



THE NATIONAL  
FOREST PROGRAMME  
**FACILITY**



## **Forests and Livelihoods Exchange Visit on Entrepreneurship Opportunities from the Sustainable Use of Forest Products and Services**

Facilitated by Betty Perry-Fingal  
*Holy Redeemer Retreat House*  
*Eggleston*  
*Dominica*

**June 22 - 24, 2010**

## 1 Background

This exchange visit is part of a regional programme on Forests and Livelihoods currently being conducted in Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Christopher (St. Kitts) & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago under CANARI's **Forests and Livelihoods Programme**.

CANARI's **Forests and Livelihoods Programme** seeks to enhance the contribution of forest goods and ecological services to sustainable livelihoods of the rural poor in the islands of the Caribbean. The programme encompasses research and analysis as well as building capacity at local, national and regional levels for equitable participation and effective collaboration of stakeholders in the management of forest resources.

## 2 Funding

These visits are being funded under the European Commission's Programme on Tropical Forests and other Forests in Developing Countries EC project on "***Practices and policies that improve forest management and the livelihoods of the rural poor in the insular Caribbean***" and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) funded regional project "***Participatory Forest Management: Improving policy and institutional capacity for development***".

## 3 Participants

The six external participants in the exchange visit included three professional officers from the Forestry sector, two engaged in both farming and handicraft production and one who produces handicraft and operates an outlet for the community's handicraft products.

- Mr. Gordon Paterson, Head, Watershed Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry and Fisheries, Grenada
- Ms. Kamlyn Melville Pantin, Department of Natural Resource and the Environment, Tobago House of Assembly, Trinidad and Tobago
- Ms. Paulina Ferdinand, Superior Broom Producers, Saint Lucia
- Mr. Ajit Duncan, Keepers of the Environment, St. Vincent
- Ms. Regina Joseph, Carib Territory, Dominica
- Ms. Jacinta Bruney, Carib Territory, Dominica

## 4 Goal/ Objectives

The main objective of the Exchange Visits is to identify, promote, and build capacity for institutional arrangements which optimise the socio-economic contribution of forest resources to the rural poor of the insular Caribbean;

The goal of this Exchange Visit was to build the capacity of CBOs and NGOs for participatory forest management that enhances the contribution of forests to sustainable livelihoods derived from the entrepreneurship opportunities from the use of forest products and services.

The main objectives of the exchange visit were as follows:

## Forest and Livelihoods

- increase understanding of how community groups can use their combined resources in conjunction with local businesses to develop rural livelihoods in the Commonwealth of Dominica;
- facilitate the exchange of information and provide lessons on institutional arrangements (policies, practices, legislation, structures, approaches, etc.) that optimize the socio-economic benefits to rural poor from forest-based resources; and
- build or enhance relationships among stakeholders across the project countries working on forests and livelihoods.

The participants further agreed on several learning objectives of the visit. These were:

- how to use combined resources in the community in an effective way;
- improving community involvement and awareness;
- identifying successful approaches to using the resources at the community level – leading to cohesive communities; and
- identifying ways to develop strong relationships between community groups.

### 5 Methods

The workshop was very interactive and utilized a “hands on” approach which included various site visits, interviews and analysis which lead to distillation of lessons learned documentation of experiences worth sharing on entrepreneurship opportunities from the sustainable use of forest products and services.

### 6 Site visits and observations

#### 6.1 Giraudel Flower Growers Group

##### *Background*

Five members of the Giraudel Flower Growers Group visited the Holy Redeemer Retreat House to provide the participants with background information on their project. Because of heavy rains, it was not possible to visit any of the members’ gardens. The members explained that the Group had a long history of community involvement in flower-growing and selling activities. The Giraudel Flower Growers Group’s major achievement has been the holding of flower shows that attract large crowds. The participants learned that because of adverse weather conditions and difficulty in obtaining a permanent site for the flower show, it had not been held for the past six years.

##### *Observations*

They participants recognised that the Group had a strong vision and demonstrated an understanding of member roles and responsibilities. The Group is cohesive, and its formal registration has enabled it to access funding. Members demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of their work to livelihoods. The participants however, observed that the Division of Forestry had provided very little input to the Group, had not offered them any incentives for their conservation efforts and provided no advocacy for them with other governmental departments.

##### *Recommendations*

- The Group should be restructured to provide a role for government personnel.
- The Group should develop an adequate plan to obtain the needed funding.

