

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS COALITION VALIDATION CONSULTATION REPORT



**Palmville Conference Room
Coco Palm Hotel - Saint Lucia**

May 26, 2015

Report from a Civil Society Organisations Coalition Validation Consultation *organised
and hosted by the Saint Lucia National Trust, 26th May 2015*

The event was funded by the:



Saint Lucia National Trust

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INTRODUCTION

At a Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) consultation on 9th October 2014, CSOs reiterated their dissatisfaction with their level of achievement and ability to meet their mandates, which was attributed to their individual and/or collective capacity constraints as well as the absence of an enabling policy framework to support their efforts. They also expressed that their capacity constraints prevented them from transitioning to becoming effective advocates in their areas of interest. Consequently, they agreed to address these shortcomings by joining together under an umbrella coalition which they perceived as a strategy for enabling them to develop synergies, pursue joint ventures, benefit more fully from capacity development interventions, and strengthen their collective voices in pursuit of their individual mandates. The coalition was also viewed as a mechanism through which CSOs would be able to provide policy inputs into national development planning and as a platform from which to monitor progress towards national development goals.

To this end, a Steering Committee was created to oversee the establishment of a Civil Society Coalition for Sustainable Development in Saint Lucia. The committee met several times over a six months period and deliberated on a number of pertinent matters including the review of a proposed framework and research material presented by a Consultant. The Committee also reviewed and amended the proposed Operational Principles and a Charter for the coalition.

As such the draft Operational Principles and Charter were circulated to all CSOs who were in turn were invited to a half-day civil society validation consultation to review and approve the documents that would serve as the foundation for the establishment of the Coalition. The Consultation was hosted by the Saint Lucia National Trust with financial support from the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) and was held on 26th May 2015 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Palmville Conference Room at the Coco Palm Hotel located in Rodney Bay, Gros Islet.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

The day's sessions commenced with opening and welcome remarks by Ms. Shirlene Simmons, Conservation Manager of the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT). In her remarks Ms. Simmons gave an overview of the GEF-SGP funded CSOs project jointly implemented by the Saint Lucia National Trust and the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology and some of the major achievements of the project. She also acknowledged the contributions of the late Dr. Donatus Keith St. Aimee who was a cultural activist and an advocate for the formation of the Coalition.

Following the introduction of participants, Mr. Bishnu Tulsie, Director of the SLNT, spoke about the requirements for establishing the coalition as a legal person as well as a non-profit organization. He further indicated that the registration process would require the preparation of incorporation documents including the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws for the coalition. Hence, the Operational Principles and Charter will serve as the foundation text for the development of these documents. Once participants clearly understood the process and purpose of the documents, they were projected for all to see, and suggested changes that were unanimously accepted were inserted during the consultation.

Thereafter, Mrs. Joanna Rosemond of the SLNT delivered a presentation on the two CSOs projects funded by the GEF SGP. Mrs. Rosemond's presentation provided an update on the activities completed under the first civil society planning grant from the GEF SGP. Some of these activities included the CSOs consultations convened before and after the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Samoa in September 2015 and an update on the work undertaken by the CSO Coalition Committee that was established at the Post Samoa Civil Society Consultation. Participants were also provided with an overview of the activities that would be completed under the second planning grant for the civil society project, the overall goal of which was "to create a platform for sustained CSO



Photo 1 - Ms. Shirlene Simmons delivering the Opening Remarks.



Photo 2 - Mr. Bishnu Tulsie giving an overview of the CSO Coalition formation process.

consultation, participation and partnership in sustainable development pursuits in Saint Lucia”. Some of the activities mentioned included the establishment and launching of the CSO Coalition; the development of a three-year Strategic Plan and sustainable financing mechanism for the CSO Coalition to include priority elements from the SAMOA Pathway; the development and implementation of a Public Education Outreach programme for the Coalition.

Mrs. Karetta Crooks-Charles then delivered a presentation to the group on Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 which was also referred to as “Access Rights”. The LAC Declaration on Principle 10 was considered to be a political commitment by Governments in the region to actively explore the feasibility of adopting a regional instrument to transform the current mode of the decision-making processes into one that facilitates the meaningful participation of all concerned citizens. Mrs. Charles informed the group that many Caribbean countries had developed legislation that would give effect to Principle 10 but they had not been implemented. She also mentioned that there were currently only twenty signatories from the LAC region, five of which were Caribbean states. As reported by Mrs. Charles, Saint Lucia and Nicaragua were recognized as Observer countries.

