

## SAINT LUCIA

### Soufriere Marine Management Area

The establishment of Marine Management Areas (MMAs) is designed to reduce resource degradation and user conflicts through co-management arrangements and consultation among stakeholders. When the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) in Saint Lucia was officially established in 1995, local fishers lost many of their prime reef fishing areas. Evidence suggests that it takes several years for spill-over benefits, in form of increased fish production in marine reserves leading to emigration of fish to multiple use areas, to spread from newly protected area. Compensation and incentive-based measures were developed accordingly.

To mitigate the negative impact on the livelihoods of Soufriere fishers and to pre-empt increased fishing pressure on near shore resources, several initiatives were introduced to compensate local communities. During periods of hardship, temporary stipends and limited fishing rights were granted. The stipend aimed to discourage fishers from trying to earn a living by illegally fishing in the marine reserves. Repeat offenders would be fined, their gear confiscated and the stipend stopped.

A gillnet buy-back scheme was set-up after gill-nets were clearly linked to significant damage to coral reefs within the SMMA. Coastal fisher folk were provided with training to enable them to take up alternative employment opportunities, if desired. An investment fund was set up to provide fisher folk with loans to invest in activities other than coastal demersal fishing, e.g. deep sea fishing and tourism-related activities. User permits were sold for diving and sailing in the SMMA and increased recreational use generated income for the SMMA (through the user permits) and for the Soufriere community at large (through tourism).

The introduction of user fees provided revenue sufficient to finance most of the costs associated with the marine management area.

#### Impact on biodiversity

Evidence suggested that stocks of fish populations within the MMA increased significantly. However, fish landings from fished zones did not increase suggesting that it takes time for enhanced productivity in MMAs to spill over to neighbouring areas. The gains made to date are limited to areas within the MMA and still rely on a complete ban on fishing in reserves.

#### Replicability

Additional MMA are envisaged in St. Lucia's National Management Plan and Recovery Efforts for Marine Turtles. There was some conflict between stakeholders and as a result, institutions were reformed to better represent local needs a few years after establishment.

#### Lessons learned

The SMMA has allowed drawing useful lessons for effective stakeholder participation and conflict management:

- the direct participation of resource users can be preferable. Community institutions do not always provide adequate representation and because stakes/interests often vary from individual to individual within the community.

- Facilitating direct communication among stakeholder groups can be beneficial; for example, by allowing fishers to directly address conflicting interests to others, such as divers or yachts people.

The SMMA has functioned at the institutional level as long as the principles of participatory planning were followed.

*Sources:* Soufriere Marine Management Association (2010); St. Lucia Submission to the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

