



StewardFish

**Report on establishment and demonstration of
the virtual leadership institute for fisherfolk**



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The University of the West Indies - Centre for Resource
Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES)



Developing organizational capacity for ecosystem stewardship and
livelihoods in Caribbean small-scale fisheries

StewardFish Project

StewardFish

StewardFish is focused on empowering fisherfolk throughout fisheries value chains to engage in resource management, decision-making processes and sustainable livelihoods, with strengthened institutional support at all levels in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) region.

The project is being funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented by the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, and executed by five (5) regional partners - Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES), Caribbean ICT Research Programme (UWI-CIRP), Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO), and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat (CRFM Sec.) in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

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Abstract

Developing capacity in leadership is critical to enhancing fisherfolk organisations' roles in fisheries and marine ecosystem stewardship. A CNFO leadership institute was established in April 2020 through its inaugural session and is currently being demonstrated primarily via an online course. The CNFO, CERMES and FAO agreed that the CNFO should have full and clear ownership of their leadership institute with support upon request from CERMES, but also as needed from other project partners and other allies. Training is the main implementation focus among the areas of the institute, the others being mentoring, discussion forum and library. The three online training sessions to date have been fairly satisfactory, but suggestions for various means of improvement have been made. Observations and recommendations are described in detail but need to be complemented by reports directly from the CNFO. The way forward must focus on monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation from the current test course and building the capacity of the CNFO to deliver all four components of the leadership institute. It is not too early to plan for further resource mobilisation to support the sustainability of the leadership institute, including drawing in fisherfolk not currently in organisations so as to expand the population from which to seek successors and institutionalise succession planning.

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iv</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Concept of a leadership institute	1
1.2 About this report	2
2 ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP	3
2.1 Starting with CERMES	3
2.2 Ascendance of the CNFO	3
3 DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP	5
3.1 CNFO gains formal control	5
3.2 CNFO leads with CERMES support.....	5
3.2.1 Training	6
3.2.2 Mentoring.....	7
3.2.3 Discussion forum	8
3.2.4 Library.....	9
4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	9
5 REFERENCES AND NOTES	10

1 INTRODUCTION

The University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES) is a partner with FAO in the implementation of its project on *Developing organisational capacity for ecosystem stewardship and livelihoods in Caribbean small-scale fisheries (StewardFish)*. The seven-country project (for Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) aims to empower fisherfolk throughout value chains to engage in resource management, decision-making processes and sustainable livelihoods, with strengthened institutional support at all levels. This includes the activities in Table 1 that among which the leadership institute is prominent.

Table 1. Establishing and demonstrating the leadership institute is a prominent StewardFish activity

Component/Outcome/Output	Activity
<p><u>Component 1</u>: Developing organisational capacity for fisheries governance</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.1</u>: Fisherfolk have improved their organisation capacity to meet objectives that enhance well-being</p> <p><u>Output 1.1.1</u>: Leaders with strengthened capacity in management, administration, planning sustainable finance, leadership and other operational skills</p>	<p>1.1.1.3: Deliver training, network capacity builders with NFOs to form a CNFO 'leadership institute'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create profile of current fisherfolk leaders in a situation assessment • Review, update, adapt or create leadership capacity development resources • Set up and demonstrate virtual leadership institute to fisherfolk • <i>Report on establishment and demonstration of virtual leadership institute to fisherfolk</i>

This report is delivered for Activity 1.1.1.3 in Component 1 which focuses on “Developing organisational capacity for fisheries governance”. The activity is to “Deliver training, network capacity building with NFOs to form a CNFO 'leadership institute’”. This is the “Report on establishment and demonstration of virtual leadership institute to fisherfolk” offered after its establishment and the delivery of the first three sessions of the CNFO leadership institute.

1.1 Concept of a leadership institute

This section appeared in a previous report on the institute’s capacity development resources¹. It is worth repeating here as critical context. The current report is ‘stand-alone’, but readers are encouraged to read the previous report first although some key points are in both.

Fisherfolk organisations were first introduced to the project countries in the 1950s-60s under British colonial rule. It was apparent that in the Caribbean, as elsewhere, organisational leadership was a key factor for success or failure. The StewardFish project document (ProDoc) identifies leadership as essential for capacity building, notes that it may enable or constrain informed stewardship, sees women and youth as critical leaders, mentions core competencies for leadership and discusses how training can assist in addressing all of the above. However, since developing and sustaining leadership is more than just delivering “training”, StewardFish was formulated to deliver a more permanent and comprehensive approach through a “leadership institute” led by capable fisherfolk leaders.

