

**IMPORTANT:** The reporting period is GEF Fiscal Year (July 1st, 2021, to June 30th, 2022)

PROJECT GENERAL INFORMATION					
<b>Project Name</b>	GEF CReW+: An integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region				
<b>Project's GEF ID</b>	9601	<b>Project's IDB ID:</b>	RG-T3412	<b>Overall Stage:</b>	Disbursing (from eligibility until all operations are closed)
<b>Country/ies</b>	Regional: Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. <b>IDB no member countries implemented by UNEP:</b> Cuba, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.				
<b>GEF Focal Area</b>	International Waters, Land Degradation				
<b>Executing Agency</b>	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the Organisation of the American States (OAS) on behalf of IDB and the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention (CAR/RCU) on behalf of UNEP				
<b>Project Finance</b>	GEF Trust Fund	IDB: \$8,545,839 UNEP: \$6,398,100 TOTAL: \$14,943,939			
	Co-finance at CEO Endors./Approv.	\$150,033,203			
	TOTAL Project Cost (GEF Grant + co-finance)	\$164,977,142			
<b>Disbursements</b>	GEF Grant disbursed as of end of previous fiscal year (2021)	IDB: \$1,563,975 UNEP: \$ 476,000 TOTAL: \$2,039,975			
	GEF Grant disbursed as of end of this fiscal year (2022)	IDB: \$4,016,489 UNEP: \$ 476,000 TOTAL: \$4,492,489			
<b>Project Dates</b>	Agency Approval Date -IDB-	12/18/2019			
	Effectiveness (Start) Date -IDB-	12/18/2019			
	First Disbursement Date -IDB-	6/01/2020			
	Expected Completion Date (in Convergence: OED) -IDB-	10/11/2022			
	Current Closing Date (in Convergence: CED) -IDB-	10/31/2023			

	Expected Financial Closure Date (in Convergence: EOC) -IDB-	1/29/2024
	Actual Date of EOC, if applicable	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>Project Evaluation</b>	Mid-term Date (Planned)	2/28/2022
	Mid-term Date (Actual)	4/01/2022
	Terminal evaluation Date (Planned)	5/23/2023
	Terminal evaluation Date (Actual)	

## Development Objective

The GEF Project "CREW+: An integrated approach to water and wastewater management using innovative solutions and promoting financing mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region" will implement innovative technical small-scale solutions in the Wider Caribbean Region, using an integrated water and wastewater management approach and building on sustainable financing mechanisms piloted through the program. The project will include watershed and freshwater basin protection, water conservation and efficiency, and water reuse, and will prioritize technologies for treating wastewater in rural and peri-urban areas that are replicable and sustainable. The GEF approved the preparation of the Full-size GEF Project (see PIF document approved in October 2017). The project will be implemented jointly by IDB and the UN-Environment (previously UNEP), under separate executing schemes but with a common coordination. The beneficiary countries include 13 IDB-member countries, and 5 non-member countries. Activities exclusively directed to non-member countries will be funded under the UN Environment-provided funding.

### Development Objective Rating (DO) & Assessment

The project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, with minor differences from the committed objectives due to the findings in the initial assessments of each activity, which will guide us in developing a more sustainable results for the countries. Construction activities were underbudgeted and initial feasibility assessment concluded in new challenges. Therefore, the rating assigned for this fiscal year is Satisfactory (S).

#### PREVIOUS RATING

S

#### NEW RATING

S

## Project Status Update

Significant progress was made during the reporting period. From the 18 participating countries, 13 are already executing activities with important progress in its execution. However, in other countries such as Cuba, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, implemented by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat on behalf of UNEP, the project activities remain in its early stages with administrative processes and agreement on the final activities to be financed. Considering this, it is likely that an extension to at least December 2023 be necessary to complete all project activities for both agencies, IDB and UNEP. Some activities will be redefined due to the budget available due to after the initial feasibility studies, new needs raised. The work done will be ownership by the countries and the agencies will find ways to keep supporting them.

The following countries (under IDB implementation): Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama have more advances and it is expected to finalize the activities under component 1 and 2 by the end of 2022. With the construction activities planned for 2023. The following countries: Cuba, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (under UNEP implementation) have suffered some delays due to the need to sign a Project Cooperation Agreement in order to start the execution.

## Implementation Progress

### Implementation Progress Rating (IP) & Assessment

During the report period the project's progress implementation is rated as Satisfactory (S). Despite the challenges derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, the national and regional activities will be in substantial compliance with the

#### PREVIOUS RATING

S

#### NEW RATING

S

original/formally revised plan except for only a few that are subject to remedial action, with the support of country focal points, their teams, and the key regional partners. The Project expected to complete the activities with some delays.

### **Component I**

The promotion of institutional, policy, legislative and regulatory reforms towards Integrated Water and Wastewater Management (IWWM) in the participating countries forms a crucial part of GEF CReW+ and is being implemented within Component 1. In reflection of the national requirements and the respective project activities within the countries, the diagnoses of existing political and legal circumstances have been grouped into the two clusters “National Framework Policy” and “National Norms and Regulations”, with the latter including guides and tools.

