

15 January 2005



# 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 2

This is the second part 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).

The first policy brief explained some of the definitions and concepts used in research on co-management, outlined the case studies and literature review from which lessons were learnt, discussed the conditions that favour and constrain co-management, and provided a policy perspective on the future of coastal resource co-management in the Caribbean.

This second brief, and others to follow, look closer at the fine detail of making coastal resource co-management successful. We address questions of why, when and where we can expect co-management to be instituted. Much of the information in this brief is taken from the *Guidelines for coastal resource co-management in the Caribbean: Communicating the concepts and conditions that favour success*, a CCA book.

The guidelines are an output of the Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project, and are available as a PDF file from the CCA and CERMES web sites ([www.ccanet.net](http://www.ccanet.net) and [www.cavehill.uwi.edu/cermes](http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/cermes)). A set of six case studies and a comparative analysis of research on co-management in the region can also be downloaded. In addition, there are slides that can be used for teaching about co-management.

The CCA, in collaboration with CERMES, is in the process of developing a series of lecture notes, an enhanced slide presentation and other teaching aids from these guidelines. Persons who are involved in training will find these useful.

## Why engage in co-management?

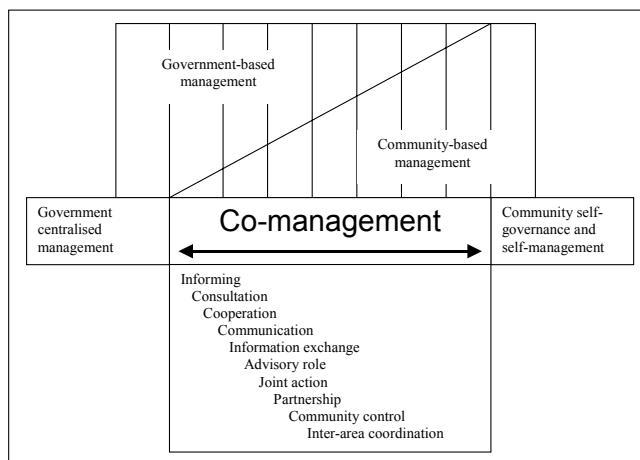
What drives the demand for coastal resource co-management in the Caribbean? It is important to be able to answer this question when promoting co-management at the policy level.

### Demand for co-management

Reasons behind the demand for coastal resource co-management include:

- Increasing conflicts among coastal and marine resource users are not being managed
- Many resources are being fully exploited or overexploited under management by government alone
- Coastal habitats are being increasingly degraded by marine and land-based pollution
- Public sector reform and down-sizing of state agencies is changing the nature of governance
- Global trends are towards empowering non-governmental organisations, communities and civil society
- Citizens' demands are for greater legitimacy and transparency in management decision-making
- Populations of indigenous people see the authority to manage resources as their traditional right
- Multilateral environmental agreements contain provisions for national and regional cooperation in management

Not all of the above apply everywhere, and in some places the list will be longer. However, the reasons for the growing interest in co-management all have linkages to policy. Co-management is seen as one of the approaches to achieving good governance. The previous issue of *Policy Perspectives* outlined three broad and basic types of co-management, but even finer distinctions (see below) are used by some researchers to capture the range of options.



Policy-makers and advisers should be aware of the wide range of options that are encompassed in the term “co-management”. Once participatory processes are encouraged by government there is likely to be a type of co-management arrangement that meets the demands of the stakeholders.

### Poverty and pro-poor perspectives

Poverty is recognized as one of the constraints to social and economic development in the region. Critical to the success of co-management is the extent to which community-based organizations engage in poverty eradication and alleviation.

This encompasses empowerment and the concept of “voice”. Poor people need their voices to be heard in co-management decision-making and to be included as beneficiaries in what is decided. Pro-poor strategies must address causes of poverty that operate at all levels, and ensure that government policy effectively engages these causes either directly or by creation of an environment that facilitates positive action by other parties such as NGOs, CBOs and external agents.

Although there have been several poverty studies in the region, and poverty reduction strategies are now common in the suite of government papers that help to secure external aid, not much attention has been paid specifically to poverty in relation to coastal resources. More research on the links between poverty and policy related to the coastal zone is urgently required. (Visit the COMARE Net web page on the CERMES web site for some studies with a pro-poor outlook).

### Social and cultural fit

Co-management is more successful when it becomes part of the fabric of society and the way of doing things in the lives of ordinary people. In general, there is not yet a very good fit for co-management in the region, largely due to the novelty of civil society participation in natural resource governance.

Coastal resource co-management initiatives remain largely driven by government. This says that the social and cultural drive to establish management partnerships is not yet firmly established at the grassroots level. The most significant impact on improving the social and cultural fit may come from learning-by-doing in order to establish the customary practices and perspectives that favour co-management. Small, successful activities and projects are the best building blocks.

CERMES’ Coastal Resources Co-management Project (CORECOMP), funded by the Oak Foundation, attempts to encourage collaborative learning-by-doing through small pilot projects that demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of approaches to co-management in selected countries. (Visit the CORECOMP page on the CERMES web site).

### *When do we start to co-manage?*

In the first policy brief we pointed out that co-management can take a long while to become established successfully.

