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SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS FOR PEOPLE ON THE CARIBBEAN COAST**Physical Planning Guidelines for
Community-Based Sustainable Tourism**

Dr. Michelle Mycoo, Physical Planner

**SUPPORTING
SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS**

Enhancing linkages between policy intent and policy implementation, towards achieving sustainable livelihoods among marginalised communities along the Caribbean coast, was the major focus of a research project undertaken during 2004-2005 by the University of the West Indies Sustainable Economic Development Unit (UW SEDU), with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The concentration on Community-based Sustainable Tourism recognised the multiple possibilities of this burgeoning industry, in providing both product inputs and direct services, to enhance linkages between producers in the communities and mainstream tourism interests.

KEY POINTS: Community-based sustainable tourism requires some minimum level of physical planning to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of tourism services and also anticipate natural disasters. This policy brief addresses the physical planning challenges, general guidelines and specific steps.

Introduction

Tourism, incorporated findings related to physical planning —the subject of this policy brief. Physical planning seeks to provide spatial order and the basis for infrastructure provision to protect public health and safety, promote economic development prospects including alternative, income-generating sustainable livelihoods, and mitigate environmental impacts that may arise from land development. These objectives ultimately facilitate poverty eradication.

Physical Planning Challenges

There are several physical planning challenges that create a strategic constraint to Natural Resource-based livelihood strategies such as community based sustainable tourism (CBST). These include:

- the absence, in some cases, of plans and policies;
- infrequent plan and policy revision and therefore the use of obsolete plans and policies;
- weak enforcement capability against illegal land development including land subdivision, building and engineering activities, and change of use of land and existing buildings; and,
- political interference whereby certain key decisions regarding land and

PHYSICAL PLANNING ENVIRONMENT PRESENTS OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS

In the English-speaking Caribbean, under the Town and Country Planning Act, the Minister has ultimate decision-making power over development — legally defined as “the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations, in, on, over or under land, the making of any material change of use of buildings, or other land, or the subdivision of land”. In these jurisdictions, the Minister has opted to delegate this responsibility to planning authorities, which have responsibility to prepare development plans, process applications for development and make policy. However, political interference, human resource constraints and budgetary limitations have collectively affected the ability of planning authorities to perform these functions efficiently and effectively. Plans have not been revised every five years, as stated in the legislation, leaving Caribbean Governments in breach. Furthermore, conventional planning acts make limited provision for public participation; Toppin-Allahar (2001) notes, “with the exception of Jamaica, all the existing environmental framework legislation in the region make express or implied provision for public participation in the environmental impact assessment process”. Yet many examples indicate state circumvention of processes to engage civil society in environmental and planning discourse on major projects. In short, the legal and institutional environment within which physical planning operates, presents challenges to the fulfillment of the objectives of physical planning.

building development are determined at the Cabinet level and are not based on technical analysis;

- the lack of success in closing the gap between plans/policy intent and implementation resulting from, among other factors, the non-existence of a budget line item that would facilitate finance for implementation.

Research Findings

The University of the West Indies Sustainable Economic Development Unit (UWI-SEDU) research between 2002-2004 identified a gap between policy intent and implementation, **one manifestation of which is infrastructural shortfalls** that leave coastal communities more vulnerable to natural hazards and public health and safety risks. This has budgetary implications;



Infrastructural issues—from left, Soubise, Anse la Raye, St Georges

a decade ago, Snaggs (1994) noted: “it is a regrettable fact that economic planning and physical planning, or Town and Country Planning, tend to be conducted quite independently of each other”.

Infrastructural difficulties impact on the marketing of coastal villages as tourism attractions. This was clear in the research undertaken at selected coastal villages in St Lucia, Belize and, latterly, field visits in Grenada — which revealed deficiencies including poor drainage leading to flooding; inadequate sewage disposal facilities; and haphazard squatter settlement layout. The coastal settlements of Anse La Raye in St. Lucia and Hopkins in Belize, which were studied in detail, suffered from inadequate infrastructure in respect of drainage, sewage disposal and water provision.

