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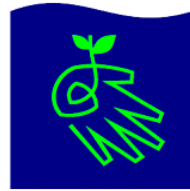
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Sustainable Development Goals being addressed



Volume 4, Issue 3

September 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



Saint Vincent Parrot Census involves the community!

During the period 14 – 17 September 2021, sixty staff members and volunteers of the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour, journeyed to five (5) sectors in remote locations of the interior forest of Saint Vincent to conduct a National Parrot census of the Amazona guildingii.

The census was first conducted in 1986 and then biannually, until 2010, to determine the population of the endangered Saint Vincent Parrot and monitor trends in the population changes. The most recent census in 2010 recorded approximately 850 parrots but an eleven-year lapse followed due to limited financial resources.

The recent eruptions of the La Soufriere volcano, along with the almost annual occurrences of extreme weather events have made the need for a census more

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IWECO - RPSCM 5 Reviewing progress at the 5-year mark

The IWECO Project held its **5th Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting (RPSCM 5)** on 23rd and 24th September 2021, virtually. St. Kitts & Nevis, the smallest country participating in IWECO, hosted this, second virtual meeting of the RPSC, which focused upon the learning from, and sustainability of, successful initiatives, the measures needed to provide more regional support, and ensuring the efficient use of time and resources needed for completion of all activities by project end-date.

The Honourable Eric Evelyn, Minister of Environment and Cooperatives, St. Kitts and Nevis, opened the 5th Regional Project Steering Committee by greeting all participants, highlighting St. Kitts and Nevis' initiatives and progress under the project. He noted that participants would see the wide range of multiscale interventions across the region, which are already having positive impacts, while at the same time reminding that consultation with stakeholders is necessary if long-term sustainability is to be achieved.

Representatives of the Project Implementing and Executing agencies, in their opening remarks, underlined the importance and scale of the project. Participating countries were reminded that, as an implementation project, IWECO needs:

- data supporting how each project reduces environmental stress levels, hence baseline surveys and proper data collection are crucial;
- participating countries must strive for joint impacts with integrated and coordinated work, in other regional projects as well, because these projects have the most significant implications for ecosystem management;
- the interventions in the IWECO project go hand in hand with other

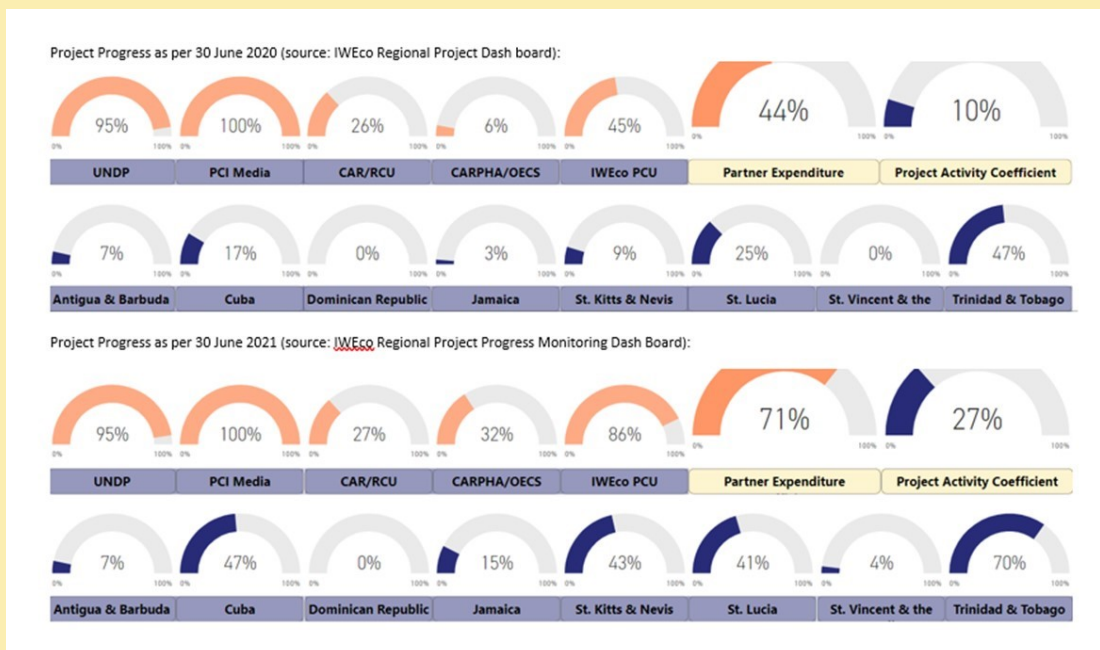
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Caribbean
Public Health
Agency

CARPHA

SGP The GEF
Small Grants
Programme



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regional projects or goals of the partnering agencies, showing the importance of the work to broader ecosystem management within the Wider Caribbean Region as well as the benefits of information sharing and collaboration; and finally,

- a call to action to accelerate the pace of implementation, given the fast-approaching end date of the project.

