

## Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project Information Update — 25 September 2002

### ***Where are we?***

We are continuing to keep you updated on the Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project via these brief information sheets. This issue includes upcoming events, project outputs, interesting reading and web sites. We welcome your news and views on coastal resource co-management to share with colleagues.

Research in the second quarter has focused on the case studies in Barbados and Grenada. Belize, a larger undertaking, will be tackled at the start of the third quarter. Interest in the project has remained strong and participation has been good. Government stakeholders have readily accepted the purpose of the research and have been keen to use the interim outputs in ongoing co-management initiatives.

### ***Management by mass media***

In Barbados, the sea urchin fishery was opened for the month of September. With the resource plentiful and prices high, the opening was much welcomed by fishers and consumers. However, the opening has had its share of controversy.

An issue was whether the season should have been opened a month later, in October, when some fishers thought the urchin roe would be in better condition for harvest. In 2001 the fishers and Fisheries Division agreed on an October opening, but September has been the traditional month. Was there enough consultation in 2002?

To allow harvest in October, some fishers wanted the season closed and re-opened later for a month, whereas others wanted it extended to October (a 2 month opening). This varied by fishing location, and in some places the season was thought to be just right. Although the fisheries authority noted the observations and recommendations of fishers, the regulations are not sufficiently flexible or responsive to allow quick changes in the harvest regime. How useful is the input from the industry to management?

Then there was the issue of harvesting out of season and using illegal gear (SCUBA). The leader of the national umbrella fishing body argued that, given rampant illegal harvest, opening the season for just one month was a prudent conservation measure. Despite her credentials being easily checked, some publicly questioned what she could possibly know about fishing. Could this be a gender issue revealed?

These types of fishery management issues are not uncommon. However, a fascinating feature was that most of this could be followed simply by listening to the radio call-in programs, watching the TV news and reading newspapers.

In field interviews it was clear that the fishing industry in Barbados sees the mass media as an important tool in effecting management change or decisions. Industry participants favour using the media over collective action by their fishing organisations. The latter were considered almost irrelevant in seeking management interventions. It was felt that decision-makers would pay more attention to news stories than listen to fishing organisations.

What does this say about the structure and operation of governance, and the scope for co-management? How much is the power of the press a factor in fisheries co-management? The media is less important to fishing in other countries, or is used as a back-up rather than a first choice for seeking representation. Why is it apparently such a critical element in Barbados?

### ***Focus on Fisheries Advisory Committee highlights faults***

The other Barbados case study concerns the local Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC). This multi-stakeholder body that is intended to advise the Minister responsible for fisheries is a feature of most eastern Caribbean fisheries laws. Yet few countries have a functional FAC.

Focus group studies and interviews in Barbados revealed an interesting array of both structural and operational constraints that may also apply to other countries. The research is still in progress, but an early conclusion is that factors favouring FAC success are scarce.

With a new FAC about to be appointed, the researchers were pleased when the Fisheries Division indicated interest in using the research results to inform a revised approach to the FAC. This augurs well for uptake of project outputs.

### ***Lobster pots for Sauteurs?***

Co-management initiatives for the lobster fishery at Sauteurs and Isle de Ronde in the north of Grenada recently took an interesting turn. Fishers in these areas are renowned for persisting with trammel nets to harvest lobster despite nets not being allowed since 1987, and trammel nets being specifically banned since 2001. A blind eye was turned to this illegal fishing for many years as fishers argued more time was needed for them to find suitable alternative fishing gear.

The Caribbean Conservation Association started a co-management project in 2001 to facilitate the fisheries authority working with fishers to find this alternative gear and to learn more about the benefits of responsible fisheries while building capacity. This was undertaken in conjunction with the co-management guidelines research. A workshop on leadership, and another on conflict management and negotiation, was organised in collaboration with the outreach initiative of the University of the West Indies. The pilot project ended in August 2002, but the government of Grenada continues to attempt co-management.

The interesting turn is the government's decision to firmly prohibit trammel net use as the basis for proceeding with finding alternative fishing gear in collaboration with the fishers. Fishers and a fisheries officer were sent to Trinidad for training in construction and use of lobster pots. Although fishers are upset that their illegal fishing has finally been curtailed, they are accepting the situation and awaiting trials with the new gear.

Ultimately, fisheries management is a State responsibility, especially where shared stocks are concerned. While, in this case, the action of the government of Grenada seems correct and in keeping with international agreements, it begs some questions. Under what circumstances should the State change agreed conditions of co-management? Can such changes be used as

a ploy to co-opt co-management processes? A Grenada fishery officer will present this case during the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (see article below).

### ***55<sup>th</sup> annual Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute meeting in Mexico talks co-management***

Several papers relevant to co-management will be featured at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the GCFI in Mexico (visit [www.gcfi.org](http://www.gcfi.org)). This includes sharing some preliminary findings from this project. A special one-day workshop on institutional arrangements for Caribbean MPAs is of particular importance to coastal managers.

### ***Legalising beach seine rules***

Examples of traditional local fishery rules are poorly documented in the eastern Caribbean. An outstanding exception is work by James Finlay, a fisheries officer in Grenada who has recently retired. His consultations on, and documentation of, the beach seine rules in Grenada have led to them being recommended for legalisation. In our Gouyave case this project is researching how fisheries stakeholders and the government may approach this.

Focus group results indicate that fishers are not certain of the next steps and the options that they have for being meaningful partners in the process. The government is still undecided as to how best to proceed. The project will bring the parties together to determine what conditions are most likely to make the process successful and the outcomes sustainable. A critical factor is the extent to which the legislation will allow local level interpretation and development of the rules to continue. Caribbean fisheries legislation is not known for its flexibility and scope for adaptation.

### ***CANARI web site downloads***

For excellent document downloads about participatory resource management and other aspects of co-management in the Caribbean visit the CANARI web site ([www.canari.org](http://www.canari.org)).

*This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.*

