



## Civil Society Advocacy Case Study

under the [CSOs For Good Governance: Enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in Trinidad and Tobago](#) (CSOs4GoodGov) project

# Civil society input in shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Organisation(s):** Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

**Date:** 2013 to 2015

**Geographic Location:** Trinidad and Tobago

**Partners:** Independent Research Forum

**SDGs in Action:**



The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a non-profit technical organisation that is engaged in research, policy influence and capacity building for participatory natural resource management across the islands of the Caribbean. In 2012, CANARI became a member of the Independent Research Forum (IRF), a global network which brings together the expertise and experience of ten leading sustainable development research institutes and think tanks from five continents, united by a common commitment to sustainable development for improved human wellbeing.

As part of collaborative work with the IRF, CANARI co-facilitated a series of series of eight informal retreats for senior government negotiators and United Nations officials who were members of the United Nations Open Working Group (UN OWG) leading the process of developing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The retreats were held in New York and created a space for negotiators to share diverse perspectives and find common ground on complex, potentially divisive issues related to principles of universality and differentiation, integrated approaches to development and addressing cross-cutting issues, criteria for development of goals and targets, implementation challenges, integrated financing, partnerships and accountability. CANARI also led advocacy on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) at the regional and national levels in the Caribbean. Taking an action-learning

approach, CANARI provided technical support to negotiators representing Caribbean Community (CARICOM) governments at the United Nations between 2013 to 2015, engaged directly in national and regional consultations, and facilitated dialogue among stakeholders and within civil society. An action learning approach was used to bring together stakeholders to address complex problems through shared learning, analysis and action that simultaneously:

- assisted in practical problem-solving and effecting change;
- expanded knowledge and understanding; and
- enhanced competencies of the actors involved.

This action-learning process focused on developing and negotiating a strong Caribbean position on the new global agenda. Learnings were channelled into advocacy processes aimed at changing perspectives, policy, practice and behaviours. Activities undertaken by CANARI as part of this process included:

- facilitation of two informal one-day retreats with CARICOM negotiators in New York, and providing ongoing communication and advice through email and occasional meetings, to support delegates in refining their negotiating positions and identifying priority issues;
- organisation of a series of webinars on critical themes led by regional experts, and sharing the recommendations coming out of these with the negotiators and others through brief reports;

- organisation of a two-day workshop that brought representatives of the CARICOM UN OWG negotiating team, regional sustainable development experts and other stakeholders together to share perspectives on regional priorities for the SDGs and lessons from previous experiences in global negotiations;
- facilitation and co-hosting with the Trinidad and Tobago office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of a meeting to develop and document a civil society position on sustainable development priorities in Trinidad and Tobago, seeking to influence the Government's position at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa;
- additional face-to-face meetings, blogs and news releases to share information on the SDGs and advocate for a development agenda appropriate to the needs of CARICOM countries.

### **Key Results and Impact**

CANARI established an informal network of Caribbean sustainable development experts from CARICOM Missions in New York, lead negotiators in capitals, the CARICOM Secretariat, CARICOM agencies, the University of the West Indies, and civil society to contribute to development of a strong and coherent Caribbean position on sustainable development priorities at the regional and national levels in the Caribbean.

CANARI supported CARICOM stakeholders and negotiators with identification and communication of Caribbean priorities for sustainable development and a framework for negotiating these. Lessons on negotiation in global policy processes were shared with CARICOM negotiators.

CANARI represented a voice of Caribbean civil society at the regional preparatory meeting and the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa. Recognising the contribution made in supporting CARICOM negotiators, CANARI was invited to be a member of the official Trinidad and Tobago delegation at the Samoa conference.

A key output of the process was a briefing paper outlining a Caribbean strategic position on sustainable development priorities.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

- Collaborating with respected and like-minded international partners brings credibility to and builds capacity of CSOs.
- Engagement in global policy processes provides an avenue for CSOs to directly engage with governments and key international stakeholders and bring civil society perspectives to them.
- CSOs can leverage their reputation as a well-established source of sustainable development expertise and use a collaborative, rather than confrontational, approach to build trust and buy-in from government negotiators and open doors at the global, regional and national levels.
- Webinars are an accessible cost-effective way of engaging experts from across the region (including technical agencies and universities) in collective analysis of issues and development of specific recommendations that government negotiators and other stakeholders can easily use.
- A CSO can create informal safe spaces for sharing among diverse stakeholders to collectively analyse ways to address complex development issues.
- A CSO can be recognised as a valuable source of technical information and a credible partner to governments.

### **Next Steps and Opportunities**

CANARI has continued to advocate on the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through its ongoing work programmes. Flowing from the IRF experience, CANARI collaborated with other CSO partners to develop the [CSOs4GoodGovernance](#) project (2017 to 2020), funded by the European Union. This aims to initiate a process for strengthening advocacy and engagement of civil society on implementation of the SDGs in Trinidad and Tobago. Through this project, CANARI is presently facilitating knowledge sharing, collaboration on advocacy and integrated working among CSOs across different to address key national priorities under the SDGs.

### **Advocacy Tips**

- *Continuously and proactively engage with national governments on influencing sustainable development priorities as part of a sustained advocacy programme instead of waiting to be invited to consultations.*
- *Consider acting as an intermediary between governments and civil society. CSOs acting as intermediaries can enable information sharing and create spaces where other CSOs are able to make more informed contributions on national sustainable development priorities and issues and be listened to by decision-makers.*
- *CSOs can take a collaborative, rather than confrontational approach, as an effective advocacy strategy.*

### **Contact Information**

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### **References and Links**

Website on the CANARI advocacy project:

<http://www.canari.org/addressing-caribbean-priorities-in-global-sustainable-development-policies>

Website on the Independent Research Forum:

<https://www.irforum.org/>

Resource: *CASE STUDY Small countries, big voices? Learning from Caribbean experience in the post-2015 negotiation process*

<http://www.canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Caribbean-SDGs-case-study-final-23June20151.pdf>

Resource: *Briefing Paper - Outline of a Caribbean strategic position on sustainable development in the context of the post-2015 global agenda on sustainable development: Instilling resilience in economic, natural, social and political systems*

<https://www.irforum.org/sites/default/files/publications/Caribbean%20strategic%20position%20on%20SDGs%20CANARI%20final.pdf>