

## **Project Workshop: Institutional Arrangements for Caribbean MPAs and Opportunities for Pro-poor Management**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are seen as a prominent means of addressing coastal resource management issues in the Caribbean. Studies on the impacts of MPAs (which have tended to focus on ecological changes, particularly on abundance and size of fishes) have usually shown them to be positive for biodiversity (Dixon *et al.*, 1993) and fisheries management (Roberts and Polunin 1993, Wantiez *et al.* 1997). Amongst advocates of MPAs there has been a tendency to extol their potential value in socio-economic terms. In reality, the establishment of protected areas often generates deep resentment in communities that find themselves excluded from resources to which they have traditionally had access, undermining the viability of those protected areas (Horrell *et al.* 1996). Over the last ten years, management of MPAs has evolved from being a preservation tool to integrating considerations of development, sustainable use of resources and stakeholder participation (Meffe *et al.* 1997). With this focus, it is believed that they can play a key role in conserving natural ecosystems and contribute substantially to sustainable development (IUCN 1997).

The purpose of the research project *Institutional Arrangements for Caribbean MPAs and Opportunities for Pro-poor Management* has been to identify current institutional constraints to, and development options for, successfully implementing MPAs in a way that leads to a sustained improvement in the livelihoods of poor coastal communities in the Caribbean. A key premise of this work is that successful implementation and beneficial stakeholder outcomes, including outcomes for the poor, are inextricably linked, and priority has been given to understanding the dynamic relationship between processes and outcomes. Particular attention has been paid to systems that include community participation in decision-making to see what benefits this brings to the poorer groups and to understand the structures and processes needed to achieve it.

An initial review of institutional and ecosystem characteristics of 80 MPAs in the Central and Antillean biogeographic zones of the Caribbean took place in 2001 (Geoghegan et al. 2001) and was followed by an analysis of operational and non-operational MPA case studies in Belize, Jamaica, Turks & Caicos Islands and Dominica to investigate factors contributing to successful and unsuccessful outcomes of MPA management. Research at the operational MPA case studies involved evaluation of the impacts of successfully implemented MPA management on poor people's livelihoods and included PA (participatory appraisal) exercises to understand poorer groups' perceptions of MPA impacts. A series of biophysical and socio-economic studies were undertaken by Masters students at the University of the West Indies (UWI) to assess the ecological and socio-economic impact of MPAs. A legal and policy review was also conducted to understand how the external policy environment influences MPA management. The project will culminate with development of guidelines promoting pro-poor management of MPAs.

#### WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

This one-day workshop on institutional arrangements for Caribbean MPAs was hosted by MRAG Ltd in association with University of the West Indies (UWI), CANARI, and the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) at the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI). The workshop is a key activity of the 18-month research project (#R7976) described above that has been funded by the Natural Resources Systems Programme (NRSP) of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). There were three workshop objectives, as highlighted below:

- i) To disseminate research findings from the case study MPAs;
- ii) To verify that the research findings (in terms of what would enable "pro-poor" management of MPAs) are as complete and relevant as possible (through sharing of experience and checking that issues raised by our research are relevant to the wider Caribbean); and
- iii) To identify or verify that the means of dissemination and type of Guidelines are relevant and accessible.

#### WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The workshop was limited to 43 participants due to the nature of working group discussions and room space and was divided into four key sessions, as outlined below:

- i) Introduction, overview and setting the scene,
- ii) Identifying relevance of poverty to MPA management,
- iii) Identifying pro-poor opportunities, and
- iv) Guidelines for pro-poor management.

After introductions, presentation of project activities and an overview of the 54<sup>th</sup> GCFI MPA session, the key presentation of Session 1 was a review of Caribbean legal and policy frameworks. This included international and regional legislation and policy as well as national and local legislative and policy arrangements for the MPA case studies (Anderson et al. 2002). Key results from project activities were highlighted during this session (see also Best 2002, Cummings 2002, Francis 2002, O'Sullivan 2002, Richards 2002, Francis et al. in press). Session 2 commenced with a presentation on opportunities and constraints for successfully implementing pro-poor MPAs (Garaway and Esteban 2002) which was based on participatory appraisal fieldwork at four case study MPAs. The participants divided into working groups to focus on identifying pro-poor opportunities in Session 3. The final session started with feedback from the working groups and then focused on the Guidelines for pro-poor management of MPAs.

