

# Caribbean to Become Sustainable Destination

The Caribbean Tourism Organization, in its quest to make the tourism industry more vibrant and competitive, developed sustainable programs for its member states to address issues that confront the industry.



Best Practice Policies are put in place, where effective and efficient methods are needed to solve tourism-related issues, at the least possible cost. These methods should be relevant to present realities, and must be within the context of the tourism industry's vision and goals. The methods that are to be put in place should be world class, and comparable to the best practices found internationally.

Tourism in the Caribbean had continuously remained robust till this year, 2012. The tourist arrivals had been on the rise with the Dominican Republic reaching almost two and a half million (2.5M) from January to June. Cuba comes next, with 1.4M tourist arrivals from January to May. Guyana with 80,000 tourist arrivals had the most significant increase of 17%, as compared to the previous period. All the others experienced steady increase in tourist arrivals from 1 to 13% as compared to the previous years.

Due to the importance of the tourism industry in the Caribbean, it became the center of various climate change summits that were directed to ward off threats of global warming on the region. This was started in the small island of Beguia, in St. Vincent, Grenadines – an exotic travel destination, but with water problems during the summer seasons, due to climate change. To address these problems, Beguia started to use a water purifying facility that converts seawater to potable water, which is safe to drink. This was implemented via a local project, with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) in the forefront.

The CCCCC is a programme, which serves as a conduit for the Carbon Neutral Tourism Program of the government which seeks to make the Caribbean region less dependent on fossil fuel. The tourism industry is among the varied industry sectors that are targeted to make the change. Among the projects currently implemented are the following programs:



**Bequia Solar Powered Reverse Osmosis Plant** – drinking water is converted from sea water. It makes use of solar power in the conversion, hence doing away with the need for fossil fuel, and the demand for foreign exchange. Fresh water is converted in the process that would solve the health issues affecting the need for potable water.

**Vieux Fort Project in Saint Lucia** – the first tie-up arrangement between the public and private sector to address the issues of climate change. There is need for volumes of water in the southern portion of Saint Lucia since it continuously suffers from drought. The tourism sector likewise, needs volumes of water; and waste water from the big hotel chains, posed a problem for waste water management.

One hotel and CCCCC was able to reduce the hotel's water requirement by one fourth of their needs, through the Global Environmental Facility Project (GEF). The excess water that was saved was made available to the vicinity. This outcome was made possible, through the use of a water treatment facility that would convert waste water to processed water. The latter is then used to water plants and the golf course area of the hotel. Due to the success of the project, the local government of Saint Lucia had now put in place a policy that all hotels in the area, should have their own water treatment facility and embark on saving rain water on its indoor repositories.



**Eastern Caribbean, Bahamas, and Belize Water Treatment Facilities** – as a result of the success in waste water management in Saint Lucia, replication of the program is now being instituted in the above-mentioned areas. The Caribbean region is highly dependent on agriculture and tourism, hence the need for them to address issues affecting climate change immediately. Effects on climate change could make them vulnerable to the viciousness of calamities like floods, hurricanes, storms and drought, among many others.

A roadmap on climate change was prepared by the CCCCC in 2009 in response to the need for strategic survival techniques. The study was entitled, Regional Framework for Achieving and Approving Development Resiliency to Climate Change. Another framework, Liliendal Declaration on Climate Change and Development, was also released the same year. Both agendas were approved by the

Heads of Government and the State and will serve as climate change roadmap for the years 2009 to 2015.

The CCCCC was tasked to do another implementation plan, for the period 2011 to 2021 that seeks to target the ethical standards on risk management, and in creating carbon-neutral destinations in the Caribbean. The region is composed of fifteen member states, where a number of them are considered as small island development states (SIDS). These small economies share the same sustainable development challenges. The climate impact such as La Nina phenomenon, El Nino, tropical cyclones, and hurricanes, among others can make their socio-economic survival vulnerable to natural calamities wrought by climate change. Hence, there is need for them to implement high impact projects to address issues affecting challenges on climate change, at the soonest possible time.

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