

# **The Development of a Caribbean Regional Network of Fisherfolk Organisations and its Role in Influencing Fisheries Policy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There have been many attempts in the Caribbean to establish networks of civil society organisations in order to increase their voice in decision- and policy-making about the use and management of the natural resources on which many Caribbean people depend for their livelihoods. However, few have had sustained success, even at the national level. This success story examines the development of a regional network of fisherfolk organisations, through a systematic process of capacity building and strategic planning, facilitated by the CRFM Secretariat, CERMES and CANARI, with funding from the CTA and the Commonwealth Foundation. It documents the network's success in terms of policy influence and analyses the key factors that have led to these successes. It also considers the challenges facing the network as it seeks to formalise its structure and expand its range of influence. It concludes by listing the lessons learned that can be of value to other civil society organisations and networks seeking to influence policies related to marine and coastal resources.

KEY WORDS: Fisheries, governance, networks, capacity building, Caribbean

## **Desarrollo de Una Red Regional de Organizaciones de Pescadores en el Caribe y su Influencia en la Política Pesquera**

Ha habido muchos intentos en el Caribe para establecer redes de organizaciones de la sociedad civil, con el fin de aumentar su voz en la toma de decisiones y en la formulación de políticas sobre el uso y gestión de los recursos naturales de los cuales muchos pueblos del Caribe dependen para su subsistencia. Pocos han tenido un éxito sostenido, incluso a nivel nacional. Este documento examina el desarrollo de una red regional de organizaciones de pescadores, que se ha realizado a través de un proceso sistemático de fortalecimiento de las capacidades y de la planificación estratégica. Esta experiencia fue facilitada por la Secretaría del CRFM, CERMES y CANARI, con la financiación de la CTA y la Fundación de la Commonwealth. Se documenta el éxito que ha tenido la Red al influir en las políticas y al analizar los factores claves. Asimismo, se toma en cuenta los desafíos que enfrenta la red en busca de formalizar su estructura y ampliar su ámbito de influencia. El trabajo concluye enumerando las lecciones aprendidas que pueden ser de utilidad para otras organizaciones de la sociedad civil y las redes que buscan influir en las políticas relacionadas con los recursos marinos y costeros.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Pesquerías, redes, formación de capacidades, Caribe

## **Le Développement d'un Réseau Régional des Caraïbes des Organisations de Pêcheurs et de leur Influence dans la Politique de Pêche**

Il y a eu beaucoup de tentatives dans les Caraïbes pour établir des réseaux d'organisations de la société civile afin d'augmenter sa voix dans la prise de décisions et la formulation de politiques sur l'utilisation et la gestion des ressources naturelles dont beaucoup de peuples des Caraïbes dépendent pour leur subsistance. Toutefois, peu ont eu un succès soutenu, même au niveau national. Ce travail examine le développement d'un réseau régional d'organisations de pêcheurs, à travers un processus systématique de renforcement la capacité et de la planification stratégique, facilité par le Secrétariat du CRFM, CERMES et CANARI, avec financement la CTA et de la Fondation du Commonwealth. On documente le succès du réseau en termes d'influence politique et analyse des facteurs clef qui ont porté à ces succès. De même, il considère les défis auxquels fait face le réseau à la recherche de formaliser de sa structure et étendre son cadre d'influence. Le travail conclut en énumérant les leçons apprises qui peuvent être d'utilité pour d'autres organisations la société civile et des réseaux qui cherchent influencer les politiques en rapport avec les ressources marines et côtières.

MOTS CLÉS: Pêcheries, réseaux, formation de capacités, les Caraïbes

## **INTRODUCTION**

This success story examines the outcomes of activities conducted under two major regional programmes aimed at enhancing the input of Caribbean fisherfolk into regional policy processes, through institutional strengthening of the primary and national fisherfolk organisations (PFOs and NFOs) in the Caribbean and the establishment of a regional

network of national fisherfolk organisations, the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO).