Adaptive management and resilience in the face of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, were consistent themes of this 5th RSPCM as partners continued work to meet project objectives. Many examples of successful adaptation were shared by the national sub-projects, among them:

- Trinidad and Tobago's utilization of emergency/back-up nurseries at the homes of quarry rehabilitation champions homes in case of future lockdowns.
- Saint Kitts and Nevis' starting their coral reef restoration trainings virtually and making best use of an international consultant and remotely located partners, to ensure they would complete most activities by end-2021.
- Saint Lucia's workarounds to enable their under-forest canopy vanilla cultivation trainings and resourceful utilization of local retired foresters as well as existing internal Forestry Department capacity, as an alternative to hiring consultants.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted project activities and slowed the achievement of some outcomes, particularly at national level, a survey undertaken by the project in late 2020 showed that significant progress has still been possible due to adaptive management at all levels, the continued provision of assistance, information exchange and technical-backstopping facilitated by virtual means, and to the renewed efforts of all project partners.

Key decisions of IWECO RSPCM 5:

- Approval of the IWECO Regional Project end date for all activities in the field to be extended from 31 August 2022 to 31 August 2023.
- Approval of the IWECO Regional Project end date to complete all financial and administrative arrangements related to the project, including conduct of the Terminal Evaluation, to be extended from 31 December 2022 to 31 December 2023.
- Approval of a 3% charge to all projects with undisbursed funds after 31 August 2022 to support the Cartagena Convention Secretariat in its continued hosting of the Regional IWECO Project and associated administrative and financial services.
- Approval of the IWECO Project Coordination Unit (PCU) to follow up on the Regional Environmental Laboratory Assessment and arrange for the requested training and procurement of laboratory equipment and materials as deemed necessary and as agreed by the RSPCM 5. As such, the IWECO PCU will take the lead in acquisition of determined equipment and training with support from a specialized consultant as well as from UNOPS (procurement issues) and UNITAR (training and capacity building).
- Recommendation that the REMDAP report be used to guide, or be a baseline for other projects and agencies, when developing new data and information management systems in the region.

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Highlights from National sub-Projects in 2021

IWEco's National sub-projects got on with a variety of educational and group activities in 2021 despite the challenges brought by the pandemic— here are just a few examples. We congratulate them all!



Water quality monitoring; training in handheld device & field-testing kits, IWEco.SLU

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urgent than ever. This is made possible by resources received from the two Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded projects that are being jointly executed through UNDP - the UNEP IWEco Project, and the Conserving Biodiversity and Reducing Land Degradation using a Ridge to Reef Approach.

Reef Guardians Training, IWEco.SKN



The methodology being used consists of teams conducting dawn and dusk watches in the five sectors which are further subdivided into five watch-points. In the past, census exercises were executed over a period of 5 weeks, one sector per week.



With the resources made available through the joint projects, the census will now take on a different approach, with all sites being observed simultaneously so that observations can be made throughout the island at the same time.



Stakeholder consultation, IWEco.DR

This census, which is the first of a series to be conducted over the next few years, had favourable weather. The Forestry Department hopes to learn more about the status of the population of Saint Vincent's national bird, a flagship species which is also an indicator of the health of the forest and the ecosystem services it provides.

Quarry Rehab Champs planting on Taungya site, IWEco.T&T



Forestry Summer Programme at the Spring Village Primary School, IWEco.SVG



You are invited to attend
A Parrot Watch Exercise
for the commencement of a National Parrot Census

Location: Heritage, Cumberland Watershed
Date: Thursday August 26, 2021
Time: 2.00 P.M.

