Background

The Folkestone Marine Park and Reserve was established in 1981 by the Government of Barbados through an Act of Parliament. The Community Based Coral Reef Monitoring Project was initiated as a result of a dire need to establish a mechanism for community participation in the monitoring and management of the only formal marine reserve in Barbados. The main challenge within the marine reserve area was the lack of stakeholder participation in decision-making process with regards to coral reef biodiversity management and associated resources.

Project Objectives and Key Activities

(i) To improve information and resource sharing among managers, scientists, communities and youths, for increased participation in decision-making regarding coral reef management.

(ii) To build capacity of youths for advocacy, and incorporate coral reef biodiversity conservation and management into the primary schools curricula.

(iii) To strengthen community and stakeholder participation in management planning and monitoring of coral reefs and associated biodiversity.

(iv) To assist in mobilizing financial resources for conservation and management of coral reefs in the long-term.

The key project activities revolved around education and public awareness. The project involved and executed a stakeholder identification exercise, designed and implemented programmes which targeted each stakeholder. Some of the key activities were as follows: Junior Coral Reef Ambassadors (JCRA) Programme, People and Corals Training, Folkestone Marine Reserve’s Summer Programme and the Adopt-the-reserve initiative.
Environmental Impact

This project facilitated increased compliance with the national marine park regulations. It led to increased cooperation among stakeholders in such a way that ensures that persons who do not comply with the regulations are speedily reported. As a result there has been a marked decrease in illegal activity within the marine reserve area such as illegal fishing and anchorage. Overall the project has resulted in improved management of 268 hectares of the only marine reserve area in Barbados.

Socio-Economic Impact

The project was mainly focussed on capacity building and increasing public awareness. However, due to the adoption of best practices produced and disseminated through this project the marine product being offered by stakeholders improved and therefore facilitated improved revenue generation. Stakeholders who benefited from the project directly or indirectly included: Hoteliers, Tour Operators, Party Cruises, Catamarans, Jet Ski operators, Primary and Secondary Schools, Fisher folk and Residents.

Policy Impact

The policy that regulates the reserve was already in existence but the project facilitated the implementation of this policy by ensuring compliance by users, stakeholder participation and co-management. The Adopt a Reserve initiative as a component of the project led to the creation of the Friends of Folkestone Foundation. The tangible outputs from the project are used to inform the management team of the marine reserve about the impacts of climate change on corals and fish species abundance within the reserve. Therefore, current and future policy decisions are directly informed by the results of this project.

Youth Engagement and Participation

Youth were engaged throughout the project design and implementation of the project. A significant portion of youth engagement was incorporated within the JCRA Programme. Over 50 young people were directly involved within the project. In addition, the United Kingdom Junior 8 team also benefited from active participation within the project. Within the final year of project implementation the St. James (Youth) Parish Ambassadors were involved in facilitating additional youth engagement within schools, communities and at the national level.
Gender Mainstreaming

The project allowed for equal participation of males and females in the following areas: 1. Training of teachers in Coral Reef Education for Primary school students 2. Establishment of Junior Coral Reef Ambassadors (JCRA) 3. Consultations with the Key Stakeholders (Fishers, Hoteliers, Dive Operators, Water Sports Operators and relevant government agencies)

Replication and up scaling

The model created from this project has been shared nationally and within the Caribbean region. The model has attracted attention by the International Development Bank and a proposal is currently on the way to upscale the project and extend the Junior Coral Reef Ambassadors programme to all Secondary Schools within the Island. It is also important to note that the summer programme has continued for several years after the project has ended and has constantly been oversubscribed.

Lessons learned

*Through community empowerment, communities can contribute to safeguarding our reefs and their biodiversity.* Community-based programmes foster a sense of stewardship which results in greater responsibility and participation from the local community. In addition, communities can provide human and technical support for the limited Marine Reserve staff. This lessens the burden of the technical capacity of the staff, especially at the FMR. *Youth advocacy programmes play a great role in building stewardship.* These programmes build on the youth’s knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the marine environment and engaging the youth to promote best practices. Their practices will influence persons close to them such as families and friends.

*Building networks and maintaining linkages between stakeholders are important for facilitating MPA management and monitoring.* The creation of partnerships among local communities, government, NGOs and donors is essential to support the implementation of the programmes and their sustainability. *It is important to highlight the benefits of the MPA to the private sector to engage their participation in MPA management.* Private sector agencies will act responsibly if they have adequate knowledge of the MPA. They will also support activities of the MPA if they understand that protecting the MPA means protecting their business. *The community must see the results of their efforts in coral reef conservation.* Communication strategies must be diversified to promote the communities’ involvement and this can also encourage other members of the community and stakeholders to get involved.

The Community Based Coral Reef Monitoring Project by CCA demonstrated that capacity building and improving the knowledge base of the stakeholders of marine reserves are important in gaining buy-in from the community/private sector and promoting stewardship.