

SIDS COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION PROJECT JAMAICA



Close-Out Workshop Report of the Small Island Developing States – Community Based Adaptation (SIDS-CBA) Project

Held on Thursday, March 5, 2020

Prepared by
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Reviewed by
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Workshop Overview

On Thursday, March 5, 2020, some 50 persons attended the SIDS-CBA close-out evaluation workshop which was held at the Wembley Centre of Excellence in Hayes, Clarendon. The objective of the workshop was to determine lessons learnt, look at the way forward in terms of upscaling and replication of activities and bring the Project to a formal closure. The key results and challenges of the Project were examined and recommendations by the relevant stakeholders were shared. The workshop was organised by the Clarendon Parish Development Committee Benevolent Society (CPDCBS).

In attendance were some key players from the local communities, academia and the Government of Jamaica. The workshop was chaired by Miss Leonie Barnaby, Chair of the NSC. His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Winston Maragh in his welcome, highlighted the need to continue the process to replicate and or upscale these community initiatives such as the water harvesting projects which have benefited so many persons. Remarks were given by representatives from the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, CPMT/UNDP Headquarters and UNDP Jamaica.

Following remarks was a cultural performance by the Victoria and Richmond Park Primary Schools (beneficiaries of water harvesting projects). The excellent performance was well received as it followed the rhythm from Grammy Award winner, Koffee celebrating the replication and upscaling of the ***Construction of Water Harvesting Infrastructure and improving the Community's Adaptive Capacity to Natural Hazards in community of Pleasant Valley Project*** in the communities of Richmond Park and Victoria. The message of the performance was an expression of gratitude to the funders and how appreciative they were of the support which had made a huge difference in their lives and communities.

Summary of Remarks

PIOJ: Ms Delores Wade, who gave remarks on behalf of the PIOJ noted that their interest in the GEF Small Grants Programme was in keeping with the roles of the Institute to lead the process of formulating economic and social policies and to coordinate and manage external cooperation. While the GEF Small Grants Programme relates to various elements of the work of the PIOJ and by extension the country's development agenda, it is particularly supportive of the environment and climate change policies.

Ms Wade noted that the relevance of the programme to national and global development is an important gateway to further uptake by international agencies and that a requirement of Jamaica's development was that externally supported programmes and projects be in alignment with Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan. In closing, Ms Wade indicated that the PIOJ was always appreciative of the GEF SGP office staffed by the NC and PA and supported by the NSC who had worked tirelessly to continue this track record of excellence.

Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries: Mr Michael Pryce gave remarks on behalf of the Permanent Secretary who was not able to attend. He noted that 90% of the farmers did not have access to water and that the systems put in place would improve their ability to earn income. He said that climate change and the unpredictability of the weather affected farmers and that the Ministry now had a facility to grant an incentive to assist with further development. For example, he said, if a group had harvested pineapples and wanted to start an operation to slice the fruit, the Ministry could assist. Additionally, the Ministry could assist with business registration and development and the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Unit could assist with financing, Mr Pryce in closing said that he hoped to see a continuation of small grants going to these vulnerable farming communities.

Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) HQ: Miss Rissa Edoe in her remarks noted that local communities, especially in the SIDS, are subjected to climate change impacts and often experience acceleration and/or intensification of its impacts due to their small land area, susceptibility to natural disasters, geographical isolation, limited natural resources and sensitive ecosystems. These communities do not have the resources to combat climate change effects on their own and further degradation of natural resources and ecosystems will increase poverty, hunger and economic inequality.

It is with these challenges in mind that the GEF Small Grants Programme entered into a partnership with the Australian Aid Programme to reduce the vulnerability and to improve the adaptive capacity of local communities to the adverse impacts of climate change and mainstream community based adaptation into national processes. She further noted that over the last year the National Coordinators have been working with partners and grantees to evaluate the impact of the CBA programme thus far and today's workshop is an opportunity to learn more specifically about the Jamaica programme and projects.

UNDP Jamaica: Ms Denise Antonio, Resident Representative noted that climate change is undoubtedly a critical development issue for Caribbean nations, and it is therefore important for us to continue to develop medium to long terms plans and implement strategies geared towards climate change adaptation and mitigation. Initiatives such as this SIDS Community-based Adaptation (CBA) project provide assurance to Jamaica that we are not alone in the struggle to combat the impacts of climate change. Ms Antonio spoke on the impact of climate change and its effect on small islands. She said that it was important to do more at the community level to educate persons on climate change and she thanked the other countries/ funders for helping. She noted that the project results underscore a point, proven time and time by the GEF SGP that, it does not necessarily take large investments to generate big results. This programme clearly shows that small grants, strategically invested and supported by the community can secure big wins. Big wins also come when we listen to the communities and partner with them, ensuring that we are guided by their experiences on the ground.

