

# CRew+ LETTER

Implementing solutions for an integrated water and wastewater management for a clean and healthy Caribbean

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# 1

## Message from the Project Coordinator



It is a pleasure to greet you again and wish you all the best for the end of the year, along with well-deserved rest with your families and friends, on behalf of the entire GEF CReW+ project team.

Thank you all, as always, for your dedication and contributions to the project. This year, we have continued to see the positive results of the project, with a notable impact benefiting the Caribbean Sea. We are aware that we are still facing several challenges that affect the implementation of the project, and these have led us to need more time to complete each activity. However, thanks to the close collaboration with counterparts, we are addressing these challenges and making progress in the right direction to achieve the project's results. I would just like to remind you of the commitment of all agencies to complete the project and achieve the much-anticipated results, and we will continue working with you until the end.

We would like to highlight the achievements in the policy and legislation component, with improvements in the institutional framework, which serves as the foundation to achieve results on the ground. The commitment of the countries has been very valuable, aligning at all times with cross-cutting work areas: gender, equality, innovation, climate crisis, indigenous peoples, etc. It is worth mentioning that we are participating in the process to include the participatory process of indigenous communities in Costa Rica's National Water Policy, a pioneering activity in the region.

We continue working to achieve the results of on-the-ground interventions with a focus on low-cost, innovative solutions, such as nature-based solutions, which have been highly praised in all sector forums. We have been able to collaborate in critical areas in rural and peri-urban zones, as well as with indigenous communities, to address their needs.

We are eager to share with you the documented experiences where we will reflect on the challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations.

That's all for now, and I invite you to stay tuned and follow all the work we are doing. The entire team is available for any questions you may have. ”



Regional Coordinator  
**Pedro Moreo**

# 2

## Indigenous peoples blog

### Indigenous Peoples and Water: Connected in Environmental Projects



 [By the Coordination Group of the GEF CRew+ Project: Daniela Araya, Pedro Moreo and Marle Reyes](#)


#### In the framework of August 9th - International Day of Indigenous Peoples

There is an ancestral correlation between indigenous peoples and the environment. Water, forests, trees... all of these are part of the worldview and expression of the original peoples of the Americas. Water, in particular, has been a determining factor in their environment and adaptation: this is the case for the Miskitos in Honduras, a people isolated from the rest of Honduras and surrounded by water, or the Guna people in Panama, inhabitants of an island whose tides have forced them to migrate.





For this reason, the GEF CRew+ project has a cross-cutting focus on indigenous peoples, and has worked hand-in-hand with the Maya peoples in Mexico, the Guna in Panama, and the Miskito in Honduras on projects to improve wastewater management. It is also promoting the participation of indigenous peoples in Costa Rica, by supporting consultations on the National Water Policy, a human rights mechanism responding to the right to prior, free, and informed consultation.


#### What are we doing?

 **Mexico:** Building ecotechnologies for rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment in the communities of San Antonio Segundo, Yaxley, and Yodznot Nuevo in Quintana Roo.

“Ecotechnologies” are innovative technologies designed for the sustainable management of water and wastewater. These solutions include systems for collecting rainwater and biodigesters, among others, which help manage water in an environmentally friendly way and improve the quality of life in local communities.

 **Honduras:** Building latrines with the Miskito community, a solution created to prevent open defecation and transform cultural patterns of sanitation that apply indigenous worldview principles in the construction and use of wood.

 **Costa Rica:** Providing technical support for the development of the indigenous consultation for the National Water Policy, a process that will ensure a human rights-based approach and the incorporation of indigenous peoples' voices in decision-making.

 **Panama:** Developing the Local Guide on Legislation and Best Practices for the Isberyala Community and the Popular Guide Dii Agued Igar "Water Care" (an adaptation of the first guide, which is illustrated and reader-friendly). These documents, created under the indigenous worldview, aim to help the community in their migration to solid land and preserve water by applying indigenous law and Panamanian regulations.

