



**CARIBBEAN NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE
(CANARI)**

**CASE OF THE SOUFRIERE MARINE MANAGEMENT
AREA (SMMA), ST. LUCIA**

**Yves Renard
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Credits

This case study is one of the products of a research project entitled **ASynthesizing the Caribbean experience in stakeholder analysis for participatory natural resource management**[®]. The project consisted of three major activities:

- ℄ the preparation of six case studies from Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, and their preliminary analysis by leading actors in each case;
- ℄ the convening, in collaboration with the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, in April 2000, of a four-day seminar to present and analyse the cases, to identify common themes and concepts related to stakeholder approaches in the Caribbean, and to develop selected principles and skills relevant to the Caribbean context;
- ℄ the preparation of a publication presenting the results of the analysis in the form of guidelines for Caribbean practitioners, the six case studies, and an annotated bibliography.

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Case of the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA), St. Lucia

Yves Renard
Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

1. Background and project description

The Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) was established in 1994 following an 18-month long process of participatory planning, which resulted in the creation of an institutional and technical framework for the management of the area's coastal resources and the conflicts provoked by the diverse use of these resources. The final agreement on the SMMA was the creation of a marine management area comprising 11 km of coastline and the adjacent marine area, to include marine reserves, fishing priority areas, multiple use areas, recreational areas and yacht moorings.

The users include fishers (pot, line and seine), yachtspersons, recreational divers, and the wider community for other recreational purposes. The management institutions include the Department of Fisheries, which through the Fisheries Act of 1984 is authorised to establish and manage Fishing Priority Areas and Marine Reserves; Soufriere Regional Development Foundation (SRDF) a community-based organisation, to which power has been devolved from Government for the purpose, among others, of developing and managing the coastal area of the town; and the Soufriere Marine Management Association (SMMA), which is responsible for coordinating management activities and guiding the formulation of a comprehensive management plan.

The Soufriere coastal region, on St. Lucia's southwest coast (see Figure 1), is an area of great ecological diversity, with well-developed coral reefs, outstanding landscapes, and forests. Its economy is based on agriculture, fishing and tourism. In response to a range of environmental and developmental issues, new management activities in the area began in the early 1980s, with the legal declaration of marine reserves and fishing priority areas. These efforts however met with limited success, probably because they were designed and implemented without the participation of resource users.

During the 1980s, resource use conflicts in the area increased dramatically, as a result of a number of factors including the expansion of the tourism sector, technological changes in the fishing industry, and an increase in negative impacts from land-based activities, notably agriculture, industry and construction. These conflicts manifested themselves in increased competition between seine fishers and yachters over the use of fishing areas, disputes between pot fishers and recreational divers over the use of reefs, restriction of access caused by the construction of a coastal jetty, and local opposition to central government's management activities and zoning decisions.



With the escalation of these conflicts, the general public and leaders of opinion in the area expressed concern, and resource users demanded action on the part of public authorities. In response to these calls, three agencies, the Department of Fisheries, the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, joined forces to begin a process of consultation that would lead to the definition of new management arrangements for the area.

2. Description of stakeholder groups

The following table identifies the various stakeholder and interest groups.

Resource, use or sector	Organisations with management authority	Organisations representing users and communities	Users and non-organised stakeholders
Planning and development	Ministry of Planning	Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, Soufriere Town Council, and St. Lucia National Trust	General public and all Soufriere residents
Living marine resources	Department of Fisheries	Soufriere Fishermen's Association, St. Lucia Dive Association, and St. Lucia Whale and Dolphin Watching Association	Fishers, other harvesters of marine resources, recreational divers, and dive operators
Transportation	St. Lucia Air and Sea	Soufriere Regional	Boat operators and

Resource, use or sector	Organisations with management authority	Organisations representing users and communities	Users and non-organised stakeholders
	Ports Authority and Customs and Excise Department	Development Foundation and Soufriere Water Taxi Association	traders
Beaches	Parks and Beaches Commission (since replaced by the National Conservation Authority) and Soufriere Town Council		General public and all Soufriere residents
Tourism	Ministry of Tourism and St. Lucia Tourist Board	St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association, Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, St. Lucia Dive Association, and St. Lucia Day Boat Charter Association	Hotels, yacht operators, dive operators, day-boat charters, taxi drivers, tourism workers, restaurateurs, visitors, and Soufriere residents

