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Co-operation for the International Drinking
Water Supply and Sanitation Decade

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HORIZONTAL CO-OPERATION IN DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND
SANITATION IN THE CARIBBEAN */

*/ Prepared by the CEPAL Office for the Caribbean in collaboration with
the PAHO Office of Caribbean Programme Co-operation.

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Introduction	1
2. Background	1
3. Objectives and scope of horizontal co-operation	2
(a) Objectives	2
(b) Scope	2
4. Experiences in horizontal co-operation within the Caribbean	3
(a) Areas of co-operation	3
(b) Co-operation mechanisms	5
(c) Impact on the water and sanitation sector	5
(d) Obstacles and constraints	6
5. Horizontal co-operation - a development strategy for the Decade	7
6. Concluding remarks	8



1. Introduction

Horizontal co-operation, conceived as a mechanism whereby two or more developing countries unite knowledge, experience and resources for their mutual benefit, is a traditional socioeconomic development strategy which has in recent years assumed increased significance and is being recommended as an important medium for development. This document discusses such co-operation within the framework of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

Horizontal co-operation brings together two basic strategies promoted by the United Nations Development System, namely Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) and Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries (ECDC). Both strategies envisage approaches which are based on self-reliance by the developing countries for the solution of the problems limiting their socioeconomic development.

This document outlines the background activities leading up to the present CEPAL initiatives in the Caribbean subregion, describes the objectives and scope of horizontal co-operation, and examines the Caribbean's experience with horizontal co-operation in the drinking water supply and sanitation sector as a basis for identifying the main considerations important to the strengthening of technical and economic co-operation within this sector in the Caribbean.

2. Background

Pursuant to the recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in March 1977, and as part of the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at that conference, the General Assembly adopted resolution 35/18 "Proclamation of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade" (10 November 1980) which inter alia proclaimed

"... the period 1981-1990 as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, during which Member States will assume a commitment to bring about a substantial improvement in the standards and levels of services in drinking water supply and sanitation by the year 1990..."

At the eighteenth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) held in La Paz, Bolivia in April 1979, promotion of the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan was entrusted to a Sessional Water Committee, and a permanent Water Resources Unit was established within the Natural Resources Division of the CEPAL Secretariat to act as the focal point of all regional activities in the field of water, including horizontal co-operation. The Commission's promotion of horizontal co-operation and its support for TCDC and ECDC activities are carried out under the terms of resolutions 316 (XV), 354 (XVI), 363 (XVII) and 387 (XVIII).

CEPAL's activities in connexion with the Decade have so far been directed towards:

(a) studying the needs and possible sources of finance for the investments required to achieve the goals of the Decade;

(b) helping to co-ordinate the Decade-related activities of international agencies through the Inter-Secretariat Group for Water Resources in Latin America; and

/(c) organizing

(c) organizing meetings of representatives of national and international agencies with a view to helping governments identify avenues and lay the ground work for co-operation in the financial, economic and social aspects of water supply and sanitation.

The first of the two meetings scheduled for this purpose was held in Santiago, Chile, in March 1981 and involved the countries of South America. The report of this meeting is presented as document E/CEPAL/G.1171.

In addition to its own activities, CEPAL has lent general support to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) in its preparations for the Decade at the regional level. Continued collaboration of the Secretariat with PAHO is seen as a priority activity by CEPAL's Sessional Water Committee.

3. Objectives and scope of horizontal co-operation

(a) Objectives

The concept of horizontal co-operation and the related programme activities seek in general to further the national and collective self-reliance of developing countries through the enhancement of their capacity to solve their development problems in keeping with their aspirations, values and special needs.

Specifically it attempts to:

- strengthen the capacity of developing countries to identify and analyse together the main issues of their development and to formulate suitable strategies to guide such development;
- strengthen existing technological capacities in the developing countries (including the traditional sector), improve the effectiveness with which such capacities are used, and create new capacities and capabilities;
- improve the capacity of developing countries to absorb and adopt technology and skill related to their needs;
- increase and improve communication among developing countries in order to foster greater awareness of common problems and related efforts towards their solution, resulting in wider access to available knowledge and experience as well as the creation of new knowledge;
- increase the amount and enhance the quality of international co-operation, as well as improve the effectiveness of available resources; and
- enable developing countries to attain a greater degree of participation in international economic activities.

