



GEO for Youth in the Caribbean

A Vision for Change!

"It is critical for us to show you how we the youth can and are working together to prevent the further destruction of our environment; and ensure its survival for present and future generations. We hope that you will be inspired and empowered to take up the baton, recognising that the future of the environment depends on us." -The Editorial Team



Background

The GEO for Youth in the Caribbean report is part of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), an integrated environmental assessment process. The youth component of the GEO process presents the environmental concerns and proposals of young people.

Young people are critical stakeholders in environmental issues due to their determining influence on present and future development trends. The GEO for Youth network enables environmentally conscious and committed youth, between the ages of 15 and 29, to share experiences and develop skills in project design, implementation, and evaluation.

The Editorial Team



Suparna Bera, Guyana

Process

The GEO for Youth in the Caribbean project began in 2003 through collaboration between UNEP, the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), and the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN). The participation of youth from 14 Caribbean countries (13 English-Speaking territories and Dutch-speaking Suriname) make this a lively network committed to increasing public awareness and fostering innovative action to improve the environmental situation in the Caribbean.

Participating Countries

Antigua and Barbuda	Bahamas
Barbados	Belize
British Virgin Islands	Dominicana
Grenada	Guyana
Jamaica	Suriname
St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	
Trinidad and Tobago	

The GEO for Youth in the Caribbean report showcases research, case studies, personal experiences, and artistic contributions from over 150 young people that describe the present state of the Caribbean's environment and propose strategies to alter negative trends. The projects presented in this report should inspire youth to participate in environmental management, and to build rewarding partnerships that will bring environmental issues to the forefront of development strategies in collaboration with other sectors of society and government.



UNEP



CCA



CYEN



Global Environment Outlook for Youth in the Caribbean



Main Observations

The assessment includes an analysis of the state of the environment divided into eight components: water, the atmosphere, forests, biodiversity, natural disasters, urban areas, marine and coastal areas and land and food. The assessment also includes a section devoted to Youth in Action that describes environmental youth initiatives in the Caribbean and projects aimed at addressing the problems identified. Future Outlook is the theme for the final part of the assessment that examines the state of the environment in the near future through different scenarios.

The Caribbean youth discusses issues of concern such as the danger of the rise of the sea level, the introduction of invasive species, the air contamination, the loss of habitat of endangered species and the mismanagement of waste water.

Example I of Youth Contribution



Derrick Kammeron, Suriname

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Example II of Youth Contribution

Mother Nature

*Mother Nature cries and cries
As she watches her creation die
Turquoise ocean now turn brown
Toxic factories bring a frown
Trees which once were a squirrel's nests
Now stand proudly as a wooden chest.
What was once a world of tranquility
Seems to lack too much sensitivity.
Mother Nature has a hole in here heart
From the pain which only man could start.
Where is the love for Earth that you once knew?
Where are forests that I gave you?
Why are the fish dying in the sea?
What happened to your island's biodiversity?
Mother Nature wants to give up.
With pollution everywhere, where is the hope?
Our endemic creatures are becoming extinct,
We're begging the world to take time to think.
I love my country and the land that I live,
And twenty years from now,
I would want clean air to breathe.
Mother Nature bears her painful grief
Until the world allows full relief.*

Carina Altenor, St. Lucia

Key Messages

Environmental problems can and should be minimised in many ways such as promoting and investing in renewable sources of energy, reducing the harvesting of our natural resources and recycling products. There must be a stop to the unsustainable economic practices that have become a custom in our societies.

Sadly, very few people realise that a "quick dollar" is a small gain when compared to the cost of remedying the consequences of our actions. Therefore youth need to be involved in far-reaching policy changes.

The youth from the Caribbean point out that there is still hope for the future if people change and adapt their current practices to more sustainable ones. They are willing to participate in this change and propose solutions to improve the quality of the environment.