

CARIBBEAN POLICYMAKERS GET CLIMATE ADAPTATION TOOL



Image credit: Xavier Cervera / Panos

Speed read

- CCORAL helps decision-makers screen activities for climate change influence
- It is aimed at policy and research users in the Caribbean to help with project and strategy plans
- There is potential to extend the tool to more countries and regions

[BOGOTA] A decision-support website has been launched to help policymakers in the Caribbean build resilience to the risks that climate change poses to activities such as tourism and agriculture.

The Caribbean Climate Online Risk and Adaptation Tool (CCORAL), unveiled last month (12 July) in Saint Lucía, allows users to identify whether their activity is likely to be influenced by climate change and how to deal with this.

It helps project managers to understand climate influence on decisions, and to choose and apply risk management processes.

The initial version has been developed for government users of any skill level for decisions about

projects, legislation, budgets and national planning.

The tool was developed by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, which coordinates the region's response to climate change, and Acclimatise, a company that specialises in adaptation and risk management.

"It was piloted in Jamaica, Suriname, Belize and Barbados to inform its design and content," Keith Nichols, development specialist at the centre, tells *SciDev.Net*.

As an example, he says "it can help assess the risks associated with acidification on fish stocks and other marine life and coastal resources".

To use the tool, users can select a country and then access any of the tool's components, such as the screening exercise to identify if an activity is climate-influenced. CCORAL includes a toolbox with a choice of more than 70 risk management tools that can best suit a particular project.

At launch, only the 15 countries in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) can be selected for customized information, but it also has a Caribbean regional option. It could cover other countries such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

"CCORAL in its current form is intended for the Caribbean, but it can also be expanded beyond the region. There is quite a bit of discussion about how it could be adapted to the Pacific," says Nichols.

“The site is not set up to tell a manager what decision they should make, but rather to help them understand the factors involved and to explore and weigh options.”

- Leigh Welling

Unique visits two weeks after the launch were well over 2,000, Nichols says, and the website statistics suggest that "users are testing the tool".

Rodrigo Suárez, director of climate change at the environment ministry in Colombia, tells *SciDev.Net* that CCORAL could be the basis for decision-making about managing climate risk.

But the process of policymaking on climate change is not an easy issue, and it cannot be replaced by such tools, he adds.

The aspect that "make the tool interesting", he says, is the ability to "screen projects, plans or policies, focused on the importance of climate in issues related to decision-making".

Leigh Welling, chief of Climate Change Response Program at the National Park Service in the

United States, says: "CCORAL is an ambitious endeavor to assist Caribbean countries with climate change adaptation planning and action.

"The site is not set up to tell a manager what decision they should make, but rather to help them understand the factors involved and to explore and weigh options.

"One concern about the site is that because it is such a large, comprehensive site including a clearinghouse of references, it may be challenging to maintain," she says.

Also its focus at enhancing resilience, which is important, should not detract from preparing for longer-term climate change impacts using other methods, such as facilitated dialog and participatory scenario planning, she adds.

"The Caribbean will also need to consider the long-term effects of sea level rise and storm inundation will cause some systems to change regardless of what actions managers take."

The project has been supported by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network and the UK Department for International Development under the Caribbean Climate Risk Management Project.

Source : <http://www.scidev.net/global/climate-change/news/caribbean-policymakers-get-climate-adaptation-tool.html>