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Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

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Towards a practical approach for the Caribbean
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**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS A
PRACTICAL APPROACH FOR THE CARIBBEAN**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Management for Development was convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, as part of its activities for the 2008-2009 programme of work in the area of Knowledge and Information Management. The meeting was convened on 17 November 2009 in Port of Spain.

The aims of the meeting were to increase awareness of knowledge management as a tool for development, and advance discussions towards a practical knowledge management approach for the Caribbean subregion. It offered participating countries and institutions the opportunity to share their views on:

- (a) A background document prepared as the basis for deliberations by ECLAC
- (b) The role of indigenous knowledge in participatory approaches for sustainable development
- (c) Country and institutional experiences on knowledge management for development
- (d) The challenges and way forward towards a knowledge management approach for the Caribbean region.

A. PARTICIPATION

Participants included experts on knowledge management from Caribbean organizations and research institutions. Given, however, the relative novelty of this subject within the subregion, information management practitioners and potential users/beneficiaries of knowledge management strategies within the aforementioned institutions were also invited. Thus, the meeting gathered an audience with heterogeneous backgrounds and expectations. The list of participants is attached as Annex II.

II. OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES

In general, the expert group meeting was well-received by participants as it provided an opportunity to introduce and share experiences and best practices as well opportunities and challenges facing the subregion with regards to knowledge management for development. It also provided an opportunity to gather some feedback on the knowledge(-based) management approach advanced by ECLAC.

On the whole, further opportunities would have to be created to bring together experts and practitioners in knowledge management (for development) across the subregion to increase awareness and enable networking and collaboration opportunities.

The following were the main conclusions and recommendations gathered from the presentations and (working groups) discussions during the meeting.

A. SESSION I: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

The session was initiated by Mr. Neil Pierre, Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean some opening remarks which were followed by the report findings' presentation by the Representative of ECLAC POS and finished with a presentation of Nutrinet.org by the World Food Programme representatives.

- The ECLAC approach for the regions is two-fold: Firstly, internal, focused on the need to organise and codify ECLAC resources in a manner to support its analytic and research efforts (internal skills audit/ skills bank, digitalization of all past and present products, development portal and Intranet); secondly, external, aimed at promoting Knowledge Management as a development tool for the Caribbean. The Expert Group Meeting was primarily about this second approach.
- ECLAC proposes a Knowledge Management for Development Framework which includes the following elements: knowledge inputs, knowledge management processes, outputs, pillars and surrounding environment. Monitoring and evaluation as well as other aspects of the KM environment have been incorporated into this framework as a follow on and/or result of this meeting.
- Two types of knowledge are considered, namely Tacit/Traditional Knowledge and Explicit Knowledge. Of primary concern is the issue of how tacit and traditional knowledge could be captured, used and shared considering its inherently difficult nature. An example to preserve the institutional memory of an organization's tacit knowledge is by conducting interviews with retirees to capture and store their experiences, skills and "know-how".
- Of paramount importance is the need to secure and (legally) protect knowledge (IP) as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the information being codified and stored.
- Knowledge management processes and tools should be adapted to the local conditions for them to be effective, efficient and have an impact. E.g. Non internet savvy individuals should be able to access and use information.
- The main emphasis of a Knowledge Management approach should be on creating knowledge and not only on locating and capturing knowledge.
- The merging of two sources of knowledge (traditional and scientific) applied to the particular settings of a community could add value to that community.
- The initiative Nutrinet.org (a web-based Knowledge Management model spearhead by the World Food Programme) serves a dual purpose: as a network for raising awareness on hunger eradication and malnutrition amongst policy makers, decision makers and practitioners; and a web-based platform for facilitating access to best practices. At the core of this approach are the Nutrinet.org community of stakeholders and the support of the governments within the region which catalyzed the development of the portal. The initiative could be further expanded to cover not only the Latin American and Spanish-speaking countries in the Caribbean but other countries in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean; high levels of internet literacy and penetration could make this possible. A strong political will from Caribbean governments can help spur on this initiative.

