

PRESS RELEASE

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Journalists Focus on Water Issues

More value needs to be placed on water and media practitioners are critical players in helping to build greater awareness on water issues among the general public and decision-makers. This was one of several messages coming out of a National Media Workshop on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) held at the Kapok Hotel in Trinidad on March 15th, 2011.

Mr. Ganga Singh, Chief Executive Officer of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), gave opening remarks at the workshop which saw the participation of several local journalists from the print, television and radio media. He expressed to participants that major intervention is needed at the policy level in sustaining the watersheds of the country. Citing a recent study conducted by WASA, he stated that quarrying, urban development, and agriculture are the main polluters of watersheds in the country. Mr. Singh said “An IWRM strategy for Trinidad and Tobago cannot sustain a fresh water supply unless we take charge of our watersheds.” He stressed that the media can play a major role in highlighting water issues in the country and that they have a pivotal role in making IWRM a success. Mr. Singh said “Partnering with the media is a win-win situation.”



The training workshop was put on by the Water Resources Agency (WRA) of the Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C). The one day workshop sought to train journalists in key principles and themes of IWRM and to sensitise them about critical IWRM issues in Trinidad and Tobago. Some of these issues included land use planning; flooding; water quality; public water supply; agricultural water management; watershed management; climate change; public participation and access to information; among many other areas.

Information on IWRM and critical water related issues often times may not reach the general public in a way that is truly understood as in many instances the information is too technical. By providing the journalists with the knowledge and tools to communicate on IWRM, the training workshop aimed to empower them to widely report on these issues and package their news to reach all audiences.

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a process of managing water, land and related resources in a way that meets society's long-term need for water while ensuring that economic and social welfare is not compromised and that there is no harm to the environment. For many of the journalists attending the workshop it was their first time being exposed to IWRM and its importance in improving water governance in the country.

Also speaking at the event was Ms. Avril Alexander, Regional Coordinator of the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) who reiterated the importance of the media in improving the awareness of IWRM and related issues. She explained that often times water issues tend to be reported when there is a problem drawing reference to the large number of articles by local and regional media on the severe drought several Caribbean territories struggled to cope with from late 2009 up to April 2010. Ms. Alexander urged journalists to incorporate greater awareness building on water issues in their work.

The journalists were given a comprehensive introduction to IWRM and issues related to the implementation of the process in the Caribbean by Dr. Floyd Homer, Managing Director of the Trust for Sustainable Livelihoods, a regional NGO based in Trinidad and Tobago. Participants were challenged during working group sessions to develop outlines of IWRM stories and features. Working groups came up with storylines on topics such as land use planning and drainage; watershed management; quarrying and its impact on the environment; wastewater and improper disposal of waste; among others.

Participants were invited to join the GWP-C Journalists Network on IWRM, which is an information and capacity building network made up of journalists from the Caribbean region that are committed to building awareness on water related issues in their country.

In addition to media practitioners, other participants at the workshop included representatives from the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA); the Water Resources Agency (WRA); the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C); the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment; the Forestry Division of Trinidad and Tobago; the Environmental Management Authority (EMA); and the Town and Country Planning Division of Trinidad and Tobago.

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The Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) is a working partnership among all stakeholders in water management within the Caribbean region and was formally launched in Tobago in June 2004. It is the Caribbean Regional Water Partnership of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Organisation, a global network of partners all working toward a water secure world. GWP-C's mission is to support Caribbean countries in the sustainable management of their water resources and to fully promote and apply an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach at the community, national and regional levels. GWP-C currently has over 60 partners in 20 Caribbean territories which encompass the English, Spanish, French and Dutch Caribbean.

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The Water Resources Agency (WRA) is an arm of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) of Trinidad and Tobago and was established to help in the development and control of the water resources of Trinidad and Tobago. The Agency which was officially attached to WASA in 1976 aims at effectively managing and sustaining the country's water resources using the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach and promoting the development and conservation and protection of water resources.