

Understanding threats, resolving conflicts and building collaborative solutions, in the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) and the Canaries & Anse La Raye Marine Management Area (CAMMA) in St. Lucia West Indies.



Project Report

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2012



Background

The Soufriere Marine Management Association Inc. (SMMA Inc.) is a Local Fisheries Management Authority responsible for managing over 22km of coastline in Saint Lucia. This area includes the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) and the Canaries & Anse La Raye Marine Management Area (CAMMA). The SMMA Inc. extends services to all water-based tourism interests such as yachting, fishing, scuba diving, beach recreation, and the tourism fraternity in general as part of Government's policy for national development. Indeed, one of the primary mandates of the organization is to enhance the equitable economic, social and cultural benefits generated from the sustainable use of the coastal and marine resources of Soufriere at the local and national level. Enshrined in this broad mandate is the need for the SMMA Inc. to take necessary steps to mitigate anthropogenic impacts on the marine and coastal resources of the area and to protect the fragile marine ecosystem while ensuring all stakeholders benefit from hassle-free use of the area. This speaks to the need to develop guidelines for best practice and sustainable use of resources within the marine managed area. The SMMA Inc. is also a small non-profit organization that depends exclusively on user fees for all costs, salaries and maintenance of infrastructure in the protected area.

The SMMA formula has proven to be successful over the years generating much needed revenue and satisfaction to its varied stakeholders. The absence however of a mechanism for periodic review, stakeholder consultation and public education as a reinforcement mechanism has led to the erosion of many of the principles that founded the success of the SMMA.

A number of problems now plague the operation of the SMMA Inc. among which include:

- The re-emergence of user conflicts: An influx of new marine resource users is resulting in increased conflicts amongst stakeholders within and outside of the marine managed area. The new entrants often use fast boats to provide day trips that include swimming and snorkeling within the marine managed area. These new entrants lack traditional attachment to the resource, instead seeing speed and high passenger numbers as a key business strategy. However this comes at the cost of insufficient care, consideration and attention to the safety of other resource users as well as carrying capacity of a few popular recreational areas within the marine managed area. Therefore frequent complaints are made by hoteliers (about the numbers of passengers placed on beaches competing for space with their guests), dive operators who complain of the speed that these vessels approach recreational areas, while both hoteliers and dive operators complain of having to rescue the guest of these new operators and of damage caused by fins to corals in the area. This comes at a time when Government is actively encouraging the growth of the marine based tourism sector. It appears that key government officials/agencies do not understand that too much use of the resource will result in environmental damage and threaten the sustainability of the livelihoods of persons involved in marine based tourism and eventually the St. Lucian economy.
- The erosion of the respect for the zoning arrangements and specificities of the use of these areas as new entrants to the user spectrum (fishers in particular) have not been informed and educated on the control mechanisms and benefits to all users.
- An inadequate operational protocol
- The absence of an information and educational programme
- Shaky stakeholder involvement

Key to the SMMA's success in managing conflicts on an on-going basis is the intricate interactions of stakeholders which include user groups and SMMA management. The spirit of cooperation directed the course of action taken by the stakeholders to secure the successful operations of the region's premiere protected area. However the erosion of the impact of these principles has set the SMMA Inc. back

significantly resulting in a resurgence of user-conflict that threatens to destroy the fragile fabric of compromise and environmental respect. This situation can only be corrected through the implementation of an appropriately informed strategic planning exercise involving all stakeholders.

Objective

In September 2011, the annual UNEP-CEP/CaMPAM Training of Trainers Course in Marine Protected Area Management (Training of Trainers) was held in San Pedro, Belize. Funding was subsequently made available to conduct an on-site follow up activity. This came at an opportune time and a project to engage marine-based tourism stakeholders was conceptualized. The objectives of the project developed are:

1. Broaden understanding by stakeholders (tour operators, dive operators, Maritime Affairs, Heritage Tourism water taxi and mono-hull boat operators, marine police) involved in marine based tourism in St. Lucia, of the goods and services provided by coral reef resources.
2. Broaden understanding by stakeholders involved in marine based tourism of threats to coral reef resources in St. Lucia. (general threats and those posed by unsustainable marine tourism activities)
3. Identify marine based tourism stakeholder perspectives on threats to the sustainability of their livelihoods.
4. Identify opportunities to resolve conflicts among marine based tourism stakeholder groups.
5. Build consensus from stakeholders in marine based tourism and support, for mechanisms and best practices that mitigate identified threats and conflicts that affect sustainability of their livelihoods.

Training of Trainers Follow Up Project Methodology.

