



**IGDS**  
INSTITUTE FOR GENDER &  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**IGDS DSPACE  
PUBLICATIONS**

**Opening Ceremony and Reception  
of the 2008  
Women Gender Water Network  
Caribbean Training Workshop  
Gender Mainstreaming in Integrated  
Water Resources Management in the Caribbean**  
April 7—11, 2008  
Social Science Lounge  
UWI St. Augustine

**Opening Keynote Lecture**

**Singapore Dreaming**  
**Jocelyn Dow**  
Activist

**Monday, April 7th 2008**  
**7 p.m.**  
**Learning Resource Centre**  
**UWI St. Augustine**

## Island Dreams

Thinking about what to say to engage your attention and frankly my own on the rather pedestrian issues of water and sanitation started out as a bit of a chore. Why should big women and men have to spend five days discussing water in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Caribbean -- much less in the oil-endowed Trinidad & Tobago, aspiring, word has it, to Singapore like status. What does it mean to dream of Singapore in our time and place? Singapore, a centre of trade and financial capital, an island of small size, multi-racial and well situated geographically -- right there in the neighbourhood of some of the most powerful global producers. I have been thinking of these dreams of Singapore and this Caribbean reference –almost a refrain- and my mind went to the time I spent on the island of Singapore learning about their super organized water systems and the making of NEWater, micro-filtered, reverse osmosis, uv-treated water reclaimed from storm drain water – free of litter of course -- and restored for drinking and Singapore’s major chip industry that depends on pristine water.

Trinidad & Tobago and Singapore: really diametrically opposed societies – order as a mantra for them, and disorder virtually a national theology for us – the hallowed Caribbean free spirit. I can remember talking to a young doctor in Singapore about his view of such an ordered society – did he think the trade off for a clean, rich and very safe place was worth the loss of some personal freedoms and less private ownership than we have come to think of as healthy? Was he comfortable with a situation where the State-owned MediaCorp operates all seven free-to-air terrestrial local television channels licensed to broadcast in Singapore, as well as all 14 radio channels? Where it is against the law to own satellite dish receivers capable of viewing uncensored televised content from abroad? How did it feel to live in a highly rules based society where you were sentenced to death for trading drugs, no matter who you were, as you were warned right there at the airport? I told him how Singapore had become a metaphor for rapid progress in my part of the world, our dreamscape for small island state progress. Even in Guyana, an island surrounded by land as we say, there are these rather bizarre references by government officials to “becoming the Singapore of the region”. What did he feel about the compulsory savings scheme that sequestered a part of your income for retirement and approved investment –like a house. Did he think that the policy of racial quotas for government projects –housing

in particular –had reduced ethnic tensions and helped to build a more cohesive and coherent society. What about elections?

What do we mean when we say this? Perhaps we really have a hidden desire to plan and live under strict rules? A mere hunger for order? Or are we finally seeing the need to defer personal gratification for the greater good, to make more use of our great diversity, to take greater pride and responsibility for our environment?

Singapore is reaping the gains now – they made that decision some time ago. For us, it would be unimaginable to take such a radically different path. All round, here and in all the territories, there is too much water under the bridge. Can this generation take up the challenge of creating a sustainable and sustaining lifestyle? Or are we hell bent on excessive consumption and, as Marley would say, *total destruction*.

Strange this refrain of the private sector and governments. Maybe we just yearn to have a per capita income of nearly US\$30.000 and be the world's 17<sup>th</sup> richest nation. Or maybe it is to be a serious financial service provider?

Why is it we wish to be who we are not and not who we should be? Is it the old plantation sown and bred hatred of ourselves? Is it all about low self esteem, loss of belief in ourselves, mimicry? Does it not matter what we have overcome – slavery, indentureship, colonialism? Is it that we cannot order our own societies because we were subject so long ago to brutal orders? And will that pain never end? Should it end? Or does Singapore-dreaming mean we have reached the limit of our jealously guarded chaos? Maybe we really wish to implement all that we know and need.

In the words of our loved Guyanese poet Martin Carter:

*And only where our footprints end can tell  
whether the journey was an old advance  
or a new retreat: or whether in the dust  
our heel marks and our toe marks are confused.*

So we are gathered to discuss and learn how to gender mainstreaming into integrated water resource management. One may well ask why women wish to enter such a polluted stream at all. Why do we need to engage this resource anew? Did we not vote

in governments to take care of these basic human rights, to ensure that we have the water at our taps, that we have taps? More work again: monitoring water supply? Do we not do enough bringing up children mostly by ourselves these days? Does life long education mean we have to become plumbers and resource managers? We have other rivers to cross. We have to fix the really urgent horrors: crime , domestic violence – boys not going to school. Rising food costs .How much more should we women do? Why are these men and of course the few women in government not earning their keep? Fixing our problems-at least the infrastructure. More work for women – formal resource management.

