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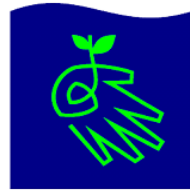
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Sustainable Development Goals being addressed



Volume 4, Issue 1

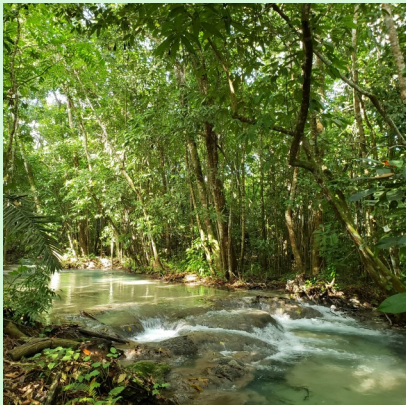
March 2021



IWECO:link

Quarterly newsletter of the GEF-funded Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States Project

www.iweco.org



Forests: more than a bunch of trees!

*Celebrating International Day of Forests,
21st March 2021*

In modern society, forests are seen as something 'you can go to' (for recreational purposes, to relax, or to make use of its products), not as something you are closely related to and depend on.

Imagine if there were no forests! Would your life be impacted?

Forests provide more than we take for granted in our daily lives than you have probably ever imagined. And please, do not immediately think only about the wood originating from forests. Think also about the food and jobs for billions of people, home and shelter to countless animal and plant species which all together - through interrelated and complex processes - provide a buffer and balance to the earth's global systems.

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Learning how to Make a Living while Reducing Environmental Stress

One of IWECO's main objectives is to enhance sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic co-benefits for targeted communities in its participating countries.

Several of the National sub-Projects include nature-based community enterprises. These include the agro-tourism park that is being developed in Saint Lucia and community-led quarry rehabilitation activities in Trinidad & Tobago. Work is also being planned with civil society organisations in other islands, and these are good starting points for nature-based enterprises aligned to the various National sub-Projects.

It is therefore important for the Project to assist in the development and strengthening of nature-based enterprises in and around GEF-IWECO national sub-project sites. If elements such as ecosystem stewardship, business strengthening, climate proofing and knowledge sharing are incorporated into enterprise development and strengthening exercises, these also contribute to the fulfilment of other GEF-IWECO project outcomes such as reduction in environmental stress, strengthened capacity and improved engagement of stakeholders.

IWECO's Mid-Term Review noted that, although a good foundation is being established, the livelihoods and revenue generation aspect in the relevant national projects re-

(Continued on page 2)



*Items made from vetiver,
Quarry Rehab Champions,
Trinidad 2019*



Caribbean
Public Health
Agency

CARPHA

SGP The GEF
Small Grants
Programme

(Continued from page 1)

quires more technical and other assistance. In order to address this, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), a Project partner since inception, is implementing a multi-pronged two-year, intervention to:

- Support ecosystem stewardship by community enterprises and other resource users to sustain the ecosystem goods and services that they depend on.
- Strengthen current and nascent nature-based community enterprises to ensure sustainable use and enhance socio-economic benefits to rural communities, particularly to women.
- Build resilience of nature-based livelihoods to the impacts of climate change.
- Enhance knowledge and foster partnerships for sustainable nature-based livelihoods using ecosystem stewardship, business strengthening and climate proofing at the national and regional levels.



Promoting the Agro-Tourism Park, Castries, Saint Lucia, December 2018

The **overall objective** of the two-year intervention is to strengthen and support stewardship and sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods in the targeted IWECO countries, to in turn facilitate healthy and resilient ecosystems. This initiative consists of four inter-linked intervention areas:

1. **Enhancing ecosystem stewardship to support sustainable livelihoods of surrounding communities.** Activities will build the capacity of community nature-based entrepreneurs and resource users in the surrounding communities to take stewardship actions to protect ecosystems upon which their livelihoods and well-being depend. They will be provided with technical support and seed funds (through a micro-grant mechanism) to effectively plan and implement stewardship actions, building their skills for stewardship through a learning by doing approach.
2. **Strengthening community enterprises to ensure sustainable use and enhance socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities:** SMEs which are dependent on local natural resources (goods or services) for their operations and processes will be targeted. Examples include agroforestry (e.g. honey and chocolate production); use of forest products (e.g. charcoal, craft materials); small-scale fisheries (including crabs and other non-fish species); mariculture (e.g. seaweed); and community ecotourism. This activity will support local resource users to establish and/or strengthen existing nature

