



INTEGRATING WATERSHED AND COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN GEF PROJECT SUMMARY

REPORT OVERVIEW

The Project consists of four components aiming to meet the Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) criteria to address global objectives and root causes of coastal degradation through strengthening the capacity of the participating countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of watersheds and coastal areas.

The main focus of this project is the demonstration of integrated watershed and coastal area management systems, which will stress the need for development of a cross sectoral management approach. Components to be addressed include the requirements for institutional and infrastructural realignment; adoption of modalities for sectoral participation; capacity building; linkages to social and economic root causes of environmental degradation; and the overall need for sustainability. The long-term goal is to enhance the capacity of the countries to plan and manage their aquatic resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The watersheds and coastal areas of the Caribbean contain some of the world's most diverse and productive habitats and encompass extensive areas of complex and unique ecosystems. The coastal areas include mangroves, coral reefs, sea grass beds and river deltas, which are an important source of food production and support a variety of economic activities such as fisheries, tourism and the related uses of recreation and transportation.

As all terrestrial areas in the 13 Caribbean small island developing states (SIDS - see Figure 1) fall within a watershed, their protection and management is critical to terrestrial biodiversity. A recent survey of the world's biodiversity hotspots has ranked these terrestrial areas as among the three highest priorities in any global strategy for biodiversity conservation and sustainable management.

As a result of their isolation, the Caribbean islands have developed a high level of endemism amongst their flora and fauna. Scientific estimates support evidence that up to 40 percent of the plant life in Caribbean forests is found nowhere else on the planet, and the entire area is renowned as a migratory route for birds moving between North and South America. Endemism and its resultant highly significant biodiversity is the key to the importance of natural habitats in the terrestrial, watershed and coastal environs of these Caribbean Islands, and is directly linked

to human health and well-being through priority ecosystem functions (such as clean water, agricultural capacity, availability of food, etc).

The problems of integrated watershed and coastal area management in each country can be summarized through looking at major threats and root causes. The primary threats include:

- Diminishing freshwater supplies
- Degraded freshwater and coastal water quality
- Tourism
- Inappropriate land use
- Climate change
- Natural disasters

Root causes include:

- Aquifer degradation
- Surface water-quality degradation
- Loss of terrestrial biodiversity
- Loss of marine biodiversity
- Land degradation
- Coastal erosion

There is a notable absence of appropriate national water quality standards and guidelines for the use of coastal waters resulting in Caribbean Government's inability to assess the coastal environment and establish and regulate effluent limitations for land-based sources of marine pollution. IWCAM provides a mechanism to strengthen the capacity of the participating countries at the national and regional level to implement an integrated approach to the management of watersheds and coastal areas and thus, recognize and mitigate the impact of primary threats and root causes on the coastal marine environment.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The Secretariat to the Cartagena convention - Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit (CAR/RCU) and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) will co-execute the project by providing support to project management and assistance to the project staff in implementing the project's objectives. The implementation of the Project will be facilitated through a network of the following stakeholders at the national and regional level:

- Public Sector: ministries responsible for water resources (utilities); environment; tourism; planning; agriculture (forestry, fisheries); industry; community development; education; and local government authorities;
- Private Sector: national and regional organizations representing: farmers; fisherfolk; manufacturers/industrialists; hotel owners/managers; tour operators; cruise line companies; yachtsmen; and diver operators;

- Non-governmental Organisations: national trusts; conservation associations; women's organisations; community-based organisations (CBOs);
- Professionals: researchers; sociologists; medical practitioners; environmental managers; engineers (water, civil, environmental); biologists; teachers; curriculum specialists; media practitioners; and
- The public.

