



Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine (FoProBiM): Enabling co-management of the Three Bays (3Bays) Marine Protected Area, Haiti through civil society leadership

FoProBiM

CASE STUDY #3: Innovation and best practices in marine and coastal governance and management by civil society in the Caribbean

This case study aims to enhance knowledge about innovations and best practices currently being utilised by civil society organisations (CSOs) and their partners in the Caribbean that can be applied to support conservation, restoration and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources in marine protected areas (MPAs) and marine managed areas (MMAs). It has been developed under the regional project ‘Powering Innovations in Civil Society and Enterprises for Sustainability in the Caribbean’ (PISCES) which is being funded by the European Union EuropeAid programme and implemented over a three-year period (2017 to 2020). PISCES is taking place in ten countries: Antigua and Barbuda; The Bahamas; Dominica; Grenada; Haiti; Jamaica; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; and Trinidad and Tobago.

Introduction



Map of northeastern Haiti showing the location and boundaries of the 3Bays Marine Protected Area. CREDIT: FoProBiM

Founded in 1992, the *Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine* (FoProBiM) is an apolitical, non-governmental, non-profit organisation based in Haiti, which was officially recognised by the Haitian government in 1995 as a foundation working on environment issues in the areas of sustainable development, education, research, monitoring, and environmental advocacy. As one of Haiti’s oldest environmental organisations, and one of the very few with a 100% full-time dedicated staff, FoProBiM’s mission includes: (i) raising awareness concerning needed changes in regulations and attitudes concerning the environment; (ii) increasing

knowledge and capabilities at the government, community and individual levels in order to make sustainable improvements in the environment and the lives of people, and; (iii) conducting educational

programs as well as scientific research, including environmental monitoring, in order to promote improved management of the environment and the protection of biodiversity through a better understanding of the need to sustainably use environmental resources.

FoProBiM is the only Haitian operated, and Haiti-based NGO dedicated to the protection and management of Haiti's coastal and marine ecosystems and adjacent watersheds. FoProBiM has provided recommendations to the Haitian government for the creation of Haiti's first Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and has seen the creation of Haiti's six MMAs. It has also guided the government in the development of laws banning plastic bags, Styrofoam containers, and the blanket protection of all of Haiti's mangroves.



Overexploitation of natural resources is a major issue in the 3Bays MPA leading to depleted fish stocks and undersized catches. CREDIT: FoProBiM

The 3Bays Marine Protected Area (MPA), located in north-eastern Haiti, was established in 2014 and is the second of only eight MPAs in the country. It is comprised of over 75,000 hectares of mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, open ocean and terrestrial ecosystems. There are eight main coastal communities with an estimated 150,000 inhabitants, of which approximately 3,000 are active in the fisheries industry (such as fishers, merchants and boat builders).

FoProBiM has been undertaking activities in the 3Bays MPA for the past five years. As with all other regions of Haiti, little or no enforcement of Haiti's environmental laws takes place. Various activities are being funded by both private and international organisations, with FoProBiM being at the core of these coordinated activities. The main issues being addressed include:

- a complete lack of governance,
- over-exploitation of resources (primarily fisheries and mangroves),
- weak capacity in local civil society organisations (CSOs) to undertake any type of activity, and
- lack of environmentally friendly and sustainable alternative sources of income.

Project activities being carried out by FoProBiM in the 3Bays MPA include:

- The development of environmentally friendly and sustainable alternative income generating activities (such as kayaking, apiculture, breadfruit flour, aquaculture)
- Mangrove reforestation/rehabilitation
- Coral reef rehabilitation
- Gear swaps (in which unsustainable gear is being replaced)
- Education/stewardship classes
- Development of a game wardens unit
- Capacity building for local stakeholder groups
- Installation of mooring buoys
- Installation of marker buoys to demarcate MPA boundaries
- Development of new laws/regulations for the management of the MPA.

With limited resources to manage the 3Bays MPA, FoProBiM signed a co-management agreement with the National Protected Areas Agency (ANAP). The co-management agreement had been more than a decade in the making, with various directors having agreed to sign, but being removed from their positions before completion. The current director, also understanding the importance of increasing ANAP's ability to manage the 3Bays, saw that there was a clear benefit to having a local, on-the-ground NGO with adequate resources to commence engaging with the local communities in managing the MPA.

Due to the “special” situation in Haiti, FoProBiM has managed to undertake most of its activities with minimal contact with the public sector. The organisation has been able to operate with minimal interference and engagement from local authorities for various reasons. It is a fairly unique circumstance in which the NGO has discovered that engaging with local authorities often negatively affects the achievement of project goals. Members of local CSOs also seem to prefer engagement with FoProBiM directly rather than with local authorities. The government is often seen as a hinderance to progress due to Haiti's history. It is also a strange situation in which government agencies tend to consider NGOs as competition rather than as partners in national development. In this regard, FoProBiM has found that minimal interaction with local authorities on project implementation has been beneficial.

