CSOs For Good Governance:

Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago

Project in brief:

Location: Trinidad and Tobago
Timeframe: March 2017 – March 2020
Funding amount: €340,000 (EU) ; €100,000 co-funding
Contract: CSO/LA/2016/382-815

Overall goal:

To catalyse transformation to a more environmentally sustainable, socially just, inclusive, accountable and resilient model of development and governance through supporting the effective involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T).

Specific objectives:

1. To establish a mechanism for CSOs to effectively engage in implementation of the SDGs in T&T in partnership with Government and other actors.
2. To support early advocacy actions by CSOs to hold Government accountable for implementation of the SDGs in priority areas.
3. To build the capacity of leading CSOs and CSO networks to effectively contribute to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in T&T, both individually and through collective action.
4. To advocate for and contribute to the implementation of a revised legal, fiscal and funding framework for CSOs in T&T that promotes greater accountability, more efficient use of resources and greater effectiveness in delivery of CSO programmes.

Primary target beneficiaries:

The project brought together an informal network of leading CSOs across all sectors as the *SDGs Catalysts Network* as a mechanism for effective engagement of civil society in T&T in the national SDGs process. CSO members acted as *Catalysts* to engage other CSOs in their respective sectors as well as other CSO networks. This 'network of networks' created a mechanism to enable broad based and integrated cross-sectoral collaboration for effective engagement of CSOs in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs for inclusive national development in T&T. The learning from this experience will hopefully provide a useful model and foundation for other networks as they continue their engagement on other national and sectoral development issues.

Implementers:

European Union

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The project was co-implemented by a consortium of seven leading CSOs in T&T. While there was engagement of all applicants across the project, key roles on Components were as follows:

- **United Way Trinidad and Tobago (UWTT)** – overall project lead, member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, co-lead Component 2, lead Component 4, lead Component 5
- **Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)** – lead Component 1, co-lead Component 2
- **Veni Apwann (VA)** – member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, potential sub-grantee in Component 2, lead Component 3
- **University of the West Indies – Institute for Gender and Development Studies (UWI IGDS)** – member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, potential sub-grantee in Component 2
- **Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD)** – member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, potential sub-grantee in Component 2
- **Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women (Network)** – member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, potential sub-grantee in Component 2
- **Environment Tobago (ET)** – member of the *SDGs Catalysts Network* in Component 1, potential sub-grantee in Component 2

It is extremely rare for CSOs in T&T to collaborate across sectors to collectively develop and implement projects, in part due to how funding is provided by Government, private sector and international funding partners. The collective working approach of this project, in itself, will be an important **capacity building process and will provide a model** for future cross-sectoral collaboration in civil society.

Components and outcomes:

The work was organised into four inter-linked Components that collectively empower civil society to be effective advocates and to actively engage in an inclusive and holistic approach to national development holding Government accountable for delivery of priority commitments under the SDGs. A fifth component supported execution of the project.

Components	Outcomes
1. Developing a mechanism for CSO engagement in the SDGs	1.1 CSOs engaged in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the national agenda for SDGs as model for CSO engagement in development and policy processes
2. Early actions for holding Government accountable for implementation of the SDGs	2.1 Innovative approaches to civil society advocacy for strengthening Government transparency and accountability are developed and piloted in key areas, with potential for replication and scaling up.
3. Organisational and advocacy capacity building and networking of CSOs	3.1 Leading CSOs across sectors in T&T are individually stronger, more effectively networked and collaborating with each other, government and the private sector to advocate for and deliver sustainable development results under the SDGs

4. Strengthening the legal, fiscal and funding framework for CSOs in T&T	4.1 All CSOs in T&T benefit from a coherent legal, fiscal and funding framework that supports them to deliver and be accountable for results that contribute to national development and good governance 4.2 Government and private sector benefit from a more effective system for registration of and reporting by CSOs for accountability
5. Project management, evaluation and learning, communication and visibility, and sustainability	5.1 Project managed within budget and timeframe to deliver project results; results and lessons learnt communicated to target groups; additional support leveraged and impact and sustainability enhanced.

Although the project focussed on impacting transformation to a more environmentally sustainable, socially just, inclusive, accountable and resilient model of development and governance in Trinidad and Tobago, and therefore the full breath of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and all 17 SDGs; the primary focus in the three-year project was on Goal 16 which is to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Building more inclusive models, with effective civil society participation and collaboration and mechanisms for accountability, fundamentally transformed ways of working within and across different sectors and therefore acted as an essential foundation for achievement of the other 16 goals and the entire *Agenda*. CSOs participating in the project looked at specific requirements under the other 16 goals and started some actions towards achieving these but specific results will be outside of the project at the impact level.