(b) Scope

Some basic operational characteristics of horizontal co-operation are as follows:

- (i) it involves the deliberate and voluntary action of sharing, pooling and exchanging resources, know-how, experience, capabilities and capacities between two or more developing countries, so as to make full use of their own potential at the national level;
- (ii) it is initiated and organized by the developing countries themselves, may include the participation of public institutions and private organizations, and may be implemented with or without the support of the developed countries, the United Nations Development System or other international organs, bodies or organizations;
- (iii) it uses exclusively, or at least as far as possible, the advisory services, research and training resources, and the equipment and supplies of the developing countries themselves;

/(iv) it

(iv) it covers all sectors and forms of operations, whether bilateral or multilateral or of subregional, regional or interregional scope; and

(v) it applies innovative approaches, methods and techniques, without excluding the use of existing forms of co-operation.

4. Experiences in horizontal co-operation within the Caribbean

Co-operation between Caribbean countries in the area of water supply and sanitation is fairly recent, having its origins in the mid-1960s, and is related to the development of national drinking water supply and sanitation institutions in the more developed countries of the English-speaking Caribbean.

Co-operation between the more developed countries and the less developed countries has formed the bulk of such activities, but in recent years there have also been instances of co-operation between only more developed countries and between only less developed countries.

During the 1960s and the 1970s most of the instances of horizontal co-operation have tended to develop from isolated, ad hoc requests from the less developed countries for small-scale assistance, usually related to the solution of technical emergencies within the water supply and sanitation services. However, there are already indications that the 1980s will see the evolution of more formal arrangements involving horizontal co-operation activities, the strengthening of technical co-operation and the initiation of active co-operation in the area of finance.

There have been few experiences of co-operation between the English-speaking Caribbean and the non-English-speaking countries of the Caribbean or with the neighbouring Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America which form part of the wider Caribbean basin.

(a) Areas of co-operation

Caribbean experiences in horizontal co-operation have been in the following areas:

- (i) training;
- (ii) short-term consultant services;
- (iii) provision of laboratory and maintenance services;
- (iv) hosting of subregional meetings, symposia and workshops;
- (v) technology transfer;
- (vi) equipment and materials;
- (vii) common professional services.

(i) Training

The University of the West Indies (UWI), which is financed by the governments of the English-speaking Caribbean and which has campuses in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad, provides training in geology, engineering and management: professional skills which are used within the water industry throughout the Caribbean.

The Caribbean Meteorological Institute (CMI), located in Barbados, operates as a shared service in a manner similar to the UWI, providing training which is important to water resources development in the Caribbean. Its proposed expansion to include training at the technician level in operational hydrology is expected to further enhance its role as a training institution.

PAHO/government-financed short-term training courses for operations and maintenance personnel of water supply and sanitation services throughout the Caribbean are held regularly in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. These courses utilize mainly local expertise, and are attended by personnel from Caribbean

/countries other

countries other than the host country. The Caribbean Basin Water Management Project has been a particularly successful initiative in this regard.

(ii) Short-term consultant services

Public sector (and less frequently private sector) experts in drinking water supply and sanitation in the more developed countries are often seconded to international agencies to undertake short-term assignments in the less developed countries of the Caribbean.

This is felt to go some way towards slowing down the brain-drain to the developed world, while allowing for the development of indigeneous expertise specifically orientated to the Caribbean's needs, and it also enhances the Caribbean's capacity to solve its own problems. PAHO's use of local expertise within the Caribbean stands out in this regard.

(iii) Provision of laboratory and maintenance services

Water Quality Laboratories, mainly in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, have often carried out chemical analyses of water samples for the less developed countries of the eastern Caribbean. Occasionally pumps or other equipment are also repaired.

Where charges are made for these services they have usually been at non-commercial rates.

(iv) Subregional meetings, symposia and workshops

The annual Caribbean Water Engineers' Conference, held in a different country each year, affords the opportunity for significant dissemination of information, exposure of new ideas, approaches, problems, programmes and experiences, and most importantly allows for regular contacts of water supply and sanitation engineers, which has resulted in the development of informal channels often used to initiate co-operation activities.

In recent years subregional meetings and seminars involving Central American and Caribbean countries have been held for the collective analysis of common problems and to develop and harmonize strategies to be pursued in the resolution of problems. The UNESCO/Jamaican Government sponsored Meeting of National Committees of the International Hydrological Programme of Central America and the Caribbean, held in Jamaica in March 1980, and the UNDP/Commonwealth Secretariat/Barbados Government-sponsored Seminar on Water Resources of Small Islands, held in Barbados in October 1980, are recent examples of such meetings.

