

## CANARIES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The district of Canaries is located between Anse La Raye and the town of Soufriere on the west coast of the island. The site of the Village is at the estuary (mouth) of the Canaries River and its convergence with the Caribbean Sea.

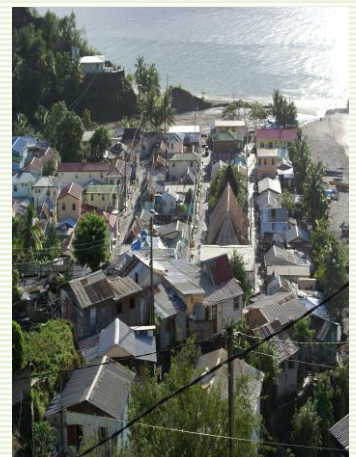
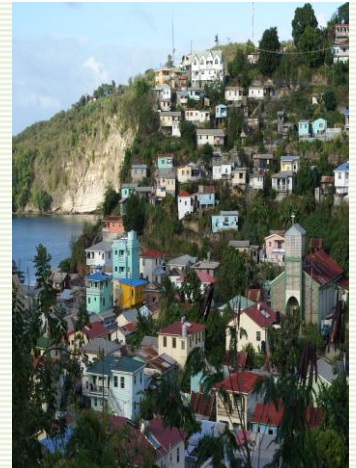
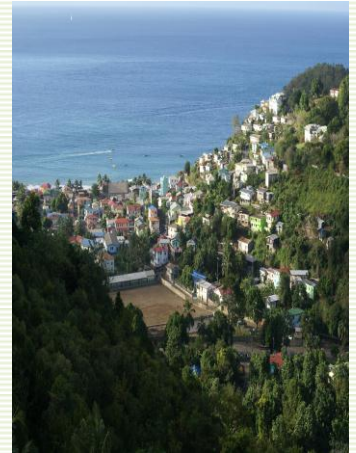
Historically, it is an Amerindian settlement named after an earthen cooking utensil which is called 'canawee'. This small settlement is relatively isolated, being about 32 miles south of the capital city and another 34 miles north of the other major port of Vieux Fort.

The areas that make up this district are:

- Anse Cochon
- Anse Galet
- Anse-la-Verde
- Belvedere
- Chalon
- Flora Villa
- Theodorine
- Canaries Village: Church St, Cork St, Desveaux, Dix St, Extension A, Gray St, High St, Mary Anne St, Riverside Rd, Roseland Av, Savan Area and Upper Cork St.

There are both natural and man-made features that form the resource base of the community. These include:

A. Physical Features: sea, river and waterfall



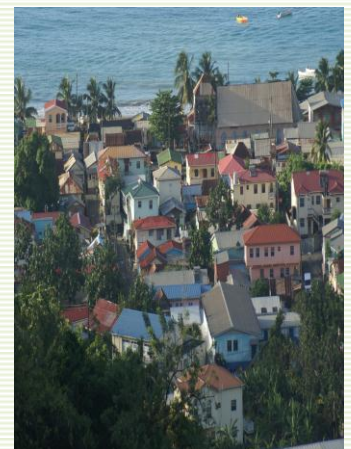
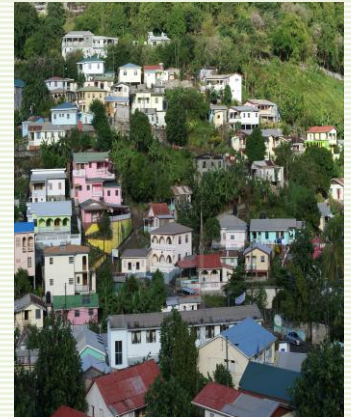
B. Historical Features: remnants of sugar mill, Brigands Sites (war artillery), drains use for irrigation on sugar plantations and Anse la Liberte.

## DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

At the time of the 2010 National Housing and Population census, the enumerated population was 818 persons and 303 households, with an average household size of 2.7 persons. The median age group at the time was 10-15 years followed by 5-9 years cohort. The majority of the community's population is youthful with 63% under the age of 35. The village is among the least populated in Saint Lucia accounting for a mere 1% of the total population.

The main housing clusters are divided by six narrow streets, but are overshadowed by the densely populated rocky cliffs of upper and lower Flora Villa. The outer walls of most houses in the village comprise of wood and concrete.

