



# CANARI Policy Brief

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## *Linking coastal management, sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction: a research agenda for the Caribbean*

### ***Coastal livelihoods: a development priority, a research priority for the Caribbean region***

The Caribbean<sup>1</sup> is, by definition, a coastal region, a region where coastal resource management is critical to sustainable human development. Even when there are no large-scale economic activities (resort tourism, transportation, urban settlements, industry), the value of coastal resources remains high, as they provide a range of social and economic goods and services to local communities and offer great potential for economic development and diversification. However, because the coastal zone is subject to a range of severe environmental impacts from both terrestrial and marine sources, environmental degradation, resource use conflicts and unsustainable forms of resource use are threatening this value. Coastal resource management issues are therefore both urgent and important to the social and economic development of the region.

Yet the links between coastal management, sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction are currently weak, because:

- most of the agencies that are responsible for coastal planning, management and development do not have a livelihoods perspective, and are not directly concerned with poverty reduction and social development agendas;

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the Caribbean region is defined to include all islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles as well as the coastal countries of Central and South America that have close historical, cultural and political affinity with the insular Caribbean.

- while the "big issues", especially those that relate to the development and management of ports, industrial plants and large-scale tourism infrastructure, have received and continue to receive the attention of researchers and planners, there is too little research being carried out on the "small issues", in spite of their relevance to thousands of people in small coastal communities.

***There is therefore a clear and urgent need for more research on the issues and opportunities that concern small scale settlements and coastal communities, and in particular on the linkages between coastal management, sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.***

***In this document, we suggest some of the research priorities that should be considered, as well as some of the approaches that would be best suited to the needs of the region.***

This policy briefing paper has been prepared and published by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). It has been produced as part of the project called "Institutional Arrangements for Coastal Management in the Caribbean", which is being implemented by CANARI, the Caribbean Conservation Association, and MRAG Ltd., with support from the UK Department for International Development's Natural Resource Systems Programme (NRSP).

## **Testing and challenging myths, priorities and opportunities: some research questions**

Recent research on coastal zone management and development in the insular Caribbean suggests that some of the dominant views on the relationship between coastal environments, poverty and livelihoods need to be re-examined, and possibly challenged. Some of the interesting questions that merit attention at this time include:

Do increases in poverty and unemployment among coastal communities necessarily lead to resource degradation? *At least one local case study in the region suggests that this is not the case, and that good environmental stewardship can occur even when socio-economic conditions deteriorate.*

What is the role of poor and marginalised people in coastal resource management? *Research in the region suggests that even poor people can manage natural resources sustainably and effectively, and that their involvement in planning and management is always desirable.*

Are there specific pro-poor approaches to coastal resource management and development? *Recent research has concluded that such approaches have a number of specific characteristics, and that more empirical evidence is required to inform policy formulation and programme implementation.*

What is the place and role of popular knowledge in modern management? *Experience suggests that both scientific and popular knowledge are important, that they belong to two distinct knowledge systems, and that one of the challenges is for researchers and managers to recognise these two systems and create bridges between them.*

## **Exploring and enhancing the contribution of protected areas to sustainable livelihoods: an unfinished research agenda**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are specially managed areas established primarily for the purpose of natural resource conservation. The relationship between MPAs and coastal livelihoods is complex, as described in the CANARI Policy Brief No. 5. MPAs can be agents of sustainable development, community empowerment and poverty reduction, but they can also, unfortunately, become factors of economic and social exclusion and disruption.

In the coastal zone, protected areas, usually called Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), have been used as one of the main instruments of natural resource conservation and management in the Caribbean. Over the past few years, principally as a result of DFID-sponsored research projects, including those that form the basis of this policy brief, a detailed analysis of this experience has been carried out, and an extensive data base has been created<sup>2</sup>. From this work, a few critical questions emerge, which should receive the attention of managers and researchers, including the following:

- do MPAs contribute to effective coastal zone management outside of their boundaries?
- how can MPAs improve the provision of social services to neighbouring communities and settlements?
- how can MPAs meet their conservation objectives while optimising their contributions to economic development and poverty reduction?
- what are the institutional options for coastal resource conservation and management outside other ways to achieve similar results?

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<sup>2</sup> This information is being incorporated into the database of the Network of Wider Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers (CaMPAM). This database, when completed, will be available from the Region Co-ordinating Unit of The Caribbean Environment Programme at [www.cep.unep.org](http://www.cep.unep.org)

## ***Institutional arrangements for coastal management and development: making co-management work in the Caribbean***

A recently completed research project on the requirements for developing successful co-management in the Caribbean has concluded that collaborative management regimes and institutions hold much promise for the region, because of their effectiveness in sustaining the natural resource base and because of their ability to meet the needs and expectations of a wide range of stakeholders.