Principle 10, as Mrs. Charles explained, originated from the Rio Declaration and was based on three pillars namely, access to information, access to public participation, and access to justice. Mrs. Charles underscored the importance of access rights to sustainable development and the minimization of social conflicts that arose when decisions are taken without the involvement of those who were directly affected, particularly when the natural resources they depended on for their livelihood are negatively affected. It was envisioned that the LAC Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 would provide the following benefits:

- Fewer conflicts between the state and citizens;
- Citizens would have clear expectations of their rights to information and public consultation procedures;
- Provide capacity building opportunities in the form of technical assistance and workshops;
- Channel financial and other support from international and bilateral donor organizations;
- Provide a dedicated secretariat;
- Attract overseas development assistance on Principle 10 related-issues;
- Establish consistent regional standards that would lead to closer integration of countries in the region;
- Create greater political stability within each country.

Therefore, given the tremendous benefits of the Access Rights initiative to civil society, the SLNT believed that it was essential for Saint Lucia and other Caribbean counterparts to sign the LAC Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 while the negotiating process was ongoing and ensure that Saint Lucia’s peculiarities and that of other member states would be considered from the onset. It would also allow Saint Lucia to play an active role throughout the negotiation process. As such Mrs. Charles indicated that the SLNT was working towards ensuring that Saint Lucia takes a decision to sign the declaration by the next meeting of the Negotiating Committee in October 2015.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Participants were very attentive throughout the consultation and provided meaningful feedback on the material presented. Some of the concerns, remarks and recommendations made were:

- a) It is not practical to exclude politics from the coalition as politics formed an integral part of our lives.
- b) Some participants felt that there should be only two categories of membership, financial members and associate members. Associate members were considered to be organisations who shared the vision of the coalition and would like to support its work but were unable to pay dues. Given that some persons felt that the coalition should not deprive members who were unable to pay dues from some of the benefits of membership, it was then recommended that Associate membership should be replaced with non-financial membership. During this discussion the following questions were asked:
 - i. Should there be different categories for payment or should some persons be exempted?
 - ii. Are all members entitled to the same benefits?
 - iii. How does one transition from non-financial to financial membership?

After much discussion, members suggested that there should be three categories namely, full members, non – financial members and observers. Observers were members who were allowed to attend the meetings of the coalition and if they wish to partake in training sessions would be required to pay. Financial members were those whose financial contributions were up to date and were eligible to serve as board members whereas non-financial members would be those whose dues had lapsed and was not paid for up to two



Photo 3 - CSO members voicing their concerns and making recommendations

years. However, some members were of the view that two years was too long to allow organisations to remain non-financial members. Some persons also felt that if after two years non-financial members were still unable to pay their dues, then they should become Associate members, whereas others felt that they should cease to be a member of the coalition. It was also mentioned that some organizations may choose to be Associate members, not because they were unable to pay dues but just because they were interested in following the work of the coalition.

- c) Regarding the section in the Operational Principles about the expulsion of members, some persons suggested that the word 'expulsion' was too harsh, and recommended that the word 'suspension' should be used instead. On the other hand, others thought that both terms should be used because suspension implied a state of temporary exclusion from coalition activities whilst expulsion was permanent. Some also added that not less than three members should file a complaint against another member in order for disciplinary action to be taken.
- d) It was suggested that to facilitate continuity, board members should serve a two year term because the executive may not be able to accomplish much within one year. The outgoing chair shall continue as an ex officio member of the board.
- e) In terms of elections, instead of the 33% required to call an election, it was decided that 25% was a more favourable percentage.
- f) Some members were concerned about the financial sustainability of the coalition and advocated that despite this concern and while the coalition should not limit their sources of funding, they did not want the coalition to become an organization that was dependent on a subvention or dues from the Government.
- g) It was unanimously agreed that the annual reports of the coalition should be made public for transparency reasons and the finances of the coalition should be audited annually.
- h) In an effort to manage the information about the coalition that was disclosed to the public, it was suggested that a knowledge management policy and systems which included information management should be developed for the coalition.