**Forest and Livelihoods**

- Participants observed that the Group had established a market for their flowers, but felt they would need technical assistance in order to further develop markets.
- There is a need for the Group to broaden its membership by recruiting younger members and men and to develop a closer relationship with the wider community in order to expand the benefits of its activities.

*Lessons learned*

The participants stated that the experience of the Group demonstrated the need for national-level support to realize the potential of forest-based resources for sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

**6.2 Green Mountain Nursery***Background*

The Green Mountain Nursery in Giraudel is the only commercial nursery in Dominica producing ornamental plants. It is owned and operated by Mr. Daryl Phillip who employs one other person to assist him. Mr. Phillip provided a comprehensive tour of his facility, describing the plants, their origin and his methods of production and marketing.

*Observations*

The participants noted that the Green Mountain Nursery made an effort to be “green” in the use of pesticides and to be careful in importing only “safe” plants. They however, observed that Mr. Phillip had cleared the area of trees, which detracted from the otherwise natural area that had dramatic mountain-top scenery. The participants noted his limited community involvement and felt that he did not appear to be developing local capacity as he only had one employee.

*Recommendations*

The participants recommended that Mr. Phillips could better utilise local resources, especially for organic pest control and fertilizer. They acknowledged that his nursery could attract people to the area through tourism and that the business had the potential to act as a demonstration model for locals interested in horticulture.

**6.3 Exotica Cottages***Background*

Exotica Cottages owned and operated by Dominicans, Athie and Fae Martin. The property consisted of six self-sufficient cottages and a small dining room surrounded by several acres of gardens and fruit trees. It is located adjacent to the Green Mountain Nursery. The Martins made a special effort to collect a variety of fruit trees, in particular, ones that are no longer commonly found in Dominica. The participants learned that during the tourism season Exotica plays a key role in a Community Gardens and Culinary Tour. The tour includes a visit to several home gardens in Giraudel, entertainment by a traditional “jing ping band” and a Creole cooking lesson that culminated in lunch.

*Observations*

The participants noted that Exotica’s focus on the international market gave the community of Giraudel more visibility. They observed that the area was being well cared for and that the owners were engaging in good agro-forestry practices, having been careful to minimize disruption when building the cottages. Some of the broader benefits to Exotica’s operation included the use of community members for staffing and ensuring that money from the tours is distributed to various community members who participated in the tours. Participants also

commented positively on the effort made to ensure that during the tours, visitors observe people engaging in traditional activities, giving them a more direct sharing of local culture.

#### 6.4 The Coal Pot

##### *Background*

The participants next visited The Coal Pot, producer of hand-made soaps, massage oils, creams, facial products, bath salts and candles. The company started out following training provided by the Youth Division Skills Training Programme with assistance from a Peace Corps volunteer. While it began as a group project, only one of the original members of the group, Ms. Avriel James, remained. Ms. James employed three helpers in the business. The business continued to expand its product line and now has markets in both the Caribbean and the United States.

One objective in establishing the business was to make better use of local natural resources. According to the owner, a variety of local products are used, including aloe, spinach, gliricidia and other such materials, but the owner has been unable to secure a variety of inputs locally and imports all of the essential oils as no one in Dominica has the equipment to produce them. Ms. James planned to obtain some equipment to produce the essential oils and to source much of the raw material for these oils locally.

##### *Observations*

The participants were disappointed with what appeared to be a “go-it-alone” attitude displayed by the owner. While they were impressed with the quality of the products and believed the owner was effective in developing the market for her products, she employed only three junior level employees. This, they believed, limited the capacity of the business to develop. The participants were also concerned that the owner appeared autocratic, unable to establish effective working relationships and unwilling to offer training to other members of her community.

##### *Recommendations*

The participants believed that:

- the business could be developed as a cooperative to have the best opportunities to expand; and
- the owner should establish formal partnerships with the local farmers to guarantee supply of the needed inputs. The participants also recommended that the owner seek her raw materials from other areas of the country including the Carib Territory where organically produced herbs are available.

#### 6.5 Grand Bay Tourism Environmental Committee – Wood Carvers Group

##### *Background*

The Wood Carvers Group is an informal association of ten wood carvers led by Mr. Hilroy George. The group has operated for a number of years and its members produce sculptures from local woods. The market has been primarily limited to visitors who come to Grand Bay, including Dominicans who live overseas. Mr. George indicated that he planned to begin selling the group’s sculptures at the Roseau Market when the new tourism season opened.