-based SMEs to enhance delivery of triple bottom line (environmental, social and economic) co-benefits. The enterprises will be supported by CANARI-trained in-country small business development mentors, who will also provide business strengthening support based on needs assessments. A micro-grant mechanism will be established for the SMEs to implement practical actions to support strengthening their business and enhancing delivery of triple bottom line benefits.

3. **Building resilience of livelihoods to climate change:** CANARI will draw on climate proofing methodology and guidelines using value chain analysis to 'climate proof' community nature-based enterprises in the target IWECO countries. It will train country project IWECO staff to be climate adaptation mentors for the community enterprises to help the enterprises select and implement climate proofing actions, working in collaboration with the business development mentors. A micro-grant mechanism will be used to fund SME climate proofing actions.
4. **Knowledge sharing for sustainable nature-based livelihoods.** In recognition of the need to scale out approaches such as ecosystem stewardship, business strengthening and climate proofing beyond the target SMEs and project life cycle, this activity will incorporate several knowledge-sharing and partnership building mechanisms including convening and facilitating Action Learning Groups, documenting and disseminating innovations and lessons learnt from the project countries, and showcasing results at national expos in each country. Approaches employed by the target SMEs will be shared with non-target SMEs and those who support development of sustainable livelihoods from government agencies, private sector, funders, civil society, policy makers and academia.

The initiative which is being implemented between March 2021 and March 2023, was introduced in two successive IWECO Partners' Webinars in March 2021 (2nd and 23rd March). The first, aimed to get National Project Coordinators on board, especially as they will be working with stakeholders to identify nature-based enterprises which can participate in this initiative. The second, widened the scope to include the GEF Small Grant Programme (SGP) Coordinators in the respective countries, given their past work with many communities on projects that strengthen ecosystem resilience and build capacity for sustainable livelihoods. The Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) was also included as its members may have a range of skills to offer and may be interested in building their capacity to lead nature-based enterprises.

We are excited about this initiative which, if successfully implemented, has the potential to combine empowerment, knowledge sharing, capacity development and practical actions to enhance the long-term health, sustainability and adaptive capacity of ecosystems and associated nature-based livelihoods.

Natural Capital Accounting in the Caribbean

On 19th January 2021, UNEP GEF IWeco's Tenth Partners' Webinar featured a presentation on Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) by Jake Kuyer, an environmental economist and principal consultant with the UK firm Economics for the Environment Consultancy Ltd. (eftec).

NCA is a structured approach to collecting data and producing environmental statistics on the value that the environment provides, such as the provision of attractive space for recreation and tourism, physical protection from sea surge and surface flooding, and abundance of natural produce from the sea and land. By translating scientific data and ecological knowledge into economic evidence for policy and planning use, natural capital accounting provides a framework for the environment to be considered alongside other economic and social decision-making.

NCA can be thought of as the framework within which environmental statistics are produced, such as through Ecosystem Service Valuation (ESV), and reported in a consistent and accessible manner for policy and planning use; therefore, conducting ESV is one means to produce evidence for the national natural capital accounts, alongside other existing economic and socioeconomic data.

The practical application of natural capital accounting in the Caribbean was demonstrated through the UK Government funded "Caribbean Overseas Territories Regional Natural Capital Accounting Programme". This programme is building capacity for natural capital accounting in the five Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Montserrat, and the British Virgin Islands), working with local government departments, and other local organisations, to collect data and produce environmental statistics within the natural capital accounting framework. These statistics will be able to sit alongside other national economic indicators, such as GDP, to help support better decision making in the region.

Applications of natural capital accounting to current challenges was also discussed. In the context of the major economic and health crises brought on by the pandemic, there is a lot of focus on how to build back economies once the health risks have subsided, and in particular, a push for a Green Recovery.



