



Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guides Association: A local green-blue enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago 2018

CASE STUDY #1: Local Green-Blue Enterprises in the Caribbean

This case study reflects findings of a process using CANARI's **Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar**¹. This is a tool to help local community small and micro-enterprises assess how they are delivering 'triple-bottom line' benefits (economic, environmental and social) and good governance, and what are possible areas for improvement. A focus group session is facilitated with members of the enterprise and they are asked to assess how they think the business is doing based on a set of indicators. Each indicator is discussed, and members agree on a ranking for each. The ranking for each indicator is placed on a spider diagram, which visually represents a snapshot of how the enterprise is delivering benefits. The rich discussion helps members of the enterprise work together to assess how they are doing and areas where they want to grow.

Introduction to the enterprise

The Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association (GRNTGA) is a non-profit, community-based organisation operating as a local green-blue enterprise located within Grande Riviere, a remote village on Trinidad's rugged north coast.

Located about halfway between the villages of Matelot and Toco, Grande Riviere has a population of about 300 people. Many earn a living through nature-based tourism – turtle-watching tours are arguably the most popular activity. This is followed by employment with the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation (a local government agency), which has two work groups based in the village – one maintains access roads, the other handles public health issues. Fishing and agriculture also provide employment but on a smaller scale. The main crops grown in Grande Riviere are bananas, a few pepper varieties, tomatoes and cocoa.



A female leatherback turtle makes her way onto Grande Riviere beach, Trinidad, to lay her eggs. PHOTO COURTESY: DENNIS SAMMY.

Founded on September 1, 1999, GRNTGA is led by a committee which employs people from the community in several programmes/projects. The GRNTGA specialises in environmental conservation and awareness, especially around sea turtles, alongside eco-tourism and other enterprises based on the use of ecosystem goods and services.

¹ See here for more information on the Local Green-Blue Enterprises Radar and CANARI's work:
<http://www.canari.org/programmes/issue-programmes/green-economy>.

The reason for establishment and central focus of the GRNTGA is co-managing Grande Riviere Beach during sea turtle nesting season, when visitors are required by law to obtain a permit to visit the beach. GRNTGA issues permits on behalf of the management authority, the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. GRNTGA ensures that visitors to the beach have the required permits and patrols the beach to protect nesting females and nests. The Association also manages the Grande Riviere Visitor Centre and provides turtle watching tours, which brings income into the group.

GRNTGA members are also involved in projects such as a Tank Husbandry for turtles and a Turtle Hatchery project – both of which are sponsored by a corporate partner, Atlantic (formerly Atlantic LNG). The hatchery includes a series of tanks and requires water and electricity for operation. GRNTGA also provides plants for the National Re-Afforestation Programme operated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and manages a community group that does reforestation as part of this programme.

Several members of the Association are also involved in the Grande Riviere Chocolate Company (GRCC). Established in 2016, the GRCC is a small community project, which supports and develops financially independent, community-owned chocolate businesses and related projects. The Grande Riviere Chocolate Company – which is working towards becoming a registered, for-profit company – uses a room at the Grande Riviere Visitors Centre to produce its chocolate bars and drinking chocolate.



The loose sand of Grande Riviere beach makes it an ideal nesting site for sea turtles, which is why during the main nesting season of March to September, the beach sees an influx of female turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs. The leatherback turtle is one of the most commonly seen sea turtles on Grande Riviere beach each nesting season.



The tank husbandry project managed by the GRNTGA on the compound of the Grande Riviere Visitors Centre. PHOTO COURTESY: CANARI.



Hawksbill hatchlings swimming in the hatchery tank prior to being released back into the wild. PHOTO COURTESY: CANARI.



Abrella Barker, an employee of the Grande Riviere Chocolate Company, grates large bars of chocolate into a bowl to produce the popular Grande Riviere 50% dark drinking chocolate. PHOTO COURTESY: THE GRANDE RIVIERE CHOCOLATE COMPANY.



An open cocoa pod showing the seeds which are used to make chocolate next to a cup of delicious homemade "cocoa tea," a popular local hot chocolate drink with added spices. This was made using Grande Riviere 50% dark drinking chocolate. PHOTO COURTESY: THE GRANDE RIVIERE CHOCOLATE COMPANY.

