

**Stakeholder Led Co-management Governance Regimes:
The New Paradigm for Marine Protected Areas in Grenada, West Indies**

**Stakeholder Llevó Cogestión Regímenes de Gobierno:
El Nuevo Paradigma para las Áreas Marinas Protegidas en Grenada, West Indies**

**Parties Prenantes a Conduit les Régimes de Gouvernance de Cogestion:
Le Nouveau Paradigme pour les Aires Marines Protégées à la Grenade, dans les Antilles**

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ABSTRACT

Fisheries management in the Eastern Caribbean has traditionally been characterized by Government led top-down governance regimes. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Grenada lack the resources to effectively and consistently conduct surveillance and enforcement exercise at all protected or conservation areas. It has therefore become imperative to develop governance systems that are compliance based and rely on the resources users and stakeholder to sustainably manage these resources. Within the past few decades, there has been a global shift from the conventional top-down government driven governance system to a more holistic bottom-up, stakeholder driven co-management arrangements. In order for stakeholder led co-management to be successful, three critical criteria must be met. Firstly, all legitimate stakeholders must be given an opportunity to participate; secondly, there must be a clear and shared understanding of the objectives; and thirdly, there must be a genuine devolution of power to the stakeholder organization established to manage the resources. This paper uses Sandy Island Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area (SIOBMPA) as case study to highlight Grenada's efforts to develop a network of co-managed MPAs aimed at fulfilling the country's Caribbean Challenge commitment of protecting 25% of its coastal and marine resources by 2020.

KEY WORDS: Co-management, Marine Protected Area, governance

INTRODUCTION

Resource management and in particular, fisheries in the Eastern Caribbean has traditionally been a managed from the top – down government led management regime. That is, most countries in the Eastern Caribbean has a Fisheries Division or Department that was mandated with managing all aspects of the fishing industry including but not limited to; resources monitoring, enforcement, marketing. In Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as those found in the Eastern Caribbean, this leave the human resources that staff these agencies stretched to the limits.

Marine Protected Areas as a fisheries management tool is a relatively recent addition to the Eastern Caribbean Region. The MPAs in Grenada were formally established in 2008 building on the best practices of some of more well managed and successful MPAs within the Wider Caribbean Region like the Hol Chan Marine Reserve in Belize and the Soufriere Marine Management Association in St. Lucia.

Grenadian Context

Grenada (12°03'N 61°45'W) consists of a chain of island within the larger Caribbean Archipelago including Grenada and several Grenadine Islands to the North. The Islands of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique are the three primary islands that constitute the tri-island state. Like other counties in the Eastern Caribbean, in Grenada, the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is the agency responsible for the development and management of Marine Protected Areas. As such the Marine protected Area Legislations SRO # 78 of 2001 made provisions for the management of MPAs via the conventional top-down Government led management arrangement.

Grenada's commitment to fulfill its Caribbean Challenge objective of protecting 25% of it coastal resources by 2020 required protecting coastal areas in the Grenadines that were removed from the Fisheries Management unit on mainland Grenada. Given the relative isolation and the socio-cultural differences of the islands of the Grenadine Island, the fisheries division recognized the need for a new place-based management paradigm to replace the top-down government led management regime.

Stakeholder Participation in Management

Before going any further it would be useful to discuss some key principles in stakeholder participating in management that underpin the current paradigm shift in resources management and particularly Marine Protected Areas throughout the Wider Caribbean. Buanes et al. (2005) noted that; *“The natural, cultural and socio-economic conditions of coastal communities are diverse, complex and dynamic. Consequently, coastal issues are usually multi-faceted, with each facet being of particular concern to a specific stakeholder group.”*

The successful resolution of environmental problems necessitates flexible and transparent decision-making that is able

to adapt to the dynamic nature of the prevailing issues (Reed 2008). In order to achieve the requisite level of transparency, stakeholder participation in decision-making is one of the most critical steps. Stakeholder participation in decision making ensures that all stakeholders have a say in the final decision; thereby, demystifying the decision making process. Increased stakeholder participation reduces the likelihood that those on the periphery of the decision-making process will be marginalized; thus, becoming a hindrance to the implementation process (Reed 2008). The inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the likelihood that the interventions and technologies devised are better adapted to the socio-cultural and environmental conditions of the location where they are going to be implemented (Reed 2008).