The core programme of activities was initiated in 2006 and is being coordinated by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) in partnership with the Centre Technique de Coopération Agricole et Rurale (CTA) based in the Netherlands. The CTA recently

approved a second phase of the programme. Technical and other support comes from the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), University of the West Indies (UWI) mainly through its project on Marine Resource Governance in the Eastern Caribbean (MarGov). The CRFM programme was developed based on a needs assessment of Caribbean fisherfolk organisations (FFOs) that concluded in November 2004 (CRFM 2004) and was discussed in subsequent CRFM meetings that involved fisherfolk in 2004 and 2005.

The 2004 meeting recommended the formation of a regional network of NFOs, recognising the need for strengthening the capacities of fisherfolk organisations through a strategy for addressing the issues revealed by the needs assessment:

- i) Lack of critical mass of NFOs for launching the network,
- ii) Fisherfolk organisations' weak management skills,
- iii) Insufficient access to relevant information by fisher folk, and
- iv) Fisherfolk's limited communication and advocacy skills

The 2005 meeting produced a *Strategy and Medium Term Action Plan for the Institutional Strengthening of Regional Fisher Folk Organisations - 2006 to 2010* to address the points above. It is through this bottom-up participatory process that the programme was designed. The overall objective is "to contribute to improved income earnings, higher standards of living of fisher folk and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Caribbean". The more specific purpose is to have "institutional capacities of fisher folk organisations developed at the regional, national and community levels" (McConney 2007).

More recently, this programme has been supplemented by activities implemented in partnership with the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), with support from the Commonwealth Foundation under the Commonwealth Marine Fisheries Management and Coastal Zone project. This project seeks to mobilise the 53 nations of the Commonwealth as a platform to enable an improvement in the management of the world's coastal and marine fisheries and to raise awareness and build capacity among coastal communities. It seeks to explore and address the need for strengthened institutional arrangements, policies and capacities to deliver more effective governance of fisheries, strengthen resilience within vulnerable fisher communities and optimise the contribution that fisheries can make to national development. The project specifically sets out to address the need for more effective trade and market measures, and address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). The aim is to take forward a policy-focused agenda, engaging with UN policy processes including at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and linking with specific policy work including the island nations of

the Caribbean. The project's findings will be considered during the Commonwealth People's Forum and reported to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, both taking place in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009.

This initiative is also expected to contribute to and draw on a number of regional research programmes focused on marine governance, such as the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and MarGov projects. In particular, several of the key members of the CNFO participated in the communications workshops under MarGov (Haynes 2008a and 2008b) and in the Regional Symposium on Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) (Fanning *et al.* 2009).

#### METHODOLOGY

The institutional strengthening was carried out primarily through workshops (e.g. CRFM 2007a, 2007b), supplemented in between by support, encouragement and mentoring from CRFM and CERMES and peer support and information exchange between key members of the CNFO.

Although 'success' is not explicitly defined in any of the project documents, it is implicit in the entire approach to the programmes that success should be determined by the resource users themselves rather than just the project coordinators. Success has therefore been evaluated mainly in relation to objectives set by or in conjunction with the primary target beneficiaries - the leaders of the CNFO and of the NFOs and PFOs it represents. So, success in this context means the extent to which:

- i) The workshops were successful in achieving their objectives, which is well-documented in workshop reports and summarised in Table 1;
- ii) Participants' individual capacity has been built and how this has enabled them to operate more effectively at the national and regional level, evaluated mainly through telephone interviews with key participants;
- iii) Fisherfolk, and specifically the CNFO, have been able to increase their influence on regional policy, evaluated through a combination of the telephone interviews and the tangible results in terms of fisherfolk involvement in formal policy and decision-making processes;
- iv) Progress has been made towards the achievement of CNFO's vision and mission, and
- v) The CNFO is likely to be sustainable beyond the completion of current projects and what would be required to assure its long-term sustainability.

This assessment draws on the interviews with CNFO members and feedback from the implementing partners. It also reviews the network's achievements in relation to the organisational development targets it had set itself.

