

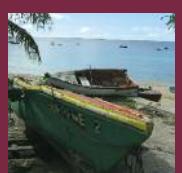
Civil Society  
& Governance

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

Technical Report  
No. 387



**Thirty Years in Support of Participatory  
Natural Resource Management:** the experience of  
the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)





# **Thirty years in support of participatory natural resource management:** the experience of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)



**Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)**  
Trinidad and Tobago  
2009

## **Acknowledgements:**

This document was prepared by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) through the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation-funded project “Climate change and biodiversity in the insular Caribbean: Going from strength to strength”. It also draws on a self-profile of CANARI produced for the International Institute for Environment and Development.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALG	Action learning group
CANARI	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCA	Caribbean Conservation Association
CERMES	Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
ECNAMP	Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Programme
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFS2S	Going from Strength to Strength (project)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus - Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SEDU	Sustainable Economic Development Unit
SMMA	Soufrière Marine Management Area
UK	United Kingdom
USD	United States dollar
UWI	University of the West Indies

## 1. A study of CANARI by CANARI, how come?

### Caribbean challenges

**These are times of great uncertainty, at global, regional, national and local levels.** The impacts of the global economic downturn are being felt within the Caribbean, particularly in terms of shrinking fiscal revenue, reduced tourism arrivals and investments, lower remittances from Caribbean nationals living overseas, reductions in the price of export commodities such as oil and methanol (Trinidad and Tobago) and bauxite (Jamaica), and the loss of traditional markets for agricultural products (e.g. bananas and sugar). These are accompanied by a growing awareness of the actual and potential threats of climate change and the scale of the interventions that will be necessary to increase resilience, particularly of coastal communities and ecosystems.



*The loss of preferential markets for Caribbean bananas has had a serious impact on livelihoods in islands such as Saint Lucia.*

Source: CANARI

**These multiple crises demonstrate the intricacy of the linkages between natural resource management and human development,** especially when one considers the connection between poverty and the environment, with the negative impact that environmental degradation has on people living in poverty, but also with the potential contribution that good environmental management can make to poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods. However, experience has shown that sustainable development and natural resource management are



*Charcoal production is common in rural communities in the islands of the Caribbean. Making this a sustainable activity can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods.*

Source: CANARI

complex processes that require the participation of all sectors of society, under new forms of governance that are based on the principles of equity and sustainability. Coherent institutional frameworks that facilitate linkages between environmental management, adaptation to change and poverty reduction, at local, national and regional levels, are more necessary than ever.

**In the Caribbean, with this region's huge ecological, social, cultural and economic diversity, effective environmental management also demands intense, constant and effective collaboration between countries and institutions, across linguistic and political barriers.**

Indeed, one of the few, perhaps the only positive sign of the current crisis is a seemingly greater impetus towards regional integration, at least in terms of developing common policies and a degree of harmonised regulation of the financial sector. In this context, all initiatives and arrangements that bring the region together in the face of these formidable challenges are worthy of support, and there is a need to identify the conditions and approaches that make regional collaboration effective, efficient and sustainable.

**Responding to present and future challenges will require capacity, at all levels and in all sectors of society, to lead and contribute to participatory processes, to build and sustain effective partnerships, to react more quickly to shifts in the external environment, to identify suitable solutions to environmental problems, and to communicate scientific and other research findings more effectively to policy makers.** While ‘capacity-building’ is integral to the discourse of development agencies, the region has regrettably not yet focused on a much-needed, systematic effort towards strengthening institutions and organisations and building the skills that are needed, in government, in the private sector, in academia and in civil society.

**While the region needs quality support to meet these challenges, it remains unclear how the donor community will react to the current crises;** although there will undoubtedly be cutbacks in aid budgets and philanthropic giving, there are as yet few indicators as to how donor funding will be prioritised, and there is a concern that the region will once again fall foul of what is perceived as ‘donor flavour-of-the-month syndrome’. For example, the region fared poorly when poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the main focus of donors because most of the countries in the region are classified as middle-income developing countries. It came back into the spotlight as the emphasis switched to climate change and, more recently, sustainable production and consumption, but one still misses the long-term strategic partnerships that can really meet the needs and priorities of this region, and that would help transform aid into a genuine investment in sustainable development and in the institutions on which such development depends.

It is against this background that CANARI has seen the need to document its own experience, not to suggest that particular models are better than others, but to reflect on and learn from that experience, and to offer insights, lessons and examples. This document, it is hoped, will therefore serve as a basis for further exchanges and will prove useful to partners in their own efforts towards building institutions that contribute effectively to equitable, sustainable development in the Caribbean and other regions.

## **Background and acknowledgements**

This document is the product of converging efforts by CANARI, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (the MacArthur Foundation). In

2006, IIED embarked on a project to analyse what makes local organisations effective and the nature of the local, national and international support that strengthens, scales up, or multiplies such local action. For this purpose, it commissioned a series of self-profiles of local organisations that contribute to poverty reduction and environmental management. As part of this global project, IIED approached CANARI, a partner in a number of IIED projects, to provide a self-profile.

This appealed to CANARI, both because of its long tradition of self-analysis and because it is currently engaged in a regional project, *Going from strength to strength (GFS2S)*, with complementary objectives. GFS2S, which is funded by the MacArthur Foundation, seeks to identify and build the capacities that conservation- and development-oriented civil society organisations need to participate effectively in natural resource management in the Caribbean. GFS2S also includes a case study component, and it was therefore decided that one of the case studies would focus on CANARI and that some of the research and analysis carried out for the IIED-sponsored project would inform the preparation of a more comprehensive document summarising the history and achievements of the organisation, and identifying some of the main lessons learned from its experience over the past three decades.

This work has resulted in two complementary publications. One is the case study prepared for the IIED project (in press) and the other is the present document, which is being released thanks to the support of the MacArthur Foundation. Both publications were coordinated by Sarah McIntosh, CANARI’s Executive Director, who also acted as lead author, and edited by Yves Renard, CANARI Associate and former Executive Director. Dr Steve Koester, Professor and Chair at the Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado Denver, took the lead on two activities:

- a desk review and analysis of documents relating to earlier processes of self-analysis and strategic planning within CANARI; and
- in-person and telephone interviews with a small selection of people who have interacted with CANARI, mainly in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia, as research partners and/or beneficiaries of capacity building activities.

Special thanks are due to CANARI Partners, Staff and Associates who contributed at various stages to the

development of the case study, and also to those who were interviewed and who provided such valuable insights into how CANARI has supported and can continue to support its partners at national and community levels, including:

- Julian Alexis, General Manager, Soufriere Fishermen's Cooperative, Saint Lucia;
- Noel Bennett, Rural Sociologist, Forestry Department, Jamaica;
- Donna Brown, President, Sundew Tourguide Services, Trinidad and Tobago;
- Christopher Cox, Programme Director, Caribbean Environmental Health Institute, Saint Lucia;
- Lucius Ellevic, General Manager, Laborie Cooperative Credit Union, Saint Lucia;
- Felix Finisterre, Independent Consultant (and since appointed Elected Partner, CANARI), Saint Lucia;
- Lyndon John, Assistant Chief Forest Officer, Forestry Department, Saint Lucia;
- Vijay Krishnarayan, Deputy Director, Commonwealth Foundation, UK (and former Executive Director, CANARI);
- Patricia Lamelas, Executive Director, Center for Conservation and Eco-Development of Samaná and its Environs (CEBSE), Dominican Republic (and former CANARI Elected Partner);
- Farah Mukhida, Executive Director, Anguilla National Trust, Anguilla;
- Susan Otuokon, Executive Director, Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, Jamaica;
- Fitzgerald Providence, Programme Manager, Integrated Forest Management and Development Programme, Forestry Department, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines;
- Yves Renard, Independent Consultant and Director, Green Park Consultants (and CANARI Associate and former Executive Director), Saint Lucia.
- Dennis Sammy, Manager, Nature Seekers, Trinidad and Tobago;
- Allan Smith, Independent Consultant, Saint Lucia (and CANARI Associate);

- Patricia Turpin, President, Environment Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago;
- Kai Wulf, Manager, Soufriere Marine Management Area, Saint Lucia; and
- Judy Williams, Secretary-General, Grenada Community Development Agency, Grenada.

It will also be evident to the reader of this case study that there are many people, both within and outside the Caribbean region, who have contributed over the past 30 years to CANARI's formal and informal processes of self-analysis, reflection, experimentation and learning. They are too numerous to mention by name, but CANARI is grateful for their contributions to these processes and for their continuing interest in and support to the organisation and its mission.

## 2. Tell me, has CANARI really made a difference?

CANARI is a regional non-profit organisation dedicated to working at multiple levels to develop, test, promote and support local, national and regional efforts aimed at improving the management of natural resources and the livelihoods of those who depend on them, through inclusive, participatory approaches. Its geographic focus is the islands of the Caribbean, including all independent countries as well as the dependent territories of France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States<sup>1</sup>. The organisation's principal means of achieving its objectives are by working with local partners to build their capacity to contribute to sustainable livelihoods and environmental management, and by identifying and promoting the adoption of suitable policies and governance arrangements.

Assessing and documenting the impact of an organisation dedicated to capacity-building and policy change is not an easy task. Like many others in these fields, CANARI is aware that it is hard to quantify and at times even simply to identify outcomes, in part because the nature of funding means that much work is done under projects, making long-term monitoring and evaluation difficult, and in part because policy and capacity changes always come as a result of several factors, making it impossible to attribute the change to a single source. In order to deal with these challenges, CANARI is in the process of developing a monitoring and evaluation framework that will encompass organisational, programme and project evaluation and will attempt to assess and document both the long- and short-term results of its work.

Attribution is particularly challenging in the case of an advocacy organisation. In CANARI's case, there were instances, especially during the early days of its field experiments in community-based resource management and its advocacy of participation, when its work was clearly going against the tide and the Institute found itself alone promoting changes in the ways natural resources were being managed – and at times even in open conflict with environmental agencies, especially in government. In

such conditions, it was easier to relate a given change to CANARI's efforts. But attitudes and policies have evolved; while the dominant approaches to natural resource management in the 1960s and 1970s were characterised by top-down interventions and the frequent exclusion of people and communities as a result of conservation initiatives, there are many organisations, at all levels and in all the main sectors, which have now adopted and advocated approaches and methods similar to those of CANARI. It is therefore not possible to attribute the policy changes that have occurred in the past thirty years, but only to identify those to which CANARI may have contributed.

Nevertheless, by adopting the outcome mapping philosophy of 'contribution not attribution', one can identify a number of key areas in which CANARI has made a substantial impact.

### **CANARI has made the case for collaborative management and participatory governance**

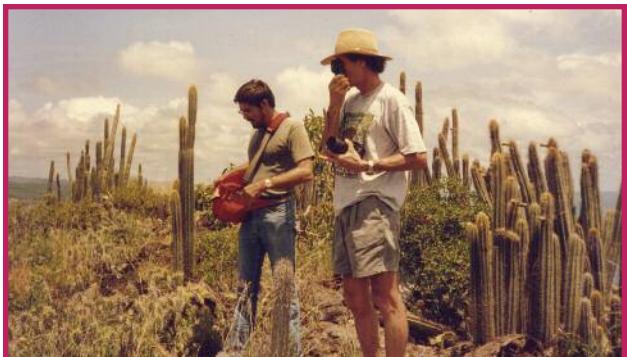
While there have been many voices and actors advocating participatory natural resource management in the Caribbean over the past thirty years, one of CANARI's substantial contributions has been the articulation of the rationale for these approaches, and the demonstration of their benefits, in a Caribbean context. In the early days, this was achieved through long-term involvement in



*CANARI's early work under the People and the Sea project involved working with local communities on sustainable harvesting of sea urchins, an important fishery in Saint Lucia.*

*Source: Allan Smith*

<sup>1</sup> CANARI's predecessor was working almost exclusively in the eastern Caribbean.