The concept of a leadership institute is not new. Many state, non-state, civil society, academic and commercial entities have leadership institutes to serve themselves and/or wider clienteles. The institutes vary greatly in scope, structure and operation, however, so there is no single best practice or model to follow. It is a matter of being fit for purpose. For Caribbean fisherfolk this includes reducing complexity and costs. Hence the CNFO leadership institute is to be mainly virtual, supplemented by in-person interaction where feasible. This includes regional self-help support plus national/local mentorship where required. Potential resources for the institute are vast and varied. CERMES’ task was to select the most relevant resources for the start of the leadership institute which is expected to be very much an incremental collective testing and learning phase. The Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) is at the centre of both the demand and supply for the leadership institute. Partners previously involved with CNFO and some fisheries authorities in supporting leadership capacity development by fisherfolk and fisheries officers include the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), as well as CERMES through prior FAO supported fisherfolk organisation capacity development projects. Resources from all of these previous initiatives are relevant as well as much more available freely online. Ensuring that the institute could be well resourced was an initial step in its establishment and demonstration.

1.2 About this report

The next section of this report builds on the existence of resources such as the main text for the training². It addresses the institute’s establishment with a small start by CERMES, but then there was a critical and pivotal bid for full ownership, leadership and stewardship by the CNFO. The third section summarises the demonstration of training based on participant observation in three of the monthly online sessions. Beyond online training, the CNFO’s aims for the institute to include mentoring, a forum and a library are briefly addressed. The discussion and conclusion section summarises leadership institute approaches to date, ending with a future outlook.

2 ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP

The previous capacity development resources report confirmed the abundance and accessibility of diverse materials on leadership in general. It noted there were resources on fisheries, with some specifically on small-scale fisheries (SSF) leadership. The latter were, however, less than a handful for the Caribbean, mainly associated with prior FAO, CRFM and UWI-CERMES projects.

2.1 Starting with CERMES

CERMES assembled a selection of resources in a Dropbox folder on “Leadership by fisherfolk”. Dialogue with the CNFO commenced simultaneously on the design and operation of a virtual leadership institute. The concept was agreed by the two organisations many years before the StewardFish project. The institute was intended from the outset to be a CNFO outcome, with CERMES providing its education and training expertise to assist the process. Yet, CERMES role in actually establishing the institute was limited due to the proactive role played by the CNFO.

While CERMES was using the leadership resources to begin designing both the administration and the implementation of online delivery of the training using Skype and Google Classroom as agreed with the CNFO, the latter was already independently promoting and scheduling the start of leadership institute training with a design of their own. Seeing the action taken by CNFO to take charge of the institute as a sign of commitment to stewardship, CERMES switched to a supportive and advisory role, deeming the CNFO initiative as positive and relatively low risk.

In this context, CERMES provided unsolicited advice on training design, but primarily monitored the progress of the CNFO where possible. Thus, CERMES played no role in securing participants or in advertising the commencement of the leadership institute as CNFO was better networked in the fishing industry for these tasks which were consistent with their role as explained below.

2.2 Ascendance of the CNFO

The StewardFish ProDoc and CERMES Letter of Agreement (LOA) were drafted on the basis of CNFO being a project beneficiary rather than a full implementation partner. This was due mainly to FAO caution not to overburden limited CNFO capacity with onerous deliverables. In the finalisation of CERMES’ LOA, however, the CNFO was offered a small separate LOA to implement fisherfolk engagement aspects of StewardFish largely by assisting CERMES with networking and communication for activities that relied on the active participation of fisherfolk and fisherfolk organisations (FFO). The leadership institute required CNFO, as Service Provider, to perform the activities in Table 2. From a CERMES perspective, the intended impacts of the CNFO LOA included assisting CNFO to build capacity directly through learning-by-doing, to

demonstrate CNFO’s credibility in leadership and stewardship to their FFO membership, and to do similar secondarily to other interested parties and potential partners.