3. Stakeholder identification and analysis

At the beginning of the planning process, the facilitators did not conduct a full-fledged analysis of stakeholders. They however prepared a list of identified users of the area, and conducted a mobilisation exercise (meetings with individuals and organisations) aimed at ensuring the participation of these stakeholders in the exercise. The process can be summarised as follows:

- < the formal consultation and planning process involved a series of meetings, some with all identified stakeholders, others focusing on more specific issues, needs or zones, and followed a logical process of problem identification, agreement on need to negotiate, and negotiation of management instruments. These meetings took place over a period of 18 months, and resulted in the formulation of an agreement which was submitted to, and formally endorsed by, the Cabinet of Ministers;
- < the agreement was reached in June 1994, and was formally launched in June 1995. It provided for a new zoning plan (fishing priority areas, marine reserves and multiple-use areas), a range of management measures (user fees, incentives, etc.) and a new institutional arrangement, with the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee, chaired by the Chief Fisheries Officer, and with the delegation of co-ordinating responsibilities to the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation;
- < during 1995 and 1996, work focused on the implementation of the main elements of the management agreement, including the demarcation of areas, the establishment of the fee systems, the provision of technical assistance to fishers and other resource users, the facilitation of specific negotiations among stakeholders, and the preparation of information materials;

- < in 1996, aware that it was encountering difficulties in the implementation of the SMMA, and that some sectors had not been properly involved in the planning process, the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation asked the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute to facilitate the preparation of a communication plan. In the preparation of this plan, a simple method of stakeholder analysis was employed in order to define the most appropriate communication messages and media. The plan has since guided several of the activities of the SMMA, but it has not been systematically implemented;
- < in late 1996 and 1997, the SMMA encountered a number of problems, apparently caused by changes in local socio-economic conditions and by a range of political factors. In response to these problems, a number of decisions were made, which did not follow the established consultative process and resulted in a *de facto* reconcentration of authority in the hands of government agencies. At the same time, a number of users, notably sections of the local fishing community, began to agitate against the SMMA and to demand changes in management arrangements;
- < in response to this crisis, the SMMA began a thorough review process, which involved all relevant stakeholders, and which resulted in the recent reorganisation of the management arrangement, with a new agreement (signed by the government and six civil society organisations) and a new organisation, the Soufriere Marine Management Association, composed of the signatories to the agreement, which is now responsible for coordinating the implementation of the agreement.

4. Main lessons learnt

This experience has already taught a number of lessons which have proven useful to planners, managers and development workers in St. Lucia and other parts of the Caribbean region. With specific reference to stakeholder analysis and related approaches to planning and management, the following points can be noted.

One of the greatest threats to the success and effectiveness of participatory management processes and institutions is the accidental or deliberate exclusion of one or more groups of stakeholders from the planning and negotiating stages.

This is a lesson that many resource managers have learnt the hard way, and one that is well illustrated by the experience of Soufriere. For example, several problems of enforcement of the initial agreement concerning marine reserves within the SMMA came from fishers who reside in nearby agricultural communities (and not in the coastal town of Soufriere as all regular fishers do) and who have the tradition of setting pots and diving for reef fishes seasonally, and very occasionally. These individuals had not been identified in the early stages, and were thus not involved in the planning and decision-making process. Most experiences in participatory natural resource management in the Caribbean region, some more dramatically than others, can provide such examples of exclusion which have resulted in the weakening of management agreements and procedures, because of a lack of commitment (at best) or outright opposition (at worst).

There is need for rigorous methods of stakeholder identification, which aim at ensuring that all parties are properly recognised and given a chance to participate in the process.