*Allan Smith and a colleague on Maria Island in Saint Lucia conducting field research, which was an important component of CANARI's experimental field projects.* Source: Janice Cumberbatch

experimental field projects (forest management in Dominica, coastal resource management and development in Saint Lucia), the lessons of which were documented and disseminated through publications, study tours and training activities.

Over time, CANARI decided to become less involved in direct field testing, and began to act more as a facilitator of collective analysis and learning among practitioners in the region. Training workshops and action learning groups (ALGs) are central to this process, combined with support for activities at community level via small grants, training and mentoring, and with the continued documentation of case studies from the region<sup>2</sup>. In recent years, with the growing interest in and adoption of participatory approaches among a wide range of institutions (and certainly as an indicator of the growth of that interest), CANARI has also been called to play a facilitating and advisory role in a number of interesting processes, in policy development (e.g. forest policy review and formulation in Trinidad and Tobago), in management planning (e.g. Centre Hills in Montserrat and Aripo Savannas in Trinidad and Tobago), and in developing multistakeholder institutional arrangements.

A critical element in this approach has been the facilitation of the design and establishment of new, collaborative institutional arrangements. Perhaps the best documented case is that of the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) in Saint Lucia, which is a good example of how a participatory conflict resolution and planning process can lead to the creation of an institutional partnership involving government agencies,

non-governmental organisations (NGOs), user groups and the private sector. CANARI was directly involved, in collaboration with Saint Lucia's Department of Fisheries and the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, in facilitating these processes. Since then, through its training and technical assistance activities, the Institute has helped in the creation or strengthening of several similar arrangements throughout the region.

Thanks to all these activities, a rationale has emerged, one that is rooted in Caribbean realities and experiences. Evidently, the discourse and the approaches have changed over time – from a somewhat naïve and narrow emphasis on 'community-based management' in the early 1980s to a broader understanding of policy, governance and partnerships – but, throughout the three decades of its existence, CANARI has clearly made the effort to distil lessons learned from field work, to identify the costs and benefits of various approaches, and to base its capacity-building and advocacy work on articulated rationales and documented experience.

### **CANARI has made people aware of the positive linkages between poverty reduction and environmental management**

Several partners of CANARI have indicated that it was through their involvement with the Institute that they learned to perceive marginalised resource users as stakeholders whose knowledge and interests are critical to effective resource management, and whose rights and responsibilities should be taken into account when designing new management arrangements. For example, a participant in a collaborative project aimed at developing a management plan for an environmentally sensitive area containing a number of long-term residents without title to the land noted that *"in one of the workshops, several squatters that live in the Aripo Savannas were invited to the workshop, and they were able to express their views. Some of them had been there over twenty years. They were able to express their opinion and they came to understand the importance of the area that they were on. So much so that last year it was designated by the EMA<sup>3</sup> as an Environmentally Sensitive Area, and based on that the EMA decided that they would redraw the boundary for some of these squatters"*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.canari.org/publications.asp> for many of these case studies and other CANARI publications.

<sup>3</sup> The Environmental Management Authority, the governmental agency responsible for environmental management in Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>4</sup> This perception about the redrawing of the boundary is not entirely correct since the EMA's decision to redraw the boundary pre-dates the meeting alluded to. However, the creation of a space in which the squatters felt comfortable to contribute did result in others shifting firmly-held opinions about squatters and facilitated the building of a consensus between all stakeholders that community members, including squatters, could act as an effective 'human buffer zone'.



*Understanding the perspectives of different stakeholders, including squatters, was an important part of the management planning process for the Aripo Savannas. Source: CANARI*

Even before the international community began to focus on poverty reduction as the main agenda of development cooperation, CANARI's work was already driven by a strong commitment to ensuring that approaches to natural resource management contribute to reducing poverty and enhancing livelihoods and reflect the needs and views of those whose livelihoods depend on the resource. From its earliest years, at a time when few organisations were interested in approaches that linked conservation and people, CANARI had started to work with small sawyers and poor charcoal producers to identify strategies that would benefit both the resource and the users. This has remained a consistent element of its field and policy work, including projects with sea urchin harvesters in Saint Lucia, seaweed harvesters in Trinidad, and fisherfolk and non-timber forest product harvesters throughout the region.

Although the term 'poverty reduction' has only recently entered into CANARI's discourse, it is clear that CANARI's work has helped in developing a positive linkage between natural resource management and poverty reduction, in at least three ways:

- by helping to dispel the prevalent myth that poor people invariably destroy natural resources, showing instead, as in the cases of the Mankòtè mangrove in Saint Lucia or Fondes Amandes in Trinidad, that users of natural resources employ coherent strategies that should provide the starting point for any improvement in management, and that poor people should be actors and partners, not victims or villains;
- by illustrating the negative impacts that top-down and narrow approaches to conservation and natural

resource management can have on poor communities, especially through their exclusion of traditional uses and users; and

- by promoting sustainable uses of resources for revenue generation and employment creation, in forestry (from the Cottage Forest Industries project in Dominica in the 1980s to the tour guiding and agro-forestry action learning projects under the current Forests and Livelihoods Programme, aquaculture (mainly with seaweed management and cultivation projects) and tourism (for example with the collaboration with the Saint Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme or the US-funded community-based tourism training programmes in Grenada after Hurricane Ivan and regional training workshop in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation).

### **CANARI has contributed to building the capacity for participatory management**

Much of CANARI's work over the past three decades has contributed to building capacity for participatory natural resource management, through five main, complementary strategies:

- encouraging changes in the world views and enhancing the skills of key individuals involved in resource management in governmental agencies and civil society organisations through training activities and the preparation and dissemination of written and audio-visual materials;
- encouraging changes in the policies, structures and cultures of organisations and institutions and supporting their formulation and implementation of projects and programmes in participatory resource management;
- facilitating action learning, communication and networking, and creating a sense of community, among key actors and practitioners committed to exploring and promoting more inclusive and participatory approaches to natural resource management and sustainable development;
- strengthening the management capacity of key organisations and institutions and helping them to enhance their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability;
- encouraging continuous participatory evaluation and adapting accordingly.

CANARI typically implements several of these strategies in tandem. Ways and examples of the varied (and sometimes unanticipated) ways in which CANARI's interventions appear to have contributed to building the capacity for participatory natural resource management at individual, organisational and institutional levels include:

- many colleagues in the region are making use of CANARI's guidelines and other materials in support of their work, and these guidelines have in some instances contributed to the design and establishment of entirely new programmes and institutions, as in the case of the Saint Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme;
- CANARI's capacity-building activities have contributed to a shift in the attitude of individual staff members in a large number of organisations – and by extension in the culture of their organisations and the partnerships in which they are involved – as in the case Forestry Department in Jamaica, with the example of the development of the Local Forest Management Committees (Geoghegan 2004). As recalled by a government forester, CANARI's workshops “provided long term benefits in the approach to the work that we do – especially in forest management – so people that are not necessarily community-oriented persons have come back from the workshops and have been able to appreciate in a much more direct way the role that the local community can play in moving things forward. People who have been sceptical about community involvement have become advocates of participatory approaches”;
- these shifts in organisational culture have often led to the adoption of participatory approaches to strategic planning and programme implementation, as in the cases of the Trinidad and Tobago Environmental Management Authority (where several of the key persons in the Biodiversity Department have been trained by CANARI and have applied learning to the planning and management of Environmentally Sensitive Areas), the Department of Environment in Montserrat (which has developed a participation strategy to guide all its activities following its involvement in CANARI-facilitated processes), Environment Tobago and Nature Seekers, both in Trinidad and Tobago, the Saint Lucia National Trust, and the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (which have all applied new – and more participatory – approaches to strategic planning and evaluation);
- several community leaders participating in CANARI workshops and field experiments have acquired the confidence and capacity to play lead roles in participatory management and local governance, as in the case of the community foresters involved in the Cottage Forest Industries project in Dominica in the 1980s or that of a participant in a recent regional training activity who has since agreed to take over the leadership of her national fisherfolk organisation;
- several organisations that have received training or technical assistance from CANARI have applied the tools and methods they acquired to the design, negotiation, review and implementation of co-management arrangements and agreements, as in the SMMA in Saint Lucia, the collaborative arrangement between Nature Seekers and the Forestry Division in Trinidad, or the arrangement at Warmmae Letang that is facilitated by Dominica's Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division (Perry Fingal 2009).

### **CANARI has influenced changes in public policy in several countries of the region**

CANARI has also facilitated a wide range of policy and management planning processes, particularly relating to forestry, protected areas, tourism and fisheries. Recent examples include facilitation of the process to develop revised Forest and Protected Areas Policies for Trinidad and Tobago; management planning for the Centre Hills in Montserrat and the Aripo Savannas in Trinidad and Tobago; and facilitating capacity building of the Caribbean Regional Fisherfolk Network to enhance its capacity to influence regional policy. The policy documents and management plans that have emerged from these processes increasingly reflect a consensus on the part of all stakeholders (typically the formal managers, the resource users, and those with a research or conservation interest) that an ecosystem-based management approach should be adopted and livelihood concerns should be factored into the management of the resource and the governance arrangements.

Thanks in part to the work of CANARI and its partners, the language of livelihoods and sustainable use is now enshrined in many environmental policy and management documents in the Caribbean, but this has not yet been translated and incorporated into the main policy documents and processes that guide development at national and regional levels. Firth (2005) found that

*“despite the fact that national poverty reduction strategies and plans (PRSPs) are intended to reflect the priorities of poor people, such as poverty-environment linkages, these issues have largely been neglected. This reflects a general shortcoming of PRSPs in that the approach largely excludes the need to integrate poverty alleviation policies with environmental policy measures. The policies also reflect a limited recognition of the role that natural resources serve in poverty reduction, particularly for the rural poor”, as illustrated by the fact that CANARI is rarely invited to consultations relating to regional or national poverty reduction strategies and has been largely unsuccessful in attracting poverty reduction practitioners and policy-makers to its workshops and consultations. Similarly, national and community-based civil society organisations involved in natural resource management are insufficiently involved in the main policy processes in their countries, and much work is still needed to advocate and promote these linkages. Overall, the institutional landscape in the region remains one in which there are few mechanisms for inter-sectoral collaboration, especially between the environment and development sectors, and, in many cases, collaboration is viewed as ceding power.*

### **CANARI has created bridges and changed relationships in ways that have made natural resource management more inclusive**

Very few linkages – and at times even high levels of mistrust – exist between stakeholders who need to collaborate in order for natural resource management and development strategies to be implemented effectively. For example mistrust often exists between:

- government and civil society;
- different agencies within government;
- regional and national NGOs that regard each other as competitors;
- researchers from outside the region and stakeholders within the focal country or countries;
- academics from different (and sometimes even the same) universities within the region;
- different factions within communities, especially around issues of partisan politics and sometimes religion;
- civil society and the private sector.