Summary of Impact and Outcomes (Oc) Results				
Impact Objective: To catalyse transformation to a more environmentally sustainable, socially just, inclusive, accountable and resilient model of development and governance in Trinidad and Tobago	• 91 CSOs (including 14 Catalysts) formally signed onto a collective advocacy effort around the NPO 2019 Act, relevant to SDG 16. • 6 Catalysts were involved in leading collective advocacy on legislation - NPO 2019 Act, building on work completed in Component 4. The Civil Society Alliance, Laws for Us, led by 5 Catalysts and other CSOs, has been established as a mechanism through which continued advocacy for enabling NPO legislation will continue • 60 CSOs (including 14 Catalysts) in a collective advocacy action led by 2 Catalysts, resulting in an open letter to PM signed by the 60 CSOs, including 14 Catalysts, for the T&T government to sign and ratify the Escazú Agreement, relevant to SDG 16. • 53 CSOs (including 20 Catalysts) led by 1 Catalyst developed a civil society shadow report focused on Trinidad and Tobago's implementation of SDG 13 Climate Action, as a complement to the Government's Voluntary National Review 2020			
Oc1.1: CSOs are engaged in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the national agenda for SDGs as a model for CSO engagement in development and policy processes	**Oc2.1:** Innovative approaches to civil society advocacy for strengthening Government transparency and accountability developed and piloted in key areas, with potential for replication and scaling up	**Oc3.1:** Leading CSOs across sectors in T&T are individually stronger, more effectively networked and collaborating with each other, government and the private sector to advocate for and deliver sustainable development results under the SDGs	**Oc4.1:** All CSOs in T&T benefit from a coherent legal, fiscal and funding framework that supports them to deliver and be accountable for results that contribute to national development and good governance; Government and private sector benefit from an effective system for registration of and reporting by CSOs for accountability	**Oc5.1:** Project managed within budget and timeframe to deliver project results; results and lessons learnt communicated to target groups; additional support leveraged and impact and sustainability enhanced

• SDGsCN fully functioning throughout the project comprising 21 leading CSOs engaged as Catalysts with a common understanding and a shared vision of civil society roles on the SDGs, building relationships amongst themselves and with their extended networks to explore opportunities for collaboration • Throughout the project, approximately 53 CSOs (21 Catalysts and members of their networks comprising 75% women) aligning their work and engaged in opportunities to advance partnerships and collective advocacy by civil society in T&T around the SDGs (e.g. climate change, National Environmental Policy, gender, disabilities and sexual rights issues). • Caribbean Civil Society SDGs Knowledge Platform developed and launched to facilitate strengthening of knowledge and network around SDGs, and reporting by CSO on contributions to delivery of SDGs; utility beyond project	• **The Project Small Grant Facility (SGF)** established as an enabler for the SDGs Catalysts to strengthen capacity for advocacy within their organisation and networks mandate. **19 Advocacy Action Small Grants** were awarded to 13 different Catalysts with a total allocation of TT$ 515,676.00 (€67,940.32 which includes UWTT's co-finance of €20,000). • **16 CSO advocacy case studies** documented, including 8 as part of the Year 1 Advocacy Report and 8 mini-case studies in the Caribbean CSOs Advocacy toolkit. • Peer sharing as a model for CSO collaboration at regional meetings: o 4th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, Quito, Ecuador, March 12-14, 2019 o UNECLAC Learning Conference: Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Caribbean Region, Port of Spain, Trinidad, May 15-16, 2019	By the end of the project, a total of 41 CSOs participated in one or more of the capacity building interventions covering the priority areas of advocacy, leadership, governance, and communications: • 40 CSOs exposed to tools, approaches and steps in developing an effective advocacy strategy • Cross-sectoral peer sharing by CSOs facilitated as a standing item in each Quarterly meeting of Catalysts, and with participants from three other EU-funded consortium projects: the TT CSOs for Business, TT CSOs for Good Environmental Governance, Sexual Culture of Justice • CSOs demonstrating increased awareness of the power of collective advocacy, trust in each other and willingness to collaborate for achievement of SDG Goals see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDmj2cJeDYI&feature=youtu.be	• CSOs Advocacy Paper completed in November 2018 outlining four priority recommendations for improving the legal and fiscal frameworks in order to incentivise a more sustainable and equitable funding framework. • The NPO 2019 Act proclaimed on 14 June 2019, sets out a definition of an NPO and appoints the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) as the Regulator 'for the AML/CFT/PF supervision of non-profit organisations. • 15 CSOs supported to submit Risk Assessment Questionnaire to Registrar General in keeping with NPO 2019 Act as part of the pilot online Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Registration portal https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-JK3L9o7LU • Guidance document for CSOs for completing the questionnaire completed http://uwtt.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Project-Guidance-Note-Form-1.pdf	The Action has been completed within the timeframe, project scope, and achieved the deliverables as planned. 12 Project Steering Committee (PSC) quarterly meetings held to monitor the project deliverables against work plans and to identify opportunities for synergies for greater effectiveness 10 SDGs Catalysts meetings conducted to share project progress as the core mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the Project including routine reporting and annual participatory monitoring using M&E framework developed in year 1 Additional resources were sourced through parallel financing: - to enhance project capacity building activities - to improve access to Small Grant Facility by all partners