In addition, ***there is need to integrate land use plans with natural hazards mitigation plans*** especially given the growing frequency of hurricanes in the Caribbean. In the absence of such

EXCERPT FROM REPORT ON INITIATIVES IN GRENADA

There was a meeting with Ministry of Tourism (Frances Robertson) on March 1st 2005 at the Ministry of Tourism... to discuss a return visit of the team members to discuss community-based tourism possibilities for Marquis. The possibility of the team looking at Soubise was then raised in April 2005 by several stakeholders. In May 2005, two UWI SEDU members (team leader Dennis Pantin and M. Mycoo Physical Planner) returned to Grenada along with Sylvester Clausel of St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme **to discuss the uptake of CBST and guide the land use and redevelopment of the waterfront area of the poor coastal community of Soubise that was devastated by Hurricane Ivan. At a meeting with key stakeholders the team outlined concepts for the physical plan for Soubise and surveys for the communities.** A ‘walk around’ was conducted on Thursday, 19th May, 2005, involving representatives from GRENCODA, GRENEDE, ART and UNDP. The ‘walk around’ started on the hard court and continued with residents met by the way and in their homes...to get feedback, host discussions, establish contacts, receive suggestions and solicit commitment for a UNDP project in the community.

action, coastal communities are increasingly vulnerable to the growing frequency of natural hazards in the region such as hurricanes, storm surges and earthquakes. The three case study countries; St. Lucia, Belize and Grenada, have all suffered from hurricanes in the last five years and were selected to pilot the preparation of hazard mitigation plans under a Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency Programme. These plans should be used to complement land use planning. The settlement of Soubise in Grenada was not subject to a detailed investigation of infrastructure, but preliminary scoping based on a field visit to the settlement post-Hurricane Ivan, showed signs of inadequate infrastructure. Specific issues included inadequate water facilities, coastal drainage and defense, and sewage disposal. The existence of only basic facilities has the potential to cause untold damage to coral reefs and sea grass beds found



Meeting with communities—Marquis, Sarteneja, Hopkins

in the vicinity of all three areas; and this can undermine the potential for community-based sustainable tourism.

General Guidelines for Physical Planning to Facilitate CBST

- If physical planning is to succeed, emphasis should be placed on the promotion of a policy and institutional environment that will support CBST-livelihood strategies. The building and site development policies should be flexible to facilitate small guest house operators.
- Capacity building is required if the existing laws pertaining to physical planning are to be implemented as intended.
- Both regulatory and economic incentives are needed to achieve land use optimisation.

Specific Steps

To overcome constraints in achieving physical planning objectives, the following guidelines and steps are recommended:

- Invite communities in the Land-Water Interface (LWI) to participate in preliminary discussions on relaxing prevailing constraints and planning the future of their settlements. An important activity is the setting of community goals, objectives and prioritisation of needs through the community participation process as was stressed by the research team in the round-table meetings and community meetings in Grenada;
- Collect data in LWI settlements using a comprehensive land use survey instrument. This will provide a sense of the land uses in the area and facilitate preparation of a zoning map of compatible land uses, as well as suggesting how to rationalise incompatible land uses where possible. Ultimately, it will support the design of a layout for the coastal villages, that is functional and aesthetically pleasing;
- Map all competing and complementary land uses and existing vacant land to facilitate land use zoning that would in turn indicate the location and scale of new planned development. The use of tools and technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), aerial photography and satellite imagery are recommended to enhance the development of land use inventory mapping; if such technologies exist in the planning agency;

- Establish and map tenure patterns in LWI settlements to help determine access to natural resources, credit, overall capabilities in attaining income-generating sustainable livelihoods, and conformity with physical planning, site, building and engineering standards;
- Establish infrastructure that should be prioritised for provision; for example, access roads, drains, water and sewerage facilities, electricity and telecommunications;
- Prepare land development and infrastructure provision scenarios and present them to relevant stakeholders so that their inputs can be made in selecting a preferred plan;
- Link physical plans with natural hazard mitigation plans as is being attempted now in the planning of Soubise, Grenada;
- Once consensus is achieved, the planning agency along with the infrastructure agency should prepare a list of priority projects for underwriting by the Ministry of Finance, to ensure that there is a budget line item established to implement plans, policies and projects;
- Post-implementation, monitor coastal settlements to evaluate plan, policy, project successes and failures. Involve stakeholders in community-based monitoring and evaluation;
- Revise plans and policies regularly to reflect relevance in meeting changing goals and objectives as the hierarchy of community needs change over time; and
- Enforce institutional reform to allow for decentralised decision-making.

Target Institutions

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Planning : Physical Planning Department, Lands and Survey Department, Land Information Section/Geographic Information Section
- Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment: Environmental Protection Agency
- Coastal Zone Management Authority
- Ministry of Works: Infrastructure Department
- Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Marketing Boards
- NGOs and CBOs Based Organisations



Meeting target institutions - Grenada, St Lucia



For More Information

Hyperlinks: <<http://www.cdera.org/>>, <<http://www.oecs.org/cpn/>>, <<http://www.csednet.org/>>

References:

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Snaggs, K. (1994) 'Problem Statement: Contemporary Development Issues and the Relevance of English Style Planning Law in the Caribbean', in *Taking Up The Challenge Of Designing Indigenous Planning Laws*, p. 8, Caribbean Planning Law Workshop Proceedings, 1994, Kingston, Jamaica.

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