

Surveying people's attitudes to protected areas

The “Improving Forest and Protected Area Management in Trinidad and Tobago” project is intended to make a significant impact on the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems in this country. A key component of this, will be positive attitudes and supportive actions of the population towards forest and protected areas. What is the current status of this?

In order to uncover the real feeling of people to our forests and protected areas, it was necessary to undertake a KAP survey - a survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices – very early in the project. Are people generally interested in these sites? Do people know of their existence? Do they see forest and protected areas as important in contributing to their quality of life? Are they aware of threats that these areas face? These are some of the questions that were identified to be used in the surveys for members of communities residing near to the pilot protected areas.

The Environmental Management Authority began to explore these questions by leading on the development of a survey instrument used in the Matura Forest and Coastal Zone Pilot Protected Area. Their survey provided information that would guide the development of a communication strategy for the Environmentally Sensitive Area at Matura. The instrument was subsequently modified an updated survey questionnaire was developed for use in Tobago, to capture the views of people living in close proximity to the pilot protected areas: the Main Ridge Forest Reserve and the proposed North-East Tobago Marine Protected Area.

Support from local agencies

With support from the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) and the Fisheries Division, a team of staff and on-the-job trainees were assigned to undertake the survey activity.

The Project Coordination Unit hosted a one-day training workshop with assigned persons on Thursday 28th July 2016 at THA's Fisheries Division conference room. This interactive workshop was designed to fully equip the young professionals with the requisite skills to conduct the survey and an understanding of the value of the exercise.

Trainees were exposed to the process of identifying the target audience and determining the sample size of the population for the survey. They were encouraged to become familiar with the instrument and advised on the importance of planning the visits to over 20 communities that fringe the



Trainees learn about the project (Top) and later conduct role-play exercises on the conduct of the survey (Bottom).

PPAs. Role play sessions conducted at the end of the workshop, while also very entertaining, signaled that the team was ready to 'hit the road'.

In the field

On the following day, the team headed to Roxborough to initiate the survey. Going out in pairs, the team members were encouraged to assist one another and provide immediate feedback on improved ways of posing questions, relating to the public and time management.

Some twenty-two survey forms were completed by villagers of Roxborough. Many respondents were eager to share their views. Even a respondent from Delaford, who was in Roxborough on the day, indicated that she will have a lot to say when the survey gets to her village.

The survey activity is expected to continue over the next three weeks in Tobago and to generate useful information about the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the local people.

The PCU looks forward to collating the results of this survey, which will assist in development of a public communication strategy on forest and protected areas.



Survey enumerators capture views of residents of Roxborough on forests and protected areas in Tobago