



## **GEF-IWCAM Project Experience Note # 7**

### **TITLE:**

**NGO development - Establishment of a Participatory Watershed Management Model in Saint Lucia.**

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

**Protecting watershed services and developing management incentives in the Fond D'or Watershed area of Saint Lucia.**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The overall objective of this project is to contribute towards improving the quality of life, health and sanitation through better management, capture, and distribution of available water resources in the Fond D'Or Watershed in Saint Lucia. As a subcomponent of this, the GEF-IWCAM Demonstration Project for Saint Lucia was interested in the development of a model approach to participatory watershed management in the Fond D'Or Watershed.

The upper watersheds of St. Lucia are conserved only in as much as they may be protected as Forest Reserves. There are 7,500 hectares of Forest Reserve in Saint Lucia. However, privately owned land within a watershed has no such

protection. Currently there is little value associated with these Forest Reserves and consequently no benefits are derived from water usage, nor are any benefits transferred to water conservation or watershed protection. Where there are laws related to protection of the watershed and water resources, enforcement and monitoring are a low priority with few resources available to provide support.

There are thirty seven (37) major watersheds in St. Lucia from which most of the water demand is met (WRMU-GOSL, 2001). The Fond D'or watershed is one of those critically important watersheds in St. Lucia, traditionally hosting a major banana producing belt and which is currently being positioned for major tourism development. Conversely, the area is also a water-scarce area.

The Fond D'Or watershed feeds into the District of Dennery, which covers an area of approximately 70 sq km, and had a population of 2,760 households and 29 scattered settlements at the time of project conception (WRMU-GOSL, 2001). The Fond D'or watershed is the second largest in St. Lucia comprising 10,230 acres. There are 15 communities within the Fond D'Or Watershed which comprises Despinoze, La Caye, La Perle, Limiere, Gardette, La Resource, Richfond, Thomazo, Grand Rivière, Belmont, Au Leon, Grand Ravine, Morne Panache, Bois Jolie and Dernière Rivière.

These communities, though diverse based on geographical location and peculiar cultural practices, share the Fond D'Or watershed as their home. All communities were expected to participate at various levels in the project implementation as well as to ultimately benefit from its outcomes. To this end, a mechanism to ensure stakeholder participation at all levels including project management needed to be developed. It was also perceived as necessary to develop an organisation that would ensure sustainability of the activities in pursuit of continued management of the Fond D'or watershed in the post-project period. It is these objectives which led to the establishment of the Watershed Management Committee (WMC) which comprise a combination of technical, residential and other interested parties.

## DESCRIPTION OF ISSUES

Although the WMC existed from inception and was expected to continue post project conclusion, there were expressions of concern that a loose Committee, would not be able to sustain activities in the post IWCAM project phase, unless it was a well constituted body with clear objectives, and a mandate from the community as well as from the national water resource management agency. While a Water Resource Management Agency exists at the national level, this Agency is currently under-resourced and is unable to assume the responsibility of a number of initiatives undertaken under the Project, including monitoring of water quality within the project area. The establishment therefore, of a locally based non-governmental organization (NGO) with direct responsibilities for watershed management was perceived as the instrument through which sustainability of the IWCAM project could be achieved. This organization would have a community as well as state mandate to leverage funds, and undertake projects in support of IWCAM.

The overall objectives of the WMC were to:

- increase awareness of the project and its activities within the communities of the Fond D'Or Watershed;
- increase awareness of watershed management issues amongst groups functioning within the watershed; and
- increase ownership of the GEF-IWCAM project amongst the communities of the watershed.

During the implementation of one of the components of the demonstration project it became apparent that community awareness of the project was not as widespread as had been expected. This was particularly true when project implementers realized that the criterion used to identify households to participate in another sub-project, the Rain Water Harvesting initiative, was not properly understood by all. Further, among certain user groups within the watershed, there seemed to be no change in attitudes regarding their use of the rivers within the watershed. This revealed the “unhappy truth” that despite efforts thus far at public awareness; many persons were not receiving and understanding the

message. Such revelations pointed to the need for sustained action beyond the life of the project, and the requirement of a legal entity with a clear, recognised mandate to carry out this work.

