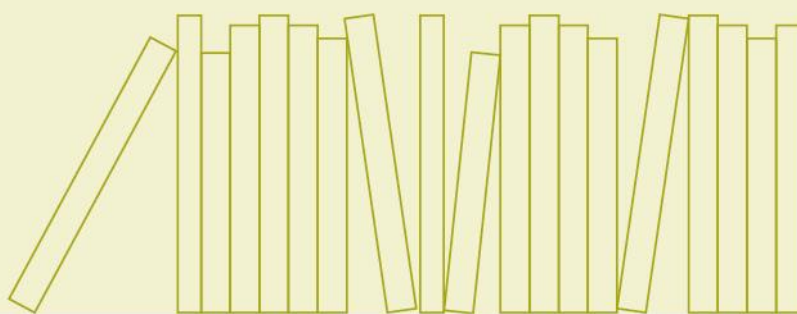


Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN



Report of the expert group meeting to review a study on synthesis of policy interventions responding to common integrated water resources management challenges in the Caribbean small island developing States



UNITED NATIONS

E C L A C



Expert group meeting to review a study
on synthesis of policy interventions
responding to common integrated water
resources management challenges
in the Caribbean small island developing States

LIMITED
LC/CAR/2021/9
14 December 2021
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Virtual meeting, 6 October 2021

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO REVIEW A STUDY
ON THE SYNTHESIS OF POLICY INTERVENTIONS RESPONDING
TO COMMON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
CHALLENGES IN THE CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES**

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

1. The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean convened an expert group meeting to review a study titled “Synthesis of policy interventions responding to common integrated water resources management challenges in the Caribbean small island developing States”. The meeting was convened virtually by Webex on 6 October 2021. The link for this event is available at: <https://bit.ly/EGM-IWRM2021>.

2. Attendance

2. There were 16 persons in attendance including representatives from the following:

- Government agencies: the Bahamas Water and Sewerage Corporation, National Hydrological Service, Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Petroleum Belize and the Jamaica Water Resources Authority.
- Integrated water resources management consultants (IWRM) from the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
- ECLAC officials.

3. Meeting agenda

1. Agenda item 1: Opening of meeting
2. Agenda item 2: Presentations
 - Introduction of study: Synthesis of policy interventions responding to common integrated water resources management challenges in the Caribbean SIDS.
 - IWRM practices, policies and recommendations: outcomes from national reports.
 - Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS): synthesis of policy interventions responding to common IWRM challenges.
3. Agenda item 3: Discussions
4. Closure

B. REPORTING THE PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting

3. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean welcomed the attending IWRM experts, colleagues, and other participants. She thanked the participating Caribbean countries of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago for readily agreeing to participate in this important research. In her opening remarks, she affirmed that the sustainable management of freshwater resources is important to economic, environmental, and social development. She noted that the current demands on public health management imposed by COVID-19 have increased awareness of human interaction with economic and natural systems and the systemic nature of risk. They also underscored the importance of ensuring that all citizens have safe access to freshwater supplies. The Director informed participants that the study addressed the challenges, explored best practices and optimum approaches to sustained water resources management in the Caribbean. She expressed the hope

that the findings and recommendations of the study can serve member countries in addressing sustainable water resources management through an IWRM framework.

2. Presentations

4. The Coordinator of the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit (SDDU) introduced the objectives of this study and the methodology applied to examine the status of implementation of selected elements of an IWRM framework. She informed that the study provided policy recommendations serving to optimize effective responses and support sustainable water resources management in the Caribbean SIDS, including recommendations for potable water management approach in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. In her presentation, the meeting was referred to the recent United Nations report of the 2030 Agenda and on the progress in implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), indicator SDG 6.5.1 on the degree of implementation of IWRM. The meeting was informed that based on the 2021 - United Nations report, the current rate of progress in the implementation of indicator 6.5.1 needs to be double, as 129 countries are not on track to achieve sustainable water resources management by 2030. This same report listed the Caribbean SIDS countries as having low to medium-low levels of implementation of this SDG indicator. In keeping with the objectives of this study, she guided that the policy recommendations enlisted in this study can serve towards systematically addressing IWRM implementation and thereby support member States in addressing the reporting requirements of the SDG 6.5.1 of the 2030 Agenda.