This lack of collaboration in natural resource management is a symptom of dominant power relations and of systems of governance that concentrate authority and resources in the hands of powerful stakeholders. CANARI’s work has helped to change this reality by creating bridges between actors and approaches that were not previously well connected, and by contributing to the empowerment of the weaker stakeholders as well as to changes in power relations and dynamics. This has been achieved through linkages between:

- science and popular knowledge, with a recognition and a demonstration of the value of that knowledge in traditional management systems, and of the benefits of promoting a dialogue between these two knowledge systems. This has manifested itself in particular in the work on community-based mapping that CANARI has conducted, building on the experience gained in the People and the Sea project in Laborie, Saint Lucia;
- resource users, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the private sector, through their participation in action learning groups, consultations and joint planning processes, and their representation in co-management bodies;
- resource users, practitioners and policy-makers through policy review exercises;
- resource users and regional policy making bodies, for example through building the capacity of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations to participate in the Caribbean Fisheries Forum;
- researchers and practitioners in different disciplines and countries, for example in the assessment of the current status of research and the research needs related to climate change and biodiversity in the Caribbean;
- seasoned practitioners and newly-formed community based organisations, through mentoring programmes such as those initiated under the Forests and Livelihoods Action Learning Projects.
- people involved in communications from very varied perspectives, as in the case of CANARI’s collaboration with Panos Caribbean and the Commonwealth Foundation in designing and hosting a workshop for artists, media workers, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) on the subject of climate change.

### 3. The evolution of CANARI's mission and approach

#### A consistent and coherent mission

Since its earliest days (see Appendix 1 for details), the organisation has been dedicated to linking natural resource management with development (Geoghegan 1994). CANARI's predecessor, the Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Programme (ECNAMP), a joint programme of the University of Michigan and the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), began in Dominica with a focus on forest management and protected area planning. ECNAMP's interest in and emphasis on community-based natural resource management manifested itself principally in its work in Dominica, where it collaborated with the Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division and with local sawyers in testing and promoting sustainable timber harvesting and forest management, and in Saint Lucia, where it facilitated collaborative projects with resource users, community groups, non-governmental organisations and government agencies on the south-east coast of the island. Out of the work in Saint Lucia grew regional activities aimed at disseminating lessons learned and building the capacity of other organisations interested and involved in participatory approaches.

CANARI has continuously worked to advance the application of this fundamental concept of participatory management and governance through a programme of applied research, repeatedly testing 'experiments', analysing them, identifying lessons learned, and then building on these to refine or develop new, more nuanced ways of meeting these dual aims. As a review of CANARI technical reports, published articles, internal assessments and successive strategic plans would illustrate, this research programme, with a central place given to empirical evidence and primary data, has been the impetus behind the organisation's ongoing evolution in conceiving and implementing participatory approaches aimed at integrating resource management with grassroots social and economic development.

In 1992, following a number of internal changes, CANARI restructured itself and developed a mission statement that emphasised the importance of community participation, stating that its purpose was to "*strengthen the capacity of Caribbean communities and their institutions to manage the natural resources critical to their development*". This was achieved through an emphasis on co-management, an approach Geoghegan broadly defined as "*approaches to natural resource management that support the active collaboration of all relevant sectors and interest groups*" (Geoghegan 1994). Projects fostering this approach focused on parks and protected areas as well as common property resources, and the organisation continued its core activities in research, documentation, information, training and technical collaboration.

This compilation by Geoghegan of an historical overview formed part of an intensive participatory evaluation and strategic planning process, which also included case studies to assess impacts, a survey of external perceptions and expectations, a management review and a performance evaluation, that resulted in a comprehensive ten-year strategic plan covering the period 1996-2005 (CANARI 1996). When this plan was formulated, the mission had evolved slightly to read: "*to create avenues for the equitable participation and effective collaboration of Caribbean communities and institutions in managing the natural resources critical to development*".

Towards the end of the 1996-2005 strategic plan period, a new, comprehensive participatory review process was undertaken to develop a five-year strategic plan (2006-2010), under funding from the MacArthur Foundation. This strategic review of CANARI's activities over the previous five years included written surveys, interviews, focus groups, a number of internal meetings and a regional meeting that included international and regional partners. As a result, the mission statement remained substantially unchanged, currently reading "*to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration of Caribbean communities and institutions in managing the natural*

*resources critical to development*”, and a short vision statement was adopted:

- A socially cohesive Caribbean region with a reinvigorated sense of community and collective responsibility for its natural and cultural assets, forged through equitable participatory processes of visioning, decision-making and management.
- Institutions, policy and practice which reflect a Caribbean model of development based on sustainable use of natural resources to meet the livelihood needs and aspirations of Caribbean people.

## Approaches evolving over time

Publications and reports spanning the period 1995 to the present show how CANARI and its partners have continued to test, analyse, evaluate and seek to improve on the organising principles and programme elements described by Geoghegan (1994). The evolution of the organisation and its approaches has occurred over a 30-year period of global economic and environmental changes that have directly influenced dominant mainstream development models, national development policies and donor priorities. As such, CANARI’s evolution in participatory resource management is also a testament to its flexibility in responding to these changing conditions and accompanying challenges and to its ability to integrate its own learning as well as lessons from others, without allowing itself to be excessively influenced by the changing discourse and fancies of international organisations and development partners.

The need for a progressive change in emphasis from co-management between resource users, civil society and government to a more inclusive view of participatory management that includes both publicly and privately owned resources was highlighted in a 2001 internal midterm review. It was motivated by the organisation’s continued search for socially just approaches to development linking livelihood needs with forms of governance that facilitate participation; by a growing interest in the business and livelihood dimensions of natural resource management (Perry-Fingal 2005); and by a recommendation of the mid-term review of the strategic plan that CANARI place a new emphasis on improving the socio-economic and environmental benefits from resource management (CANARI 2002).

The organisation’s original focus on ‘communities’ was revised as well, as it came to recognise the false sense of



*A wide range of stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector in Montserrat were engaged in a process of planning how the last remaining forest on the island should be managed to benefit people.* Source: CANARI

homogeneity this term implies (Brown 1995). The emphasis shifted instead to ‘stakeholders’, defined as “*those who have influence on, or can be affected by, the management process*”. This concept is more encompassing, acknowledging individuals and groups who directly or indirectly influence or are affected by the use and management of a resource (Geoghegan and Renard 2002). As such, the term stakeholder encompasses groups of people beyond a local, geographically defined community, and implicitly recognises the distinct interests and forms of power that characterise the relationship between a particular group and a resource, and between different resource users.

Geoghegan and Renard (2002) highlight this shift from communities to an emphasis on stakeholders as one of the essential components of CANARI’s conceptual framework for participatory planning and resource management, along with the recognition that:

- resource management is, in effect, the management of the relationship between people and resources;
- relationships among and between stakeholders and their relationships to natural resources are governed by a host of formal and informal institutions including cultural norms as well as laws;
- these institutions are complex and dynamic;
- management is the task of transforming these institutions to achieve defined goals including meeting human needs, poverty alleviation and social justice; and

- for this process of transformation to occur the complexity and coherence of existing institutions and the diversity and interests of various stakeholders must be acknowledged.

In addition to describing CANARI's conceptual framework, Geoghegan and Renard (2002) delineate four lessons about protected area management based on CANARI's experience and the experiences of resource managers and development workers involved in CANARI training workshops. The lessons were:

- the need to recognise the diversity of stakeholders and take into account the full complexity of their interests and relationships with the resource and with one another;
- the importance of suitable institutional arrangements to the long-term success of participatory management;
- the need for transparent, negotiated processes for determining priorities in the face of inadequate resources; and
- the relationship between successful participatory management and the provision of appreciable benefits for local communities.

## Highlights

Two strong characteristics emerge from this brief historical overview. One is CANARI's emphasis on critically assessing its work, on extracting, documenting and disseminating lessons learned, and on applying them to subsequent projects, with a continuous comparison and evaluation of 'locally-driven' experiences and lessons learned with concepts from 'outside' the organisation<sup>5</sup>. Although it may not have used the concept explicitly, CANARI probably meets the criteria of a 'learning organisation', an organisation that is committed to innovation, that recognises that change usually comes from the margins, that knows that there is as much to learn from failure as there is to learn from success, and that the best way to gain new knowledge is through experimentation and mutual learning.

The other characteristic, according to Geoghegan (2009), is that CANARI's history and mission have helped '*to creolise or transform the externally created, virtualised development and conservation models of transnational*

*development and conservation agencies into approaches that are appropriate to the social, economic and environmental realities of the Caribbean*'. In Geoghegan's view, CANARI accomplishes this by reinterpreting these externally conceived visions in the projects and programmes it engages with on the ground. The approaches CANARI promotes are based on a concept of participatory resource management that assumes resource and livelihood sustainability are inextricably linked. As she explains, CANARI's "work is based on the idea that the region's development depends to a significant degree on the ability of local people, and especially the poor, to have access to natural resources and to make use of them for their livelihoods".

After three decades of focused efforts aimed at fulfilling a dedicated mission and at building an efficient and effective organisation, CANARI finds itself confronted with a number of challenges in its own institutional development. Some of these challenges are not new, while others have surfaced more prominently in recent times:

- securing adequate funding, particularly for core costs;
- reducing the relatively high turnover of technical Staff and consequent overload on those that remain;
- balancing effective implementation of projects with the ability to stay abreast of relevant literature and initiatives outside the region;
- effectively evaluating the outcomes and impact of its work;
- incorporating the findings of its evaluations and identified stakeholder needs in the development of new programmes and projects;
- developing a communication strategy and putting greater emphasis on communications research;
- keeping an appropriate balance between the need to work with and influence mainstream processes and established institutions, and the benefit of exploring new grounds and testing new approaches;
- understanding why relatively few 'conservation' or 'development' NGOs in the region are thriving and what distinguishes those that do from those that are struggling.

<sup>5</sup> Such concepts are derived from relevant literature; CANARI's long-standing relationship with scholars such as Fikret Berkes (who was highly influential in encouraging CANARI to adopt this approach); collaboration with academic institutions such as University of the West Indies Sustainable Economic Development Unit (SEDU), St. Augustine campus and the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), Cave Hill campus; and interactions at events such as the International Association for the Study of the Commons Conference.

## 4. What works: Reflections from CANARI and its partners

Appendix 2 presents the current status of CANARI, with a focus on describing and analysing its structure, resources, strategies and systems, which is likely to be of particular interest to managers of other civil society organisations. The present section offers an analysis of the Institute's experience, seen in particular through the eyes of CANARI's partners.

### Institutional strategies

#### **A strategic focus**

An obvious lesson from CANARI's history, which is a lesson that can certainly be drawn from the history of all the organisations that have been able to achieve significant results in their work, is that it is essential to remain focused. This fidelity to its mission is seen by CANARI's partners as an essential strength that has enabled it to continue and grow in relevance. *"They have remained focused despite so many other things – they have maintained their focus in working with natural resource management and people"*, says one of CANARI's partners, *"I think that it's easy to get caught up in other things because there are so many other issues. I think focus has been a big part of it"*.