Telephone interviews were conducted with five members of the CNFO:

- i) Bhawase Harripaul, Secretary, # 66 Fisheries Upper Corentyne Fisherman Co-Operative Society (UCFCS), Guyana,
- ii) Glaston “Chris” White, Treasurer, Jamaica Fishermen’s Cooperative Union Ltd (JFCUL) and Chair, Halfmoon Bay Fishermen’s Cooperative Society Ltd., Jamaica,
- iii) Huron Vidal, Board Member, National Association of Fisher Folk Co-Operatives and Treasurer, St. Peters Fisheries Co-operative, Commonwealth of Dominica,
- iv) Joslyn Lee Quay, Consultant to Seafood Industries Development Company (SIDC) and member of Trinidad and Tobago United Fisherfolk (TTUF), Trinidad and Tobago,
- v) Nadine Nembhard, Executive Secretary, Belize Fishermen Co-operative Association, Belize,

Vernel Nicholls, President, Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisation (BARNUFO) also provided unsolicited, but highly relevant, feedback at a conference which she and two of the paper’s authors attended in September 2009.

## RESULTS

### Outcomes of the Workshops

A list of the workshops, their main focus and key points from the participant evaluations is provided in Table 1. Table 1 indicates that the majority of the workshop objectives were achieved. The most significant outputs from the perspective of policy influence were statements delivered to the Ministerial Council and the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, the documented analysis of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) from a collective fisherfolk perspective and the significant press coverage of fisherfolk views during the workshops.

### Capacity Built and Application at the National and Local Levels

Participants identified the following as some of the important successes in this area:

- i) *Increased awareness and self-confidence*, resulting in a decision to take over the leadership of and revitalise the Barbados NFO (Vernel Nicholls, Chair, Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO));
- ii) *Willingness to apply new skills* and take on new challenges in the Belize NFO (Nadine Nembhard), who stated that *“the overall experience...has encouraged me to stay strong and keep pressing forward”*;
- iii) The motivation *“to do more on my national Board and give back more to the fisheries indus-*

*try”* (Glaston White),

- iv) *Enhanced facilitation and outreach skills*. For example, Joslyn Lee Quay trained Secretaries and Treasurers of the Trinidad and Tobago NFO and the PFOs in leadership and management training. Huron Vidal noted that the training had helped him *“to share information with the fisherfolks in a way that they understand and appreciate”*. Nadine Nembhard indicated that the skills acquired had enabled BFPA to reach out more effectively to the National Fisherman’s Cooperative and the Northern Fishermen’s Cooperative.
- v) *Application of planning and project proposal writing skills* to develop the NFOs and PFOs and secure additional funding and training programmes. For example, Nadine Nembhard was able to contribute to developing a strategic and communication plan for the BCFA. Joslyn Lee Quay was able to apply his skills in the development of the Seafood Industries Development Company (SIDC) and also secured support for training of the NFO and PFOs in financial literacy, business development and understanding of the national insurance system.
- vi) *Enhanced communication skills*. For example, Vernel Nicholls highlighted the greatly improved media coverage of fisherfolk issues in Barbados that she has been able to achieve through issuing press releases, appearing on television and developing closer relationships with the media practitioners.
- vii) *Adaptive management and enhanced capacity for market research and marketing*: Nadine Nembhard noted that *“Last year the fishermen who exported lobster to the USA lost significant market share very suddenly as a result of a move by the U.S. government. This became a major issue for the Cooperative. I applied some of the skills learned in the workshop which helped me in figuring out a solution to this problem of market identification. I was able to do a market survey;*
- viii) *Networking and information exchange*: all interviewees highlighted in one way or another the added value that membership of the network and the exchange of experiences and information among peers.

### National, Regional and International Policy Influence

Interviewees pointed to the CNFO’s presence at the CRFM’s Ministerial Council meeting in January 2009, the securing of observer status at the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, and their contribution to drafting the Common Fisheries Policy as the most tangible outcomes at the regional level. Others characterised it more generally as now having *“space to bring all groups together to make a louder noise in advocating the issues relevant to PFOs and*

their members” (Nadine Nembhard) and “We are now being recognised. Acceptance is now there” (Glaston White). Interviewees also noted that the development of communication mechanisms, such as the section of the CRFM website dedicated to fisherfolk and the fisherfolk newsletter (Fisher Folk Net), had served to raise the profile of fisherfolk issues with decision-makers.