#CaringForOurFuture



On 22nd March we celebrated World Water Day under the theme 'Valuing Water'. By recording and celebrating all the different ways water benefits our lives, we can value water properly and safeguard it effectively for everyone. What does water mean to you?

[#WorldWaterDay](#) [#iwecoproject](#) [#CaringForOurFuture](#)
[#NosImportaElFuturo](#)

NCA can also support delivery of several of the Sustainable Development Goals, providing an evidence backed way of understanding what is driving their need and where to focus resources to achieve them. Work on establishing NCA in the Caribbean is ongoing, and it is hoped that the knowledge generated will help enable better management of the economy and the environment for the benefit of the Caribbean.

See the presentation at:

http://www.iweco.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/UNEP_Caribbean%20NCA%20seminar_eftec_January%202021.pdf



(Continued from page 1)

Consider: From your daily meals, to the transport you use, to writing your shopping list, to getting your injuries bandaged, medicines, to cosmetics and detergentsforest products are a vital part of our daily lives. For all of us! No forests = no life!

A forest is a complex system with - from the vegetation point of view - normally several tree layers; the lowest level close to the ground being made up of shrubs and herbs. As the trees create a particular type of environment, it attracts particular animals and plant species that thrive in it.

So, different types of forests, are normally inhabited by different kinds of animals and plant species!

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a "forest" is a piece of land bigger than 5000 m² with trees higher than 5 meters and a tree cover of more than 10 % (or with trees that would meet these criteria in future). Your bunch of trees around the corner could well be a real forest! These days, in cities 'tiny forests' are promoted, sometimes as small as 100 m²....and even those small 'forests' provide shelter to many organisms of different sizes!

In general, we distinguish between four main types of forest: Tropical forests, Temperate forests, Boreal forests and Plantation forests. Between the latitudes 10° North and South of the Equator you can find Tropical forests which are most rich in species and identified as 'hotspots of biodiversity'. Between 53°N and 67°N Boreal forest, generally populated with needle-leaf trees, is found. In between are the Temperate forests and these normally have broadleaf trees. The broad leaf forests are more species rich than the Boreal forest.

Did you know that Planet Earth has more than 4 billion hectares of forests? ...that's about one third of the total land area! The livelihoods of 1.6 billion people depend directly on them, but equally important is the fact that 80% of all land organisms live in forests!

Quite impressive, isn't it?!

Some 7% of all forest cover on earth consists of Plantation forest. While the direct productivity (through the supply of a sustainable volume of forest products such as timber and fibre) of planted and intensively managed plantation forests is usually greater than that of natural forests, plantation forests house less biodiversity compared to natural forests and as such their contribution to the global balance and buffering mechanism is more limited.

We depend on all these types of forests for our survival, from the wood and fibre we use, to the air we breathe. Forests provide ecosystem services that are critical to human welfare. From providing shelter and habitats for animals, livelihoods for humans, to providing watershed protection, prevention of soil erosion and mitigation of climate change.

Forests are also important for mitigation of climate change because they are - after oceans - the world's largest carbon storehouses!

They provide ecosystem services that are critical to human welfare. These include:

- Absorbing harmful greenhouse gasses that produce climate change. In tropical forests alone, a quarter of a trillion tons of carbon is stored in above and below ground biomass
- Providing clean water for drinking, bathing, and other household needs
- Protecting watersheds and reducing or slowing the amount of erosion and chemicals that reach waterways
- Providing food and medicine and many other raw products needed in our daily lives
- Serving as a buffer in natural disasters such as extremely heavy rainfall and flooding, but also serving as buffers to avoid outbreaks of pests, viruses, etc.
- Providing habitat to an estimated 80% of all land-based species which form part of the global balance and buffering mechanism!

We all depend on forests! Without them there would be no life on this planet!

Given their importance, the IWECO Project (with funding specifically from the Biodiversity and the Sustainable Forest Management Impact Programs of the Global Environment Facility) pays attention to forests in a few National IWECO projects.

