



Blanchisseuse fisherfolk highlight challenges in video “Fish for Gas”

Fishers and others from the community of Blanchisseuse on the north coast of Trinidad produced a short video highlighting the challenges that they are facing and presented it to a meeting of key partners who can help them to solve these problems to improve their livelihoods.

The meeting with partners was held on November 30th 2011 and was attended by the Fisheries Division, the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP), the Seafood Industry Development Company Limited (SIDC), and the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO).



Photo 1 Dexter (holding smartphone) captures Clive's interview

A key problem is that there is no gas facility in Blanchisseuse and no current plans by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to install a station there. Fishermen must now rely on an unapproved trade in gas to fuel their boats, which Angelique Balbosa-Philip from NP said was “very troubling”. In return, they sell their fish to the gas vendors, often for a below-market price. Fishermen feel that they have few options, because there is no ice facility at Blanchisseuse so this reduces their ability to store and market fish themselves.



Photo 2 Ramon (standing) interviews Kurt. The two are testing the quality of the video before capture.

Eleven members of the Blanchisseuse community worked together in a two-day workshop in early November to develop a video that told the story of their challenges, how those challenges were affecting the fishers and possible ideas to address those challenges. The participants in this participatory video project were the producers, writers, videographers, narrators and interviewers.

When the video was presented to partners, they found the video very useful in clearly showing the problems that fishermen are facing. Christine Chan-A-Shing, Director of the Fisheries Division, was present at the meeting with partners. She gave the Blanchisseuse team “congratulations in bringing your story out to some of us

who may not know what your story is”. Dexter Black, President of the newly formed Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk and Marine Life Association, noted that they felt proud of their work to produce the video and said that it was a great way to bring in the voices of many members of the Blanchisseuse community. The Association is leading the work to improve the livelihoods of fishermen in Blanchisseuse and played a key role in the production of the video.



The Fisheries Division, NP, SIDC and CNFO all committed to supporting the Blanchisseuse Fisherfolk and Marine Life Association with strengthening their capacity to play a lead role in solving problems facing Blanchisseuse fishermen. Specific follow-up actions were identified, which include partnering with NP and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to identify options to get an approved supply of fuel to Blanchisseuse. Several options for getting a small ice plant in Blanchisseuse were also identified.

The Blanchisseuse community is being supported in the production of the participatory video and follow-up work by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and the University of the West Indies (UWI), who were implementing this pilot project to test the use of participatory video to help fishing communities document challenges they are facing and share these with partners who can help them to address these problems. The pilot project was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The videos were captured on the Motorola Defy smartphones that were used by the fisherfolk courtesy of BG Trinidad and Tobago (BGTT) as part of the mFisheries project being implemented by UWI.

About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 20 years. Our mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing natural resources critical to development. Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships.

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