R.S.V.P by Tuesday August 24, 2021

- Parrot Facts**
1. Found only in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the wild
 2. Lives in the central National Parrot Sanctuary, parts of this habitat is being degraded by both nature as well as humans
 3. It shares this habitat with other endemic species of plants and animals such as Whistling Warbler, Whistling Frog, Black Snake, several species of plants, to name a few
 4. Listed internationally (IUCN) as a Critically Endangered species
 5. International trade in this species is protected under C.I.T.E.S
 6. Documented in 2 color morphs—brown morph and green morph
 7. Parrot pairs stay together for life
 8. Typically rears 2 chicks per year
 9. Documented as living upwards of 50 years in captivity
 10. Has an extensive range of vocal sounds
 11. Last count in 2010 lists the wild population at approximately 850 birds
- SEE YOU IN THE WILD!!!!!!

The census was preceded by a Parrot Watch exercise in August 2021, which explained the methodology to be used.

IWEco.Cuba charts its progress!

IWEco’s National sub-Project in Cuba focuses on biodiversity and targets four watersheds in different parts of the island. It is being executed by the Centro de Estudios Ambientales de Cienfuegos (CEAC). IWEco:Link’s December 2019 issue - <https://tinyurl.com/3aaex5cp> - introduced the project and its objectives. CEAC also produces an IWEco.Cuba newsletter which we publish to the project website. Here are some highlights from the latest issue which describes activities in all four watersheds in the last quarter (July – September 2021).

The San Juan Basin, Santiago de Cuba:

- Visits by specialists from Bioeco, the Agroforestal Gran Piedra Company and the National Company for the Protection of Flora and Fauna to monitor the development of forest and fruit plants, and, to the forest and fruit tree nursery, located in the “Hermanos Marañón” forest community, to look at the development of seedling production for reforestation purposes and observe challenges being faced.



- Visits to determine the physical and geographical characteristics of the site of the new cement factory which is being built in Santiago de Cuba, including the risk of erosion and threats to biodiversity.

The Agabama Basin:

- Tours of intervention sites at three demonstration farms to check progress with reforestation efforts to: propose remedial strategies; determine points in the riverbed for future physical-chemical studies of the water; carry out an inventory of flora and fauna. Preliminary results confirmed 50 species of birds, belonging to 26 families and 42 genera, of which 9 are endemic.



- Visits to schools in the towns of Buenavista, FNTA, Manaca and Vallecito to consult with stakeholders in order to select target audiences and schools for implementation of an Environmental Education Programme.
- Re-design of the mascot of the IWEco.Cuba project: Atabey, to be used in promotional and educational materials, including in the “Biodiversity Conservation” circles of interest.



The Arimao Basin:

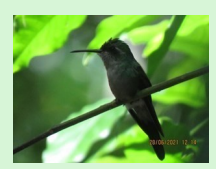
- Follow-up on the Good Agricultural Practices being implemented in the Arimao Basin demonstration project where significant progress was seen, including an improvement in working conditions, the development of environmentally friendly



training and workshop facilities, the use of biological methods of pest control and the introduction of covered cultivation.

The Guanabo Basin:

- Tours of the “La Coca” Ecological Reserve to monitor the fauna and take photographs of the existing species, towards completion of the basin’s existing biodiversity database.
- Evaluation of soil conservation measures in the basin.
- Monitoring of conservation and soil improvement activities in the Finca el Recreo.



See details of these activities and more in IWEco.Cuba’s newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/22skhmb6>

Cultivating vanilla to support the forest and sustainable livelihoods

The **IWEco Saint Lucia National Project** is using an innovative approach to forest restoration and sustainable land management by training farmers to cultivate vanilla, an increasingly precious commodity, in the south of the island.

The training was launched in April 2021 at Barre D'Isle in the Dennery Forest and was facilitated by Mr. Karl Augustine, the IWEco Saint Lucia National Project Coordinator and a team from the Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture. According to Mr. Augustine, they hope to eventually expand to the Fond Doux Coastal Zone and scale up cultivation in the Soufriere watershed.

While one driver of the cost of vanilla is its cultivation, another driver is supply and demand. Vanilla is an orchid, which takes 3-4 years to come to harvest, during which time it can be damaged by storms, hurricanes, forest fires, flooding, all of which are increasing in frequency and intensity due to climate change. Although native to Central America, the Caribbean also has the right climate conditions to support its cultivation.

The global rise in health consciousness has led the food industry to move away from the artificially made Vanillin back to natural vanilla. This shift is significant for the Caribbean, because, according to Mr. Augustine, in the 1940s and 1950s before the introduction of vanillin, vanilla was a significant agricultural earner for Dominica and Saint Lucia.

