

Working Towards a Code for Sustainable Fisheries with the Conset Bay Fishing Community in Barbados

Trabajando en Pro de un Código para la Pesca Responsable con la Comunidad Pesquera de Conset Bay en Barbados

Vers un Code pour la Pêche Durable avec la Communauté de Pêche de Conset Bay à la Barbade

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable fisheries are fundamental to livelihoods in the coastal fishing community of Conset Bay. Fishing is part of the cultural maritime heritage of the area. Acknowledging the importance of fisheries, and the need for a collaborative approach in which fisheries stakeholders and the wider community play active roles in sustainable fisheries management, a code for promoting sustainable fisheries at Conset Bay was formulated. The local sustainable fisheries code was a component of the project “Up-scaling Sustainable Resource Management in Coastal Watershed Communities of Barbados’ National Park and System of Open Spaces”. It was a collaborative effort by the Government of Barbados, United Nations Environment Programme and The University of the West Indies. The development of the Code was participatory. The contents of the Code were developed through collectively reviewing the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and documents related to small-scale fisheries. A video was produced in which fisherfolk inform the wider community of the importance of adhering to the CCRF. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and discussions were held with the Conset Bay advocacy group, a core group of interested fisherfolk, to decide upon the key principles of the Code. At the end of the participatory process, nine principles emerged which were fully supported by fisheries stakeholders. A poster was created and plans have been made for promoting uptake by the wider community. This experience of learning-by-doing to build capacity and stewardship in a fishing community contains lessons for future participatory processes and approaches to scaling up the Code.

KEY WORDS: Conset Bay, fisheries code, fisherfolk, sustainable, Barbados

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) was adopted by the Food and Agricultural Organization in October 1995 to promote principles and international standards of behaviour for sustainable and responsible fishing and aquaculture on a global scale. Its underpinning philosophy is that the ‘right to fish’ carries the obligation to do so responsibly. The CCRF calls for the involvement of all stakeholders and emphasizes the need for a participatory approach in the decision-making process. At the national level, it can only be effectively achieved when governments incorporate their principles and goals into their national fishery policies and legislation (FAO 2002).

In Barbados, there have been national efforts to implement the CCRF. Thus far, the CCRF has provided the basic principles by which the Barbados Fisheries Management Plan operates. However, to further support its implementation and yield the benefits of responsible fisheries, a next step is the dissemination of the Code to local fishing communities, like Conset Bay, to develop a code of practice that is specific to the community but is also consistent with the principles and goals of the CCRF.

The Government of Barbados and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) collaborated with the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) from The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus through the project entitled “Up-scaling Sustainable Resource Management in Coastal Watershed Communities of Barbados’ National Park and System of Open Spaces”, hereafter called the “Conset Bay Pilot Project”. The project sought to improve the management and monitoring of the nearshore marine and terrestrial resources within the Conset Bay watershed, enhance the local communities’ capacity to participate in sustainable fisheries governance, and introduce systems for project management, reporting, and information distribution. The project was a pilot strategy under the UNEP’s project “Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Resource Management in Latin American and the Caribbean” to provide government and stakeholders with the tools required to improve coordination between agencies and develop consistent cross-cutting policies for sustainable resource management.

This paper is a summary of the fourth report to the Government of Barbados and UNEP entitled “Draft Local Sustainable Fisheries Code to Promote Responsible Fisheries Development and Management for Conset Bay” (CERMES 2012d). It examines the participatory process used to develop the local sustainable fisheries code in the Conset Bay fishing community and highlight lessons learned for future participatory processes and approaches to scaling up the Code.

Fisheries Characteristics of the Conset Bay Fishing Community

Fisheries have been fundamental to the close-knit fishing community of Conset Bay for generations, forming part of the rich cultural maritime heritage that exists in the area. Conset Bay lies within the parish of St. John and within the southern boundary of proposed Barbados’ National Park (Figure 1). It is one of the only three primary landing sites on the east coast of the island whereby the landing of fish, boat-building, vessel haul-up (especially in hurricane season), repairing, and maintenance of vessels are among the many activities that occur within the area (CERMES 2012b). Conset Bay is also one of the few areas with a protected bay supporting mariculture, particularly for sea moss farming (Mahon 1999). It is also known to be one of the popular sea egg fishing grounds around the island.