#### Implemented by GIZ on behalf of IDB

The following national activities were completed: (i) Costa Rica: The National Water Policy was updated based on a participatory process through national forums; (ii) Guatemala, the update of the Guidelines on Micro-Watershed Management Plans has been concluded. Consultation was completed, the document was approved by the counterpart and is being printed; (iii) Honduras: The development of a marine-coastal quality norm has been concluded; (iv) Panama: Two instruments to facilitate the implementation of Panamanian water and sanitation legislation in the community of Guna Yala (a guide for local managers and decision makers and a popular guide for the community) have been finalized.

The following national activities are progressing as planned: (i) Belize: The update of the National Policy is advancing. (ii) Costa Rica: A national plan for IWRM is being developed to incorporate the recommendations for the implementation of the new national policy. A consultation process with the indigenous communities is now being conceptualized; (iii) Colombia: The analysis of the legal and economic basis for tariff reform and infrastructure financing is on track, currently a market study for the reuse of treated effluents in the Caribbean zone and socio-environmental and economic costing of the irregular use of natural waters is about to be concluded; (iv) Dominican Republic: The updating of the Environmental Standard on Control of Discharges to Surface Water, Sanitary Sewage and Coastal Waters is progressing; (v) Honduras: The development of an environmental vulnerability map for the Omoa bay is ongoing, first draft available; (vi) Mexico: The project closely accompanied the consultation process for the introduction of the new wastewater discharge norm (NOM-001) in 2021. The new wastewater discharge norm NOM-001 came into force in March 2022. Support for the implementation of the norm (elaboration of recommendations for WWTP along the Caribbean coast to adhere to the new norm) is ongoing; (vii) Trinidad and Tobago: The specific norm on reuse standards has been developed and will soon go through public consultation.

The following national activities are delayed: (i) Jamaica: The Development of a Concept Paper started with the conceptualization of structure and scope; (ii) Mexico: An initial document prepared in 2018 for a regulatory work plan for protection of cenotes/karst wetlands has been reviewed and updated according to the recent reforms to the applicable regulations. However, due to changes of priorities of national stakeholders, it was not possible to agree on any activity to support the protection of cenotes during the project period; (iii) Panama: Final review of parameters and consultation process for the coastal-marine norm draft is being re-tendered and will start in July 2022; (iv) Suriname: Baseline concerning public policies, regulatory gaps, and planning processes in sanitation a capacity building program as well in project formulation and evaluation, to be started July 2022.

Implemented by OAS on behalf of IDB

In Barbados, a National Communication Strategy and Implementation Plan is being developed

Implemented by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat on behalf of UNEP

The Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention has been advancing in the outputs related to the Cartagena Convention and its LBS Protocol. The Freshwater Strategy and Nutrients Standards Papers were finalized and endorsed by LBS COP 6. The OEWG and its thematic sub-groups will also oversee recommendations to the LBS STAC 6 and LBS COP 6.

The Secretariat followed up with countries that participated in the virtual LBS workshops in November 2021 to obtain information on their national needs for capacity-building and technical support. The Secretariat will continue to follow up to assist countries with addressing the barriers to ratifying the LBS Protocol. The LBS RACs will also support countries in 2022 in their respective ratification processes through the SSFAs mentioned above based on specific requests for assistance. Co-financing was mobilized through the Swedish Government (SIDA Grant) and the European Union-funded ACP MEAs III project that will enable the two LBS RACs to further support ratification on the LBS Protocol through the convening of national workshops, missions and/or exchanges. During the 6th meeting of the GEF IWECO Project Steering Committee Meeting scheduled for July 2022, the support available from the GEF CREW+ Project for ratification will be highlighted as part of the presentation by the Secretariat.

The development of a Water Information Management System (WIMS) prototype for Trinidad and Tobago is progressing. In Costa Rica, the National Information System for the Integrated Management of Water Resources (SINIGIRH) is currently being updated. The Secretariat has commenced consultations with stakeholders in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and national authorities responsible for water-related data in Grenada and Saint Lucia.

Implemented by GIZ on behalf of IDB

Capacity building activities for the reporting period include the webinars as part of the CREW+ Academy program, block 2 and block 3, where participants benefit from training on governance in wastewater treatment and reuse, including regional experiences in the implementation of management models and regulations, and Blue Economy and the good use of wastewater. Additionally, other workshops were coordinated with partners such as: *the Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo (CCAD)* and the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO)* to provide technical expertise in 3 modules of the regional Course on Water Governance and Water Security; a 2-day virtual workshop entitled “Knowledge Exchange on water sector reforms and IWWM policy development between the different countries and in the Wider Caribbean Region”; the workshop “Socialization and consultation on the Guideline for the elaboration of Hydrographic Basin and Micro-basin Management Plans in the Territory of Guatemala”; and workshop on Perspective on Wastewater Reuse in the Dominican Republic.