She pointed out that climate change was not a stand-alone issue as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals also had to be borne in mind. The UNDP promoted the mainstreaming and upscaling of projects to support local communities and replication in other countries. Work was also done with persons with disabilities to show that they are not excluded. Ms. Antonio commented that water in the bucket was collected a “drop at a time” a phrase used to show it did not matter how small the funding, a positive change could be made to help the community. She then highlighted the positive difference the funding provided had made, even though it was a small amount, quoting comments from a community member in Clarendon (Pleasant Valley) referencing the impact of the project.

Keynote Speaker: The keynote message was delivered by Member of Parliament elect for South East Clarendon, Mr Pearnel Charles Jr. who started out by thanking the stakeholders and funders who participated and were a part of the project. He noted that partnerships must become the norm when it comes to climatic issues facing the country. For us as a country to reverse impending climatic conditions these programmes were important, and Government must participate by endorsing these partnerships. Mr Charles commented that the programmes created a domino effect of positivity and transfer of knowledge on these climatic issues. He expressed the hope that these partnerships would continue to help mitigate these conditions.

Mr. Charles mentioned that he had been visiting areas in the country to look at the water situation in communities and had noted water wastage; he pointed out that we did not need a government to tell us to conserve water, nor should we depend on the Government to solve the problem. In closing, Mr Charles, encouraged the local communities to continue the partnership while Government would do its part. He stated that he was very proud to know the project was already being replicated and that others had been inspired by these projects and the transfer of knowledge. He thanked the partners, stakeholders and communities, and on behalf of the Mayor and himself, committed their continued support for these positive projects that were helping the parish.

Programme Overview: Ms Hyacinth Douglas, National Coordinator, GEF Small Grants Programme, in presenting the overview of the programme, noted that it was important to know what the plan for the country was and to work in partnership with the relevant Ministries. Ms Douglas further noted that NGOs/CBOs were trained in the use of the Vulnerability Reduction Assessment (VRA) which was a tool designed to measure the changing climate vulnerabilities of communities (on a scale of 1-5), and to be comparable across vastly different projects, regions, and contexts, making it possible to determine if a given project was successful or unsuccessful in reducing climate change risks.

She said that three VRA sessions were conducted during the life of a project, the initial, mid-term and end of project assessments. At the end of the project, a community project score of 4.5 would indicate that the community was more resilient or less vulnerable. She observed that community members worked to maintain projects and ensure that they were sustained primarily because they owned it. She underlined the importance of having a team of strong soldiers to carry on the projects.

Presentation of Findings: The National Association of Parish Development Committees was tasked to review the UNDP GEF SGP Community Based Adaptation Projects and Ms Eurica Douglas presented the findings on behalf of the group. The review was considered as two components: review of each individual community project and strategic review of the overall country project. Data were collected using a mix of methods which included desktop review, structured interviews, focus group meetings and site visits.

Among the key findings of the review was that partnerships, strong community participation and empowerment and incorporation of local knowledge were some of the key characteristics of effective project implementation.

There was evidence of strong collaboration with the relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, namely: The Forestry Department, Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Social Development Commission (SDC), Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Meteorological Service of Jamaica, Clarendon Municipal Corporation (CMC), PIOJ, Climate Change Division. These agencies provided technical support, data and training and provided co-financing (cash and kind). There was a deliberate strategy to engage both men and women, youth and persons with disabilities. One challenge highlighted was the insufficient participatory methodological guidelines for the tools designed for climate change adaptation projects for example the VRA.

There were numerous lessons learnt such as that leadership and management transitions among community groups need to be carefully managed, for example, by ensuring succession planning and documenting project results, especially in terms of what worked, so that these can be shared among a wide group and at all levels. Two knowledge products (case studies) were developed and shared at all levels. One other lesson was the focus on gender, which “opened the eyes” of some community members to the roles women can play and made them aware of some of the “hidden” talents that women have and vice versa.

This resulted in community members now saying that there was really nothing that a woman could not do. So now most community members were no longer seeing certain jobs as being for women or for men but were more often searching for those “hidden” talents to save costs and have a more involved and united community. Some noted recommendations were that NGOs should continue to participate in global workshops and conferences where they can share their experiences and learn from others. During implementation, two (2) project beneficiaries (CPDCBS 2015 and Colouden 2017) participated in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Group Discussion Session

Members of the Colouden Community in Crooked River, noted that before the project there had been no water, but persons were now returning to the community. There was increased productive activity, that is, livestock rearing, business and farming generally, due to the availability of water. The adaptive capacity of the community had improved, as the communities now had water, persons had been utilizing training and had been doing water harvesting. The project has been replicated across Clarendon. More than nine (9) tanks had been improved parish-wide.

What contributed to the success of the projects?

