REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
KNOWLEDGE STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT: KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

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CONTENTS

A. DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Knowledge strategies should be developed and implemented, which could assist in achieving regional development goals thus enhancing development in the new knowledge era. As part of the development of knowledge strategies, more active research was needed on knowledge flow, not just within organizations, but between countries and individuals. That would allow for finding Caribbean solutions that would encourage the sharing of knowledge through the subregion.

2.   Indigenous knowledge held by citizens in the rural communities must be safeguarded, or it would otherwise be lost. Liaising with the Caribbean Development Fund to develop community centres and development centres and create sessions to capture, share and utilize that indigenous knowledge was recommended

3.   Monitoring and evaluation should be fused with knowledge management. Experts should be brought in to demonstrate practical applications to knowledge management and the results-based management concept should be applied.

4.   Measuring value of knowledge was essential. Methodologies for measuring the cost of knowledge gain and loss must be developed and implemented throughout the subregion.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

5.   The expert group meeting under the initiative, Knowledge strategies for development: knowledge networks, was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean on 26 August 2011 in Port of Spain.

2. Attendance

6.   A number of experts in the field of knowledge management from member countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee attended the meeting.

3. Agenda

1.   Welcome, security briefing, introductions

2.   Adoption of the agenda

3.   Knowledge Networks: and introduction

4.   Knowledge Networks and Caribbean Development

5.   Conclusions and recommendations

6.   Closing remarks

C.   SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1.   Opening of meeting

7.   Welcome and opening remarks were made by Peter Nicholls, Chief, Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. He explained the objectives of the meeting, namely, that the discussions were to analyze the concepts of knowledge networks, specifically, definition, types and purpose; and to show the impacts that the active support and maintenance of knowledge networks could have on development by promoting better relationships among governments, stakeholders, agencies and citizens. The purpose of those discussions was to consider how to create awareness as it pertained to knowledge networks and the possible role that knowledge networks could play in development across the Caribbean.

2.   Adoption of the agenda

8.   The provisional agenda was adopted.

3.   Knowledge networks: an introduction

9.   The first presentation offered a theoretical discourse on knowledge networks. That included topics such as definitions, types, promotion, advantages and disadvantages, and possible impacts.

10.   It was noted that the value of knowledge was enhanced only when it was shared. Its value was limited only by the capacity of people and institutions that utilized it, and that it was important to understand the knowledge dynamics of oneself and the organization to take full advantage of such a network.

11.   Networks were seen as a need to get knowledge to the right people at the right time and there was a need to put strategies into action that could enable those actions. To sustain a knowledge network, participants had to be able to communicate as fast as possible so that decisions and actions could be made as soon as possible. Participants were reminded that while technology was an enabler of a those networks, they could exist without technology.

12.   A key issue which emerged from the discussion was who owned the knowledge in the network and whether such knowledge should be sold or shared freely. There were divergent views on that issue and no consensus emerged form the discussions.

13.   Other participants compared knowledge networks to other networks such as value chains (in trade) and social networks in other social disciplines.

14.   Diversity of a network was important for fostering knowledge creation. It was noted that differences in the level of development of information communications technology (ICT) in the Caribbean subregion could lead to unequal participation in knowledge networks, thereby limiting their sustainability and also their impact.

15.   The question of trust was discussed as a key element in sustaining the viability of those networks.With regard to issues of security and knowledge management in his work, one participant noted that security management was not possible without proper knowledge management.

16.   When it came to effective knowledge networks, the person was more important but the system must exist. That being said, the success or failure of a network lay in the hands of the individual in that he/she had to want, and actively seek, knowledge in the network.

4.   Knowledge networks and Caribbean development

17.   The second session was on the potential role of those networks in Caribbean development. Issues presented included the Caribbean landscape and potential impacts and barriers to knowledge networks in the Caribbean.

18.   It was suggested that governments should capture, retain and share knowledge and information with itself, its people and other sectors to promote development and achieve greater economic success. The public sector should work towards improving the relationship between itself, citizens and stakeholders. Harnessing opportunities to share knowledge from inside or outside the sector would make it more effective.

19.   Through that collaboration, citizens would start to feel trusted and valuable. It would provide them with a new way of looking at their lives and to seek out ways to affect their own development. Therefore, the inclusion of citizens was essential for development by the public sector.

20.   It was discussed that internally, in one's day-to-day activities, the unit or department was always considered, however, that should be expanded to include the organization's considerations as that created new knowledge and information. It was stated that the only limit placed on knowledge was on the people, how they understood that new knowledge and how the new information was conveyed.

21.   Barriers mentioned to the previous point were the hierarchies and business strategies that were needed to be considered before participating in such arrangements. It was suggested that there was a need to look at the policies to see how to make participation possible and less restrictive. The hierarchial processes of organizations were mentioned as barriers to formal knowledge networks. As knowledge had to be able to flow horizontally, there was a need to have autonomy in order for barriers to be broken down to allow that horizontal flow.

22.   Other barriers mentioned included cultural differences, language barriers, absence of trust and differing levels of ICT maturity within countries of the subregion, which made it difficult to build networks and share knowledge through them.

23.   Issues concerning the longevity of knowledge networks were discussed. It was mentioned that in the long run there was no diversity of ideas and view points because members were accustomed to working with people in the same knowledge network. There was a need to challenge and create new knowledge by encouraging participation of others outside the network. Furthermore, it was stated that there were always gaps in information.

