

GEF SGP Trinidad and Tobago

Issue 1 (Jan-Mar 2020)

Welcome to Trinbago Talk!

The latest news on GEF SGP in sweet T&T



National Steering Committee Chair, Ms. Terry Ince is captured taking a photo of the pledge signed by the Castara Tourism Development Association.

This quarterly newsletter intends to share with you information on grantees, project activities and achievements. Join with us as we explore the hard work of the grantees and the positive contributions they have been making towards making this country a better place. In these uncertain times, we all need some good news! Enjoy!

THIS QUARTER'S TOP STORIES

Castara EcoSustainability Shop is open!

Trinidad and Tobago Bridge Initiative (TTBI) Environmental Empowerment Programme

Sunbeam Foundation's Community Garden

Capacity building in project development and grant writing offered to NGOs

Castara's EcoSustainability Shop is now open!

The village of Castara is a small village located on the leeward coast of Tobago, on the hills above the sea. Castara's touristic popularity is a boon but also its bane, as visitors support the community's economy but also put pressure on its natural environment.



Wanting to preserve the village and its surroundings and to reduce the marine pollution generated from its tourism trade, Castara Village in 2018 developed a community project to reduce their solid and liquid waste impacts on the environment.

In February 2019, fifteen (15) guesthouse owners signed a pledge solidifying the commitment of their guesthouses, managers, staff and guests to engage in voluntary, environmentally-friendly practices to reduce pollution from styrofoam, plastics, and harmful detergents in Castara.

On 4 August 2019, history was made in Trinidad and Tobago with the opening of the country's first Sustainability Shop in Castara. This shop was established to provide a reliable supply of eco-friendly products to replace styrofoam and plastic bags for hotel supplies, as well as eco-friendly disinfectant and laundry detergent. The cleaning chemicals are actually produced in Castara, using natural products which break down easily and reduce environmental pollution.

The Castara Eco-Sustainability Shop subsequently gifted most food businesses on the island with samples of their products. As of September 2019, the Castara Eco-Sustainability Shop had distributed 7231 food containers, 8535 bio-degradable bags and 20 gallons of eco-friendly detergent to their community and customers.



Castara's efforts make them one of the first green community enterprises in the country. The Castara Tourism Development Association (CTDA) successfully rallied the community's support, raised its environmental consciousness, and translated this awareness into passion, drive and action. These achievements have been recognised in the

“Community Spirit Award” from the Office of the Prime Minister (Tobago Affairs), Central Administrative Services Tobago.

Communities like Castara are very important because they highlight two important lessons for Trinidad and Tobago. First, they show how communities that work together can implement positive changes to the benefit of all members. Second, they prove that communities can conduct businesses that support sustainable livelihoods, without having harmful impacts on their environment. This project is an important lesson for other local communities in achieving community objectives in a holistic and coordinated manner.

Trinidad and Tobago Bridge Initiative (TTBI) Environmental Empowerment Programme

In October 2019, TTBI partnered with GEF SGP to host the annual Knowledge Fair at their NEW FIRE Festival. As the premiere environmental festival in the country, with a focus on changing consumption patterns and encouraging proper waste behaviour, NEW FIRE was the perfect venue to facilitate exchange amongst environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs).



TTBI’s vision is to be a leading nexus for sustainable development within the region by empowering communities. As such, they included in their proposal, four eco-enterprise skills building workshops, which they referred to collectively as their Environmental Empowerment Programme. This programme provided members of the public the opportunity to develop skills which would allow them to develop a sustainable livelihood, using natural or recyclable materials. The four workshops offered were:

- 1. Upcycled Craft:** In this workshop, participants were taught how to use household items and waste, such as old cans and toilet paper rolls, to make creative and useful artistic pieces, such as plant pots and vases.
- 2. Pallet Furniture:** Participants were also taught how to turn wooden pallets, which are usually discarded, into useful furniture pieces. After a two-day session, participants took with them with tool cabinets, wine racks, tool boxes and folding chairs, as well as the new skill of converting pallets into useful products.

- 3. Introduction to Composting:** In this third installation, they were taught how to turn food scraps into compost, which could be sold or used at home to keep a healthy, chemical-free home garden.
- 4. Business Development Workshop:** In this final session, participants were introduced to the steps needed to turn their new skills into a sustainable business venture.

The four workshops were oversubscribed and thoroughly enjoyed by all attendees. Feedback from most of the participants was very positive with many stating that they never realised many of the things they throw away can be converted into useful products.



Top Left, going clockwise: participants in the upcycling, pallet, business development and composting workshops. (Pictures taken from TTBI Facebook page; Photography done by RLiveTT Productions.)

Sunbeam Foundation's Community Garden



The Sunbeam Foundation won a grant from the GEF SGP to develop four (4) climate-smart, urban community gardens in Arima. The first garden was developed in Malabar Phase 4, and community members and school children from schools within the area, all contributed towards the development of the first garden.

As part of their project, they provided the community with eight (8) agriculture training sessions during the weekends. These were:

- Vermicomposting
- Nursery
- Hydroponic
- Aquaponic
- Grow box/bag/medicinal plants/ repellants
- Emotional/ Mental and Physical wellness
- Art enrichment/ Business Coaching
- Green market

Each session involved a theoretical session and a practical session, which allowed participants to practice what they were learning. During the week, children from schools within the area were also invited to learn about the garden as well as actively contribute to the garden's development. The first garden was officially opened on the 7th March at the Malabar Phase 4 Community Centre with a completed hydroponic system, an aquaponics system, grow boxes and growbags, all populated with medicinal plants and common vegetables, such as tomatoes and lettuce.

Sunbeam Foundation's first garden earned considerable praise locally. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) applauded the organisation for their work in community gardens. The organisation was also featured on local television stations and the report is available at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1897359383729334>.

The boxes were also beautifully decorated by the community members and children, thereby further adding to the aesthetics of the gardens.

The Sunbeam Foundation has three more gardens to implement and we look forward, with excitement, to the further development of community food and spirit within the Arima area.



Top Left, going clockwise: Pictures of the Sunbeam Foundation Community Garden in Malabar Phase 4. (Pictures taken from The Sunbeam Foundation Facebook page)

Capacity building in project development and grant writing offered to NGOs

The National Coordinator (NC) for the GEF SGP has been working very closely with non-profit organisations (NGOs) to develop their skills in project development and proposal writing. Many NGOs are actively pursuing impactful projects which bring benefits to their community and environment. However, many of these organisations lack the capacity to develop project ideas clearly or package them successfully in order to win financial support.

With this in mind, NC Dr. Sharda Mahabir took the training on the road, from the mountains of Brasso Seco to the sloping hills of Moruga. Over the period of September 2019 to February 2020, the NC worked closely with ten (10) NGOs, of which three (3) were grassroots organisations. Not all of these organisations were able to receive financial support from the GEF SGP but all appreciated learning how to do so.

The GEF SGP is committed to the development of the country's environmental and community-based NGOs and will continue to provide training and capacity building opportunities, to benefit communities across the country.



Top: Members of the Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers Association participating in project development and grant writing workshop. (Photo courtesy Winston Maraj)



The National Coordinator of the GEF SGP has many roles including working closely with CSOs and CBOs in preparation of project concepts and proposals to ensure alignment with national objectives; overseeing ongoing SGP grant projects; and documenting programme/project stories, lessons learned, and best practices in SGP programme/project development, implementation, and oversight. This quarterly newsletter serves to document the work of the programme in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in terms of sharing the achievements and good work of community people, providing community actions, for national benefit.