Women need to be more at the centre of all decision-making that determines their lives. Women must be there when it is being decided who, when and at what cost water is in our taps, our rivers are clean, our beaches are not dump sites, our food is safe, our children are healthy.

Why should we not simply turn on our taps and have clean water when ever we so desire? Why should there be people, even one person, in Trinidad & Tobago without access to water, much less potable water. Why would a country that is an oil producing country with a relatively small population, high levels of tertiary education – especially for women, -- electoral democracy, good infrastructure, high levels of income, extensive public works, why should such a country be in such a state? Why do we refuse to act more decisively on the evidence we have for resource planning? Did we say we wish to be a Singapore?

Governance perhaps -- no political will to get rid of dysfunctional and anachronistic systems we inherited? Historical and historic disparities between rich and poor perhaps? -growing disparities and new alienation ? Poor organizational skills perhaps? No one is beating down the door in the Caribbean to fix these failures. What is happening ? How are we going to deal with climate change and the new issues.

If I were talking about Guyana I would know why there were unserved areas, as they are politely called. Paradoxically the word Guyana means land of many waters and that we have large rivers and large issues about mining pollution and a failure to regulate.

So since I am in Trinidad & Tobago I wanted to see what the water issues really were. This led me to the never failing omnivorous Google and here I found some rather interesting facts, albeit from a report in 2004 by Mahabir.

Trinidad & Tobago uses most of its water for domestic purposes: washing, cooking, flushing toilets, bathing, watering gardens and perhaps filling pools. About 60% more than for industry, and for major and small agriculture. So people use more than all your petro industries, more than sugar, more than manufacturing -- could this be still true in 2008? But the real mind blower was that all of these numbers paled into insignificance when you looked at the number for unaccounted – disappeared -- water. And I thought again of Singapore -- importing water from Malaysia, planning more desalinization plants and ensuring that all rainfall that could be collected in storm drains was processed in their their impressive water treatment plant – which by the way is also an educational facility with state of the art interactive virtual teaching aids to engage their students into learning about global and national water issues. The plant is even equipped with a theatre and surround sound to transport you into a world of water responsibility. A water management plant that is a tourist attraction. Ah yes – the wanting to be Singapore syndrome. As we say in Guyana, wishing to be elsewhere. This elsewhere that somehow transforms us, Caribbean people, from a callous unthinking citizen to a responsible, resource conscious motivated being.

Perhaps it was the alienation of our labour in slavery and indentureship in these early colonial globalization experiments that has so scared us that we have not realized that this is our land, our piece of the pie so to speak.

Singapore, Trinidad & Tobago, small island states, climate change, unsustainable life styles, women-gender mainstreaming -- where am I going with all this? Why should you here at this conference be assailed by all these odd facts and personal observations? I have spent many years listening to governments and powerful global institutions like the IMF and World Bank, listening to the ministers of water, listening to the experts on climate change, on renewable energy, on women's rights, on the need for a gender lens, on how to build sustainable economies. And what I have come to know and understand is that you are done for in a globalizing world if you do not join up the dots, make the links.

What happens here on these islands neither begins here or ends here. It never has I suppose. To be romanced by oil resources and wealth and not to understand that this century, nay this millennium, will be about limit, about the end of excess, is not to understand our human condition. It is our common and differentiated responsibility to sustainable societies and therefore to a peaceful and healthy planet that will permit us all to live full lives and guarantee a future for our children's children.

Water may as well be the metaphor – a better one than Singapore in many ways. We can't yet make water as yet so we had better learn to respect it some more. Singapore has made land, islands from dredging up from the ocean floor, so as to expand their land area. They have created an island just for garbage disposal – high tech, no pollution-- and will create a new island in the near future. But they still cannot make water, nor can anyone else. So let us build our dream world around water instead of other developed islands. What is it we need to know about water here in the Caribbean? We are assured that in this century the new wars will not be like the current ones, however masked they currently are. It will not be about oil and who controls the fields.