CONSULTATION EVALUATION

Consultation evaluation questionnaires were circulated to participants at the end of the consultation in an effort to obtain information about how effective the workshop was and areas for improvement of future consultations. The conveners of the workshop and the presenters were excluded from the survey list. Twenty-two (22) evaluation forms were completed and the summarized results are presented below.

Question 1: Did this consultation meet your expectations?

The majority (95%) indicated that the consultation met their expectations.

Question 2: How would you rate this consultation in terms of meeting its objectives?

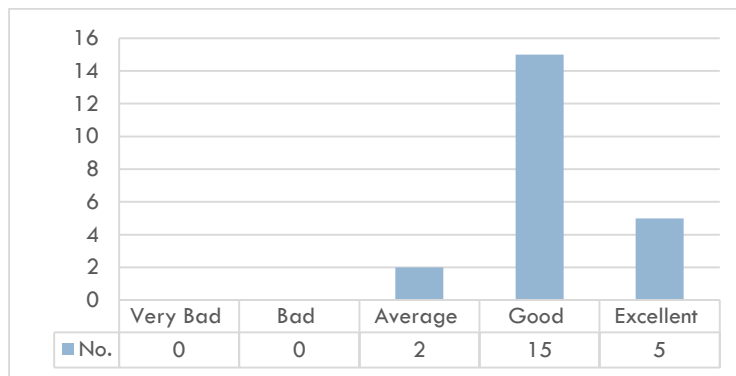


Figure 1 – Rating for Workshop Objectives Met

Most (90%) of the participants felt that the consultation’s objectives were met and two individuals were of the view that it was not exceptional at meeting its objectives but at the same time it was not bad.

Question 3: What would you say are two of the main learning points that you took away with you from this workshop?

There were several repetitions of learnings points by the twenty individuals who responded to this question. Their comments were:

- Charter and Operational Principles presented;
- More informed and better understanding of the purpose of the CSO;
- There is definitely a need for more cohesion between/among CSOs;
- The need for members to commit to the coalition;
- How to become a member and about the membership of the coalition;
- The finances of the coalition;
- The assurance that the CSO coalition will get off the ground soon;

- Reporting of the CSO coalition function will be transparent;
- There are still a lot of details to be worked out for the coalition to take place effectively;
- There is a fine line between associate members and financial members that needs to be addressed to benefit members that really need the help;
- Necessity to be energetic and informed;
- CSO will strengthen the capacity of organizations;
- Members of CSO can benefit from grants and other resources;
- Dissemination of information was good;
- About Access Rights projects;
- About GEF CSO projects;
- Always the same CSOs participating and showing interest when meetings are called;
- The importance of CSOs in the sustainable development of Saint Lucia;
- Requirements and way forward in establishing the CSO coalition in Saint Lucia;
- Importance of CSOs;
- Contribution of CSOs is very necessary for each member;
- There is a lack of information as to the availability of funding for projects;
- The advance stage of the setting up of the coalition;
- Working together with mind and effort is the way forward;
- CSO Coalition Vision and Mission;
- Guiding Principles for CSO Coalition;
- Transparency and accountability.

Question 4: Will you be reporting back to your organisation?

All participants indicated that they will be reporting back to their organisations.

Question 5: Did you represent your organization at the CSO Consultation held on 9th October 2014?