In Trinidad & Tobago and in St. Kitts & Nevis, for instance, IWECO projects support the restoration of former quarries through supporting natural regeneration and planting of indigenous tree species.

And in Cuba, IWECO supports reforestation and forest conservation.

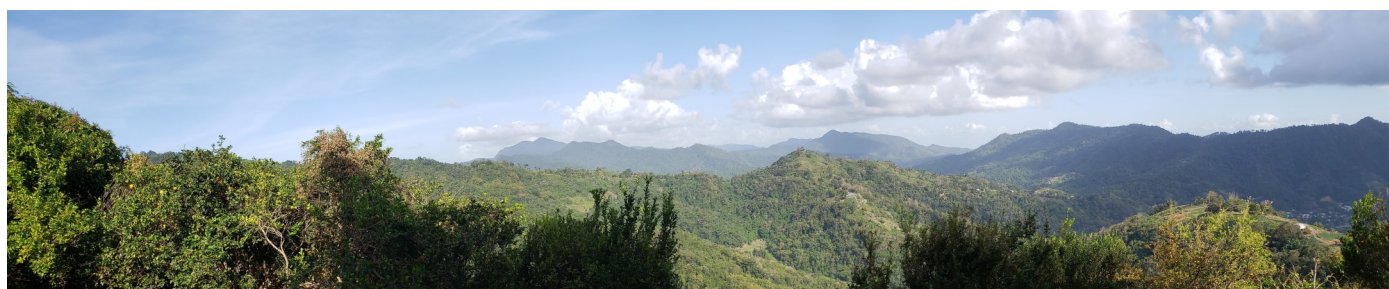
The IWECO National Project in Saint Lucia supports activities to reduce stress in the Upper Soufriere Watershed through appropriate sustainable water, land and ecosystems management interventions by promoting tree planting and forest conservation.

And the plantation forests of Saint Vincent & the Grenadines will gradually be converted to more natural forest types which would be more stable in times of hurricanes, while at the same time providing more food and shelter for the indigenous Saint Vincent parrot.

Forest conservation in Caribbean Small Island Developing States reduces the runoff of silt and nutrients to the Caribbean Sea, improving the health of the tropical coral reefs that underpin the economies of many islands. Through forest conservation the IWECO project also works to support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention.

Next weekend, go out to the forest...remember all the intricate processes taking place inside that amazing system...and be thankful to be in the presence of such abundant and wonderful life. Enjoy!

Jan Betlem is Regional IWECO Project Coordinator; he has a forest conservation background.



CEAC's establishes IWEco.Cuba Data and Info Network



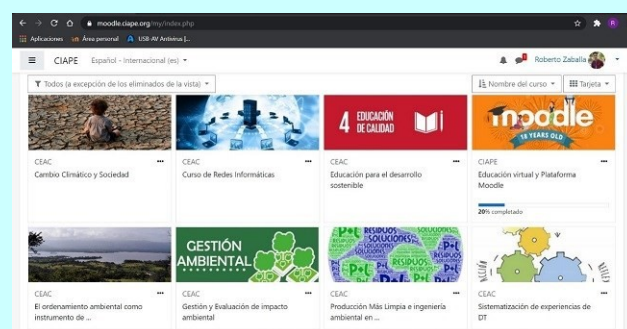
Between 24th January and 13th February 2021, specialists from the Center for Environmental Studies in the city of Cienfuegos (CEAC) and an expert from DanofficeIT, installed and configured new computer servers and network equipment acquired under the IWEco.Cuba Project.

Given the current international health restrictions due to Covid-19, it was not possible to carry out this technical assistance in person, as had initially been planned. Guidance was therefore provided virtually by Engineer Leonardo Padilla, of the company DanofficeIT, to Engineer Duniesky Herrera Pérez, principal specialist of CEAC's Computer Science Group. DanofficeIT is a global provider of high technology solutions serving the United Nations and other organizations worldwide.

This node, along with the rest of the computer equipment distributed in the various project demonstration areas, effectively establishes the IWEco National Network which supports communication about Project implementation and hosts the Management Information System designed in 2020 to facilitate the monitoring and control of IWEco.Cuba activities.