In CANARI's view, "focus" comes from a strong sense of values, vision and consensus on strategic directions. In the organisation, these are revisited at regular (average five-year) intervals, and refined if necessary through a participatory process involving all Staff, Board members/Partners and usually a significant number of CANARI partners and beneficiaries. CANARI's experience shows that focus also comes from an ability to manage the many opportunities and solicitations that come from outside, especially those that are generated by the donor community and the international institutions. It is easy – but not necessarily beneficial – for an organisation to follow the ever-changing trends in the global agenda and to participate in a plethora of international meetings and processes, and effective change agents on the ground are probably those who remain

faithful to their own agendas and mission and who devote enough time and resources to their programmes, while of course being aware of and informed by larger, often external processes.

#### ***Adaptive management and learning by doing***

One of CANARI's strengths is its emphasis on critically assessing its work, extracting and documenting lessons learned, and applying them to future work. This approach was implicit when the organisation began as ECNAMP in the late 1970s, and became instilled and explicitly articulated in each of CANARI's strategic plans since 1995. It is now institutionalised as 'adaptive management' and 'action learning'.

Adaptive management is used at both strategic and operational levels and is based on a willingness to critically evaluate performance and act on the findings. When CANARI began, there were few examples of effective participatory resource management, and CANARI 'learned by doing'. Lessons derived from these experiments, as field projects were then called, led to changes in strategic emphases, from community to partnerships, and from co-management to broader participatory planning, governance and policy-making processes.

CANARI's also employs an adaptive approach to the management of the organisation, leading to constantly evolving structures, systems and procedures. At the operational level, there have been continuous reviews with changes made as needed and with staff members being encouraged to seek more effective ways of operating. At the governance level, the Partnership system which emerged as a result of these internal processes has strengthened relationships between Staff and Board members and has resulted in a more effective and equitable form of governance, without losing the essential elements of oversight and accountability.

## Methods and approaches for programme delivery

### Action learning

Action learning, with the facilitation of group reflection to think through problems and find solutions, has become a key element and instrument of CANARI's approach to research and adaptive management. In summarising the work of Revans (1979), Raelin (1997) and Koo (1999), McIntosh, Leotaud and Macqueen describe action learning as "*a means of development, intellectual, emotional and physical, that requires a group of subjects, through responsible involvement in some, real complex and stressful problem, to achieve intended change sufficient to improve observable behaviour*". It combines sources of knowledge with group questioning or reflection and applies it in attempting to solve problems (McIntosh, Leotaud and Macqueen 2008). This concept of action learning was first applied formally by CANARI in the Caribbean component of the Who Pays for Water project – a multi-island project aimed at strengthening the capacity of regional and national institutions in assessing the potential of payments for watershed services as a means of improving watershed management and contributing to local livelihoods. The project's primary objective was to build a community of change agents, the Action Learning Group, prepared to adapt and shape new watershed market initiatives and disseminate lessons learned in their countries (McIntosh, Leotaud and Macqueen 2008). It has subsequently been adopted in other CANARI projects under the Forests and Livelihoods and Civil Society and Governance programmes.

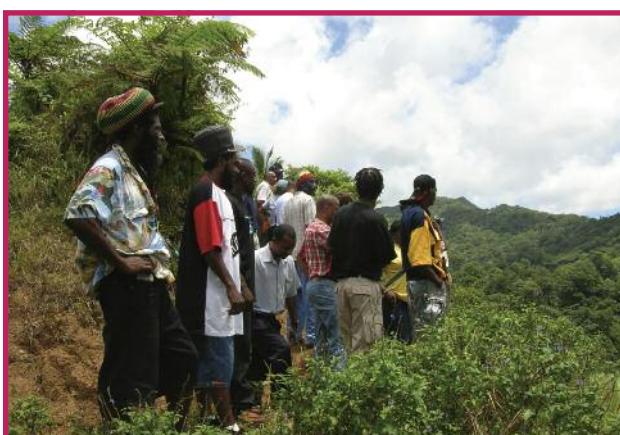


*Members of CANARI's action learning group on Forests and Livelihoods listen to the ideas of community members working to develop sustainable livelihoods from the use of forests.*

Source: CANARI

Participants in action learning activities described how workshops are organised around a case study of a problem, and how they have learned by interacting with different stakeholders in the field, including professional natural resource managers, representatives of civil society organisations, and resource users. We would "*go to the site where they are practicing the things we are discussing*", says one participant. "*Usually we have a session with people from the local community so they explain what they're doing in a direct way – we don't just read the material of what has been done in a case study; we actually go. And people can actually explain what they are doing. So, it's a hands-on approach; it's not just theory. I think it is one of the unusual ways that CANARI contributes. They explain what is happening but they get us to touch the ground so to speak*".

ALGs are also very useful as forums for the exchange of ideas and reflection among a diverse group of people, as one participant explains: "*The CANARI projects that just recently started with action learning – the first workshop was in Jamaica, and we had a panel discussion with some of our partner organisations. So, that gives us the opportunity too to look at things from a different perspective. People from other organisations or countries ask questions that we might not have asked or thought of. In that way it gives us different perspectives*". The relationship between CANARI and participants in these processes is described as one of sharing: "*They don't use the approach of talking to you – like this is what we've learned and this is it. Their approach...is definitely about sharing and working both ways, and one that helps you to think about what you're doing and if there is some way to*



*CANARI brought stakeholders from government agencies, donors, regional technical assistance agencies, civil society organisations, and local communities together to explore whether payments for watershed services could benefit poor people.* Source: CANARI

*perhaps do it better*”. Along these lines, one NGO leader describes his organisation’s interaction with CANARI as a “*symbiotic relationship*”, and it is clear that the emphasis on adaptive management and action learning is empowering for both the individuals who take part and for their organisations

### ***Focusing on key change agents***

The notion of ‘change agents’ is one that management practitioners and partners of CANARI have little difficulty to embrace, since most were working on natural resource issues prior to their involvement with CANARI and some were actually involved in pioneering participatory processes. Their relationship with CANARI was, in most cases, long-term and had been developed through a combination of on the ground collaboration, training and workshop opportunities, ongoing technical support, and in a few cases co-authorship of reports and articles.

This is seen as a deliberate and effective strategy on CANARI’s part, as testified by one of the region’s leading NGOs: *“I think CANARI’s strategy has been to stay close to a group of one or two key organisations in a country and work to build those organisations. I think that has been a tremendous asset to the region”*. By focusing on targeting key change agents at local, national and regional levels and establishing long-term relationships with them, rather than just targeting those in formal positions of power and influence or short-term project beneficiaries, CANARI feels that it is able to optimise the impact of its work on policy and practice in the region.

### ***Developing the capacity of partner organisations***

The small CBOs and NGOs that CANARI has worked with over the years often lack the internal capacity to sustain themselves. CANARI has therefore seen the need to complement its collaboration on and capacity building for participatory natural resource management through workshops focusing on organisational and institutional development, including financial management, incorporating participatory processes in their own organisational governance (developing and working with community boards), succession planning, human resources development, proposal writing and strategic planning. CANARI’s support to these organisations is often complemented by small grants aimed at helping them accomplish these tasks and initiate programmes.

As one of the beneficiaries of this work explains: “*We had a project proposal with CANARI and the funding was*

*supposed to be to help an organisation evaluate its strategic focus and part of it was to evaluate our financial processes. And they did evaluate our financial processes, they made a stakeholder analysis and they made some tremendous recommendations for a way forward. We weren’t doing so well before CANARI did that particular work*”. These activities actually serve to enhance partners’ capacity in several other ways as well, for example in building alliances and improving communication with government. “*Also regarding the policy development*”, says one NGO colleague, “*they (CANARI) have helped us a lot in working with those areas. And how to work with the government and how to network with other organisations in the country in order to achieve our goals in the management of natural resources*”.

### ***Building strong strategic alliances***

The focus on key change agents and the provision of organisational support are part of a broader strategy aimed at developing and nurturing strong strategic alliances, both individual and organisational, at national, regional and international levels. The benefits of this approach have come not from the number of these alliances, but from their quality, strength and durability. Throughout its history, CANARI has been particularly careful not to enter into partnerships that did not have the potential to remain and grow, and has tried to foster relationships that result in true alliances, i.e. that yield benefits for all partners.

Within the Caribbean, CANARI’s work has undoubtedly contributed to developing and fostering an informal network of CBOs, NGOs and government agencies concerned with the management of natural resources and interested in participatory approaches, and many see themselves as members of such a network as a result of their collaboration with CANARI and its emphasis on regional workshops where individuals from different countries have an opportunity to meet and work on a common problem. As a member of a partner organisation commented, “*... there is a connection by people from the different islands that under normal circumstances would not be done. CANARI provides that connection. It is like a portal that provides links to different people. Through CANARI I have had connectivity that is tremendous and we can share skills.*” Another explained, “*We are able to see ourselves as a group of technical experts. We operate as a kind of fraternity of peers who provide different perspectives on issue. It has been quite a rewarding experience. I’ve learned quite a lot. The interactions*

*provide you with a contrast to the work that you're doing as well as a chance to point out the similarities and challenges we face in the Caribbean..."*

### **Communicating and disseminating**

Communication is key to advocacy and capacity-building, and it involves the dissemination of CANARI's work via publications, technical reports, policy briefs, videos, and a website as well as through the workshops, training and technical assistance mentioned above. CANARI's partners have described its numerous reports and publications of lessons learned, specific participatory techniques and studies of resource issues as one of the Institute's primary achievements, and even organisations with few programmatic links with CANARI are making use of its publications. Some interviewees mentioned that CANARI has also assisted them with disseminating information about their own work, and specifically communicating their work to government policy makers. Over the years, CANARI has become more systematic and rigorous in its approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its communications and views this as an area for continuous review and improvement.

### **Working regionally**

CANARI has embraced a regional approach, and as such works throughout the English, Spanish, French and Creole speaking islands. This is at times challenging, but it is seen as a positive factor by many actors in the region. *"The Caribbean is a very special region"*, says the leader of a national NGO, *"and even though we are of different languages and cultures, we have very similar problems and challenges, and working together we can do a lot."* Or, in the words of another: *"I think I have learned a lot from CANARI. They have also helped me to establish a better working relationship with the rest of the Caribbean people. Not only the countries and organisations, but the people – to have a better understanding of the culture and the way we should work together."*

## **Internal organisation and governance**

### **An effective governance structure**

CANARI's internal governance arrangements, with a Partnership arrangement involving elected Board members and senior Staff, have proven effective. However, the Institute has recently engaged in internal discussions on the benefits of the Partnership structure,

asking itself whether it is the Partnership concept per se that creates such an effective working relationship between Elected Partners, other Partners and Staff, or whether it could be equally well achieved under a more traditional Board structure. This has revealed that the keys to the success of the relationship may lie in the following:

- the concept of a partnership, which embraces and facilitates inputs from all Staff;
- handpicking new Elected Partners (or Board members before the Partnership was established) rather than the open elections typical of membership organisations, which ensures that there is a balance of skills and experience and everyone has something of value to contribute;
- the "energetic" process (an Elected Partner description) by which CANARI Staff engage the Elected Partners. This draws on Staff experience of facilitating participatory processes under programme activities and mainly comprises brief presentations, followed by structured discussions designed to find creative solutions to problems, review and refine strategic objectives, and discuss potential new areas of activity. This provides a rare opportunity for mutual learning and open and constructive exchange of views between people from different disciplines, perspectives, organisational structures, countries and cultures.

It appears therefore that the Partnership's success is based not so much on its structure as on the commitment of all to the concept and the processes used to achieve it in practice. In a region where relationships between non-profit Boards and Staff are often fraught with conflict, these conclusions could be useful and relevant to other organisations, including membership organisations.

