

Participatory Processes for Involving Fisherfolk in Barbados Fisheries Management Planning

EMMA WILLIAMS¹, PATRICK MCCONNEY² and ANDERSON KINCH³

¹ *Natural Resource Management Programme,
CERMES, University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados*

² *Fisheries Division, Ministry of Agriculture
Bridgetown, Barbados*

³ *Oistins Fisherfolk Association
Christ Church, Barbados*

ABSTRACT

A bottom-up approach to planning was implemented for the formulation of the 2001 to 2003 Fisheries Management Plan for Barbados. Rather than seek public participation through obtaining comments on an existing draft, this process sought wide stakeholder input without prepared text. The main initiative was a series of fish landing site community consultations aimed at identifying issues and recommending actions for inclusion in the draft management plan. Fishing industry organisations and the Fisheries Division of government collaborated in this process. Industry issues focused mainly on immediate problems with landing site infrastructure and constraints affecting income-generating activities. Conservation was mentioned primarily in the context of fisheries known already to be in crisis. Most of the actions recommended placed responsibility for fisheries management principally on government, with relatively little responsibility shared by the fishing industry. This paper examines the inputs and outputs of the participatory process prior to drafting the 2001-2003 Fisheries Management Plan for Barbados.

KEY WORDS: Barbados, participatory, planning

INTRODUCTION

The first Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for Barbados was approved in 1997 following an introductory planning process that emphasised the role of a multi-stakeholder Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) with later input from individuals in the fishing industry through a series of public meetings (McConney and Mahon 1998). The legislation to give effect to the agreed upon management measures became law in 1998 as regulations under the Fisheries Act of 1993. Prior to this process the majority of people in the fishing industry and the general public were unfamiliar with the concept of fisheries management planning (McConney 1997). The first plan, for the three-year period 1997 to 2000, was intended primarily as a communication and education document (Fisheries Division 1997).

During the preparation of the 1997 - 2000 FMP few organisations existed in the fishing industry. The absence of fisherfolk organisations may have impacted as much on the contents of the Plan as it did on the process. The latter was more of an

exercise in the promotion of participation than it was in the technical and scientific aspects of fisheries management planning (McConney and Mahon 1998). However, in implementing the 1997-2000 FMP, the government of Barbados has encouraged a co-management approach to fisheries governance. The government assisted in establishing and strengthening fisherfolk organisations through a two-year Fisherfolk Organisation Development Project (FODP) reported on in McConney et al. (1998). The project was moderately successful in terms of creating or facilitating conditions that favour co-management (McConney in press). Several examples of attempted co-management exist in the Caribbean Community (Brown and Pomeroy 1999), and this form of partnership is seen as one of the more positive options for reforming fisheries governance in the region (Chakalall et al. 1998).

Although fisherfolk organisations have been formed through the FODP, several of them are still weak. One of the most significant problems has been that many of the organisations lack effective leadership to interest and sustain the involvement of members (McConney et al. 1998). The government's intention for the planning the new 2001 - 2003 Fisheries Management Plan is to involve fisherfolk organisations more in the process. This may help to strengthen both fisheries management planning and fisherfolk organisations in Barbados through information exchange and the demonstration of important roles that the industry organisations can play. An important aspect of developing the 2001 - 2003 FMP will be encouraging co-management and stakeholder participation that will strive towards a bottom-up, as opposed to the more conventional top-down, approach to planning.

There will be questions as to whether top-down consultation, or the encouragement of bottom-up participation, is more appropriate in Barbados at this time due to the present lack of awareness about fisheries management and the emergent development stage of the fisherfolk organisations. Indeed the role of government in the process of engineering co-management can also be brought under scrutiny (Pomeroy and Berkes 1997, Jentoft et al. 1998). However, it is generally thought that social partnerships will continue to play a key role in fisheries management planning in Barbados and throughout the eastern Caribbean, and therefore should be encouraged (Chakalall et al. 1998).

