



Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society Limited: Fisherfolk taking the lead in co-management of the Gouyave Marine Protected Area, Grenada 2019

CASE STUDY #2: 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 is being implemented over a three-year period (2017 to 2020). PISCES is taking place in 10 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

Gouyave is a fishing town located in the parish of St. John's on the west coast of Grenada and is known as one of the most prolific fishing centres in the Eastern Caribbean. Locally proclaimed as the "fishing capital" of Grenada, the town has a thriving fishing industry based around commercially important species such as yellowfin and other species of tuna. Other pelagics like marlin, sailfish, swordfish, and wahoo are also commercially targeted.

The coastal shelf area in Grenada is the second largest in the Eastern Caribbean (3,100 km²) (Grant, 2007). However, the west coast shelf is fairly narrow when compared with other areas of Grenada, like the southwest, which extends anywhere between 19 km and 23 km. Gouyave itself covers an area of 311 km² and has over 2,000 residents. The main economic activities in Gouyave are agriculture and fishing, and there are approximately 300 fishers. Fishing activity is primarily based in the L'Anse area, though fisherfolk are based both in Gouyave and in surrounding communities (Grant, 2007).

Despite the importance of the fishing industry in Gouyave, the fishing association remained largely inactive and only involved a few fishers prior to the conception of the Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative

Society (GFCSL). In 2015, for fishers to be able to manage and sell gas at the local fuel facility, the Government of Grenada requested that the cooperative be formalised. The organisation started with approximately 50 members but has now grown to 80 members, who are mostly men, ranging in age from 15 to 64 (Grant, 2007).

The GFCSL and fishers of Gouyave are now facing a decline of key commercial species of fish, small pelagics like the jacks and invertebrates such as mussels. Stocks of yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), bigeye scad also known locally as jacks (*Selar crumenophthalmus*) and Atlantic flyingfish (*Cheilopogon melanurus*) are depleting. The decline in fish stocks and its consequent effect on livelihoods in Gouyave, the parish of St. John and other neighbouring parishes, has inspired GFCSL to advocate for the establishment of a fish sanctuary and a wider marine protected area (MPA). Apart from the local benefits of implementing the MPA, this initiative also contributes to the Government of Grenada's commitment to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI). This is a regional "20 by 20" challenge where Caribbean Governments are partnering with the private sector to protect and conserve 20% of the nearshore marine environment by the year 2020, and to which Grenada has committed to 25% (Campbell, 2018).

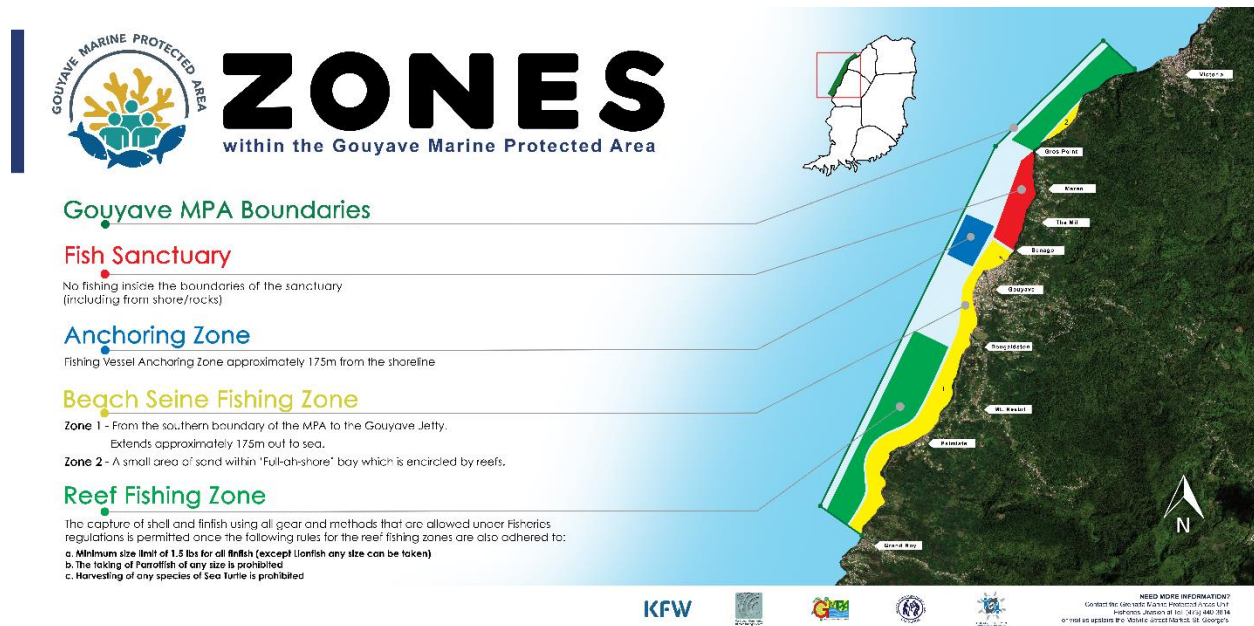
The project is supported by the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA) also based in Gouyave. GRENCODA is an implementing partner for the larger project "Community-based Coastal Ecosystem Management for Climate Adaptation in Selected Areas of Grenada" funded by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) and the German Development Bank (KfW). This project is directed at addressing climate change adaptation through enhancement of ecosystem services for coastal communities on the west coast of Grenada, through the establishment of a well-managed MPA and raising community awareness on climate change and its impacts (Campbell, 2018).

