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## **Finding a Balance between Meeting Needs and Addressing Policy Issues in Integrated Watershed and Coastal Areas Management –**

### **The GEF-IWCAM Project reviews achievements and lessons learned**

The Global Environment Facility-funded Project on “Integrating Watershed and Coastal Areas Management in Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean” (the GEF-IWCAM Project) hosted its Final Project Conference in Kingston, Jamaica, 16 – 18 November 2011.

The experiences and achievements of more than five years of implementation were shared and reviewed by project partners and stakeholders. The public was invited to follow the proceedings via live webcast, which remains available at [www.iwcam.org](http://www.iwcam.org)

The Project’s overall objective was strengthening the commitment and capacity of the participating countries to plan and manage their aquatic resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis. It came from the realization that the sectoral approach to the management of watershed and coastal resources which prevails in Caribbean countries is unsustainable. Degradation of the environment, overexploitation of natural resources, competing resource uses and conflicts among users are all commonplace.

Messages delivered at the Opening Ceremony by the Project’s Implementing Agencies (UNEP and UNDP) and Executing Agencies (the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention, UNEP’s Regional Coordinating Unit in Kingston; and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute) all stressed how essential relationships and partnerships at every level were to its success.

Nelson Andrade, Coordinator of UNEP CAR/RCU noted especially the coming into force of the Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution (LBS) Protocol in 2010, following its ratification by the Bahamas and Antigua & Barbuda during the life of the Project. This was significant progress, he said, as it would now enabled countries to benefit from additional sources of funding and technical expertise to address existing problems.

Following an historical overview of the Project, the Regional Project Coordinator, Vincent Sweeney, reviewed achievements at both regional level and within its thirteen participating

countries (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago). Nine demonstration projects were implemented in eight different countries. Each fell under one of the following thematic areas:

- Water Resource Conservation and Management (Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts & Nevis)
- Wastewater Treatment and Management (Antigua & Barbuda; Bahamas-Exuma and the Dominican Republic)
- Land-use Planning, Zoning and Alternative Practices (Bahamas-Andros and Trinidad & Tobago)
- Targeted Model IWCAM (Cuba and Jamaica)

The demonstration projects provided a wealth of experience and lessons learned in terms of practical approaches to integrated watershed and coastal areas management, and notably, tangible evidence of benefits of the approach. Many examples of the following were cited: improved access to water for human well-being, for agriculture and basic sanitation; communities being cleaned; children being educated on environmental issues; and professionals across the region developing and applying new skills. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) as well as each of the Demo Project Management Units had been working to share good practices and lessons learned far and wide and collaboration among disparate organizations had been strengthened.

Partnerships at every level had a significant impact. They were promoted and supported at the levels of communities, governments, and the region, where high level sessions of Ministers at established fora such as CWWA, CAWASA and GWP were supported. An Informal Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) started by the Project evolved into the CARICOM Consortium on Water, which was mandated by the Council of Ministers for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) in 2008. There was also networking and sharing with international partners such as the Pacific IWRM Project (SOPAC) throughout the life of the Project.

In a presentation on capacity building in the Jamaica Demonstration Project, Sheries Simpson, Manager, Project Planning and Monitoring, NEPA, stressed that not only had many improvements been seen as the result of the project's many initiatives within the Driver's River Watershed, but also that most of the activities had been sustained. The Demonstration Project developed a Watershed Area Management Mechanism (WAMM) which has been adopted by NEPA for management of watersheds, is currently being "rolled out" in the Black River Watershed and will eventually be replicated in all of Jamaica's watersheds.

It was agreed that the GEF-IWCAM Project's approach to developing legislation in support of IWCAM had been imaginative and was proving to be more fruitful than traditional approaches. According to Judy Daniel, the consultant who worked on this component, "instead of reviewing laws and simply proposing changes, IWCAM tried to address all of the cross-cutting issues... to come up with a practical toolkit for institutional, policy and legislative improvements in support of the IWCAM approach." Existing domestic legislation was consulted in each country and analyzed in terms of what was needed to bring it into compliance with the Land-Based Sources

of Marine Pollution Protocol. This flexible approach identified all areas in each country for which legislation was needed as well as the major drivers (e.g. tourism), key institutions and changes needed.

