

R8317
Institutional Arrangements for
Coastal Management in the Caribbean

FTR Annex G: Institutional Arrangements for Coastal:
Management - A Preliminary Research Agenda

December
2005

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.



INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AGENDA

Introduction

Over the past six years, a number of research projects have been implemented in the Caribbean, focusing on the relationship between coastal resources, livelihoods, poverty reduction, and governance. Most of this work was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of the Land-Water Interface (LWI) component of its Natural Resources Systems Programme (NRSP). These research projects have involved a range of organisations, including the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), the Marine Resources Assessment Group Ltd. of the United Kingdom (MRAG), the University of the West Indies' Centre for Resource Management and Environment Studies (CERMES) and Sustainable Economic Development Unit (SEDU), and the University of Puerto Rico's Sea Grant College Program. In addition, important initiatives have been implemented in the field of sustainable tourism, notably the EC-funded Saint Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme (SLHTP), which is being implemented by Saint Lucia's Ministry of Tourism, as well as a number of local initiatives aimed at linking tourism development, environmental sustainability and community empowerment.

These efforts have contributed very significantly to the development and dissemination of new knowledge and new practice in coastal management and development. They have also helped to identify new issues and directions for future research. The purpose of this brief paper is to summarise this information, as one of the bases for future research planning and programming in this field in the Caribbean region. Without duplicating all the results and information contained in the reports and publications of the various institutions involved, this paper builds on the main conclusions of these projects as well as the presentations made to and discussions held at the seminar on "*Improving Coastal Livelihoods: Lessons Learned from Experience and Priorities for Future Research*" (Soufriere, Saint Lucia, July 2005).

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

The Caribbean 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, with particularly severe impacts on poor communities.

Natural resources, livelihoods and institutions are subject to a constant process of change. Issues of coastal management and development are being made even more acute because of rapid urbanisation, migration from rural areas and the growing dependence on tourism as

a prime economic activity in many of the eastern Caribbean countries, pursuing a path of development that focuses mainly on satisfying the needs of visitors and less on exploring economic opportunities that address issues of poverty, environmental sustainability and host community empowerment.

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;
- 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;
- the scientific and development literature from other regions of the world is extensive and useful, but it does not always apply to the specific conditions of the insular Caribbean.

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, poverty reduction and governance. Such research must focus on current issues and needs, but it must also take into account future trends and scenarios, particularly as a result of climate change, population growth, economic transition and social change.

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 have been identified include:

- Do increases in poverty and unemployment among coastal communities necessarily lead to resource degradation? *Recent field experience in the region suggests that this is not the case, and that good environmental stewardship can occur even when socio-economic conditions deteriorate. If so, what are the factors that create and justify unsustainable patterns of resource use, and what are the key ingredients of effective local institutions?*
- 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. If so, what is the role of poor and marginalised people, and how can this role be effectively performed and supported?*
- 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, especially in relation to access to and tenure of resources, institutional arrangements, information creation and dissemination, and promotion of entrepreneurship and employment creation.*

- What is the place and role of popular knowledge in modern management? *Experience suggests that both scientific and popular knowledge are important, that there are various forms and systems of knowledge that often overlap, and that one of the challenges is for researchers and managers to recognise these systems and create bridges between them. How can these bridges be created? Are there specific tools, including those of community-based mapping and information management, that can contribute significantly to this process?*
- How could and should issues of equity be addressed by future research? *There is a need for a better understanding of the place and role of power and power relations in defining institutional arrangements and in determining how coastal resources are allocated and used. While there is a consensus on the need to promote equity, the factors that militate against equitable use and access are many, and more research is needed to explore them and to provide directions and options for policy reform and institutional change.*
- Who are the winners, who are the losers, and who decides who wins and who loses? *Much of the current discourse on sustainable development and natural resource management talks about the need to search for “win-win solutions”, but experience shows that such solutions are actually hard to find in reality. In the practice of coastal management and development, there are almost always losers (either resource or people), and research is needed to guide the management process, to provide tools for the assessment and mitigation of the negative impacts of change, with the compensation of ‘losers’ whenever appropriate.*

Research on coastal livelihoods and development must also probe the concept of *poverty* and the manner in which it is understood and communicated by various stakeholders, including the people who live in poverty. Recent focus on poverty within the international community has led to the adoption of a new discourse, and the relevance of that discourse to the realities of the region must be debated.

Sustainable livelihoods: from concept to action

While the concept of *sustainable livelihoods* is attractive and widely accepted, it is proving difficult to put it into practice. This is at least partially because the forces that shape livelihoods and patterns of resource use are constantly changing. There is therefore a need for extensive and systematic research that examines the interplay of opportunities and conditions that ensure that livelihood strategies and patterns of resource utilisation are indeed sustainable, while contributing optimally to poverty reduction.

Research projects of the past few years, as well as the papers, case studies and guidelines presented at the seminar of July 2005, provided interesting lessons on the approaches and tools that are required to promote sustainable development in coastal areas, all of which deserve more in-depth research and exploration, namely:

- there is a need to *mainstream poverty reduction* in all relevant policies, programmes and interventions, and to design mechanisms to *move from local action to macro-economic impacts*, especially in terms of poverty reduction;
- attention must be paid to the design and operations of effective, flexible and durable *institutions*;
- *co-management* can be an effective and suitable arrangement to link participation, sustainable resource use and poverty reduction;
- all programmes and interventions should take place in the context of *integrated planning and management* that responds to changing conditions;

- there is a need for *improved access to finance and credit*, especially for micro businesses and entrepreneurs;
- in order to *stimulate entrepreneurship*, there is a need for capacity and institutional development, but there is also a need for cultural and attitudinal change at all levels;
- in business development, there is also a need for policies, tools and approaches that facilitate the *mobilisation of community assets, including common property natural resources*, in support of entrepreneurship and business development, in a manner that is compatible with the needs and rights of the community;
- sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial development require the identification or creation and enabling of *markets* and the development of *products* that are suited to these markets;
- in all these efforts, increased *regional cooperation* is needed, to promote the exchange and enrichment of experiences, approaches and methods.