24.   It was raised that there was a need for a framework or model on how to calculate the value of knowledge. Knowledge networks must show the value and input they brought to the community.   A question was posed as to how the value of a knowledge network could be shown. The answer suggested was by use of assessments. If the baseline could be measured as a person joined a community, followed by an assesment to show what they had learnt when they left the community, then, the value of participation in a network could be shown.

25.   There was discussion on the merits of how a 'think tank' group would operate in the Caribbean. ICT for Development (Jamaica), a knowledge network that promoted IT to foster and enable development was mentioned as an example. The network had a virtual strategic think tank that generated ideas and focused more on development rather than information technology. They also had a 'think tank' with university lecturers to promote new innovations. Jamaica Information Services, a think tank that was held every week where heads of agencies came in to share their experiences in knowledge management was also mentioned. A forum established in India by the United Nations Development Programme called "Solution Exchange" was also cited. That network was focused on solution-oriented development and not only on technology. That type of forum could prove beneficial for the subregion and help in the sensitization of policymakers through a combination of face-to-face or virtual meeting environments. It was noted there was a lack of Caribbean case studies present when searching online. It was mentioned that the United States Agency for International Development had a think tank programme where presentations were sent by e-video.

5.   Conclusions and recommendations

26.   Knowledge networks had clear applications within the realm of development, specifically among government, citizens and other stakeholders. To further harness the advantages offered by those networks in the Caribbean, the following recommendations and conclusions were made:

(a) To ensure development in the new knowledge era, knowledge strategies should be developed and implemented that could assist in achieving regional development goals.

(b) Although information and communication technologies and their development were important, it was essential to refocus on the "human" element in knowledge strategies as they were the carriers of knowledge.

(c) Knowledge networks were present in all organizations and among organizations, many transcending national boundaries. The amount of knowledge locked in those networks was extremely valuable for the development of the Caribbean. Plans and programmes should be put into place that could enhance those networks in order to utilize them.

(d) Greater effort should be put into discovering the dynamics of knowledge in the Caribbean, the way it flowed among individuals, organizations and systems. That would allow for the development of better strategies to enhance knowledge networks and, thus, the creation and sharing of knowledge.

(e) There was a need for an overriding regional approach tailored to the needs of the economy. Some countries were further ahead than others, therefore, a bigger plan was needed, but in order for it to be successful and beneficial, that plan must be tailored to meet the different needs of individual countries.

(f) Rural communities held a great deal of indigenous knowledge that would be quickly lost if knowledge networks were not adapted to suit those communities. Liaison with the Caribbean Development Fund to develop community centres and development centres and create sessions to utilize that indigenous knowledge was recommended.

(g) There was a need to spread the use of knowledge networks in the various governments and ministries. On the policy level and operating level, there was disconnect between policy level and

the librarians. In addition, there was a need to ensure that relationship existed with the government and ministers.

(h) ECLAC has made a good start with focusing on sustainable development which was considered the new area of concentration, while other organizations were focused on recent issues and themes taking place in the Caribbean. Because ECLAC had a history, they could become a centre of excellence by establishing a multisectoral theme to support the knowledge management theme, for example, tie in sustainable development and knowledge management. A development strategy in knowledge management, within the context of sustainable development with a top-down and bottom-up draft framework, could be presented to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, to present to regional governments. There needed to be a re-emphasis on the benefits that government and policymakers would derive from knowledge management. The approach should be directed at the ministerial level and ECLAC seek the collaboration of Caricom to operate the process within the region.

(i) The knowledge development model could be used to push the Caribbean small island developing States agenda.

(j) Ideas for research and development brought out innovation, and governments saw potential in that area. Pitched at that level, governments must recognize the knowledge component in each idea.

(k) There was an overriding need for training and capacity-building in the subregion in order to position itself to move towards a trained society and to have the skill sets to operate in such an environment. Working with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Commonwealth Secretariat to help drive the process could support training and information research. One of the projects by IDRC was to identify the cost of information.

(l) Monitoring and evaluation should be fused with knowledge management. Experts should be brought in to demonstrate practical applications to knowledge management and the results based management concept should be applied. Questions such as, "where did I fail?" and "what were the inputs that were missing to make it happen?" should be focused on. The Caribbean Centre for Development Administration was implementing in-country training to sensitize people in monitoring and evaluation in order to measure the impacts of knowledge management.

(m) There was a need for sensitization on knowledge managament and the need to have something practical, maybe promoting community or practice that would enhance the public sector.

6.   Closing remarks

27.   The representative of ECLAC thanked all experts for participating in the meeting. He stated that the Commission looked forward to continued cooperation and collaboration with governments and development agencies in the Caribbean in an effort to work towards greater development in the subregion through the advancement of knowledge management.

<u>Annex I</u>

List of participants

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<u>Annex II</u>

List of documents

Document symbol	Document title
LC/CAR/L.251	Programme of work of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 2010-2011
ECLAC/POS/2011/KSKN/1	Provisional agenda
ECLAC/POS/2011/KSKN/ 1/Add.1	Provisional annotated agenda
ECLAC/POS/2011/KSKN/2	Provisional programme
ECLAC/POS/2011/KSKN/3	Draft Study on "Knowledge Strategies for Development: Knowledge Networks"