



CAZALAC

Newsletter N°1 march 2003

Water Center for Arid and
Semi-Arid Zones in Latin
America and the Caribbean

PRESENTATION

Dear Friends:

As expressed through several global reports issued by international organizations and agencies, water resources of arid and semi-arid zones are facing dramatic pressures regarding their distribution and management as never before. This affects local populations and their development chances, as well as the ecosystems found in the relevant territories. Latin America and the Caribbean are not an exception to this situation.

In this context, the Water Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Zones of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAZALAC) arises to serve the countries of the Region through several actions associated with a sustainable management of water resources in territories that experience water shortages.

As part of the Center activities - and with the purpose of collaborating in the above mentioned aspects - we hereby start with a series of newsletters on interesting topics related to this issue. The purpose is to report on the development of activities and instances both in the LAC Region and in the rest of the world, which will add up to the knowledge on progress obtained in water management in arid zones, such as publications, workshops, seminars, courses and any relevant activities related to this issue.

We hereby invite anyone who wants to collaborate and share this newsletter to forward your contributions and suggestions to us, so that it is increasingly interesting for all.

In this first delivery, we hereby encourage you to continue working in the activities you develop in relation to the Arid Zones. From CAZALAC's central office we send a close hug,

Guido Soto
Executive Director
CAZALAC



ON THE CENTER

CAZALAC's Origin

The Chilean National Committee of the International Water Resources Program (CONAPHI), with the support provided by the government, the PHI local points in LAC and UNESCO, started up a process to install the "Water Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Zone in Latin America and the Caribbean" (CAZALAC) in Chile.

This organization is aimed at reinforcing technological, social and educational development regarding the use and comprehensive management of water resources in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid zones of Latin America and the Caribbean and, in addition, to increase the communities' - as well as other actors' – role to develop a sustainable culture in environments affected by water shortages.

At present, CAZALAC has begun activities with the financial support granted by the Chilean Government and UNESCO, the latter by contributing non-budgeted funds coming from the Government of Flanders.

The first actions have been aimed at consolidating juridical aspects, forming the initial technical and administrative team and establishing strategic development lines to ensure that future activities will fulfill the Region's expectations.

UNESCO, on the other hand, through the International Water Resources Program, is supporting the creation of regional centers that will collaborate with the strategies of the countries leading water management and that will play a role as coordinating organizations, which will formulate programs and projects related to this issue.

Legal Status

The Water Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Zones in Latin America and the Caribbean (CAZALAC), is a non-profit private corporation and its original by-laws were executed by the Public Works Department, the Regional Government of Coquimbo and the University of La Serena.

The Center currently reports to the General Water Resources Office while the juridical status is formally approved by the Justice Department. It is expected that this situation will be solved by March-April of this year.

On the other hand, the Chilean government has requested formal sponsorship for the Center from UNESCO, which must be approved by the General Assembly and will represent a material progress for CAZALAC's consolidation at an international level.

Scope of the Water Center - CAZALAC.

The main actions are related to developing research projects and training tasks. Diffusion is another important area within the Center's scope, aimed at reporting water management knowledge progresses to the community and collaborating with the planning activities in several production industries, as well as increasing awareness of the value of water resources by the different users of society in general.

The total extension of arid and semi-arid zones in Latin America and the Caribbean covers an area of approximately 4.5 square kilometers, including 22 countries from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego. In this context, it may be observed that a large portion of the population lives under poverty conditions in environments affected by strong desertification processes, mainly due to water shortage and the lack of the appropriate knowledge regarding the management and preservation of natural resources in general. Recurrent droughts in these territories further contribute to worsen this condition.

Twenty two countries showing arid and semi-arid zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Mexico, will be directly benefitted from the Center's activities. 25.4% of the South American area is arid and semi-arid, including 9 countries located in this sector of the continent. Central America has 2 countries, with 7.8% of the area showing this environment, plus ten island-states in the Caribbean, where 20.5% of the total area is arid or semi-arid.

Main Work Guidelines

A planning workshop took place in last January to determine the main work guidelines to be developed by the Center in the future. Delegates from the LAC Region and renown researchers and representatives from international institutions and organizations participated in the workshop.

Additional information in this respect has been included below in this newsletter.

WORLD WATER DAY and SPRING WATER INTERNATIONAL YEAR



The World Water Day will be celebrated worldwide on next March 22.

“Water for the Future” will be the concept highlighted in this occasion.

The celebration will be aimed at locally and globally promoting a better awareness of the need of using and preserving water resources in a more responsible manner.

Regarding the Water International Year, it must be noted that the United Nations General Assembly declared year 2003 as the *Spring Water International Year* pursuant to resolution 55/196. This will provide a significant chance to accelerate implementation of the integrated water management principles. This will also allow a continuous follow-up of commitments acquired during the [Sustainable Development Summit Meeting](#) (Johannesburg, September 2002), and its impact should continue far beyond the year 2003.