## What have we learned throughout the implementation?

Maria Vizcaya, a consultant for the project, worked actively with the Guna community in Panama.



“Embracing cultural value is a gateway to working in the communities,” says Vizcaya. “That value comes from involving them as participants and protagonists in the situations, as well as following the outreach protocols outlined by the communities themselves.”

Furthermore, it is necessary to be sensitive to understanding the historical and cultural processes that shape their view of the world and their self-perception in society.

Vizcaya highlighted the importance of addressing some long-term issues that may not be as visible to them, such as: the care of water sources, overpopulation in their communities, birth control, and solid waste management.

### In the case of Mexico:



“The main challenge in rural communities is the language barrier; however, having people who speak the local languages or dialects greatly facilitates engagement with the communities, as it helps strengthen the relationship between NGOs and the residents, providing a level of trust through effective and clear communication of project commitments and goals.”

noted Estefania Medina, project leader with the implementing NGO Amigos de Sian Ka'an in the indigenous Maya communities.

The work of the GEF CREW+ project with indigenous peoples is just the beginning. There are significant historical gaps in water and sanitation that need to be addressed to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples. Starting with the connection between indigenous peoples and water implies that interventions must be centered on the beneficiary, be consistent with human rights, and focus on a project vision where these peoples are the protagonists. This thread cannot be overlooked or forgotten; now more than ever, it must guide execution.

# 3

## GEF CReW+ Champions Honduras and Costa Rica

### Vivian Gonzalez

 PROFESSIONAL IN PROJECTS AND STRATEGIC PROCESSES WATER DIRECTORATE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY



"From our work in water resource management in Costa Rica, the activities executed through GEF CReW+ have provided us not only with positive results in terms of achieved objectives but also with significant lessons and new challenges for the future."

[read more](#)

### Victor Pineda

 CHIEF OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOOD MICROBIOLOGY LAB. CENTRE FOR CONTAMINANT STUDY AND CONTROL



"Actions have been carried out in both ethically important communities in Honduras and in areas of growing tourism, generating a significant impact on the quality of life for hundreds of people."

[read more](#)

# 4

## GEF CReW+ at IWC10

The GEF Biennial International Waters Conference (IW10) was held from September 23 to 26, 2024, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, under the theme "**Transformative Actions and Impacts for Water and Ocean SDGs: The GEF IW Response to the Global Challenge**".

The conference was the most anticipated event for learning and exchanging experiences among projects financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the International Waters focal area.

The GEF CReW+ project participated in the event through two interactive sessions, a project stand, participation in the UNEP stand, and a video featured in a film festival.

The interactive sessions included:

- ✓ Achieving Policy Coherence from Source to Sea.
- ✓ Looking Ahead: Ensuring Resilience to Future Changes.





## Water and Climate Crisis: The Central Focus of the Annual Conference of the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association

 By the Coordination Group of the GEF CReW+ Project and Gustavo Alvarado (UNEP-Cartagena Convention Secretariat)

**From October 21 to 25** two environmental events coincided in the Americas: the 33rd Annual Conference and Expo of the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA), with its High-Level Forum for Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Conference of the Parties of the Biodiversity Convention (COP 16) with its activities on climate change in Cali, Colombia.

The links between these conferences go beyond the dates. Both events touch on the core of the climate crisis. It is no coincidence; it is a cross-cutting issue for the water sector from every angle. This is confirmed by the Declaration of the Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water and Wastewater, signed in Port of Spain, in which the countries commit to: “prioritize the reduction of non-revenue water (NRW) through the adoption of best practices, innovative technologies, and capacity-building initiatives, and implement strategies to measure the efficiency of water utilities and build resilience to the climate crisis”.