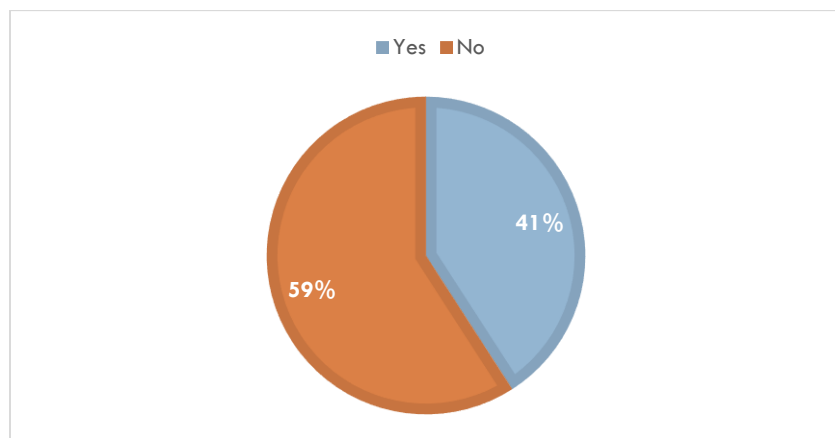


Figure 2 – Previous CSO Consultation Attendance

Nine (41%) participants at the consultations had represented their organization at the previous Consultation held on 9th October 2014 whereas, thirteen (59%) of the participants present were not at the previous consultation.

Question 6: Will your organisation be interested in participating actively in a Coalition of CSOs for Saint Lucia?

Nineteen participants responded to this question and they all indicated that their organization would be interested in actively participating in a Coalition of CSOs for Saint Lucia. One respondent indicated that their agency would be interested in joining the coalition but would be unable to pay membership dues.

Question 7: How would you rate the venue for the Consultation?

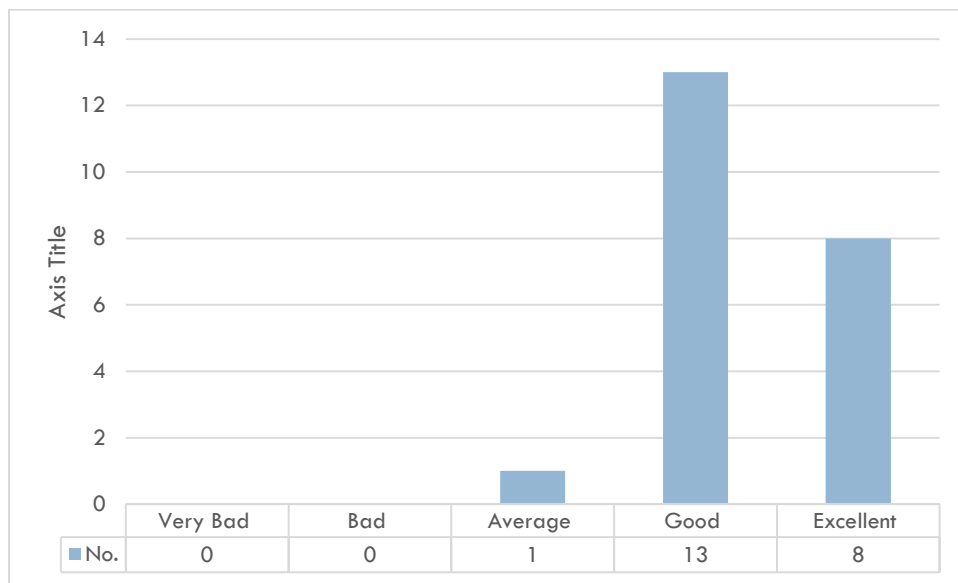


Figure 3: Rating of Consultation Venue

Overall (95%) participants felt that the venue was well suited for the consultation as was reflected by the thirteen (59%) participants who indicated that it was good and the eight (36%) who said that it was excellent.

Question 8: Give one recommendation you would like to make which could improve the quality of future

Twenty-one (95%) participants responded to this question. Thirteen (62%) out of the twenty-one indicated that it was not applicable and the remainder suggested the following:

- Meet with various groups and share this information on a one to one basis;
- Not really sure but something needs to be done to motivate CSO members to come out to the CSO consultations;
- Having desk microphones or ceiling microphones to allow for more interaction;

- Individual groups or members can submit in advance any proposals or plan of action for consideration at the consultation;
- We must be more forceful on points;
- Ensure the participation of all CSOs in development of the coalition;
- Documents should be circulated ahead as well as objectives;
- The information that was sent electronically should also be presented at the meeting on a jump drive or DVD.

Question 9: How would you rate the overall consultation?

