

**Report on UNESCO Small Island Voice activities in St. Kitts and Nevis at the SIV Planning meeting in Bequia-11 to 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2005** \-

**by Antonio Maynard-National Coordinator.**

**Introduction and Background**

The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is located in the Caribbean Sea, midway between Puerto Rico to the North and Trinidad and Tobago to the South. It has a land size of 168 sq km in St. Kitts and 93 sq km in Nevis. The country enjoys a tropical climate with little changes in seasonal temperature, with a volcanic and mountainous interior, where the hurricane season runs from June to November. With a population of 38,736, 29% of the people are between the ages of 0-14, 62% between the ages of 15-64, and 9% are 65 years and older.

In December of 2001, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis was invited by UNESCO to be the focal country in the Caribbean for the Small Island Voice initiative. Since its inception on St. Kitts and Nevis, when it was launched in 2002, a strong foundation has been truly laid, and it is now strategically poised to continue to tackle the many pertinent environment and development issues in the Federation.

## **The Foundation**

A National Coordinating Committee was established, and is comprised of three Sub-Committees, Namely: Public Relations/Media, Display board, Education and Administration Sub-Committee. It comprised of representatives from a wide cross section of stakeholders, including: Government Departments, Media Houses, Civil Society, non- Government organization, and the Education fraternity. As a matter of fact, just recently, the capacity of the Committee has been strengthened to include even a broader representation.

In order to market and promote this project effectively, a number of promotional materials were produced. These include:

- Folders,
- tee shirts,
- a sixty -second radio and television Jingle
- three very colorful billboards were also erected in St. Kitts, which high light the name of the project,
- The UNESCO slogan, and its logo, was also produced locally.

Through its many and wide-ranging public relation programmes, including talk shows, panel discussions, Radio and Television programmes, as well as regular advertisements on the electronic Media, the project has now become a household name in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Over the past two to three years, the S.I.V. Project has helped to strengthen the Federation's views, not only in the area of environment and Development, but on many current social issues. In order to help accomplish this, one of the first activities that were conducted was a comprehensive National Survey in 2002, wherein the general public had an opportunity to give their opinion on issues of concern to civil society. As a result, we were able to prioritize the issues that impact the society.

### **The Internet Forum**

Subsequently, several pieces of Equipment were acquired through this initiative, in order to help facilitate the views and opinions of the general public and, in particular, the students. These were used for the primary purpose of establishing the Internet –based Youth forum.

The Internet Forum was launched on July 14, 2003, in St. Kitts, and on June 8, 2004 in Nevis. Here students are encouraged to communicate

globally with each other by posting articles to and receiving responses from their counterparts in the other regions. This aspect of the project has been going reasonably well, however, there is a need to restructure this forum in order to make it more user- friendly and interactive.

### **Public and Panel Discussions**

The sensitization of the general public on Environment, Development and social issues on St. Kitts and Nevis continues to be the hallmark of this project. Between March and November of 2004, the committee conducted a series of radio panel discussions on a variety of social and environmental topics. These discussions capture the imagination of the general public, and persons ventilated their views on topics such as:

- Do advantages outweigh the disadvantages of employing foreign workers in the Federation?
- Should local farmers be the sole suppliers of fresh fruits and vegetables to locally based resorts?
- Is there a link between unemployment and crime, and by extension, youth violence?

- Is the popularity of new technologies creating an environment for the increase in crime and violence in society?
- How will the construction and completion of the west Basseterre by-pass road affect the environment?

### **Back Chat Programme**

The National Coordinating Committee is of the view that if this project is to be sustained, much emphasis has to be placed on the young people in the Federation. As a result, the SIV "Back Chat" group was established and launched on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2004, from within the Secondary Schools in both St. Kitts and Nevis. During the course of 2004, the "back chat" group executed a number of activities. These included:

-radio programmes, including interviews with the students themselves.

- The publication of a news letter from both St. Kitts and Nevis groups separately.

-The two groups also visited the rain forest in St. Kitts, in order to experience for themselves the best examples of our natural environment.

-The student also took part in the Internet forum discussions on a regular basis.

-In September of 2004, the backchat group took part in the Ocean conservancy Beach clean -up activities.

- On February 17, 2005 several students and member of SIV held a simple but touching candle light vigil to share and send their sympathy to their colleagues in the region that was affected by the Tsunami disaster.

### Youth Visioning Segment

Other Youth activities with in the project include the fact that, in 2003 Mr. Samal Duggins, a CFBC student got the opportunity to travel to Seychelles, in the Indian Ocean, and to Palau in the Pacific region as the SIV ambassador of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Also, the Activities towards Mauritius for the **Youth Visioning for Island Living event**, were launched in May 2004. An essay competition on sustainable development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held to select two young persons to represent the Federation at that meeting, held in Mauritius along side the conference to review the implementation of the programme of action, for the sustainable

Development of Small Island Developing States, in Mauritius from 7-12 January 2005.

