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Policy Perspectives

Perspectives on resource management and environmental policy from the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados.

The Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) has initiated this outreach publication, *Policy Perspectives*, primarily in order to share some of the lessons learnt from recent projects. These interdisciplinary applied research projects emphasised learning-by-doing through the collaboration of researchers, beneficiaries and other interested parties. The information in these policy briefs may be used by policy-makers and their advisers to strengthen the linkages between research outputs and policy-making in the Caribbean. This connection is often weak in the area of natural resource management.

Coastal resource co-management in the Caribbean — Part 4

This is the last of a four-part policy brief on coastal resource co-management. Lessons are drawn from the Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) and CERMES' Coastal Resources Co-management Project (CORECOMP). This brief concludes the series by taking a broad look at some of the essential elements of reforming governance to facilitate the success of co-management in the region.

Reforming governance for successful coastal co-management in the Caribbean

There is interest expressed by Caribbean governments and coastal resource stakeholders in establishing co-management arrangements, but a number of conditions constrain further development. As a matter of policy, governance structures for fisheries and other coastal resources in many countries may need to be changed to accommodate co-management.

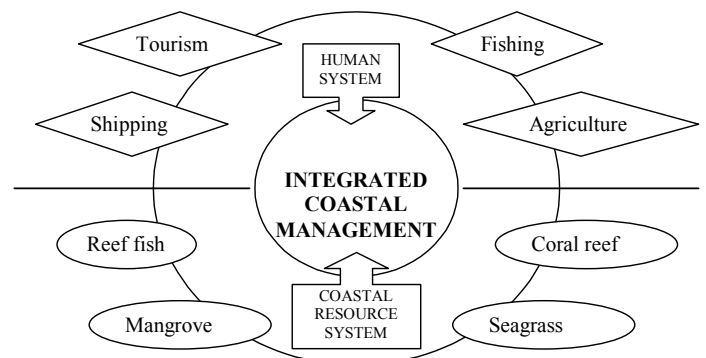
State institutions

Using the fishing industry as an example, in most Caribbean countries the State plays a leading role in all aspects of fishery policy by regulating management and conservation of capture fisheries, and through direct intervention in the implementation of policies and development programmes.

Fisheries authorities in the region vary widely in terms of staff and staff expertise. However, it is normal to find the fisheries unit located within a large ministry concerned with agriculture and other matters. Taking into account population, physical size, human resources, contribution of fisheries and present economic circumstances, a separate fisheries ministry is not practical in these countries. As part of the public sector, relatively few resources are provided to fisheries agencies for

institutional activities such as establishing co-management and organizing fishers. Policy reform may be slow.

An explanation given for little attention to co-management is lack of staff. Existing staff may not have the time, inclination or expertise to address all of the components necessary for planning and implementing co-management arrangements. Fisheries departments very often do not take full advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other ministries, government departments or NGOs with expertise in methods that could be useful in implementing certain co-management activities such as organizing fishers. Government departments with expertise in livelihoods analysis and pro-poor policy are also often not part of the integrated coastal management arena. The inter-ministry or departmental linkages, which are essential for effective collaboration in fisheries and integrated coastal area management, are not yet well developed in many countries.



Ultimately, living aquatic resource management must be set within a broader context of coastal and marine management. Fisheries must be included in integrated coastal management, as called for by the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, if conflicts and impacts on marine resources are to be minimized. Fisheries and coastal authorities must proactively establish collaborative relationships with other institutions, especially those whose activities also impact on the health of the coastal and marine environment.

Government's role in co-management

Reforming government institutions is a difficult task because it demands that we dispel the notion that governments have the exclusive mandate and capability to manage coastal resources. Government's coastal management approaches need to be flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances.

The implementation of co-management will depend upon governments' willingness to devolve authority and responsibility for management to stakeholders, to empower stakeholders, and to restructure the roles of management agencies. Governments will need to legally and financially support co-management. Since agencies in the region do not have the capacity to manage coastal resources by themselves, they may accept co-management, however reluctantly. The test of this acceptance will be whether governments actually share responsibility or merely establish systems of passing on transaction and other costs, which is not true co-management.

Another roadblock to co-management in the region is the limited trust and mutual respect between government and some coastal users, especially fishers. Fishers report that they often feel that the government does not understand or care for them or their situation. Government may feel that fishers are not responsible enough to take on management responsibility. A sense of trust, respect and understanding between partners in co-management must be established if there is to be any chance for successful implementation of this arrangement.

Governments need to pay more attention to access and property rights to address the multi-use and multi-user nature of coastal resources in the island-states of the region. The interests of multiple stakeholders in the coastal zone may coincide or conflict. Co-management will allow stakeholders to participate in coastal management and manage conflict.

The capacities of government departments need to be built to work more with resource users on coastal conservation and management. Fishers need to become organized, and existing organizations strengthened to participate in and to undertake management. Stakeholders also need some skills in resource planning and management, participation, effective leadership and conservation measures, among other topics. This requires financial and technical resources, some of which may need to be sought from external agents. Good networking is essential.

Despite the legal authority which exists in some countries to support community fishery management bodies, and to provide preferential use rights (e.g. fishing priority areas), most countries need to enact new laws and policies in support of decentralization, empowerment, organizing, and use rights. While co-management may operate informally in its first few years of existence, there will be a need to provide it with a strong legal foundation as an incentive for stakeholders to sustain cooperation. Organized fishers, environmental NGOs and others may need to lobby government to give coastal issues a higher priority among policy makers' concerns.

Requirements for effective participation of civil society

The main challenge facing effective participation of civil society in environmental management is that conditions for participation do not automatically exist. They have to be created. The following basic requirements should be met:

- The legislative framework should exist for systematic consultation to encourage increased communications and

exchange of information on allocation of resources, devolution of authority and responsibility, and procedures for enforcement of decisions. This is a State duty.

- At the level of the owners of resources (State, community and private sector), the formal legal arrangements must be in place for transfer of ownership, delegation of rights and responsibilities regarding the use of resources.
- At the level of civil society, there must be the capacity to sustain participation and the ability to organise effective representation. Collective action must also be sustainable.

All of these requirements should operate within a guiding policy on the use and management of natural resources for sustainable development. Decisions on the use of natural resources in the Caribbean to date have been largely dictated by socio-economic factors and are rarely influenced much by environmental considerations. New arrangements for participation must address the conservation of resources.

Institutional reform

The long-term success of participatory management depends on the suitability of the institutional arrangements. Principles to guide the design of institutional arrangements include:

- The need to be democratic and to contribute to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups
- The inclusion of structures and mechanisms that allow stakeholders to influence management decisions
- The efficient and effective pursuit of shared management objectives
- The means to be flexible and capable of responding and adapting to change, and also to deal with surprises and exceptional events such as natural disasters
- The adaptation to local conditions and to be compatible with the local socio-cultural and political landscape
- The requirement to promote and sustain linkages between sectors, and to beneficial external agents
- The involvement of non-traditional actors (e.g. the poor) in management arrangements and decisions.

Conclusions

Research on regional experiences in participatory marine and coastal planning and resource management reveals that there is considerable scope for approaches to governance such as co-management in its various forms. The demand for it exists and is growing in keeping with global trends in management. Challenges to meeting this demand are mainly institutional. Stronger linkages between policy and research can assist in identifying critical areas in coastal resource governance and the means for implementing remedial policy interventions.

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