B. SESSION II: INSTITUTIONAL AND COUNTRY EXPERIENCES ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Albeit a different sequence this session included a presentation on the report findings' by ECLAC representatives which were followed by two institutional presentations namely "*LAC Knowledge-based Economies: Strategies and enabling Innovation Environment*" by Prof. Miguel Carrillo, Executive Director, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business and "*Crafting a Caribbean Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge, Folklore and Genetic Resources*" by Ms. Mary-Ann Richards, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Regional Coordinator and Consultant.

ECLAC report findings presentations:

- The World Bank Knowledge Economy Model (KBE) proposes four pillars: Education (skilled labour force), Innovation (an effective innovation system), Information and Communications Technologies (modern and adequate infrastructure), and Economic and Institutional Regime (a country's enabling environment).
- The analysis of the Caribbean Knowledge Economies revealed that some countries in the Caribbean, such as Barbados and Aruba have been able to make progress on (some of the) aforementioned pillars while other Caribbean countries lay (well) behind as evidenced by the (composite) knowledge economy index and selected indicators.
- The Knowledge-based Development Model of the Asian Development Bank expands the KBE of the World Bank to include the social and natural value domains which includes variables, such as, human development, peace, cultural integrity, environmental technology and sustainable development.
- With regards to the development challenges facing the Caribbean, the subregion has experienced significant improvements particularly in areas such as education, gender parity and hunger eradication. However, challenges with respect to HIV/AIDS, maternal health and child mortality are still prominent.
- Knowledge Management initiatives such as the framework advanced by ECLAC and others being implemented for example by the World Health Organization (WHO) could support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by providing a methodology for capturing, creating, using and disseminating knowledge for development purposes.

“LAC Knowledge-based Economies: Strategies and enabling Innovation Environment”:

- Knowledge is a key factor of innovation and the primary purpose of innovation is growth.
- In a business environment, companies such as Coca-Cola innovates the message or symbol of its products and how it is conveyed to the consumer instead of innovating the product (development of new perspectives on the same product). What is absent in the Caribbean is knowledge of the cognitive and emotional markets of the consumers.
- The challenge of knowledge management is how to create, deliver and capture value. The most innovative countries are those that are better at capturing value, i.e. using knowledge to innovate.
- There are three levels of knowledge namely ground, mid and high levels which make up a knowledge trajectory. Developing countries are most likely to have developed ground-level knowledge (manufacturing) whereas more advanced nations have developed high-level knowledge (design, innovation). In Latin America and the Caribbean, few countries such as Brazil, Chile and Mexico are moving towards the higher end of the knowledge trajectory. For individuals and organizations a knowledge trajectory is composed of as follows: ground level knowledge - users and operations; mid level knowledge - engineers and development centres; high level knowledge - scientists and research labs. “Scientists and engineers are the basic input into the discovery process, the fuel that fires the innovation engine”. Romer (2002)
- The Europe's Skills Pyramid proposed by INSEAD (European Institute of Business Administration) considers three tiers: Literacy and Basic Skills (tier 1), occupational skills (tier 2) and Global Knowledge Economy (GKE) Talents (tier 3). GKE includes the capacity to generate innovation, ability to lead in cross-cultural environments, ability to manage virtual teams, and the collective and individual capacity to address new issues (e.g. climate change). Countries in Europe are at uneven but widespread levels of development with regards to each of these tiers of the skills pyramid.
- When comparing the variables Quality of Education and Innovation Performance for the world's top 15 knowledge economies, it was found by INSEAD that there is not apparent correlation. In the Middle East, however, there is a clearer correlation between countries with higher quality of education and countries with higher innovation performance (E.g. Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Qatar).

