

# Resilient Caribbean Communities Newsletter 5.

Upsa - Cuba

## My productive yard, an alternative way of life

As part of the CCR project, scientific and investigative tasks have been carried out at the intervention sites. Always incorporating environmental education through the introduction and exchange of knowledge, traditional practices have been intertwined with science and technology. Among the relevant topics, the landscape ecology approach is worth mentioning, as in the intervened areas it is appropriate to establish short-cycle crop agriculture exclusively in those sites with slopes less than 8%, in small valleys.

To support this activity, efforts are made to promote family agriculture in the backyard of homes, as well as food production in agroforestry and agrosilvopastoral systems. Meeting these precepts significantly increases food production with local impact, contributing to food sovereignty and security, with a more harmonious connection to the environment. Hence the initiative called "My Productive Yard" emerged, with the vision of turning the fences of the yards and demarcations into living fences using, for example, passion fruit as a vine to form a green chain over these enclaves while providing food.

In this way, a new agro-landscape is created, with a new social and ecological contribution, encouraging optimal use of yards and strengthening the livelihoods of people in communities.



Concert-Action - Haiti

## Field visit: how cabbage builds trust

In a few weeks, Dieudonné Silfrard's cabbage will be ready for harvest. He is very excited for his family to soon taste his cabbage. In addition to eating it themselves, he wants to sell the leftover cabbage at the local market. Cabbage is not only part of the Silfrard family's diet but is also a popular ingredient in Haitian cuisine. Selling at the market brings additional income to the family. Money that the family can put to good use in an economically and politically unstable time.

Dieudonné Silfrard is one of the participants in the CCR project, whom Jonas Baumann from OroVerde, along with Hanna Maas from Welthungerhilfe, met during their field visit in February. Cabbage cultivation has taken on a key role in the project. It is there to sow trust. In the long run, the Haitian organization Concert-Action plans to create an agroforestry system in the family's field. However, the trees needed for this need time to grow and bear fruit. Therefore, cabbage has a "double function": it ensures short-term income and food and, at the same time, guarantees the care of tree seedlings.

The agroforestry system on the Silfrard family property is one of the planned solutions from a wide range of Concert-Action measures. The long-term goal is to restore local ecosystems so that people and nature become more resilient to future extreme weather events. In technical terms, these solutions are known as Ecosystem-based Adaptation measures (EbA). However, they can only be successfully implemented if people's livelihoods are also considered in the current crisis situation.

Taking this into account, Concert-Action also provides project participants with vegetable seeds. The seeds are grown at home and multiplied there to strengthen families' autonomy. This makes them less dependent on the country's generally difficult supply situation. These strategies by the Haitian organization allow for sustainable and long-term solutions even in difficult conditions.





*Bioeco - Cuba*

## CCR in Las Guásimas: on the way towards resilience

In the Baconao Biosphere Reserve, just 9.8 km from Santiago de Cuba, lies the Las Guásimas watershed, one of the intervention areas of the Caribbean Communities Resilient project. In this watershed, currently degraded due to inappropriate management in the area, are the communities of Las Guásimas, El Sapo, La Caridad, La Estrella, El Refugio, and part of El Brujo, with an estimated population of over 1500 inhabitants. Livestock farming and agriculture constitute the fundamental economic activities in this zone.

Among the environmental problems in this area, deforestation is evident due to the establishment of grazing areas, intensive agriculture, and intensive logging. In addition, there are various difficulties with water supply, as the population growth has led to a reduction in the flow of this watershed.

As part of the Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) measures toolbox, the CCR project is promoting and contributing to the reforestation of the area. Rainwater harvesting systems are being installed during the first months of 2024 to improve access to water. This aims to restore ecosystem services in degraded areas, prioritizing biodiversity conservation and the adaptation of local communities to climate change.

*From the project*

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## Knowledge exchange for EbA



As part of the CCR project implementation in Cuba, Kristina Osen, an Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) specialist from the NGO OroVerde, shared valuable knowledge with researchers from the Eastern Center for Ecosystems and Biodiversity (Bioeco) and the Budgeted Unit for Environmental Services (Upsa), during a mission in March 2024.

Her visit to communities in the Alejandro de Humboldt National Park and the Baconao Biosphere Reserve provided a space for exchanging experiences to address the challenges of climate change. Conversations with local residents revealed practical strategies, such as crop diversification, to mitigate the effects of droughts and heavy rains, demonstrating that academic knowledge and local wisdom are powerful tools when combined for a common goal.

*Welthungerhilfe Thiotte - Haiti*

## Rehabilitating community cisterns in Grand-Gosier

To improve water availability in the localities of Boulay, Kay Anri, and Zegwi, in the municipality of Grand-Gosier, rehabilitation works have begun on four community cisterns in these areas. Additionally, road rehabilitation activities leading to these localities have been carried out to facilitate the supply of materials to the work sites.