(v) Technology transfer

The Cuban Micro-Dam programme carried out in Jamaica in the late 1970s provides an example of the transfer of technology organized within the Caribbean between developing countries of the region, and is one of the few instances of horizontal co-operation between English and Spanish-speaking Caribbean neighbours.

(vi) Equipment and materials

Another unique feature of the co-operation between Cuba and Jamaica was the provision of significant quantities of equipment in addition to the usual expertise, which normally formed the mainstay of horizontal co-operation in the Caribbean before then.

The provision of water mains to the Government of Antigua by Trinidad and Tobago is another more recent example of this form of co-operation. The purchase of the mains was effected through the Caribbean Aid Council, a financial instrument created by Trinidad and Tobago to finance development in the Caribbean.

/(vii) Common

(vii) Common professional services

The less developed countries of the eastern Caribbean are attempting to come to terms with the limitations of their small size by the creation of a common pool of professionals within the structure of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

This shared pool of professionals will include skills needed to assist the drinking water supply and sanitation services of the member States of OECS. Its creation is also expected to slow down the movement of professionals out of the less developed countries and encourage the return of others.

(b) Co-operation mechanisms

(i) Avenues of co-operation

Horizontal co-operation activities in the Caribbean have largely been based on government-to-government arrangements, with little involvement of the private sector. This is readily understandable since the provision of drinking water and sanitation services throughout the Caribbean is wholly owned and controlled by governments.

Government-to-government co-operation is initiated at the level of the administration of the water utility and at the political level.

The provision of laboratory and maintenance services and the secondment of experts to a government are usually initiated at the level of the public utility's administration and usually require political authorization as a matter of formality. Such activities do not usually make significant financial demands on the donor, and such demands as there are can generally be accommodated within the donor's budget.

The other areas of co-operation, however, often involve significant resources and require commitments at the political level of the country. These forms of co-operation are usually carried out within the framework of formal agreements and protocols.

Another avenue of co-operation presently being explored involves the use of a third party, the Caribbean Development Bank, to manage funds of the Caribbean Aid Council made available by Trinidad and Tobago to finance development activity within the Caribbean, including co-operation in the drinking water supply and sanitation sector.

(ii) Financing of horizontal co-operation

Caribbean training institutions such as UWI and CMI are financed by budget allocations by the Caribbean countries themselves. Costs associated with the provision of laboratory and maintenance services, the hosting of subregional meetings, and other miscellaneous local costs arising from country-to-country co-operation are also generally borne by the governments directly. In the particular situation already mentioned in section (a) (vi), donor governments have provided equipment and materials as essential components of co-operation activity.

The funding of costs related to the use of Caribbean national experts recruited and assigned within the Caribbean is most often borne by international agencies, and occasionally by a developed country working through a regional institution, e.g., CDB or an international agency.

(c) Impact on the water and sanitation sector

The most significant benefit arising from horizontal co-operation within the Caribbean relates to the staffing of water supply and sanitation utilities throughout the Caribbean. Few non-Caribbean nationals occupy positions in these utilities, and most are believed to have been trained within the Caribbean.

The impact of the use of Caribbean experts cannot be readily isolated, as they usually function as part of a team in which they are generally in the minority. However, it is possible to discern among Caribbean experts a growing confidence in their own capacity, which is also reflected in the confidence shown in them by their own countries, particularly in the more developed countries. This increased capability is no doubt related to the experience gained while serving as experts in Caribbean countries other than their own.

The importance and success of small-scale co-operation, particularly in the eastern Caribbean, resulted largely from the informal contacts developed during meetings of Caribbean countries.

A basic strategy, developed around the need to be more self-reliant and incorporating the concept of horizontal co-operation, has already begun to emerge from the few regional meetings held, the effect of which has yet to evolve.

A similar situation exists with respect to the efforts at technology transfer and the provision of equipment and material.

(d) Obstacles and constraints

Several obstacles to the more intensive use of horizontal co-operation as a strategy of development have been set out below:

(i) Governments do not readily see tangible benefits arising from horizontal co-operation in the short term, in comparison with those accruing from traditional bilateral arrangements with developed countries. As a result, insufficient priority is assigned to horizontal co-operation activities in the design of plans for overall social and economic development.