At the national level, interviewees pointed to a range of achievements in relation to influencing policy and practice:

- i) In Trinidad and Tobago, the creation by the SIDC of a cookbook featuring underutilised species and the introduction of aquaculture;
- ii) In Belize, the reorganisation of the BFCA has contributed to the effective re-engagement of the National Fisherman’s Cooperative and stimulated its decision to formally rejoin BFCA at the December 2009 AGM;

- iii) In Dominica where the NFO is involved in setting up, managing and maintaining Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and ensuring that the regulations are being followed, Huron Vidal notes that “the creation of the CNFO has opened doors for the NFOs and PFOs, so much so that the Chief Fisheries Officer has agreed for the FFOs to partner on setting up Fish Aggregating Devices. The fact that there is an organised body gives the CFO confidence to pass on the responsibility;
- iv) In Guyana, Bhawase Harripaul highlighted the fact that “fishermen are getting more hearing from government...[and] being better positioned to advocate and influence the government. The Minister is showing an interest and asking whether we have put in place the skills and tools we have learned having attended these conferences;

**Table 1.** Key points from recent fisherfolk organisation workshops

Workshop title, dates and venue	Main focus/objectives	Results	Participant observations in evaluation sessions on success in achieving objectives
<i>Training Workshop on Management, Communication and Advocacy for Fisher Folk Organisations in CARICOM</i> 22 September - 3 October, 2008 Castries, St. Lucia (Almerigi 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build support for a regional Fisherfolk organisation and the skills needed to coordinate it and national Fisherfolk organisations, including the development of skills in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Planning</li> <li>- Project Cycle Management</li> <li>- Communication and Advocacy</li> <li>- Conflict management and negotiation</li> <li>- Leadership</li> <li>- Facilitation</li> <li>- Business Planning</li> <li>- Organisational and financial management</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><u>Tangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft vision statement</li> <li>• Environmental analysis (external environment)</li> <li>• SWOT analysis</li> </ul> <p><u>Intangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills of 25 fisherfolk built in a range of management, leadership and communication skills</li> <li>• Enhanced commitment of Fisherfolk to the development of the regional network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall evaluation favourable with “a high degree of enthusiasm for the usefulness of nearly all methods learned with project cycle management and facilitation skills rated the highest (Almerigi 2008)</li> </ul>
<i>First Workshop on Regional Fisherfolk Organisations Policy Influence and Planning</i> 13 – 15 January 2009, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (McIntosh 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide fisherfolk leaders with up-to-date information on fisheries initiatives in the region so as to encourage their active participation in advancing fisheries policy recommendations; and</li> <li>• to review the RFO-CU activities undertaken in the light of attainment of their goals and objectives, expected outputs and outcomes and prepare strategic and action plans, including a communication strategy and plan for the RFO-CU.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Tangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalised vision and mission statements</li> <li>• Policy statement for submission to Ministerial Council</li> <li>• Identification of strategic objectives and priorities</li> <li>• Action planning for 2009/2010 initiated</li> <li>• Additional capacity building needs identified.</li> </ul> <p><u>Intangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better informed RFO-CU and fisherfolk leaders;</li> <li>• Greater engagement of the RFO-CU in regional and national policy formulation;</li> <li>• Greater public and Ministerial awareness of the RFO-CU and its objectives;</li> <li>• A clearer collective sense of the RFO-CU’s long- and short-term direction; and</li> <li>• Enhanced networking within the RFO-CU and between the RFO-CU and its national partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall evaluation was good-very good:</li> <li>• helped build confidence to assume greater leadership.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learned a lot about regional policy and activities, “walking instead of creeping”.</li> <li>- more time needed to digest the large amounts of information and to allow participants to ask questions and respond.</li> <li>- high level of participation during the meeting an indicator of enthusiasm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 1 (continued).