Co-management is defined as the formal sharing of management responsibility and authority among two or more management partners. Potential partners in coastal resource co-management include state agencies, non-governmental organisations, community-based groups and private sector bodies. Typically, co-management arrangements are supported by formal agreements among these partners.

But the region's practical experience in this field remains limited, and there is a need for field experimentation and analytical research focusing on key questions, including the following:

- what are the methods and processes required to institutionalise co-management arrangements in the coastal zone?
- what are the criteria that can be used to assess the desirability and feasibility of co-management in specific contexts and situations?
- how can the effectiveness and efficiency of co-management regimes and institutions be assessed and measured?
- what is the role of the various agencies, including those responsible for economic development, social protection and poverty reduction, in multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements for coastal management?
- how should the various property rights be defined and allocated among the partners in co-management?
- how can the traditional rights of local resource users be recognised, especially the rights of those whose livelihoods depend directly on the use of coastal resources?
- what are the policy and legal instruments that are required to enable co-management, to guarantee the rights of the various management partners and to provide the basis for fair and effective co-management agreements?
- how can collaborative management arrangements contribute to the management and elimination of conflicts over the use of coastal resources, especially those that impact negatively on the poor and the powerless and that result in environmental degradation?
- what are the types of organisations that are best suited to participate in co-management arrangements, and what are their capacity requirements?

This policy brief is based principally on the results and products of three projects carried out between 2000 and 2004 under the auspices of the Natural Resources System Programme (NRSP) of the UK Department for International Development (DFID). These were: *Institutional and technical options for improving coastal livelihoods* (implemented by CANARI); *Institutional arrangements for Caribbean Marine Protected Areas and opportunities for pro-poor management* (implemented by the Marine Resources Assessment Group MRAG); and *Requirements for developing successful co-management* (implemented by the Caribbean Conservation Association).

## ***Setting the research agenda: the case of the Soufriere Marine Management Area in Saint Lucia***

The Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) was established in 1994, following an intense process of consultation. That involved a wide range of agencies, community organisations and resource users. Because of the novelty of the approach used and of the results obtained, which have both been recognised by international awards and reviews, this institution has received much attention in recent years, including that of external researchers who see the SMMA as a suitable terrain to carry out research. Concerned with the demands that these researchers placed on its resources, and conscious of the need to integrate on-going research into its management systems, the SMMA developed a research framework that allows it to channel offers of assistance towards its priority needs and to optimise the impact of research on local management, without curtailing the rights and creativity of researchers. As a result, the SMMA has been able to develop an on-going research programme and to provide a field laboratory to test and document participatory approach to coastal management and development. More information on this framework can be obtained from [www.smma.org.lc/research.htm](http://www.smma.org.lc/research.htm).

### ***Making research useful and relevant to coastal livelihoods: an opportunity for creative partnerships***

The research that has been discussed in this paper is at the convergence of several disciplines, providing a unique opportunity to link research on natural resources with poverty research and socio-economic study. It also provides a special opportunity to conduct and document concrete and practical experiments and pilot projects. A number of principles should guide the design and conduct of research in this field:

- *participation*: all those who have a stake in the outcome of research processes, beginning with the coastal communities in the location of research activities, should be involved at the various stages of the research process. This involvement should begin with the definition and framing of research questions, to ensure that research activities actually meet the needs of intended beneficiaries. At all stages, suitable methods should be used in order to make genuine participation possible;
- *empowerment*: research should serve to redress power imbalances and to provide all stakeholders with the information, skills and resources they need to participate meaningfully in, and to benefit substantially from, research activities;
- *dissemination*: the results of research should be interpreted and disseminated in the appropriate forms to all relevant stakeholders, including local resource users and managers. Research should be conceived as an integral component of management, contributing to learning and adaptation on an on-going basis.

#### **Caribbean Natural Resources Institute**

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is an independent, regional, technical Assistance organization with more than 20 years of experience on issues of conservation, The environment, and sustainable development in the islands of the Caribbean.

CANARI's mission is to create avenues for the equitable participation and effective collaboration of Caribbean communities and institutions in managing the use of natural Resources critical to development.

The Institute has specific interest and extensive experience in the identification and Promotion of participatory approaches to natural resource management.

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