Measure realized within block 3 of the CREW+ Academy on the topic: State of the Art and Future Prospects for Water Quality in the Region: The Increasing Contamination of a Scarcer and More Vulnerable Resource, one session in English and one in Spanish, 84 participants in total, 48 of them female.

Measure realized within block 3 of the CREW+ Academy on the topic: Wastewater and Flow Regime, Water for the Environment and Water Reserves, one session in English and one in Spanish, 84 participants in total, 50 of them female.

## Component II

Component II of the project aims to enhance access to and availability of financial resources for IWWM. Following a circular economy-model, the component also intends to incentivize efficiency, effectivity and inclusiveness in the distribution and use of water and water-related ecosystem services (from natural freshwater bodies and the Caribbean Sea). Consequently, it aims to also incentivize and finance the installation and operation of adequate wastewater treatment services across the Wider Caribbean Region.

### Implemented by GIZ on behalf of IDB

The planning for component 2 in many countries has been repeatedly adjusted, this has various reasons, the first being that the plan has not been concluded in several countries prior the beginning of the execution of the GEF CREW+ project, secondly, implementation has shown that planning and execution of activities for financial mechanisms and incentives is a complex and lengthy endeavor involving many actors from a range of water, sanitation, and finance sectors at the very least. In many countries, despite the continued efforts of the GIZ project team, an approach has been recently agreed in component 2 (Mexico and Jamaica), or the process of deciding on an approach or location of the politic activities is still ongoing. Managing activities remotely differs completely from executing them on the ground. Only when travel was possible, the range of activities were available to be determined especially for those pilot locations at the local level (Honduras and Panama). Hence, component 2 is beyond schedule and will have to be completed with delay, the project team is focusing also on realistic products that can be finished within project current timeframe.

The following national activities were completed: (i) Working group to reform the BWRP has been established and agreements in the working group on the involvement of the technical partners in the decision-making on the use of BWRP funds has been completed in Belize; (ii) The study of the framework for tariff reform has been completed in Colombia; (iii) An innovate technical-financial mechanism to improve financing in the sanitation sector in Costa Rica has been identified and approved by counterparts, it is now under tendering process for more detailed technical elaboration; (iv) Analysis of the current tariff structure and benchmarking in Dominican Republic; (v) Assessment of cooperation needs in the Guna community (Panama) has been completed, and activities have been agreed, cooperation partners have been identified. (vi) In Belize, a potential for future implementation of incentive mechanisms to improve sanitation at the local level has been identified; (vii) A local MoU committing the municipality to sustainable management of the sanitation infrastructure in Omoa has been signed.

The following national activities are progressing as planned: (i) Barbados: an assessment of the enabling environment for the Development of Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Integrated Water and Wastewater Management (IWWM) through the design of a Framework; (ii) Incentivizing reuse through compressive tariffs and incentive mechanisms in Colombia; (iii) Costa Rica: Detailed elaboration of the financial mechanism and road map for implementation by counterpart; (iv) Approaches between the municipality of Omoa and Puerto Cortes in Honduras; (iv) Advisory to GIZ's national counterparts regarding selected activities Reflection and integration of lessons learned resulting from capacity building activities, dissemination of acquired knowledge and experience.

The following national activities are delayed: (i) Dominican Republic: Working group formed, submission of tariff options within the Development of financial sustainability scheme); (ii) Honduras: Support regarding micro-metering and professionalizing and digitalizing services; (iii) Jamaica: Market study (Development of a Business Plan for the reuse); (iv) Panama: Proposal for budgeting system and accompanying activities; (v) Strengthening capacities and competencies of the

officials of the institutions linked to the water sector at the sanitation level that allows them to build a mechanism for planning and prioritizing projects in this strategic sector (Surinam); (vi) Mexico: The establishment of a financing mechanism for payments for ecosystem services (PES) was being assessed for e.g. a potential design to integrate payment for ecosystem services (PES) on water bills. A first assessment of viability and necessary normative changes has been completed. The effort was stopped by the counterpart in early 2022. Therefore, the component was re-defined during the reporting period: Identification of financing sources and financing mechanisms for different types of WTP in Quintana Roo, allowing them to fulfil the requirements of the new NOM-001 (see component 1); and training for CONAGUA on the implementation of the financing mechanisms; as well as development of sustainable financing mechanisms for communal *ecotecnias* (see component 3 -to be implemented July to September 2022); and (vii) Honduras: Propose tariff structure.

Capacity development measure realized within block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: The Green Decade: Transformative Change towards Watershed Regeneration and the Correct Use of Wastewater, one session in English and one in Spanish, 85 participants in total, 51 of them female. Capacity development measure realized within block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Multi-stakeholder dialogue for the search for financing of the adequate management of wastewater within the basins, one session in English and one in Spanish, 82 participants in total, 47 of them female.

Next steps under capacity building will be the identification of core topics in line with the progress of the implementation and needs of the countries. block 4 of the CReW+ Academy is currently in execution, focusing on project formulation. Beneficiaries are being trained in the design of business cases in a circular economy, revolving funds and other financial mechanisms for capital financing, and tariff systems.

