

Caura's Water Woes

A photojournal

2012

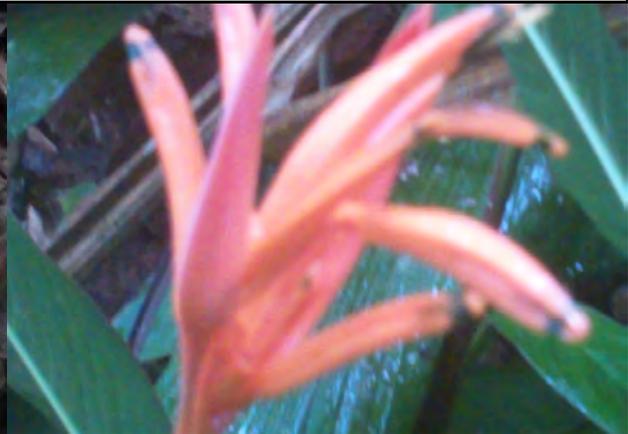
The Caura watershed lies within the Northern Range and helps to 'win' water for several districts along the East-West corridor. Our valley is therefore very important to people as well as to wildlife.



The leaves on the trees and on the ground reduce the impact of raindrops and control the flow of water into our underground reservoirs.



This helps to preserve our environment and its plants and animals.



Tree roots 'hold up' the river banks, as well as bamboo.



The bamboo we see alongside the road was planted there by elders because they knew it kept the soil together.



Water changes its course and the river is filled with debris. The result is: destruction of the land, the river banks and the river bed. This the same water we need - now and for the future.



Not everyone gets a pipe-borne water supply in the Valley... even people living a stone's throw away from the treatment plant do not have this type of supply.





We discovered that some people are putting in illegal water storage tanks.

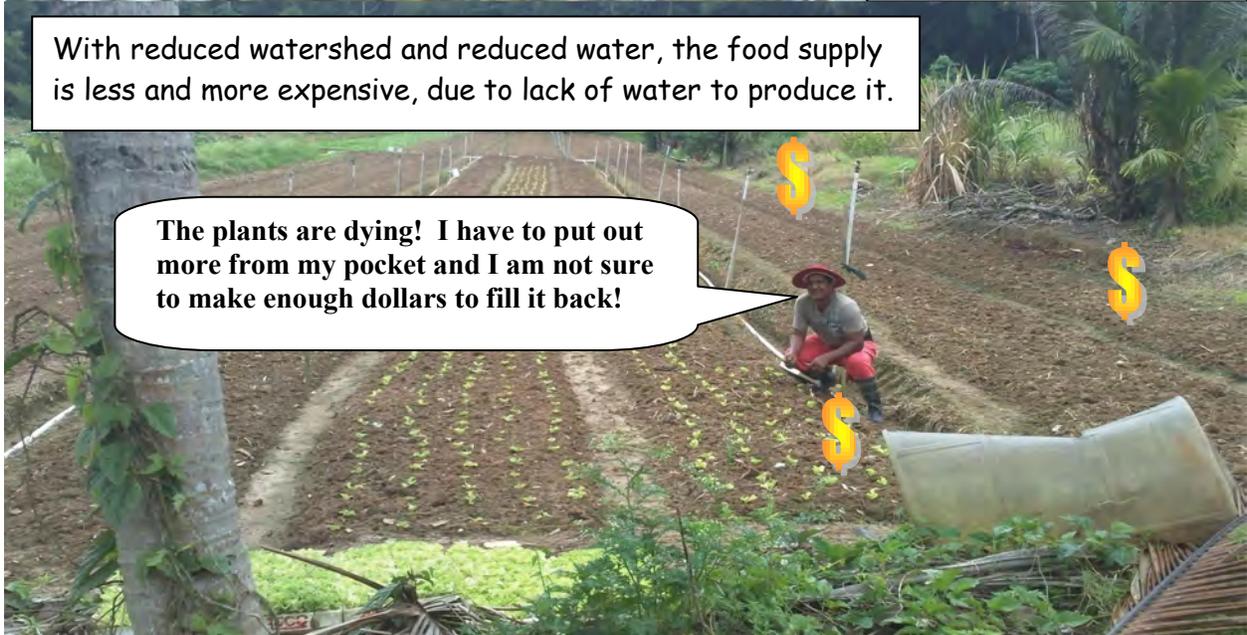
The water is being taken from a spring.



