

Welcome to Trinbago Talk!

The latest news on GEF SGP in sweet T&T



Picture 1: Brasso Seco Farmers with Consultant Richard Matthias showing off the treatment for varroa mite.

This newsletter covers from August to December since the country was on lockdown and state of emergency and much of our grantee's work was delayed due to this. In this edition, we give updates on ongoing projects and share with you stories of hope, pretty pictures of the ongoing work and lots of positive energy through our words. Happy reading!

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THIS QUARTER'S TOP STORIES

South-South Exchange: St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago

VCTT launched community garden in Chinapoo

Two grantees present at the CWWA Conference

GEF SGP and CCOTT commemorate 16 days of Activism

Update on the South-South Apiculture Project: Great news for bee enthusiasts!

In August 2021, Master Beekeeper Richard Matthias, from St. Lucia, visited Trinidad and Tobago to begin his training with the Brasso Seco Morne La Croix Farmers. He spent five (5) days in the misty mountains of Brasso Seco, evaluating their hives and advising and guiding the beekeepers in addressing the needs of their bees, depending on seasonal changes.

An important inclusion to his visit was the testing of varroa mite at the four visited apiaries. Participants were able to learn first-hand how to test for this important and debilitating disease, as well as how to sustainably, organically treat for the disease.



Picture 2: Brasso Seco Farmers in their apiary.

Mr. Matthias will be back in Trinidad and Tobago in early 2022 to complete training in queen rearing and assist the Brasso Seco Farmers Group to develop their queen rearing lab. It is hoped that through this exchange, Brasso Seco Farmers will inculcate their learning and help to expand and develop their apiaries to produce more honey and other hive products.

This Brasso Seco Beekeeping project is actually part of a regional apiculture project involving seven islands (Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Samoa and Trinidad and Tobago). As part of this project, each country will receive online theoretical training in beekeeping; in-person practical training in beekeeping; twenty (20) complete hives and access to the Caribbean's first beekeeping app.

This trip represented the first of his field visits across the islands, which is part of the regional project. At least ten (10) members of the Brasso Seco Farmers Group participated in the online beekeeping course, which consists of seventeen (17) modules: ten (10) theoretical and seven (7) practical sessions.

The online beekeeping course is being rolled out online via the link: <https://iyanolaapiculture.org/training>. Each theoretical module has its own web page which contains a video as well as a summary of the video content. There is also a short quiz that the participant can take to test their learning. The pages are still in development and we hope to have a formal launch of this early next year.

This online beekeeping course differs from other offerings because it contains a module on occupational health and safety as well as gender and social inclusion. The information contained is not only relevant to beekeepers but also to secondary school students, especially those pursuing Integrated Agriculture and Environmental Sciences as well as University students pursuing Natural or Life Science Courses.



Picture 3: Brandon Hernandez, Brasso Seco Beekeepers and Richard Matthias pose with a healthy frame of bees after an inspection and treatment.

The regional apiculture project will be completed in June 2022. Until then, Mr. Matthias will be visiting all of the other countries in order to assist them as well in developing their apiculture skills and sector. It is hoped that at the end of this project that all the participating countries can meet, possibly at the next Association of Caribbean Beekeeping Organizations

(ACBO) meetings in order to share their experiences and learning as they develop the apiculture sector together.

VCTT launched community garden in Chinapoo

The Volunteer Centre of Trinidad and Tobago, in partnership with the East Port of Spain Corporation, and GEF SGP, has been developing five (5) community garden projects in the vulnerable communities of Sea Lots, Chinapoo, Morne Repos, Gonzales and Basilon Street.

Training in home- and community-gardening began in 2020 and despite COVID-19 limitations, forty-four (44) persons from the five (5) communities were able to benefit from this.

Picture 5: Chinapoo Community Garden, Morvant.



To others, these numbers may seem very low however, COVID-19 restrictions prevented the gathering of no more than five (5) persons. More importantly though, COVID-19 increased the vulnerability of the communities, especially in their ability to early a steady livelihood. Most families were hit hard and employment became rampant, resulting in an upsurge of gang-warfare in these important communities. Yet, despite all these odds, there were dedicated and committed community workers, mostly women from the community, who continued to encourage their neighbours and youths to participate in this project, because of the opportunities they could provide.



Picture 4: Picture of Chinapoo community garden with representatives from GEF SGP, East Port of Spain Development Company, Chinapoo Community and WHYFarm in attendance.

Earlier this year, VCTT successfully completed one (1) of their gardens and was able to launch this important community resource. The garden, located in Chinapoo,

is managed by the community members. Since its establishment, it has produced at least three (3) reapings of fresh seasonings, which has been identified to be a profitable, in-demand product for the community. Proceeds from the garden have been reinvested in the garden, for its sustainability. The community members who help to maintain the garden are also able to receive a small stipend for their services.



Three (3) other community gardens are in development and should be rolled out early 2022, since COVID-19 restrictions have been laxed. Gonzales' community garden will be upgraded with the addition of a Green Market, also to be completed early next year.

Picture 5: National Coordinator, Dr. Sharda Mahabir, addressing the audience during the launch ceremony.

