National Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms (NICs): Marine Resources Management through Effective Integrative Governance

Mecanismos Nacionales de Coordinación Intersectoriales (NIC): Gestión de Recursos Marinos a través de Gobierno Integrativa Eficaz

Mécanismes Nationaux de Coordination Intersectorielle (NIC): Gestion des Ressources Marines par une Gouvernance Intégrative Efficace

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

The establishment or enhancement of National Intersectoral Coordination Mechanisms (NICs) has been identified as a priority for the project on *Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems* (CLME+ Project, 2015 - 2020). However, NICs need to be well developed in order to strengthen governance arrangements and serve needs, not only for CLME+ project purposes. They are critical for countries and organizations in the Wider Caribbean Region with shared interests in specific aspects of marine policy (Mahon et al. 2010).

NICs are designed based on the principles of good governance and are empirically flexible enough to accommodate different types of governance arrangements. They operate through nested policy cycles by creating well-coordinated two-way linkages between national and regional processes; local and national levels connect vertically, while lateral connections are established within countries (McConney et al. 2016). These linkages span both the social and ecological parts of governance systems, arrangements and institutions. NICs can be viewed as an operational arm within national governance frameworks (McConney et al. 2016) that carry out all or some of the five stages of a policy cycle. The large marine ecosystem (LME) governance framework is based on a multi-level system, with nested policy cycles aimed at governance effectiveness (i.e. governance effectiveness assessment framework – GEAF). Governance within countries can partly be assessed by how well their NICs perform. Guidelines were developed to assist stakeholders in perfecting the design and performance of NICs.

Methods

In 2015, a global rapid survey of NICs in selected LMEs and a survey of NICs in the CLME+ region were conducted (McConney et al. 2016). Ten LMEs were selected for the global rapid survey. The LMEs were chosen based on how accessible and quickly information could be found. The survey instrument solicited information on the existence, characteristics, and functions of present, past, and planned NICs. The survey targeted all 40+ countries and territories of the CLME+ Project (McConney et al. 2016). Individuals from government fisheries, environment, tourism, foreign affairs, transportation, and energy agencies with knowledge of NICs were identified by snowball sampling and interviewed via voice (telephone and internet). In the next phase, the key findings of the two surveys were distilled into a set of guidelines on NICs that showcased the best practices based on the evidence (Compton et al. 2017).

Results and Discussion

The survey report indicated that many stakeholders were proponents of establishing or reactivating NICs, as a measure for promoting good governance within marine processes (McConney et al. 2016). Figure 1 shows a list of some of the main lessons learned from the NICs survey in the CLME+ region. The lessons learned informed best practice guidance that can

Promote and **practice the principles of good governance** as fundamental to NIC
Ensure the availability and use of up-to-date and **non-conflicting legislation**
Innovatively **reduce the operational costs** of meetings and communicating
Mobilise **champions and leaders** to give a NIC new energy and direction
Develop internal **problem-solving and conflict management** mechanisms
Exert more policy influence by **effectively mapping and managing networks**
Include **multiple stakeholder** groups directly or through sub-structures
Understand the hidden **power dynamics** associated with NIC stakeholders
Increase **private sector participation** for economic links and policy influence
Document processes for **transparency, accountability, institutional memory**

Figure 1. List of lessons learned that can be used as good practices for NICs in the CLME+ region.

be used for establishing, strengthening and sustaining NICs (Compton et al. 2017).

No comprehensive NIC success stories, where all the features of an ideal NIC were present, were identified from the survey of the Wider Caribbean Region. Given the region's diversity, proposing a single NIC model may not be successful for all types of NICs and governance arrangements in the region (McConney et al. 2016). Although not researched thoroughly, there were a few NICs that could be used as examples of good practices because they met most of the requirements of a successful NIC (Table 1). These NICs were investigated using available literature and online sources. The information presented was not validated by in-country investigation and may not be the most accurate representation of how these NICs actually function. Triangulation among respondents and secondary sources was attempted, but this typically left a large are of uncertainty due to differing perspectives and time slices of data.

Establishing and sustaining NICs is challenging. However, marine governance in the region is multifaceted and the LME governance framework allows for the adaptation of specific approaches as needed and change over time. This framework was incorporated into the CLME+ Project along with ecosystem-based management. The governance arrangements within this framework and the region can become operationalized by developing tools and strategies such as seen in NICs that can facilitate the implementation of good marine governance and management for sustainability. In order to fill existing knowledge gaps, it is suggested that a comprehensive analysis of NICs across the region, focusing on their institutional development and/or reestablishment, should be completed. The NIC guidelines need to be tested against actual observed practices and experience during the implementation of the CLME+ Project, and then reassessed. This additional investigation is proposed as a component of the author's graduate research that is soon to commence.

Conclusions

NIC guidelines on good and best practices were developed from empirical evidence collected through a survey. However, several features of NICs remain to be better understood. In response to filling knowledge gaps from previous survey research, an additional study on NICs is commencing. The objectives are to: clarify the specification of NICs; identify case study countries and characterize the several types and stages of NICs; for each case study, obtain more detailed information to identify successes and best practices; make recommendations on incentives for CLME+ Project countries to establish or strengthen NICs; and promote NICs as critical mechanisms for marine governance beyond the CLME+ Project.

KEYWORDS: Integrative, governance, intersectoral, mechanisms, coordination

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Table 1. Examples of the good practicing NICs.

Country	Scope	Structure
Brazil Inter-ministerial Commission for Sea Resource (CIRM)	The CIRM in Brazil is one of the NICs that appears to have been successful over a long time. It was initially created as an academic initiative.	It is legal in status yet apparently flexible. NGOs and private sector interests are not official members; however, they are closely involved through sub-committees and working groups.
Puerto Rico/US Virgin Islands Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC)	The CFMC is responsible for the creation of FMPs for fishery resources in the US Caribbean EEZ off PR and the USVI.	All members come from state agencies. DAPs are advisory to the CFMC; they have a large number of NGOs, civil society actors and private parties
Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Ocean Governance Committee (OGC)	The concept of the OGC continues to be examined and to evolve and adapt under the scrutiny of the Commission's Ocean Governance Team	It was entirely governmental. Then it became more inclusive and participatory (non-governmental and communication-based organisations). The scope has also broadened in range of topics, extent of civil society outreach and stewardship.