Water used to reach by my knee, now it is down to my ankles!

The diversion of water is creating a dry ravine and is causing hardship for people living in the lower part of the Valley and the wildlife. At one location where this was observed, some 21 households downstream have been affected by low water supply.

With reduced watershed and reduced water, the food supply is less and more expensive, due to lack of water to produce it.



The plants are dying! I have to put out more from my pocket and I am not sure to make enough dollars to fill it back!

Farmers are using pumps to get water from the river as they have no way to store the water. Ponds cannot work in Caura Valley because of the soil type.

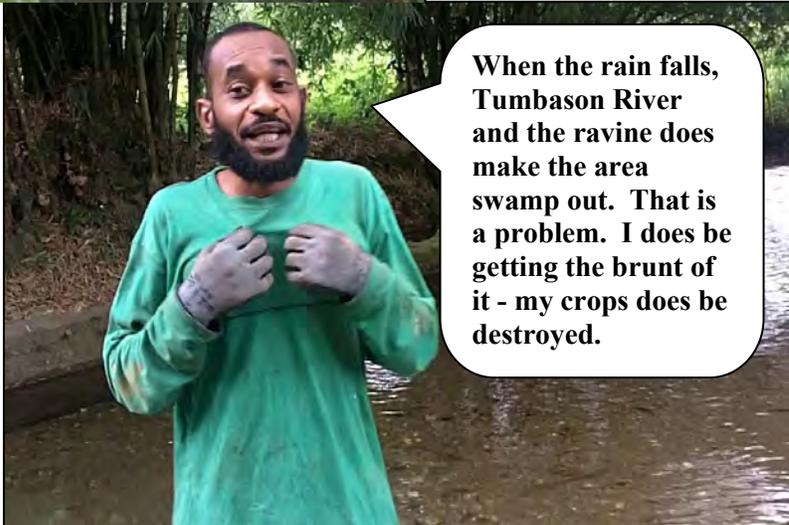
Climate change is predicted to cause many more harsh dry seasons. We in Caura Valley recognise that our present situation of an already challenging water issue, is a source of vulnerability.



In the wet season, it is expected that climate change will bring more intense rainfall events and hurricanes.

With ongoing deforestation, we have other issues to face ... like the soil washing away.

Flooding in Caura causes problems of: loss of crops (particularly in the Royal Road, Concordia and Gardenside areas), cutting off access routes to farmers' fields and a lowering of water quality.



When the rain falls, Tumbason River and the ravine does make the area swamp out. That is a problem. I does be getting the brunt of it - my crops does be destroyed.

Dumping in the Valley also contributes to the flooding problem. Caura Valley seems to be a dumping ground for all types of waste: we have seen used tyres, galvanise, even dead bodies dumped here.



Since many households in the Valley depend on water pumped from the river, apart from what is supplied to communal tanks by WASA, water quality is often quite poor.

People have to get their drinking water from other sources.



You have water here looking at you in the spring and you can't drink it!

We try to treat the water using bleach and chlorine tablets, but we are still not sure that we can drink this water or use it for cooking purposes.

The water from the river is unsafe for use and people still are unsure about the safety of water in communal tanks. Therefore we buy water.



Blue money for blue water!



Visitors (ab)use the water stored in communal tanks.
The supply for residents is therefore decreased.

Refilling of the tanks does not take place on a regular schedule.

We often have to make calls on our personal phones to ask for refills. This is an additional cost for residents.



- ▶ We have documented some of the problems that we identified in the Caura Valley, regarding the quality and quantity of our water supply.
- ▶ These problems affect us, the residents, our wildlife and also visitors to Caura Valley, as well as the areas of Trinidad dependent upon the watershed.
- ▶ Livelihoods of women, farmers and others are being affected and climate change impacts are of great concern.
- ▶ We have brainstormed on ways to tackle these areas of vulnerability.

