



Civil society agenda to address the impacts of climate change in Tobago

2012

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Introductory statements

Civil society in Tobago recognises and accepts that climate change has affected the livelihoods of everyone. It is no joke.

We believe that we have significant roles to play in advocating for change, educating others and leading in actions to build Tobago's climate resilience.

Civil society is ready to collaborate, and ready to engage with government and the private sector on climate change issues.

We are ready to adopt new information as well as grassroots knowledge and traditional practices to build resilience to deal with impacts.

We believe that sharing information as well as conducting the necessary research will assist leaders in making the best decisions for dealing with climate change.

Priority areas identified for action

Civil society feels that the following are the key sectors for consideration when dealing with climate change impacts in Tobago:

- Food security including marine resources
- Tourism including dive tourism
- Infrastructure and utilities
- Water resources and wetlands issues
- Forest resources



Workshop participants discuss Tobago's vulnerability to climate change

The priority areas are detailed below, along with potential solutions.

Food security including marine resources

Main impact 1: Unpredictable weather patterns are affecting agricultural production.

Main impact 2: Fish stocks are declining.

Civil society will:

1. Plant crops to support bees.
2. Promote the use of shade houses as a possible solution to reduce the effect of direct sun on crops such as tomatoes and melons and the use of green-houses to control the timing of planting.
3. Encourage each other to think outside of the box to deal with pests such as the Cocrico and parrots.
4. Encourage the adoption of practices such as len hand¹ among farmers.
5. Work among themselves and with other stakeholders such as the Government to improve soil structure to address soil erosion.
6. Support reforestation activities of appropriate species that provide food for animals and people.
7. Recommend to Government that fisherfolk be adequately supported by providing them with fishing gear such as fish finders, GPS and radios.
8. Recommend that all stakeholders consider aquaculture as an option to improve Tobago's food security.
9. Educate people that burning to clear agricultural land and to dispose of garbage should not be done these actions can lead to larger and more devastating fires. Civil society will also advocate that Government supports this initiative.
10. Promote wildlife farming with Government support, as the consumption of wild meat is a large part of Tobago's culture and a ready market exists.
11. Advocate that Goldsborough should be preserved and maintained as an agricultural bread basket as a way of ensuring Tobago's food security.
12. Advocate that record keeping for farmers be instituted so that they can be correctly compensated for crop damage or loss of livelihood/income due to extreme events.
13. Advocate that Government provides expert help to educate farmers and fisherfolk in adapting to climate change.
14. Recommend to fisherfolk and farmers that they engage in more environmentally friendly practices, for example, farmers can store more water; more mulching; composting.
15. Advocate that Government take the necessary steps and ensure that the already designated as well as the proposed marine protected areas (MPAs) are in fact protected as these are very significant in protecting fisheries resources.
16. Strongly suggest that steps be taken collaboratively by stakeholders to boost the capacity of fisherfolk to participate nationally as their roles are important.



Growing food crops is important to food security in Tobago.



Fish is an essential part of Tobago's food security.

¹Len han is a traditional practice used to solve labour shortages in which persons visit agricultural holdings to assist in crop picking and is reciprocated. It also provides encouragement, advice and skills transfer.

Tourism including dive tourism

Main impact 1: Degradation of the reefs especially coral bleaching is affecting the tourism product.

Main impact 2: Warmer, drier climates may become uncomfortable for tourists from colder climates.

Civil society:

1. Recommends strongly that this sector become more cohesive and embrace the fact that climate change is already affecting and will seriously affect their ability to earn livelihoods.
2. Advises that stakeholders in this sector should become more sustainable and not engage in short term practices for short term profits.
3. Advocates that all, including civil society, the private sector and Government stakeholders become more responsible and engage in tangible steps to adapt to climate change and disengage from practices that exacerbate climate change impacts.



Without coral reefs, the white sandy beaches will be lost.

Infrastructure and utilities

Main impact 1: Erosion is damaging coastal roads.

Main impact 2: Homes and facilities on the coast are being damaged by erosion.

Civil society:

1. Notes and supports the actions of Tobago Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) in preparing communities as well as the island of Tobago for disasters.
2. Supports TEMA's plans to train 125 fisherfolk and distribute communications equipment for use in emergency.
3. Feels strongly that Tobago society needs to prepare for extreme events and engage in disaster mitigation including, for example, an evacuation plan for Roxborough.



Coastal erosion is already occurring in Tobago and will worsen as the effects of climate change become more apparent.

Water resources and wetlands issues

Main impact 1: Streams, rivers and waterfalls are drying up.

Main impact 2: Water availability and quality is becoming an issue both for agriculture and people.

Civil society:

1. Has engaged in a recycling project which gained tremendous buy-in from a variety of stakeholders within Tobago and has the potential to become sustainable in the long term. This has implications for reducing pollution of water courses, wetlands, estuaries and the marine environment. As a result, civil society wants to form partnerships with private sector and government to help sustain green projects in the long term.
2. Will be engaging in carbon sequestration projects in North East Tobago.
3. Advocates and supports plans for reforestation and agroforestry to restock our forests and protect our watersheds.
4. Advocates for the development of artificial wetlands habitats to protect Tobago's coastline.
5. Proposes that rainwater harvesting be mainstreamed as this is an important additional source of water.
6. Promotes reusing our waste rather than dumping it. (For example, in Jamaica, plastics are shredded and used as planting medium along with coconut.)



