



## TRINIDAD & TOBAGO'S EXPERIENCE

### TITLE: Infrastructure to Develop Deprived Communities in East Port of Spain



**Country:** Trinidad and Tobago

**Institution:** East Port of Spain Development Company Limited

**Other institutions involved:** Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)

**Webpage:** <http://www.eposdctt.com>

#### Context

East Port of Spain is a network of diverse communities covering an area of 6,791 acres (2.7 hectares) located within the metropolitan district of Greater Port of Spain and has a population of approximately 95,000 persons in 27,000 households<sup>1</sup>.

The communities are quite diverse in terms of size and demographic composition; however, they display many similarities in their physical and socio-economic characteristics. Some communities are vulnerable to poverty, crime, and violence, and residents do not benefit from the economic growth experienced nationally. Living conditions are typically poor, and many residents experience a range of livelihood challenges including, but not limited to, poor access to basic sanitation, sewerage disposal facilities, water supply, electricity, and utilities; poor solid waste management; inadequate vehicular and pedestrian access; inadequate and unsafe housing; inadequate recreation and community facilities; safety and security risks; and a range of public health and natural hazards. These conditions contribute to stigmatization, social exclusion and deprivation, economic stagnation, and environmental degradation, and have a disproportionate impact on the youth (aged under 30 years) who represent 46% of the population.

The East Port of Spain Development Company has been leading the effort to develop and execute a spatial development strategy for regeneration of the area through physical, social, and economic transformation of the area under its jurisdiction in partnership with the community and key stakeholders. In the communities of East Port of Spain, where 46% of the workforce earns less than \$1,000 per month, and unemployment may be as high as 49%, infrastructure projects represent a

<sup>1</sup> 2000 Housing and Population Census

chance to enjoy a higher standard of living, increase access to services and facilities, and provide opportunities for economic stimulation, job creation, and poverty reduction.

The East Port of Spain Development Company recognizes that the development of physical and social infrastructure facilitates the production of goods and services, the movement of products to markets, access to opportunities, services and employment, poverty alleviation, resulting in an enhanced quality of life of residents of East Port of Spain. Therefore, the company is committed to pursuing a strategy of regeneration through physical, social and economic transformation of the area under its jurisdiction.

### Objectives

The Company's overall strategic goal is to improve the quality of life of residents of East Port of Spain. Infrastructure Development Projects seek to achieve specific objectives including:

1. **Sustainable Development:** To create a network of sustainable communities equipped with adequate physical and social facilities to sustain a high quality of life, consistent with government's development strategy
2. **Safety and Security:** To create safe and secure communities in which persons and property are protected
3. **Economic Development:** To increase economic activity, investment and jobs
4. **Environmental Sustainability:** To establish and maintain a high quality physical environment to ensure health and well-being of residents, protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources

### Relevance

This projects of the company are well-aligned with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's Medium-Term Policy Framework, specifically **Pillar 1: People Centered Development, Pillar 2: Poverty Eradication and Social Justice, and Pillar 3: National and Personal Security**; from the Seven Inter-Connected Pillars For Sustainable Development. Over the medium-term 2011 – 2014, five strategic priorities have been identified and these projects contribute to three of them, namely:

- Crime and Law and Order
- Economic Growth, Job Creation, Competitiveness and Innovation and
- Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development

In addition, projects are developed in consultation with residents of East Port of Spain who identify their needs and the development challenges in their communities and in collaboration with key stakeholders.

### Implementation

The Company undertakes development projects through direct development, institutional coordination and development facilitation.

Major actions include:

- Identify, design and implement projects
- Procurement and tender management
- Construction Management

Key Performance Indicators include:

- 100% customer satisfaction
- Projects delivered within time and budget

- Projects within specifications

#### **Distribution of tasks**

Project implementation is coordinated by the Company's Projects Unit under the guidance of a Projects Manager. Contractors engaged are often from within East Port of Spain, though open tenders may attract contractors from other areas within Trinidad and Tobago. Contractors are required to engage workers from within the communities to provide jobs/employment opportunities in communities where unemployment is up to three times the national average.

Community residents also perform an informal monitoring function and may be formally engaged by the Company to oversee work at the project site.

Project design is undertaken by Company staff and by consultant engineers and architects, where necessary.

#### **Achievements and results**

To date, 32 infrastructure projects have been executed (with an additional 12 projects on-going and 10 projects to commence shortly) with the aim of improving the quality of life of residents and enhancing citizen security through the provision of basic and additional infrastructure necessary for the advancement of the community. As such, infrastructural works completed/on-going include the following:

- the upgrade of recreation grounds and facilities
- the upgrade and construction of pedestrian walkways, drainage and other basic infrastructure
- environmental enhancement works
- the construction of a learning centre
- the construction of youth and sports facilities, including the implementation of a pilot project utilising sport as a tool for social and economic development
- Emergency relief projects

All projects undertaken in the past 12 months have been completed within schedule and budget.

The transformative role of technology in community and human development is also recognized by the East Port of Spain Development Company. To this end, the Company has recently begun installation of thirteen (13) nodes in nine (9) locations to provide free wireless internet access to residents of East Port of Spain, support the development of information technology capacity and services and increase access to IT services to a wider segment of the population of East Port of Spain. Two of the spaces are currently being retrofitted to make them more user-friendly to adults and school children who need access to technology infrastructure.

#### **Capacity to replicate and potential for exchange of this experience**

The project implementation methodology is replicable in similar communities with comparable development challenges. The approach requires a very hands-on role by the Company, especially to provide technical support small contractors and to resolve issues within the community and between residents and the contractor to facilitate implementation and avoid delays or work stoppages. The approach is also very participatory and seeks to engage community residents throughout the project life cycle.

The Company will benefit from exchange of best practices and experiences in similar situations and in other countries.

**Modalities that are considered appropriate to facilitate the exchange of this experience**

- Exchange filed visits
- Seminars, workshops and panel discussions
- Project evaluation reports

**Human, operational and institutional capacities to transfer this experience to other countries**

Company personnel are available to share experiences.

**Good practices and concrete lessons**

- Community engagement strategies and participatory approaches
- Changing the environment may help change behavior
- Well-designed projects stimulate community pride
- Engaging community labor and community contracting
- Construction management strategies
- Timely disbursement of funds (need for simplified, responsive and flexible disbursement strategies)
- Need for adequate project funding

**Experiences and subjects to learn from other RIAC members**

Project implementation strategies in high risk and high crime communities

**Key persons involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation**

Dr. Deborah Thomas-Austin, Managing Director, [dthomas@epos.gov.tt](mailto:dthomas@epos.gov.tt)  
 Michael Aberdeen, Projects Manager, <mailto:maberdeen@epos.gov.tt>  
 Arthur Lewis, Communications Officer, [alewis@epos.gov.tt](mailto:alewis@epos.gov.tt)

**Author of this story**

Dr. Deborah Thomas-Austin  
 Managing Director  
 East Port of Spain Development Company Limited  
 Trinidad and Tobago  
[dthomas@epos.gov.tt](mailto:dthomas@epos.gov.tt)