

Public Inclusion Needed

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By Khalil Goodman

While Barbadians take great pride in their right to unbarred beach access in Barbados, they are less enthused about protecting the ocean environment.

This was one major point put forward by Executive Director of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), Leslie Walling, who was speaking recently at the official launch of the Coral Reef Monitoring and Management Project at the Folkestone Marine Park.

It was highlighted that local coral reefs in Barbados have been impacted directly by coastal development, anchor and snorkel damage and pollution. The only area that is protected by legislation is a 2.2 kilometre space located on the West Coast.

This programme will focus on promoting responsible behaviours and improved management of the coral reefs and resources. Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Rosina Wiltshire, agreed fully with this. She stated that failure to include local communities in environmental planning would result in failure in environmental protection.

This community-based project will be sponsored by the UNDP's Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, and will be co-financed by the UN's Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) and the CCA.

Wiltshire noted that many of the problems affecting the coral reefs and the park have their origin in physical planning issues and inadequate systems for the management of pollutants in the watershed. However, she added, By far the source of most of the problems has been the failure to consult with resource users in establishing the Folkestone Resource Marine Reserve.

She pointed to the Environmental Consulting Report published in 2000 which stated that the lack of consultation of nearby residents by the park resulted in a lasting deep-rooted resentment by local residents today. Wiltshire stated that people are resource users who continue to interact with the resources on a daily basis. This, she said, places them in the position of having both the greatest veto power and the greatest capacity for enabling most forms of sustainable development, adding, The power for change lies in the hands of the people.

The programme will therefore have a Train the Trainers workshop, which will aim at building the capacity of primary school teachers to deliver lessons on the conservation and management of reefs to students and other key groups. The project will also provide assistance for the Folkestone Marine Park to mobilise finances for long-term conservation activities. The launch was attended by Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Environment Ann Belgrave, National Conservation Commission General Manager Keith Neblett, Laurie King of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, residents of the area and other stakeholders.

Following the launch there was a dance instillation which was choreographed by the artist Ian Douglas. This avant-garde performance looked at the environment from a holistic perspective and portrayed the characters of the Yemayá goddess of the sea and her sister Oshún, inherent entities of the Orisha and Ifeism belief system of Africa and the African Diaspora. =