working closely with Trust for Sustainable Livelihoods and IAMovement to design community projects that will sustainably achieve the IWECO objectives, and the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals; and on July 10th the NSC officially approved these 2 projects.



Key national stakeholders and partners at project launch



SGP project activities will include training of community members in forest, agriculture and soil stabilization techniques, these trained 'community champions' will then be engaged in quarry rehabilitation by reforesting abandoned areas of selected quarry sites. Nurseries will also be set up to supply the project with a continuous supply of tree and grass species; community members will also participate in handicraft workshops using vetiver grass, leaves and roots. The entire project will also be documented and a short film produced. The local communities are the front-line beneficiaries of the interventions to be implemented under the project, and community empowerment and establishment of viable livelihood opportunities are core pillars for the GEF SGP.



Sustain T&T at the GEF Assembly, Da Nang, Vietnam – June 2018

by Carver Bacchus, Director, Sustain T&T

After applying for support to attend the GEF Assembly as a funded participant I was surprised and, naturally, very pleased to have been notified of my selection in May, 2018. I've always wanted to attend a UN Environment conference and visit South-East Asia, so both happening at once was incredible for me.

I arrived in Vietnam on a bright and very hot morning in June and immediately saw Da Nang as a city on the move, in a country with one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Long held as the provincial step sister to hip Hanoi and the administrative centre of Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang has become a booming city and popular tourist destination for Vietnamese and international travellers alike. The city is growing quickly with high rise hotels popping up and apartments and restaurants keeping pace. Da Nang is no longer the ugly step sister but one with her own charm and beauty.

A quick walk on the beach front and a meal of Ban Xeo (crispy, savoury Vietnamese pancakes) was all I could muster that first day before succumbing to jet lag. The next morning the GEF CSO Network planning sessions began, in preparation for the main Assembly.

The Assembly itself was impeccably planned. Over 2000 representatives from governments, development agencies and CSO's from around the world descended on Da Nang needing to be housed, transported, fed and engaged in meaningful work. This was no small feat for the organizing committee and the government of Vietnam. All participants were thoroughly impressed at the level of logistical coordination apparent throughout the assembly.





As a CSO representative I participated in the CSO forum, jointly organized by the GEF CSO Network, the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Small Grants Programme, The GEF Indigenous Advisory Group with the support of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This forum brought together over 120 representatives of civil society organizations and indigenous peoples groups from 55 countries. Under the overall objective

Partnerships for Transformative Change: Civil Society's Contribution to Transforming Systems to Safeguard the Future of Our planet, the Forum showcased best practices and new approaches for CSO involvement in GEF processes and focal areas. I, along with 17 other CSO reps, was invited to present a 60-second Pitch and participate in a 'Story Harvesting' session. In my brief pitch I spoke of the challenges environmental advocates face in T&T, especially with a public that has not prioritized positive environmental behaviours. Environmental information is the medicine that we need, but do not enjoy. I proposed that Sustain T&T's focus on producing innovative events and film products was the sugar needed to help the medicine go down. Sweeter more thoughtful tactics would lead to more meaningful engagement.

The Assembly also presented several round tables that caught my attention including those on **Sustainable Cities** and **Innovation in Clean Energy**. By 2050 two-thirds of the world population will be living in cities. If not properly managed, sprawling urban areas will actually exacerbate climate change, land degradation, air and water pollution. As it stands now over 1.2 billion people worldwide still cannot access electricity and 2.8 billion are struggling with indoor air pollution due to burning biomass, kerosene and coal for cooking. These roundtables brought together government ministers, private sector leaders and UN representatives to present and explore new pathways to cleaner cities powered by renewable energy.

Near the end of the Assembly the CSO Network was given the opportunity to make a statement on the assembly floor. This statement was, in language and intent, a **Call for Action** and several recommendations were made to strengthen the implementation of GEF-7.