- According to the US Council on Competitiveness “Innovation will be the single most important factor in determining America’s success in the 21st century” , the Lisbon Agenda challenges the EU to make itself “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world...”
- Innovation is thus the pathway to develop a knowledge-based economy, what are, however, the conditions to enable it? What are the policies and actions that drive it? Societies need to embrace change in order to pave the way towards a knowledge-based economy. Countries could adopt and benefit from: leading-edge technologies, expanded human capacities, better organizational and operational capability and improved institutional performance.
- The Global Innovation Index (GII) developed by INSEAD considers 8 pillars: Institutions and policies, human capacity, infrastructure, market sophistication and business sophistication as GII inputs; knowledge, competitiveness and wealth as GII outputs. Some recommendations that could apply to the Caribbean region on this regards are as follows:
 - a. Internationalization of trade between Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - b. Internationalization of knowledge-intense corporate functions.
 - c. Developing a safety net for innovators to encourage experimentation and disable the “succeed or perish” mentality as the social cost and implications of failure in Caribbean societies are quite high.
 - d. Develop a trajectory in a knowledge-based, technology driven, global potential, enabling sector.

“Crafting a Caribbean Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge, Folklore and Genetic Resources”

- The Intellectual Property (IP) system is the only system in place for recognizing creativity and providing ownership of ideas and products. However, many countries in the Caribbean are not IP conscious (IP is considered as something that does not affect them; it is not for small countries or only pertains to the music industry).
- The Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) establishes minimum standards for IP.
- WIPO is an intergovernmental body that brings countries together to discuss IP-related issues. Such system is important to be established in the Caribbean as there is TK that is being stolen.
- At the Treaty of Chaguaramas, WIPO assisted Caribbean Members States in developing a harmonized framework for the protection of Traditional Knowledge.
- Despite its great socio-economic importance, Caribbean TK is rarely documented and as result little or nothing is known in terms of “who develops a registry of TK, who owns TK, who determines access to TK and who has the right to access TK”. Threats to TK include the fact that it is undervalued, unappreciated and held in low esteem. Methods for protecting TK include contracts, registries and libraries.
- There is a critical need to (i) develop a system to capture, use, preserve and disseminate TK for/to younger generations (ii) develop multi disciplinary teams for protecting TK at the national, regional and community levels. The challenge is to determine how IP can serve these and other local purposes before it is actually adopted.

C. SESSION III: TOWARDS A KM FOR DEVELOPMENT APPROACH FOR THE CARIBBEAN

For this session, participants were organized into four groups for the analysis and discussion of four particular themes. The outcomes of the group presentation and ensued discussions follow:

Theme 1: How can Caribbean countries use knowledge management to tap into the existent Traditional and Cultural heritage for the sustainable development of the region?

Challenges and obstacles:

- Geographic location of Caribbean countries as a major challenge for information sharing;
- Under-valued traditional culture and knowledge;
- Lack of understanding of how traditional culture and heritage can derive economic benefits.

Opportunities:

- Capitalizing on the economic benefits of traditional knowledge. Some examples of TK which hold potential: the cultural industry (music, design, film and medicinal herbs), and the various cultural festivals which have influenced other types of cultural festivals throughout the world;
- Creating and raising awareness on the important role of traditional culture;
- Empowering community participation and enabling businesses creation to increase economic growth and sustainability of communities.

Suggested strategies:

- Capturing, storing and disseminating traditional knowledge in partnership with community members;
- Enhance school curriculum to facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge to the younger generations;
- Advocacy role to inform policy decisions.

Theme 2: What strategies should/could Caribbean countries focus predominately on in education and innovation in order to enable knowledge-based economies?

- Identifying the long-term development needs of the Caribbean;
- Improving the structure of the education system to include new methods of learning for those in traditional classrooms as well as alternative methods to meet the needs of those persons outside of the formal educational system;
- Fostering a culture of innovation/creativity by introducing a system of “learning by doing”;
- Encouraging exploratory learning to yield new ideas and produce innovative thinkers who are not fearful of challenging the status quo;
- Developing strategic partnerships with the private and public sectors and other stakeholders, while reducing the duplication of effort, in developing and sustaining a culture of innovation;
- Creating a reward system and providing exposure for highlighting the work of Caribbean innovators through establishment of tech parks, incubators and attendance at trade fairs and expositions;
- Creating opportunities for returning citizens to share their skills and experiences acquired from studying and working abroad to support the innovation process.
- Facilitating the transferring and use of remittances for entrepreneurial activities and innovation purposes.
- Encouraging and facilitating the transfer of knowledge which would support economic growth and development.
- Promoting regional integration to reap the benefits of a larger, stronger trading group in negotiating trade agreements with the international community.