There is need to make a distinction between stakeholder *identification* and stakeholder *analysis*, or, at least, to see the former as an indispensable first step in the process of stakeholder analysis. There is thus a need for methods that would ensure that all stakeholders are properly identified. This is challenging, as experience shows that many stakeholders are not immediately *visible*, because of a range of factors that can include powerlessness, distance, or the seasonality or rarity of their involvement in resource use. It appears that the only way to avoid this exclusion would be to begin with an identification of all the current and potential functions and uses of the natural resources which are the object of management or the focus of conflict, and then to identify all the groups and actors who may have a stake in these functions or uses.

Stakeholder groups and communities are far less homogeneous than it is generally assumed by the initiators and facilitators of participatory management processes.

In Soufriere, the experience of the past decade has confirmed that it is not possible to talk about *fishers*, *tourism operators* or *hotels* and to assume that these groups have common interests, needs and expectations. Indeed, even within the same fishing household in Soufriere, one can see many differences in livelihood strategies, based on sex, age or culture. Another main challenge of stakeholder analysis is therefore to define methods which can take these differences into account, and allow for their integration into management decisions.

Even when stakeholders are properly identified, and when their interests are properly taken into account, there are many forces which militate against the fair and equitable distribution of rights, responsibilities and benefits.

In the planning phases of the SMMA process (1992-1994), a particular effort had been made to ensure representation of various interest groups within each sector. For example, there were eight fishermen who were systematically invited to all negotiation meetings and activities, and these individuals were assumed to represent all types of fishing. However, and without this being noticed by the facilitators of the process, several of these fishers began to miss meetings, while the two leaders of the local Fishermen's Cooperative began to assume more responsibility and to act as the spokespersons for the entire fishing community. In effect, what happened in this instance was a progressive return to the initial pattern of power relations within the fishing community, with the poorest and weakest of its members having little or no voice in formal negotiations.

Representation and representativeness are two different concepts, and effective representation is difficult.

Facilitators of participatory processes often place much emphasis and importance on ensuring adequate representation of stakeholder interests. But in practice, it is not possible to ensure that all sectors are properly represented in all formal and informal negotiation activities. Yet, it remains possible to ensure that participants in these activities formulate views, opinions and demands which reflect those of all stakeholder groups. It may therefore be useful, in many

instances, to pay less attention to *representation* (i.e. involving people who legitimately speak on behalf of stakeholders) and to value *representativeness* (i.e. involving people who may not represent any particular group, in a political sense, but whose views are representative of the needs and interests of a given sector).

The legitimacy and competence of facilitation are essential requirements for the success of participatory planning and negotiation processes.

In the case of the SMMA, one important factor in this regard has been the collaboration of several facilitators, and the fact that the conduct of this negotiated process was presented to, and perceived by, stakeholders as the joint initiative of three partners, rather than the individual effort of one agency. These included the Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, which brought to the process its legal mandate and authority as well as its technical competencies; the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, a community organisation that had local and national legitimacy, political linkages and a demonstrated ability to implement development projects; and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), a technical organisation that was perceived as independent, bringing facilitation expertise and experience to the process. In many respects, it could be argued that the initial negotiation which took place among these three partners, and by which they agreed to initiate this process and to share the facilitation roles, has been a decisive factor in the relative success of this process. Alliances are one of the answers to the need for legitimate and effective facilitation.

When carried out in a participatory fashion, stakeholder analysis is an instrument of dispute resolution.

At the beginning of the planning process (1992-1993), large meetings were organised, at which each stakeholder group was invited, in turn, to present its interests, expectations and concerns (and at which all other participants were obliged to listen without arguing or negotiating outcomes). This activity proved extremely useful. It created a forum of dialogue and interaction, and dramatically increased the participants' understanding of, and respect for, the views and needs of others. In this way, it created the conditions for the direct negotiation of management procedures. One example of this benefit was seen in the constructive dialogue that was subsequently established between pot fishers and recreational divers, which these meetings made possible.

Natural resource management and development processes take place in constantly evolving situations, and conflict management and participatory planning activities often suffer from the incorrect assumption that conditions are far more static than they are in reality.