### The Frontline of the Climate Crisis

“The Caribbean is the frontline of the climate crisis,” and therefore there is an inescapable link between fluctuations in rainfall patterns and the possibility of providing stable water supply to Caribbean communities. This, coupled with the consequences of increasingly frequent and devastating extreme weather events, makes the need for resilient infrastructure more urgent. This was highlighted by Marvin Gonzales, Minister of Public Utilities of Trinidad and Tobago, during the opening of the conference.

It is clear for the Caribbean, in the words of its own ministers, that an extreme weather event affecting water and sanitation infrastructure will occur, it is only a matter of when. The International Monetary Fund estimated that, according to current trends, climate change could increase the economic impact of storms in the Caribbean by 77% by the year 2100 [1].



Success stories like that of the Caribbean Water Utility Insurance Collective (CWUIC-SP) in Grenada demonstrate the difference between being prepared and not. The island nation, through CWUIC, received \$2.2 million just 14 days after Hurricane Beryl passed, enabling them to respond to the emergency promptly and effectively.

CWUIC is a clear example of how the CWWA conference connected water and the climate crisis through financing as a resource that can be leveraged and to which Caribbean nations can turn for its multiple benefits. Other good examples from the conference include carbon credits and GEF funds.

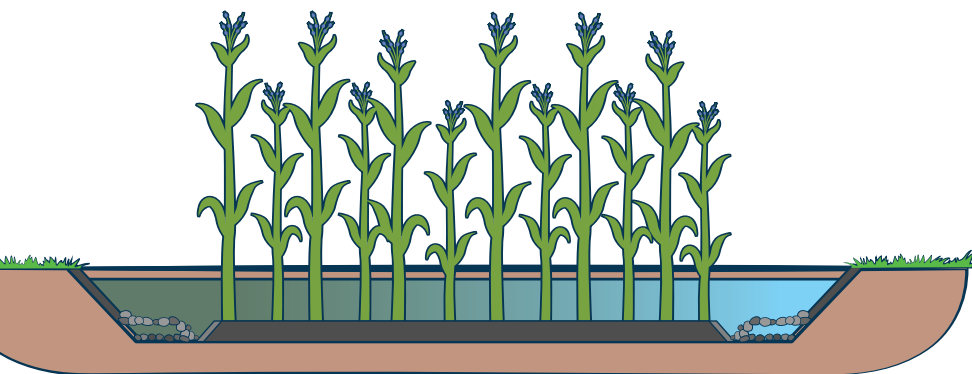
## Climate Crisis and Water

Actions to reduce non-revenue water, such as leak reduction and optimizing distribution, help address the climate crisis by reducing water waste and ensuring sustainable management. Improving water efficiency reduces energy consumption and protects this vital resource, adapting to extreme climate conditions.

Equally important are wastewater, which constitutes an underutilized resource that, if treated with circular economy practices, can help reduce freshwater consumption. According to UN data (2014), in the Caribbean, 72.1% of freshwater is used for agriculture, 16.9% for industrial uses, and only 11% for domestic use [2].

Water reuse for agriculture and industry is safe when done appropriately. The GEF CReW+ project is piloting water reuse for agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago at a lettuce farm, supported by the University of the West Indies, where they aim to put into practice the reuse of water from the St. Augustine Campus treatment plant.

Water and its connection with the Caribbean and the climate crisis require integrated actions to address the region's challenges. Each island country needs tailored solutions based on its unique possibilities and circumstances, which must be prioritized in light of the consequences of not acting in time. If anything can be learned from Grenada's case, it is that preparedness, combined with innovation, can drastically change the outcome of a story.