##### *Observations*

The participants observed that the quality of the sculptures was high. They felt Mr. George seemed to be an able leader who understood the need to share responsibility. They were

impressed by his regular training programmes for young people in the community. The participants commented favourably on the group's sourcing of wood locally.

The visitors were however, concerned that there was no evidence of record – keeping for the sale made during the visit. It also appeared that there was no storage of the raw material and the finished product. The group's success was likely to be limited if those concerns were not addressed.

### *Recommendations*

Recommendations for improving the group's success included:

- designation of someone to be in charge of sales;
- development of a market strategy. This lack of marketing strategy indicated that the group probably needed a formal structure with clear roles for the members.
- establishment of location(s) to store both the raw material and the finished products.

## **7 Lessons Learned**

Following the site visits and the analysis of the activities observed, the participants agreed on a set of lessons learnt. These were:

- a) businesses that involve the wider community have more potential to grow and succeed.
- b) most of the enterprises observed focus on one type of resource and miss the benefits of using combined resources.
- c) there is poor networking among the various enterprises.
- d) there is a need for ongoing training for existing and new members of the groups to ensure that the enterprises continue to grow.
- e) the groups need to improve communication and awareness of their activities to build support.
- f) the community groups have a good vision and can implement projects, but the lack of institutional support from village councils and relevant Ministries often discourages members from continuing with the project.
- g) there is overall an inadequate use of the cooperative concept.

## **8 Conclusion**

The participants ended the discussion with the firm recommendation to CANARI that it continue its efforts to support community groups in their projects to develop sustainable livelihoods from forest-based resources. They believed that CANARI could assist in exploring further opportunities in using the natural resources. They each stated that the exchange visit had been very useful and that they would use what they had learned when they returned to their own organisations.

**Appendix 1**  
**Forests & Livelihoods Exchange Visit**  
**Dominica**  
**22 – 24 June, 2010**

The Exchange Visit to the Eggleston-Giraudel area of Dominica is intended to introduce the participants to the Giraudel Flower Growers Group and the private sector operators in the Eggleston-Giraudel area who offer complementary services. The visit will include a trip to the village of Grand Bay to visit a community-based soap-making operation that relies on local herbs, spices and agricultural products and a wood carvers group.

The objectives of the study visit are to:

- increase understanding of how community groups can use their combined resources in conjunction with local businesses to develop rural livelihoods in Dominica
- facilitate exchange of information and provide lessons on institutional arrangements (policies, practices, legislation, structures, approaches, etc.) that optimise the socio-economic benefits to rural poor from forest-based resources; and
- build or enhance relationships among stakeholders across the project countries working on forests and livelihoods.

<b>Tuesday, 22 June</b>	
10.35 p.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Arrival in Dominica and transfer to Eggleston, Holy Redeemer Retreat House
1:00 p.m – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch (HRRH)
2.00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Welcome, Registration, Lodging Assignments
2:30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.	Free time
4.30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Overview of Study Visit Review of Agenda, Assignment of Participant Roles
7.00 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.	Dinner (HRRH)

## Forest and Livelihoods

<b>Wednesday, June 23</b>	
8.45 a.m. – 9.15 a.m.	Warm up and group activity to set learning objectives
	<i>Betty Perry-Fingal</i>
9.15 a.m. – 10.15 a.m.	Introduction to the Giraudel Flower Growers Group
	<i>GFG Group member</i>
10.15 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	<i>BREAK (snack)</i>
10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Giraudel Flower Tour, including Green Mountain Nursery and Exotica Cottages
	<i>GFG Group members, GMN, Exotica</i>
1.00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch (HRRH)
3.00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Wrap up
4:00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.	Free time
7.00 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.	Dinner (HRRH)
<b>Thursday, June 24</b>	
9:30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Visit to Coal Pot Soap-Makers, Grand Bay
	<i>Avriel James, Manager</i>
10:45 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.	Visit to Geneva wood carvers group, Grand Bay
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	<i>LUNCH(Evergreen)</i>
2.00 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.	Group analysis and lessons learnt activity
4.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.	Free time
6.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.	Participant reflection and sharing: What can I take back and apply to my own local context?
7.00 p.m.	Dinner (HRRH)
<b>Friday, June 25</b>	
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Depart Retreat House, travel to airport via Carib Territory with



**Forest and Livelihoods**

	stop at model village
1:00 pm	Airport Arrival