This paper looks at how the fisheries management planning process began for the formulation of the 2001 - 2003 FMP, with emphasis on the process used to involve fisherfolk, especially those associated with fishing industry organisations. It looks at the initial inputs and outputs related to this participatory event as a result of fieldwork. It is a work in progress that is being reported upon here as part of a graduate student research project. Early in 2001, the new plan is expected to be approved by the fisheries Minister prior to implementation, as required by law, following several other steps in the process.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS

The Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO) is a secondary, or umbrella, fisherfolk organisation formed through the FODP. Its members are the primary fisherfolk organisations scattered around the coast. With the exception of a single fishing cooperative, these groups are associations bound by an internal constitution, but not any national legal framework. Their development process and structure is examined in McConney et al. (1998).

BARNUFO recognised the growing need for community based co-management approaches to fisheries governance in the Caribbean and its potential role in the formulation and implementation of the 2001 - 2003 FMP. Its constituent organisations and Board of Directors widely accepted that fisherfolk must play an integral role in the effective and efficient management of fisheries resources throughout the Caribbean. Consequently, they saw stakeholder participation as a prerequisite for providing an equitable mechanism for establishing strong fisheries management processes and plans throughout the region.

Consistent with this guiding philosophy, BARNUFO applied to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada for research funding under its recently initiated Community Based Coastal Resources Management Project (Caribbean). The overall objective of the BARNUFO proposal was to undertake applied research and participatory activities to provide primary and secondary fisherfolk organisations in Barbados with the much needed capacity to meaningfully contribute towards the successful implementation of the 2001 - 2003 FMP, starting with formulation in a bottom-up planning process. BARNUFO's proposed project sought through its member organisations to formulate the fishing industry's perspective on issues for the formulation of the new FMP for 2001 - 2003, by funding research on fisheries issues to be conducted by and for the fisherfolk. The aim was also to facilitate capacity building in the fisherfolk organisations over an eighteen month period, set out in three phases: Pre-plan, Planning and Post plan, through the actual practice and experience of participatory planning. To achieve this the project was designed to comprise the following activities:

- i) Community FMP consultations
- ii) National FMP consultation
- iii) Training in research methods
- iv) Participatory research projects
- v) Reports and recommendations
- vi) Evaluation of the FMP process
- vii) Fisheries study tour (optional)

This paper focuses only on the community FMP consultations, the first set of activities.

The project was approved by IDRC and launched on 12 January 2000 at a BARNUFO Board of Directors' meeting by Ms Angela Watson, President. The BARNUFO project and the parallel year long Fisheries Division review of the existing 1997 - 2000 FMP with formulation of the 2001 - 2003 FMP, termed "FMP 2000" by the government of Barbados, were strategically scheduled to coincide.

This was to allow greater interaction between the two management-planning processes. The fisheries Minister launched FMP 2000 at the same BARNUFO meeting in a show of support for the simultaneous grassroots process. Figure 1 compares the processes for the two management plans, noting the intention for the present process to be driven by the fishing industry through the BARNUFO intervention. A fuller analysis of the 1997-2000 FMP process is in McConney and Mahon (1998).

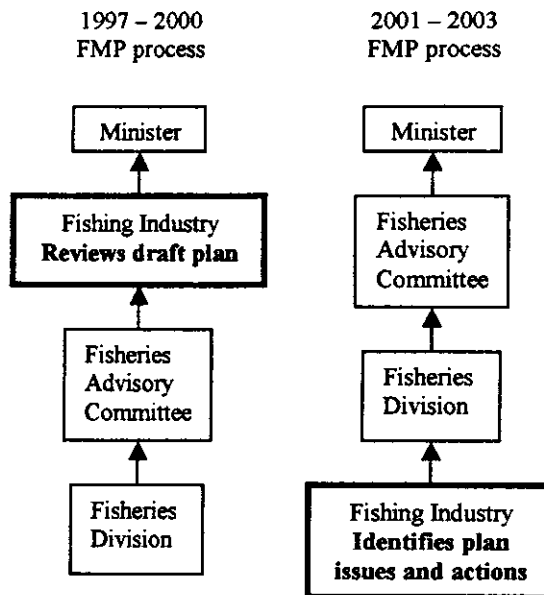


Figure 1. Comparison of past and present FMP processes

After launching the project, BARNUFO formed a sub-committee of three fisherfolk (a young fisherman, a boat owner/former fish processor and a boat owner/part-time fisherman) to work with a technical coordinator/advisor (the Chief Fisheries Officer) on project implementation. This sub-committee was intended to oversee all aspects of the project and to report to the monthly meeting of the BARNUFO Board of Directors. However, due mainly to logistic and communication problems this group did not function as intended. The President subsequently took on its role partly by co-opting available members of constituent fisherfolk organisations for various tasks, but primarily by doing most of the work herself. Although the Board of Directors, comprising primary organisation representatives, was kept informed, the President exercised considerable freedom in