Young farmers have not been venturing into vanilla cultivation, and as farmers who know how to grow vanilla get older there has been a decline in traditional knowledge of its cultivation in Saint Lucia. Now, with the help of the IWEco Saint Lucia National Project, a new generation of farmers is learning to help Saint Lucia re-enter the industry in a significant way and contribute to forest restoration efforts whilst doing so.

The vanilla training sessions aim to build knowledge of best practices for vanilla cultivation as well as to restore and uphold traditional knowledge of vanilla cultivation. The sessions are each approximately 4-5 hours long and run for a total of 9 weeks.

Participants are taught the history of the vanilla flower, as well as how to grow, manage and cultivate it. They are also taught how to identify the most suitable sites for vanilla cultivation as the plant is an orchid vine which is known to like shade and is traditionally grown by attaching the vine to a tree.

The sessions also focus on how to sustainably prepare the site for vanilla cultivation, and how to repeatedly carry out plot management and/or vine husbandry activities. Participants learn how to control weeds, use plant cuttings, set up a trellis (a system to support the vanilla vine as it grows)



and pollinate the vanilla flower by hand, as the melipone bee which pollinates the vanilla flower is native to Mexico, and not found in Saint Lucia.

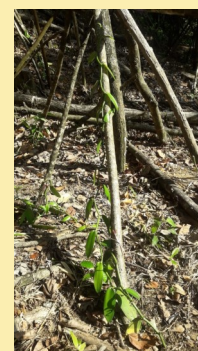
The use of the trellis is particularly important, as the project has identified that it is more practical to use trellises to grow vanilla. Placing the vanilla vine on a living tree means that when that tree grows exceedingly tall, it becomes more challenging, and eventually impossible, for the farmer to continue to cultivate, as the beans are by then out of reach for hand pollination. As a counter to this, the project is using trellises made of aged wood sustainably sourced from old plantations. The trellises are 6-7 feet high and are arranged as a tepee.

Whilst in initial experiments the project found that the vanilla flower did not do well on the first set of trellises, after experimenting with different types of wooden trellises (in efforts to mimic the natural growing conditions of the vanilla orchid vine) they were able to design a system that the vanilla orchid can be cultivated on successfully.

Following the training, the farmers are given a plot of land (one acre each) in the forest to cultivate vanilla. The teepees are constructed under the trees which provide much needed shade to the vanilla orchids and, in this way, farmers are incentivized not to cut or remove the trees in their forest plots.

During the recent passage of Hurricane Elsa, although one tree was blown down, the trellises were not damaged. According to Karl Augustine, "The plot has been expanded to five or six times the original size ...to about half an acre, and three months after planting in May, most of the vines have survived and are showing good growth." He noted that, "A few vines were accidentally planted upside down but as maintenance, namely weed control, is being done, the vines that were planted upside down have been re-planted right side up." No doubt, there will be many more lessons learned before the first vanilla pods are harvested!

By August 2021, the project had trained 20 locals as well as 20 forestry rangers in vanilla cultivation. It is revitalizing vanilla cultivation on the island, ensuring that traditional knowledge of the management of the crop is not lost, creating sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing the economic viability of the island's agriculture sector. Most importantly, this agro-forestry activity is contributing significantly to restoration efforts and sustainable land management by giving farmers a financial reason not to destroy the forest.



Strengthening nature-based enterprises and livelihoods in IWEco - CANARI's capacity building for mentors

In early-September 2021, CANARI completed a series of five online capacity building sessions for mentors under its partnership with the GEF-IWEco Project to strengthen and support nature-based small and micro enterprises (SMEs) in the Caribbean.

This is part of the two-year long partnership between CANARI and IWEco to strengthen and support stewardship and sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods in the targeted IWEco countries to in turn facilitate healthy and resilient ecosystems under four intervention areas. For more information on the project and the four intervention areas.

These capacity building sessions are part of Intervention Area 2 'Strengthening community enterprises to ensure sustainable use and enhance socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities.' This is meant to support community nature-based Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) in delivering triple bottom line (environmental, social and economic) co-benefits through support provided by trained in-country small business development mentors.

The overall objectives of these initial capacity building sessions are to: (i) raise awareness of targeted SMEs on capacity building; (ii) build capacity of SME Mentors to provide support to SMEs; and (iii) build capacity of project stakeholders.

Representatives from government and regional agencies, involved in natural resources management and/or supporting small businesses were also invited to participate in sessions focused on specific tools for supporting nature-based SMEs. The intention is to learn from these agencies' experiences and share the tools and processes that CANARI uses to support nature-based enterprises.