## **5. RESULTS AND LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE**

### ***Project Results***

Establishment of a participatory watershed management model was one of four primary outputs expected from this project. In an attempt to ensure from the onset of the Demonstration Project that the community was aware of the project and its activities, a Watershed Management Committee (WMC) was proposed. This Committee was a collaborative grouping of stakeholders, which would be responsible for, amongst other activities, promoting the project and its activities to the communities within the Fond D'Or Watershed as well as assisting the Project Management Unit in the implementation of the project's activities. This organization was formally inaugurated towards the end of the project with the title "Trust for the Management of Rivers" (TMR). The TMR continues to have a community and state mandate to leverage funds, and undertake projects in support of IWCAM.

### **Composition of the WMC**

The composition of the WMC was determined after the conduct of a stakeholder identification and analysis process, as described below:

Key stakeholders were identified as individuals or organizations that could significantly influence or were important to the success of the project.

A number of groups were targeted under this analysis and included:

- Residents of the communities within the watershed
- Water management, supply and regulatory agencies

- Thomazo Water Catchment Group<sup>1</sup>
- Organised Civil Groups
- Government Agencies

Once stakeholders were identified, it was necessary that they be classified into the following categories:

- HH - High importance & High influence
- HL – High importance & Low influence
- LH – Low importance & High influence
- LL – Low Importance & Low influence

The results were analysed and it was decided that the WMC should comprise stakeholders that fall within the HH category and 25 % of individuals that fall within the HL and LH categories.

### **Choosing a structure for the WMC**

Further, recognizing the need for sustainability beyond the life of the project, a workshop was held with the members of the WMC to explore different types of organizational structures that would be best suited to continue the work of integrated management of the Fond D'Or watershed, after the Demonstration Project had come to an end. Different options were considered including a public sector led agency, a community-based organization (CBO), or a public-private sector corporation. It took a series of meetings, before members agreed that a non-governmental organization (NGO) was perhaps the best format to address the need. At that point, the WMC contracted a consultant to lead a series of working and consultative sessions, which finally resulted in the formulation of a clear mission statement and objectives for the NGO.

Several factors resulted in the choice of an NGO over other options:

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<sup>1</sup> This group was best organized in the catchment and presented the most workable community-based organization to partner with.

1. The attempt to politicise the project caused the project implementers to be guarded against a community based organization, which could be more easily susceptible to political interference.
2. It was also felt that there was need to challenge public sector approaches to watershed management, particularly as the *Assessment of Poverty in St. Lucia Report (2006)* had revealed disparities in the mean water supply to various districts across Saint Lucia. For this reason, some level of independence from the public sector was determined to be required.

The processes for NGO development outlined by the consultant were as follows:

- Development of Rules and Regulations;
- Registration as a legal entity;
- Formulation of a Transitional Plan of Action that would incorporate policy development, membership mobilization and formalization, financing, and the staging of an inaugural Annual General Meeting,
- Formal establishment of the entity as an NGO.

### ***Learning from the experience***

The process involved in developing the WMC and its eventual emergence into an NGO has presented several lessons ranging from understanding group functioning and dynamics, managing partisan politics, as well as the role of professional expert guidance in the establishment of a participatory watershed management model.

### **Participation and involvement**

Developing equitable, effective and efficient watershed management systems require the involvement of various stakeholders particularly at the decision-making and management levels. However, participation does not necessarily require that every stakeholder grouping is represented on the management body. This is often neither practical nor useful. It is therefore necessary at the stakeholder analysis stage to determine real commitment to the overall objective,

which in this case, was ensuring water quality and increasing its availability to the community. It is not uncommon for persons to join such groupings for the sake of pursuing personal agendas or enshrined biases to their respective group or sector interest, and therefore with insufficient appreciation for the “bigger picture” or overall objective.

### **Stakeholder Identification and Analysis**

Stakeholder analysis is a more complex process than is often realized, particularly when dealing with natural resource management issues. First of all there are a wide range of issues and actors that are constantly changing. Managing these complex relations between humans and the resources upon which they depend (in this case the watershed) should not be treated as a simple relationship.

The stakeholder analysis was critical in analyzing the various relationships between stakeholders and their resource use. That this analysis was done early was important otherwise the Project would have had to “go back to the drawing board” to identify the right stakeholders or the key members for the WMC.