During the first quarter of the year, 2024, works have been underway in two of these four projects, Zegwi and Kay Anri (Anwo Anri). These actions will improve water supply for over 400 families and will be used to irrigate the pomegranate plant nurseries planned in these areas. These actions aim to better address the effects of climate change such as prolonged droughts, decreasing annual rainfall, and increasingly extreme and erratic downpours.



Upsa - Cuba

## Reducing forest fires for EbA



Forest fires are natural phenomena that originate from different causes. Being prepared to prevent and face them is a concern and determined goal of the labor team of Resilient Caribbean Communities. In synergy with the National Environmental Strategy (CITMA, 2016), we seek to prevent, among others, soil degradation, deforestation, and loss of biological biodiversity.

In this sense, preventive measures intentional work has been carried out in targeted manner to mitigate these phenomena by combining active systems with passive ones: the main importance of firebreak systems in the study areas lies in their possibility of combining them with active systems for protection against forest fires. Therefore, it is defined as prudent to make fewer trails in the protected areas where the project intervenes and combine more with active methods to fragment the habitat less, following the concept (according to Primack et al., 2001) that one of the habitat degradation processes that commonly leads to the extinction of populations, species, or communities is precisely the fragmentation of the habitat.

As an EbA measure related to the reduction of wildfires in the CCR work areas, work has continued during the first quarter of 2024 to strengthen passive systems for fire containment (firebreaks and roads). In this context, 18 km of firebreaks were constructed and 5 km of neighborhood and forest roads were preserved to maintain the prevention.

Welthungerhilfe Thiotte - Haiti

## Training to combat forest fires

The measures to reduce forest fires are closely linked to EbA, as forests are crucial for preserving biodiversity, regulating climate, conserving soil and water, and protecting ecosystem services. By training local communities and improving their response to forest fires, their capacity to adapt to environmental changes is strengthened. Furthermore, by protecting forest ecosystems and biodiversity, these measures contribute to maintaining ecosystem resilience to climate change. In this context, 9 training sessions were conducted from February 28th to March 9th, with a total of 46 participants, including members of civil protection, environmental agents, and municipal brigades in the CCR project communities. This training provides them with the ability to respond in an organized and timely manner to potential forest fires in their communities.

Centro Naturaleza - Dominican Republic

## CCR at the traditional Agricultural Fair in Villa Los Almácigos



The Agricultural Fair, an event that combines tradition with community effort, is a grand exhibition where agricultural producers and others come together to share the fruit of their labor. This annual gathering does not only highlights the diversity and richness of agriculture but also fosters the exchange of sustainable knowledge and practices that promote growth and development in vulnerable rural communities where the CCR project intervenes.

Thanks to the collaboration of various organizations working for the sustainable development of vulnerable rural communities, such as the Centro Naturaleza, Caritas Diocesana, and Plan Sierra, and the support of local authorities such as the Villa Los Almácigos City Council, the Agricultural Fair was successfully held in March 2024.

In this activity, various communities involved in the Resilient Caribbean Communities Project came together to market their agricultural products. The fair is a celebration of life, nature, and community. This is an event that motivates community members to promote good practices in agriculture, practices that strengthen local knowledge and at the same time contribute to an increased resilience of ecosystems by strengthening their adaptability to the effects of climate change.





Enda - Dominican Republic

## Strengthening gender perspective in the CCR Project: gender assesment and training workshops

With the aim of strengthening the gender strategy of the CCR project, a gender assesment and seven training workshops for gender leaders were carried out in the months of February and March 2024, adopting a practical and pragmatic point of view. The measure is intended to contribute to analyzing and conducting project actions from a gender-sensitive perspective by promoting horizontal power relations within families.



Initially, a gender assesment was conducted using a participatory methodology that included interviews and focus groups, among other activities, which made it possible to identify good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations that become a motivation to strengthen the gender perspective from a transformative gender approach.

As a result of the assesment, opportunities to be reflected upon by the project team, leaders, and project leaders were identified. It underscores once more the necessity to always consider a perspective that is sensi-

tive and raises awareness of the importance of providing opportunities for women to access opportunities within the project equitably.

The challenge remains for the project to continue integrating actions that allows a horizontal and collaborative power relationship between men and women; which means that technical teams must keep increasing their capacities to enable women to integrate themselves into activities traditionally implemented by men.

Five training workshops were conducted for male and female leaders in the municipalities of Cercado and the Guaybín basin, accompanied by Centro Naturaleza and Enda Dominicana, addressing concepts such as identity and equity, productive and reproductive work, practical needs and gender strategies, difference between sex and gender, the latter analyzed as a social construction.

## The project

The Resilient Caribbean Communities (CCR) project, implemented in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, aims to develop nature-based solutions and adaptations to the impacts of climate change in the Caribbean Biological Corridor. The project employs a participatory approach, focusing on working directly with community members to strengthen the ecosystems on which they depend.

Learn more here: <https://www.ccr-project.com/home/> & [CCR Facebook](#)

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