In addition to enabling the remote installation and configuration of the servers in the offices of CEAC, joint management between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the UN Environment Programme, enabled strengthening of national capacities in Cuba by facilitating the acquisition of equipment for topography and tidal studies, vehicles to increase the mobility of technicians and materials necessary for on-site studies, and laboratory instruments and furniture.

IWEco.Cuba has four demonstration sites—the Guanabo River basin in Havana, the Arimao River basin in Cienfuegos, the Agabama River basin in Sancti Spiritus, and the San Juna River basin in Santiago de Cuba. Acquisition of this equipment enables extensive work to conserve and protect these widespread areas. All equipment should be delivered by end-June 2021.



IWEco.Cuba uses Moodle to support distance education

The IWEco.Cuba Project, through its educational component, on 3rd February 2021, introduced a course on "E-Learning and the Moodle Platform". This is taking place from 1st March to 3rd May 2021, at the Centre for Environmental Studies of Cienfuegos (CEAC).

This is meant to strengthen institutional capacity as well as build new knowledge networks in IWEco and beyond, in support of South-South cooperation in Latin America. The fundamental objective of this program is to provide the tools for participants to design, implement and evaluate quality courses, with the use of innovative tools on the Moodle platform.

This activity is jointly organized by CEAC and Chile's CIAPE Foundation for Education and Technology. The latter, is in charge of the training process, with its president, Juan Alonso Peñafiel Reyes, in the role of teacher-facilitator.

This activity aims to build capacity amongst CEAC teachers, researchers and process facilitators and to strengthen the teaching-learning process in a virtual environment using the Moodle



platform. In addition, it will expand access to specialized postgraduate training, from the local context into the international one, while adapting to the requirements of the COVID-19 health emergency.

It strengthens and integrates the institutional processes of training and research, through project management. Finally, it contributes to the building of new strategic alliances and knowledge networks in the educational dimension of environmental studies. Seven participants (four women and three men) are directly benefiting, in the roles of professors, researchers and facilitators.

Youth in Action Cleaning up the Coastal Zone in St. Kitts



As part of Youth in Service Day 2021, held on Saturday 13th February in St. Kitts and Nevis, the Caribbean Youth Environment Network in St. Kitts and Nevis (CYEN in SKN) partnered with the Department of Youth Empowerment to lead beach clean ups on ten (10) beaches all over the island of St. Kitts. This was the largest coordinated beach clean-up effort even in St. Kitts and

Nevis. Over 172 volunteers rallied together to clean up more than 930 kg of trash from the coastal zone.

Detailed data as to the types of trash collected are currently being compiled and will be stored in a central database so that these efforts can be properly tracked and monitored over time. CYEN in SKN aims to build on this experience and continue to grow its network of youths and community groups inspired to action in our coastal zone.

Other groups and agencies involved in this island-wide clean up included The Ripple Institute SKN, St. Kitts and Nevis Chess Federation, Psychological Learning Centre, St. Kitts and Nevis Turtle Monitoring Network, Department of Environment, Department of Youth Empowerment Youth Volunteer Corps, Department of Marine Resources, Reef Guardians, Anjolie Dance Company, Ministry of Tourism, CSEAO, Sustainable Destination Council and the Ross University Scuba Club!

CYEN in SKN aims to mobilize the youth in St. Kitts and Nevis by equipping them with the proper tools and training to become active guardians of the coastal areas in their communities through environmental monitoring and clean-up activities. IWEco SKN is actively working with CYEN in SKN to build upon and enhance the coastal clean-up efforts spearheaded by the group under the Clean Seas Program

www.cleanseas.org



REMDAP Survey Report

The report of the scoping assessment to ascertain the feasibility and best options to establish a web-based Regional Environmental Monitoring Data Portal (REMDAP), commissioned by the IWEco Project in 2020 is now available.

This report examines the varied MEA reporting requirements (of IWEco project countries), associated data needs and data flows, and presents some scenarios for the establishment of this mechanism along with the required resources.