We recommended the following:

- 1. The implementation of the new Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Equality Policies as soon as possible.*
- 2. GEF to make better use of the skills and knowledge of CSOs in environmental stewardship and also invest further in strengthening the mechanisms and capacity of CSOs in recipient countries to engage effectively in the implementation and monitoring of GEF processes and projects.*
- 3. The establishment of multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms to build more trust and collaborative approaches to address environmental issues and GEF-related issues.*
- 4. GEF Agencies and Operational Focal Points to facilitate greater engagement of CSOs in medium and full-size GEF projects.*
- 5. GEF to further support the GEF CSO Network in: contributing to achievement of the GEF 7 targets; enhancing the engagement of civil society at national, regional and global levels and to implement the Network's revised Strategic Plan 2018-2022.*
- 6. GEF to fully commit to the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Principles and Guidelines by: establishing an outreach and capacity building programme, enhancing operations of the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG); establishing a dedicated financial mechanism for indigenous peoples; as well as recognizing the rights of these peoples to participate and to be consulted.*

Vietnam is opening its arms to the world after years of looking inward and, it seems, struggling with a vision for the country not coloured by conflict. The people of Vietnam are very resilient and appear to be embracing this new age with vigour. But, even these hopeful times are tempered by the reality of environmental challenges. Vietnam is still quite lush and green but, like many developing economies around the world, the country grapples with managing its natural resources alongside industrial interests often responsible for driving the economy forward. Rapid development, coupled with deforestation, lack of vehicle emissions standards, poor urban planning and the ubiquitous gasoline powered motorbikes, have made air quality a major concern in Vietnam. Most motorcycle riders wear masks to mitigate the air pollution impacts.

All our countries face individual challenges but the GEF Assembly showed me that we do not have to face the future alone. Through shared knowledge and resources, all our nations, small, large, developed, developing, stand a chance at a sustainable future.

Sustain T&T was the recipient of 2 GEF SGP grants focused on environmental education and climate change awareness.

Sunbeam Foundation - A Ray of Hope

by Rhea King-Julian, Director, The Sunbeam Foundation



The Sunbeam Foundation (SbF) is extremely grateful to the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) capacity building workshop team: Ms. Rissa Edoe, Ms. Melanie Richards and Ms. Rudo Udika for their guidance and support as they journeyed with us from the project conceptualization phase through to manifestation of the 'Food Production in Motion' project.

The GEF SGP team's combined transformative power not only nourished the project in its foundation caterpillar phase paving the way forward via imparting their knowledge on the use logic-based tools such as the problem and solution trees, but also through tailored elaboration on ways to formulate and meaningfully address objectives and action plans. Effortlessly, the GEF SGP also brought 'humanness' to their endeavours, affording the SbF supportive heart-centered qualities, such as empathy and kindness when the time had come for the project to build its weight, purpose and alignment with national goals.

With determination, and sheer will the GEF SGP team continued to hold the SbF's hand even during the reflective pupal stages of the full proposal's drafting process, with patience and meticulous discipline; providing encouragement when the path to completion seemed uncertain, slow, and tedious.

Now, after nearly a year of gestation, the Food Production in Motion has emerged into a butterfly, not only beautiful in its concept, but also one that has been tended to with so much care by the GEF SGP team, that into its own wings have been infused the qualities of those from whom it sought nourishment. It has become strong and confident in its mission, driven and ready to take its place in the world.

Capacity Building of CSOs and GEF SGP grantees remains a core pillar of the Programme. Over the last few years the office has significantly increased the number of outreach sessions and the diversity of trainings offered. The SGP believes that investing time and energy in developing well thought out and designed project is key to success, and this can significantly help to reduce risks and challenges during implementation. These sessions also help the SGP office and the NSC gain a better understanding of the community groups and the problems to be addressed, enabling us to provide the best guidance early on in project design.

Commonwealth Honours Vetiver System in T&T

by Rudo Udika, SGP Programme Assistant

Jonathan Barcant of IAMovement emerged the winner of the Caribbean and the Americas Regional Award for Excellence in Development, at the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2018. The T&T national stated that he was “extremely humbled to have been selected for the regional award, especially having met some of the other finalists from Jamaica, Guyana and Canada and having seen the excellent work they are all leading in their particular fields.”



Jonathan Barcant (far left) with other award recipients

The Commonwealth Youth Awards recognise outstanding young people aged 15-29 whose innovative projects have had a significant impact on their communities. Jonathan received the award for his work in T&T towards building climate change resilience through adaptation, and towards reducing the damage caused by climate change.