### Some resources are more easily co-managed than others

A wide variety of coastal and marine resources exist in the Caribbean. Not all are equally suitable for co-management. Those that are most difficult for co-management are often also problematic for conventional management, such as highly migratory species of fish that fall under international management authorities. Some features of resources that are generally more easily co-managed, and that are also often locally over-exploited, include:

- Sedentary creatures and ones that do not range far in their life cycles (e.g. most reef related resources)
- Resources whose distribution corresponds with human settlement (e.g. sea urchins in Laborie Bay, St. Lucia)
- Resources that fall under one jurisdiction for management (e.g. small coastal pelagics)

### Resource use crises: conflicts, dependence and scarcity

Understanding what motivates people to work together in management, or to not cooperate amongst themselves, is often a challenge. Co-management is typically introduced at a stage when there is a resource crisis such as conflict and/or scarcity, especially when people who are highly dependent on the resources demand changes in management. Only when problems have reached crisis proportions are people really motivated to invest time and effort in co-management.

Where there is a history of frequent dependency on government, or a tendency to put responsibility on others, people are more likely to form groups to pressure authorities for action, than to form groups to take action themselves. While pressure groups can be important, they will not become full co-management partners unless they are also willing to take direct and collaborative management action. Governments should provide support and assistance for pressure groups to develop into management groups, if they so desire, rather than treat them as threats to be stifled. In providing such assistance, the temptation for co-optation or coercion to bring potentially antagonistic stakeholders around to the view of the government should always be resisted.

Solving shared problems helps to establish common interests and facilitate co-management. Often a problem has several parts that can be tackled simultaneously by stakeholders in different ways. Sometimes it is only through combining our efforts that a durable solution can be reached. Arranging for mutual assistance becomes a vital and cost-effective mechanism for problem-solving in places with limited capacity. Joint examination of concerns and problems usually builds partnerships. Therefore policy must encourage, enable and facilitate the kinds of active and constructive engagement needed for stakeholders to fully articulate their problems and develop collaborative solutions. The occasional town-hall meeting or crisis-oriented forum will not be adequate.

### Benefits to groups and individuals

Co-managers need to be concerned about providing benefits and incentives, for all of the participating stakeholders, so as

to ensure that motivation is sustained. This is critical especially in the delicate early stages of co-management where investment costs can be high with few evident returns. These costs include in-kind contributions to the process such as a fisher foregoing a day's catch to attend a meeting. Some possible costs of co-management include:

- Requires an initial financial investment in capacity, etc.
- Time requirements for full participation can be large
- May result in a smaller share of the coastal resource
- May result in less power or shared power for some
- Information to be communicated has to be compiled
- May take a longer time to reach joint decisions
- Requires skills such as in facilitation and leadership
- May cause demands in other areas, from other groups

Although they vary with the specific case, some benefits from successful co-management are commonly cited:

- Improves information flows
- Promotes conservation
- Helps to sustain livelihoods
- Encourages self-reliance
- Reduces many conflicts
- Facilitates compliance
- Lowers long run costs
- Increases empowerment
- Establishes responsibilities
- Enhances accountability
- Strengthens property rights

Prospects of power, recognition, reward and personal gain can also draw stakeholders into a co-management arrangement. However, unless they are specifically aimed at achieving the collective goal, these personal incentives are not likely to contribute positively to the co-management group effort, and may de-rail it if other stakeholders perceive inequities. A good incentive operates at the individual level without compromising the integrity of the group process. Policy advisers who are technically oriented run the risk of underestimating the political importance of proper incentives.

### *Where do we co-manage?*

Just as how not all resources are equally suitable for co-management, neither are all places. Some features, physical and institutional, favour co-management more than others.

#### Boundaries and scale

Managers of coastal and marine areas in the Caribbean deal with several kinds of boundaries. Some are physical, but many are intangible and conceptual boundaries devised to categorize or delimit various factors in resource management.

Transboundary and highly migratory fish species require international, regional and sub-regional arrangements for cooperation. These are provided for under the 1982 Law of the Sea and other, more recent, agreements. There is a need to initiate transboundary co-management of many Caribbean

marine resources according to the provisions of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). This scale of fisheries co-management is within the mandate of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). The CRFM is taking steps towards establishing a regional common fisheries policy and regime. National fisheries policies need to reflect and implement the regional policy if it is to succeed.

However, it is at the national level that many co-management boundaries apply. Having clear organizational jurisdictional boundaries generally favours co-management because they allow stakeholders to know where their responsibilities lie. The closer these boundaries correspond to the distribution of natural resources, the greater are the chances of management success. While boundaries that act as barriers can reduce the flexibility of co-management arrangements, knowing how the different types of boundary apply to the arrangements can help reduce conflict, assign appropriate responsibilities, and facilitate monitoring and evaluation. Fuzzy boundaries are often a feature of policy aimed at ensuring space for political manoeuvrability, but these can hinder co-management.

#### Property rights

Coastal resources that come under co-management are not likely to be private property. Coastal and marine common property resource institutions are either scarce or not well documented in many parts of the Caribbean. Some terrestrial coastal resources such as mangroves and coral cayes are likely to be owned by the State, as is the seabed. Most of the marine fishery resources of the Caribbean are open access.

Marine protected areas (MPAs), by definition, are restricted areas; although the nature and severity of limits on activities and uses varies. The fundamental problem is that successful management typically results in benefits that are eroded by new entrants to resource exploitation almost as soon as they are realized, especially where labour is available and mobile.

Partners in co-management are unlikely to contribute much to the effort over the long term if they do not expect to maintain or increase the benefits of their investment in participation. A key to success is to reduce the openness of access to coastal and marine resources through establishment or strengthening of property rights. However, open access is likely to remain a feature of Caribbean coastal resource management due to a deeply held belief that access to marine resources is a basic right rather than a privilege dispensed by the State. Where open access is prevalent it is still possible for co-management to make a positive difference by ensuring that the agreed management measures are as effective as possible.

Assistance was received for this publication from the Oak Foundation and from the UWI Coastal Management Research Network (COMARE Net), 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 or of the Oak Foundation.