## 6

## Agency messages for 2024



“ 2024 allowed us to make progress on key project commitments and share in spaces with decision-makers from the water and sanitation sector. In particular, IWC10 was a platform for exposure, professional exchange, and camaraderie, where we connected with our peers managing projects in the international water portfolio and the GEF. A year of work awaits us, and we anticipate great results. ”

**Rodrigo Riquelme, IDB**

“ The GEF CREW+ project is a golden opportunity to advance further the waste water management agenda and meet our obligations under the SDG6 framework, the LBS Protocol and others. As we conclude yet another active year, advanced nature-based and decentralized solutions, worked actively with communities in all countries for a healthier and cleaner Caribbean Sea, I would encourage you all to reflect on what is still needed to achieve sustainable wastewater management for improved human health, and ecosystem security. Please reach out to the CREW+ Project Team and discuss your needs for 2025. Happy festive season! ”

**Isabelle Vanderbeck, UNEP**

“ In 2024, the OAS Water Program for the Americas, together with the IDB, continues to make significant progress, especially in Mexico, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Honduras, leading alongside local and national entities. The inclusion of these countries has strengthened regional cooperation in wastewater financing and management, allowing the adaptation of project management to expand the scope of the GEF CREW+ and advance towards sustainable development in the Americas. ”

**Andres Sanchez, OAS**

“ The GEF CREW+ Project has continued to work with countries in 2024 to advance integrated water and wastewater management. This year we also partnered with the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association to host the 20th High-Level Forum for Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water under the theme “Collective Regional Action Toward a Climate Resilient and Water Secure Caribbean” where the project outlined the advantages to nature-based solutions and innovative technological solutions for wastewater management. We look forward to continuing to promote these solutions in the coming year. ”

**Laverne Walker, UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat**





## Component I

### Institutional incidence in the region



**Panama**

- Dissemination of the Popular Guide and Best Practices through workshops with the Guna Yala indigenous community.
- Coastal-marine water quality standard.



**Saint Kitts and Nevis**

Development of the National Wastewater and Sludge Management Policy, Effluent Standards, as well as a Master Plan for Wastewater.



**Guyana**

Creation of an electronic database for the water sector, which is being developed by the government with support from the project.



**Cuba**

Strengthening of the Municipal and Provincial Watershed Councils regarding integrated watershed and coastal area management.



**Saint Lucia**

Development of the Guide for Wastewater Treatment for Small Systems with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security, and Rural Development.



## Component III Innovative solutions

### Colombia

Technical mission to determine the activities to support the municipality of San Antero.

### Panama

Progress in the construction of the artificial wetland at Niga Kantule Port (Guna Yala Indigenous Community).

### Honduras

Consultancy to identify financing alternatives for the wastewater treatment project in Omoa.