### **Component III**

The assessment of the construction activities took into account delays related to the Covid-19 pandemic pandemic, slow country responses, existing capacity and technical expertise onsite, as well as changes of government and national counterparts. It showed that the planning documents related to construction measures need to be complemented and possibly underbudgeted measures (Dominican Republic, Honduras) have been identified. It has been agreed with the IDB that GIZ will continue with planning and designs, including BoQ. Budget shifts are allowed between countries and components. A further assessment and communication of adjustment needs will take place after completing this phase. Additionally, since the examination of the feasibility of construction measures is not yet finalized in Surinam, GIZ possibly has to adjust the scope based on the pre-feasibility and the endorsement of the country to the project.

#### Implemented by GIZ on behalf of IDB

The following national activities were completed: (i) The feasibility study (ASADA La Fortuna) in Costa Rica is on track, final draft submitted, final reviews ongoing; (ii) First sanitary units have been constructed in La Moskitia (Honduras); (iii) Additional feasibility study and the consequent preparation of the design of the wastewater system in Omoa (Honduras); (iv) A socio-environmental diagnosis of rural communities in Quintana Roo (Mexico) has been conducted and a Community Water Governance Strengthening Strategy developed; the Strategy is already being implemented in various (non-CReW+)-communities in Quintana Roo; (v) Planning, design of capacity development activities based on the Guidelines on Micro-Watershed Management Plans (see component 1, Guatemala). Regions/ local authorities to benefit from the activities have been defined. The e-learning training course for the use of the Guidelines on Micro-Watershed Management Plans has been installed in the counterpart's web platform, final products have been sent and approved by the counterpart.

The following national activities are progressing as planned: (i) Technical baseline for the design of wastewater treatment plant in Caye Caulker in Belize; (ii) Mexico: Construction drawings, material lists and price catalog for the systems to be constructed have been prepared.; construction is being prepared for August/September; (iii) The planning and design for the optimization and water reuse in San Antero (Colombia) is on track and will finish in August; (iv) Guatemala: Launching of the training course; Preparation of conduction of the trainings; Toolbox for capacity building.

The following national activities are delayed: (i) Planning and design for the WWTP in the Dominican Republic (Sabana Yegua, Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo); (ii) Designs and planning in Omoa (new site); (iii) Construction of ecotecnias (Mexico); (iv) Elaboration of feasibility and pre-design study in Suriname; (v) Accompanying measure funded by BMZ: Colombia – study of impact of wastewater discharges on the coastal environment (INVEMAR).

Capacity development measure realized within block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Urban Vision of Water and guidelines for the promotion and implementation of Green and Blue Infrastructure for urban communities, one session in English and one in Spanish, 95 participants in total, 56 of them female. Capacity development measure realized within block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Innovative solutions to address the hazardousness of chemical and biological waste in the environment, one session in English and one in Spanish, 92 participants in total, 55 of them female.

Accompanying measures financed by BMZ: (i) 1-2) In San Antero (Colombia) 41 beneficiaries and in Sabana Yegua and Santiago (Dominican Republic) 47 beneficiaries were trained in integrated crop management with wastewater reuse.

Block 4 of the CReW+ Academy is currently in execution. Beneficiaries are trained in feasibility studies and the selection of nature-based solutions, design and proper operations and maintenance of septic tanks, the application of Shit Flow Diagrams, as well as irrigation systems for treated wastewater. Preparation of trainings on operation & maintenance during the planning and design phases in Colombia the Dominican Republic, and Suriname. The MOOC based on the Compendium of Sanitation Systems and Technologies for the Wider Caribbean Region is in progress with more than 280 participants registered so far.

#### **Component IV**

Activities in Component IV focus on improve awareness and access to information. The Communication Strategy has been implemented during the reporting periods, with the PCG leading the development of an Action Plan. The website has been developed however, technical issues with the hosting of the site have been delaying its official launching.

#### Implemented by IDB and UNEP

Activities in Component IV focus on improving awareness and access to information. The Communication Strategy has been implemented during the reporting periods through an action plan led by the PCG. The action plan has over 79 different communication products, that range from social media campaigns, experience notes, a press protocol and media kit, a newsletter, blog articles, fact sheets, and infographics, among many more. The CReW+ enhanced its presence and engagement in social media, while is also conducting social listening for brand purposes in the press, but also in social media platforms; relevant public relations actions have been executed to ensure brand coherence and messaging with different stakeholders, including strategic meetings with each one of the communications teams from the GEF CReW+ countries, in parallel with conducting crisis interventions in specific cases.