Co-funders will consist of those funding agencies which are either contributing directly to the project itself, or which have been identified by the Implementing Agencies and GEF as making a significant contribution to the project objectives by way of their own independent inputs and objectives. Co-funders may therefore include international donors who are funding independent projects (which directly support the aims and objectives of the Integrated Watershed Coastal and Area Management (IWCAM) project) as well as those donors, which have been directly involved with the project development process.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES & PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The overall objective of the proposed project will be to assist the 13 participating small island developing states of the Caribbean to improve their watershed and coastal zone management practices in support of sustainable development. The resulting demonstration projects will be used to assist with the development and implementation of an integrated approach to the management of watersheds and coastal areas in other small island states around the world.

Further, the broad environmental goal of the project is to achieve a sustainable balance between development and the protection/conservation of coastal and watershed resources by integration and co-ordination of management and planning approaches.

National reports and a regional synthesis identified regional priority needs for IWCAM for the Caribbean SIDS and grouped them into four major components.

- 1) Project Management and Co-ordination.
Address regional collaboration, coordination and project management.
- 2) IWCAM Demonstration Projects.
Focus on specific IWCAM issues and barriers and aim to demonstrate actual working examples of IWCAM within a defined watershed and/or coastal system boundary while addressing priority issues as identified in the root cause analysis.
- 3) Strengthening Capacity for IWCAM.
Focus on the need to strengthen capacity for IWCAM through a review of existing national and regional laws, policies and institutions and provide guidelines for reform.

4) Sustaining Support and Capacity for IWCAM.

Support component 3 through concentrating on achieving long-term sustainability for management and protection of globally significant biodiversity and for mitigation of transboundary IWCAM issues.

PROJECT BENEFITS

The project will set out to strengthen institutional capacity at the national and regional level; provide assistance to countries in understanding the linkages between, and the requirement for, integrating management of watershed and coastal zone environmental problems; and to meet national priorities within a regional context.

The following benefits should be seen as an integral part of the IWCAM process, encouraging policy realignment and redefinition of legislation and responsibility.

- A more sustainable resource base supporting the economy (especially in areas of critical economic importance to the countries such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, etc.);
- Improved living conditions for local populations (cleaner water, better waste management, reduced threats to health, alternative livelihoods, reduced poverty);
- Improved land management providing more secure livelihoods for farmers and possible resolution to tenure issues;
- Better training for human resources opening opportunities for employment security and career improvement;
- Improved policies on development protecting the rights of the general public over the ambitions of the private sector;
- Resolution of some economic globalisation issues (e.g. inability to compete with international markets, collapsing resource base due to over-exploitation); and
- Equity in the advantages gained from access to natural resources, as well as in the cost incurred in their management.

Demonstration activities will represent the real and concrete response to the identified threats and root causes and provide a framework for countries wishing to design and implement free-standing, national IWCAM projects. These demonstration activities will benefit the host country or countries (some of these may be sub-regional demonstration activities) while providing valuable, transferable lessons of global significance. Not only can the lessons and experiences of such demonstration activities be shared with other Caribbean SIDS countries but they can also be transferable to other SIDS and other pertinent IWCAM and sustainable development situations throughout the world.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AND RISKS

Since integrated planning and management are not widely practised within Caribbean SIDS, a considerable amount of time and effort will be required to foster a fresh philosophical and conceptual approach among the relevant decision-makers as well as field personnel. The long-term success of the Project will ultimately rest on the political willingness of the participating countries to cooperate and to sustain the Project's outputs well after its completion. The level of this risk will depend on the success of the proposed public education and awareness activities, and the extent to which the public is motivated to participate in the implementation of the project. This risk will be minimised by the deliberate inclusion of major stakeholders in the implementation of the project objectives. Such stakeholder participation must be seen as a key theme and essential requirement throughout all of the components and activities of the project.

The long-term success of the Project will ultimately rest on the political willingness of the participating countries to cooperate and to sustain the Project's outputs well after its completion. In light of this, a strategic regional coordination framework, has been incorporated due to institutional weaknesses that exist at the national and regional level. Further, legislative and policy reform at the national level is intended to underpin project objectives and IWCAM sustainability at the regional level.