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**Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy
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Building Better Communication Bridges to Preserve our Natural Resources

July 22 – 24, 2009 was indeed a productive, engaging and enjoyable period for eight representatives from various fields who participated in a **Training Workshop in Communication Skills for the Pointe Sable Environmental Protection Area (PSEPA)**. The objective of the workshop held at Juliette's Lodge Hotel in Vieux Fort was to increase the capacity of agencies and individuals to deliver effective communication on the Point Sable Environmental Protection Area (PSEPA).

Day one gave participants an insight into "What is Communications?", Communication Issues at Pointe Sable and the Communication Actions to be taken to remedy these problems. By exploring these topics the participants learned more about the PSEPA which is the O.E.C.S Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods Project (OPAAL) site in Saint Lucia. Pointe Sable spans approximately 1038 hectares of land and sea on the South-eastern part of the island. The popular Maria Islands Nature Reserve, home of the Saint Lucia Whiptail lizard and the Saint Lucia Racer snake, forms part of this diverse area. The Mankote Mangrove, Amerindian sites at Pointe de Caille and Anse de Sable and the breathtaking Moule-a-Chique Peninsular are some of the other features of this area.

On day two the participants engaged in practical sessions which explored the art of "Communicating with the Customer" and "Communicating through Power Point". The participants were given various scenarios and through role play were asked to apply their newly acquired customer service skills in solving them. One such scenario tested individuals on how they would approach a farmer who was caught clearing the mangroves within the PSEPA. This role play was indeed vibrant as the individual who pretended to be the tour guide tried hard to convince the farmer that her actions were illegal and she was destroying mangroves which play an integral role in the survival of many birds, crabs and fishes within the area. Nonetheless, the farmer stood her ground and was adamant that her actions were legitimate and refused to stop. At the end of the day, the group agreed that in this scenario the best action was for the tour guide to take her visitors away from the area and the cutlass bearing farmer and call the police or relevant authority to intervene.

Many participants were honest enough to admit that they were somewhat terrified of day three because of the mock interviews session. In preparation for this session they viewed presentations on “Understanding the Media” and “The Media Interview”. This session gave the participants an opportunity to put most of their communication skills and knowledge about the PSEPA acquired over the three day period into practice. After the interviews were videotaped, the participants and facilitator viewed and evaluated each recording. This allowed the interviewers and interviewees to obtain constructive advice on how to improve their communication skills for a real interview.

Participants were drawn from the Saint Lucia National Trust, the National Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Social Transformation, the Department of Forestry and Environmental Studies students.



Overall the three day training workshop presented by the Environmental and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, through the O.E.C.S Protected Areas and Associated Livelihood (OPAAL) Project was well executed and the participants undoubtedly gained sufficient skills to augment their communication abilities.