### CONCLUSION

The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for discussion between a wide cross-section of MPA managers, policymakers, researchers, users and other interested parties from 16 Caribbean countries. Discussions focussed on issues raised during presentations and are reported in the Executive Summary from the workshop report (see below). The workshop report is available on [www.mragltd.com](http://www.mragltd.com) and is also on the GCFI web site. Feedback on the report, and information on initiatives relevant to issues raised during the workshop, would be very welcome.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Excerpt from Workshop Report: Esteban et al. 2002)

#### Background

This one-day workshop on institutional arrangements for Caribbean MPAs was held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2002 as a concurrent session at the 55<sup>th</sup> GCFI Annual Meeting in Mexico. It was hosted by MRAG Ltd in association with UWL, CANARI and CCA. The workshop was one of the final activities within the DFID funded research project *Institutional arrangements for Caribbean MPAs and opportunities for pro-poor management* (NRSP R7976).

The workshop was attended by 43 people, representing 16 countries and 28 agencies. They included MPA managers, fishers, policymakers, donors, NGOs and scientists. The objectives of the workshop were to disseminate research findings, assess relevance of findings to the wider Caribbean and identify means of dissemination.

### Research Findings

The workshop focussed on two of the research activities that were seen to be particularly relevant to identifying institutional opportunities for pro-poor MPA management. These included results of a legal and policy review and results from a study investigating the impacts of MPAs on poorer "communities".

Three legal typologies were identified in the legal and policy review: traditional resource conservation laws, *ad hoc* legislation relating to the creation and operation of specific MPAs, and generic regulations providing a framework for the designation of such areas whilst injecting some degree of flexibility into the management arrangements applicable to specific MPAs. Whilst the latter may be a preferred regulatory regime, it is neither sufficient, nor necessary, for achieving operational management of an MPA.

Other factors contributing to operational management were found to include development of systems to implement specific international obligations, rationalization and clarification of governance structures, the articulation and effective operation of area-specific policies to guide administrative action in respect of all activities impacting the protected area, availability and effective deployment of human and material resources, and meaningful community participation.

Where it exists, poverty was identified as a factor that, at the very least, exacerbated management performance and therefore, in these cases, the issue of poverty should be relevant to MPA managers.

Five specific areas were identified as providing opportunities to address needs of poorer user groups, thereby improving management performance and ultimately the natural resource base itself. These areas were:

- i) Empowering poorer communities leading ultimately to co-management,
- ii) Providing new alternatives,
- iii) Improving access to existing ones (in particular tourism),
- iv) Improving fishery related livelihoods, and
- v) Improving the natural environment (recreation, health and safety).

Results from case studies suggested that, whilst there were many successful initiatives from which lessons could be learned, there was still a lot to do to address the needs of poorer groups, and improvements needed to be made in all areas and relationships that make up MPA management, i.e., relationships between the legal, policy and funding environment, the "service delivery" organisations, community based organizations, and user groups.

### Working Group Findings

Five working groups looked at possible areas for improving MPA performance. Priority was given to areas that would do so by improving impacts on poorer user groups. These included co-management and community empowerment, ICZM and legal and policy arrangements for MPAs, funding options, providing alternatives and improving existing ones, and fisher livelihoods.

- i) Co-management was seen as a route to addressing needs of poorer groups

but that there was a need to realise that achieving co-management was only the beginning of an ongoing process.

- ii) Legislation could have a role in all areas of MPA management, from requiring that local communities have a voice in, and benefit from, MPA management, through to the implementation of international agreements.
- iii) Funding was considered a major issue by all, and a significant constraint. New and innovative approaches to “selling the MPA product” were required.
- iv) Tourism has substantial potential to provide alternatives and therefore compensate for loss of access to traditional resources. To do this, creative financing and capacity building were crucial.
- v) The main identified route to helping fishers was involving them at all stages. There was a need for improved communication, and for an understanding that fishers have the ability to solve their own problems if they were given the opportunity.

#### **Other Points Raised Throughout Workshop**

The term “pro-poor” was not favoured and it was felt that it would not be useful in conveying project findings and Guidelines. Indeed, the extent to which poverty reduction should be an explicit objective of MPA management was questioned. Whilst there was agreement that sustainable livelihoods were a component of sustainable management, the emphasis on poverty was not a priority.

Designing areas as Marine Protected Areas as opposed to Integrated Coastal and Marine Management Areas may be a significant design flaw and legal constraint.

The project Guidelines should be developed collaboratively bringing in the experiences of the wide range of participants at the workshop.

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