In the exploration of options for sustainable livelihoods, two particularly critical themes have emerged. First, the experience of the past few years, especially in the innovative work of the SLHTP, has shown the potential benefits of *community-based sustainable tourism*, and has confirmed the need for a more systematic exploration of options and opportunities, as community-based tourism offers one of the very few new opportunities for employment and revenue generation in coastal areas. Second, in tourism as in other sectors, there is need for increased attention to *entrepreneurship*, and for an understanding of the conditions under which such entrepreneurship can flourish in Caribbean coastal communities.

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

One of the research projects of the past few years has focused on the requirements for developing successful co-management in the Caribbean, and it has concluded that collaborative management regimes and institutions hold much promise for the region, because of their effectiveness in sustaining the natural resource base, their flexible nature and their ability to meet the needs and expectations of a wide range of stakeholders.

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 make co-management work in the coastal zone?
- what are the criteria that can be used to assess the desirability and feasibility of different forms or systems 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 and management activities for coastal development?
- what is the role of the private sector in various types of institutional arrangements and management programmes, and how can that role be nurtured and strengthened?
- how should the various property rights be defined and allocated among the partners in co-management?
- how can one define the type of decentralisation and delegation that is best suited to specific situations?
- 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?
- how are individual and collective rights harmonised and reconciled, especially when there is active promotion of entrepreneurship and business development?

- 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 capacity requirements that enable organisations to participate in co-management arrangements?
- how can new approaches to coastal management and development be translated into new *governance arrangements* that facilitate partnerships, empowerment and effective action?

Past and current work on co-management also points to the fact that coastal management and development is, above all, an exercise in conflict management. Tools and concepts are therefore needed to allow for a better understanding of these conflicts, and to assist policy makers and managers in making the decisions that are required to achieve desired management outcomes while minimising the negative impacts of conflicts.

Exploring and enhancing the contribution of protected areas to sustainable livelihoods

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, a detailed analysis of this experience has been carried out, and an extensive data base has been created. 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 contribute to improved 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 of formal MPAs? are there other ways to achieve similar results?

Policy research

There is a need for a better understanding of the policy process, i.e. for research that can inform and guide policy influencing and policy formulation. Some of the research questions include:

- to what extent can *public understanding and awareness* of issues assist in creating demand for policy change?
- how do *public perceptions and expectations* influence the policy process?
- what are the formal and informal *policy mandates* in coastal management and development?
- what are the *priorities* for policy reform and formulation?
- what are the *policy gaps, conflicts and needs* that need to be addressed through policy reform and advocacy?

Policy reform and advocacy require appropriate approaches to and tools for communication, and specific observations can be made in this regard:

- the need to develop, refine and disseminate *communication tools and strategies*;

- the need to *engage civil society and non-governmental organisations* in communication and advocacy processes;
- the need to *involve the mass media* and to promote informed and responsible journalism;
- the need to support *policy action*, i.e. policy research and advocacy that lead to the development and implementation of actual policy instruments;
- the need to conduct activities that aim specifically at *preparing for change* and at facilitating the process of change in a given policy environment;
- the need to manage and guide *public expectations*;
- the need to use *communication tools and techniques*, e.g. websites, efficiently and effectively.

Research activities should be designed and implemented in order to design, test and refine these approaches and tools. They must also examine the policy dimensions and implications of the various issues and questions identified in this research agenda.

Making research useful and relevant to coastal livelihoods

The seminar of July 2005 and the review of various field projects has provided particularly useful views regarding the manner in which research should be designed and implemented, suggesting directions and priorities for the next steps. In this regard, the main points that should be noted as follows:

- appropriate *baselines* should be established in order to permit the *monitoring and evaluation* of social and economic change over time;
- there is a need for rigorous and harmonised, yet flexible, *research frameworks* that allow for the comparison of results and other beneficial interactions between research initiatives while making it possible to respond to new issues and research questions that may arise;
- *case studies* must be developed and disseminated, to provide the examples that are needed in support of capacity-building, advocacy and institutional and policy reform;
- there is a need to *develop cultures of 'learning-by-doing' and 'doing-by-learning'* within organisations, i.e. integrating a learning dimension into the practice of management and development agencies and practitioners, but also integrating a culture of applied research in the approaches of research institutions;
- while new research is needed, it is critical to *deepen the work that is already underway*, to refine past and current research, to provide opportunities to test and assess change and impacts over time, and to use the existing capital to further the exploration of priority issues and research questions;
- it is also important to accelerate the *dissemination of available findings*, to ensure that results are published, and to aim at reaching both a regional and an international audience;
- in this process, efforts must now be made *to link with other research communities and disciplines*, within the Caribbean and in other island developing states and regions, where similar research questions and issues are being explored from other angles and perspectives, as there is much to gain from such an exchange of experiences and lessons;
- *research should be participatory*, and 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;

- research should serve to *empower communities* and 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;
- *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.

Next steps

The views and recommendations contained in this paper should be shared among all stakeholders concerned with issues of sustainable development and coastal management in the Caribbean, and should serve as a platform for discussion and collaboration. While this paper does not provide a specific work plan, it is hoped that it will be used by agencies in the design of research activities, and in the planning and implementation of future research and development initiatives.

Please send comments to Sarah McIntosh at the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, sarah@canari.org