<p><i>Caribbean fishers collaborating on suitable gear and techniques that will contribute to sustainable fisheries, 1-3 April 2009, Grenada (Lay 2009)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop recommendations on sustainable fishing practices relating to lobsters, snappers, reef and pelagic fisheries in the CARICOM region.</li> <li>Increase fisherfolk awareness of fishing and livelihood relationships to ecosystem-based management</li> <li>Increase the commitment of participating fishers to the sharing of information on the exchange and to adopting recommendations on a personal level.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Tangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations developed and shared with local fishers and more widely via press release.</li> </ul> <p><u>Intangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eleven fishers, including five CNFO-CU leaders, more aware of fishing and livelihood relationships to ecosystem-based management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluations by the fishers who participated were all positive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that the Grenada exchange is one of the best if not the best workshop that I or most of us as fishermen have ever attended because we were able to share our fishing methods and learn other methods that are used within the region.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Second Workshop on Regional Fisherfolk Organisations Policy Influence and Planning 15-17 April 2009 Commonwealth of Dominica (McConney 2009)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse (a) the outputs of the CRFM working group on the draft CFP, and (b) the agenda items for the Special CFF in relation to the knowledge, interests, strategies and plans of the CNFO-CU.</li> <li>Formulate an approach for informed and meaningful participation of the CNFO-CU in regional fisheries governance and policy development through its observer status at the Special CFF proposed for 17 April in Dominica, and with a view to CNFO-CU participation in the conclusion and implementation of the CFP.</li> <li>Ensure completion of all planning tasks agreed to at the first workshop in January and make arrangements for the implementation of the 2009 operational and communication plans</li> </ul>	<p><u>Tangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documented analysis of CFP from fisherfolk perspective with approaches developed for participation in the Special CFF</li> <li>Medium-term strategic plan, 2009 action and communication plans for CNFO-CU completed.</li> </ul> <p><u>Intangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seven CNFO-CU leaders better equipped to contribute towards fisheries policy development.</li> <li>CNFO-CU representative fully prepared for first participation as observer at Special CFF.</li> <li>Partners CANARI and CERMES better equipped to assist the CNFO-CU and CFP process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall favourable evaluations with the following specifically noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>short time frame to achieve all objectives – policy objectives more fully achieved than planning ones;</li> <li>high value of group learning and opportunity to go through the draft CFP in detail, share the understanding of content and prepare representatives to comment on it;</li> <li>increased awareness of areas where capacity still needs to be built and of the need to take activities between workshops very seriously in order to sustain progress given high cost and irregularity of face-to-face meetings.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Achievement of Vision and Mission

CNFO finalised its vision and mission statements during the January 2009 workshop held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (see McIntosh 2009) as follows:

- i) Vision: *Primary, national and regional fisherfolk organisations with knowledgeable members collaborating to sustain fishing industries that are mainly owned and governed by fisherfolk who enjoy a good quality of life achieved through the ecosystem based management of fisheries resources.*
- ii) Mission: *To improve the quality of life for fisherfolk and develop sustainable and profitable industry through networking, representation and capacity building*

Many of the results listed above and in Table 1 attest to the progress made in capacity building, networking, representation, and the development of fisherfolk organisations at all levels. The 2009 Grenada workshop (Lay 2009) exemplifies some of the strides made, both in terms of the

CNFO's ability to drive its own agenda (documenting results and recommendations) and its progress in increasing its own and other fishers' understanding of ecosystem based management and its relationship to fishing and livelihoods. The development of a press release and facilitation of the dialogue with local fishers again provide evidence of increased capacity. To sum it up in the words of one of the participants, Armando Ramirez, *"I believe that the Grenada exchange is one of the best if not the best workshop that I or most of us as fishermen have ever attended. Because we were able to share our fishing methods and learn other methods that are used within the region. And for grass root fishermen to gather together to give recommendations in regards to what gears are to be used for sustainable fishing, is exactly what governments, NGOs, biologists, etc should be promoting, encouraging and supporting, financially and otherwise. So this, Grenada exchange was a success, excellent, stupendous, great, unique, extraordinary."* (Lay 2009).