### **A multi-disciplinary team, open to continuous learning and committed to excellence**

Human resources are critical to any organisation. As one observer explained, *"CANARI has had the ability to hire people that believe in their mission and that identify with the region and that are able to accomplish the high goals that CANARI sets for itself and others. So, I think that's what has allowed them to do their job"*. This same person describes the result that comes from having this kind of Staff: *"I think CANARI has a high profile. It is well respected throughout the region. Because everything they do has this qualitative... how do you say, non-biased very professional. I don't know... everything they do is good*

work". Others describe CANARI Staff as being prepared and able to reach out: "*Externally they reach out and share the work they do...there is a strong emphasis on preparedness...and to reach out to people from different backgrounds.*" CANARI staff members are described as being "*down to earth...able to reach out to people in different projects and interact with people on different levels... They are able to manage and negotiate all those differences, and this means you must be keen on details.*"

The diversity and relevance of the collective skill set of CANARI Staff is also mentioned as a positive factor: "*They have different people within their association – with CANARI – with different experiences and skills. And when these different people come together, they have a different approach. I know they have people with GPS skills and others about botany and wildlife, and all these different skills come together and I think that is why they are effective*". Similarly, one partner comments on CANARI's ability to "*keep renewing their stock, and have competent people take the new space. It's one of the reasons for their longevity... They are able to pull on persons that have the required skills to positions that come available. That was the signal to me that it's an organisation that has sustainable features in their recruitment – that they are able to give exposure to younger people and talent*".

CANARI has also benefited from a very high level of commitment of all its staff members and this has been a characteristic of the organisation since its inception. It continues to be evidenced by people's flexibility and willingness to work long hours when needed, without being asked to do so by their manager or, in the case of senior Staff, by the Partnership. However, it is an aspect of CANARI's functioning which has the potential to run counter to the organisation's stated value of equity and needs constant monitoring since it tends to disproportionately affect those whose working lives may already be more difficult, such as those without strong local family support systems or single parents with children.

### ***Effective succession planning***

The transition from visionary founders and creative initiators to a sustained institution is one that often causes organisations (whether for- or non-profit) to flounder or fail. CANARI is now in its third generation of Executive Director (fourth generation of leadership when including the period before the appointment of the first Executive Director) and has experienced a fairly high turnover of

Staff in recent years, yet the transition has been relatively smooth, largely as a result of:

- its policy of identifying potential Staff, including the Executive Director, through involvement in its workshops and capacity building activities and, where possible, 'testing' their competencies and values through short consultancies before recruitment is considered;
- strong support from and continuing involvement of previous Staff in their roles as Associates and through the development of close working relationships between former and current Staff (a characteristic of the organisation which has caused it to be dubbed by more than one staff member as 'Hotel California' based on the Eagles' lyrics "*You can check-out any time you like, but you can never leave*").

### ***Effective fundraising***

For a non-profit organisation, successful fundraising is of course an essential condition of effectiveness and durability. CANARI has never been in a position where it could be complacent about the source of its funding and, on reflection, this has served it well. Indeed, the skills it has developed as a consequence may become a critical element of its survival in the uncertain times ahead. When money was more easily available in the 1980s and early 1990s, CANARI's work was so different from what other organisations in the region were doing, and what donors expected, that fundraising was already challenging. While others were getting money almost by default, CANARI had to 'prove itself', so the proposals and the networking had to be good. Now that participatory management is of interest to more agencies, but money is tighter, CANARI still has to work hard to successfully raise funds without being diverted from its core focus. As a consequence, it has also avoided the trap of becoming over-dependent on one or two sources of funding, which may be withdrawn at short notice (with such over-dependency also threatening the autonomy and freedom of the recipient organisation).

Yet, raising funds is much more than writing and submitting proposals, and CANARI's experience in this regard confirms that of all the other non-governmental organisations that have stayed in business for a long time. Fundraising is about building long-term relationships based on trust, it is about establishing and managing good communication networks that project the right image and yield relevant information, it is about delivering and properly documenting the agreed services and results, and it is about demonstrating to the potential donor that its

support is a worthwhile (and valued) investment. In order for fundraising to succeed, the recipient organisation has to be a ‘good grantee’, with effective systems; a good understanding of the expectations, capacities and constraints of the donor; and a commitment to make the relationship open, fair and effective.

But the commitment to openness, fairness and effectiveness must also come from the donor agency, and CANARI’s experience has been varied in this regard. The main issue is the complexity of grant application, funding and reporting processes, which could in many cases be simplified, without sacrificing transparency or accountability. The other conclusion from CANARI’s experience is that it would be desirable for major donors to attempt greater coherence between their reporting formats to reduce the complexity of financial and other record-keeping. In the absence of such coherence, it is much more complicated to run a small NGO than a small business, yet few NGO managers, and even fewer of their government partners, have any prior exposure to or understanding of the financial management and entrepreneurial skills needed.

Donors should also recognise that the sustainability of an organisation is likely to be enhanced rather than compromised by funding administrative costs and other overheads, particularly in early stages of development. This has been CANARI’s own experience as a grantee, but also as a manager of small grant funds, when even a sum as small as USD 1,500, with few if any strings attached, can make a big difference in helping an organisation to secure essential equipment, facilitate the engagement of communities and build key capacities, which then enable them to access a wider range of funding opportunities. CANARI’s research also indicates a need for donors to reconsider their definition of a ‘sustainable’ Caribbean NGO or CBO; in a region with little tradition of philanthropy and a limited market for goods and services, particularly in poor communities, it is impossible for all existing NGOs and CBOs to generate sufficient revenue to carry out their missions, unless they continue to get grant funding or subventions. This further reinforces the need for long-term donor commitment to the region and a rethinking of the funding of core costs.

### ***Effective financial and other management systems***

CANARI makes every effort to ensure that projects are completed within budget and time frame or more money is sought to complete them, and that operational funds and cash-flow remain at a level that permits it to meet its



*CANARI has worked with key technical staff in forestry departments to build their capacity and support their efforts to engage stakeholders in management of forests.*

Source: CANARI

salary bill and other routine overhead costs. Suitable and effective financial management systems are an essential condition of good performance and effective impact; too many Caribbean organisations unfortunately struggle because they fail to establish such systems.

### ***Strategic use of resources***

As a relatively small organisation, CANARI has to consider how to achieve maximum impact with its limited resources. Its philosophy in this regard has been relatively unchanged over the years, namely to adopt and be guided by a long-term perspective, including:

- building on the findings and outcomes of field experiments and demonstration projects to design future activities and to develop policy recommendations and capacity building programmes;
- working closely over a long period with a relatively small core of identified ‘change agents’ throughout the region, both to build their capacity and to solicit their inputs into CANARI’s strategic focus and programme development;
- developing long-term relationships with donors, such as Hivos, the Commonwealth Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, regional partners such as CERMES and Panos Caribbean; and technical agencies such as the FAO.

## 5. In conclusion

There are of course many lessons that could be extracted from three decades of work and collaboration with a wide range of community, private sector, civil society, academic and governmental partners in this diverse region. Among those, a few can be highlighted here, with the hope that they could help to strengthen organisations and institutions in this region and to shape a new relationship between them and their development partners. There is indeed little doubt that the many crises that the world and this region are currently experiencing are in part the product of inadequate and unfair relationships. Rethinking aid and development cooperation – including the support that can be provided to change agents such as CANARI – must therefore be considered a priority and collective responsibility.

***CANARI's mission – the promotion of equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing the natural resources critical to development – remains highly relevant to the sustainable development agenda in the Caribbean.*** While approaches have evolved and the context and the issues that must be addressed have changed over time, the concepts of equity, shared governance, empowerment and sustainability, which have been at the heart of CANARI's work throughout its history, remain just as valid today. It is thanks to this focus on its mission that CANARI has been able to have some beneficial impact on the region, and it is thanks to its willingness and ability to reflect, learn and adapt that it has been able to remain relevant and useful. Its vision of participatory management and shared governance is now a vision that many actors have embraced.

***In order to realise this vision, the Caribbean and its organisations need adequate and appropriate support from external agencies, including donors, over a long period.*** The challenge of integrating conservation, livelihoods and poverty reduction requires a commitment of both financial and technical resources over a time scale



*Participants at CANARI's regional workshop on participatory wetlands management in 2006 visit the Nariva Swamp in Trinidad to look at how stakeholders are working together to address the management challenges at this Ramsar site.*

Source: CANARI

concomitant with effecting, monitoring and evaluating changes in entrenched behaviours and systems. Attempting to achieve this with scattershot, short-term project interventions is analogous to Sisyphus rolling his boulder to the top of the hill only to watch it roll back down again. Much of CANARI's work, for example, focuses on participatory processes that engage stakeholders in visioning, strategic planning and dialogue about areas of common interest. This can be highly successful in building trust, identifying areas of common interest and forging consensus on how to handle conflict. But these processes take time and will often need to be sustained and revisited as circumstances change and new areas of conflict emerge. The region's experience with donor interventions has been mixed, but there have nevertheless been good examples of longer-term donor projects and programmes in the region, guided by locally-driven needs, within which donor-imposed conditions successfully effected a mutually agreed behavioural or cultural change beyond the project timeframe<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> For example the Trees for Tomorrow project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Jamaica came with a gender and participatory focus that resulted in the appointment of the region's first female Conservator of Forests and extensive work with community-based, national and regional partners to entrench participation as an organisational culture. In the Dominican Republic, insistence of the German agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) on an institution that would include government, civil society and private sector stakeholders, combined with technical support for the initial process, has resulted in one of the region's most sustained and effective networks, *Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano* (CAD).

**Funding agencies and other external partners should make strategic investments aimed at building local institutions operating at community, national and regional levels in the Caribbean.** One of the main reasons why CANARI (and more so its predecessor ECNAMP) was able to carry out medium- to long-term field experiments that tested innovative approaches – often against the wishes of some local agencies that perceived the participatory approach as a threat – came from the programmatic support provided in the late 1970s and early 1980s by agencies such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the World Wildlife Fund-US. The MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, which CANARI received in 2009, provides comparable flexibility in that the awardee determines how the funding should be used as well the approaches it will use to achieve its objectives.. Such framework-type support is essential to allow organisations to go beyond the execution of discrete projects and to provoke meaningful change in policy and capacity, but it is only very rarely available to Caribbean organisations. Funding agencies active in supporting conservation work in the Caribbean also tend to work directly with large international or North American NGOs, while more investment is needed to build indigenous capacity.

**The design of programmes and projects that are financed by external sources should be a collective exercise, driven by needs and priorities on the ground.** This is critical in order to ensure that investments are targeted at the priority issues and needs, but also that the approaches and interventions are suited to local realities, and that existing and required capacities are taken into account. CANARI has demonstrated that such participatory needs assessments and project design processes contribute to better and more sustained outcomes, particularly when



*CANARI believes that the traditional knowledge of local people is important in discussions about how to manage natural resources to benefit livelihoods and conservation.* Source: Howard Nelson

accompanied by participatory monitoring and adaptation. By contrast, inadequate project formulation and management have typically resulted in poorly identified needs, inappropriately designed implementation structures, inflexible disbursement and reporting arrangements and, on occasions, large amounts of unspent funds being returned to the donor.