Guyana and Suriname have had our demarcation of our potential oil reserves in the common ocean defined by the Hague, as have Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago. We can drill away and continue to only talk about renewable energy. Those who are producers ratchet up big petro dollars as the rest of us scramble to find this black gold. We can continue to waste water – disappear it by leakage, by pollution and by ignoring the signs of water stress too much, too little, not at the right time, not clean, too expensive and all the myriad issues that are arising inland and offshore here in the Caribbean. We can fool ourselves that oil is the real resource-the oil wealth will permit us to fix everything. Just give us time.

What we should know is that some of the most brutal conflicts are about resources not least water or the lack thereof and given the high population per square kilometer in our island states we need to pause a little and reflect on some other global realities:

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's message on World Water Day, on 22 March, opened as follows:

*“This year, World Water Day coincides with the International Year of Sanitation, challenging us to spur action on a crisis affecting more than one out of three people on the planet.*

*Every 20 seconds, a child dies as a result of the abysmal sanitation conditions endured by some 2.6 billion people globally. That adds up to an unconscionable 1.5 million young lives cut short by a cause we know well how to prevent.*

*Poor sanitation combines with a lack of safe drinking water and inadequate hygiene to contribute to the terrible global death toll. Those who survive face diminished chances of living a healthy and productive existence. Children, especially girls, are forced to stay out of school, while hygiene-related diseases keep adults from engaging in productive work.”*

The Secretary General went on to lament that we were nowhere near achieving the Millennium Development Goals solemnly adopted by leaders in 2000. Then they envisioned halving the proportion of people living without access to basic sanitation by the year 2015. Instead, the experts have predicted that, by 2015, 2.1 billion people will still lack basic sanitation. At the present rate, the SG pointed out, sub-Saharan Africa will not reach the target until 2076.

Acknowledging that there have been advances, he went on to identify the main obstacles: “progress is hampered by population growth, widespread poverty, insufficient investments to address the problem and **the biggest culprit: a lack of political will.**”

*“With the right resolve, there are many steps that members of the international community can take. The Commission on Sustainable Development in 2005 outlined a series of measures aimed at securing meaningful progress, holding Governments of affected countries primarily responsible. It also called for international support through a conducive policy environment, financial resources and the transfer of technology to countries in need.*

*If we take up the challenge, the positive impact will reverberate far beyond better access to clean water. Every dollar invested in water and sanitation yields an estimated seven dollars worth of productive activity. And that comes on top of the immeasurable gains in cutting poverty, improving health and raising living standards.*

*World Water Day offers a chance to spotlight these issues, but this year, let us go beyond raising awareness -- let us press for action to make a measurable difference in people's lives."*

John Ashton, the UK Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Climate Change, in 2007 mentioned that recent climate change was a factor in the Darfur conflict's "complex roots". Rainfall in northern Darfur had declined by almost 40 per cent over the last century, creating increasing competition for water between previously co-existing peoples. Sir Crispin Tickell, the former UK Permanent Representative to the UN, highlighted the environmental factors behind societal collapse. The genocidal inter-ethnic Rwandan conflict in 1994, he argued, stemmed partly from a population increase set against a background of land degradation and drought.- one million people died in that genocide. Ashton also cited the Indian government's recent announcement that it intends to build an 8 ft-high barbed wire fence for the length of its 2,500 mile frontier with Bangladesh. Delhi's intention, he added, is partly to prevent migration from Bangladesh as rising sea levels brought about by "catastrophic climate change" are forecast to inundate the low-lying country. The clanging of the caste gates as it is described or better yet barbarians at the gate mentality.

**The Middle East Conflict –everyday we are made more aware of the global melt down in financial terms-and its dire consequences- Cost of war over oil since it was not about terrorism.**

**It is perhaps not as well known as it ought to be that the Six-Day War of June 1967 was the culmination of escalating conflict over water rights in the Jordan basin. Israel and Jordan has both embarked on unilateral schemes for the river Jordan headwaters.** Part of the Yarmouk River, a major tributary, was diverted by Jordan to irrigate the east bank, while Israel's National Water Carrier diverted water from the Jordan above Lake Tiberias for distribution on the coastal plain and in the Negev desert. Israel also planned to pump water out of Lake Tiberias itself. In retaliation, the Arab League in 1960 proposed to divert the Hasbari and the Baniyas, upper Jordan tributaries, through Syria into Jordan. This would have had the effect of by-passing the point of diversion to Israel's National Water carrier. Israel declared that this would be an attack on a main means of its livelihood and as such a threat to peace. It was nothing less than a denial of Israel's right to exist. Several skirmishes ensued over the following years, with Egypt eventually blockading the Straits of Tiran and massing troops on the Israeli border in Sinai. **The June 5, 1967 preemptive**