However, long-term monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the vision and mission will require some further reflection on how 'quality of life' should be

measured, what is the starting point in terms of a baseline, and how data can be collected and analysed on a regular basis.

### Organisational Development of the Network

An ambitious programme of strategic and organisational planning has been embarked upon. Each of the workshops has generated significant advances in this planning process but the momentum has not been sustained between workshops, resulting in targets for completion being missed on a number of occasions. This partly relates to the challenges outlined in Section 4 below, but also to the inherent challenges of the coordination of, and communications between, a group of people whose work involves varied hours and periods when some are inaccessible because they are fishing. Since email, and particularly Skype, have been identified as the preferred means of communication, this is exacerbated by technological challenges such as unreliable access to computers, poor broadband service and, in the case of Belize, the legal ban on Skype. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, the following plans are being completed and used – a medium term strategic plan, a communication plan and an action plan for 2009. The CNFO is also preparing project proposals for its funding.

### CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The main identified challenges for the CNFO are:

- i) Finding an appropriate legal structure that will enable it to secure its own funding. There is currently no legal framework for the establishment of a regional organisation, so it will have to legally register in one country. CRFM has secured further assistance from the CTA to analyse the options and recommend the most appropriate one, but this clearly has potential to be a challenge in future as key officers of the CNFO may be in countries other than the one in which it is registered but will nevertheless need to ensure that all the legal and statutory requirements are met.
- ii) Sustaining the commitment and effort needed to coordinate the network and participate in policy processes, particularly as the CNFO would increasingly like to extend its influence to international policy processes. Mitchell Lay, the current coordinator, highlights the tension between the time needed to communicate and coordinate effectively within the network, to attend regional and international meetings, to continue as an active fisher in order to secure his family's livelihood needs, and generally to "*make sure things are OK at home*". This tension is not an unusual one in civil society organisations and networks that depend on volunteers, particularly as there is currently not enough recognition from

government bodies or technical agencies that participation in training, consultations and policy processes, though highly desirable, often means participants sacrificing one or several days' pay or income. In such circumstances, participation in such events remains inequitable. On the other hand this may be seen as an investment on the part of the fisherfolk leaders in developing capacity to safeguard their future interests.

Mitchell Lay has suggested that the hiring of a dedicated paid coordinator for the CNFO would be the best approach to resolving these challenges but is also in the process of succession planning at the level of the Antigua and Barbuda NFO.

### LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

Several of the lessons learned under this project validate earlier CANARI research findings on capacity building and effective policy influence, notably that:

- i) The capacities required for effective participatory natural resource management encompass much more than just skills (though these are essential) and include an institutional world view and organisational culture that genuinely embrace shared policy and decision-making and collaborative management; appropriate institutional and organisational structures, material resources; adaptive strategies; and linkages. The network both exemplifies and demonstrates the value of linkages (Figure 1). A significant investment in capacity building is needed over a period of several years in order to facilitate the development of a sustainable organisation or network. In order to be successful, this is likely to include a high degree of mentoring and monitoring of progress from the support agencies. Patrick McConney, for example, indicated that the time spent on these functions significantly exceeded the time spent developing, facilitating, and reporting on workshops;
- ii) A small number of key "change agents", acting individually and in concert, can significantly influence policy and practice. Such individuals may or may not formally occupy the most powerful position within their organisations and networks, but typically demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility and to adopt, apply and adapt the lesson they have learned. For example, Vernel Nicholls was not the Chair of BARNUFO when she became involved in the capacity building programme but was catalysed by the process to take on the responsibility.
- iii) Partnerships between technical agencies (such as CRFM and the national Departments of Fisheries), applied research institutes (such as CANARI and

CERMES) and resource users (such as the fishers) can contribute to the enhanced capacity and understanding of all parties and facilitates the development of consensual positions that reflect rather than ignore some of the inherent complexities of and tensions between conservation and livelihood considerations.

