Mobilizing Indigenous and Local Knowledge Solutions

Addressing Climate Impacts and Vulnerabilities: A Perspective from the Caribbean Region

Workshop report in English: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375025.locale=en
Informe del taller en español: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375025_spa
ABOUT

UNESCO organised the first regional Caribbean workshop on indigenous and local knowledge of climate impacts.

3 – 5 September 2019 in Georgetown, Guyana.

PARTICIPANTS

AI Anguilla
MS Montserrat
AG Antigua & Barbuda
BS Bahamas
BB Barbados
BZ Belize
CO Colombia
CU Cuba
GY Guyana
MX Mexico
NI Nicaragua
PR Puerto Rico
VC St. Vincent & the Grenadines
SR Suriname
TT Trinidad & Tobago

KNOWLEDGE CO-PRODUCTION

The workshop brought together indigenous and local knowledge holders with climate scientists from the Caribbean region.
Indigenous and local knowledge arise from specific social contexts and economic processes.
UNESCO has a **20-year history** of working with indigenous and local knowledge holders on climate and biodiversity policies and practices.

UNESCO has a policy on engaging with indigenous peoples

[https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples/policy](https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples/policy)

UNESCO's **SIDS Action Plan** aligns with the SAMOA Pathway


The Georgetown event and report are contributions to the rolling work plan of the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Parties acknowledge that adaptation action [...] should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems.

Paris Agreement, article 7.5
Excerpt from Article 31.1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples have the right to protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, as well as their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge…
The two or more epistemologies can be combined to produce the best available knowledge, improving decision-making in climate issues – respecting their different origins, functions and governance. Complementarity creates opportunities for knowledge coproduction and improving decision-making.
Hurricanes and other extreme weather events, leading to flooding as well as storm surges and erosion, and threats to fresh water supplies.

Climate Hazards in the Caribbean

Declining biodiversity, for instance via loss of pollinators.

Increase in heat-sensitive diseases, example: dengue fever.

Ecosystem impacts, rising sea level, salination of drinking water, coral bleaching and death, ocean acidification, and others.

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Natural Science Sector

26 July, 2021
CONTRIBUTE to the rolling work plan of the UNFCCC LCIPP

COMPILE and share case studies on ILK from the Caribbean region, including States and Non-self-governing territories

DELIBERATE on the issues and key characteristics of ILK in the Caribbean

GENERATE relevant recommendations to strengthen ILK alongside science in policy and decision making

GEOGRTOWN WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES
UNESCO Workshop Themes

✧ **Livelihoods** of indigenous peoples and local communities of the Caribbean

✧ **Observing** and understanding impacts of climate change

✧ **Mobilizing** ILK for Caribbean adaptation planning

✧ **Case studies** of risk reduction, boosting ecosystem resilience, coping, and recovery strategies

✧ Multi-stakeholder **partnerships in support of indigenous knowledge** in climate change policy, identifying best practices and challenges.
Almost 100 different ethno-meteorological and hydrological indicators are used by the Akawaio indigenous people to assess weather and climate, including 77 biological indicators such as signs from plants and animals, eight physical indicators and ten cosmological indicators.
Case Study: Cabañuelas

- Cabañuelas is a traditional forecasting system used for centuries by Cuban farmers from Contramaestre.
- It is described in Cuban Farmers’ Local Knowledge on Weather and Biodiversity, presented by Juan Carlos Rosario Molina, Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba.
CUBAN FARMERS' CABAÑUELA'S FORECASTING SYSTEM
Presented by Ms Froyla Tzalam, Mopan and Q’eqchi Maya, Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management, Belize

Four indigenous communities created Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) to co-manage the National Park

Indigenous knowledge is the foundation of local climate mitigation and informs data on forests and carbon inventories.

The synthesis of traditional knowledge and modern science won SATIIM recognition from both the World Bank’s Indigenous Adaptation to Climate Change Fund
Maya of southern Belize observe changes to their forests resulting from climate change.

Indigenous farmers predict rain by listening to howler monkeys, watching flood flies and black army ants.

When the cotton trees drop their leaves and cicadas sing, it announces the dry season.

Looking for rings around the moon can indicate rain.
Indigenous and local knowledge, in combination with science and environmental conservation initiatives (i.e. nature-based solutions), can contribute to:

- forecasting
- monitoring
- managing natural hazards and climate change impacts:
  - slow onset phenomena
  - extreme weather events.

ILK can contribute to recovery from impacts and build resilience:

- in food security,
- agriculture,
- fisheries,
- spatial planning,
- housing and adaptive livelihoods.
Gender Awareness and Women's Knowledge

Safeguards

Importance of gender awareness and women's knowledge

Urgent attention to safeguarding community knowledge systems

Respect Individuals

Adopt models geared towards mutual benefits and based on respect for the rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities

Add Value

Avoid "extractive" research or knowledge exchange models in which traditional knowledge is separated from its holistic context

Foster Dialogue

Create spaces for intergenerational dialogue with and within indigenous peoples and local communities

Principles for ILK Cooperation with Science and Policy Making

UNESCO Natural Science Sector

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Indigenous languages, cultures, values, practices and cosmologies are all vehicles for intergenerational transmission of valuable knowledge;

**Indigenous peoples welcome the opportunity to work with scientists** and policy makers, working jointly for greater resilience;

Caribbean meteorologists noted the importance of local observations and adaptation actions, they welcome further cooperation;

CARICOM noted the importance of indigenous and local knowledge both in terms of climate responses and biodiversity conservation;

Guyana is studying a new national action plan on traditional knowledge.

International Decade of Indigenous Languages provides an opportunity for capacity building: **it is time to move from being holders of knowledge to being involved in policy and decision-making.**
FURTHER ACTIONS

Undertake a series of capacity-strengthening, information-exchange and strategy workshops for indigenous and local community leaders in the Caribbean.

Further cooperation between international, regional, national and local actors, with attention to ongoing cooperation between National governments, indigenous peoples’ organisations and UNESCO.

Support for the Guyana Traditional Knowledge National Action Plan

Establish an observer status for local communities and indigenous peoples within the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center (CCCCC) and other relevant Caribbean institutes.

Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe (FILAC) online workshop on ILK of natural hazards and risk reduction (2021)
CLOSING THANKS

With thanks to the traditional owners, participants and the indigenous peoples and local community organisations who participated in the 2019 workshop.

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For further information contact:

UNESCO Local and Indigenous Knowledge Programme: links@unesco.org

Website: https://en.unesco.org/links
Did you know that ‘hurricane’ is an indigenous word? Taino and Arawak use versions of hurakán, literally ‘wind centre’. It is associated with a malignant spirit of storms.

THANK YOU!