Solutions: Monitoring

- ▶ As a community, we have been doing some serious monitoring and documentation of unregulated deforestation, watercourse diversion and water wastage in Caura.
- ▶ We would like to share this information with the agencies that should be monitoring these abuses and enforcing laws.



Monitoring by authorities

- ▶ People continue to dump and impact on our water quality because they just **DO NOT CARE.**
- ▶ While the community can commit to being local watchdogs, we believe that the authorities also need to step up their monitoring and enforcement of laws. **ENFORCE THE LAW!**

I am doing my part but they are not taking me on!

I wonder why they put me here?



Solutions: Watershed management



- ▶ Monitoring is one aspect of the management of the resource; what has been destroyed however should be restored.
- ▶ Residents would like to partner with the Forestry Division for a reforestation exercise in affected areas.
- ▶ Based on the fact that some community members are beekeepers, we would like to recommend Cypre among the trees to be planted and also fruit trees and trees for handicraft supplies for the Women's Empowerment Group entrepreneurs and wildlife.

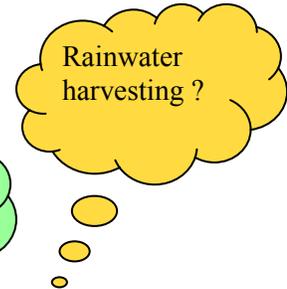
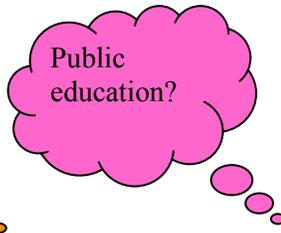
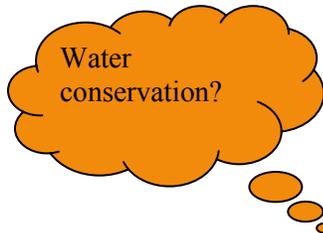
Solutions: Improving water supply to Caura

- ▶ We want a pipe borne water supply throughout the Valley.
- ▶ It is so ironic, that Caura is such an important watershed area, yet, not everyone in Caura Valley has access to a pipe-borne, potable supply of water.



Solutions: Find out about practical solutions and alternatives

We decided to find out about some short to medium term measures we could implement to address water issues.



Rainwater Harvesting

We invited Ms Diane Wells an expert in rainwater harvesting systems from OptionsPlus, to talk to us in the community about these systems.

Rainwater harvesting systems have been promoted in Trinidad and Tobago by Global Water Partnership - Caribbean.

It was important to understand what is involved in setting up a system and the possible benefits of doing so.





- ▶ A system at the Activity Centre would allow the building to have a back-up water supply and can also let residents see how it works.



- ▶ A system on a farm could provide an relief for a famer and maybe identify a new category of subsidy that is more appropriate to the conditions at Caura Valley.



Solutions: Public awareness

There is need to make people more aware of the impacts of climate change and particularly the areas of vulnerability to climate change impacts.

We have had issues in Caura for a long time, but the information and understanding we have now has helped us to see how climate change can worsen these problems.

As some of our livelihood activities - farming, food preparation, beekeeping - are or will be impacted, we need to take steps to ensure that others are also on the same page.



Public education must be supported by the agencies that can influence attitudes and behaviours and enforce laws.





Public education also involves passing on positive values to the next generation, through formal education in schools.

We are committed to doing our part, in sharing the information we have on climate change. This photojournal is one means by which we can undertake that information sharing.

- ▶ **The need to conserve water** in Caura must be shared with visitors as a matter of priority.
- ▶ **The need to maintain our vegetative cover** on the hills of Caura to maintain water supply is an important message to share; we will encourage farmers and others to **engage in agroforestry**.
- ▶ We see the need to advise the public of the sources of water in the Valley in order to encourage them to conserve water used from the communal tanks and to **protect the quality of water in our rivers and streams**.



This photojournal was prepared by the people of Caura Valley in 2012 during the project "Pilot project: Community action to build climate change resilience in Trinidad and Tobago". All photographs were captured by the residents themselves, and the text of this publication is in their own voice.

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