**Approaches to conservation, natural resource management and sustainable development must be tailored to local needs and conditions, and advocacy organisations such as CANARI can play an essential role in this respect.** The concept of ‘creolisation’ can be borrowed from Geoghegan, who notes that it “signifies the melding of different influences that has characterised Caribbean history... [and that it] can also be applied to some of the approaches to natural resource protection that have evolved in the region, particularly over the past few decades” (2009). Taking inspiration from the process that is at the roots of Caribbean societies – societies that have been constituted, or rather reconstituted, on the basis of a mix of diverse ethnic, social and cultural influences and with a political economy shaped by a very peculiar history (slavery, indentureship and dependency, emancipation and resistance) and ecology (island ecosystems, high diversity, fragility) – what CANARI and several of its partners have done has been to design approaches and practices that borrow from many sources but are unique and suited to (as well as the products of) local needs and conditions. Many organisations – especially in the Global South – advocate the need for indigenous solutions and methods but, in this globalised world, there are perhaps lessons to be learned from an approach that sees ‘indigenous’ as ‘creole’.

**All organisations should practice and reflect, in their culture, structure and operations, the values and mission that they advocate and pursue in their own programmes.** CANARI’s experience suggests that there are benefits to be gained for an organisation, any organisation, to apply to its own strategies and behaviour the principles and methods that it applies to the object of its work. Adaptive management, participation, resilience, multi-stakeholder approaches, equity, are concepts that CANARI has consistently applied to natural resource management in the field and at policy level, but these are the very same concepts that it has also applied to its structure and its operations. Perhaps one of the secrets of a successful organisation – if success can be defined – is the coherence and consistency between what that organisation does and the way it does it.

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## Appendix 1: The evolution of CANARI and its mission

Developmental Phase	Mission	Programmes	Partners, including donors
<b>Dominica Wildlands Program 1976-1977</b>	To link conservation with rural development (not explicitly stated)	<p>Four pilot projects, mainly in Dominica, under the themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• natural resource planning</li> <li>• environmental education</li> <li>• training</li> <li>• utilization</li> </ul> <p>One regional training workshop (held in Dominica with field trip to Guadeloupe)</p>	<p>University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources [UMSNR] (technical inputs/project leadership)</p> <p>The Rockefeller Brothers Fund [RBF] (donor)</p> <p>Dominican Government.</p> <p>Caribbean Conservation Association [CCA] (co-implementation)</p>
<b>Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Program (ECNAMP) 1978-1980</b>	<p><i>To assist the countries of the Lesser Antilles in assuring that natural areas and resources contribute to long-term development within culturally, economically and ecologically consistent framework</i> (quoted in Geoghegan 1994)</p> <p>Consolidation of programme, including small office in St Croix.</p> <p>Hiring of 'staff consultants' in Saint Lucia and Antigua</p>	<p>Four project areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training</li> <li>• planning</li> <li>• environmental education</li> <li>• ecodevelopment (projects aimed at providing short-run economic benefits to rural populations through actions that are ecologically sustainable over the long run (Geoghegan 1995))</li> </ul> <p>To provide technical support to CCA members.</p>	<p>UMSNR RBF CCA Governments of the Lesser Antilles</p>
<b>ECNAMP 1981-1984</b>	<p>Assistance to governments on conservation for development that benefits people</p> <p>Development of an institutional identity</p>	<p>Field-based participatory demonstration projects and training activities</p> <p>Increasing focus on economic benefits at community level and on 'local participation'</p>	<p>RBF and World Wildlife Fund (US and International)</p> <p>UMSNR CCA</p> <p>UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme</p> <p>Governments and communities/community groups in Lesser Antilles (with a significant portion of the field work taking place in Saint Lucia)</p>

Developmental Phase	Mission	Programmes	Partners, including donors
<b>ECNAMP 1985-1989 became incorporated as an independent organization (1986)</b>	As above but with remit extended to all islands of the Caribbean	5 programme themes:	RBF and World Wildlife Fund (US and International)
Relationship with UMSNR severed in 1986	Functional links with CCA gradually broken with MOU cancelled in 1989	Governments, communities/community groups in the islands of the Caribbean	CCA
RBF withdraws as major donor after 1986 close out grant Offices in St.Croix and Saint Lucia	Board of Directors	education and training;	UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme
		sustainable resource use	Collaboration with regional universities on capacity building and research
		Ability to implement constrained by need to find additional sources of funding	
<b>Transition from ECNAMP to CANARI 1989-1991</b>	As above but increasing focus on capacity building of NGOs and national trusts	Programme themes reduced to two:	Transnational donors
Shift to wider regional focus on all islands of the Caribbean	Name changed to CANARI in 1989	• parks and protected areas	Governments, communities, NGOs in the islands of the Caribbean
Development of internal policies including personnel policy defining working conditions and benefits		• community-based resource management, with a particular focus on marine and coastal resources.	Regional universities
<b>CANARI 1992 -1995</b>	CANARI is dedicated to promoting conservation that benefits people, <i>Its mission is to strengthen the capacity of Caribbean communities and their institutions to manage the natural resources critical to their development.</i> (Mission statement adopted 1992)	Programmes defined as:	Bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors
		• research	Governments, communities, NGOs in the islands of the Caribbean
		• information and documentation	Regional universities
		• training	

Developmental Phase	Mission	Programmes Partners, including donors
<b>CANARI 1995-2000</b> Development of 1996-2005 strategic plan	<i>To create avenues for the equitable participation and effective collaboration of Caribbean communities and institutions in managing the natural resources critical to development (CANARI 1996)</i>  Geographic scope: all the islands of the Caribbean.	Development and adoption of policies that support increased participation and collaboration in managing natural resources through applied research, analysis and advocacy (CANARI 2006)  Regional universities  Bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors International NGOs Governments, communities, NGOs in the islands of the Caribbean
<b>CANARI 2000- 2005</b>  Mid-term review of strategic plan in 2002 Head office moved to Trinidad in 2001 One-person office in Antigua 2003-2005	As above but with specific goal <i>To foster the development and implementation of policies and approaches that generate equitable and sustainable benefits from participatory natural resource management.” CANARI Programme Framework 2002-2005</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Policy processes:</b> To develop and promote policies that facilitate socio-economic and environmental benefits from participatory natural resource management.           </li> <li> <b>Institutional requirements:</b>            To increase understanding of the requirements for stakeholder participation in institutions that support effective natural resource management.         </li> <li> <b>Skills and methods:</b>            To increase the capacity of individuals and organisations to implement participatory natural resource management through advocacy and technical assistance activities.         </li> </ul> Reduced emphasis on field research

Developmental Phase	Mission	Programmes	Partners, including donors
<b>CANARI 2005–present</b> Head office in Trinidad One-person office in Barbados 2007–present	CANARI is a regional non-profit organisation whose mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing the natural resources critical to development.	CANARI seeks to achieve its mission through:	Areas of research focus identified as:

1. How can equitable and effective participation in natural resource management best be achieved?
2. To what degree does participatory natural resource management:
  - Facilitate equitable decision-making about priorities and trade-offs?
  - Improve livelihoods?
  - Contribute to conserving natural resources?
3. How can lessons learned about participatory natural resource management and development be most effectively shared to influence decision-making?

Thematic programmes developed in 2007/2008:

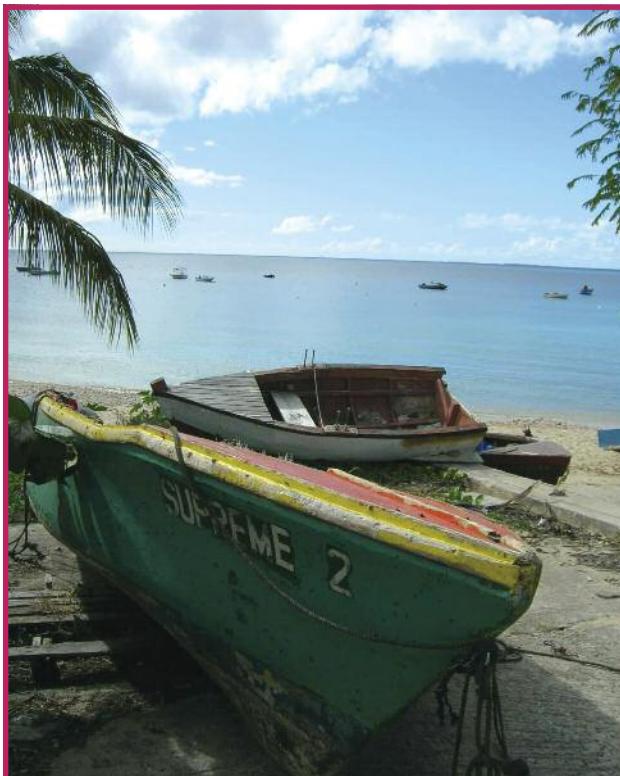
- Forests and livelihoods
- Climate change and disaster risk reduction
- Coastal and marine governance and livelihoods
- Civil society and governance

Geographic scope: all the islands of the Caribbean.

(CANARI 2005a)

### Programme

CANARI's programming is an integral part of its strategic planning process, and the current programme is broadly determined by the objectives outlined in the 2006-2010 strategic plan. Since then CANARI Staff and Partners have engaged in several discussions about how to structure the programme in such a way that it still functions well from an internal project management perspective but can be better understood by external partners, beneficiaries and donors. Initial discussions focused on whether CANARI should retain a programming structure along the broad lines of research, communications/advocacy and capacity building, which perhaps avoids the danger of over-simplifying the complexities of the issues being addressed, or whether it should adopt a thematic programme structure (e.g. by ecological area), with cross-cutting elements (e.g. protected areas), which is easier for external target audiences to understand and provides a framework for building complementary and inter-related projects. The consensus was that, in spite of inevitable overlaps between programme areas, thematic programmes that provide a clear indication of desired outcomes (e.g. livelihoods or governance) would be best.



*CANARI is working to build capacity for adaptation of coastal livelihoods under its Climate change and disaster risk reduction programme.* Source: Anguilla National Trust

The following have consequently been selected as the core programme areas, with a number of cross-cutting themes such as community-based tourism, gender, protected areas and communications research:

- Forests and livelihoods.
- Climate change and disaster risk reduction.
- Coastal and marine governance and livelihoods.
- Civil society and governance.

Staff members still work across programme areas but with an overall programme leader taking responsibility for programme development and implementation. This facilitates integration and linkages across programmes and projects while also increasing organisational flexibility and building Staff capacity and commitment to CANARI's values.

### Communications and target audiences

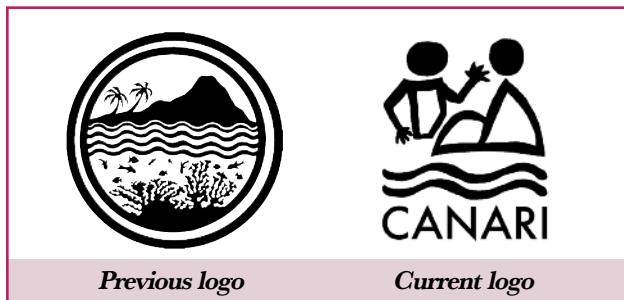
Communications are a key element of CANARI's work, and reviews of and feedback on CANARI's communication strategy, which encompasses print and audiovisual materials, capacity building and training initiatives, as well as other forms of advocacy and policy influence (e.g. one-to-one meetings) have been for the most part favourable. The 2005 strategic review and work conducted under the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID)-funded *Institutional Arrangements for Coastal Management in the Caribbean* communications research project (CANARI 2005b) indicated that CANARI's publications were widely read and had contributed to CANARI's reputation for serious and relevant research. However, the readership had been largely confined to fairly technical audiences, such as government technical officers, NGO leaders, academics and students. In other words, the needs of policy makers and community-based organisations were not being addressed through print materials, although this was compensated for somewhat by personal contacts and training programmes.