The Grande Riviere Chocolate Company produces four chocolate products: Grande Riviere 60% dark chocolate; Grande Riviere 60% dark chocolate orange; Grande Riviere 60% dark chocolate cinnamon; and Grande Riviere 50% dark drinking chocolate. The chocolate bars are sold at two major supermarket chains (Xtra Foods and Massy Stores) and at about 15 gourmet stores across the country. This enterprise uses locally produced cocoa beans and oranges and requires electricity to operate its machines. It is part of the Alliance of Rural Communities of Trinidad and Tobago, the vision of which is to support and develop financially independent community-owned rural businesses.

The GRNTGA is a non-profit community organisation, with a cluster of social/ green enterprises within it that help to generate income for the organisation and its members while achieving the overall aims of environmental conservation and community development.

Economic benefits of the enterprise

The GRNTGA provides employment to residents of Grande Riviere and environs who might otherwise have to travel long distances to find work. This is done through members' participation in programmes, some of which require seasonal labour while others employ a small group year-round. Employing people from the community reduces commute times to/from work, which means less money spent on transportation, so employees have more disposable income. A regular income provides residents with financial stability, thus reducing the likelihood of them needing to apply for government assistance.

The projects in which GRNTGA is involved also create economic linkages between the community, its suppliers and customers, as goods are bought and sold, and services used, in the day-to-day operations. For example, visitors to the hotels and restaurants in the village participate in tours conducted by GRNTGA so that they can see nesting sea turtles, which is the main attraction in the area.

GRNTGA members feel that there is room for improvement though in collective ownership/ shareholding. Although many projects have required the hiring of staff, not everyone in a managerial role gets fully paid for what they do. Finding ways to compensate managers for their time and commitment to projects is a matter currently under consideration by GRNTGA. The Association also wants to ensure that future projects include proper compensation for those who agree to manage them.

Environmental benefits of the enterprise

The Association is very good at ensuring its operations do not pollute water courses, the soil or even the air. Much of what GRNTGA does involves environmental protection/sustainable use of the environment, so it is also very good at ensuring its operations do not degrade or destroy biodiversity.

Some members think the Association's water and electricity use can be more efficient. Solar power was suggested as a way of reducing dependence on electricity, the supply of which is sometimes sporadic in Grande Riviere. Whether they use river water or pipe borne water, GRNTGA members agreed to be more conscious of how much water they use versus how much they need and reduce consumption accordingly.



A female leatherback turtle lays her eggs in the loose sand of Grande Riviere beach as children and adults look on. Red lights are used by guides because sea turtles prefer dark, quiet beaches on which to nest. PHOTO COURTESY: TURTLE VILLAGE TRUST.

Social benefits of the enterprise

The use of local goods and services is a big part of both their operations and projects managed by members. If the item/service cannot be sourced within Grande Riviere and environs, members try to find the next nearest supplier. GRNTGA's preference is also for items made in Trinidad and Tobago, to help support other local enterprises.

GRNTGA will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2019 yet the number of individuals who can be relied upon to manage projects has not grown as the organisation has grown. This is a very small community and

generally, the same men and women who helped establish the Association are the ones who end up managing projects, many of which provide employment for others in the community.

Members agree there needs to be more managerial involvement by other committee members as well as encouragement of more of the community's young people to become active members and future leaders.

Governance of the enterprise

All members can access information about the programmes/projects under GRNTGA's purview and are welcome to take on bigger roles in whichever programmes/project/s interest them. The Association is also good at developing and maintaining partnerships with the people/groups they work with, both on research projects and business ventures. However, when it comes to participatory decision-making at a managerial level, there is room for improvement, as most times it is the same group of people who show up to meetings and therefore are the ones making decisions.

Members feel that there is even more room for improvement when it comes to sharing of knowledge and having a common vision and value-driven strategy for GRNTGA. The core group of active members are willing to pass on their expertise, but it seems not that many people are interested in learning these things – more people are willing to be workers than managers. Institutional knowledge currently resides mainly in the memories of the core group, something which they intend to change by putting things in writing, so that knowledge can be easily accessed by current and future members. They also want to ensure succession planning by putting written policies in place about how meetings should run and how leaders should be elected.



Employees of the Grande Riviere Chocolate Company were all smiles at a chocolate sampling event at a local supermarket, Massy Stores. Left to right: Abrella Barker, Shelly-Ann James and Sherry-Ann James. PHOTO COURTESY: THE GRANDE RIVIERE CHOCOLATE COMPANY.

A bright future ahead

Overall, GRNTGA is doing many things right as a local green-blue enterprise, from promoting sustainable use of the environment to providing jobs for community members through its activities.