**strike by Israel and its victory six days later reversed the balance of water resources in the Middle East. Occupation of the Golan Heights gave Israel control over the Baniyas headwaters, while occupation of the West Bank gave it vital ground water resources. Defeat meant that Jordan lost a third of its population and agricultural land, accounting for 45% of GDP.**

**Yesterday's *London Observer* brought this news from Spain: "There is a common saying in Spain that during a drought, the trees chase after the dogs. Now it is ringing true as the country struggles to deal with the worst drought since the Forties: reservoirs stand at 46 per cent of capacity and rainfall over the past 18 months has been 40 per cent below average.**

**But months before the scorching summer sun threatens to reduce supplies to a trickle, a bitter political battle is raging over how to manage Spain's scarcest resource - water."**

In parched Catalonia, in North East Spain, the drought is taking the heaviest toll, with reservoirs standing at just a fifth of capacity.

According to the *Observer* report, "Faced with the prospect of having to cut supplies, authorities in Barcelona have brought in hitherto unheard of fines of €30 (£23.50) for watering gardens or €3,000 for filling swimming pools over 300 square metres.

Municipal fountains, some lit up at night for tourists, are empty. Beach showers have been turned off."

**For Zapatero's Socialist government, the answer lies in a controversial series of desalination plants. Spain already has 950 desalination plants which produce 2 million cubic metres of water a day, enough to supply 10 million people. Another is due to open near Barcelona next year. The Socialists claim that the plants will end Spain's almost yearly scramble to stop its reserves drying up. This has not gone down well with the Spanish Association for the Technological Treatment of Water. They say that each desalination plant indirectly produces one million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. –more issues for climate change. A double whammy –so to speak –cause and effect of climate change.**

**And so the battle rages as Spain dries up. Those who see the solution as diverting rivers versus the Prime Minister's preferred desalination plants that alarm the environmentalists.**

**So now we know that water wars are real not just as we see on television for starving Africans –who have come to be the poster children of poverty but in the so called developed world..** This is not new in human history. Civilization and settlement have been about water. One of the reasons proffered for the end of some civilizations like the Mayans of South America is that they had outgrown their agricultural capacity and the great empire came to an end. It was a water related environmental disaster that accelerated the end of an era. Curiously the Mayan calendar ends in 2012. This is why some people look at the melting glaciers, the raging floods, the bitter droughts, the intense storms and the rising sea level and wonder at the current global complacency. We are not limited by a lack of knowledge and a lack of capacity. Our failure is lack of political will and a foolish belief that we can overcome nature with our puny technology as we have seen in our response to Katrina for instance. In the Caribbean we know well the power of the hurricane. At least we do not blow our horn that we can fix the world with our might and our dollar.

To return to the ghastly arithmetic: there are 1.3 billion people without access to clean drinking water; 2.6 billion people are without access to sanitation; and one-half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from water-borne diseases. Nearly 2 billion cubic metres of water are used globally each day. Each North American uses, on average, 650 litres of that water. The largest single household use is flushing the toilet, which uses eight to twenty-five litres per flush. Brushing teeth takes about eight litres; taking a shower consumes 100 to 200; dishwashers use 45 to 75 litres per load. It takes four litres of water to process one pound of hamburger, 40 litres to process a chicken, and 40,000 litres to make a new car, on average.

Meanwhile, in some parts of the world, the single most important task is walking several miles to collect the daily ration of water and returning it safely to the family. Less than 1% of the water supply on earth can be used as drinking water.

Evidence of a world water crisis abounds: drought, pollution, falling water tables, withered crops, eroded land, blowing soil and unprecedented flooding. Of the entire world's water, only 2.5% is fresh, and we use more of it every year. The per-person amount of available water is falling drastically in many places. More than two billion people suffer the indignities of being without sanitation facilities, with one billion

suffering the health and livelihood effects of not having access to clean water. There are six thousand water related deaths each day, mostly in poor countries.