There were 64 registered fisherfolk that operated in the area, the majority of which were boat owners. Others included fishermen, fish vendors, fish processors, boat agents, and fish boners (CERMES 2012b). The fishing fleet comprises 51 registered boats including 27 day boats/launches, 22 moses, and two ice boats (CERMES 2012b). The fishing gear commonly utilized included nets, fish pots, hook and lines, and spear guns. The types of fish landed vary from flying fish, dolphin, and kingfish to smaller catches of conch and sea eggs (in open-season) (CERMES 2012b).

The fisherfolk of Conset Bay are not formally organized; however through a strengthening initiative of the Conset Bay Pilot Project, the Conset Bay advocacy group was formed to take the lead in addressing fisheries issues (CERMES 2012c). This core group of fisherfolk was instrumental in the development of the local sustainable fisheries code.

THE PROCESS

In creating the Draft Local Sustainable Fisheries (LSF) Code for Conset Bay, a strong collaborative approach was taken in which the fishing community actively participated from the inception to the development of the final nine principles that comprise their local code. The steps taken are depicted in the diagram below (Figure 2). These steps included the review of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), sensitisation of the CCRF and identification of best practices through developing a



Figure 1. Map of Barbados highlighting Conset Bay (Source: Google Maps)

local video and consultative meetings that facilitated the development of the key principles of the LSF Code.

Review of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)

The generation of the Local Sustainable Fisheries (LSF) Code for Conset Bay commenced with an in depth review of the FAO’s CCRF, FAO (2011) report on “*Discussion Document: Towards voluntary guidelines on securing sustainable small-scale fisheries*” and the Canadian Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations. The criteria that were considered for the framework of the LSF Code included: applicability to Conset Bay, basic principles/thematic areas of CCRF (fisheries management, fisheries operations and safety practices, post-harvest, marketing and trade, fisheries research and information needs, and key elements relevant to small-scale fisheries, such as disaster risk management and climate change adaptation).

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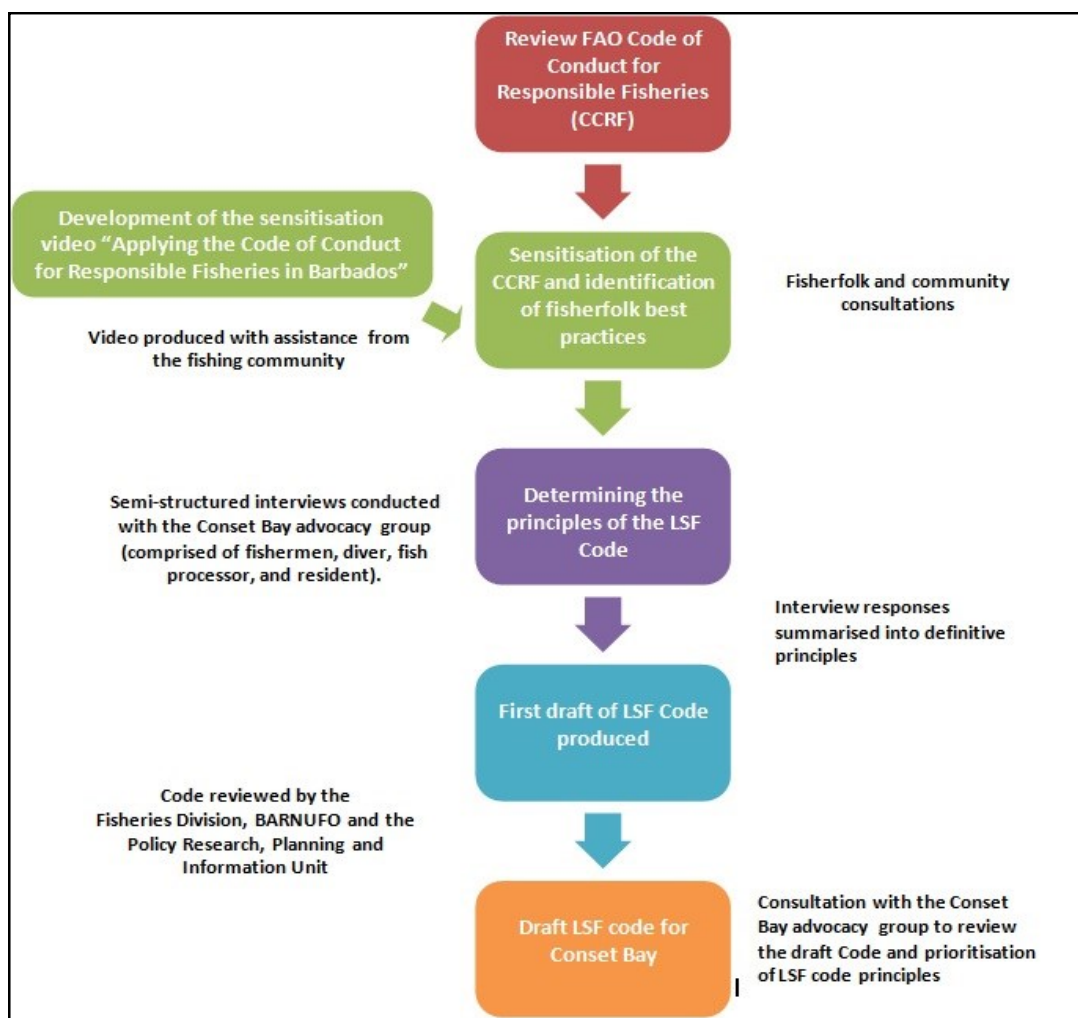