Jonathan notes that “climate change is an issue which is finally getting much needed front burner attention in the Caribbean and the world, largely because of record breaking weather conditions.” He further stated that he is “grateful that the Commonwealth recognized the value of what we are doing in Trinidad & Tobago.”

Jonathan was recognised for his work with Vetiver TT and the Vetiver system, while leading IAMovement, an NGO he cofounded in T&T. According to Jonathan, “the Vetiver System is a unique, cost-effective bio-engineering tool for solving many land and water related challenges. This is because of its deep penetrating root system which can extend to ten feet deep in the first two years, and many other characteristics which allow it to stabilise land, prevent erosion, slow down runoff and promote groundwater recharge.”

From 2016-2017, Jonathan worked with the Paramin Development Committee to implement the Vetiver Education & Empowerment Project (VEEP) in Paramin with funding from the GEF SGP. A total of 25,000 plants were installed on 15 properties and over 50 individuals were educated in various uses of the Vetiver System. Additionally, “House of Vetiver” was also launched as a handicraft component of the project.

Congratulations Jonathan on this significant achievement!

Len Shines a Light for Turtle Conservation

by Rudo Udika, SGP Programme Assistant



Turtle conservationist and chairman of the Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association, Len Peters, has been named the 1st Commonwealth Points of Light Award Recipient in 2018. Len was recognised by Queen Elizabeth II and named as the recipient of the award in honour of his exceptional voluntary service protecting endangered turtle species in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Points of Light award is a special series of awards recognising inspiring volunteers from the 52 countries of the Commonwealth. The Queen— as Head of the Commonwealth has recognised and thanked these inspirational volunteers from across the 52 Commonwealth nations for the difference they are making in their communities and beyond. Through their commendable acts of volunteering these individuals help to inspire others to make their own contribution to tackling some of the greatest social challenges of our time.

Len and his team from the Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association protect about 20,000 turtle nests each year. Thanks to his educational work with local communities and regular patrols of the beaches, Len has contributed to Trinidad and Tobago being one of the densest leatherback turtle nesting beaches in the world.

Len, on receiving the award, is quoted as saying that he was honoured to receive the prize on behalf of the dedicated members of his organisation. He added that the award recognises many years of dedicated voluntary service performed by him and the members of his community in protecting the environment and creating sustainable livelihoods. Len said he hopes that his acceptance of the award would, in some small way inspire others to see the value of voluntary service.

In an interview with the British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, Tim Stew MBE, Len commended the late Mr. Richard Laydoo (1st GEF SGP National Coordinator) and the GEF SGP for supporting the Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association and other NGOs in the field of turtle conservation in T&T.

We are proud of you Len!

Beating Plastic Pollution with MEEPTT

Human influence has become a critical factor in the increasing amount of debris found in the marine environment. Statistics for T&T revealed that over 25,000 pounds of garbage was collected in 2016 for the International Coastal Clean-up. This is disturbing for a small country of approximately 1.3 million citizens. Unless we act now, our seas will be filled with the leftovers of human consumption. That's why, in 2018 the CNIRD (Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development) embarked on the Marine Environment Education Programme (MEEPTT) with funding from the GEF SGP. The MEEPTT project is also leveraging support from like-minded project partners such as Caribbean Bottlers Limited, the Institute of Marine Affairs, the European Union, the British High Commission, the Ministry of Planning and Development and SWMCOL.

MEEPTT focuses on generating awareness and engagement of citizens, government, private sector and civil society in combating T&T's marine pollution problem. The project also inspires national marine litter public awareness activities through monthly beach clean-up events with school children. This approach ensures the sustainability of the results by using multiple entry points, working at the systemic, institutional and individual capacity levels to generate motivations for behavioural change towards marine conservation. The CNIRD aims to transform standards, practices and policies within T&T to reduce marine debris pollution across our beaches, coastlines and waterways.



MEEPTT commemorates WED and World Oceans Day 2018 with the EU T&T Delegation

World Environment Day 2018 highlighted this pollution problem with the theme ‘Beat Plastic Pollution’. This theme is a call to action and invites us all to consider how we can make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution on our natural environment, our wildlife – and our own health. The CNIRD and the MEEPTT project is certainly playing a significant role in beating plastic pollution in T&T.