How many of those 1.6bn people are here in Caricom? How many of us do not have access to sanitation and hygiene? How many children die in our region from lack of safe drinking water and how many are made ill by the use of polluted water? We should know the answers to these questions. And we should determine how we are going to fix this problem not only today but by 2015 and beyond to 2050 when the effects of the predicted climate changes will be upon us. **Begin the count –get the data-share the details.**

In 1992 the international community under took at Rio, the Earth Summit, to address many of these problems at the United Nations Summit on Environment and Development, still the most profound and path-breaking international negotiation in my view. It was a preemptive agenda trumped by the end of the Uruguay Round and the birth of the World Trade Organisation with its crippling notions of reciprocity and incursion into national policies not least environmental.

Our governments in the Caribbean were an important voice during this conference. We along with all of the other 177 governments present **committed to a common and differentiated responsibility to the achievement of sustainable development.** We undertook to protect ecosystems to ensure intergenerational equity. Women in the Caribbean were a dynamic force during building of this agenda. We were part of a historic meeting that was held in Miami by WEDO where the guiding document – The Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet, was honed. 1500 women from 83 countries organized to build a blue print for our advocacy and action. Our task is no less now. As you meet over the coming days to learn about water resource management and as you discuss the gender mainstreaming of an integrated water resource management I urge you to reflect on something that helped us in those days when women were only in the margins of these concerns: **if it is good for poor women then it is good for the planet.**

And come to know that your knowledge, your experience and your responsibility to present and future generations that you will birth are worthy of a special declaration that deepens the achievements of Rio, that is bound by the Millennium Development

Goals for 2015. That is mindful of the new crisis of climate change and climate variability, that is respectful of your journey from slavery and indentureship and that is cognizant of the real and present danger of a development that spreads disparity and forbids a world that we – men and women, young and old -- can live in harmony with nature. And we should measure that equity, that political responsibility, that gendered understanding –drop by drop- a new arithmetic for the Caribbean.

**Jocelyn Dow**

**Trinidad & Tobago**

**April 7, 2008**

## ANNEX

### **Information on Singapore & Water:**

Without natural freshwater rivers and lakes, the primary domestic source of [water supply](#) in Singapore is rainfall, collected in reservoirs or catchment areas. About half of Singapore's water comes from rain collected in reservoirs. Most of the rest comes from Malaysia. The two countries have long argued about the legality of agreements to supply water that were signed in colonial times.

Presently, more catchment areas, facilities to recycle water (producing NEWater) and desalination plants are being built. This "four tap" strategy aims to reduce reliance on foreign supply and to diversify its water sources.

Singapore has a network of reservoirs and water catchment areas. By 2001, there were 19 raw water reservoirs, 9 treatment works and 14 storage or service reservoirs locally to serve domestic needs. [Marina Barrage](#) is a dam being constructed around the estuary of three Singapore rivers, creating by 2009 a huge freshwater reservoir, the Marina Bay reservoir. When developed, this will increase the rainfall catchment to two-thirds of the country's surface area.

Historically, Singapore relied on imports from Malaysia to supply half of its water consumption. However, the two water agreements that supply Singapore with this water are due to expire by 2011 and 2061 respectively and the two countries are engaged in a dispute on the price of water. Without a resolution in sight, the government of Singapore decided to increase self-sufficiency in its water supply. More [NEWater](#) and desalination plants are being built or proposed to reduce reliance on import.



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

THE CENTRE FOR  
GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

*invites you  
to the Opening Reception*

*of the 2008*  
**Women Gender Water Network  
Caribbean Training Workshop  
"Gender Mainstreaming in Integrated Water  
Resources Management in the Caribbean"**

on  
**Monday 7th April 2008  
at 7 p.m.**

**at the Social Sciences Lounge  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
St. Augustine Campus**

R.S.V.P. 662-2002 exts. 3573/3533/3549



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and Opening Ceremony  
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**Monday, April 7th 2008  
7 p.m.  
Learning Resource Centre  
UWI St. Augustine**

**Welcome**

**Dr. Fredericka Deare**  
Chair

**Prof. Clement Sankat,**  
Principal, UWI St. Augustine

**Background to the Workshop**  
**Mr. Paul Hinds**  
Global Water Partnership Caribbean

**Remarks**  
**Prof. Rhoda Reddock**

**Introduction of the Feature**  
**Ms Deborah McFee**  
IGDS

**Keynote Lecture**  
**Singapore Dreaming**  
**Jocelyn Dow**  
Activist

**Greetings**  
**Ms Emily Dick-Forde**  
Minister with responsibility for the Environment

**Closing Remarks**  
Chair

**RECEPTION**