This is also useful in managing power groups within a project. Political interference threatened some demonstration project activities as persons of influence attempted to seek benefits based on political partisan favour. Project managers explained that this occurred because community members were not adequately informed about demonstration project activities, particularly the criteria for participation as was the case in the rainwater harvesting project. This was due to some weakness in communication and sensitisation at the community level. However, having carried out a thorough stakeholder analysis which identified equity in representation at the WMC level, the project was able to rationalize and defend any challenges.

### **Flexibility and Adaptive Learning**

A critical but often missed lesson learned from such initiatives is that there is no blueprint for success. The differences which exist in the social strata, political

relationships and power groups in any community including, in this case, church groups and political parties; the history of dependence, or conversely, self-reliance; and cultural norms and practices account for variables that cannot be isolated and generalized for all communities. Each situation is unique and requires an understanding of local conditions and realities. For this reason there is no “process that fits all” approach to developing representative management bodies like an NGO. Flexibility and adaptive learning must remain the watchwords as the process unfolds and the outcomes are realized. The recognition that such a process requires that more time be set aside early for stakeholder analysis and identification is important and has implications for planning.

### **Use of professional expertise**

Participation is often perceived by planners and managers as a simple process that does not require expert skills and methods. Poorly designed and implemented participatory processes may have negative social and environmental impacts. Consequently, a rigorous process of stakeholder identification and analysis, involving a thorough understanding of the local conditions including political relations, economic distribution of wealth, access to resources, perceptions and other local realities, is absolutely necessary. In this regard the use of an independent consultant to investigate and provide advice on the structure of the WMC, and later the TMR, provided the appropriate expertise which was not available in the community. The process also benefitted from the independence of thought and avoidance of bias.

## **6. REPLICATION**

Recognising that natural resource management is complex and involves managing the impacts of human activities on the resource, is the basis upon which replication may be discussed in this instance.

Therefore the conditions that would facilitate replication of this experience include the need for a detailed stakeholder analysis and identification that recognises the

relationships between the resource and the community or agency stakeholders. These relationships must isolate exactly who the stakeholder is, the benefits to be derived from the resource, identify any conflicts with other resource users, assess the balance of power between the various resources users, and finally determine the commitment and willingness to participate in management.

For example, although a stakeholder analysis was undertaken to determine stakeholders who would be affected by or impact the project, it was noted that some individuals who were nominated to sit on the WMC did not participate fully from the onset. These are expected weaknesses which should be remedied early and speedily as they are variables that may impact replication.

Identifying clearly the stake that a group or individual has in the resource, lessens the need to clarify bias or unfocused objectives. For example, attempts made to involve other community groups that were not primarily of an environmental nature in the project, resulted in many of these groups viewing the project as a sponsor for their activity rather than as a means to achieve improved water quality and access. A focused WMC was able to take decisive action and intervene before this situation got out of control.

Finally, political interference can derail project objectives and must be guarded against vociferously. The management of power brokers and influential groups or individuals is critical for ensuring replication of this process.

## **7. SIGNIFICANCE TO GEF-IWCAM**

The GEF-IWCAM approach incorporates participatory watershed and coastal area management in achieving improved overall watershed management objectives because it recognizes that the meaningful involvement of stakeholders is necessary for sustainability. All aspects of IWCAM: coastal area management and biological diversity conservation; tourism development policy and planning; protection of water supplies; and land and marine-based sources of pollution are likely to be more effective if those who are affected are involved in decision

making. This is why finding a participatory management model which is effective in a particular context is so important.

This experience is significant to GEF as it demonstrates several features which are replicable if adapted to different situations. The common concern, “Protection of water supplies”, while central to project objectives, may initially seem secondary to individual stakeholder objectives. The participatory management mechanism agreed to, in this case an NGO, promotes this general objective while recognizing the validity of different perspectives and needs and seeking to accommodate them. This has significant implications for sustainability of activities begun during the project as well as for new activities in keeping with IWCAM, in the post project phase. It is a mechanism which seeks to bring IWCAM and community needs closer together, thereby ensuring that the IWCAM approach has a greater chance of uptake in the future. This experience has attempted to provide the process for developing a management body that will sustain effective integrated watershed management objectives in the post demonstration project period.