The group highlighted the main challenge for the Caribbean included the buy-in from stakeholders in the society as well as the difficulties in mobilizing the resources needed to implement the strategies formulated.

Theme 3: What aspects of Caribbean culture could enable and disable the knowledge process?

Disabling factors:

- Lack of long-term vision for the development of the Caribbean, predominance of “the one-day-at-a-time” thinking;

- A culture of dependency and the lethargy which hinders the ability to innovate;
- Toleration of low standards and the lack of consequences for poor performance;
- The inability to learn from mistakes “doing things the same way while expecting a different outcome”;
- Lack of political will as politicians are afraid or unwilling to make tough or unpopular decisions;
- Inadequate storage and protection of information;
- Lack of identity within the Caribbean.

Enabling factors:

- The diversity and rich cultural heritage prevalent in the Caribbean;
- Creativity
- Culture of excelling in the education system at foreign international universities and being able to secure jobs in the same locations after graduating;
- A sense of community belonging;
- The thrust towards CSME (Caribbean Single Market Economy) and Pan Caribbeanism to benefit from the integration movement, which so far has been very successful within financial institutions;
- Recent initiatives to capture and store valuable cultural information in the Caribbean (Jamaica and Dominica) which is linked to appreciating the value of such information gathering.

Theme 4: Bearing in mind the main development challenges of the Caribbean, what are the main obstacles for efficient and effective use of knowledge management for development? What strategies could work?

Major obstacles:

- Inability to transform or translate strategies into public policy;
- Lack of synergies between countries in the Caribbean in sharing their experiences and “know-how”;
- Inefficient documentation of experiences and the dissemination of knowledge sharing practices;
- Inadequate support from stakeholders, which, if made stronger, can greatly support knowledge management;
- Disparities in the accessibility of services and education due to one’s gender and socio economic background;
- A culture that is not value oriented on the knowledge present in the Caribbean;
- Insufficient investment in Knowledge Management, especially the soft side of infrastructure.

Strategies that could be used for Knowledge Management:

- Fostering of an enabling environment for learning through the allocation of a percentage of GDP to knowledge management;
- Creation of an innovation/technology institute to support the promotion of Knowledge Management;
- Development of a plan to attract students to programmes at the institute;
- Formation of advocacy groups to attract support from stakeholders and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs);
- Creation of outreach programs to rural communities to expose them to Knowledge Management and its importance in the development agenda for the Caribbean;
- Training at every level of society to enhance a culture of recording and protecting of information through ICT;
- Promote regional integration and coordination to benefit from each country’s strengths and capabilities which could contribute to economic growth;

D. WRAP-UP AND CLOSING REMARKS

The Director, Mr. Neil Pierre thanked all presenters and participants for attending the meeting and for their valuable contributions to the discussions.

As closing remarks it was stressed the need for all participants to work in a more collaborative manner to move forward the KM for development agenda in the Caribbean.

III. EVALUATION OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING

The gender distribution was 75% (18 participants) female and 25% (6 participants) male.

5 Caribbean and Latin American countries were represented by one or more participants (in brackets) namely Jamaica (1), Panama (2), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1), Dominica (1) and Barbados (1).

Various evaluations were carried out before, during and after the Expert Group Meeting: a feedback questionnaire on the background document prepared by ECLAC and the final evaluation form. An overview of the final evaluation as well as general suggestions follows:

18 evaluation forms were received.

With regards to whether the objectives of the meeting were met or not, 12 participants (67 %) answered “completely” and 6 (33%) “partially”. Among the reasons why the Expert Group Meeting objectives were met partially are “having more room for discussion about Knowledge Management processes, networking opportunities, additional information on Knowledge Management for development, ECLAC initiatives on Knowledge Management, and strategies for introducing Knowledge Management in my organization”. Most of these reasons relate to the participants’ own expectations for the meeting and also regarding this event as a seminar or training course on Knowledge Management rather than a meeting of experts.