making decisions in consultation with the adviser. The organisations participated little in decision-making although requested to do so by the President on occasion.

The FMP “community consultations”, as they were called, began on 23 July 2000 at Oistins, home of one of the more active and proactive fisherfolk associations. The community consultations were held at primary, secondary, and tertiary fish landing sites in Barbados, bringing the meetings to the fisherfolk on their turf and under their terms. Preparation for the twice-weekly consultations consisted of preparing promotional flyers for the particular location, and then distributing them to fisherfolk at the location and surrounding landing sites.

The one-page meeting flyers were designed to attract the attention and participation of fisherfolk at each site by highlighting important issues specific to fisheries management and development at each location. For example, some flyers focussed on the inshore fisheries where these were most important, and others on the offshore fisheries, links with tourism, physical infrastructure, or other matters as necessary. Attempts were made to have fisherfolk organisations host or promote the consultations when held in their locations, but only a few responded with action. In several cases fisheries officers distributed the meeting flyers on behalf of BARNUFO in the absence of fisherfolk organisation members identified for the task. BARNUFO’s President also communicated with key community contacts to spread the word about the consultations prior to each event.

A similar sequence of steps was followed at each consultation as shown in Figure 2. On arrival at the consultation location, often a fish market, shady tree or neighbourhood shop, a flipchart was set up after encouraging people to gather closely around the preferred spot. The Chief Fisheries Officer and President of BARNUFO gave an overview of the past and present FMP processes, highlighting the role of BARNUFO and the fisherfolk generally in this bottom-up exercise. BARNUFO’s President then usually chaired the community consultation, with help if necessary from the technical coordinator/advisor. Refreshments were served halfway or later during the process to keep the discussion going and extend the informality.

At each community consultation participants were encouraged to share any pressing issues that they had pertaining to the fishing industry in general, a specific fishery, or a particular fish landing site. A graduate student recorded on the flipchart each issue as it was presented, and participants were then encouraged to analyse how these issues of concern could be reasonably addressed and by whom. The responses were recorded next to the issues as the recommended actions in an adjacent column. Sometimes there was more than one action per issue, and sometimes there were several alternative actions if the participants did not reach consensus on their preferred response. Late arriving participants checked the flipchart to see what had gone before, and sometimes the recorded issues or actions were returned to for further elaboration or clarification.

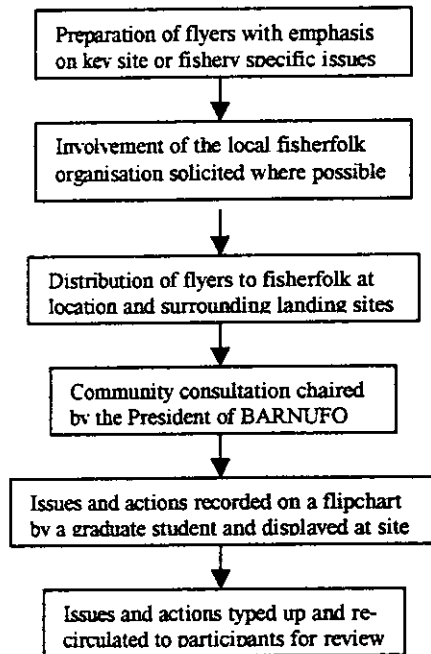


Figure 2. Typical community consultation activity sequence

Consultations lasted from one to nearly three hours in the afternoon going on to evening. They were informal with on-site media coverage only on one occasion. The majority of those who attended the community consultations were older males who had participated in the fishing industry for many years. There was also fairly good representation of younger male fishermen or boat owners, and some older women fisherfolk who were mainly fish vendors. Young women were generally scarce, except at Bridgetown where they comprised a substantial portion of the postharvest workers (e.g. fish cleaners and vendors). Although fisherfolk were notified well in advance of community consultations, there were still some who chose not to participate even when on site and encouraged to do so by the organisers or their peers. In most cases, however, consultations were greeted with enthusiasm from the fisherfolk and there were usually more than ten active participants at each location. Fifteen community consultations of this type were undertaken, with even geographical distribution around the coast.