Table 2. CNFO’s formal roles in establishing and demonstrating the leadership institute in their LOA

Component/Outcome/Output	Activity
<p>Component 1: Developing organisational capacity for fisheries governance</p> <p>Outcome 1.1: Fisherfolk have improved their organization capacity to meet objectives that enhance well-being</p> <p>Output 1.1.1: Leaders with strengthened capacity in management, administration, planning sustainable finance, leadership and other operational skills</p>	<p>1.1.1.3: Deliver training, network capacity builders with NFOs to form a CNFO 'leadership institute'.</p> <p>The Service Provider will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot virtual leadership institute for fisherfolk • Create awareness and promote utilization of the virtual leadership institute. • Report on awareness building and promotion of the utilization of the virtual leadership institute for fisherfolk.

Although CERMES was taken aback and surprised by the swift and independent action of the CNFO to establish the leadership institute, and feared inadequate planning and preparation, it supported the CNFO’s initiative. Thus, through network promotion (communications included in the previous report) the CNFO obtained a start-up set of eight trainees and some observers for its inaugural online Skype session on 1 April 2020 which established the ‘consumer-facing’ side of the institute. The CNFO had its plans reasonably well thought-out for a trial of the institute’s online training with a mix of fisherfolk and organisation mentors likely to be strongly supportive of the initiative and useful in obtaining feedback without undue damage to the credibility of the CNFO during the learning stages of implementing its first leadership training.

Behind the scenes CNFO also sought to properly establish the institute by seeking technical advice from The University of the West Indies Caribbean ICT Research Programme (UWI-CIRP) on the modes of delivery. In addition, CNFO established a WhatsApp group to use for new participant orientation and engagement. These and other establishment inputs with additional logistic and participant details are well described in CNFO reports to FAO³. The CNFO having established, or at least started, the institute we turn now to demonstration.

3 DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP

We report here on the early work by the CNFO to truly operationalise the leadership institute with three sessions that had little input from CERMES, but which were relatively well done for an organisation without previous experience in delivering sustained adult online training.

3.1 CNFO gains formal control

CNFO demonstrated from the outset that they were willing and keen, even if not fully able, to assume full ownership of the leadership institute. In the establishment phase CNFO showed an interest in learning how best to implement the institute, and this continued into the first few online sessions. In an early Skype call with CERMES, the CNFO staff revealed incomplete plans for the leadership institute (see report on resources). They envisaged an institute with four main components: training, mentoring, discussion forum and library. CERMES agreed with this vision. However, CERMES and CNFO differ on the appropriate approaches to implementation.

Putting it bluntly, CNFO considers CERMES' approach much too academic whereas CERMES considers CNFO's approach to be too unstructured and inadequate to achieve the outcome. The two organisations agreed that their differences could not be resolved, but they could be managed as they remained committed partners. In a wide-ranging meeting with FAO on 13 May 2020 all parties agreed, among other things, that CNFO would take ownership of the leadership institute with CERMES providing support upon request⁴. This decision validated and formalised roles that had informally been in place from almost the start, although the formal decision was taken after the second online training session. The formal change in roles was also to facilitate CERMES transferring most of its remaining small budget allocation for the leadership institute to the CNFO, once FAO agreed. The emphasis now, more than before, is on supporting CNFO success to demonstrate leadership institute viability. The draft leadership profile⁵ validates what is already known informally about fisherfolk leadership by all parties in StewardFish and reinforces the direction of the leadership institute as agreed. The next sub-section summarises CERMES perspective on CNFO's demonstration of the four leadership institute components, including CERMES supporting role and recommendations to date.

3.2 CNFO leads with CERMES support

As expected in the early stages, the four components of the leadership institute are not equally developed. Emphasis has been on training. It is less clear exactly what the state of the others is but all are important, interdependent and receiving some level of attention as described below.

3.2.1 Training

The CNFO leadership institute design states “training tailored to meet the needs of FFOs.

- Building the capacity of SSF fishers in a challenging environment.
- Promoting FFOs effectiveness and credibility.
- Enhancing advocacy and representation skills.
- Promoting the inclusion of fisher knowledge, skills and experience in responsible fisheries”

Online training of current and potential fisherfolk leaders and supporting allies is the flagship of the CNFO leadership institute. The CNFO Programme Coordinator and Administrative Officer are both deeply invested in getting it right. The CNFO aims in their design ideally require further elaboration with clear links to learning objectives, training session delivery, training materials and means of at least formative assessment. This is not ‘academic’, but just good practice and fairly standard content for a course outline. CNFO may have thought through these aspects, but their transparency and accountability is compromised by not putting the information in writing and making it widely available as public information. If, however, this first ‘course’ is primarily a test, then the course outline need not be publicised but instead used as the basis for systematic course review and evaluation to develop the real course. The first three sessions observed are addressed collectively as, although their content differed, their delivery was similar.