The GEF CREW+ Second Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting was held virtually on April 27 and 28, 2022. The progress on project execution was presented by each Executing Agency (GIZ, UNEP/SCC, and OAS). The updated project documents (including the Terms of Reference for the PSC and National Focal Points; a detailed Work Plan and Budget for the project; the contractual arrangements in connection with the roles of the Executing Agencies; the CREW+ Results Matrix; the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan; and the proposed Communication Plan) were presented to the Board Members and re-confirmed. The meetings brought together delegates from eleven GEF CREW+ participating countries, representatives of the CREW+ Project Implementing and Executing Agencies, CREW+ Partners (among them Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA), Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association (CAWASA), United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) and representatives from all the main regional and international institutions involved in Integrated Water and Wastewater Management (IWWM) in the Wider Caribbean Region, with support from the Regional Project Coordinator (RPC).

Challenges. During the reporting period, project execution was still challenged by COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, such as: remote planning and recruiting, and travel restrictions. Additionally, tropical storms Elsa and Fred, elections cycles in target countries – Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua – and lack or delayed responses from counterparts were factors affecting the timely execution of activities. Despite these challenges, and with the full commitment and support of our country focal points, their teams, and the regional partners, implementation of activities moved forward with significant advances in some countries and regional activities.

**Main Achievements.**

- 17 of the 18 participating countries actively engaged in execution of activities.
- Activities planned in 16 participating countries to strengthen the Institutional, policy, legislative and regulatory reforms for Integrated Water and Wastewater Management (IWWM).
- 11 participating countries to enhance access to and availability of financial resources for IWWM.
- 17 participating countries will benefit from the innovative and nature-based solutions to mitigate the effects of non-treated wastewater on the environment and public health, improving access to sustainable WASH services through effective design and operation of wastewater facilities and capacity building on innovative low-cost Integrated Water and Wastewater Management.
- 18 building capacity activities across all components of the Project
- Launch of the Compendium of innovative technologies adapted to small-scale situations.
- The overall GEF CREW+ communications plan was developed and approved in May 2022, and started execution

**Project Risks**

Risk Rating (RISK) & Assessment	Previous Rating	New Rating
<p>The main risks identified at the preparation phase of the project were the limited stakeholder’s involvement; as well as limited political will of participating governments to push the implementation of the pollution reduction measures; and cultural resistance to accept new wastewater management measures; as well as weather hazards, especially hurricanes. The risks identified were rated as medium/low and there have not been substantial changes at this stage. Therefore, the risk rating for the period 2021 - 2022 remains as Modest (M).</p>	M	M

## Stakeholder Engagement

During fiscal year 2022, the CReW+ project continued building a broad community of partner agencies and individuals focused on integrated water and wastewater management. Progress at the national level primarily involved engagement of the ministries of environment, and by extension the National Focal Points, who are critical and indispensable constituents of the program's operational architecture, and who serve as primary links to the agencies and beneficiaries executing specific components.

Regionally, CReW+ established agreements with CWWA, UN-HABITAT, CCAD, GWP-Caribbean and GWP-Central America. Throughout the reporting period, the CReW+ Academy, as an online learning platform, continued to offer short courses on wastewater management throughout the wider Caribbean region. See: <https://academy.gefcrew.org/en/>

CReW+ continually seeks opportunities to identify new partners through conferences, symposia and other (largely virtual) events, and to exchange perspectives on common issues and challenges. Clearly, the post-pandemic "new normal" will differ from the old one, and it will be necessary to identify evolving financial, institutional, and political conditions and capabilities, which in turn will require adjustment and adaptation.

During second quarter of 2021, the program conducted a comprehensive stakeholder analysis to identify the engagement modalities of key regional and national stakeholders, and to promote and clarify implementation of partnership arrangements. The analysis will be annexed to this report.

## Gender

The project keeps promoting the cross-cutting element related to all stakeholder participation and involvement in the project.

The Project will keep working in this line building on the multiple project outputs, sub-outputs and activities that include gender-specific elements. Main knowledge, learning and capacity building activities (webinars and virtual workshops in Spanish and English) as part of learning blocks the CReW+ Academy are listed in the Knowledge section indicating participation by gender.

## Knowledge

Main knowledge and learning products, capacity building activities and events by component are:

### Component I

Capacity building activities for the reporting period include the webinars as part of the CReW+ Academy program, learning blocks 2 and 3, where participants benefit from training on governance in wastewater treatment and reuse, including regional experiences in the implementation of management models and regulations, and Blue Economy and the good use of wastewater. Additionally, other workshops were coordinated with partners such as: the *Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo* (CCAD) and the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (FLACSO) to provide technical expertise in 3 modules of the regional Course on Water Governance and Water Security; a 2-day virtual workshop entitled "Knowledge Exchange on water sector reforms and IWWM policy development between the different countries and in the Wider Caribbean Region"; the workshop "Socialization and consultation on the Guideline for the elaboration of Hydrographic Basin and Micro-basin Management Plans in the Territory of Guatemala"; and workshop on Perspective on Wastewater Reuse in the Dominican Republic.

