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Workshop on the Second Order Draft of the Grenada National Ecosystem Assessment

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Registration link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsfu6hrD4rG9DhDHm4VyV62vv1MPr0qa_D

Summary of Chapter 1 on Setting the scene: How a National Ecosystem Assessment will contribute to better decision-making



Summary of Chapter 1

SETTING THE SCENE: HOW A NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO BETTER DECISION-MAKING

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Introduction

Chapter 1 has four basic goals: (1) Explain the importance and usefulness of a national ecosystems assessment for Grenada, in particular, and small island states in general; (2) Explain the benefits that Grenada can derive from understanding and supporting the ecosystems services that biodiversity provides; (3) Establish the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in all types and aspects of development policy; (4) Provide context for the rest of this National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) by describing characteristics of Grenada's economic, social, and political structures as they affect and are affected by biodiversity.

Grenada's National Ecosystems Assessment: local and global importance

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) account for a significant percentage of the world's unique biodiversity and ecosystems (Cherian, 2007). They contain resources that can contribute positively to economic and social development, within individual SIDS and globally. However, the extent to which they can is not fully known. Thus, there is a vital need to properly assess and document these resources to understand their current condition, the stressors that affect them (natural and anthropogenic), and the landscapes they occupy. NEAs can provide quantifiable knowledge, along with keenly observed qualitative data, to help develop policies aimed at making island ecosystems sustainably beneficial to their flora, fauna, and human populations.

Grenada's diverse biomes are representative of those found throughout the Caribbean region, including high-elevation rainforests and natural springs, coastal mangroves, and coral reefs (Moore, Gilmer and Schill, 2015). However, due to Grenada's relatively small human population, challenges related to human capital, and scientific and administrative capacity are accentuated. A national ecosystems assessment can help by providing policy-relevant information that empowers Grenadians to conserve national ecosystems through a combination of national and regional efforts and to take action, in concert with other SIDS, to influence international decision-making on preventing biodiversity loss.

Ecosystems Services and Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability

This NEA follows the model established by *The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA) which analyses the benefits of biodiversity through the lens of ecosystems services and establishes preservation of "nature's contributions to people" as a primary goal. Like the MEA, this study holds that preserving

specific benefits for humans requires conservation of entire ecosystems. However, in this chapter we also emphasise that the concern for “contributions to people” should not lead to policies that disaggregate ecosystems into baskets of extractable resources for human use. So, this report also considers the benefits of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in virtually every policy realm.

Grenada’s accomplishments in this regard are considerable but the challenges it faces are substantial as well. This chapter discusses institutions—national, regional, and international—as decision-making venues and possible sources of support for applying an ecosystems services methodology and a mainstreamed approach to policymaking.

Effective mainstreaming also requires inclusiveness of knowledge and participation from wide arrays of stakeholders. Historical and practical knowledge of locals is invaluable to an NEA’s success (Magni, 2017). Knowledge that has been cultivated over years of hands-on experience—used in conjunction with scientific knowledge—is vital to understanding changes that natural systems have gone through and provides lessons on how to conserve them (Berkes, Folke and Gadgil, 1995; Hiwasaki *et al.*, 2014).

A myriad of institutions and processes

Enhancement and preservation of ecosystems services, through mainstreaming biodiversity conservation, requires an active appreciation of the fundamental interconnectedness among ecosystems, human well-being, and society. Moreover, it is important to understand how those connections are embedded in complex decision-making processes in the public, private and civil society sectors across international, national, sub-national and local levels (Maes *et al.*, 2012).

From local to global, each economic sector, region and community has its distinct needs in managing trade-offs among a range of development goals and targets, in a context of competing national priorities and limited resources. Adjudicating disputes over decision-making authority, collecting and analysing relevant data, and procuring support (material and political) are all common components in making those trade-offs and negotiating the needed agreements among competing interests.

This chapter makes note of the complexity, complementarity, and occasional confusion of changing and overlapping government ministries and departments; some that have already moved toward mainstreaming biodiversity conservation, and others that could benefit from doing so. We describe regional organisations with significant capacity for advising, guiding, and supporting Grenada’s biodiversity conservation efforts—including the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC); and this chapter provides a comprehensive list of the multilateral environmental agreements to which Grenada belongs. Taken together, these institutional resources can be the basis of a collaborative and comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation. Such representative institutions provide the top-down participatory approach of a formal democracy if they are complemented by a vibrant civil society engaged in bottom-up participatory methods of governance (Gaymer *et al.*, 2014; Semeraro *et al.*, 2020).

To highlight the need and potential for local and regional capacity building (human capital in particular) this chapter also examines educational resources in Grenada. There is mention of primary and secondary school resources, and attention given to the post-secondary educational contributions of public and private institutions.

Chapter 1 also provides data and descriptions of basic characteristics of Grenadian society, government, and economy that affect biodiversity and can benefit from effective biodiversity conservation. We briefly examine leading economic sectors—especially tourism—to provide baseline information for later discussions of their environmental impacts. And we discuss key aspects of public finances and related issues; among them, budgetary constraints, sovereign debt and foreign investment figure prominently.