Despite this, FoProBiM is working with all levels of government from the Ministry of Environment and the National Protected Areas Agency (ANAP) down to the local area supervisors. Local women's, church, youth, fishers, farmers, school, and salt producer groups are also engaged in project activities since they are the main beneficiaries.

Overview of the innovation or best practice

CSOs in Haiti are notoriously weak. Although the country is often praised for having so many CSOs, they remain “opportunistic”, meaning that they usually only “re-organise” themselves when an opportunity presents itself such as when a donor or NGO is looking for a local group to work with on a project. They rarely organise themselves enough to go looking for projects/activities on their own and also usually remain completely controlled by one or two individuals. Moreover, although many other CSOs may be battling similar challenges, the situation in Haiti is perhaps an extreme example of the perfect storm of lack of resources, lack of public will, lack of public support, extreme economic frailty and degrading social contracts, which are expounded by extreme environmental degradation and completely unsustainable exploitation of natural resources with no legal recourse for their protection.

With these constraints in mind, FoProBiM decided to actively engage and consult with local CSOs, as a best practice, prior to the start of project activities on the management of the 3Bays MPA, which is the opposite of what most NGOs do. Involving local CSOs in consultations and decision-making processes enabled the organisation to examine their needs and to gauge their levels of interest in undertaking potential solutions. Most NGOs working in Haiti often tell the local CSOs what they need (i.e. a solution in search of a problem) rather than understanding local needs. Instead, FoProBiM collaborated with local CSOs to design and implement project activities in the 3Bays MPA. The organisation was also cognisant that these activities would be flexible to facilitate the needs of local CSOs and their capacities for undertaking project activities, ranging from the level of coordination of their boards to the availability of tools for project execution. Moreover, FoProBiM designed the project activities in the 3Bays MPA to be easily replicated at any other coastal site in Haiti (taking into consideration, of course, the local circumstances).

Key results achieved

1. Over 2,000 coastal community stakeholders in the 3Bays MPA have been successfully engaged in public awareness and education activities on marine sciences, basic sciences, mangrove restoration and sustainable gear use. Educational materials on mangrove and coral reef educational have also been developed.
2. Over 1,000 hectares of mangroves in the 3Bays MPA have been rehabilitated and/or restored and are being monitored with assistance from FoProBiM's Game Wardens unit. Three nurseries have been established and 250,000 mangrove trees have been replanted.
3. Eight local CSOs are participating in mangrove-linked apiculture in the 3Bays MPA with 20 members of each CSO trained in apiculture and provided with starter hives to enable them to engage in honey production.
4. Co-operatives were created for honey production and bread fruit flour production with community entrepreneurs to allow them to market their products and to diversify their income.
5. One local CSO has successfully established an ecotourism community enterprise focused on kayaking tours and services and was provided with training and gear. This kayaking community enterprise aims to support income diversification within the 3Bays MPA.
6. New partnerships have been developed with 22 local community groups and local authorities to support the co-management of the 3Bays MPA.
7. A management plan for the 3Bays MPA has been developed, which is the first for an MPA in Haiti



FoProBiM is working with local communities to support mangrove-based apiculture within the 3Bays MPA. CREDIT: FoProBiM

Lessons learned

- Local CSOs and communities should be actively engaged at all stages (from conception to implementation etc.) to ensure that they participate in decision-making, including the design of project activities which considers local needs and capacities.
- Local communities should be supported to establish community enterprises based on natural resources such as honey production, ecotourism or breadfruit flour products through providing training as well as initial equipment and materials. These community enterprises can provide more stable income and indirectly contribute to reducing pressure on the MPA while creating lucrative alternative livelihood options.

- Cooperatives should be established to provide support services and increased access to markets to community enterprises.

Recommendations for others

- Engage in networking and collaboration with other local community groups and local authorities operating within the MPA to support co-management objectives and activities.
- Explore environmentally-friendly and sustainable natural-resource-based enterprises as much as possible to generate new income streams.

Looking ahead

FoProBiM is looking forward to scaling up project activities in the 3Bays MPA. All activities have been successful so far but due to their small-scale, they are at risk of failure without continued and increased support to the local communities. More initiatives are being planned which will provide local community stakeholders with new income streams, which will enable both reduce exploitation of natural resources and reduce the over-exploitation of local fisheries and mangroves in the MPA. FoProBiM has identified the following activities for scaling up, including mangrove rehabilitation and coral reef restoration as well as the development of new income generation streams such as seamoss production and ecotourism activities which would support sustainable livelihoods of local communities within the 3Bays MPA.

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