Simple Steps - If You Can't Reuse It, Refuse It

- Bring your own re-usable shopping bags to the supermarket
- Pressure food suppliers to use non-plastic and non- Styrofoam packaging
- Refuse plastic cutlery
- Pick up any plastic you see the next time you go for a walk on the beach
- Swap out single use plastic water bottles for reusable metal ones
- Pack your lunch and snacks in reusable containers
- When catering events at your workplace, ask suppliers to use compostable packaging

MEEPTT ACTIVITY REPORT JANUARY-JUNE 2018

The project aim is to increase awareness, facilitate dialogue and promote co-responsibility for the sustainable management of marine litter in T&T.



THIS PROGRAMME IS THE 1ST ONE OF ITS KIND IN T&T!

We not only **raise awareness of marine pollution** but conduct **regular beach cleanups** to reduce litter across T&T.



We are funded by **GEF SGP UNDP**

a programme that provides technical and financial support to projects that conserve and restore the environment, while enhancing people's well-being and livelihood.

Over **7,000** Pieces of Trash Collected by Students and over **25,000** Collected by MEEPTT Volunteers

Over **5,000** PLASTIC BOTTLES sent for recycling

AWARENESS OF MARINE LITTER raised with **183** school students.

#BEATPLASTIC POLLUTION
2,312 lbs of plastic removed during cleanups

VOLUNTEERS RECORDED
Data on specially designed Data cards that record every piece of trash picked up during our cleanups!



We are the **first organisation** gathering consistent **DATA** on Marine Debris within T&T!!

2,168 VOLUNTEERS collecting data since JANUARY 2018.

#BetterThanThat

We coordinate the **International Coastal Cleanup** in T&T! The worlds largest data driven volunteer event to removing marine debris in our oceans.



Meet Our New National Steering Committee

This March the UNDP Resident Representative appointed the new GEF SGP National Steering Committee (NSC) for the Term 2018- 2020, chaired by Ms. Terry Ince. All SGP country programmes have a voluntary National Steering Committee, comprised of a majority of civil society organizations, as well as representatives of the government, UNDP, the academia, research institutions, the private sector and the media.

The NSC's primary role is to provide overall strategic guidance and direction to the country programme, and to contribute to the development and implementation of strategies for country programme sustainability. The NSC also helps develop the SGP Country Programme Strategy (CPS), considers whether proposals for grants are feasible and meet SGP criteria, and what kind of technical support is needed for implementation. It is also responsible for the final approval of grants, undertaking monitoring and evaluation visits to the projects, providing advice, mobilizing resources, building partnerships and support for the GEF SGP and its grantees, and promoting SGP at the national and international levels.

We are very happy to have the following individuals and organisations on the NSC, as they all bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the GEF SGP.

Name	Organisation/Position
1. Terry Ince	NSC Chairperson and Gender Focal Point
2. Dennis Sammy	CSO Representative
3. Rianna Gonzales	CSO Representative, Youth Focal Point
4. Cindy-Ann Currency & Nia Nanan	Digicel Foundation, Social Inclusion Focal Point
5. Hayden Romano & Candice Clarence	Environmental Management Authority, IWECO Focal Point, GEF Operational Focal Point
6. Wendy Nelson & Kahlil Hassanali	Institute of Marine Affairs
7. Lindford Beckles	Tobago House of Assembly
8. Candace Leung Woo Gabriel	Ministry of Planning and Development
9. Sharifa Ali-Abdullah	UNDP, Assistant Resident Representative

