

DELTAMERICA

Development and Implementation of Mechanisms to Disseminate Experiences and Lessons Learned in Integrated Transboundary Water Resources Management in Latin America and the Caribbean

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MECHANISMS TO DISSEMINATE EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN INTEGRATED TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Diagram of the IWRN Web Network

COUNTRIES: All 34 OAS member states

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

REGIONAL EXECUTING AGENCY: Organization of American States/ Office for Sustainable Development and Environment (OAS/OSDE)

DURATION: 2003-2005

WEBSITE: <http://www.iwrn.net>; <http://www.rirh-conosur.net>; <http://www.rirh-brasil.net>

GEF GRANT: 0.972 US\$ millions

CO-FINANCING: 0.665 US\$ millions

PROJECT COST: 1.637 US\$ millions

INTRODUCTION

Despite the significant advances of the last decade, Latin America and Caribbean countries continue to face serious challenges in dealing with water management issues. Conflicting mandates, incompatible policies, inadequate legal frameworks, lack of institutional capacity, financial limitations, and weak public participation strategies remain as serious obstacles in the region for attaining IWRM goals and objectives.

While these problems appear common to many countries and in between river basins, approaches and solutions are largely developed on a case-by-case basis, with little interchange of experiences and outcomes between countries, basins, or stakeholders. Recognizing this problem, the Government of Brazil, through the National Water Resource Secretariat, proposed to GEF a project initiative “to prepare and execute mechanisms of dissemination of experiences and lessons learned, in the

integrated management of transboundary water resources in America.” Based on “best practices” and lessons learned, the Project aims to support the development and replication of sound integrated water resource management policies throughout the region, helping to promote relations and establish linkages between on-going water-related initiatives, particularly transboundary projects financed by GEF as part of its International Waters Operational Program.

THE PROJECT

The projects seeks to achieve an increased understanding and capacity of river-basin organisations, national water authorities and water stakeholders to properly address the technical, social, legal, and ecological issues facing water resources management in the region. Such capacity and understanding is predicated upon access and exchange of information, to be developed and/or strengthened through this project by:

1. The Inter-American Water Resources Network is a “network of networks” whose purpose is to build and strengthen water resources partnerships among nations, organizations, and individuals; to promote education and the open exchange of information and technical expertise; and to enhance communication, cooperation, collaboration, and financial commitment to integrated water and land resources management within the context of environmental and economic sustainability in the Americas. Created in 1994, the IWRN is composed of National Focal Points, constituted by government-appointed ministries or institutions responsible for water resources in each of the 34 OAS member States, and an Advisory Council of more than 130 institutions, organizations, and private sector representatives. An Executive Committee of 25 members is the governing body of the IWRN.

- (a) Establishment of a Virtual Forum, helping to strengthen regional and national information systems to address common difficulties in implementing effective, integrated land and water management practices;
- (b) Strengthening of the Inter-American Water Resource Network-IWRN¹, as the principal hemispheric communication tool for integrated water resources management in the region; and
- (c) Enhancing and promoting an active participation of civil society in water management decision making.

The activities and results of this Medium Sized Project will serve as a demonstration/pilot project for the global-scale, GEF-financed IW-LEARN project, leveraging the experience gained in LAC to benefit GEF-IW activities world-wide, building a larger system of global knowledge sharing.

Specific components of the Deltamerica project are:

COMPONENT 1 — *Foster dialogue amongst GEF-IW and other related water resource management projects in LAC establishing a mechanism to share recent accomplishments, experiences from the planning and management of IW projects, lessons learned, and best practices.*

The objective of this Component is not only to facilitate communication amongst and between GEF-IW project managers in order to address common concerns, but also to develop a mechanism whereby they can meet with government officials, local authorities, and stakeholders to discuss the strategies for incorporating lessons learned in water resources management practices and policies.

COMPONENT 2 — *Foster the inclusion of lessons learned and best practices into water resources management practices.*

The objective of this Component is to develop a framework within which the experience acquired during the execution of GEF-IW projects can be shared and disseminated so as to minimise problems and issues of concern through improved communication and information-sharing. The outcome of this Component includes shared experiences and inclusion of lessons learned into routine water management practices in the region.

COMPONENT 3 — *Strengthening of the Inter-American Water Resources Network-IWRN as the principal hemispheric communication tool for integrated water resources management.*

The objective of this Component is to develop specific processes and tools for sharing and disseminating experiences and lessons learned from GEF-IW projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. The output of this Component includes Internet as well as other media, tested and refined for future use, with appropriate linkages to other networks and information systems and a sustainable financial and knowledge base. Three Web-based regional nodes have been designed, developed and are already operational. One for Brazil, one for the South Cone, and one for the Central American Isthmus. Two more are under development. One for the Small Islands Caribbean States, and one for the Andean region. A strengthened and actively used IWRN, capable of meeting the needs of the stakeholder community, will be the principal result of this Component.