Indeed, the Soufriere experience illustrates the importance of change, in both human and environmental terms. Since the SMMA was formally created in 1994, changes in this area have included the almost simultaneous closure, in 1996, of two of the main employers and economic activities in the area (one hotel and one agro-processing factory), which radically changed the employment conditions, and the destruction of several reef areas by Hurricane Lenny in late 1999. These examples not only demonstrate that social, economic and environmental conditions can and do change, but they also dispute the prevalent perception that processes of change are

linear. Many natural resource conservation and management interventions are based on the premise that local systems are affected by a process of environmental degradation caused by human interventions, while field observations suggest a more complex reality. In Soufriere, for example, coastal resources are likely to have been severely affected at the time of the expansion of plantation agriculture in the 18th century, and to have recovered following the demise of the sugar industry in the area towards the end of the 19th century. Change (and its complexity) is a factor that must be taken into account in stakeholder analysis and participatory management.

Conflicts cannot be resolved; they can only be managed. The challenge, therefore, is to establish conflict management institutions that are capable of responding equitably, effectively and efficiently to emerging changes, evolving issues and new needs.

The terminology of conflict *resolution* has now practically disappeared from the development lexicon, and for good reasons. The case of Soufriere is another example of the fact that conflicts are never fully resolved (a specific dispute may however be resolved) and that new conflicts can always emerge. In this case, it was naively assumed by its facilitators that the participatory process of 1992-94 would resolve conflicts, but it did not. In many respects, the fundamental difference between the initial agreement of 1994 and the one that was reached in 1999 following the institutional review is precisely this one. The first agreement aimed at resolving conflicts, and time showed that it was not adequate to address the new issues that evolving conditions had created. This latest agreement, it is hoped, provides the institutional basis for the management of current and future conflicts and, as such, may have far greater chances of success.

In situations where conflicts are acute, and are at the origin of the stakeholder analysis exercise, there is indeed a danger that conflict management may become an end in itself, rather than the means of addressing broader development issues. In retrospect, this may have been the case in Soufriere, and may have been responsible for some of the problems encountered in the implementation of the agreement. It could easily be argued that what was negotiated at the beginning of the planning process was an agreement to resolve conflicts (as these conflicts were the motivation for action), rather than an agreement to negotiate the procedure for the management and development of the area. As a result, the process failed to develop a common vision and clear management objectives, and the SMMA suffered from this.

5. Further reading

Additional information on the history of the SMMA and the issues discussed in this paper can be obtained from the following documents:

- d'Auvergne, C. 1998. Participatory coastal resource management: the Soufriere Marine Management Area (St. Lucia). ENCORE Project, St. Lucia. 13 pp.
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- George, S. 1994. Coastal conflict resolution: a case study of Soufriere, St. Lucia. 14 pp.
- Larson, P., J. Cumberbatch, M. Fontaine and M. Nolan. 1998. The ENCORE experience: lessons learnt to date. ENCORE Project no. 538-A-00-93-00231-00:33 pp.
- Nichols, K., S. De Beauville-Scott and S. George. A critical review of the implementation of the management plan for the Soufriere Marine Management Area: a case study. 48th Proceedings of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute. In press.
- Renard, Y. and S. Koester. 1995. Resolving conflicts for integrated coastal management: the case of Soufriere, St. Lucia. Caribbean Park and Protected Area Bulletin 5(2):5-7.
- Sandersen, H.T. 1995. Co-management in Caribbean fisheries? - the case of St. Lucia. Nordland Research Institute, Norway. 34 pp.
- Soufriere Regional Development Foundation. 1994. Soufriere Marine Management Area, agreement on the use and management of marine and coastal resources in the Soufriere region, St. Lucia. Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, Soufriere, St. Lucia. 25 pp.
- St. Lucia National Trust and Soufriere Development Programme. 1990. Soufriere 2000, report on community retreat. 54 pp.
- Thébaud, O. and Y. Renard. 1995. Gestion du littoral et processus de décision: analyse de quelques cas d'étude dans la région Caraïbe. Paper presented at the 5th Common Property Conference: reinventing the commons. Bodo, Norway. 17 pp.