IWRM practices, policies and recommendations: outcomes from national reports:

5. These presentations focused on the main outcomes of national reports including national IWRM organisational structures, challenges, and recommendation for more effective systems. The requirements to have national policy, legal framework, designated water resources management budget, database infrastructure and institutional structures to facilitate effective and sustained implementation of IWRM were common recommendations across each of the seven countries considered in this study.

Caribbean SIDS: synthesis of policy interventions responding to common IWRM challenges:

6. The lead IWRM consultant delivered this presentation highlighting the policy recommendations that would ultimately support the sustainable water resources management in the Caribbean Region and following an IWRM approach. The following captures the discussions related to the main aspects of IWRM following on this presentation. The discussions also reflected the views and strategies countries adopted in response to the potable water management requirements and the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Discussions

7. The Coordinator for Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit then invited the participating experts to share their views on the study.

8. IWRM - enabling environment: the Managing Director, Water Resources Authority (WRA), Jamaica, generally agreed with the recommendations provided from this study. However, he cautioned the expectation of officials to look towards the water extraction volume-based fees (VBF) as an income generating instrument. Instead, he proposed that VBF should be established as a management tool that would guide policymakers, abstractors and other users towards a more efficient and better national water management strategy.

9. Institutional framework: the IWRM consultant from Jamaica informed the meeting that there are many challenges facing the Caribbean SIDS and when addressing IWRM. One of his concerns was the brain drain that the sector often experienced. Repeatedly, this sector would lose trained IWRM employees to other jobs. Towards addressing this challenge, he proposed developing a Caribbean regional IWRM human resources capacity pool. This group of IWRM experts can also serve in sharing their experience with the region and other SIDS. The lead consultant concurred, referring to the experience in Trinidad and Tobago, where WRM experts have better employment incentives to work in the private energy sectors when compared to working in the public sectors.

10. The Coordinator of the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit suggested the incorporation of water resources management into the curriculum of tertiary institutions such as the University of the West Indies (UWI), along with other expertise could provide a source of replenishment for the brain drain.

11. The lead consultant shared a SIDS best practice from Singapore, where their IWRM national current and projected needs were clearly defined. This country then invests in having their experts trained in IWRM. These experts were also sufficiently remunerated and could be considered as a strategy to reduce staff turnovers.

12. Management instruments: as part of the management instrument the lead consultant offered the inclusion of geospatial technologies to support IWRM databases, information systems and disaster planning and management. The consultant from Suriname agreed these technologies were effective tools for water resources management. She further recommended that a distinction should be made between developing a policy that calls for the inclusion of these technologies, the technical (and data fields) aspects to be addressed and user agencies requirements to enable their use and application.

13. Proposed IWRM organizational structure: in examining the IWRM components considered in the national reports and towards addressing the requirements of sustained IWRM, the lead consultant presented on a proposed national IWRM organization structure including functions and activities. She informed that this proposed structure could provide a guide to member States in advancing their IWRM agenda and including the reporting requirements of the SDG 6.5.1.

14. Comments and suggestions received from the floor following this proposed national IWRM organizational structure were:

- The IWRM consultant from Jamaica suggested the inclusion of land management as an integral aspect of watershed management. His colleague from WRA Jamaica agreed. He elaborated that previously all agencies related to IWRM came under one agency. However, under current administration, this overarching agency was disaggregated. He informed that this change has caused misalignment on IWRM functions and resulting delays in the implementation progress.
- The IWRM consultant from Belize agreed that a single independent organization to manage water resources was necessary. He also agreed that disaggregated and uncoordinated systems resulted in data management gaps, inefficiencies and approval delays. He along with other participants, including the Senior Hydrologists from the Bahamas and Belize indicated that the organizational structure as is presented could be adjusted to meet country needs. The consultant from Guyana preferred that the IWRM roles outlined in the structure be delegated to existing agencies, especially in the case of his country. He also contributed that the proposed structure could be streamlined according to countries peculiarities.

- The Coordinator of the SDDU informed that this proposed IWRM organizational structure was formulated following the examination of the information contained in the seven national reports including best practices, challenges and policy recommendations. In keeping with one of the main objectives of this study, it was highlighted that this proposed structure includes a section providing for the IWRM data management and reporting requirements. Towards this purpose and based on national circumstances, countries can further examine and adapt this proposed structure.

4. Closure of meeting

15. On behalf of the Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, the Coordinator of the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit thanked all participants for their attendance, presentations and active participation at this EGM which examines the draft study on synthesis of policy interventions responding to common integrated water resources management challenges in the Caribbean small island developing States. The meeting concluded at 12.08 p.m.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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