While this somewhat restricted focus could be seen as an outcome of a conscious decision to focus on key 'change agents' within government and civil society, those consulted in 2005 viewed it as hindering the overall effectiveness and impact of CANARI's work. It had also resulted in CANARI having an 'elitist' image and a perception from some that too little had been done to widely publicise or disseminate that work. Those outside

the immediate circle of partners and change agents were confused about CANARI's precise role, resulting in a somewhat fuzzy image (Perry-Fingal 2005).

Some immediate decisions were taken to address these concerns:

- systematic inclusion of background and overview of CANARI's work in all its presentations and training programmes;
- greater attention to building up a database of relevant contacts throughout the Caribbean; and
- development of a new visual image, starting with the 2006-2010 plan document and the design of a new logo, which would include the word CANARI and better reflect the focus on people in CANARI's work (see below for old and new logos):



The question of who CANARI's main target audiences are, and how the organisation should prioritise the use of its limited resources to communicate with them, has come up a number of times since 2005, with the main debate revolving around whether CANARI should dedicate more of its resources to 'protocol-type' visits to and relationship-building with relevant government Ministers and regional bodies. The conclusion from these discussions has been that CANARI's strategy of identifying key change agents within all sectors, whether individuals or organisations (and not necessarily those with formal power), had been successful and should be continued. CANARI's principal boundary partners<sup>7</sup> have been identified as:

- senior public servants in CANARI's thematic areas of work;
- academic researchers and lecturers (inside and outside the region) working on cutting edge areas of research;
- research institutions;
- managers and senior technical personnel working in regional and international NGOs in the same field as CANARI;



*CANARI targeted Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in a series of national workshops under its Forests and Livelihoods programme. Here CBO leaders in Tobago exchange ideas on a field trip as part of a workshop held in 2009. Source: CANARI*

- donors;
- CBOs who are considered as key change agents;
- technical assistance agencies;
- private sector: companies with strong corporate social programmes, particularly in the tourism sector, and consultancy firms working in natural resource management;
- media houses and practitioners; and
- ministers of government (to a lesser extent) (CANARI 2008a).

The absence of a comprehensive communication strategy for the organisation however remains a gap, even if CANARI's overall approach to communications has become both more strategic and more targeted in recent times, largely as a result of the findings of the DFID project mentioned earlier (CANARI 2005b), which generated a number of creative experiments on which the organisation continues to build. Areas in which CANARI is currently seeking to build its communication skills and to expand its programme are the use of video, and particularly participatory video, as well as the development of short policy briefs as a response to topical issues rather than solely as outputs of its projects. There is now a greater focus on communications research, which CANARI now tries to incorporate into all its projects and for which it is also seeking dedicated funding.

<sup>7</sup> Terminology adopted from outcome mapping to describe those stakeholders with whom the organisation interacts directly

## Geographic scope

CANARI's geographic focus remains the islands of the Caribbean, with research being conducted at the local, national and regional levels. CANARI and its partners testify to the benefits they have gained from the Institute's regional approach<sup>8</sup>, such as the opportunities for exchange of information and views with colleagues from other countries and for practical exposure to relevant experiences and examples through case studies and field trips. Workshop evaluations also highlight how few opportunities there are, other than those provided by CANARI, for individuals and organisations involved in natural resource management in the Caribbean to exchange views, work on common problems and share lessons learned in an informal and open environment that is conducive to breaking down traditional barriers between civil society and government and between people from different backgrounds and sectors. Many participants in CANARI's workshops and projects remain in touch with each other, creating an informal network that can be drawn upon as needed. The benefits to CANARI are great in terms of exposure to a wider set of views, approaches and case study examples. The regional approach also helps the organisation to distil which cultural, political or socio-economic factors contribute to or detract from successful processes or outcomes.

CANARI however faces a number of challenges in implementing its programmes at a regional level:

- the diversity of languages (Creole, Dutch, English, French and Spanish);
- the high cost of, and complex routes involved in, intra-regional travel, in spite of short distances;
- inadequate technological infrastructure and services to facilitate effective use of alternatives to face-to-face regional meetings;
- the fact that most funding agencies do not have pan-Caribbean programmes;
- the difficulty of attracting and retaining Staff who are interested in and capable of working at a regional scale.

## Internal governance

CANARI is legally a non-profit organisation registered in Saint Lucia, the United States Virgin Islands and Trinidad and Tobago, with its main office in Trinidad. It has 501(c) (3) status in the United States and charitable status in Trinidad and Tobago. The legal governing body is a Board of Directors. Elected Board members hold the positions of Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.

In 2001, CANARI established an innovative internal operating structure, the Partnership, designed to leverage more effectively the collective skills of elected Board members and senior Staff, to improve the working relationship between the two groups, to give senior Staff a more formal role in governance, and to reflect better the participatory culture of the organisation. Under the Partnership structure, Board members are designated as 'Elected Partners' and the Executive Director as 'Managing Partner'. Senior technical Staff with management responsibilities can be appointed as 'Staff Partners'.

Partners have collective responsibility for oversight of the Institute and for ensuring the appropriate use of the Institute's funds. Elected Partners are authorised to represent the Institute with the approval of the Managing Partner. They are eligible for two two-year terms and must then step down for at least two years. Potential new Elected Partners are identified by the entire Partnership and then approached by the person who knows them best, finally being formally elected at the Annual General Meeting. Their responsibilities were recently formalised in Terms of Reference and the Institute has also adopted a Conflict of interest policy. Expenses to attend meetings are covered but there is no remuneration for being a Partner.

The combination of CANARI's long-standing reputation for excellence and the person-to-person approach (from Staff or Partner to potential new Elected Partners) has resulted in CANARI continuously being able to attract people of an excellent calibre and with a high profile within the region. However, the emphasis on what skills are considered desirable on the Board/Partnership has shifted periodically. Following the move to Trinidad and

<sup>8</sup> Both the value and the complexities of taking a regional approach are well captured in the following extract from a recent situation analysis of the Caribbean: "The 35 independent countries and territories that are covered reflect huge ecological, historical, political and cultural diversity but also many commonalities that make regional programming relevant and useful. The main defining characteristics of the region include high levels of biological diversity; small size (of islands, countries, markets and social institutions) and scarcity of many resources, resulting in frequent conflicts; economic dependency on natural resources; vulnerability to hazards and shocks; and openness to external forces (e.g. global markets, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, alien invasive species). ... With the exception of Haiti, Caribbean countries range in the middle to high range on international development indices, but high levels of economic inequity mask persistent and in some cases increasing poverty. The main drivers of Caribbean economies are tourism, construction (much of which is tourism-related), mining and oil exploration. ....The region is heavily dependent on external trade, and the recent loss of preferential agreements with traditional trade partners has increased competition in international markets (Brown, Geoghegan and Renard 2007).

the period of transition (2001-2008) from the founder Directors (Yves Renard and Tighe Geoghegan) to the second and third generation of Managing/Staff Partners (respectively Vijay Krishnarayan, Gillian Cooper and Lyndon John; and Sarah McIntosh and Nicole Leotaud), there was a greater emphasis on Elected Partners with organisational development and management skills. With growing confidence in the management foundation that has been established in Trinidad, the emphasis has shifted closer to that of earlier Boards, with a higher proportion of academics and well-known regional change agents. There are currently eight Elected Partners.

Partnership meetings are held twice a year over a 2-3 day period at CANARI's headquarters in Trinidad. Interactions between Partnership meetings usually fall into one of the following categories:

- quarterly management committee telephone meetings (Managing Partner, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer);
- ad hoc telephone meetings of the human resource committee, which also meets during Partnership meetings;
- emails from CANARI Partners to Elected Partners, updating them on important news (ranging from new projects to new Staff); and
- information from Elected Partners about relevant activities in their countries or sectors;
- interactions with individual Elected Partners within the context of programmes or projects in which they or their organisations are involved.

## Staff

CANARI's Staff currently comprises the Executive Director/Managing Partner; Programme Director/Staff Partner; four Technical Officers (three at senior level); a Financial Officer; and an Administrative Officer.

Staff members are both CANARI's greatest asset and its biggest challenge. Many people who come into contact with CANARI expect to find a much larger Staff, based on the organisation's outputs and influence over the years. Or, as Dr Koester put it when reflecting on the interviews and desk review, "*how did so few people do so much*"?

While most of the regional organisations in the Caribbean point to funding as their greatest challenge, CANARI's philosophy has been, and continues to be, that good technical Staff will pay for themselves. If an exceptional person is identified, every effort is made to bring her or

him on board, to find the funding to cover the salary during the initial period of orientation and training, and to build his or her capacity to develop fundable project proposals in areas of interest to the organisation and the individual concerned.

This strategy has served the organisation well, with CANARI Staff members being highly regarded in the region and beyond, but it has not proven easy to consistently find and retain as large a team of technical Staff as would be desirable. Challenges relate mainly to the requirement for Staff to be "*rigidly flexible*" (Perry-Fingal 1999) an approach that ensures the organisation remains committed to its purpose but is open to, and in fact seeks, new ideas and new institutional arrangements that may lead to better, stronger forms of participatory governance. Staff members are also expected to be self-organising and independent yet team-oriented and participatory, and able to fit into an institutional culture of excellence and peer review of all major outputs. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the region served by CANARI is also a challenge, and in recent years, it has proven difficult to consistently maintain a team with high competency in oral and written French and Spanish.

This creates an environment which several Staff members have found initially (and sometimes persistently) unsettling. The 'culture shock' which some Staff describe having experienced at CANARI can be attributed in part to the traditional Caribbean educational model, which focuses on academic excellence and much less on independent thought and risk taking. Criticism and punishments within such systems can be harsh, making it difficult to adapt to the concept that peer review is a constructive contribution to self- and organisational development. Similarly, for those coming from the hierarchical structures that prevail in government, some private sector and even civil society organisations, the adaptation to a flatter structure that seeks to treat and value everyone equally can be discomforting. Others have found it difficult to adapt to a system where the link between what you are doing, the budget available for it, and the ability of the organisation to continue to employ you, are made explicit through the requirement to allocate all time to identified activities and to play a role in ensuring that budgets are not exceeded or adaptive steps are taken.

Currently, the climate among Staff is one of collaboration with relatively few – and then only minor – conflicts. This can be attributed to a combination of factors including:

- identifying to new Staff in advance the areas of institutional culture that they may find difficult and providing mentoring in the adaptation process;
- focusing on team-building, conflict management and mentoring;
- more regular project meetings, including financial and administrative Staff;
- fortnightly Staff meetings to ensure that everyone is up-to-date on others' activities and can input into decision-making;
- short internal training and discussion sessions designed to nip incipient conflict in the bud;
- more widespread and greater confidence among Staff about their ability to contribute to discussions;
- introduction of an adapted performance management system which includes quarterly meetings and reward/recognition for achieving goals;
- fewer incidences of being under-staffed, which creates stresses on those that remain.

