



CARIBBEAN NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE

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BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY FOR CONSERVATION IN THE CARIBBEAN UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

REPORT ON SARAH McINTOSH'S VISIT TO BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS 14 -16 October, 2009

1. Purpose of the visit

- To launch the regional Darwin initiative project *Building civil society capacity for conservation in the UK Overseas Territories* to a wider range of stakeholders, since only the British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust (BVI-NPT) and, to some extent, the Virgin Islands Environmental Council (VIEC) and Jost van Dyke Preservation Society (JVDPS), had previously been engaged in direct discussions, e.g. at the UK Overseas Conservation Forum 2009 Conference;
- To identify a potential second BVI civil society organisation to partner with BVI-NPT in the regional Action Research and Learning Group;
- To identify what are currently the main priorities in terms of biodiversity conservation in Anguilla and who are the key stakeholders, with a particular focus on those from civil society;
- To identify the key capacities that civil society needs to be effective in biodiversity conservation in BVI, which capacities it already has and which need enhancing or building;
- To discuss how government agencies can improve the enabling environment and form effective partnerships with civil society organisations;
- To determine how the project can best support civil society capacity building in BVI and, in particular, to discuss with BVI-NPT and the partner organisation (if identified during the visit) the specific areas of capacity building they would like to see included in the project.
- Where possible, to provide advice on other possible sources of capacity building/funding/peer exchange on areas of capacity building that this project would not address.

2. Methodology

- Feedback from BVI-NPT during the project proposal development phase on its key needs and discussions at the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum meeting in Grand Cayman in June 2009;
- Brief presentation to and feedback from the BVI-NPT Board on 14 October.
- Stakeholder meeting on 15 October (see Agenda at Appendix 1 and Section 3.1 for more details on the approach and outcomes)
- Discussions throughout the visit with BVI-NPT Director, Joseph Smith-Abbott;
- Meeting with Bertrand Lettsome, Chief, Conservation and Fisheries Department, Ministry of Natural Resources.

3. Results

All the identified objectives were fully or partially achieved thanks in large measure to the excellent organisation of BVI-NPT, particularly in mobilising participants for the stakeholder workshop. The workshop proved very productive thanks to the active and informed participation of all those who attended.

3.1. Stakeholder meeting

a) Participants

Nine persons (see participant list at Appendix 2) attended the stakeholder meeting, four representing civil society organisations (CSOs), one from a private sector association, and four representing government agencies or departments. However, several of the CSO representatives have previously worked in government and several belong to more than one of the CSOs. This ‘cross-fertilisation’ seems to have resulted in open and amicable dialogue between CSOs and the Conservation and Fisheries Department, often united in their opposition to or concerns about activities being approved by other government departments.

b) Introductions/statement of organisational needs

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and respond – as specifically as possible - to the question ‘*What is the most important thing my organisation needs in the next 12 months to play an effective role in biodiversity conservation?*’. There was a fair degree of commonality with the following emerging as the major priorities (and needs) for the organisations represented:

- greater access to relevant timely information, supported by a Freedom of Information Act, and collaboration to minimise duplication of efforts;
- improved financial sustainability of CSOs, access to funding for projects and programmes (both CSOs and government), including enhanced in-country fundraising;
- improved enabling framework including passing of biodiversity conservation and environmental management legislation and the implementation of the National Parks System Plan;
- funding and human resources (including VIEC identifying the need for a specialist consultant) to dedicate to raising public awareness and influencing policy makers;
- enhanced networking at community, national and regional level, including partnerships between government agencies and CSOs where they share a common interest.

c) Identification of key biodiversity issues, stakeholders and their power in decision-making

After an overview of the project, participants were encouraged to reflect on what are the key issues and stakeholders in biodiversity conservation in BVI using a series of pictures depicting different aspects of biodiversity use and conservation.

Some of the key biodiversity issues identified included

- the fragility of the shoreline and the continuing degradation of coastal and marine resources as a result of land-based sources of pollution, inappropriate development, and impacts of yachts mooring;
- the need to ensure that more attention is paid to terrestrial protected areas and that they do not become fragmented (hence the need for the Systems Plan);
- the need to broaden the targets for protection to include, for example, mangroves and seagrass.

The discussions yielded the analysis shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Extractive use	Main stakeholders	Priority Strategies	What could be further improved
Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BVI Fishers Association ○ BVI Dive Association ○ Restaurants ○ USVI Sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closed seasons (in place) ○ Marine protected areas (some in place) ○ Protecting juveniles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visible enforcement ○ Visible enforcement ○ Education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fishers ○ USVI divers/recreation 		
Sandmining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developers ○ Construction industry ○ Reclamation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation and enforcement of permitting
Turtles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poachers ○ Legal hunting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closed season for some species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete ban for some species
Non-extractive use			
Marine recreation/tourism	(Not done in detail but includes cruise companies, yachties etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review fee structure ○ Determining carrying capacity (e.g. # of boats, cruise ships) ○ Zone maps
All uses			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build a constituency to advocate and lobby for change ○ Track economic impacts of severe events (e.g. flooding) ○ Economic valuation

With regard to the stakeholder identification, certain criteria were used to determine those who are key – for example, persons or organisations:

- with formal or informal rights or responsibilities;
- whose livelihoods depend significantly on the use of the resource;
- whose activities would be significantly affected by a change in management regime;
- whose activities have a significant positive or negative impact on biodiversity;
- who are currently excluded from decision-making and/or not receiving benefits but would like to.

