

Node: Suite Summary^{1,2}

Caribbean: Policy knowledge on alternative NR livelihoods

Context

Much research on coastal zone management in the Caribbean focuses on the natural resources (NR), institutions and macroeconomics of management, including study of the environmental laws governing natural resource use, land tenure, control of land and vulnerable groups' rights to NRs. The depletion of both agricultural and aquatic (fish) resources in the Caribbean means that there is a need to identify alternative livelihood strategies for those poor communities who depend on these resources for a living. Exploring alternative 'sustainable' livelihood strategies in a holistic and participatory manner was considered a high priority amongst Caribbean development and research institutions during a NRSP workshop held in Barbados in 2001. However, there have been few livelihoods studies conducted in the Caribbean.

In this context the Suite sought to identify appropriate alternative strategies to reduce the pressure on coastal resources and enhance the sustainability of NR based livelihoods. It also investigated constraints to livelihood change. Mechanisms for achieving livelihood change were identified, tested and promoted throughout the Caribbean.

Research Topics

- How, why and where is the coastal environment in the Caribbean changing?
- What is the impact of environmental changes on poverty and NR based livelihoods?
- What are the constraints, opportunities and potential strategies for achieving desirable NR based livelihood outcomes in the coastal zone?
- What lessons can be learned from using policy-relevant knowledge to address a gap found between policy intent (improved livelihood outcomes) and policy implementation?

Projects

The Millennium Development Goals of poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and improved food security required, in the context of NRSP's research in coastal zones, an understanding of NR and livelihood dynamics and interdependencies, and the identification of means to overcome constraints to livelihood improvement.

Accordingly, early research was designed to identify the gaps in quality and quantity of previously published work in relation to pro-poor livelihood policies and the NR resource base in the Caribbean. A database was developed that collated all available information on the land water interface in the Caribbean, facilitating identification of topic areas on which future research should focus (R7797 [see project links below]). One such area was the need

¹ This document summarises NRSP's work in one of its Uptake Promotion Node: suites. For further details and links to project and project documents see <http://www.nrsp.org.uk/6.aspx>

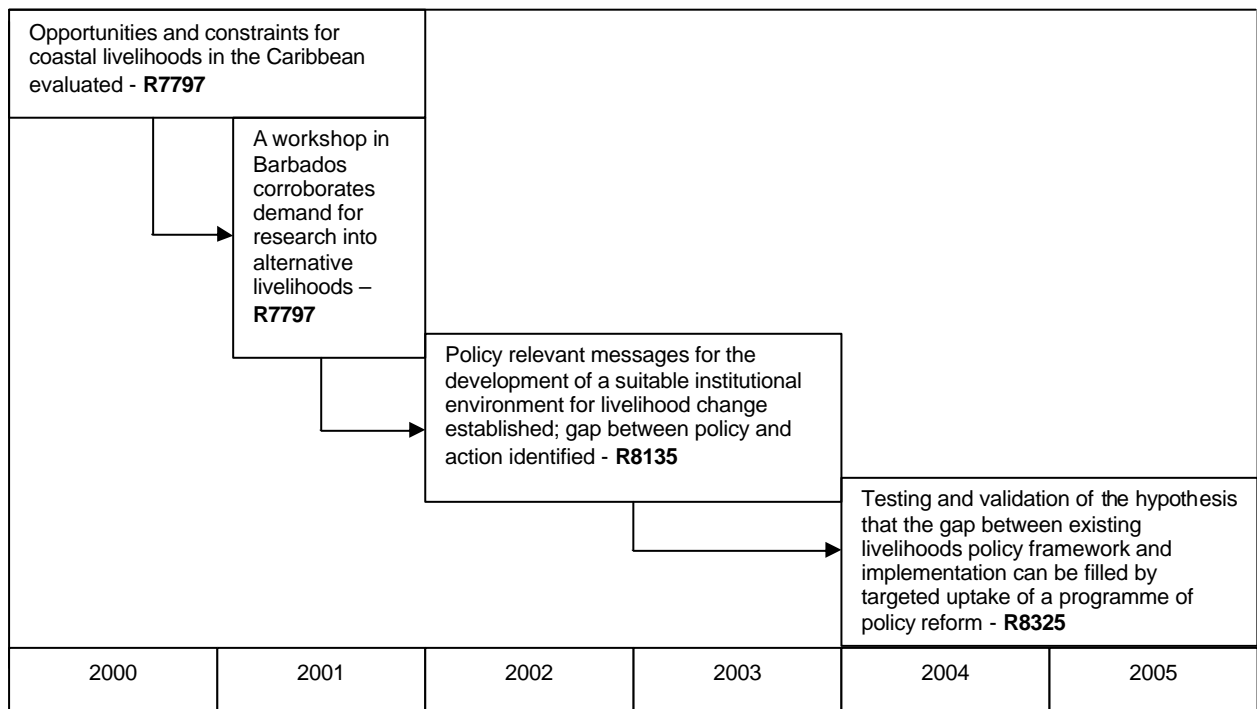
² This document presents research funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

to address alternative NR based livelihood strategies. During a presentation of project findings to a regional group of researchers and development advocates at a workshop in Barbados, this topic was confirmed as a high priority for the region. In addition to creating the database of existing literature, R7797 conducted stakeholder analyses within coastal communities of Tobago and Portland Bight, Jamaica to determine residents' views on their livelihood opportunities, constraints, assets and vulnerability.

