

Determining the Enabling Conditions and Actionable Steps in Successful Alternative Livelihood Projects (ALPs) within the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) Region

Determinando las Condiciones Iniciales y Procesos que Conducen a Proyectos de Alternativas Económicas a la Pesca Exitosos en la Región del Sistema Arrecifal Mesoamericano (SAM)

Détermination des conditions favorables et des étapes réalisables dans la réussite des projets de moyens de subsistance alternatifs (ALP) dans la région des récifs mésoaméricains (MAR)

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Alternative Livelihood Projects (ALPs) can protect biodiversity by reducing the prevalence of environmentally harmful practices (McPherson, 2006; Wright et al. 2015;). These types of projects promote and create options for sustainable sources of revenue, depending on the community's capacity and available resources, to supplement basic income (Wright et al. 2015). In the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) Region, the creation of other livelihood options to fishing can increase and diversify sources of income (McPherson, 2006). The outcome of ALP establishment can gradually decrease the dependency on reef damaging livelihoods (McPherson, 2006). As well as create a financial buffer against economic and vulnerability impacts from declining marine resources and climate change effects (McPherson, 2006). However, the variety of influential factors in ALP implementation can make successful strategy replication difficult (Brooks et al., 2012). Furthermore, the limited literature documenting ALPs within the MAR region rarely detail project context and components. Understanding the objectives, methods, and enabling conditions of successfully implemented ALPs can create basic guidelines for project establishment specific to the region.

To provide more information to ALP implementors, the components of participatory projects were analyzed via a detailed literature review and open-ended interviews to assess the success of ALPs implemented throughout the MAR region. Interview questions about the broader configuration of projects' implementation were focused on to better understand how successful projects achieved their objectives. The interviews were analyzed to disentangle themes of effectiveness and identify the enabling conditions that promote the establishment and successful of projects. Results indicate projects have moved away from objectives exclusively related to conservation. Instead, surveyed projects main aims were to generate income, build communities' economic capacity, and improve resource management. Financing was a key limitation impacting project progression. Enabling conditions were found in promoting social capital to involve the beneficiaries to want to conserve their resources and use of sustainable fishing practices. Understanding the structural components of successful projects can promote the steady progression of other ALPs in the region to reach their individual goals. Takeaways from this research are for ALP managers to consider the impacts of financing timelines on project progression and to therefore consider reinforcing social capital into the aspects of project design that would be impacted. The results of this study can provide ALP managers in the MAR Region, and around the globe, actionable strategies that can facilitate effective income diversification and ultimately reef ecosystem preservation.

KEYWORDS: Income Diversification, Mesoamerican Reef Region, Alternative Livelihood Projects, Fishing .

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