Overview of the innovation or best practice

The creation of a marine protected area was proposed to mitigate against and adapt to climate change while also attempting to reverse the depletion of the fish population in the nearshore ecosystem in Gouyave. The Gouyave Marine Protected Area (GoMPA) is comprised of five zones: a fish sanctuary, an anchoring zone, a beach seine fishing zone, a reef fishing zone and the rest of the area protected within the MPA boundaries. The GoMPA covers 5.4 km² of the nearshore environment of the west coast of Grenada, most of which is less than 40 m in depth. The fish sanctuary, a no-take zone within the boundaries of the MPA, covers an area of 23.8 hectares (0.238 km²) (Campbell, 2018).



A member of the Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society accepting his fisherman's award at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Annual Fisherfolk Forum. CREDIT: Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society



A map of the location of the Gouyave Marine Protected Area and the five delineated zones: the MPA boundaries, fish sanctuary, anchoring zone, beach seining zone and reef fishing zone. CREDIT: Fisheries Division, Grenada

The main objectives of the creation of the GoMPA are:

- to protect and conserve the coastal and marine ecosystems of the west coast of Grenada and the services they provide;
- to promote and develop sustainable livelihoods and sustainable use of natural resources; and
- to cultivate resilience of vulnerable communities through knowledge sharing and capacity building in climate change.

For the development of the management plan and determining the boundaries and zones of the MPA, a mix of participatory planning, consultations, scientific research and ground truthing were utilised. Ground truthing exercises included benthic surveys for the shelf reefs, where data on reef health was collected.

The GFCSL also carried out an outreach and awareness campaign in the community of Gouyave, entitled “Our Fish, Our Future”, where members of the cooperative walked around the community, talking to and educating persons on the importance of the MPA.

The GFCSL is also taking the lead on the management of the MPA, with a co-management agreement between the cooperative and the MPA Management Authority of the Government of Grenada drafted and awaiting approval. The arrangement will facilitate the GFCSL running the daily operations of the MPA under the directive of the Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management and Information, with MPA staff such as the rangers being contracted by the Government. These rangers however, are intended to be fishers seeking alternative sources of income. The MPA will also be governed by a stakeholder advisory committee, consisting of individuals from various government agencies and civil society organisations.

The fishers and their commitment to the establishment of the MPA were the key elements to the continued progress and success of this project, particularly through the collective action encouraged by

the GFCSL, which ensured the input of fisherfolk throughout the consultation process. The GoMPA will be managed and run by the fishers of Gouyave, who are now protectors and advocates for the natural resources it provides. The MPA will bring environmental and socio-economic benefits to fishers by providing supplementary or alternative sources of income through eco-tourism and create opportunities for the larger community as well.