In conclusion, the fisherfolk participants were notified that their contributions would be circulated back to them for review and further community discussion. They were also told that what was recorded should find its way into the 2001 - 2003 FMP if even as an appendix of public participation. Finally, they were reminded that not all matters could be dealt with in the FMP, but that BARNUFO would assist in ensuring that those of major importance to the fishing industry would receive priority attention.

ISSUES AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED

The following tables present examples of the array of issues and actions that were frequently mentioned at the community consultations. They reflect only the views of those who participated in this stage of the 2001 - 2003 FMP planning process undertaken through the BARNUFO project. The issues and actions varied slightly at each community consultation due to differences in the location, history, and character of each fish landing site, and as a result of the different occupations of the fisherfolk who participated in the planning process. However, some points were raised at almost every session. Most issues tended to be immediate rather than future-oriented, and actions usually entailed government intervention. Quantitative analyses of the issues and actions by site, subject and other criteria are yet to be done.

Table 1 lists a few of the issues and actions that concern mainly the harvest sector. As much attention was paid to development and profitability issues as to matters of fisheries resource management. The latter mainly concerned inshore fisheries already known to be under threat due to habitat degradation, overfishing, or combinations of these and other factors. There was relatively little concern over the status of shared stocks of migratory pelagics.

Table 1. Some harvest sector issues and actions

Harvest sector issues	Harvest sector actions
Small mesh in traps	Increase for deep traps
Small seine net mesh	Regulate minimum size
Sea urchin overharvest	Extend closed season
Inadequate boatyards	Allocate coastal areas
Too few boatbuilders	Youth training needed
Inadequate ice supply	More, bigger ice machines
Government too slow	Simplify paperwork
Fishery inputs costly	Increase subsidies

The situation with postharvest sector issues and actions reflected a narrower range of topics, emphasising quality-related matters and physical infrastructure for fish processing, storage and sale (Table 2). While workers in postharvest occupations seldom raised harvest sector issues, fishermen and boat owners had much to say about postharvest.

Table 2. Some postharvest sector issues and actions

Postharvest sector issues	Postharvest sector actions
Need quality assurance	Put HACCP in new law
Improve public markets	User group committees
Ex-vessel prices too low	Guaranteed min. price
Fish prices too variable	Increase storage space
Imports too competitive	Restrict fish importation
Fishers are price-takers	Government protection
Poor fish handling	Code of practice, train
Consumers not buying	Customer relations

In general, participants did not demonstrate familiarity with regional and international fisheries problems. Also, participants made points that reflected poor awareness of the Barbados government's policies on international and regional trade, subsidies, and price control, among others. Information that was available from the Fisheries Division was not reaching these clients, even in cases where that information had been provided to representatives of the fisherfolk organisation serving the area. An overarching issue raised was that there should be better interaction and feedback between the Fisheries Division staff and fisherfolk as follow-up after important meetings have been held.

The final 2001 - 2003 FMP BARNUFO consultation will be a national event opened up to a wider selection of fishing industry stakeholders such as tourism and watersport interests, government agencies, environmental non-governmental agencies and others. This will be a one-day event where the diverse stakeholders will discuss issues and actions from the community consultations amongst their peers and other interested parties. Co-management approaches is the theme of the consultation. It will provide an opportunity for all of the stakeholders to share their concerns and recommendations with each other and the relevant authorities. This will further encourage bottom-up, as opposed to top-down, approaches to fisheries management planning in Barbados. The other project activities are still to be undertaken.

DISCUSSION

During the previous FMP planning process for formulating the 1997 - 2000 Fisheries Management Plan, the Barbados Fisheries Division and the Fisheries Advisory Committee determined the plan addresses more than just the fishing industry. The Fisheries Advisory Committee was relegated to the role of reviewing a prepared document that would integrate the industry's concerns regarding the agenda and prioritization of issues.

