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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 3

This is the third of a four-part policy brief on coastal resource co-management in which lessons learnt are drawn from the Caribbean Coastal Co-management Guidelines Project of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) and CERMES' Coastal Resources Co-management Project (CORECOMP).

This brief continues the examination of how to make coastal resource co-management successful. We address questions of who are the co-management partners, and what are some of their characteristics. In this issue we also introduce some of the tools and techniques used by change agents in the process of co-management. Refer to ***Guidelines for coastal resource co-management in the Caribbean: Communicating the concepts and conditions that favour success***, a CCA book that is available as a PDF file from the CCA and CERMES (www.ccanet.net and 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. There are also slides for teaching more 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.

Who do we co-manage with?

Co-management requires partnership. Although stakeholders have common interests, they also have differences that can be significant during co-management negotiations. Working together towards common goals requires collective action. Trust and mutual respect are essential for this to happen without undue conflict. Policy-makers and advisers need to be aware of these factors that can determine whether a co-management initiative is likely to succeed or not.

Stakeholders and partners

Stakeholders are those whose interests, resources, power or authority suggest that they are likely to substantially impact, or be impacted by, management or its absence. We should not forget that government represents many primary stakeholders and resource users along with having its own interests. Often it is implied that stakeholders are only those outside of the government such as NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), fishing and other groups in civil society. In the Caribbean, where many co-management initiatives are led by State agencies, the inclusion of government is essential.

If co-management initiatives are initiated by non-government organisations then these organisations should make all efforts to draw government in as a partner. The art and science of stakeholder analysis helps to systematically determine who needs to be a partner in the co-management arrangement, and whose interests are too remote to make this necessary. Policy makers, especially those who are elected, are usually acutely conscious of their voting constituents. Technical officers who advise on policy must be aware of political realities and work with a realistic model of the politics of policy in coastal areas.

Trust and respect

Trust and respect are fundamental to durable co-management partnerships, but they are not tangible or easily measurable aspects of social capital. There are common dimensions of trust and respect that help us to better understand these terms. Some expressions of trust among group members include:

- Looking after the common interests of the group
- Promoting the partnership ahead of oneself
- Expecting the group to meet responsibilities
- Exchanging information and opinions freely
- Assisting the group to sustain a spirit of collective action
- Ensuring equitable distribution of rewards and benefits

The importance of having respect among unequal partners should not be overlooked. Fishers and other coastal resource users who have low socioeconomic status often see respect as a critical factor in relationships with government agencies or powerful private sector interests such as the tourism industry. Some dimensions of creating and maintaining respect are:

- Acknowledging partners' contributions to the group
- Creating equal opportunities for participation
- Assisting the disadvantaged to make their own inputs
- Recognising the special knowledge of resource users
- Restraining from exercising power over others
- Accommodating the critical interests of stakeholders

Our research has found trust and respect to be more critical in the institutional arrangements for coastal management in the Caribbean than they seem to be elsewhere. This may be a reflection of the inter-personal dynamics in small societies. It is imperative that relations of trust and respect exist at the start or are part of the planning in initiating co-management.

Collective action and organizations

Community organising will be a critical component of introducing or strengthening co-management in the Caribbean. This involves the promotion and support of collective action. Collective action is defined as coordinated behaviour of groups towards a common interest or purpose. Collective action needs special attention, especially in relation to fishing industry organisations. The CANARI "people and the sea" project that took place in the village of Laborie, St. Lucia, provides lessons on community level collective action in several spheres (visit www.canari.org).

The weaknesses of fishing industry organisations in the Caribbean suggests that much will have to be done to promote sustained collective action to institutionalise co-management. Sustained collective action is necessary to make co-management successful. Policies that constantly change and the apparent victimisation of interest or pressure groups are among the factors that inhibit sustained collective action.

Decentralisation, delegation and devolution

Except for private property, the status of the State as the ultimate authority over natural resources usually makes it impossible for other stakeholders to legally assume power in resource management policy decision-making unless they are granted that right or privilege by a government authority. Limitations in stakeholder and state agency capacity, and in the legal framework, are often barriers to decentralisation, delegation and devolution for co-management.

The re-distribution of power from government to other stakeholders is usually an incremental and gradual process based on good performance assessed through monitoring and evaluation. The extent of power redistribution parallels the three main types of co-management. The State relinquishes more power as you go from consultative, to collaborative, to delegated co-management. While it is important not to foster dependency, it is essential for the State to provide sufficient support to ensure that the co-management arrangement is on a sound footing. Higher, often national, levels of policy may determine the arrangement that is selected.

Regional and international instruments may also play a role in such policy. For example, Principle 4 of the ***St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS*** is to "Ensure meaningful participation by civil society in decision-making". Like most policy statements this can be interpreted to signify many things, including forming a policy foundation for co-management arrangements. Soon the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) will also be an overarching policy framework to take into account.

External agents and resources

External agents facilitate the process of co-management. They usually include donor and development agencies, international and national NGOs, private foundations, universities and private sector. The list of external agents will depend on the location and circumstances. Assistance to co-management is usually technical, financial or through institutional strengthening.