Subsequently, the Social and Economic Development Unit (SEDU) of the University of the West Indies (UWI) examined a number of livelihood strategies based around NRs at the coastal zone (R8135) and attempted to address a significant gap between the existing sustainable livelihoods policy environment and its implementation in Caribbean coastal areas. From investigation related to livelihood strategies based on fishing, farming, the agro-industry and tourism, livelihood specific and generic policy messages were identified. Key issues for further research were also identified.

A following project undertaken by the same team (R8325) addressed the hypothesis that the identified policy-implementation gap could be filled by facilitating activities which bring together policy makers - in the public and private sector - and communities in order to develop appropriate policy reforms. Action research in three case study countries, Belize, Grenada and St Lucia, sought to identify specific, prioritised initiatives as well as reveal the approach required to close the policy-implementation gap. Lessons across the three studies were synthesised and contributed to project 'guidelines' for promoting livelihood change. The chief audience for these guidelines was policy makers, intermediary change agents and development organisations including Government departments and NGOs.

Project links within Caribbean Suite 2: 2000 - 2005



Outputs

Findings

Literature sources suggested that agricultural sustainability was being undermined by high rates of natural soil erosion arising from the combination of sloping terrain, thin, highly erodible soils and intense tropical storms. Human activities such as shifting cultivation are thought to be further exacerbating productivity decline. However, knowledge of how, why and where the coastal environment in the Caribbean is changing is incomplete. The review of the literature on the land water interface in the Caribbean indicated that “despite long histories of research, both ecological systems as a whole and their component parts are not fully understood even now...it is apparent from several sectors that we really do not understand enough about the underlying processes” (R7797 FTR, p.24). As a consequence of this partial knowledge, it is difficult to understand the large-scale impact of environmental changes in poverty and livelihoods.

The poor are acutely aware both of their dependence on the NR base and of threats to their existing NR-based livelihoods. Stakeholders interviewed in Tobago and Jamaica perceived declines in fish catches and water quality which they attributed to a variety of causes, including large or foreign fishing fleets, tourism, ‘people in general’ and lack of active government involvement on environmental issues. But interviewees did not rate environmental issues as high a priority as other concerns such as food security, health, livelihoods and services.

Early research identified a demand for investigation of the means to achieve improved NR based livelihoods and, in the context of a degraded NR base, alternative livelihood opportunities. Subsequent research on a number of existing livelihood strategies in Belize and St Lucia identified a need for integrated livelihood and NR policy analysis, a policy framework to support pro-poor tourism, training in enhanced production (including organic production methods) and marketing techniques for fishers and farmers (including for sea-moss harvesters), and experimentation with innovative credit mechanisms.

R8135 examined the feasibility of alternative livelihoods for people in the coastal zone, and determined what new knowledge was required by policy makers in order for alternative livelihoods to contribute to poverty eradication. It found that policy eradication policies exist, but there is a gap between policy and the action needed on the ground to eradicate poverty often related to a lack of capacity to implement policy. Tourism was widely identified by poor people as the alternative livelihood option they would most like to explore. But limited land ownership, poor access to credit (and lack of awareness of existing credit sources or how to access them), infrastructure deficiencies and lack of skills and knowledge about the tourism market present major constraints. Policy to support pro-poor tourism and increased participation of the poor in the tourism sector must be incorporated into broader tourism development plans. Investment in communication tools and processes is also required to address the barrier to livelihood change created by poor access to credit.

R8325 argued that the gap between policy intent and policy implementation could only be filled if there was collaboration and partnerships among all stakeholders in the policy arena. The findings indicated that such collaboration and partnerships could best be built around practical, ‘do-able’ activities which impact positively on the livelihoods of those living in poverty. However, achieving such collaborative interventions requires a change in the values and assumptions of those involved towards those living in poverty. Constraints to

collaboration identified during R8325 included: persuading all stakeholders that poverty eradication is feasible; loss of institutional memory in policy institutions due to movement of staff; and lack of experience of working in sustained collaboration and partnerships among all stakeholders.

R8325 produced guidelines for collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders to mainstream sustainable livelihoods policy support for marginalized communities in the Caribbean. Key constraints to facilitating collaboration in the Caribbean, and possible ways to overcome these constraints, were also identified.