Activities within learning block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: State of the Art and Future Prospects for Water Quality in the Region: The Increasing Contamination of a Scarcer and More Vulnerable Resource, one session in English and one in Spanish, **84 participants in total, 48 of them female.**

Activities developed within learning block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Wastewater and Flow Regime, Water for the Environment and Water Reserves, one session in English and one in Spanish, **84 participants in total, 50 of them female.**

## **Component II**

Capacity development measure realized within learning block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: The Green Decade: Transformative Change towards Watershed Regeneration and the Correct Use of Wastewater, one session in English and one in Spanish, 85 participants in total, 51 of them female. Capacity development measure realized within learning block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Multi-stakeholder dialogue for the search for financing of the adequate management of wastewater within the basins, one session in English and one in Spanish, **82 participants in total, 47 of them female.**

Next steps under capacity building will be the identification of core topics in line with the progress of the implementation and needs of the countries. Learning block 4 of the CReW+ Academy, currently in execution is focusing on project formulation. Beneficiaries are being trained in the design of business cases in a circular economy, revolving funds and other financial mechanisms for capital financing, and tariff systems.

## **Component III**

Capacity development activity realized within block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Urban Vision of Water and guidelines for the promotion and implementation of Green and Blue Infrastructure for urban communities, one session in English and one in Spanish, 95 participants in total, 56 of them female. Capacity development measure realized within learning block 3 of the CReW+ Academy on the topic: Innovative solutions to address the hazardousness of chemical and biological waste in the environment, one session in English and one in Spanish, **92 participants in total, 55 of them female.**

Accompanying activities financed by BMZ: (i) 1-2) In San Antero (Colombia) 41 beneficiaries and in Sabana Yegua and Santiago (Dominican Republic) 47 beneficiaries were trained in integrated crop management with wastewater reuse.

Learning block 4 of the CReW+ Academy is currently in execution. Beneficiaries are trained in feasibility studies and the selection of nature-based solutions, design and proper operations and maintenance of septic tanks, the application of Shit Flow Diagrams, as well as irrigation systems for treated wastewater. Preparation of trainings on operation & maintenance during the planning and design phases in Colombia the Dominican Republic, and Suriname. The MOOC based on the Compendium of Sanitation Systems and Technologies for the Wider Caribbean Region is in progress with more than 280 participants registered so far.

## **Component IV**

Activities in Component IV focus on improving awareness and access to information. The Communication Strategy has been implemented during the reporting periods through an action plan led by the PCG. The action plan has over 79 different communication products, that range from social media campaigns, experience notes, a press protocol and media kit, a newsletter, blog articles, fact sheets, and infographics, among many more. The CReW+ enhanced its presence and engagement in social media, while is also conducting social listening for brand purposes in the press, but also in social media platforms; relevant public relations actions have been executed to ensure brand coherence and messaging with different stakeholders, including strategic meetings with each one of the communications teams from the GEF CReW+ countries, in parallel with conducting crisis interventions in specific cases.

The Cartagena Convention Secretariat is developing a dedicated page on its website for the GEF CReW+ project. The webpage outlines the main information on the project and provides further insights into the specific project activities carried out by the Secretariat. Preview here: <https://nu3v0.gefcrew.org/>  
In the absence of the IT person from the UNEP-Cartagena Convention the official launching of this webpage has been delayed. One of the challenges of the communications component is the human resources availability, having partially available staff from all agencies which prolongs the time for the development of all communication products, moreover, the reluctance from some of the stakeholders to work coordinately to ensure brand cohesion and messaging is the biggest challenge in component IV, more importantly, the reputation of the project and the institutions involved could be undermined if a bigger communications crisis is not averted.