GRNTGA members identified a few key areas for action to help strengthen the delivery of economic, environmental and social co-benefits and good governance, including:

- becoming more energy efficient and starting to use renewable energy;
- identifying more suppliers of local raw materials;
- developing a greater pool of reliable committee members who would be able to shoulder the burden of running such an active organisation and in the future, take over senior leadership roles currently occupied by founding members of the Association;
- creating a succession plan for leadership roles and formalising its operational policies.

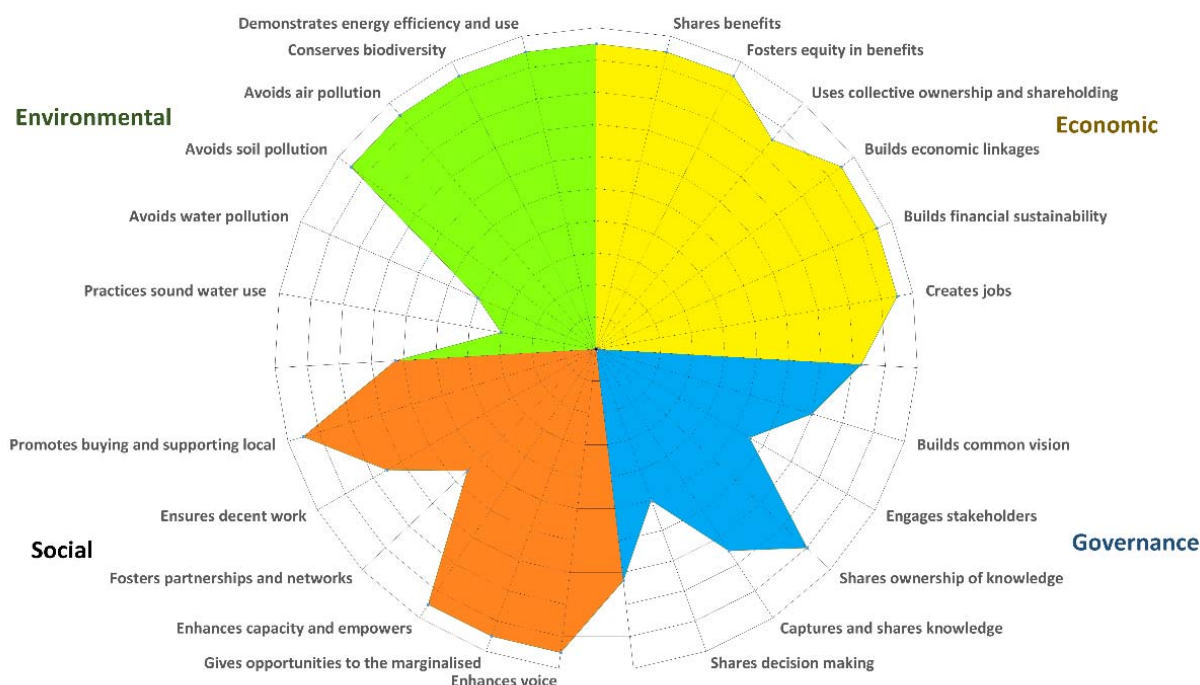
GRNTGA sees itself as a good example of what it means to be part of an inclusive, green and resilient economy. Some members have branched out from the original activity of turtle conservation to chocolate production, others into providing plants for the Government's National Re-Afforestation Programme, among other things. These diverse activities help to ensure the continued provision of sustainable jobs for the community, which otherwise has few employment options. By expanding while remaining true to its original mandate, GRNTGA is a successful example of a local green-blue enterprise that is always seeking new opportunities to provide economic opportunities for its community while protecting the rich natural resources of the area.

“Doing the radar helped us realise we need succession planning and new people to step up to leadership roles...The radar gives you a snapshot of the organisation in a holistic sense - where we have excelled, where we are weak, who is really benefitting from these projects. Certain conversations would not normally take place if they (topics) hadn't been raised by this exercise.” – Len Peters, President of GRNTGA



Members of the GRNTGA (foreground in blue) discuss the benefits of being a local green enterprise prior to using CANARI's Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar tool to assess how their organisation delivers economic, environmental and social co-benefits and ways in which this can be improved. The Radar exercise was facilitated by CANARI at the Grande Riviere Visitors Centre on September 26, 2018. PHOTO COURTESY: CANARI.

Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association Radar



The Radar for the Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association developed by members of the enterprise based on their self-assessment in September 2018. This shows how members ranked the enterprise as being very strong in delivering economic benefits. They also identified opportunities for growth in how they use water, foster partnerships and networks, and develop shared decision-making through succession planning.



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European Union

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