Research messages

- The livelihood practices of the poor are often constrained by limited knowledge of the most efficient and effective methods of production, and of how to market their products. More emphasis should be placed on capacity development of the human resource base in NRs research and development.
- Alternative livelihoods are often proposed (e.g. tourism, agro-processing) but few are viable. Complementary activities that provide supplementary incomes may be as important as alternative livelihoods.
- Landlessness was found to be a major cause of poverty. Options for land reform, leasing of state land or resettlement demand attention.
- Poverty and NR issues tend to be treated separately by distinct public agencies. Effective pro-poor policies related to NRs require communication between disciplines and development of coordinated, integrated policies.
- Conflict is often a problem between stakeholders at the local scale. Conflict resolution processes and efforts to build local democracy deserve greater consideration.
- Micro-credit systems that can meet the needs of the poor must be developed to enable them to move out of poverty, and mechanisms ensuring that the poor are aware of micro-credit opportunities are required.
- To address poverty eradication, a fundamental requirement is to address the causes underlying the gap between policy intent and implementation.
- A participatory and co-ordinated approach involving stakeholders at all levels is required to address gaps between policy intent and action on the ground. Locally relevant mechanisms for achieving this must be established, and can be facilitated through a well planned and implemented communications strategy related to a selected achievable activity.

Key research products

Final technical reports

- Willoughby, N.G. 2001. Opportunities and constraints for coastal livelihoods in the Caribbean. Final Technical Report for project R7797. Chatham: Natural Resources Institute.
- Pantin, D. 2003. Feasibility of alternative sustainable coastal resource based enhanced livelihood strategies. Final Technical Report for project R8135. Trinidad and Tobago: Sustainable Economic Development Unit, University of the West Indies.
- Pantin, D. 2005. Policy relevant knowledge on feasible alternative natural resource based strategies for enhancing livelihoods Final Technical Report for project R8325.

Trinidad and Tobago: Sustainable Economic Development Unit, Economics Department, University of the West Indies.

Policy briefs

- Mycoo, M. 2005. Policy brief: physical planning guidelines for community-based tourism. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 6pp.
- Gobin, J. 2005. A guideline policy brief: natural resources and sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 4pp.
- Brown, D. 2005. Policy brief: poverty and sustainable livelihoods on the Caribbean coast. 4pp.
- Toppin-Allahar, C. 2004. Policy brief: legal/institutional and policy environment for natural resources based livelihood strategies. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 5pp.
- Rennie, W. 2005. Policy brief: finance/credit availability and access. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 5pp.
- Francis–Brown, S. 2005. Policy brief: communicating policy relevant knowledge. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 6pp.
- Pantin, D.A. and Francis, J. 2005. Policy brief: community based sustainable tourism. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 6pp.
- McDermott, C. 2005. Policy brief: sustainable tourism linkages: case study – sea moss production in Praslin, St. Lucia. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI-SEDU. 4pp.

Other key products

- A database collating all available information on land water interface in wider Caribbean: R7797, 2002. CD-ROM.
- A book exploring the feasibility of alternative sustainable coastal resource based enhanced livelihood strategies: Pantin, D.A. et al. 2004. People and the Caribbean coast. UWI-SEDU. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. 92pp. (R8135).

Impacts

- There was considerable demand for products from R7797, especially the prototype database collating all available information on the land water interface in the wider Caribbean. The region-wide interest in the database indicated that workshop participants perceived it to be valuable and highly relevant product.
- Alternative livelihoods were recognised as a gap in Belize’s national Coastal Zone management plan that needed addressing (R8135). Here and at other study locations, policy recommendations are being adopted through a process facilitated by the Sustainable Economic Development Unit (SEDU).
- In Belize, Grenada and St Lucia a mechanism for implementing alternative livelihood strategies was validated, adapted, disseminated and adopted via the example of community based sustainable tourism (R8325).
- In Belize, Grenada and St Lucia, policy makers’ awareness of the need for integrated livelihood and NR policy analysis to develop policies for alternative livelihoods was raised through policy briefs and newsletters (R8325); key national policy makers

implemented livelihood change strategies at study locations through participatory approaches facilitated by the project's activities.

- A Project Guidelines document raised awareness of the potential for livelihood change and enhanced understanding of livelihood change mechanisms with relevant regional bodies (e.g. through regional workshops). These guidelines were presented to policy makers and change agents at six regional workshops and three regional conferences (R8325).

Further work

To support the improvement of livelihoods of coastal communities in the Caribbean, key areas for research include:

- Understanding the social and economic effects of increased fishing (catch and effort) and the vulnerability of fishing communities to globalisation and other external pressures.
- Identifying opportunities for increasing linkages between tourism and fisheries and agriculture.
- Understanding the processes and institutional structures needed for effective co-management and wider empowerment.
- Defining carrying capacities and related policies for tourism and fisheries.

Given the finding of a lack of understanding of Caribbean ecological systems as a whole and of their component parts, more research may also be required in this area. However, any such studies need to be targeted in a way that enables them to produce findings that are of direct relevance to poor people's livelihoods and priorities.