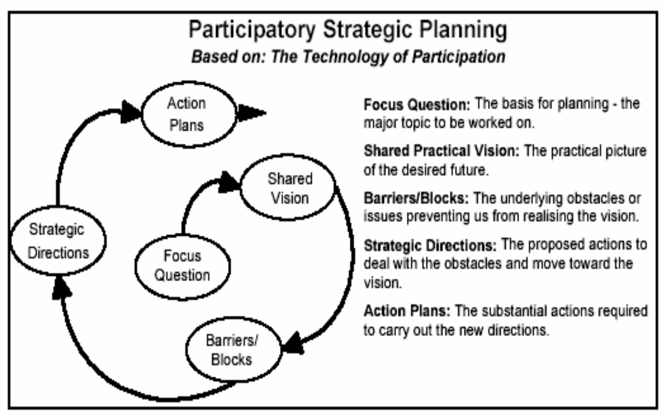
External agents act as potential assets by:
- Providing many operational resources
- Offering linkages to large global networks
- Attracting attention from other agencies
- Stimulating new plans and perspectives
- Facilitating the swift building of capacity

However, external agents, as potential liabilities, may:
- Encourage dependency on outside assistance
- Assist for terms too short to assure sustainability
- Try to impose their own views and agendas
- Overwhelm small organisations in various ways
- Ignore national policies and plans in progress

Most governments have policies for guiding relations with external agents. It is useful for all parties to be aware of the influence external agents may have in the policy domain.

How do we co-manage?

When policy formulation and planning are not participatory, or are divorced from management, strong partnerships among the co-management stakeholders are less likely to form. Co-management is more likely to be successful, and objective-driven, when it incorporates a participatory planning process. A methodology that has been used in several Caribbean marine and coastal management situations is shown below.



Management objectives

The importance of having good objectives has recently been emphasised in both fisheries and marine protected area management particularly in the context of evaluating the effectiveness of management. Good management objectives state very clearly and concisely what is intended to be achieved, by when and whom. We say they are SMARTER.

Specific — clear and easily understandable language
Measurable — use quantities to monitor progress
Achievable — be realistic about expectations and goals
Relevant —use objectives that stakeholders agree to
Time-bound — use milestones to assist in monitoring
Evaluated — build in a process for assessing outputs
Reviewed — review objectives and adjust them to suit

Local and scientific knowledge

In co-management, local or traditional ecological knowledge is more likely to become incorporated into planning and management due to the close and ongoing relationships that are established among partners. In conventional management the State tends to rely more on expert scientific advice. Local and scientific knowledge are very often complementary. Co-management is more likely to succeed if the resource is one that stakeholders know a lot about. The exchange of knowledge and learning is very beneficial to all parties.

Decision-making, power and equity

There is considerable variety in the levels and types of institutional arrangements for formal and informal decision-making around the region. There are several degrees of stakeholder involvement and power. Real power and perceived power are factors in determining the interest and willingness of stakeholders to engage in dialogue and negotiations. The power advantages of the strong and the disadvantages of the weak make them both reluctant to co-manage because of nothing to gain and too much to loose, respectively. It is essential to be aware of power differences.

Co-management is likely to re-distribute power. It may be resisted by those who want to avoid losing, or sharing, power. Equity is about ensuring fairness to stakeholders in several respects. It differs from equality in recognising that capacity, authority and responsibility will vary amongst the partners, but that each should play a role that is appropriate. Equity is linked to power in that disadvantaged groups (including the poor, women, youth, elderly, ethnic or religious minorities etc.) may need to be informed and empowered in order to bring them to positions of equity within the arrangements.

Building capacity

Participation in co-management often requires building the capacities of individuals and organizations. The need to organize representative stakeholder bodies will arise, even if only for logistic reasons. Community-based co-management arrangements are typically with a local governance body such as a village council. Good coastal resource management involves participation, even if not called co-management.

Leadership

Leadership is a key element of capacity building. Without good leadership it is unlikely that appropriate capacity will be built in any organisation. Style of leadership is very relevant to co-management. The participative or democratic style is fundamentally most compatible with co-management. Yet, authoritarian approaches may be more appropriate at times.

Leadership style may determine the chances of successfully negotiating agreements, reaching consensus and encouraging buy-in to support compromise outcomes. Effective leadership stresses bringing out the group's vision and mobilising it to work towards achieving the collective vision.

Communication, cooperation and coordination

There is a need in the region for considerable improvement in communication, cooperation and coordination. These terms are closely related. Communication is a process by which information and understanding is transferred. Cooperation follows communication if the parties decide to work with each other. Coordination entails communication, cooperation and leadership for harmonisation of activities. Assignment of clear responsibilities facilitates this in co-management.

Conflict management and negotiation

Conflicts are not necessarily negative. They may cause more equitable power relationships to emerge and improve policy. The issue is how to manage conflicts in order to reach (at least temporary) solutions in the most appropriate and least disruptive or harmful manner. The goal of conflict management is not to avoid conflict, but to supply skills that can help people to express their differences and solve their problems for win-win, or mutually beneficial, outcomes.

Compliance and enforcement

Compliance with, and enforcement of, environmental legislation is poor in the Caribbean. Co-management may facilitate enforcement by incorporating responsible agencies as stakeholders. It can be an asset to enforcement agencies by bringing stakeholders together in a forum where issues can be resolved jointly. Weak enforcement hinders co-management by increasing the uncertainty of resource sustainability and decreasing the returns to investment in participation. Factors influencing compliance include:

- Benefits from non-compliance
- Deterrents, penalties and sanctions
- Actual outcomes of enforcement
- Perceived legitimacy of regulations
- Practicality of the regulations
- Norms and morals of the individual
- Level of participation in management

Although policy-makers and advisers may not be engaged in the fieldwork of co-management it helps to know what tools and factors are most relevant to the inevitable challenges.

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