These key stakeholders were then inserted into a decision-making pyramid (see Figure 1 overleaf) to assess who currently has high, medium and low power and therefore what might be the most critical intervention points in terms of policy influence and capacity building. This exercise highlighted

- the relative weakness of the Fisheries and Conservation Department in relation to other government departments;
- the growing influence of civil society in decision-making and policy influence related to conservation, particularly as a result of VIEC's success in the Beef Island case.

The facilitator suggested that the pyramid seemed to validate the need to focus on information exchange, communications and capacity building but that consideration might be given to placing greater emphasis on trying to influence and communicate effectively with the high-power individuals and organisations, rather than focusing primarily on public education and awareness.

e) Constraints

The exercise also stimulated discussion of a number of constraints to effective implementation of biodiversity conservation priorities were identified, many relating to the difficulties that UKOTs have accessing funding for implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as the Convention on Biodiversity. Independent countries can access, for example, GEF funding but this is not available to UKOTs. On the other hand, UK funding such as the Darwin initiative is made available to

both independent and dependent developing countries. It was therefore suggested that the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) should ring fence a sum of £1-5 million be ring-fenced to support UKOTs with biodiversity conservation. The EU's Green Paper on Future Relations with the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) has also acknowledged the need for special treatment of OTs.

The hybrid nature of the National Parks Trust also creates some challenges since it is a non-profit organisation but must get government approval before implementing any projects, yet the Act which governs it also requires that stakeholders be consulted and their views taken into account.

**WHO HAS INFLUENCE/DECISION-
ACTIVITIES THAT RELATE TO THE
BIODIVERSITY)**

**MAKING POWER (REGARDING
PRESERVATION OR DESTRUCTION OF**

HIGH

**LOBBYING AND
ADVOCACY**

Premier
Ministers
Developers
Trade Dept
Tourism Board
Port Authority
Construction Industry

USVI
stakeholders

MEDIUM

**CAPACITY
BUILDING AND
FORMING
ALLIANCES**

Fisheries and
Conservation Dept

Service clubs

External research/
volunteer groups
○ Ocean River Institute,
USA
○ Visions International
○ Lifeworks
○ Sail Caribbean

BVI-NPT

VIEC



BVIDA

Save Beef
Island
Group

BVI
Heritage
Croup

Humanities
Group

Fishers
Association

LOW

High School
Environmental
Clubs

HSLCC

Jost van Dyke
Preservation Society

Coppermine Committee
(inactive)

Organisations in blue are civil society
organisations

Key,
BVIDA BVI Dive Association
BVI-NPT BVI National Parks Trust
VIEC Virgin Islands Environmental Association

f) Civil society capacity needs assessment and discussion of enabling environment

Participants then divided into two groups to discuss the questions outlined in the agenda with regard to capacity needs and the enabling environment. This resulted in the following feedback.

Group A Civil Society

1. **ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

- Advocacy
- Public education
- Influencing policy
- Solidarity/networking
- Participation in planning/(co-) management

2. **CAPACITIES NEEDED** (H = HAVE; N = needed)

- Access to, and ability to interpret, information (H, but could be improved)
- Understanding of court procedures (VIEC = H, JvDPS = N)
- Ability to develop communication strategies for different target audiences = N
- Equipment/technology = N
- Diversified fundraising skills = N
- Partnerships and information exchange – (N to be improved, particularly regional, e.g. UNESCO for heritage sites)
- Stakeholder mobilisation = N

Group B Government

1. **HOW CAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IMPROVE THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

- Legislation, including Freedom of Information Act
- Provision of information
- NGO representation on standing committees etc.

2. **GOVERNMENT CAPACITY NEEDS**

- NPT needs training and doesn't get a budget from government for this.

4. **Identification of partner organisation for Darwin Action Research and Learning Group (ARLG)**

The Director of BVI-NPT suggested that given the BVI context, the optimal arrangement would be to have both JVDPS and VIEC partnering with BVI-NPT on the ARLG, but with only one representative from each. The facilitator agreed to this suggestion.

5. **Next steps**

1. CANARI will take the findings of the workshop into account in determining:
 - a) the focus of the training at the Action Research and Learning Group (ARLG) meetings. There will be also be a strong focus on designing this training in such a way that it can be applied or adapted by ARLG members at the national level for the benefit of the other civil society stakeholders;
 - b) the priorities for its wider training programme
2. It was suggested that CANARI should consider webinars as a means of reaching a wider target audience for its training programmes

APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP AGENDA



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NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

9 am – 2 pm 15 October 2009

Botanical Gardens

1. **Introduction to the project and the workshop** *CANARI*
2. **Anguilla's biodiversity – visioning a sustainable future** *Whole group discussion*
 - What is biodiversity and why is it important?
 - What are the priorities for action in the British Virgin Islands?
 - Who are the key stakeholders?
3. **Making the role of civil society more effective** *Small groups*
 - What role should civil society play?
 - What capacity does civil society need to be effective?
 - What capacities does it have now?
 - What capacities need to be built?
 - How can government agencies improve the enabling environment?
 - How can effective partnerships between government and civil society be built?
4. **Presentations and discussion of small group findings** *Small group presenters*
5. **Setting the workshop findings in the context of Anguilla's actions under the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD)** *CBD focal point (provisional)*
6. **Next steps** *CANARI/BVINPT*
 - How can the Darwin project contribute to the capacity building?
 - Who/what else can contribute to the capacity building?

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT LIST

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