- iv) Effective policy influence requires the use of multiple communication products and channels (e.g. coverage in the media, written and oral policy briefings, engagement in formal policy processes, and the development of relationships with policy makers and their technical support staff). It is also a continuous process, which needs to be adapted to respond to changes in the external environment. For example, the CNFO had relatively little time to consider the final draft of the Common Fisheries Policy before developing and presenting its position on it to the Ministerial Council.

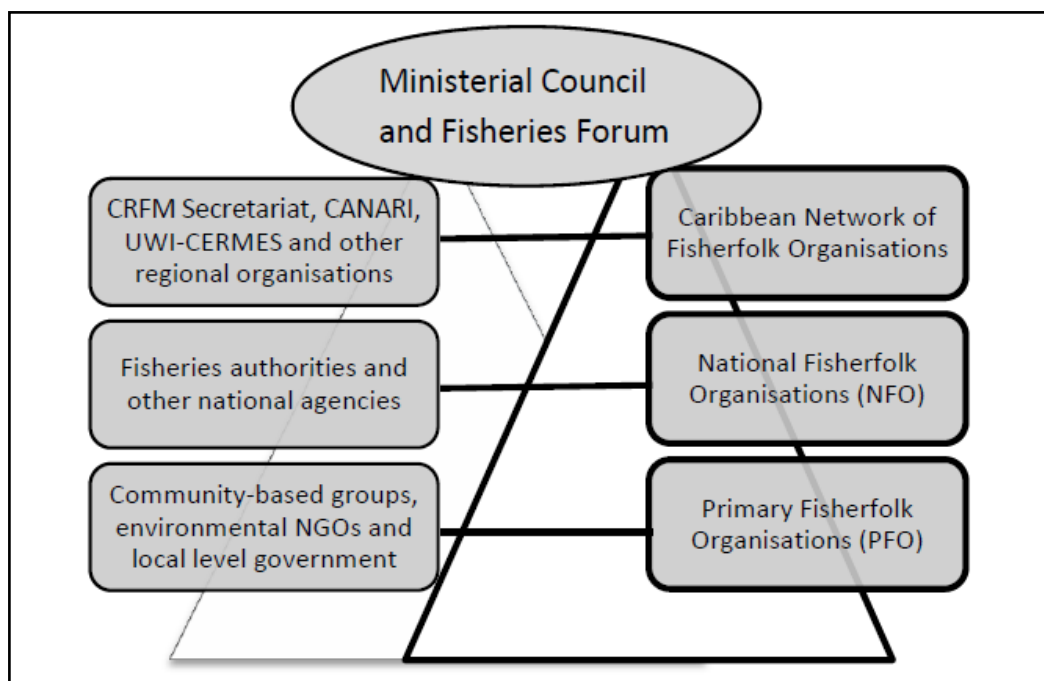
In a region where it has proven difficult to develop and sustain networks, even at the national level, the approach taken to the development of the CNFO provides a valuable model, which demonstrates that a regional network can be developed even if the constituent national organisations are not initially all functioning effectively. On the contrary, it is has been the creation of the CNFO - and the skills, information-sharing and relationships that it has engendered – that has facilitated the strengthening of NFOs and PFOs.

Additionally, Mitchell Lay points out that few people in the fisheries industry move outside it, though they may change positions within their organisations or networks. The investment in capacity building is therefore one that is likely to continue benefitting the industry for many years.

Sustainability of the CNFO will depend on the improved skills and capacities of executives and officials of its member organisations, institutional sustainability resulting from enhanced network structure, management and operations, and proper functioning of sound administrative and management systems. Political and social sustainability will be due in part to the CNFO enhancing its credibility as the legitimate voice of the fisherfolk organisations and fishers of the region, and by expanding its partnerships with UWI-CERMES, CANARI and other organisations. The creation and maintenance of an organisational environment conducive to responding to stakeholder needs as well as seeking public support and financial sustainability for member organisations will partly depend upon CNFO’s capacity to undertake sustained advocacy and mobilise external resources.

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**Figure 1.** Linkages in fisherfolk organising and policy influence

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