The SMMA proposed a training activity for stakeholders involved in marine based tourism in St. Lucia. The training aims to educate and increase understanding of threats to marine resources and livelihood strategies in St. Lucia, resolve conflicts and build collaborative solutions to mitigate and manage future conflicts as well as ensure sustainable use of SMMA resources. To this end a phased approach was employed. An impartial facilitator was contracted to develop a questionnaire in collaboration with SMMA Inc. to obtain a broad array of perspectives on threats, conflicts and potential solutions that protect both marine resources and the economic interests of the tourism sector operating in the SMMA. One-on-one consultations with key informants engaged in or with interest in water based tourism were conducted as part of a rapid assessment to determine the concerns and interests of stakeholder groups operating within the SMMA and CAMMA. A one-day stakeholder training was held and was divided in two sessions. The first session included presentations by the SMMA on the threats, rules and regulations, and the SMMA's objectives in managing the area for sustainable use and improvement of long-term economic benefits to all. Other government agencies were invited to present on their portfolio and role in managing marine-based tourism in St. Lucia. The focus of the second session was on the participants' mutual perspectives on threats to the marine resource and aimed to initiate dialogue that resolved conflicts and generated solutions that were mutually agreeable to all parties. A summary report was submitted by the facilitator following completion of the one-day stakeholder workshop which included recommendations from observations during the interviews and workshop.

Results

Twelve interviews were conducted with key informants, representative of current marine-based tourism stakeholders. These included representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association, St. Lucia Air & Sea Port Authority, Police Marine Unit, Day Charter Tour Operators and Dive Operators. From the situational assessment, the SMMA Inc. has recorded achievements in sustainable

management of the two MPAs through stakeholder involvement and reduction in conflicts. However some of the lessons learned also show areas for improvement especially in education and sensitization which has been lacking over the years. More information on the results of the situational assessment are provided in Appendix I.



Photo 1. Presentation by Nadia Cazaubon on the SMMA & CAMMA



Photo 2. Presentation by Christopher Alexander on licensing and registration conducted by the Maritime Division of SLASPA



Photo 3. Presentation by Tzarmallah Haynes, St. Lucia Bureau of Standards on the National Standard for Water-Based Tourism.



Photo 4. Presentation of results of the situation assessment by Rich Wilson, Seatone Consulting

Participants were introduced to or in most cases re-sensitized on the existing rules and regulations that apply in the two marine management areas as well as on the threats these areas face. Representatives from the Saint Lucia Air & Sea Ports Authority and the Department of Fisheries educated participants on their requisite licensing programmes for marine-based activities namely, vessel registration, boatmaster certification as well as licenses to ply for hire, dive and snorkel and conduct sports fishing. A representative from the St. Lucia Bureau of Standards delivered a presentation on the work of the bureau specifically the approved national Standard for Water-Based Tourism. Many participants were unaware of this “national standard” which presently is a voluntary guideline for all water-based tourism activities.

The consultant shared findings from the situation assessment on marine tourism in SMMA & CAMMA. Participants were engaged in sharing their vision for the development of this area and worked on finding solutions to address issues that were identified. Details of these exercises are contained in the Strategic Planning and Assessment Workshop in Appendix I.

Objective	Comment
1. Broaden understanding by stakeholders (tour operators, dive operators, Maritime Affairs, Heritage Tourism water taxi and mono-hull boat operators, marine police) involved in marine based tourism in St. Lucia, of the goods and services provided by coral reef resources.	All the stakeholders who participated in the workshop had a good understanding of the goods and services that our coral reef resources provide especially the economic tourism benefit. The SMMA presentation re-emphasized those points.
2. Broaden understanding by stakeholders involved in marine based tourism of threats to coral reef resources in St. Lucia. (general threats and those posed by unsustainable marine tourism activities)	All the stakeholders who participated in the workshop had a good understanding of the threats posed by unsustainable marine tourism activities. Mention was made of a previous consultation with all dive operators in St Lucia which was held earlier this year, where operators were calling for additional artificial reefs to rest the natural coral reefs. The SMMA presentation re-emphasized those points.
3. Identify marine based tourism stakeholder perspectives on threats to the sustainability of their livelihoods.	During the visioning exercise where participants identified their greatest fears some of which spoke to a realization that marine tourism sector depends on a healthy ecosystem and properly managed areas with a ten year vision that included “Users have awareness of the value of coastal and marine resources”
4. Identify opportunities to resolve conflicts among marine based tourism stakeholder groups.	A brainstorm session on making the ten year vision a reality yielded a myriad of solutions including education, use of peer pressure and conducting regular workshops to promote mutual understanding of rules and regulations.
5. Build consensus from stakeholders in marine based tourism and support, for mechanisms and best practices that mitigate identified threats and conflicts that affect sustainability of their livelihoods.	Participants were fully supportive of the national standard and called for operators to voluntarily adopt the standards which have been developed through consultations with stakeholders.



Photo 5. Presentation of visioning ideas



Photo 6. Final categorization of visions and solutions presented