

MEDIA RELEASE

27 Teachers Attend Second UNESCO Sandwatch Workshop

The Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO hosted its second *Sandwatch* workshop on September 28, 2022, in the St. Patrick Education District, training an additional 27 teachers of both primary and secondary schools on the global environmental programme “*Sandwatch*”. The Sandwatch methodology links education to real-life issues such as climate change and teaches participants the importance of environmental education outside the classroom.

This series of environmental training workshops is very timely as climate change, biodiversity loss and the declining health of the ocean are affecting Caribbean coastal ecosystems in many ways. These changes include coastline erosion, beach debris and plastic pollution, ocean warming and acidification, and coral reef bleaching. With seventy percent of the Caribbean population living in coastal areas, the prospects for sustainable development in the countries are inextricably linked to a healthy and thriving marine and to environmental education.

In this context, UNESCO is developing a regional approach for participatory environmental education by developing the capacities of teachers, students, and local communities to work together to monitor and conserve the coastal and marine environment. Through this approach, UNESCO contributes to adaptation to climate change and ocean-related threats by building the resilience of natural ecosystems and of communities. The regional initiative is benefiting from a pilot in Trinidad and Tobago. The first workshop was held on June 9, 2022, in the South-Eastern Education District in the coastal community of Mayaro, where 30 teachers from primary and secondary schools, and curriculum officers from the Ministry of Education were trained.

The level of technical and scientific environmental training that participants received will enable participants to not only develop skills to establish other Sandwatch activities but to also connect new schools into the existing Sandwatch network. With the rich environmental content participants also developed a deeper appreciation for our beaches, how critical they are to our eco-system and the need to protect them from the ravages of coastal soil erosion and climate change.

Sandwatch began in 1998 as a regional activity involving the Caribbean UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network. It has since grown into a global programme, actively implemented in more than 50 countries worldwide with the support of UNESCO, the Sandwatch Foundation, and several other partners. Sandwatch links classroom activities to real-life issues related to climate change, environment, sustainable development, cultural diversity, science and more. It links academic subjects across the curriculum from Mathematics and Natural Science to Social Studies and the Creative Arts. Most important of all, Sandwatch stimulates and encourages practitioners, young and old, to act by becoming involved in protecting their environment, and in understanding and influencing local government policy and action.

By 2025, UNESCO aims to integrate environmental education into the school curriculum.

Secretary General
Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO
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