This serves as the first Phase to contribute to this clearing-house activity, where the next steps will be determined with input from the appropriate project and regional partners (CARICOM, ROLAC, UN ECLAC, among others).

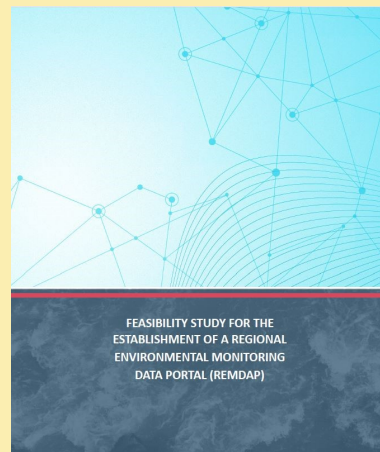
Given COVID-19 restrictions across the region, the consultancy was undertaken virtually (with surveys disseminated to national and regional agencies within the IWEco network). The study scope included the ten IWEco SIDS and considered the Project's alignment to 15 conventions, guidelines and instruments (SDGs, Cartagena and its protocols, CBD, CITES, RAMSAR, CMS, Agenda21, RIO+ 20, Barbados PoA, JPOI, Samoa Pathway, and GPA).

The IWEco PCU envisages that the REMDAP mechanism will include tools and indicators for multi-scale applications, support improved methods for multi-scale assessment and monitoring of land degradation trends, and contribute to regional monitoring of impacts of investments in water, land and ecosystem services maintenance.

Successful development of a REMDAP could significantly transform the region's approach to reporting on sustainable development initiatives and, ultimately, decision-making.

See the report at

http://www.iweco.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/UNEP-GEF_IWEco_Feasibility_Study_REMDAP_Dec_2020.pdf



GEO 6 for Youth

In February 2021, UNEP published its first fully interactive e-publication, GEO 6 for Youth. It provides engaging multimedia content and interactive features to inform, engage, educate, and lead to youth action.

<https://www.unep.org/resources/geo-6-youth>

Learning a thing or two about the Negril Great Morass on World Wetlands Day



Wetland boat tour of the North Negril River. Pictured to the right, Mrs. Nicollette Buchanan, Environmental Health and Safety Manager for Beaches Negril Resort who organized and hosted the event.

In celebration of this year's World Wetlands Day, the IWEco Jamaica National sub-Project partnered with the Beaches Negril Resort for an interpretive boat tour of the Negril Great Morass in a bid to educate their staff members about the importance and benefits of wetlands. Participants were taken along the North Negril River and into the scenic mangrove-rich interior of the wetland forest. This allowed each individual to obtain first-hand views of the rich ecological diversity contained in the area. This interaction sparked lively discussions about the various wetland plants and animal species and the roles they play in sustaining life on earth.

Wetlands are of key importance to sustaining life and provide a wide range of ecosystem services that no other ecosystem can. These include flood protection, shoreline erosion control, climate control, water quality improvement, as well as the provision of natural products and opportunities for recreation at no cost. In spite of these benefits, wetlands suffer irreparable damage in some instances as a result of stress caused from unsustainable human practices. This is largely due to a lack of information and insufficient knowledge of the environmental and ecological functions of wetlands.

The communication campaign under the IWEco Jamaica sub-Project aims to ensure that wetland resources and ecosystem benefits are widely understood and valued by stakeholders and communities within the Negril Environmental Protection Area.

Securing public support for wetland restoration is essential to ensure social commitment towards sustainable land use and management of these globally significant ecosystems. For this very reason, the members of the project executing unit are putting their hearts where it matters most by actively working to address how people relate to the wetland environment, especially the Negril Great Morass. This will be achieved through ongoing edu-

World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on February 2 and is used to raise global awareness about the values and benefits of wetlands in an effort to promote their conservation and wise use. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the convention on wetlands of international significance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on February 2, 1971.