### Cuba

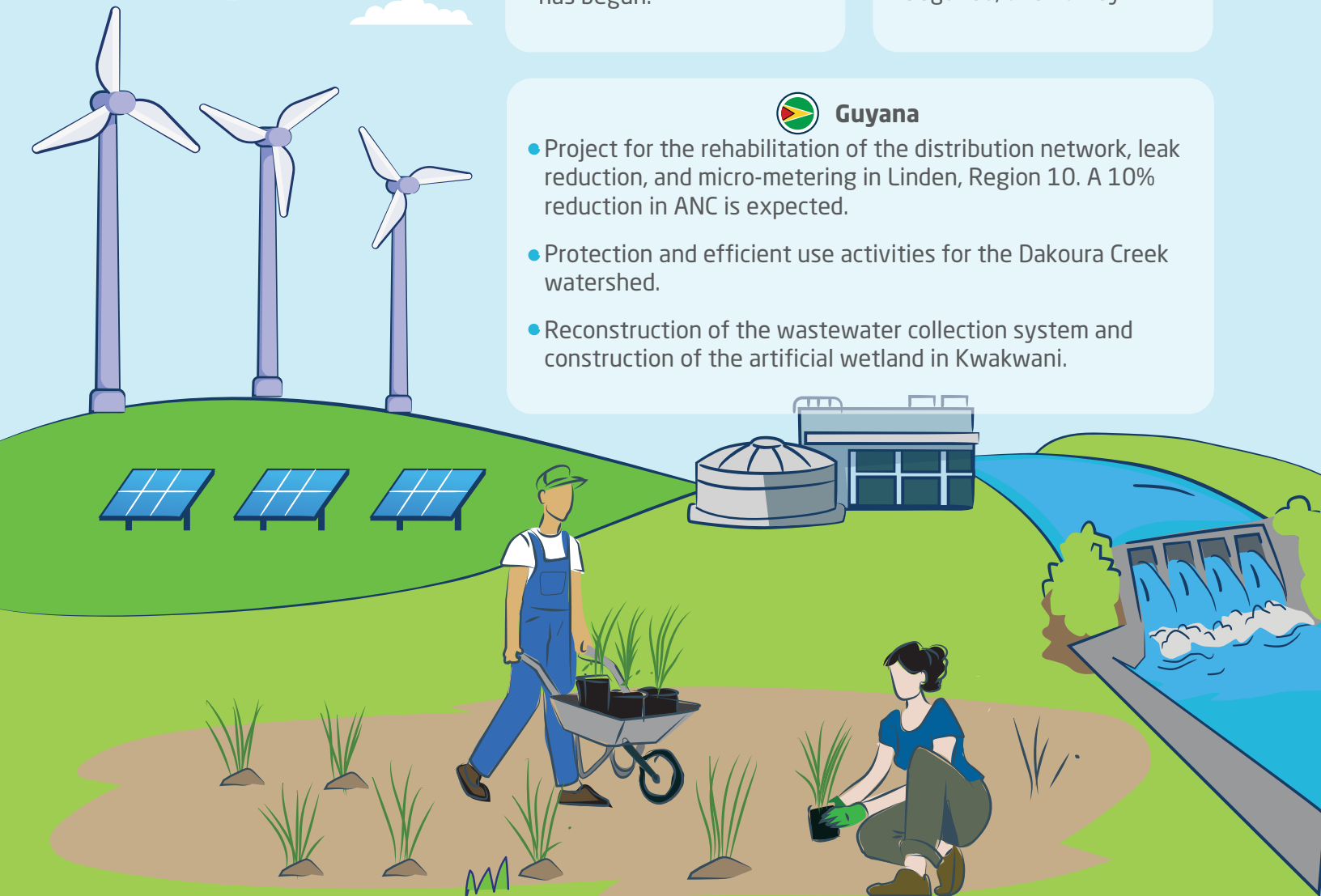
The acquisition process for equipment to rehabilitate the sanitation system in the Municipality of Rodas has begun.

### Mexico

Construction of ecotechnologies in the communities of Yodzonot Nuevo, San Antonio Segundo, and Yaxley.

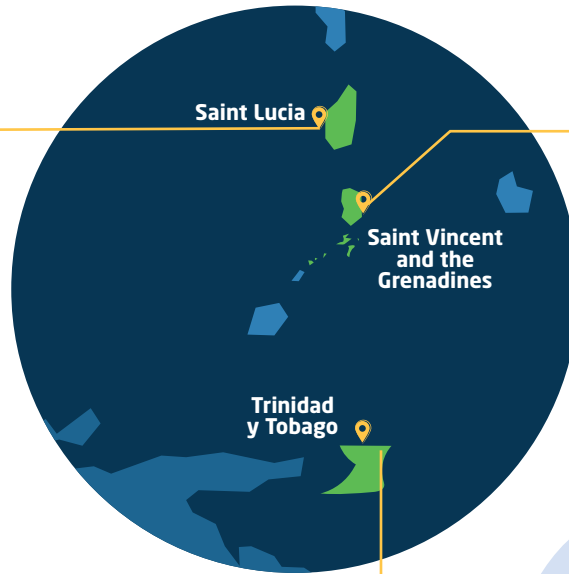
### Guyana

- Project for the rehabilitation of the distribution network, leak reduction, and micro-metering in Linden, Region 10. A 10% reduction in ANC is expected.
- Protection and efficient use activities for the Dakoura Creek watershed.
- Reconstruction of the wastewater collection system and construction of the artificial wetland in Kwakwani.



