Fisherfolk approaches to pursuing blue, social and climate justice in small-scale fisheries in Barbados

Enfoques de pescadores para buscar la justicia azul, social y climática en la pesca en pequeña escala en Barbados

Approches des pêcheurs pour poursuivre la justice bleue, sociale et climatique dans la pêche artisanale à la Barbade

MARIA PENA[1], and MARY ALLEN[2]
[1]*University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES), Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu*
[2]*Lynker, Inc. under contract to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management, Coral Reef Conservation Program, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, mary.allen@noaa.gov*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The global initiative, Socio-economic Monitoring for Coastal Management (SocMon), was established 20 years ago in 2000 as the socioeconomic monitoring arm of the International Coral Reef Initiative's (ICRI) Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN). In its formative period from 2000-2009, six regional SocMon nodes were established in the Caribbean, Central America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Western Indian Ocean to provide region-specific technical guidance for establishing site level socioeconomic coastal and marine monitoring programmes for improved coastal management and policy influence; the main purpose of SocMon (Bunce et al. 2000; Bunce and Pomeroy 2003). During this period, core SocMon guidance resources – a field manual of methods and region-specific guidelines for measuring a suite of socioeconomic variables – were produced and published for use. Global site monitoring was initiated at a number of coastal sites in all SocMon regions funded by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Within the last 10 years, strategic planning has been central to the initiative's further development and key to its mission of helping "…coastal stakeholders better understand and incorporate the socioeconomic context into coastal management programs through global, national, regional and local partners to facilitate participatory socioeconomic monitoring for the benefit of local communities and relevant stakeholders" (SocMon 2022). During this timeframe, another SocMon node, serving Brazil, was formed and global reporting has been central to promoting the successes and challenges of Global SocMon (Loper et al. 2008; Wongbusarakum et al. 2022). The Global SocMon initiative is coordinated by NOAA and has primarily been financially supported by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) Grants over its 20-year history.

The SocMon Caribbean node is hosted by The University of the West Indies, Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES) at the Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. SocMon Caribbean was one of the first nodes to be established early in the history of the Global SocMon initiative in 2003 and has been one of the most active regional nodes globally. Initiation of assessments was largely supply-driven in the early years of SocMon Caribbean – 2005 to 2011. From 2013 onwards, it has tended to be demand-driven with partners and entities approaching SocMon Caribbean for opportunities for capacity building. Multi-site projects over multiple years, funded by many donors – UNEP, NOAA CRCP, NFWF, GCFI, TNC, EU – valued at USD 500,000, resulted in the initiation of 33 socioeconomic assessments in 13 countries in the English-speaking Caribbean across 25 sites. These assessments were primarily implemented at Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or Marine Managed Areas (MMAs) in the region due to directed interests in coral reef initiatives. As such, international funding strategies (e.g., NOAA CRCP International Strategy 2010-2015) tailored grant funding to support socioeconomic monitoring at these sites.

Table 1: Trends in socioeconomic conditions and characteristics at Caribbean coastal management sites

- a high level of livelihood dependency on fishing, particularly subsistence and small-scale
- declining resource conditions and accompanying reduction in catch at some sites
- reluctance to change to alternative livelihoods due to a number of factors
- threats such as restricted access, overfishing, pollution, sedimentation, among others
- some understanding of the importance of coastal ecosystems
- support for the implementation of management measures to protect coral reefs
- reasonable support for MPAs and management
- low levels of (stakeholder) involvement in management and decision-making
- community/stakeholder interest in being involved in coastal and marine management

Typical goals and objectives for SocMon Caribbean assessments have been numerous, diverse and generally included:

- Baseline data gathering on coastal communities against which to measure changes.
- Informing fisheries and MPA management plans and decision-making.
- Developing socio-economic profiles for fisheries.
- Promoting the use of socioeconomic data in fisheries management.
- Assessing management effectiveness of MPAs to inform and adapt management.
- Determining the adaptive capacity of coastal communities to climate changes.
- Monitoring impact of development on coastal areas, fisheries-based culture.
- Using socioeconomic data to complement biophysical monitoring.
- Enhancing management capacity of stakeholders.

Over the near 20-year period of conducting socioeconomic assessments in the region, some trends in socioeconomic conditions and characteristics are clear and useful to improving coastal and marine management and decision-making. Some are summarized in Table 1.

The importance of understanding the human dimensions (social, economic, political and cultural systems), and the complexities of societal relationships with the Caribbean's peopled coasts, and how these influence sustainable management and effective, equitable governance, is crucial to evidence-based decision-making across varied marine policy realms - marine conservation, marine spatial planning (MSP), fisheries management, the Blue Economy and climate adaptation and resilience - in these large ocean states. Socioeconomic monitoring initiatives such as SocMon are capable of providing the data and information necessary to guide evidence-based decision-making in the region with respect to these efforts and initiatives.

Schemes for participatory monitoring and evaluation utilizing SocMon and other approaches can promote social and institutional learning aimed at expanding socioeconomic data collection and increasing adaptive capacity within social-ecological systems. SocMon can increase institutional learning and management performance when better integration is developed with the management process. When included in management, SocMon could be a source for institutional building, stakeholder engagement and management robustness. It can also reveal the institutional and communication gaps, and situations that need to be addressed to improve management. The democratization of the knowledge generated through SocMon, where learning is not limited to research and NGOs, but extends to fisherfolk, managers and the whole diversity of stakeholders, is compelling and exemplifies the potential and power of the approach. Due to the adaptability of the SocMon methodology to each site's needs there is little limitation in site assessment or monitoring goals and objectives. The participatory approach of SocMon is highly recommended for monitoring the socioeconomic characteristics of coastal and marine systems in order to inform and adapt management, increase adaptive capacity and resilience, and reduce vulnerabilities to certain shocks and impacts.

KEYWORDS: SocMon Caribbean, human dimensions, evidence-based decision-making

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