Participants felt that there had been strong leadership, good partnerships, good communication and awareness building campaigns. Participants also felt that training activities had helped to make the projects successful, as had the involvement of stakeholders from the start to the completion of the projects. Noted also was that capacity building of the community members was built over time. One community member shared his experience that “about 4 years back, we started to plant trees and persons went and set fire to it. But we haven’t had bush fires in a while because of training and education of the students and the general community”.

Key areas for prioritising and further discussion

In a guided discussion, the following comments and proposals were made by the participants:

Protection of Watersheds and planting of trees: It was felt that there should be better protection of the watersheds and that trees should be planted to protect the watershed. A policy should be in place to prohibit slash and burn. Participants felt that the campaign to stop the cutting of trees should be a continuous drive.

Community participation and capacity-building: The Local Forestry Management Committees (LFMCs) should be strengthened, for example, by ensuring that a member from the community sit on the Committee. Persons from communities should be encouraged to be a part of a group so that they could access funding and technical support. Community groups should be reactivated. There was need for on-going capacity building. Community organizations should be transparent.

Provision of drip irrigation to local famers in the hills: It was noted that drip irrigation was an expensive venture, as the system depends heavily on the location. It was agreed that there were shared benefits for “on-farm irrigation” and that there was need for more discussion among groups to see how best they could work together.

Development of value-added products: As regards valued added products, such as processed ground provisions or crops, it was pointed out that there were technicalities in getting products approved by the Bureau of Standards and that it could be an expensive venture for local community groups.

Involvement of young men in the community: The question was asked “are young men in the community involved?”. The response was that young men were neither involved nor interested in agriculture as they tended to look for work activities that bring in “fast cash”. Because of this, it was often difficult to mobilise young men to be a part of agriculture. Participants felt that capacity building should be extended to all and that there should be a “move away” from the traditional ways to the introduction of new approaches and new Agri-techniques to get youths more involved.

Access to land was noted as a challenge for youths. It was suggested that land tenure issues required further discussion especially at the policy level. As sustainability was important, there was need to develop strategies to get youths involved. Marketing was also an area that needed to be looked at for Farmers Groups etc. It was proposed that farming concepts should be assessed by technical agencies to see if they could be profitable. Participants felt that praedial larceny was a major problem and that it was time for us to find some workable solutions.

Rationale for and ways to replicate/upscale the projects

Participants considered that the success of these CBA initiatives, was in itself justification for replication/upscale. The Clarendon Municipal Corporation in partnership with the CPDC had noted the importance of water harvesting, especially as it related to community resilience, and therefore the use of alternative water sources was a major recommendation in the parish’s Sustainable Development Plan of 2017. It was on this basis that the parish partners had been trying to replicate and or upscale the projects by engaging several local and international funders.

The partnership building process was an ongoing initiative that had already seen more than nine (9) community catchment tanks refurbished parish wide. The goal was to continually promote the use of alternative water sources and focus on unity building by encouraging the formalisation of Community Based Organisations to replicate and upscale the CBA projects.

Lessons learnt

It was recommended that the lessons learned should be extended to other community members, especially the young people and the wider community in general. There were good examples of new technologies and approaches such as aquaponics, and greenhouse agriculture and container gardening to name a few, which could be replicated. There could also be access to technical support, for example from the CMC for minor water projects. An important lesson was that communities should be Involved in projects from concept through to implementation.

The setting up of a Farmers Watch Group was recognized as a best practice. One group shared their experience in dealing with praedial larceny. A small grant was secured by the Farmers Group to build a meeting house and obtain a trail bike to patrol the area. Suspicious activities were then reported to the nearest police station. This initiative could be replicated across the parish.

Next Steps/Action

The SDC indicated that they would always engage the communities and look at the issues affecting our youths. There is need to extend water sources to other communities. A bigger pipeline should be installed in the Colouden community where more residents can access water. Among the areas identified for attention for communities were the suitability of crops, best technology to be used, the appropriateness of the environs, capacity building and leadership. Technical support should be accessed, for example, soil testing etc., identifying the relevant agencies and their roles and responsibilities. The image and visibility of groups should be considered to keep the groups strong. Farming should be approached as a business. The network of community groups, ministries, departments and agencies should be built up.

The RADA will offer training on record-keeping based on requests and assessed needs. Groups should have regular meetings and ensure proper succession planning is in place, when a key member leaves the group can continue its operations. Groups are to have backup of all files including digital storage and this could be a way of getting young persons involved. Groups were encouraged to continue to seek more opportunities for funding and international cooperation.

Conclusion

The participants expressed appreciation for the workshop and for the projects which they had implemented. In closing the workshop, the Chair commended the communities for their commitment and enthusiasm without which the SIDS CBA Project would not have been the success it turned out to be. A big “thank-you” was extended to the partners from the Government, academia and the private sector for their contributions and their indications of continued support to the communities.