The main type of land holding is rented and squatting. The land is owned by former residents living in the United Kingdom and so most houses are rented. Due to the size of the lots, the expansion of houses is not possible in the village. Additionally, residential land is not readily available within the community because the available lands are owned by a few individuals and have not been fully developed to facilitate sale.



Canaries has earned the reputation of a ‘migrant community’ in Saint Lucia. A significant part of the village’s population has migrated to the United Kingdom and United States.

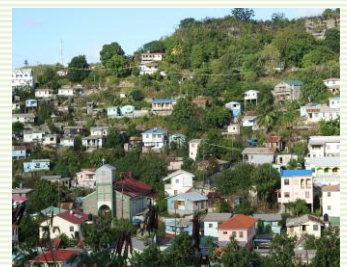
## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES**

The village of Canaries has been given a number of new social infrastructure and services, but many constraints were identified. One notable challenge within the village is that the majority of residents lack water and proper sanitation.

The issue of land tenure has been identified as a major obstacle in residents not being allowed or able to build toilets since house lots cannot be extended to accommodate septic tanks and soak away systems. Another challenge is the rocky topography of Flora Villa, combined with overcrowding in the village.

Therefore, residents are left with little choice and land space than to use the public bath and toilets which the Village Council attempts to operate 24 hours a day. Historically, the river has provided an avenue for communal bonding of villagers as they wash, bathe or perform other domestic duties. However, a difficulty for residents is still access to potable water, as many rely on standpipes for water.

The two schools in the community are the Canaries Infant and Primary schools. One pre-school provides early childhood learning education. The nearest secondary school is located in Soufriere which is about eight miles from the village. There



is also a small library which also provides limited internet access and is mainly used by secondary school students.

A primary health care service is provided by the Canaries Health Centre and the closest hospital is in the neighboring town of Soufriere. The doctor's clinic is only available on Mondays. Unfortunately, if a holiday happens to be on a Monday, the villagers must wait until the next week or visit the doctor in the neighboring communities.

The village has its own ambulance which was provided through the efforts of the villagers and Canaries/UK Association. While this service is important to the village, there are no trained personnel to accompany the ambulance and management of this service is needed.

The basic utilities of water, electricity, telephones and other tele-communication services are easily accessible. The village is served by a Post Office and a Police Station. The village boasts one of the lowest homicide rates on the island. Gun violence is unheard of and reported crimes are generally praedial larceny and a few robberies.

The Roman Catholic Church is the leading Christian denominational group followed by the Seventh Day Adventist. The Pentecostal and Apostolic Churches are the two smaller churches in the village.



Residents have access to the recreational facilities of a playing field and a multipurpose court which needs upgrading. Night time entertainment is generally provided by three discos located in the village and a bi-weekly street party called 'Creole Pot'.

There are many organizations within the community which are involved in a wide range of activities including general community development, sports, recreation, education and cottage industry. They include:

- Village Council
- Canabelle Cooperative Society Ltd
- Creole Pot Committee
- Mothers and Fathers group
- Community Club
- Canaries Sports Group
- Belvedere Development Committee
- Catholic Parish Council
- Sports Committee

Other services in the community include a gas station, grocery shops, bakery, rum shops and supermarket.

The community is served by nine mini-buses on the Canaries/Castries route. There is no organized bus schedule and commuters are not always adequately facilitated. However, the buses usually operate from 6:00 am and 5:00 pm on weekdays and up to 6:00 pm on weekends.



Many who are eager to pursue studies from evening classes are unable to travel on evenings due to the unavailability of a bus service. Since there is no organized bus service for the Canaries/Soufriere route, residents are forced to travel to Castries to conduct most of their business transactions.

## ECONOMIC LIVELIHOOD

The significant forms of livelihood within the community are its traditional fishing activities, the making of cassava cakes and subsistence farming. The Construction and Public Service are the other areas of employment. The Village Council which is the local government arm plays an essential role in providing employment to several residents.

The male dominated fishing sector represents the main income-generating activity with a total of 18 canoes and an estimated 50 – 60 males employed. According to the fishermen, the main problem in sustaining this livelihood is the facility used for landing and departure. The wave action and sand deposits make it very difficult for the fishermen. Zion, a resident of the village complained, *‘They build a jetty on the other side of the beach, but the type of boats that we have, we cannot use it. It was built for tourist boats to stop and visit Canaries, but the tourists are not coming here. We should have received the money to help fishermen instead with a fishing complex.’*

It is important to note that Canaries never participated or gained from the booming banana industry in the 1980s. This is due to the rocky topography of the village which limited



farming and also the relatively far distance to the sea port in Castries and Vieux-Fort.