COMPONENT 4 — *Involve civil society according to principles set forth in the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (ISP).*

The objective of this Component is to facilitate access to the IWRN by civil society. The outputs include a meeting of IWRN National Focal Points leading to the formulation of a strategy for the inclusion of the ISP principals within the information dissemination process. The results of this Component are enhanced participation by civil society in water resources management and decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

- Dialogues for all the subregions (South Cone, Amazon, South Pacific Watersheds, and Central America and the Caribbean) have been organized and presented with the participation of Project Managers and government official from all GEF-IW projects in LAC. Representatives from government institutions responsible for water policy and regulation also participated at these events, providing their countries priorities and needs for information and knowledge.
- In process the implementation of Virtual forums in all the subregions, and the new Web network System, including three nodes, one in Brazil, one in Argentina, and one in Costa Rica, serving the Central American Isthmus countries, and a central Web site at the IWRN Technical Secretariat.
- The review of experiences, “best practices” and lessons learned from GEF-IW is being completed and ready for publication. The document also provides guidelines for identifying “best practices” in on-going and future projects.



The architecture of the system provides for its sustainability in two very distinctive aspects: (a) financial, and (b) institutional. The “distributed” fashion allows for the sponsorship of private organizations, and others, which in turn can, not only provide funding for the maintenance and operation of the sites, but also for face-to-face information and knowledge exchange, through workshops, twinning, and horizontal cooperation. Also, consortiums or co-management of the sites are being encouraged as to provide continuity to the efforts in case one of the institutions runs into financial or institutional problems. Support of international organizations such as UNESCO, IICA, CEPAL, FAO,

- In process the development of a new Information and Communication Tool (ICT) and a new dynamic Web-based Information System for the IWRN. This new Information System is based on three criteria:
 - (1) a dynamic and decentralized “web” of Web sites;
 - (2) mixed-partnerships for the operation of the Web sites; and
 - (3) basin-based information systems. This approach allows for a distributed management of the information, fostering a broader participation (including national and sub-national groups, private and public sectors,) the preservation and strengthening of members’ identities, and the sharing of responsibilities. The distributed management of the information also provides for a more timely and efficient information and knowledge supply, which, in turn, facilitates the use of experiences, lessons learned and “best practices”, and their transfer to national and regional policy.

- Developed and implemented a prototype for the new dynamic Web-based Information System for the IWRN, with two nodes: one in Brazil, serving the whole country and its states; one in Argentina, serving that country and its provinces, and the remaining four countries that make the South Cone, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and one in Costa Rica, serving the Central American Isthmus countries. A central Web site was also implemented for the IWRN. An interface between the three Web sites was developed as to allow queries and dynamic navigation through these sites.

and others will also foster a more active participation of international organizations in the IWRN, based on their specific mandates and missions and their specific interest in specific countries or regions. The “new” network provides a useful tool to many organizations, from international cooperation to business oriented organization, increasing the IWRN’s role.

- In process the review of the organizational structure of the IWRN, its mandates and activities, services and products, including a new business plan prepared by the Strategic Planning Committee, encompassing a new organization of the Network.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the review of “best practices” and lessons learned, and building on the reorganization of the IWRN, the role of the National Focal Points and their relationship with the GS/OAS, efforts center in the establishment of a hemispheric water agenda, identifying common principles and standards for the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM.)

The National Focal Points, as high-level government experts on issues regarding water policy, will have a central role in establishing the hemispheric water agenda, and in defining the common principles and standards for the implementation of IWRM.

The new dynamic Web-based Information System for the IWRN is being expanded to the Caribbean and other

subregions. Full implementation and use, establishing mixed-partnerships between governmental institutions, universities, NGOs, international organizations, and private organizations will be pursued and promoted in the years to come. The

System is capable to support all communications and discussions for the development of the hemispheric agenda, as well as for the implementation of national and regional ones.

This document has been prepared by the Office for Sustainable Development and Environment of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, as the regional executing agency for the Deltamerica Project, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (implementing agency for the Global Environment Facility), and the Water Resource Secretariat of Brazil (SRH), as local executing agency, on behalf of the National Focal Points of the Interamerican Water Resources Network. The document is intended to provide general information on the status, preliminary results and follow-up activities regarding project implementation, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of SRH, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organization of American States, or the GEF.



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