## Lessons Learned / Best Practices

### Lessons from the MTR

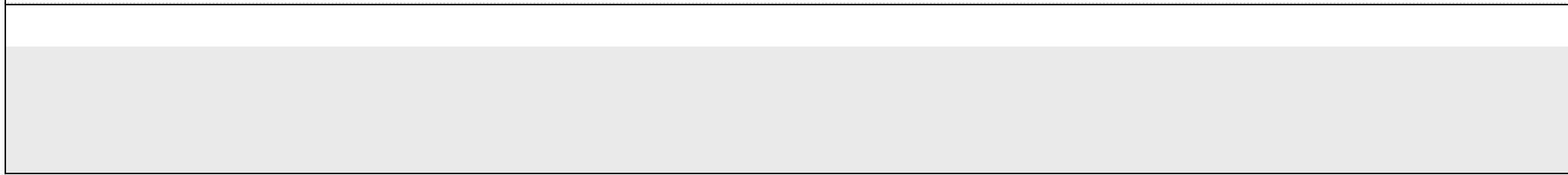
Lessons Learned Category	Details on lessons learned
Stakeholder Engagement	<p><b>Countries.</b> The benefits of having direct access to the focal points and heads of ministries without a lot of protocol, and to have the ability to talk candidly about wastewater issues and the project is key. It takes years to build up that kind of relationship, and it needs to be sustained from one project to the next, and from project preparation to final evaluation.</p>
Project Design, Appraisal and Planning	<p><b>Relearning from CREW.</b> Although some lessons learned from the original CREW were taken into consideration for the preparation of this project, other were inappropriate for the design of CREW+, because there were no experiences in working in the variety of countries, in the variety of project concepts and the broad cast of players. A key lesson from the CREW is that all stakeholders did not initially appreciate the purpose of the project (testing of the financial mechanisms). Hence, a conclusion is that more attention should have been devoted explaining the project at inception.</p>
Stakeholder Engagement	<p><b>Stakeholder Coordination and Operations.</b> In a GEF project of this size, with 18 countries, 2 implementing agencies and 3 executing agencies, and four distinct components, it is important to define a coordination structure that facilitates constant and effective communication among the partners to create joint ownership and ensure correct execution of the activities.</p>
Project Management, including financial and human resources issues	<p><b>Budget Allocation.</b> Whereas in the original CREW, four countries received almost the entire financing and another 13 countries were supported under region-wide activities. In preparing for CREW+, countries pushed for a more equitable distribution, which led to the CREW+ design where the budget is divided among 18 countries and four components. The result is the proliferation of very small activities that are difficult for executing agencies to manage effectively, and present relatively high transaction costs for countries for a very small amount of money. A \$300,000 sanitation system goes through the same planning and approval process of a \$3 million system. The amount of energy that the countries and the executing agencies require is not commensurate to the size of the operation. There are certain things that are not going to happen, but we might not have known that if we had not gone forward with the design as we did.</p>
Project Design, Appraisal and Planning	<p><b>Design Challenges.</b> This project is the maximum expression of countries and topics that can be feasibly managed. Two challenges of CREW+ project design are: (a) the number of countries dispersed among several IDB and UNEP operational regions; and (b) the broad diversity of topics. The diversity of countries makes it difficult to guarantee the quality of the final results and to keep counterparts satisfied and motivated to continue forward. The project will produce distinct, individualized small projects for each component (4 components x 18 countries ~72 specific sub-projects), each having specific roadmap, timeframe, constraints, stakeholders and expectations. From a purely project-execution perspective, it may have been more efficient and effective to ask countries to choose a limited number of component activities, rather than attempting to do everything everywhere.</p> <p>On the other hand, having the components on policy and on innovative treatment to reuse wastewater together at the same time, has successfully moved the IWWM agenda forward in nearly all countries. The combination of policy and projects is effective, but difficult. The lesson in advance is there will be a wide range of outcomes.</p>

Stakeholder Engagement	<p><b>Relevance to IFIs.</b> There are people in the IFI’s who don’t think the banks should be involved in GEF projects, because they are complex and expensive to manage, and contribute little identifying projects eligible for development lending. Interestingly, there was no reference in the PIF or CEO documents of having referenced the IFIs upcoming lending programs when developing the CReW+, with perhaps the exception of Belize. Nonetheless, there are many steps both CReW+ and the countries can take to engage the IFIs, through the country development plans and lending program with the banks.</p>
Project Management, including financial and human resources issues	<p><b>Time and effort.</b> A lesson from the original CReW that bears repeating in CReW+ is that all stakeholders underestimated the time and effort to undertake this project. The level of preparedness at the country level (ensuring that enabling conditions of institutions, that policies are in-place, that potential projects are prepared and evaluated for feasibility, etc.) needs to be enhanced. The country project managers have underestimated the capacity needed to carry out activities at a local level. The implementing and executing agencies’ ability to provide flexible and innovative support to small utility companies, should be reconsidered</p>
Political/Institutional Challenges	<p><b>Managing expectation.</b> There is a huge distance between the expectations created in the country profiles and the reality of the final country budget allocation, due largely to the budget reduction. One country was under the impression that it would receive \$1 million for Component 1. There needs to have been a more disciplined process of prioritization with the countries before submitting the CEO Endorsement document.</p> <p>Once the budget was reduced from \$45 million to \$15 million, perhaps a better approach would have been to present the menu of components to countries and allow them to select one of the components. For example, this could have resulted in 6 treatment plants, 6 financing schemes, and 6 laws and regulations, which would have provided significantly more resources for each component activity. As seen in the initial CReW, clusters of countries working on similar component would work together, organize exchanges and learn from each other’s efforts. Nonetheless, it is likely that without having experimented with the current model, the project would not have realized what the practical limitations are.</p>
Stakeholder Engagement	<p><b>Acceptance of reusing treated wastewater.</b> Some countries have strict regulations against reusing treated wastewater, and community reaction has been generally negative. Other countries have fewer restrictions, and the communities are more relaxed. The lesson is that this is not a one-size-fits-all topic, and that efforts need to be customized to the local context.</p>
Scaleup	<p><b>Replication and scaling up.</b> Conversations are already underway for replicating the CReW+ project strategy in the Pacific coast of the Americas. This means the project strategy is more relevant now than ever. The UN discussions addressing ocean plastics, climate change, plastics and biodiversity are also important initiatives where CReW+ can find inspiration and synergies.</p>
Project Design, Appraisal and Planning	<p><b>Adapting the operational model to the country needs.</b> Different models may work better in certain circumstances. When designing a future project, it would be advantageous to put more emphasis on the country’s interest and capability, and to distribute the executing agencies in a way that maximizes their strengths. Likewise, it would be more efficient to assign one agency per country, just for the sake of efficiency and integrating planning.</p>