The delivery of the event was well perceived in general (participants were asked to rate their opinion within the range Very Good to Very Poor): 12 participants (67%) evaluated the insights; information, knowledge and practical experience shared/discussed during the meeting as “Very Good” while other 6 (33%) regarded it as “Good”. Having the opportunity and more time to discuss national experiences on knowledge management was considered the main reason for considering this event as Good.

Some additional topics that should have been included in the meeting are:

- The use of technology in agricultural processes.
- How to use Regional Trade Agreements to promote Knowledge Management.
- Situational analysis of Knowledge Management in the region.
- Knowledge Management experiences from other (UN) agencies.
- Discussion of strategic linkages of ICT and Knowledge Management.
- Methods of further collaboration/networking with participants.
- Measurement and value of knowledge assets (tools and methodologies).
- Knowledge Management tools.

Participants’ opinion about how the information gathered from the Expert Group Meeting will be used varies from “to inform (my institution) work in developing a KM-related initiative.....”, “to be mindful, further study and/or share information with colleagues, supervisors and/or communities on KM strategies” and “to encourage more knowledge transfer and to try to get my government to play a more active role in investing in R&D of new products based on Caribbean realities and resources”.

Participants’ general comments could be summarized in one hand as “very interesting experience because the Knowledge Management was analyzed in different aspects to strengthen the cooperation for development”, “an excellent opportunity for learning and networking and for the advancement of Knowledge Management within the region”, “excellent meeting, very informative, very interactive, well managed, excellent range of initiatives and institutions”. In the other hand, more time for presentations

and discussions was considered that should have been allowed as well as having more representatives from other Member States and further work was acknowledge as necessary to take knowledge “to the next level” to “creating value for development”.

All feedback obtained from participants during and after the meeting have been incorporated (to the extent possible) as content and/or policy recommendations in the revised report on Knowledge Management for Development: towards a practical approach for the Caribbean; it will also be considered for further search topics and action plans on the area of knowledge management for development (in coordination/collaboration with other institutions) as follows:

- Situational analysis of KM in the region. How is information and knowledge located, captured, created, shared, applied, stored and protected in the Caribbean subregion? (Knowledge Assessment/Audit)
- Measurement and value of knowledge assets.
- Research and capacity building for Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge.
- Innovation in the Caribbean, the role of enterprises in innovation.
- Knowledge Management Toolkit (Processes and tools) for the public sector.

Annex I**Programme**

8:30 am	Registration
9:00 am	Opening remarks
Session I	Knowledge Management (KM) as a tool for development
9:10 am	Presentation of report findings: <i>ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean</i>
9:20 am	Discussion
9:30 am	Nutrinet.org to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty in LAC - <i>Ms. Tayra Pinzón, World Food Programme (WFP) Panama National Officer, and Ms. Yarabin Deicaza, Consultant for NUTRINET Panama</i>
9:45 am	Discussion
10:10 am	Coffee Break
Session II	Institutional and country experiences on KM for Development
10:20 am	Presentation of report findings: <i>ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean</i>
10:35 am	Discussion
10:45 am	LAC Knowledge-based Economies: Strategies and enabling Innovation Environment – <i>Prof. Miguel Carrillo, Executive Director, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business</i>
11:00 am	Discussion
11:30 am	Crafting a Caribbean Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge, Folklore and Genetic Resources: <i>Ms. Mary-Ann Richards, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Regional Coordinator and Consultant</i>
11:45 am	Discussion
12:15 pm	Lunch break
Session III	Towards a KM for Development approach for the Caribbean
1:45 pm	Presentation of report findings: <i>ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean</i>
2:00 pm	General Questions and Answers
2:15 pm	Work group discussions
3:00 pm	Coffee Break
3:15 pm	Work group's feedback presentation
4:30 pm	Wrap - up and closing remarks

Annex II**List of Participants**

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