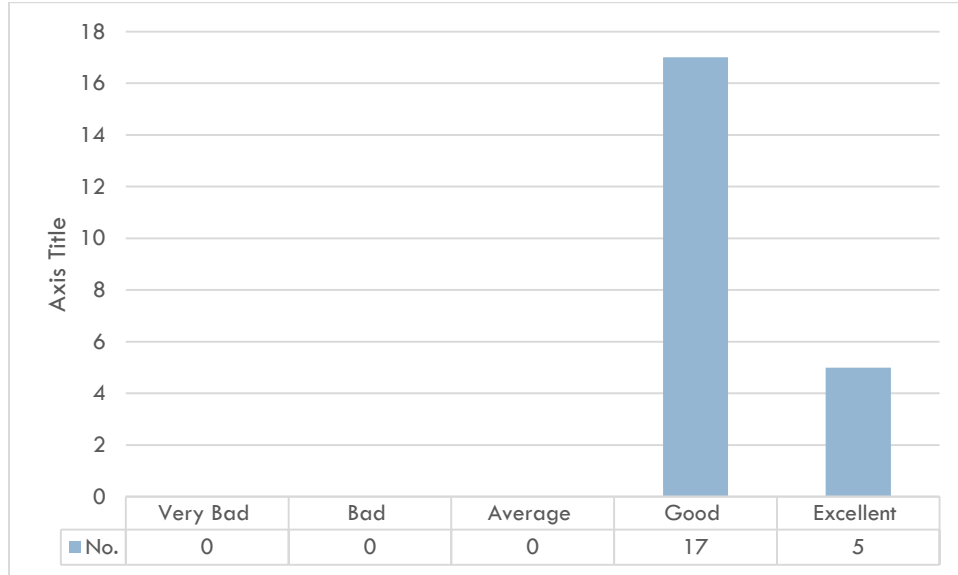


Figure 4: Rating of Overall Consultation

Twenty-two participants responded to this question with 17 persons (77%) indicating that the workshop was good and five (23%) persons who thought that it was excellent. Therefore, it can be concluded that overall (100%) participants thought that the consultation was beneficial.

APPENDIX A – CONSULTATION AGENDA

Civil Society Organisations Coalition Validation Consultation

9:00 a.m.
26th May 2015

*Palmville Conference Room, Coco Palm Hotel
Rodney Bay, Gros Islet*

Agenda Items

1. Welcome
2. Introduction of Participants
3. Presentation of CSO Coalition formation process
4. Review and finalisation of CSO Coalition Charter
5. BREAK
6. Review and finalisation of CSO Coalition Operational Principles
7. Presentation of GEF-SGP CSO Project Phase II
8. Access Rights—“Latin American & Caribbean Declaration on the Application of Principle 10”
9. Way Forward

APPENDIX B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization
Anita James	Back on Track Incorporated
Anthony Norley	La Bourne Youth & Cultural Committee
Augustine Dominique	Laborie Development Foundation
B. Du Boulay	Cultural Development Foundation
Bishnu Tulsie	Saint Lucia National Trust
Chesterfield Octave	National Consumers Association
Debora Pamphille-Mc Lean	Saint Lucia Blind Welfare Association
Delroy Alexander	Sacred Sports Foundation
Donovan Brown	Saint Lucia Dive Association
Emmanuel Alexander	Iyanola Council (ICAR)
Eulympia John	St. Lucia Coalition of Service Industries
Floreta Nicholas	Act Now Generation
Floretta L.Hinds	N.O.W.
Giles Romulus	GEF SGP UNDP
Hilary La Force	Folk Research Centre
Joanna Rosemond	Saint Lucia National Trust
Judy Deterville	In Time Education TV
Karetta Crooks-Charles	Saint Lucia National Trust
Kim Clarke	OECS Commission
Lancia Isidore	National Council of & for Persons with disabilities
Laurent Jean Pierre	Archeological and Historical Society
Martha Mc Lennon	Act Now Generation
Martin Weekes	Saint Lucia Blind Welfare Association
Murlina Murray	Saint Lucia National Trust
Nisha Paul	ECHO Lab
Paula James	St. Lucia Manufacturers
Quanley Marieatte	ATLAS
Shirlene Simmons	Saint Lucia National Trust
Sumitra Jagroop-Leo	Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce
Vincent Clarke	Eco South Tours/ Aupicon Charcoal Producers