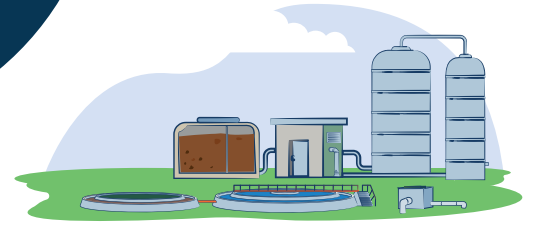
## Saint Lucia

- Tender process for piloting low-tech and sustainable wastewater management solutions for the Canaries community.
- Tender process for piloting reliable technology and sustainable wastewater management in a private pig farm in Volet, Mon Repos, in the district of Micoud.



## Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Preparation of designs for treatment plants at 3 hotels on the South Coast and the fish market, as well as the design for constructing the artificial wetland at the Belle Island prison.



## Trinidad and Tobago

Program to repair and clean septic tanks in Charlotteville.



## Training

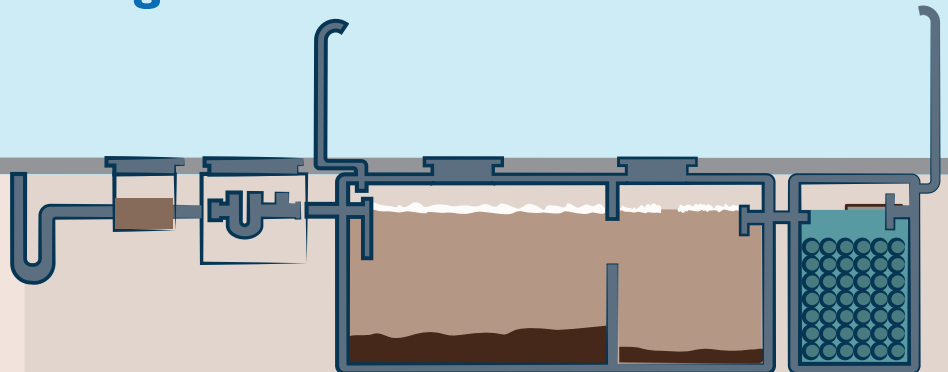
Capacity-building workshops "Technologies for Domestic Wastewater Treatment" in Panama organized by CIMAB S.A from Cuba.



## Behavior Change

### Dominican Republic:

Design of Behavior Change in the community of Cristo Rey, Jarabacoa.





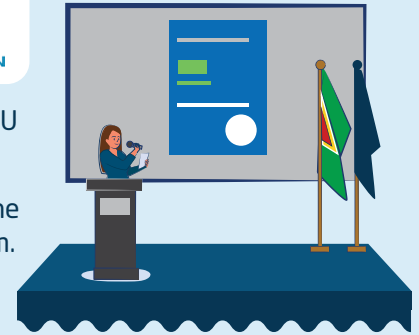
## Advocacy



- Delegation of PCU, Panama and Guyana.
- Two sessions, one stand and one video at the film festival.



- Delegation of PCU and Guyana.
- One session in the High Level Forum.



## Knowledge

2 Biannual newsletters

5 Videos

2 Blogs

4 Social media campaigns

10 Monthly capsules

7 IW Learn Stories

1 2022-2023 achievements factsheet

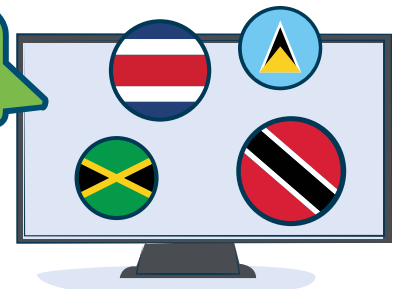
1 Achievement factsheet

Communication support for member countries



### Water Information Management System (WIMS)

Advances in Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, Saint Lucia, and Jamaica.



# Implementing integrated water and wastewater solutions for a clean and healthy Caribbean Sea

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