This initiative can be replicated within Grenada and throughout the region, where resource users play an active role in advocating for and managing natural resources for sustainable use. For the success of initiatives like this it is necessary to have the support of the aligned ministry and other civil society organisations that can strengthen and bolster the capacity of fisherfolk organisations.

Key results achieved

1. Establishment of the Gouyave MPA which is currently before Parliament to be gazetted
2. Commenced construction of the GoMPA office and visitor interpretation centre which will enable the daily operations of the GoMPA
3. Completed a successful community education and awareness campaign executed by fishers to raise awareness on the importance of the MPA for Gouyave
4. Development of a co-management agreement for the GoMPA which will be managed by a diverse stakeholder advisory committee and led by GFCSL
5. Supported the contribution to Grenada's commitment to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative
6. Support the protection of Gouyave nearshore reef habitats and the sustainable fishery management of the pelagic species targeted by Gouyave fishers through the establishment of the GoMPA
7. Enable the creation of alternative livelihood options for fishers in Gouyave as MPA rangers and in ecotourism activities e.g. tours
8. Increased ecotourism activity and sustainable fisheries through the creation of the GoMPA will lead to improved rural development in St. John's parish and neighbouring parishes like St. Mark and St. Patrick, which are some of the poorest in Grenada

Lessons learned

Although the project has been unfolding steadily and there has not yet been any significant missteps, some general lessons learnt and recommendations, which may be useful for other civil society organisations working in marine conservation or fisheries are:

- There are gaps in the data available for the development of the management plan of the GoMPA, but which will be addressed in the first year of operation of the MPA. One such example is an incomplete inventory of the uses and users of the GoMPA.



Members of the Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society speaking to a member of the public on the as part of their awareness campaign "Our Fish, Our Future".
CREDIT: Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society

- There should be communication and involvement of the aligned ministry and associated agencies early in the process of establishing an MPA, so that the time for approval of the MPA and gazetting will be shorter. The GoMPA is still waiting to be gazetted because the ministry was not involved from the very start, leading to the project losing some momentum.
- There should be supportive legislation and policy for collaborative management of protected areas. The current legislation in Grenada does not support such an arrangement, however, an agreement was made with the MPA Management Authority to facilitate collaborative management, while the Fisheries Act is being reviewed (Grenada Coral Reef Foundation, 2018).

Recommendations for Others

- Creating opportunities for fisherfolk exchanges is important for continued learning and capacity building for the cooperative, and to share the experience of the creation of the MPA with other fisherfolk organisations.
- ‘By the fishers, for the fishers’, made a big difference! It is very important to get buy-in from all stakeholders and resource users, but particularly those who earn their livelihoods from the resources, like the fishers
- Capacity building is necessary for fishers who would be involved in the management of the MPA, particularly those who will be employed as rangers.

Looking ahead

Since the establishment of the Gouyave MPA, the Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society will now focus on implementing the actions from the GoMPA management plan (Grenada Coral Reef Foundation, 2018) including:

- Establishing of a community monitoring team with trained community scientists
- Finalising the management structures for the GoMPA
- Signing the co-management agreement between the MPA Management Authority and the GFCSL
- Developing the strategic plan for the GoMPA
- Developing an implementation plan for the various management interventions intended within the MPA
- Completing the construction and equipping of the office for the GoMPA
- Hiring required staff such as a site manager and MPA rangers
- Commencing on-the-job training of staff
- Developing an annual workplan
- Procuring and installing MPA infrastructure including a boat, signs and demarcation markers
- Developing a communication strategy and action plan
- Starting patrols within the MPA
- Continuing awareness and education activities within the community and school

The GFCSL will continue to encourage sustainable fishing practices and create new opportunities for the fishers of Gouyave and by extension Grenada, working to make the GoMPA and the cooperative exemplars for innovative solutions, advocacy, co-management and sustainable resource use.

Useful references

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