

**Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods:
Collaborative Management of the Mankòtè Mangrove, St. Lucia**
Tighe Geoghegan and Allan Smith, 1998

INTRODUCTION

St. Lucia's mangrove ecosystems, although of limited size and largely confined to the east coast of the country, are important producers of organic matter for many marine and coastal species, and provide protection against coastal erosion and pollution. They have also traditionally been important in rural production systems, providing wood for charcoal, fodder for livestock, and other renewable goods and services.

The extent and value of the country's mangroves have been significantly reduced in recent years. Several areas have been completely filled or cleared, and others used as dump sites. Some mangroves have been cut for charcoal production at unsustainable levels, and some have been used for inappropriate agricultural purposes (Devaux 1988, OECS-NRMU n.d.). Although the problem of mangrove loss and degradation has been recognized, no effective measures have been taken at the national level to reverse the trend.

In Mankòtè, the country's largest remaining mangrove, however, a group of charcoal producers and a non-governmental organization have been collaborating, with government endorsement, on an experimental management strategy that has provided significant protection as well as economic benefits to rural families for the past ten years. This case study tests the hypothesis that the Mankòtè experience can provide a model for the management of mangroves and other living resources both in St. Lucia and elsewhere in the region. In doing so, it examines aspects of the Mankòtè management arrangement that are generally believed to be critical in the success of participatory resource management approaches.

The case study was prepared by staff of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, which has been actively involved in the management of Mankòtè for a number of years. The authors consulted CANARI's files and all major documents produced about the case, as well as the reports and papers of several outside researchers. For comparative purposes, they also reviewed documents relevant to mangrove management in St. Lucia generally. Interviews were conducted with key participants, and the authors were also able to draw on their own long involvement with the case. Drafts of the study were reviewed both internally and by selected colleagues with a knowledge of the case.

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