Project Management, including financial and human resources issues	<b>The pandemic cannot be the scapegoat.</b> There are a lot of problems stemming from decision that have been made over the course of planning and executing CReW+. Yet, the pandemic ensued, affecting everything from planning, contracting, construction, training and relationships, which was outside anyone’s control. It will be important to find the balance and not place the onus of delays and problems solely on the pandemic. We must be responsible for doing the best with the current program, and down the road, try something a little simpler and more streamlined.
Project Design, Appraisal and Planning	<b>Concept-to-results gap.</b> Part of the problem affecting focus, priority, relevance and readiness is the asphyxiatingly long time gap between project conception and start-up of activities, which is four to six, years depending on how it is measured. The execution period is only the tip of the iceberg. During this time many of the political and technical leaders move on and institutional memory fades, so that there is no assurance that the initial enthusiasm is present when the project begins. The question is, what can be done between PIF approval and the CEO document? Lessons learned point to the need to prepare terms of reference for consultants, complete selection, planning, appraisal and feasibility of infrastructure projects, support country managers with training and orientation, with the idea there will be on-the-ground momentum at the time of project approval. It is highly unlikely the GEF or IDB would permit retroactive financing for this type of activity, nor is it likely that countries would dedicate significant resources to an unfunded operation, in both cases, the main risk being the non-approval at the GEF CEO Endorsement phase.
Stakeholder Engagement	One success factor to any large, complex project will always be the willingness of all participants to work together, keep well-mended fences, communicate clearly and frequently, resolve problems quickly and respectfully, honor the strength that comes from diversity, support each other in times of weaknesses. And, in the end, celebrate the successes and share the stories.

**Successes**  
The GEF CReW+ Academy web portal is established: <https://academy.gefcrew.org/en/>

**Challenges**  
Project execution was still challenged by COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, such as: remote planning and recruiting, and travel restrictions. Additionally, tropical storms Elsa and Fred, elections cycles in target countries – Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua – and lack or delayed responses from counterparts were factors affecting the timely execution of activities. Despite these challenges, and with the full commitment and support of our country focal points, their teams, and the regional partners, implementation of activities moved forward with significant advances in some countries and regional activities.



## Project Results Framework Modifications

Category	Fiscal Year	YES NO	APPROVED BY	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE AND EXPLANATION
Outcome	2021	NO	IDB	NONE
	2022	NO	IDB	NONE
Output/Activities	2021	NO	IDB	NONE
	2022	YES	IDB	Changes were made to values in outputs 1.2, 2.2 and 2.4 (IDB) due to adjustment of national activities in agreement with the countries. The implementation schedule will need to be readjusted. The rest of the project remain the same. 1.2 Training workshops delivered 2.2 New financial instruments developed 2.4 New financial instruments developed

## Project Extension or Other Modifications

Due to the significant delays and challenges derived from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is likely that an extension until December 2023 will be necessary to complete all project activities (UNEP and IDB). Some activities will be redefined due to the budget available due to after the initial feasibility studies, new needs raised. The work done will be ownership by the countries and the agencies will find ways to keep supporting them. This will be duly reported during next PIR 2023.

## ANNEX 1. DEFINITION OF RATINGS

### Development Objective Ratings

- Highly Satisfactory (HS):** Project is expected to achieve or exceed **all** its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
- Satisfactory (S):** Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
- Marginally Satisfactory (MS):** Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
- Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU):** Project is expected to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only **some** of its major global environmental objectives.
- Unsatisfactory (U):** Project is expected **not** to achieve **most** of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):** The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, **any** of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

### Implementation Progress Ratings

- Highly Satisfactory (HS):** Implementation of **all** components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised implementation plan for the project. The project can be presented as “good practice”.

2. **Satisfactory (S):** Implementation of **most** components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan except for only a few that are subject to remedial action.
3. **Marginally Satisfactory (MS):** Implementation of **some** components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with **some** components requiring remedial action.
4. **Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU):** Implementation of **some** components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with **most** components requiring remedial action.
5. **Unsatisfactory (U):** Implementation of **most** components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan.
6. **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):** Implementation of **none** of the components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan.

#### Risk ratings

Risk ratings will assess the overall risk of factors internal or external to the project which may affect implementation or prospects for achieving project objectives. Risks of projects should be rated on the following scale:

1. **High Risk (H):** There is a probability of greater than 75% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/or the project may face high risks.
2. **Substantial Risk (S):** There is a probability of between 51% and 75% that assumptions may fail to hold and/or the project may face substantial risks.
3. **Modest Risk (M):** There is a probability of between 26% and 50% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/ or the project may face only modest risks.
4. **Low Risk (L):** There is a probability of up to 25% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/ or the project may face only modest risks.