Making Peace with Nature



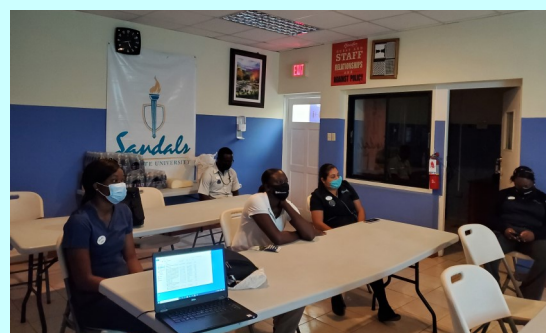
On 18th February, the first UNEP synthesis report titled: **"Making Peace With Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies"** was launched ahead of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). It is based on evidence from global environmental assessments and communicates how climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution can be tackled jointly within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

"The resulting synthesis communicates how climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution can be tackled jointly within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. The report serves to translate the current state of scientific knowledge into crisp, clear and digestible facts-based messages that the world can relate to and follow up on."

See more and download the report:

<https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

cation and outreach activities to encourage behavior change and personal responsibility towards the environment.



Staff members of Beaches Negril Resort gathered for a presentation about the IWEco Project and the significance of wetlands guided by Stacy-Ann Campbell, Technical Officer (IWEco Project) and Xavier Shim, Environmental Officer (NEPA).

Restoration Begins with Me

Send us a photograph or a short video clip showing how you care for plants/trees/forests and what they mean to you

#RestorationBeginsWithMe



The UNEP GEF-IWEco Project along with the UNEP Caribbean Sub-Regional Office (CSRO), the Cartagena Convention Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization Representation for Jamaica, the Bahamas and Belize, invite people across the Caribbean to submit a photograph with a short description, or a short video, of an activity such as tree planting or caring, or anything associated with such an activity that shows how you value plants, trees or forests, and what they mean to you.

On the International Day of Forests (IDF), 21st March 2021, we launched a campaign under the theme “Restoration Begins With Me” to culminate on World Environment Day (WED), when the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration will be formally launched. This regional campaign theme addresses both the IDF and WED themes “Forest Restoration – A Path to recovery and well-being”, and “Ecosystem Restoration”.

Join in this rallying call and participate in the conversation on ecosystem restoration!

See the guidelines at <http://www.iweco.org/node/347> and submit your photo or video to restoration-begins-with-me@cep.unep.org before 17th May 2021.

#RestorationBeginsWithMe #GenerationRestoration #CaringForOurFuture #NosImportaElFuture

Stay safe everyone!


For up-to-date info on COVID-19: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

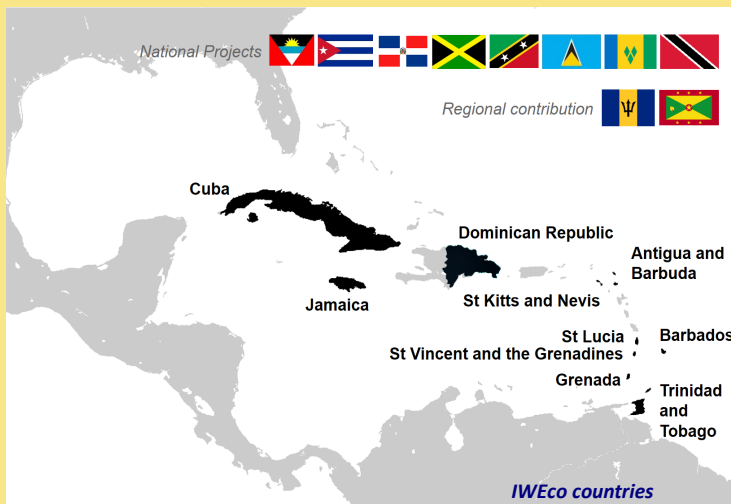
IWEco thanks IWEco:Cuba, IWEco:Jamaica, IWEco:St.Kitts&Nevis and other Project Partners for their contributions to this issue.

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The IWEco Project is a five-year multi-focal area regional project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). UN Environment is the lead Implementing agency and it is hosted by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat.



integrating water, land and ecosystems management
in caribbean small island developing states

#CaringForOurFuture