

Getting the ball rolling;
Soufriere Residents Encouraged to Conceptualize Creative ways to
use their Natural Resources

Residents of Soufriere gathered at The Still Plantation Resort on Monday, April 6, 2009 for an interactive Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) workshop. The GEF/SGP which was established in 1992, sets out to fund environmental projects aimed at reducing poverty while building capacity. Presently, it is administered in 112 countries around the world, providing funding of up to US\$50,000 per project to Community-Based Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Mr. Giles Romulus is the Sub-Regional Coordinator of GEF/SGP for Barbados and the OECS. He was the main Facilitator of what can be described as a charged forum which highlighted the criteria to be met to access grants under the GEF/Small Grants Programme. In addition, the session allowed participants to present, brainstorm and fine-tune their project concepts.

From the on set the participants were encouraged to think of an environmental issue their various groups would like to tackle in any of the five focal areas of the programme; Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Prevention of Land Degradation, Protection of International Waters and Elimination of Persistent Organic Pollutants. As a result, some of the ideas which were thrashed out ranged from "the use of compost to develop a vegetable garden at the Fond St. Jacques Primary School" to "promoting the environment through art".

In addition, several successful examples were cited of GEF's Small Grants Programme in various countries in the region such as the "Transformation of St. George's Grenada into a Green City" and the "Sustainable organic farming and rabbit rearing at St. Paul's Primary School in Barbados" just to name two. With this in mind, the groups were reminded that Saint Lucia, particularly Soufriere, given its World Heritage Site Status has the ability to create viable environmental programmes with an integral revenue generating component.

Environmental projects within Soufriere's World Heritage Site will receive priority funding for the next two years or so from the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme. However, the participants were challenged to finalize their projects soon in order to launch them in conjunction with World Environment Day to be observed on June 5th, 2009.

The one day seminar was organized by The Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) in collaboration with the Soufriere Marine Management Area. Interested Soufriere residents are encouraged to contact the SLNT; the National Focal Point for the GEF/SGP for more information on how to access funding from GEF.

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