Stakeholder involvement or participation is often cited as possessing the potential for fostering “social learning” which is defined as a process by which members of the wider community learn to appreciate the legitimacy of each other’s views ultimately transforming adversarial relationships (Reed 2008). Therefore, the success of any collaborative environmental management programs depends heavily of social learning as the primary mechanism for the transformation of adversarial relationships; thereby, allowing stakeholders to work together effectively to resolve the environmental issues affecting their resources. Rivera (1997) goes a bit further to highlight that stakeholder empowerment through participation in environmental management programs is a by-product of dialogue, which can only be achieved when resources users perceive their contributions as making a positive difference in the management of their resources.

There has been a paradigm shift from the conventional “tool-kit” model of resources management to the “service contract” paradigm which attempts to devise a place-based management system, where the mitigation measures are tailored to match the changing natural and socioeconomic circumstances and dynamics of the environment where it is employed (Reed 2008).

Arnstein’s (1969) “ladder of citizen participation” highlights the fact that stakeholder involvement occurs along a continuum represented by a metaphorical ladder of citizen participation. The ladder of citizen participation divides the governance continuum into rungs which are further subdivided into three categories (i.e. Nonparticipation, Tokenism & Citizen Power) which corresponds to the level of participation exhibited. This is very similar to the three categories of arrangements (i.e. Consultative, Collaborative & Delegated) presented by McConney et al. (2003) along the continuum of co-management with “Government” having the majority of the decision making power on one end of the continuum and “Citizens” possessing the majority of the decision making power on the other end.

Arnstein (1969) goes a bit further to points out, although the ladder of citizen participation only depicts eight rungs, in reality there are an infinite number of rungs

on the metaphorical ladder; however, what is critically important is that the three categories of stakeholder participation (i.e. nonparticipation, tokenism and citizen power) remains valid regardless of the number of rungs inputted.

Case Study: Sandy Island Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area (SIOBMPA)

Co-management

A co-management arrangement was identified as the most appropriate mechanism for managing the SIOBMPA based on the premise that the stakeholders and governmental agencies on the ground on Carriacou would have a better understanding of the situation and circumstances. Also, a better understanding of the situation on the ground would improve the responsiveness and adaptivity of the management interventions to the ever-changing condition within the MPA and its adjacent communities.

With co-management identified as the model for management, the communities on Carriacou were included from the inception of the MPA development and establishment process. Over a decade of educational and sensitization activities within the communities of Carriacou culminated with the official launch of the Sandy Island Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area.

The management plan which outlined the boundaries as well as the goals and objectives of the MPA was developed in a participatory process that included all major stakeholder groups and the general public. The various primary stakeholder groups that participated in the development of the management plan formed the interim stakeholder management committee.

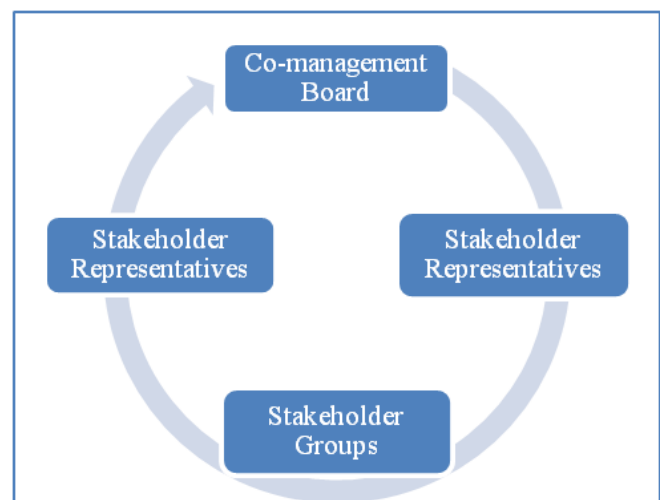


Figure 1. Diagram of the proposed flow of information in the co-management decision making cycle.

Official Launch

On July 30th, 2010 the SIOBMPA Stakeholder Committee signed the co-management agreement with the Grenada Fisheries Division for the management of the SIOBMPA.