Figure 2. Stages for the development of the draft local sustainable fisheries code for Conset Bay.

Determining the Principles of the LSF Code

A semi-structured interview was conducted to develop the key principles of the LSF Code and

it was based on the elements highlighted in the FAO CCRF review. Interviews were conducted during the period of late March to late May 2012 with members of the Conset Bay advocacy group, some of whom assisted in making the sensitisation video and all were present at the fisherfolk consultation. Members interviewed comprised a cross-section of the Conset Bay fishing community and included fishermen, a diver, residents, and fish processors. The interview centered around stakeholder representation and participation, sustainable resource management, fisheries operations and safety practices, post-harvest, marketing and trade, fisheries research and information needs, social and economic development and, disaster and climate change. The responses from the interviews were then used to develop the principles of the LSF Code for Conset Bay.

First Draft of the Principles for the LSF Code

Seventeen proposed principles were developed for the LSF Code based on the responses from the interviews (Table 1). These principles were subsequently reviewed by fisheries and fisheries-related stakeholders: the Fisheries Division, the Barbados National United Fisherfolk Organisation (BARNUFO) and the Policy Research, Planning and Information Unit of the Ministry of Environment and Drainage. Afterwards, a follow-up meeting was conducted with the Conset Bay advocacy group to present the principles to them. The group was given the opportunity to either endorse all 17 of the proposed principles or to prioritise them into a smaller number e.g. ten principles. They determined that the latter suggestion would be more appropriate for them.

As the next step, a prioritization exercise was conducted using the *dotmocracy* technique. The 17 principles were listed on a flip chart to facilitate the exercise, and each person received ten colored sticky dots to place next to their ten preferred principles. Afterwards, the outcomes of the *dotmocracy* were highlighted.

Table 1. Outcome of prioritization process	
Possible Principles for the Local Sustainable Fisheries Code	Rating
Committed to protect the Bay for today and future generations.	6
Accept climate has and will continue to change and we will adapt accordingly through wise use of strategies and pursuing stronger collaborations with Fisheries Authorities.	6
Ensure emergency procedures are updated, adhered to and executed effectively and collaboratively with the Fisheries Division.	6
Support any improvements and upgrades to the infrastructure of Conset Bay that are important to the fishing community.	5
Agree to work together with other institutions towards the further development of sustainable livelihoods within the Conset Bay Fishery.	5
Commit to reduce and properly dispose of all waste such as plastic bags and old oil whether at sea or in the boat yard.	5
Utilise all landed catch including non-target species for consumption and the development of value-added products.	5
Respect and protect the integrity of the hill side and the Bay to ensure a healthy and productive marine ecosystem and a sustainable coastal fishery.	4
Commit to develop the Conset Bay advocacy group to effectively convey the common interests of Conset Bay fisherfolk.	4
Commit to protect endangered and threatened species such as turtles.	3
Respect fisheries laws and regulations.	3
Commit to improve our knowledge of fisheries best practices to ensure sustainable livelihoods.	3
Commit to best practices to ensure customers receive a safe and high quality product.	3
Commit to water conservation and efficiency.	2
Commit to ensure quality fish is affordable and fairly priced for everyone.	2
Commit to energy efficiency and the use of affordable and applicable renewable energy technologies.	0
Continue to use adaptive strategies in dealing with seasonal fluctuations.	0

OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

We agree to work with each other to protect, develop and manage flora and fauna of Conset Bay environments to ensure the health and productivity of the ecosystem.