Mr. Fadil Imo and Kennedy Pemberton represented the Federation at the Youth Visioning for island living meeting, firstly by being in St. Lucia for a meeting for orientation and information sharing purposes, and then to the meeting itself in Mauritius.

As a result, our delegation to the Mauritius conference returned with many ideas and a wealth of information which is being disseminated, via extensive radio and television interviews. Also, as another result, the S.I.V. project and in particular the **Youth visioning for Island living** segment of the project, took on a new precedence, and we are now working in collaboration with two participation projects that are labeled SIV associated, and were approved with in the UNESCO program and budget for 2004-05.

These two associated projects are entitled: "Community out Reach Project", and Students of Universal Love, which will help to ventilate some of the critical social issues of SIV, especially those that emanate out of the Mauritius meeting.)

Further, the National Coordinating Committee has put forward a proposal with a set of new ideas and activities for the year 2005.

**The activities of the Education Sub-Committee include:**

**1. Newsletter**

The news letter will capture the current issues among the young people in the country and with in the secondary schools in particular. Each of the six participating high schools in the Back Chat group will use the newsletter as part of a Geography class in this instance.

**2. School Visits**

The group will visit the six high schools over a 3-week period to share the messages and gather feed back concerning environmental and social issues.

**3. The Survey in the schools**



A survey will be conducted in each of the six participating high schools. The survey will seek to get the students perspective on various issues ranging from education, sex, employment, and so on. The result of the survey will be documented and placed on the SIV Website.

#### **4. The Environmental Challenge**

Each participating school will engage itself in an environmental exercise.

The exercise will include:

- i. Identifying an environmental issue
- ii. Researching the issue via the use of media, field trip and interviews
- iii. And finally, documenting the exercise in totality.

#### **5. Field Trips**

The group will make 3 field trips during the period APRIL 2005 to DECEMBER 2005. The places to be visited are: Tortola and /or Montserrat for the primary reason to spread the SIV program on those islands. In April

of this year, 2005, the National Commission of The British Virgin Islands sent an officer from their Commission on an attachment in order to learn more about SIV, with the intention of implementing it in Tortola.

- i. The other field trips include visits to the volcano on St. Kitts and to the historical sites on Nevis in order to bring focus to these sites.

## **6. Group Social Gathering**

The group will hold 2 social gatherings:

- i. A banquet to show appreciation to the students who took part in the Environmental Challenge
- ii. A closing ceremony and buffet for the Back Chat Group

### **Activities of the Public Relation Sub-Committee include:**

The Public Relations Sub-Committee of the UNESCO Small Islands Voice Project has launched a programme that consist of a series of **Opinion Spots** on the Tsunami disaster in comparison with the Hurricanes

and their possible implications for small island developing states, as well as the imminent closure of our sugar industry.

The Tsunami opinion spots are an attempt to empathize with the people who have been affected by the disaster, and to express our own vulnerability when faced with similar disasters, Whereas the sugar industry opinion spots will seek to sensitize the local and international community on the changes that will be taking place as a result of the closure of the sugar industry.

We are therefore capturing the comments from several persons and stake holders in these particular areas of interest in the country via audio and /or video recordings. They were asked to respond briefly to two questions in relation to the Tsunami disaster:

- (1) How do you feel about the Tsunami disaster in comparison with a Hurricane disaster?**

**(2) If a similar disaster were to take place here, what would you do?**

Also, they were asked to respond briefly to one (1) question in relation to the sugar industry: **“What are the possible social and environmental consequences of the closure of the sugar industry”?**

In addition, there are two other current developments that the committee is monitoring, namely:

- The Fishing Complex that is being built on a heritage site in the town of Old Road.
- And a Dolphin Park that is being constructed on one of our most popular beach-Friars Bay. These projects are causing much concern.

**Other activities of the Public Relation sub-committee include:**

- Television Interviews

- A documentary that chronicles the SIV project since its inception in St. Kitts and Nevis.
- Panel Discussions
- Beautification & Promotional Efforts

In addition to the activities in 2005, Independent Researcher Ms. Darcy Nugent visited the Federation from the 27<sup>th</sup> February – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005, to evaluate the UNESCO Small Islands Voice Internet Forum and associated programmes such as the “Back Chat” group during the course of this year. Ms Gillian cambers also paid us a visit.

### **Future ideas and plans**

- To restructure the Internet Forum.
- To involve other small Caribbean islands in the project.
- To have closer cooperation with other Caribbean islands involve in the project.
- To sponsor and support more high profile events on the islands

- To embark more on information sharing through out the network of islands, via websites, radio and television programmes news letters, emails and other means.
- To bring more information to the forefront in relation to developmental projects and its impact on the environment.

### **Challenges**

- Obtaining information from pertinent sources on developmental projects.
- Late payments form Head Quarters in Paris and Caribbean Cluster office in Jamaica.
- Coordinating activities with the outer island.