The publication of [The UN World Water Development Report](#) is one of the major events that will take place this year. The launching of the first edition will take place on March 22, the World Water Day, during the [Third World Water Forum](#) to be held in Kioto, Japan.

CAZALAC PLANNING WORKSHOP



The workshop “Strategies for Developing Water Resources in Arid Zones of Latin America and The Caribbean” took place in La Serena on January 15th - 17th, 2003. The event was organized by CAZALAC with the support of the CONAPHI-Chile Science Committee and UNESCO. Financing was provided by funds allocated by the General Water Resources Office for the Center’s start-up and by the UNESCO-Flanders Fund, the Operating Plan of which considered this activity.

Attendance: A total of 56 delegates attended the workshop, who came from 20 countries of Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. This number increased to 77 with the attendance of participants from different local institutions.

Program: In its beginning, the program included participation of outstanding internationally renown scientists, who exposed relevant issues related to water resources in arid zones. Then, work groups were organized and developed different program lines and proposed tasks to be developed by the Center in the future.

Conclusions y Recommendations

1. Center program lines. It was proposed that the following topics – outlined during the workshop – will be included in the program lines of the Center for arid and semi-arid zones of Latin America and the Caribbean, i.e.:

- Assessment of water resources
- Efficient use of water resources
- Water management models
- Environmental issues
- Economic and social aspects

2. Regional database center. To join the efforts aimed at researching and developing the arid zones of the region, CAZALAC must integrate and coordinate a wide regional database (hydrological data, processes, researchers, etc.) from institutions, researchers, projects and studies, the topic of which is focussed on the above identified guidelines. In addition, along with implementing the data base, the Center must encourage the formation of teams specialized in water resources, to deal with those aspects rated as priorities.

3. Collaboration and encouragement of international programs. It is considered that CAZALAC must act as collaborator / catalyst of international programs (HELP, Millenium Assessment, FRIENDS, WWAP, etc), by closely supporting and collaborating with the places where these programs are focussed on.

4. Specialized Information Center. It is recommended that CAZALAC will represent a specialized information agency, aimed at spreading information and progress obtained in research and developing methodologies and technologies that tend to improve water management in arid and semi-arid zones in LAC. This purpose will be achieved by organizing seminars, newsletters and regularly published documents to spread information on the above mentioned issues, in addition to developing and implementing a web site for CAZALAC, which will operate as an information electronic window and serve as a link and contact point for the different researchers, institutions and organizations existing in the Region.

5. Node with Specialized Centers and Conventions. It was proposed that, on one hand, CAZALAC will act as an international specialized center node with respect to research and development of arid zones, by developing and encouraging experience exchange with other centers like the Egypt Center, specialized institutions from Israel, the United Kingdom, Germany, etc. And, on the other hand, it will establish links that will allow developing synergies with the UN conventions on the environment: Bio-diversity, Desertification, Climate Changes, Wetlands (Ramsar).

6. Reinforcement and synergies between CAZALAC and the CONAPHIs of LAC. It is proposed that the Center's scope in the region is extended by implementing a focus point network, the nodes of which are represented by leading institutions and researchers in the different areas of investigation and development of water management in arid zones of each country. Thus, CAZALAC will encourage a synergy within national PHIs. Both the center and national CONAPHIs will benefit from the above.

7. Financing. An initial financing fund that will secure both the Center stability and its initial and future activities must be obtained.

8. CAZALAC action plan and development policies. Establishing a policy and a medium and long term strategic plan is considered extremely important for a good operation of the Center, in virtue of the requirements shown as workshop results, allocating priority to those aspects and needs that involve sub-regions as well as the LAC Region as a whole. In the short term, it has also been suggested that certain specific products, such as a map of LAC arid zones, water resources balance by country, and other urgent interesting issues concerning the region should be obtained.

Contacts Established

Several contacts have been established to start developing the actions proposed in the workshop. Thus, the Center entered into a collaboration covenant for scientific exchange, post-graduate scholarships, post-graduate courses, summer schools and scientific meetings among other issues, with the **UFZ, from the Leipzig University, Germany**.

Also, discussions to present and develop joint cooperation projects aimed at providing training and education on different interesting issues regarding the development of arid zones are well in progress between the Water Center and the **Ghent University, Belgium; the IWST Institute, Ben-Gurion University, Israel; the Waterloo University, Canada; FAO-FODEPAL and the UN Convention to Fight Desertification and Drought (UNCCD)**.

Final Report. The workshop full report can be requested at: cazalac@cazalac.org



REGIONAL MAP OF ARID ZONES



In order to make available basic information on the location and situation of the Regional arid zones, a Regional Map of Arid and Semi-Arid Zones in Latin America and the Caribbean is currently being prepared.

The collaboration of every LAC country having any official information on their arid, semi-arid, and sub-humid areas is essential for this purpose, especially regarding water flows, aridity indicators, preservation status, number of inhabitants in the area, etc. Therefore, CAZALAC hereby invites all the regional institutions and specialists who want to collaborate with this initiative to contact the Center, in order to forward any suggestions and/or information regarding these issues.

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