Other strengths of the Project which were detailed in a series of presentations and discussions were its varied capacity building initiatives (regional and national level training in many areas, including indicators, communications, water quality monitoring, sewage treatment plant management, community-based resource assessment, and laboratory strengthening); gains in terms of information and data management; the number and variety of public education and awareness initiatives undertaken at every level; and the extent to which stakeholders had been involved.

Stakeholder involvement was extensive throughout the Project, with the following examples being especially noted:

- In Jamaica, the Drivers River Stakeholders Group engaged stakeholders in East Portland through four sub-committees: Governance and Enforcement; Sanitation and Livelihoods; Environmental Monitoring; and Public Awareness.
- In the Dominican Republic, the Private Sector participated in an extensive survey of industrial practices in the Lower Haina River Basin, as well as identification and implementation of Cleaner Production Mechanisms planned for the short, medium and long-term.
- In Saint Lucia, the Watershed Management Committee, responsible for motivating and mobilizing the wider community to participate in several activities, took the initiative to transform itself into an NGO, the Trust for the Management of Rivers, to promote, implement, and ensure sustainability of the IWCAM approach after the project was finished.
- In Tobago, the Anse Fromager Ecological Environmental Protection Organization, a community group largely dedicated to clean-ups and fighting wild fires on the hills of the Courland Watershed became involved in all planning and execution activities for the Watershed's reforestation effort.
- In Saint Vincent, IWRM Community Pilot Projects in four communities - Chateaubelair, Greggs, Spring Village, and Vermont - worked to increase public awareness of watershed issues and implement activities aimed at mitigating water pollution while providing improvements to communal facilities.

Christopher Cox, Programme Director at CEHI, reviewed experiences, results and lessons learned in Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), one of the sub-components of the Project for which CEHI had responsibility. Among lessons learned were: the need for local champions; that Climate Change is a key driver of IWRM; that "one size does not fit all"; that we need to figure out how IWRM fits into business processes and the costs associated; and, that progress often comes in small, incremental steps although IWRM Plans and Road Maps can seem very ambitious.

Other challenges were underlined and described by Adrian Cashman, Lecturer at CERMES. He called them “lowlights” and although described in relation to the IWRM work in Barbados and Grenada specifically, it was agreed by participants that they were reflected in the wider Project as well. These include: difficulty engaging the private sector and key ministries such as the Ministries of Finance; the inability of technocrats to successfully communicate to politicians the urgency of the need for IWRM; and, the lack of secure funding for follow-on actions.

The final day of the Conference began with a panel discussion on the theme: “IWCAM - Replication or Relegation to History? What can make a difference?” Lively discussion followed with participants agreeing in the end that concerted, sustained effort to build upon the successful initiatives of the Project, and learn from its successes as well as its failures, are both necessary if IWCAM is not to be “forgotten”.

In closing, both project Executing Agencies reiterated their commitment to continuing the work begun under IWCAM. They attributed the success of the Project to the fact that it took, first and foremost, the interests of the countries into consideration, that it sought to understand local challenges, and to be collaborative and flexible. Patricia Aquino, Executive Director of CEHI, described this as “the culture of how the Project was run, from planning stages right through to implementation”. Christopher Corbin of UNEP CAR/RCU, while pointing out that the regional agencies are themselves challenged to get the personnel support which they need to fulfill their responsibilities, added that it was indeed “the Project’s ability to find a balance between meeting needs and addressing the policy issues” that had made a difference.

*“WaterWays” the IWCAM video documentary was screened on Day 1 of the Conference and will soon be available via the website ( [www.iwcam.org](http://www.iwcam.org) ). In addition the following resources, also available online, were distributed to participants:*

- *The Toolkit for Institutional, Policy and Legislative Improvements*
- *GEF-IWCAM Indicators Assessment and Template*
- *The Community Based Resource Assessment Tool and Facilitation Manual*
- *Environmental Impact Assessment Review Training Workshop Manual*
- *Manual on Responding to RFPs – Writing Effective Proposals*
- *Policy Makers Briefing Sheets*
- *A series of IWCAM Brochures for the general public, the agricultural sector, the industrial sector and the tourism sector.*

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