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SMEs selected from amongst IWEco participating countries:

Country	Enterprise/Group	Preliminary area of focus
Jamaica	Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust	Business development around a plant nursery/coral garden/sea moss
Jamaica	Hanover Bee Farmers' Co-operative Society Ltd.	General business improvement
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Madeira Valley Heritage Park Inc.	Exploration of business opportunities
St. Kitts and Nevis	WINA - Winward in Action	Sargassum product development
Saint Lucia	Fond St. Jacques Development Committee	Plant nursery/agro tourism park
Saint Lucia	Jacq-co Valley Foods	Marketing assistance

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), one of the partnering agencies of the IWEco Project, has begun its two-year initiative to strengthen and support stewardship and sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods in the targeted IWEco countries. The mentors and their connected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are completing trainings on business development and sustainability to help SMEs climate-proof themselves for a sustainable future.

Environmental SMEs are generally categorized into four areas:



IWEco and CANARI stand behind the work of SMEs because they not only bring approximately US\$44 trillion of economic value generation—more than half of the world's total GDP, but they create employment that lifts people, especially women and children, out of poverty. Job creation in the private sector has contributed to the sharp decline in the share of the population in developing countries living below the poverty line from 52 to 22 percent. SMEs also ensure sustainability by increasing local resource use and reducing transaction costs which increases the amount of money staying within the community.

SMEs impact environmental management in many ways:



SMEs can increase:

- Pollinating plants
- Tree cover and shade
- Species diversity
- Feed and shelter for birds
- Knowledge of environmental benefits
- Fruit set and coffee yields
- Pest control
- Tourism

SMEs can decrease:

- Soil erosion
- Poor water quality
- Forest degradation
- Land degradation
- Illegal hunting animals
- Overfishing
- Overexploitation of Resources
- Climate change vulnerability

The series which started on 4th August and ended on 1st September, took place virtually using the Zoom platform.

Following the launch of the programme, sessions covered:

- Understanding community nature-based enterprises
- Mentoring community nature-based enterprises
- Assessing capacity of community nature-based enterprises and planning for capacity-building
- The Mentor-Mentee relationship

Now that these lively sessions have been completed, the mentoring with the SMEs which have met CANARI's criteria is underway!

Strengthening policy, legislation and institutions under IWEco

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission (OECS), at the GEF IWEco RPSCM 5 in late-September, presented a comprehensive update of its activities to date under Component 3 of the Project. While this is a multi-focal project, it is universally agreed that in order to bring about the necessary changes required under the key focus areas of the project, there is a regional need for policy, legislative and institutional reforms tailored to the specific needs of each participating country at the national level. Working with the consultant, Open Plan Consultant Limited, the OECS in collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) has pursued an approach which is both practical and sustainable.

For its part, Open Plan Consultants Limited, recognized from inception that the purpose of Component 3 of the GEF-IWEco Project is to inform and make recommendations for the development and enhancement of policy, legislation and institutional reforms that address the lack of financing, policy and coordination amongst sectors identified in the following participating countries (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Trinidad & Tobago). Open Plan therefore formulated innovative project interventions and the development of policy tools and guidelines by making abstractions from best practices and lessons learned under Component 1.

They have also used a participatory, stakeholder-centred approach. Stakeholders from the eight participating countries were consulted to determine the priority interventions for their respective countries using a multi-criteria analysis methodology. Significantly, twenty-six (26) interventions emerged as the top 3-4 priority activities for each country. This list was then further analyzed by Open Plan, discussed and subsequently grouped into eight Terms of Reference (TORs) which are intended to take advantage of economies of scale whilst simultaneously recognizing

that many of the countries expressed similar priority areas.

Four TORs, reflecting priority areas at both country and regional levels, are now being finalized and will be shared by the OECS with the participating countries in order to verify the specific activities and engender ownership. Following this exercise, the procurement process will begin and the OECS will pursue implementation in the months ahead.