CNFO is drawing upon the main training guidance² but apparently not yet using much of the other available material¹ placed in Dropbox folders. The material covers not just leadership itself, but also ways others have gone about training small-scale fisherfolk in leadership in other locations. Session planning and assessment are addressed. This and related material could convince CNFO that formative assessment can be both pleasurable and informative for all involved. Feedback from participants in this first training course on a variety of modes of assessment could be useful. It is good, however, that all sessions were interactive and could easily allow for some assessment of both participants and resource persons.

After the first session the CNFO began inviting external trainers in part to diversify delivery of the remaining sessions. CERMES declined, conveying our view that the institute first has to be strongly associated with competent CNFO delivery in order to establish credibility among its partners and onlookers. A perception that the CNFO is ‘sub-contracting’ because it is unable to manage the institute must be avoided. Although no external trainers were used in the three sessions, the third was led by a CNFO board member having his first online training experience. He was mentored in preparation by the well-experienced Programme Coordinator and it was known that the participants were all supporters of the CNFO, and hence would be a kind crowd. However, to project professionalism it would have been better for the trainee trainer to have

developed further in practices prior to the public session. Quality assurance is important. As the most vocal participants in all of the sessions observed were not regular fisherfolk leaders (most were mentors or others whose livelihoods were not in the industry) it was difficult to determine the effectiveness and likely impact of the training on industry leaders as the main beneficiaries.

The quality of CNFO session technology management has improved considerably. Zoom has replaced Skype as the delivery platform and there are plans to soon use Google Classroom in addition to the WhatsApp group. CNFO has used guidance from UWI-CIRP⁶. It would, however, be preferable for participants to all engage using computers or tablets and good internet. These specifications may be challenging for some, but essential if technical limitations such as reliance on smart phones by some are not going to constrain sessions for all. Initially there was to be a separate, basic, course using Skype audio alone, but the course appears to be evolving instead. CNFO will need to determine a consistent technology package that facilitates optimal delivery.

Somewhat related to the technology is the visual impact of the training material. Using Zoom on computers or tablets could allow trainers to use much more than the current plain slides. It is unclear whether CNFO will, for example, incorporate videos, but they could. Voting software can be used for instant quizzes that can be fun approaches to formative assessment discussion. Without making the delivery complicated, CNFO should seek to enhance materials delivered as is well within current capacity using simple graphics and photos. This includes supplementary resources for participants to browse between sessions.

The schedule of one hour-long session per month should be manageable for all participants. It is unlikely, however, to provide adequate training in leadership unless heavily supplemented by inter-sessional learning activities and mentorship. Increasing the frequency and the related activities to reinforce learning is strongly recommended. An associated deficiency is permitting new registrations for each session. While some participants will take the entire course, some may only take one or a few. This disrupts the flow of collective learning and trivialises the value of the course. There is a role for stand-alone sessions, designed as such, but the mix being used defeats the purposes of both a stand-alone and a continuous learning design.

3.2.2 Mentoring

The CNFO leadership institute design states: “mentoring to provide leaders with support from experiences.

- Providing space and resources for group mentoring of leaders.
- Facilitating peer to peer mentoring.
- Developing leaders to deliver training.

Some non-fisherfolk people who have been mentors on other projects are taking the course. It is not clear to CERMES, however, what the plan is for mentorship although CNFO has assured a plan exists. The use of mentors is appropriate. Peer to peer mentoring by fisherfolk leaders is likely to be an effective means of building capacity. The CNFO should be encouraged and guided to build an effective mentoring network, perhaps relying on CANARI for guidance in the way they rely on UWI-CIRP for guidance on technology. They should take a similar approach, learning about the available options. The good gender balance observed in the course should extend to the mentoring especially if CNFO is to mainstream gender as set out on the SSF Guidelines and other supporting material. While leadership is not the focus of the SSF Guidelines they provide excellent context to link the several facets of leadership skills and should be brought further into the mentoring approach combined with policy influence and other aspects of StewardFish.