The co-management agreement transitioned the stakeholder management committee to the SIOBMPA Co-Management Board and tasked them with the responsibility of managing the SIOBMPA to achieve the goals and objective enshrined in Management Plan.

The agreement took the form of a “Delegated Co-management” arrangement where the SIOBMPA Co-management Board was given the authority to make all decision pertaining to the running of the SIOBMPA (McConney et al. 2003). This level of participation in decision making corresponds with “Citizen Power” on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of stakeholder participation. In this case, power is represented by votes and on the SIOBMPA Board, non-governmental stakeholder held the majority of votes. This was strategically done to ensure that the persons that stakeholders who had the potential to be most affected by the interventions or decision of the MPA Board would have the definitive vote. Decision at the board level is made by a simple majority where representatives’ vote are based on the views and feedback of their respective stakeholder groups (Figure 1).

Governance Structure

The management structure for the MPAs within the GMPA network includes the National MPA Committee, the various Co-management Board, Site Managers, Chief Wardens the all other wardens (Figure 2). There are three officially established MPAs within the Grenada Network of MPAs (i.e. Sandy Island Oyster Bed MPA; Moliniere-Beausejour MPA & Woburn Clarkes Court Bay MPA). Currently, the SIOBMPA and MBMPA are under active management and follow this governance model once active management for WCCBMPA which is scheduled for 2014 comes on stream it too will follow the same model.

The National MPA Committee the highest level of governance within the GMPA and it is responsible for setting out the national policy direction and developing legislations for all MPA within the Jurisdiction of Grenada.

The next level down is that of the co-management board. It is envisioned that each MPA would have its respective Co-management board that would be responsible for the management of the MPA at the site level. That is, ensuring that the management interventions that are implemented on the ground in that specific MPA conforms to the national regulations and the strategic direction of the National MPA System.

The third level is that of the MPA site manager who is hired by the respective co-management board and is responsible for the daily management of the MPA. That is, supervision of the wardens and the implementation of programs on the ground in the MPA in order to achieve the goal and objectives outlined in the management plan.



Figure 2. A diagram of the governance structure for the management of MPAs within the Grenada Marine Protected Area System.

The bottom level of the structure is that of the MPA wardens or rangers. They are appointed by the board of directors in conjunction with the manager are responsible for the interpretive services as well as the enforcement of the MPA legislation. The chief warden is responsible for the supervision of all the other wardens in his chain of command.

Key Lessons Learnt

During the initial stakeholder identification process it is critically important to ensure that all primary stakeholder groups are identified and actively engaged to become part of the MPA establishment process. Special attention should be given to groups that are typically marginalized (e.g. fishers) for various reasons such as lack of a preexisting formal representative body (e.g. cooperative). Even in the cases where all stakeholder groups are identified, it is critically important to ensure that the representative of the various stakeholder groups are fulfilling their intended function and are legitimate. Legitimacy within this context in that they are duly elected or selected by the group that they are representing on the board or committee. The legitimacy of the representative ensures that the vast majority of the member of the represented stakeholder group feels that their interest is effectively and adequately being considered. If the representative is not fulfilling their role the decision making loop (figure 1) would be incomplete.

The first step in establishing an effective management regime is to ensure that you have enabling legislation. That is, the legislation that governs the management of MPAs must have provisions that enable the establishment of alternate forms of management including co-management arrangements. In the case of Grenada, the current MPA legislation does not make legal provisions for the establish-

ment of co-management arrangements. This essentially means that at any point without notice or justification, the minister with responsibility for Fisheries could nullify the co-management agreement as it is not legally binding. The Grenada Marine Protected Area has initiated a legislative reform process and the inclusion of provision for co-management arrangements are amongst the addition to the new legislations.

In order for a co-management arrangement to work there needs to be a genuine devolution of power to the authority tasked with the management of the area. In other words, once the agency is given the responsibility for managing an area, there should be no unsolicited interventions by any government agency without following a formal channel that is agreed to ahead of time. This does not mean that there should not be checks and balances to ensure that the over-arching goals of the MPA is achieved, quite the contrary, there must be a mechanism for monitoring progress and providing oversight. However, excessive intervention would erode the devolution of power and undermine the decision of the governing body and thereby slowing the “social learning” process.

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