Mangroves are important to protect Tobago's coastline

Forest resources

Main issue 1: Deforestation by man will exacerbate climate change impacts across other sectors.

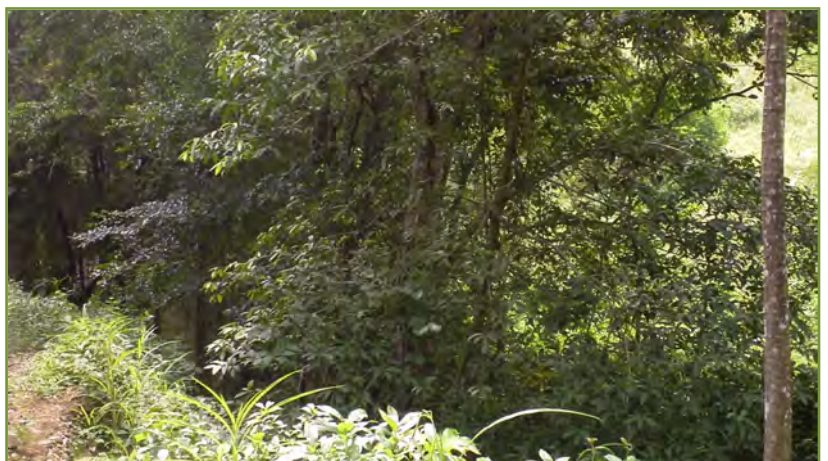
Main issue 2: Forests are needed to maintain climate on the island.

Main issue 3: Forests are needed to act as carbon sinks.

Main issue 4: Landslides are occurring in the forests.

Civil society:

1. Proposes that Government, civil society and other partners work together to reforest Tobago as maintaining forest resources is critical to the protection of both terrestrial and marine resources in the face of climate change.
2. Understands that private land owners are allowed to engage in logging within limits outlined by law, but views with concern reports that logging is occurring on susceptible slopes at night. It urges Government action to prevent illegal logging if this is occurring and to prevent erosion that could impact on the marine environment.



Forests are important carbon sinks.

Other sectors of note

Civil society recognises that there are other sectors that will also be affected by climate change:

Livelihoods/ culture

Climate change has affected the livelihoods of everyone. This is a cross cutting issue across sectors.

Civil society:

1. Notes that people are realising that they need to have other livelihood options and proposes diversification as a mind-set as an adaptation strategy in communicating about climate change.
2. Urges that all of Tobago realises how serious climate change impacts can be and that we work together to plan for and adapt to climate change.



Many persons in Tobago depend on natural resources to earn their incomes

Energy

Civil society views with concern Tobago's reliance on electricity from Trinidad in face of the possibility of extreme events that could disrupt supply.

Civil society:

1. Notes that inroads are being made by some of its members into piloting green energy in Tobago and looks forward to Government support in implementing more sustainable energy practices including solar energy.

Research

Civil society feels that research is important in helping Tobago to make the right decisions when it comes to adapting to climate change.

Civil society:

1. Proposes that parties that are collecting databases of environmental information within the state and non-state sectors should share such with as many Government stakeholders to support decision making that takes climate change issues into consideration for the benefit of all of Tobago.
2. Feels strongly that a more concerted effort must be made by all stakeholders to share knowledge on climate change issues and impacts with each other.
3. Advocates that traditional knowledge, that can build climate change resilience, be shared.
4. Advocates that more meteorological stations should be established and linked to agro-meteorology to support farmers.
5. Proposes that Government initiate research to inform on what types of crops will survive in the changing weather.



Research is important to help make the right decisions to adapt to climate change

Other issues

Civil society also:

1. Wants Government to consult with stakeholders before making key decisions such as siting facilities for fisherfolk.
2. Plans to monitor incentives to make sure they are used appropriately – civil society feels strongly that tax payers' dollars should not be wasted.
3. Wants to stop the *gimme gimme* attitude and instead become more proactive.
4. Wants assistance to strengthen its capacity to act.
5. Wants to promote green living.
6. Feels that it should not be confrontational when dealing with the government.
7. Advocates to Government that policies originating out of multilateral environmental agreements be put into legislation and enforced such as the Forest Policy and the Protected Areas Policy.
8. Believes that its role in monitoring and reporting on negative development actions should include the potential of such actions to exacerbate climate change impacts.

Concluding statements

Civil society in Tobago urges that human induced negative environmental impacts be curtailed so as to reduce our existing and natural vulnerabilities. The time to act is now to reduce Tobago's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

This agenda was developed through interviews and a workshop hosted by CANARI with civil society in Tobago in October 2012. At these discussions, civil society shared its perspectives on current climate change impacts, activities in which they are presently engaged and discussed potential solutions.

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Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for over 20 years.

Our mission is to promote and facilitate equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building and fostering partnerships.

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