Report on Demonstration Exercise for GEO-SIEAN

On February 24, 2004, a demonstration exercise was held at the Conference Room of the O.E.C.S' Environment and Sustainable Development Unit. The exercise was funded by the United Nations DESA and Organisation of American States (OAS) through the Ministry of Physical Development, under the regional project "Information for Decision-Making for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States."

This demonstration exercise was the result of a culmination of two major workshops held with Caribbean SIDS to determine their specific and general needs for managing the multiplicity of concerns for information for sustainable development and integrating the social, environmental and economic aspects for decision-making. St. Lucia expressed its requirement of an efficient and easily accessible software package which would assist the island's information users to use, manage, store and analyze data and information to develop indicators and to guide decision-making.

Thus, the major aim of the demonstration was to determine the relevance and feasibility of the GEO-SIEAN software package- developed by the University of Costa Rica- to manage data from across different sectors and which would aid users in building a baseline for our development of Indicators for sustainable development under the current Integrated Planning for Sustainable Development process.

Brief opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Alphonsus Antoine of the OAS, St. Lucia office who welcomed participants and urged them to assess software carefully both for their local/sector needs and national needs.

The demonstration exercise was attended by twelve participants who represented a number of Agencies, covering the major pillars of sustainable development (economic, environmental, social, spatial). A list of the participants is included in Annex 1 of this report.

Dr. Freddy Abarca represented the Development Observatory of Costa Rica conducted the demonstration exercise of the GEO-SIEAN. He began with a presentation on the objectives and a summary of the software package. A few slides of his presentation are carried in Annex 2 of this report.

A brief to the software package was used to guide participants through the demonstration exercise. The guide has also been included in Annexe 3 of this report.

The demonstration exercise considered the following:

- Overview and summary of the GEO software
- What it can do for users/participants?
- How various agencies across the different sectors can use this data to make long term decisions in their various sectors
- Storing data in database
- Compatibility and flexibility of software to other programs such as Access, Excel, etc
- Using graphics, reports as outputs in the program
- What led to the development of the software?
- Multiple input points of raw data into the program, data entry and their protocols
- Using Baseline information
- System requirements
- Adding new data sets
- Inputting data from multiple sources eg environment, economic, social data
- Possibility of geo-referencing

Discussions, Recommendations and Way Forward

During the discussions which followed, the participants noted and recommended the following:

- Need for a database or integrated information system which should be part of the overall Integrated Development Planning process
- A prerequisite is the upgrading of the current system of information storage, sharing from hard copy to software
- The database should be used for integrating needs across different sectors, as is done by GEO-SIEAN
- Advantage of GEO-SIEAN: The package presented is an openly available software which has great potential because of its simplicity in use, and attractiveness to various users
- Work should begin immediately on baseline study of data and information currently available. Should look at rationalizing the needs of different data users eg the Statistics department, agencies' needs and reconciling various needs to identify collaborative best practices;
- The participants of the workshop to consider being a part of a Working Group/Information point person/liaison officer for the development of the process of the baseline study for the integrated management system

- Some Agencies have already developed or are in the process of developing databases and the process should determine ways for inclusion of information and data that are available, as is the case with the Forestry Department;

- Need for a GIS and graphics-related aspect to be an integral part of the software, to allow for dynamicism, with the ability to simultaneously access and process both map and attribute data.

- A Needs assessment was identified as an important step in this process: looking at an understanding of the particular users of the information, their demands of the system, and an evaluation of the educational and training needs.

Appendix 1

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Annex 2: Excerpt of the Presentation by Dr. Abraca

National Environmental Statistics Information System

AGENDA

- **Our context.**
- **Our goals.**

- **GEO-SIEAN software package.**

- **The data base.**
- **Hands on experience**

Saint Lucia, February 2004

... from Saint Lucia

- **Overview and summary of the GEO software**
- **What it can do for participants and member countries?**
- **How can the different agencies across the different sectors (education, statistics, labor, environment, land management) use this database to make long term decisions in their various sectors?**
- **Storing data in database**
- **Compatibility and flexibility of software to other programs such as Microsoft Access, Excel, etc**
- **Using graphics, reports as outputs in the program**
- **Baseline Information, Inputting data, Multiple entry sources**
- **Using Baseline information**
- **Minimum system requirements**
- **Adding new data sets**
- **Can data be geo-referenced?**

Saint Lucia, February 2004

Our context (1-3)

- There is the 11th Decision of the XIV Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

- There is a software application which the OdD has been developing.

- Latin American and The Caribbean countries are the focus of this effort.

- By now, there are over 200 variables related to environmental statistics and indicators.

- There is a variable classification (a taxonomy) to display data.

Our context (2-3)

- There should be a data base server with, at least, two data base engines: an international and a national one.

- As a result, there must be a national effort looking for a "national data base"...

- ... and there should be computer instruments capable of building both platforms.