(ii) Public sector water supply and sanitation institutions, although actively involved in training, have problems in retaining trained staff and are usually understaffed. This weakness makes development of an effective national focal point for co-operation activities difficult and limits the availability of the remaining experts, who then have to carry heavier responsibilities than is desirable. On the other hand, the private sector is usually well staffed with water supply and sanitation experts, but these are unfortunately not readily visible because of their service role to the government, their lack of access to international communication, and exclusion from international meetings, symposia, etc.

(iii) Although the various United Nations agencies in the Caribbean have a formal position in support of horizontal co-operation, some of the local offices still maintain the traditional attitude of searching for expertise, technology and solution outside of the Caribbean, generally in the developed countries.

It is also apparent that international agency co-ordination within the Caribbean could be made much more effective if instances of duplication and competition between programmes of different agencies were promptly identified.

(iv) Funds are not available in sufficient amounts to finance development thrusts incorporating horizontal co-operation activities. These activities are not generally "bankable" projects and therefore do not qualify for loan financing from international development banks (including CDB). Neither are such projects attractive to developed countries, who instead prefer the traditional bilateral arrangements with individual countries.

The Caribbean countries themselves do not allocate significant resources to these activities because of their relatively meagre resources and the low priority assigned to horizontal co-operation activities.

5. Horizontal co-operation - a development strategy for the Decade

Technical and economic co-operation among developing countries (i.e., horizontal co-operation) have been recognized and authorized as essential components of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

Horizontal co-operation does not propose to be an end in itself, but instead must be viewed as a dynamic process through which developing countries collectively seek to achieve the full social and economic development of their individual countries.

For the water supply and sanitation services in the Caribbean, this process is being examined within the framework of the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990). A successful Decade programme and the effective use of technical and economic co-operation must give due consideration to the following factors:

(i) The establishment or strengthening of focal points conveniently located within the national political and administrative structure, particularly within government ministries with responsibilities for finance and planning, water supply and sanitation, and health.

Caribbean governments should be motivated to assign priority to the development of adequate water supply and sanitation services through the discussion of the Decade and horizontal co-operation by their inclusion as agenda items at national, subregional and regional meetings such as, for example, the Caribbean Health Ministers' Meeting (January 1982), Caribbean Water Engineers' Conference (October 1982), and the CEPAL Seminar on Horizontal Co-operation in Central America and the Caribbean (January 1982).

An inter-sectoral National Action Committee (NAC) for the Decade could be established (or strengthened) to act as the focal point within each country. The NAC would act as the main channel of communication and be responsible for defining Decade objectives, identifying development strategies, preparing sectoral plans and programmes, and detailing specific projects for implementation. Documentation on these should directly address the question of the priority assigned to the development of water supply and sanitation services, set out the related allocation of national resources and include a clear statement of the gap between the countries' needs and the available resources.

Such documentation, besides establishing central themes to guide national sectoral and inter-sectoral decisions, would provide comprehensive information on developing countries' plans and projects, thus facilitating decisions on greater technical support and increased external funding through bilateral agencies and financial institutions. It would also be the basis for identifying areas of common interest and joint action in horizontal co-operation activities among Caribbean and Latin American countries.

(ii) The continuation and strengthening of existing areas and forms of technical and economic co-operation among Caribbean countries by effecting improvements in efficiency and expansion of scope.

The need to create new and/or adapt existing technologies in order to develop low-cost alternatives in the field of water supply and sanitation could be satisfied by financing appropriately applied research at existing national and Caribbean training and research institutions.

Increased use of Caribbean experts (including private sector experts) could be encouraged through the preparation of a list of Caribbean experts who are actively involved in the water supply and sanitation industry. This list would detail their training, experience and expertise, and be available to Caribbean governments, regional institutions and international agencies operating within the Caribbean.

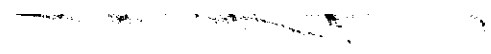
(iii) Increased co-ordination and more effective communication between agencies of the United Nations Development System in the Caribbean.

This could be achieved through the formation of a permanent inter-secretariat working group for the Decade within the Caribbean. This working group would meet regularly to review and co-ordinate the relevant aspects of activities of the international agencies within the subregion.

6. Concluding remarks

The situation shared by the Caribbean subregional group in the context of their specific geographical and cultural heritage, historical experience and technical capacity on the one hand and the potential and resources that can be mobilized to achieve the development of their water supply and sanitation services on the other, give rise to common interests which provide real opportunities for intensifying horizontal co-operation within the group.

CEPAL's role is, inter alia, that of intermediary and promotor of horizontal co-operation among the developing countries of the region (and subregion), as a strategy useful in achieving the national objectives set for the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.



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