The TORs:

1. The Development and Implementation of a Methodology for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (deemed to be the number 1 priority for Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, as well as St. Vincent and the Grenadines). Outputs will be draft Coastal Zone Management Plans for Grenada, Jamaica and St. Vincent & the Grenadines, and a review and revision of the existing Coastal Zone Management Plan for Saint Lucia.
2. The incorporation of principles and objectives of Integrated Water Resources Management and of a National Water Information System into the governance and institutional framework (deemed to be the number 1 priority for Barbados and St Kitts & Nevis). It is expected that there will be functioning Water Information Systems developed, data sharing agreements, and training in the use of the systems for both Barbados and St. Kitts & Nevis.
3. The Development of a National Research Strategy for the Collection of Environmental Data Necessary to Inform Environmental Management Decision-making (deemed to be the number 1 priority for Antigua & Barbuda and Trinidad & Tobago). This research strategy will ensure the incorporation of a citizen science approach and include the development of a stakeholder engagement strategy and communication strategy for long term sustainability in-country.
4. The Development of Systems and Capacities for Improving the Availability of Data on the Importance and Functioning of Ecosystems and Environmental Systems to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation and Decision Making (deemed to be the number 1 priority Regional Activity), having alignment with the recently concluded feasibility study under the IWEco project for the establishment of a regional environmental monitoring data portal (REMDAP). It is expected that the recommendations from this feasibility study will be adopted and a data portal will be developed, tested and launched, after establishing consensus and support for the creation, implementation and hosting of the REMDAP.

Making Peace with Nature

- the IWEco Approach to Ecosystems Restoration in St. Kitts and Nevis

"The themes of both Earth Day and World Environment Day in 2021 were focused on ecosystems restoration and the urgent need for us to make peace with nature. How can we do this? What actions can we take in small island developing states of the Caribbean to BECOME "Generation Restoration". The answer lies in unity, integration, and collaboration. Nature-based solutions (NbS) are critical to making peace with nature.

Although NbS can be both labour and time consuming and require sustained financing and active collaborations, the long-term benefits are clear with the creation of win-win situations where human well-being and biodiversity are enhanced. These types of solutions are the best way forward as we seek to make peace with nature and truly become #Generation Restoration."



Nelson's Spring Wetland, Nevis, before restoration work

- Dr. Halla Sahely, IWEco SKN National Project Coordinator

In her presentation on 6th October 2021, at the Caribbean Water and Wasterwater Association's 30th Annual Conference and Exhibition, hosted by the Cayman Islands and taking place virtually, 3 – 8 October 2021, Dr. Halla Sahely, IWEco St.

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Kitts & Nevis National Project Coordinator, highlights Nbs in action in St. Kitts and Nevis. She describes land degradation control works in about 5 acres of land in the College Street Ghaut, St. Kitts, and reforestation and restoration activities over 23 acres at three separate sites in Nevis.

See the presentation:

http://www.iweco.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/GEF-IWEco_SKN_Project_CWWA-conference_presentation_HSahely_Oct2021.pdf



Nelson's Spring Wetland, Nevis, after clean-up efforts in late-2020

SAVE THE DATE!
IWEco's 15th Partners' Webinar

Nature-based solutions for land restoration in IWEco

Methods / Challenges / Community involvement
Lessons learned (including adaptive management) / Mainstreaming good practice

Tuesday 2nd November 2021, 9:30 - 11:30 am (GMT-5)

Stay safe everyone!

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

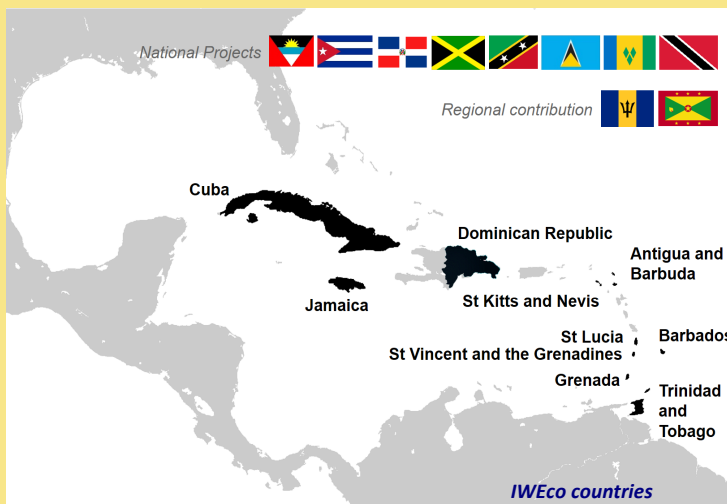
IWEco thanks IWEco.SVG, IWEco.Cuba, IWEco.SLU, IWEco.SKN, CARPHA and other Project Partners for their contributions to this issue.

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

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