Nevertheless, CANARI continues to struggle to fully identify what combination of competencies and other attributes make for a good fit between a potential technical Staff member and the organisation. Although research and communication skills are important, the following factors seem to be even greater indicators of lasting 'fit':

- a value system that includes an understanding of and commitment to the values of participation and equity;
- broad-based academic background and work experience rather than narrow focus on a single discipline or sector;
- openness to others' perspectives, including through peer review, and to working in a multi-disciplinary environment;
- willingness to work across projects and programmes;
- curiosity and a desire to continue learning;
- team-oriented but also self-organising and motivated;
- good understanding of the Caribbean political, socio-economic and cultural landscape, combined with exposure to and experience of working in other regions and cultures.

Facility in spoken (and preferably written) Spanish, French and/or Creole is also considered desirable.

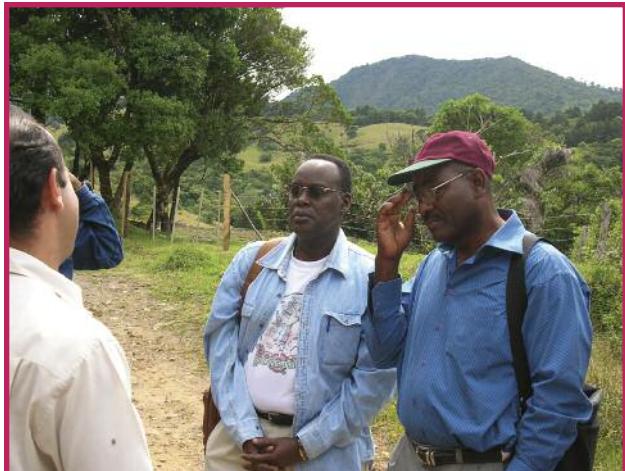
## **Associates**

CANARI has created the position of Associate for individuals who have a strong commitment to CANARI's mission, who have previously been members of Staff or Elected Partners or have otherwise worked closely with CANARI, and whose expertise adds value to the organisation and its programmes. These Associates have played an important role in the organisation's development since its move to Trinidad in 2001, acting as a source of support, expert advice and institutional memory on organisational issues, without ever interfering in day-to-day management. They have also played a significant role as consultants on CANARI projects, bringing a range of relevant skills, not all of which are otherwise easy to find in the region. In turn, CANARI has helped them to remain connected with regional processes and programmes of relevance to their individual work.

## **Strategic alliances and partnerships**

CANARI's strategic alliances with key individuals, other institutions and organisations – international, regional, national and local – further expand its capacity to carry out its mission. Such alliances, which encompass both formal partnerships and informal collaboration, enhance the quality of research in the region, reduce duplication and optimise the use of limited human and financial resources. CANARI's partners include academic institutions; multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies; international, regional and national NGOs; community-based organisations; and individual consultants.

In terms of international NGOs, CANARI's relationship with IIED has been of particular value in stimulating new thinking about approaches to natural resource management and governance. Typically, IIED has involved CANARI both in helping to conceptualise project design and in implementing the Caribbean component of a wider global project, for example the *Who Pays for Water* project on pro-poor payments for watershed services and the *User Guide to Effective Tools and Methods for Integrating Environment and Development*. This has not only avoided the externally imposed solutions to hypothesised problems described by Geoghegan (2009) but has also provided a wider global perspective, which project participants felt added new insights to the discussions, even if some of the approaches used elsewhere (e.g. Costa Rica) proved not to be easily transferable to the insular Caribbean. CANARI has also worked closely with the University of the West Indies (UWI), and particularly



*CANARI facilitated a visit of key policy makers from the Caribbean to Costa Rica to study that country's system of payments for watershed services under the Who Pays for Water project in 2006. Source: CANARI*

its Sustainable Economic Development Unit (SEDU) and its Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), both of which share many of CANARI's values and interests.

CANARI's relationships with other regional NGOs and CBOs are multi-faceted. They are variously beneficiaries of CANARI training and small grants; partners in the development of regional workshops and communication campaigns, such as those developed with Panos Caribbean or on behalf of Christian Aid; the focus of CANARI case studies; colleagues and collaborators on international programmes such as the new Caribbean Initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); facilitators of regional and national processes which CANARI is invited to contribute to (e.g. the Partnership for Sustainable Land Management coordinated by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development or the Trinidad Sustainable Development Network coordinated by the Cropper Foundation); and part of an informal information exchange network which operates on an as-needed or as- interested basis.

## **Funding**

CANARI's programmes are supported by a diverse funding base, including grants from multi-lateral and bi-lateral institutions and private foundations. Its total budgeted expenditure for the current financial year (2009) is just over USD 1 million. CANARI supplements its grant funding through training fees and short consultancies that

are consistent with its vision, mission and strategic objectives. In general, CANARI only submits proposals for consultancies when it has specifically been invited to bid, either as sole applicant or in a closed call for proposals. The current ratio of income is approximately 80% from grants and 20% from consultancies and training.

There are merits and disadvantages to both types of income. Grant funding provides greater scope for innovative design and focus on strategic priorities as well as a longer project time frame. On the other hand, complex proposal design and rigid donor reporting systems can be onerous and a barrier to effective achievement of the outputs and outcomes, without necessarily increasing accountability and transparency. The relationship between CANARI and the MacArthur Foundation is an example of how donor relationships can function optimally. The Foundation is always open to innovative and creative ideas and will easily make suggestions, but it recognises that it is not as well-placed as its grantees and their partners to determine what is most appropriate. It has straightforward and relevant reporting requirements and does not retain a final payment to assure completion of the project. The relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, which in turn engenders an increased sense of commitment from the grant recipient to effective and efficient use of resources. By contrast, CANARI is currently implementing projects under funding from both the European Union (EU) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) National Forest Programme Facility, both of which have some complex and arcane rules which even the local programme officers of these organisations have had difficulty in interpreting. However, in these cases, the frustrations engendered by the proposal design and reporting processes have been offset by the development of excellent relationships with the national or regional offices and a mutual commitment to try and minimise these frustrations.

The experience of funding under consultancy projects has been mixed. These projects have provided excellent opportunities to test or apply participatory methodologies and to develop new and productive relationships with key change agents (for example, over the past couple of years, the Department of Environment in Montserrat; the Environmental Management Authority and Forestry Division in Trinidad and Tobago; and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Joint Nature Conservation Committee in the UK for work in the UK overseas territories). In some cases, such projects have also made a significant contribution to administrative overheads and



*CANARI has partnered with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to support participatory planning process for biodiversity conservation in Montserrat.* Source: Stephen Mendes

fund surpluses. However, in instances where CANARI has not had much input into the terms of reference, or when these have been poorly thought through or not based on a well-identified need, there have often been demands for changes in approach or iterative processes of consultation or review that were not originally provided for and can easily result in exceeding the budgeted costs if not carefully managed and re-negotiated.

CANARI has intermittently discussed the possibility of securing a more sustainable funding base. The receipt of the 2009 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions is enabling CANARI to explore strategies to further secure its financial stability and ability to pursue the type of regionally-relevant independent research on which its reputation is based. Approaches which are being examined include:

- development of an endowment fund, including allocation of USD100,000 as seed funding and a target of securing USD 1 million over 3 years (a target that may prove ambitious in the current economic environment);
- exploration of the potential for partnerships, both within and outside the region, to secure framework funding to address key identified research and capacity building gaps in the region;
- provision of systematic and regular avenues for technical Staff to build competencies and remain at the cutting edge of current research in CANARI's programme areas, primarily through 'mini-sabbaticals' of 3-6 weeks to study in more depth a particular topic of

individual interest that can contribute to addressing current or potential CANARI research areas;

- communications research to evaluate the effectiveness of past communication strategies of both CANARI and some of its partners (e.g. CERMES), in relation to their policy or other objectives, and to test and evaluate the comparative cost-effectiveness (CANARI 2009).

## **Internal systems**

### ***Filing and library***

CANARI has always placed a high value on implementing and maintaining systems that would preserve institutional memory, help it to meet any statutory requirements as well as facilitate access to information, especially for Staff. These include idiosyncratic but highly functional library management and hard copy filing systems. Recently, a decision was taken to maintain comprehensive files only in electronic format, with just key documents (e.g. contracts, project outputs and reports) kept in hard copy. Similarly, an electronic library of useful documents is gradually being developed. The greatest challenge in this area is likely to be lack of space, and the library and filing rooms are both bursting at the seams in spite of several rounds of 'weeding out' duplicates and publications such as old newsletters on topics that are not of core relevance to CANARI or its library users. CANARI has discussed for several years the possibility of developing a project to digitise parts of its library and its own older publications but this has never come to fruition, in part because until recently the library was maintained by part-time Staff, who combined that role with full-time academic studies. However, CANARI's library advisors have consistently indicated that there are potential funding sources for this, so it is something that should be put back on the agenda, particularly as the only other comparable non-academic (i.e. NGO and accessible) library of its kind in the region, that of the CCA, is currently not being maintained and has an uncertain future.

### ***Internal policies and procedures***

CANARI has consistently developed internal policies and procedures to meet identified needs without burdening itself with bureaucratic rules, and the Institute currently has the following policy documents or manuals:

- Human resource policy (including subsections on working hours, compensation, leave and benefits, and grievances)

- Conflict of interest policy for Elected Partners
- Administrative policies and procedures
- Financial policies and procedures
- Library policy and procedures
- Information management policy and procedures

These are reviewed and added to as new areas are identified, often during the process of orienting new Staff, an area of continuing weakness as the policies still need to be compiled into a comprehensive and coherent policy/orientation manual.

### ***Financial management systems***

CANARI has paid attention to issues of financial management and has maintained good financial records from the outset. However, this did not prevent it from suffering a number of cash flow crises. In recognition of the need to find a mechanism to cover more adequately its operational overheads, it adopted in the 1990s a system of full cost recovery whereby Staff time was no longer charged out to projects just at a percentage of actual salaries but at a cost which included overhead recovery. The system however progressively became too complex and, in 2005, a new system was introduced to simplify the job of the Financial Officer and facilitate both internal project management and external reporting, without discarding the principle of full cost recovery. A key feature of this system, which is still being used with minor refinements, is that all project activities are budgeted and accounted for along the lines under which they have to be reported to the donor (all of whom have separate and different reporting requirements). This has slightly increased the amount of time that Staff and the Financial Officer have to spend on timesheets and monthly record-keeping but vastly improved the ability to monitor whether a project is on track. It has also reduced donor reporting to a fairly routine and undemanding exercise, even in the case of donors with complex reporting requirements.





## **Caribbean Natural Resources Institute**

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for over 20 years.

Our mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing the natural resources critical to development.

Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships.

### **For more information please contact:**

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)  
Fernandes Industrial Centre,  
Administration Building  
Eastern Main Road, Laventille, Trinidad, W.I.

Tel: (868) 626-6062 • Fax: (868) 626-1788  
Email: [info@canari.org](mailto:info@canari.org) • Website: [www.canari.org](http://www.canari.org)

This Technical Report was produced by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute as an output of the project "Going from strength to strength: Building capacity for equitable, effective and sustained participation of civil society organisations in biodiversity conservation in Caribbean islands" funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.



**Citation:** CANARI 2009. Thirty Years in Support of Participatory Natural Resource Management: the experience of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). CANARI Technical Report No.387: 38pp

**ISBN 1-890792-14-4**