However, there are farmers who have toiled the land on small holdings which is not very accessible. These farmers who once engaged in subsistence farming are now retiring due to age and strength which threatens to deprive the community of food. The farming activities are characterized by root and tree crops mainly for the domestic consumption. One important root crop cultivated is the cassava plant, utilized for the making of a range of flavored cassava bread cakes and farine. This enterprise is undertaken by many households, but is increasingly dominated by a small family business, 'La Plas Casav' (the cassava place).

The Canaries Creole bread is becoming increasingly known around the island. Many commuters traversing the west coast to Soufriere would often stop to sample and purchase this delicious bread which has made its way to the shelves of a major outlet in the city.

The village is a huge recipient of remittances, gifts, barrels (food and non-food items imported to the island in barrels) and other contributions made through its high migrant population in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. While these remittances are largely un documented, the existing anecdotal evidence suggests that the volume of remittances distinguishes Canaries from other villages in St. Lucia.



In addition to the family remittances and gifts, the formation of a Canaries/UK Association catalysed numerous investments in education, health and sporting facilities and care for older persons within the Village.

The village has begun to take advantage of the tourism industry through the 'Creole Pot' activity and a few sightseeing tours such as the water fall. The Creole Pot festival was designed to create an income-generating opportunity for residents, especially the unemployed young females. The festival is seeking to attract the growing tourist sector and local residents throughout the island. The activities include a visit to Canaries to share in a 'local brand' of cooking with live musical and cultural performances.

### **POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY**

The Government of St. Lucia and the Caribbean Development Bank 2005/2006 Poverty Assessment revealed that the enumeration district of Canaries, which also constitutes the district of Anse la Raye, was the poorest on the island with 44.9% of residents living below the poverty line and an indigence rate of 5.3%. These figures were far below the national averages of 28.8 % and 1.6% respectively.

With the highest rates of poverty on the island, Canaries is easily considered one of the more economically distressed





areas in Saint Lucia, with high unemployment and low family income.

The experiences of poverty in Canaries conveyed three significant constraints. The first is that unemployment was central to the understanding of poverty within Canaries. The research participants held that the absence of jobs and income-generating opportunities created relations of dependence within the Village among residents.

Another associated issue was the low levels of educational attainment and skills endowments among villagers to secure employment with reasonable wages. Adleen, a resident of the village captured the unemployment situation by stating *“In Canaries, unemployment is so high; if the young persons travel to look for jobs, the money is not enough because of the transportation costs. Another thing is that although they have left secondary school, the qualifications and skills are lacking. Unemployment is the main problem here among a lot of young girls and boys”*.

The second significant idea of poverty in Canaries was the ‘age-specific’ experiences particularly among children, young mothers and older persons. It was outlined that every day was a struggle for households of young women and their children, older persons whose children migrated and individuals who abused alcohol and illegal drugs. Andria, a community health worker and leader held that “the poor economic situation and loneliness of older persons” were intolerable experiences. Moreover, the community health worker outlined that young



women had multiple sex partners, numerous children and engaged in risky sexual behaviour. Andria outlined that the lifestyle displayed low self-esteem and apathy and the need for a change of mindset among young women.

The third notion of poverty was the historical account given regarding neglect in developing the main economic and social sectors. The residents held that there was too much dependence on *trans-local assistance and gifts* in the village experience of the village. The villagers argued that the reliance on fishing, migration and remittances in the village was significant and there was very little investment made by successive governments in Canaries

According to the 2001 Housing and Population Census, the village had the highest unemployment rate which was twice the national average at 34.7 %. The unemployment rate among females was alarming at 50% as few employment opportunities exist in the village. Men were mostly employed in fishing and agriculture.

### THE VISION

In 2005, the Canaries Community Club conducted a visioning exercise with community residents who expressed their determination to improve four specific areas in the village. These include economic livelihood, education and training, social infrastructure and disaster mitigation in order to advance the development of the village. The residents articulated goals and strategies for each of these areas of the development.