This differs from the current FMP planning process whereby all members of the fishing community were given an opportunity to attend and participate in the scheduled events designed to make their input, through oral communication, the point of departure for the 2001 - 2003 FMP. Community consultations in the present FMP planning process emphasize fisherfolk as vital in developing the new

ground. Another consideration is the trade-off between promoting an unregulated local longline fishery, as at present, and regulating billfish harvesting so as to enhance the recreational fishery, which could be steered more towards catch and release. These options should be considered in the Fisheries Management Plan.

Attitudes Towards Fisheries Management

As the marine fisheries in Barbados continue to grow, tournament anglers appreciate that increasing pressure is exerted on the fishery resources, and therefore, precautionary management strategies and measures may be required via the implementation of various angling rules and regulations. They have witnessed the incorporation of more IGFA rules in their own tournaments and have instituted minimum retention weights.

With respect to catch and release, a large proportion of the anglers were uncertain about support for this because of the different reasons for targeting each species, a problem encountered more with multi-species than single-species fisheries. Anglers who agreed to the release of fish preferred to catch marlin. Those that preferred dolphin mostly disagreed with catch and release.

Similarly with bag limits, which received least support, the rationale for opposition relates to the consumption of fish as an important reason for fishing. Those that considered the sale of fish important or had dolphin as first choice were most opposed to the use of bag limits. These relationships point to consumption and sale as important elements to be considered in the management of MRF in Barbados for some species especially.

By examining motives and attitudes together with various management options for resource conservation, fisheries managers can devise comprehensive management and development programs to meet the anglers' and government's objectives for responsible fisheries. For example, for those who prefer to target billfish high emphasis should be placed on catch rates but low emphasis on retention. Such conservation practices may facilitate an ecotourism perspective (Holland et al. 1998). For fisheries managers to provide programs best suited for anglers, information is required on the different components of a fishing experience that contribute to angler satisfaction (Ditton 1996).

Caution should be exercised when generalizing results from motivation studies to provide programs for anglers because aggregate profiles may be misleading and obscure the diverse interests of anglers. As Shafer (1969) reminds, there is no such thing as an average angler. We should expect diversity in motivations and attitudes, and hence, there is a need to prioritise and compromise amongst angler and management objectives. In conclusion, this paper illustrates for fisheries management the importance of human dimension information about tournament anglers.

fisherfolk have good interpretative and analytical skills, and they are capable of coherently discussing the problems facing the fishing industry and the management of fisheries resources, despite their lack of some information. In many instances, their wealth of first-hand practical ecological knowledge compensates for second-hand scientific knowledge, and it is only in the realm of policy that the information deficiency is particularly evident.

Furthermore, some of the issues raised by fisherfolk were controversial. Had recommendations such as mandatory national insurance contributions for fishermen, fish vendors having to pay their own light and water bills at public markets, and blood tests for fish handlers as a health requirement, been raised by non-fisherfolk the objections would have been severe. Fisherfolk also have many concerns which pertain more to management of fish landing sites than fisheries. These are relevant in the context of improving working conditions. They remind us that the fish resource is only one aspect of fisheries operations and that other factors may be equally relevant to quality of life. Addressing the problems at fish landing sites may encourage fisherfolk to take an active interest in other aspects of the management and development of the fishing industry and fisherfolk organisations. There was talk of fish market user group committees being formed and affiliated with fisherfolk organisations.

The new Fisheries Management Plan, if it is a true reflection of fisherfolk participation and input during this round of community consultations, should give fisherfolk a greater sense of achievement and satisfaction than the 1997 - 2000 FMP process. The process of bottom-up participation of fisherfolk in formulating the 2001 - 2003 FMP can, however, only be considered successful at a later stage when the plan is complete and being implemented. Getting the input of fisherfolk during planning may, or may not, encourage their integration into later fisheries management plan decision-making. While improved participation in planning and management may be feasible, most fisherfolk organisations are far from becoming partners with government in co-management at this time. Further developmental work is clearly warranted, particularly in capacity-building.

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