World Environment Day With The Bridge Foundation

by Anthea McLaughlin, CEO, Bridge Foundation

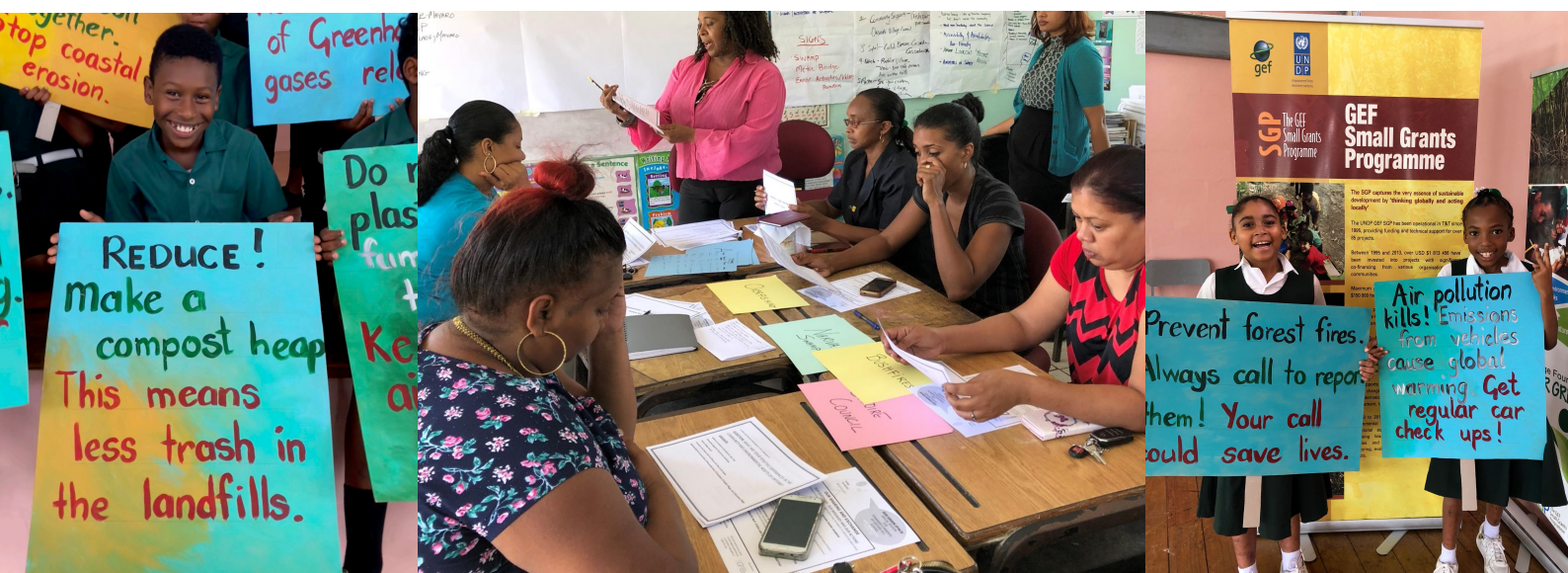
On July 6th, 2018 the Bridge Foundation with the parents of Guayaguayare R.C. and Ortoire R.C. Schools hosted a World Environment Day Event in Guayaguayare at to celebrate the work of their GEF SGP funded project - 'Read 2 Rise Green Space'.

The Read 2 Rise Green Space project is an innovative environmental education initiative for primary schools in rural South East Trinidad. The Project works with the youngsters and their parents to share environmental experiences and to identify community environmental assets. Parents, teachers and students are also collaborating to design environmental projects based on the culture and traditions of these rural communities.

The R2R event included a theatrical production showcasing the transition from historical indigenous values in harmony with nature and the shift towards unsustainable development. The production included performances by the St. Francois Girls Theatre group, led by Serran Clarke. The event was hosted by locally accomplished spoken word artist, Zakiya Gill, and also included specially invited guests from the Ministry of Education, Mayaro Parliamentary Constituency Office and GEF SGP.

During the special WED commemorative event, Mr. Ian Puntai, School Supervisor 1 of Mayaro and Guayaguayare communities, indicated his appreciation that environmental awareness has been taught through theatrical advocacy, creative writing and interactive projects.

Principal Wiseman of Guayaguayare R.C. Schools shared his commitment to continue R2R Green Space initiatives within his school to promote environmental sustainability practices within the classroom. He shared that R2R creative strategies have already led to improved literacy among the school population, and a successful 'reduce, reuse and recycle' school programme.



SGP The GEF
Small Grants
Programme

25
YEARS

**THANK
YOU!**

**COMMUNITY ACTION
GLOBAL IMPACT**



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Designed & Edited by Rissa Edo, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Trinidad & Tobago

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