## A. Economic Activity:

Create economic opportunities by building on the strengths within the community and nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship to allow every resident the opportunity to earn an income in order to raise their standard of living. This should be achieved by the development of the community tourism product by:

- Identifying and developing community sites
- Improving the community's accommodation service
- Promoting Heritage/Eco Tourism Sector
- Developing the community's handicraft and cultural sector
- Developing the marine tourism sector
- Promotion of investment and locally owned enterprises
- Increasing the volume of agricultural produce and the fish catch
- Establishing a fish processing sector

## B. Education and Training

Facilitate access to a variety of educational programs and encourage lifelong learning to ensure that residents are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate employability by supporting them through various structures. The objectives to achieve this goal will be to:

- Create a sense of community 'ownership' of schools



- Emphasize soft skills in the schools such as discipline, self esteem and self motivation
- Provide access to computer learning and internet
- Increase the community's capacity to conduct research on social issues
- Expand after school classes to offer tuition in more areas
- Create a mechanism to source funding and provide bursaries for needy students
- Create opportunities that will produce a skilled labor force
- Promotion of the arts, cultural heritage and environmental education
- Identification of indigenous plants and animal species in the community

### C. Social Infrastructure:

Pursue a safe, clean and friendly community where residents have strong community pride and spiritual values. Residents will take responsibility for the environment; have access to adequate healthcare and affordable housing. An effective transportation system is also desired and recreational opportunities for all ages. To achieve this goal, the residents will:

- Refurbish existing facilities and construction of new facilities
- Proper management of public facilities
- Improve the management of solid waste
- Eliminate indiscriminate defecation
- Improve working conditions for sanitary workers
- Increase the number of residents with access to toilet facilities



## D. Disaster Mitigation

Lower the vulnerability of residents to the effects of natural and manmade disasters to an acceptable level by systematically identifying risks and work cooperatively on risk reduction initiatives. This will be done by reducing the effects of flooding, storms and hurricanes and also minimize fires.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The residents of the village have identified the cottage industry sector as leading the advancement of social and economic development. These are embodied in the following priorities:

### Refurbishment of Old Church

This venture intends to add to the tourism asset pool. It aims to develop an Art Gallery and thus improve the aesthetics of the village. It is also hoped that it will facilitate the continuation of the Canabelle Cooperative Project (soap making) thereby providing an employment avenue for residents. This undertaking is estimated at EC\$563,585.80

### Refurbishment of Village Square

This initiative also aims to enhance the general aesthetics of the village. As a result, this should nurture a sense of community pride among residents while complementing the tourism asset pool. It is envisaged that the Square will facilitate income generation for residents and provide a much needed recreational space.



The Canaries Village Square Development Project has been estimated at EC \$220, 100.00. Its refurbishment will feature walkways, a gazebo, benches, lighting and landscaping.

### **Development of the Canabelle Cooperative Society**

In 2003, the Government of Saint Lucia under the Rural Enterprise Project trained single unemployed mothers in basketry and natural soap manufacturing. The project selected the poorest villages on the island, which included Canaries. As result, Canabelle became a women’s soap cooperative and the first local soap making venture on the island. The initiative now produces eighteen varieties of quality medicated and natural handmade soap from indigenous plants and spices. The local plants and materials used for soap making include sulphur, glory cedar, cucumber, nutmeg, aloes, hibiscus, lemon grass and bayleaf. The natural soap products are sold on a small scale at gift shops, hotels and pharmacies.

The remaining priorities are the Interpretation Centre and Stride Herbs Processing Plant.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN**

It is envisioned that Canaries Community Club which is a nonprofit organization will facilitate the implementation of this plan. This organization has a full complement of executive members and will be periodically trained in areas such as organizational leadership, managing finances, and understanding key roles of executive members among others. This entity will serve as an umbrella body for other



organizations and institutions for partnering in the development of the community and will be managed by a Board of Directors.

### **Origin of the Community Plan**

This community evolved from a number of processes over a period of time where opportunities were given for resident voices to be heard through:

Focus Group Meetings with random selection of participants

Community assessments

Interviews of key stakeholders including men, women, fishers, children, professionals

- Qualitative and quantitative data analysis from established institutions
- Community Resource Sheet
- Community profile
- Consultations on local issues
- Community surveys
- Community Meetings
- Strategic Development Plan for Canaries