Beyond the first, the training sessions have not made much distinction between leadership and good management. The distinction can be fuzzy in practice, but the mentors need to reinforce the difference. Several initiatives have and will address management, but this is the first and only to address leadership by fisherfolk. The number of mentors currently training in leadership is small and it is not clear what the CNFO plans and projections are to grow the number of available mentors so that several are available per country quite soon, even though perhaps beyond the project implementation period. If the training is going to be transformative, a revolution in capacity rather than a slow evolution, then more needs to be done. The mentors also need to be able to tie stewardship initiatives such as implementing codes for the ecosystem approach, mainstreaming gender and policy influence to leadership.

3.2.3 Discussion forum

The CNFO leadership institute design states: “forum to facilitate open discussions and collective dynamic sharing.

- Question and answer forum board.
- Continuous learning on weekly tips board.
- Open platform for sharing experiences.”

This is an excellent component and customary in online learning. Currently it appears that only the WhatsApp group is being used for discussion. Use of the Google Classroom is being added to allow more sophisticated discussion options, exercises and access to materials for learning. The exploration of various means of inter-sessional engagement is a key part of the learning.

Presumably, with regular scheduling, use of learning resources and pairing with mentorship, the discussion forum will become a formidable tool for capacity development.

3.2.4 Library

The CNFO leadership institute design states: “library to provide resources and document learning.

- Providing access to leadership materials.
- Repository for leadership training course materials.
- Leadership directory.
- Dynamic FFO learning library.”

CNFO has been accumulating leadership resources, but their organisation is currently unclear. The Dropbox of online resources first set up by CERMES is still available as the start to a library. Combined with access instructions and active management by CNFO staff or others the library could very quickly become established and expand with guidance. Resource materials are free and abundant, but there must be appropriate coverage for different levels of comprehension⁷.

Separate CNFO reports to FAO on their leadership institute should provide additional details directly and complete the perspective on progress from a different angle. The discussion and conclusion summarises the situation and addresses the future only from a CERMES perspective.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The leadership institute is intended to be transformative, making a real difference to the performance and sustainability of FFOs by building new capacity in existing leaders and preparing potential leaders in succession planning. It is appropriate that the CNFO have full ownership of the initiative and take the lead in its implementation. Our overall view is that the CNFO is learning and progressing, but it could do so more effectively by making better use of the many resources to guide the establishment and demonstration of the leadership institute.

The preceding sections have set out CERMES observations and recommendations for further improvement, with the clear understanding that CNFO is not doing anything wrong, although the approaches are not all what CERMES would recommend to achieve the project outcomes. While CNFO may have the capacity now to undertake the test course with more attention to monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation, it will be difficult to deliver the institute in its entirety with only two persons part-time if there is the expected interest. There must also be attention to fisherfolk (especially younger women and men) who are not currently in FFOs⁸. It is

likely that these are still the majority of fisherfolk in CRFM/CNFO countries. They represent a large potential target audience for the leadership institute which the CNFO needs to attract.

Given the high probability that the current test course and several other StewardFish activities will confirm that there exists a demand for the CNFO leadership institute it would be advisable to begin planning for resource mobilisation by the CNFO to sustain the leadership institute. The CNFO can be guided in this by the project partners, if they wish, as benefits will be widespread.

5 REFERENCES AND NOTE

¹ CERMES. 2020. *Report on update, adaptation and creation of leadership capacity development resources*. Developing Organisational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-scale Fisheries (StewardFish) project. Project Report to FAO. 21 pp.

² Blackman, K. and S. Almerigi. 2017. *Leading Fisherfolk*. Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. 95pp

³ CNFO Progress Report #1 and CNFO Leadership Institute Pilot Report

⁴ CNFO StewardFish Planning Meeting Notes 14 May 2020

⁵ CERMES. 2020. *Profile of fisherfolk leaders in CRFM Member States*. Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-scale Fisheries (StewardFish) project. Project Report to FAO. [forthcoming]

⁶ Several UWI-CIRP ICT deliverables focused on FFO governance capacity-building should be relevant

⁷ The microgrants being issued by CANARI may or not be relevant to acquiring some print materials also

⁸ This holds true for most StewardFish activities and is critical to sustainability of stewardship generally