We are committed to:

- i) Protecting Conset Bay for today and future generations,
- ii) Accepting that climate has and will continue to change and we will adapt accordingly through wise use of strategies and pursuing stronger collaborations,
- iii) Ensuring emergency procedures are updated, adhered to and executed effectively and collaboratively,
- iv) Supporting any improvements and upgrades to the infrastructure of Conset Bay that are important to the fishing community,
- v) Agreeing to work together with other institutions towards the further development of sustainable livelihoods within the fisheries at Conset Bay.

- vi) Reducing and properly disposing of all waste such as plastic bags and old oil whether at sea or in the boat yard,
- vii) Utilising all landed catch including non-target species for consumption and the development of value-added products,
- viii) Respecting and protecting the integrity of the hill side and the Bay to ensure a healthy and productive marine ecosystem and a sustainable coastal fishery, and
- ix) Developing the Conset Bay advocacy group to effectively convey the common interests of Conset Bay fisherfolk.

This paper is of demonstrative value to the implementation of CCRF at the local level. The LSF Code was developed and endorsed primarily by the Conset Bay advocacy group, with the guidance of the Project Team and with input from the Fisheries Division, BARNUFO, and the Policy Research, Planning and Implementation Unit.

However, the success of developing the LSF Code does not end here. The LSF Code must now be embraced by the entire fishing community. The role lies with the Conset Bay advocacy group, with support from government, to mobilize and develop a communication plan to promote the LSF Code within its community. Feasible strategies for disseminating the LSF Code must be explored. These strategies may include its promotion on community billboards, use of print media i.e. posters, its incorporation on exercise books for primary schools within the Conset Bay watershed and promoting the sensitization video on national television.

The Code should always remain current and relevant to the community. Therefore, the recommendation was made for the LSF Code to undergo an annual review to either update and/or incorporate any changes to national fisheries policies or fisheries development activities. For example, aquaculture/mariculture operates on a very small-scale in Barbados; however, if the industry expands or if seamoss farming becomes relatively active in Conset Bay, the code should be updated to reflect best practices for aquaculture.

Finally, while the project's focus was on Conset Bay, the government should encourage the application of the CCRF around other fishing communities on the island.

KEY LEARNING

The process for developing the Draft LSF Code has identified a number of lessons useful for participatory approaches; many of which can be applied to other local fishing communities and perhaps in the region.

- i) *Encourage stakeholder engagement and participation* — Community engagement from inception was integral to the development of the LSF Code. Community engagement not only ensures its acceptance by the Conset Bay fishing community but it will ensure that the community upholds their standards and best practices and further strengthening their ownership of the Code
- ii) *Use of tools for community engagement* — Having the most appropriate communication tool (s) is critical for successful community engagement. The sensitization video was a useful participatory tool which served a dual purpose. It engaged the Conset Bay fishing community by giving them the opportunity to voice their common fisheries practices which conformed to the CCRF and informed discussion on the CCRF at the consultation meeting. Noting that there is no *one size fits all* approach to engage a community, the choice of tools is dependent upon one's knowledge of the target audience, including their interests, attitudes and access to resources.
- iii) *Catalysts for other fishing communities* — The process of the developing the LSF Code can be viewed as a model/catalyst for other fishing

communities around the island to also promote their best practices towards sustainable fisheries.

- iv) *Level of community's knowledge influences the development process* — Based on the interviews with the Conset Bay advocacy group, the community is conscious of the importance of taking an ecosystem management approach to fisheries, while acknowledging their vulnerability to climate change and the need for conservation. This can be considered a significant step forward for policy-makers in working with fisherfolk in the future to develop strategies towards sustainable fisheries governance in Barbados. A further lesson noted is that instead attempting to educate the community, we should focus on building upon their existing knowledge.

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