An important aspect of this project is the development of a “Grown in East Port of Spain” community product. In order to identify what this product would be, a community mapping exercise will be conducted to assist communities to identify other resources that could be added to their garden produce in order to make a higher valued product. To give a suitable example, if the

community has many mango trees and grows fresh seasonings in their garden, then the value added product could be preserved mango, amchar mango or curry mango. This product, still to be decided by the communities themselves, will be grown and developed within each of the communities and will be made available to the wider public through partnership with local supermarket chains.

This project is not just about providing food security and developing resilience skills in these communities; it is also about restoring a sense of pride to these communities. The GEF SGP is extremely proud of this project and looks forward to the completion of the mapping exercise and the development of the new product from these communities.

Two grantees present at the CWWA Conference

During 2021, two important projects came to a close: these were Cashew Gardens Community Council (CGCC) first community-run composting project and Central Pathfinders Environmental Foundation's (CPEF) Urban Composter projects.

Both projects addressed organic waste which are those items in our garbage bins that can decompose easily such as vegetable peels. On average, 22% of the materials in our four major landfills are organics. Their decomposition produces carbon dioxide and methane, which are two major greenhouse gases. Of greater concern is that methane is highly flammable and as such, encourages landfill fires, which burn other toxic chemicals including carcinogenic pollutants.

CGCC successfully completed the country's first community-led composting project in which compost from 16 households were collected over a 4 month-period and converted into compost, which is used in the community garden. This pilot is also the first community circular economy for composting in the country and it resulted in the diversion of 510lbs or over 200kg of organic waste from our landfills. The community had indicated that the interest in the composting project is growing, with temples and food establishments now providing material to their composters.

CPEF also contributed to solving our organic waste in our landfills with the development of an urban composter which they call "Captain Turner". This composter is designed to fit a small kitchen space and allows households to convert their own waste into compost in less than 2 months. The composter will now be sold locally to households and marketed as another avenue through which households can positively contribute to the reduction of our carbon emissions.

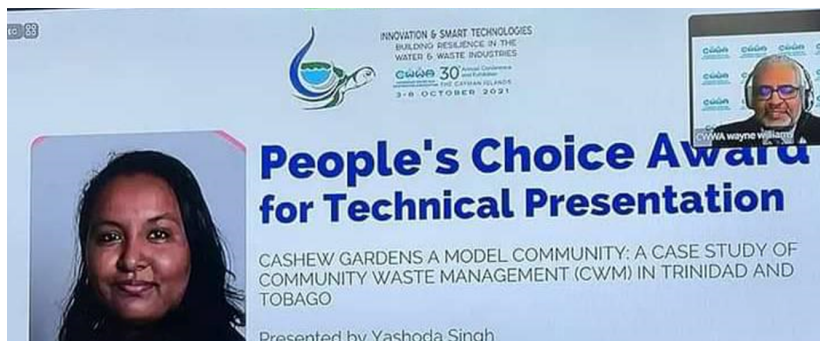
Both CGCC and CPEF recently presented their work at the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association Conference, held in October of this year. Their papers can also be accessed from: <https://cwwa.net/cwwa-conference-and-exhibition-2021/thank-you-for-attending-the-2021-conference/>.



Picture 6: Captain Turner, Trinidad and Tobago's first urban composter.

Picture 7: Community member from Cashew Garden adding organic material collected from the households to the community composter

GEF SGP is especially proud of the CGCC's work which received two awards at the CWWA conference namely the Ronald Williams Award for Technical Excellence and The People's Choice Awards for Technical Presentation.



Picture 8: Photo of the virtual award ceremony where Cashew Gardens was presented with two awards.

The fight against climate change begins with making small behavioural changes at the household level, which when collated results in bigger impacts for the country. The implementation of community or household composting, as offered by these two GEF SGP projects, provides citizens of this country with the opportunity to contribute to solving climate change directly.

A small step like composting at home can make big impacts, so start composting today!

GEF SGP supports CCOTT commemoration of 16 days of Activism

The GEF SGP recently partnered with the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, the British High Commission of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cashew Gardens Community Council to commemorate 16 days of activism, with the installation of public gender messaging in parks.

CCOTT was the organizer of the event which took place in Woodbrook, Port of Spain. Four (4) benches in the public park were first given an uplift with a fresh coat of paint and then, gender messages were added to the benches to encourage users to discourage gender-based violence.

Over the past two (2) years, gender-based violence has increased locally partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased vulnerability in many communities, especially amongst women and children. A major issue locally is that gender-based crimes are not reported by the persons who may witness or sense a concerning situation. There have been over 800 domestic violence reports for 2021 alone.

There is a need to change this behaviour and it begins by making bold, public statements that certain behaviours are not acceptable. As such, simple projects like these, have big impacts because they install the bold, “in-your-face” messaging that is required to make it clear to perpetrators and victims alike, that gender-based violence is not acceptable.

The event was a joy to behold and be a part of it.



Picture 9: Members of Cashew Gardens Community Council painting the benches.



Picture 10: Youth member of Cashew Gardens Community posing on the bench.



Picture 11: Representatives of British High Commission, CCOTT and Cashew Gardens labelling the benches.



What a year! For six months, this country was under lockdown and state of emergency and for a while, the country, its people and our grantees began to feel depressed, trapped and frustrated. This is another reason why our projects are so important. They not only provide the communities with important resources and livelihood opportunities but also creative avenues through which they can express themselves or simply burn off steam. Thank you grantees and GEF SGP for providing this important avenue for the people of our communities.