

FISHER TO FISHER

A grass-roots approach towards improved fishery management

Executive summary

From 24 August to 4 September 1998, an interesting 'people-to-people' initiative was taken within the framework of UNESCO's CSI platform endeavour. An encounter was arranged which brought Haitian and Jamaican fisherfolk together in their respective countries to learn about and from each other. A visit was arranged for 17 Jamaicans to travel to Haiti, and for 14 Haitians to effect a return visit to Jamaica, thus enabling each group to meet and see first hand how the others fared in their milieu and how they conducted their daily work.

The exchange visit was organized, with UNESCO (CSI) funding, by the Foundation for the Protection of Marine Biodiversity (FoProBiM, for the French: *Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine*) in Haiti, and by the Caribbean Coastal Area Management (CCAM) Foundation in Jamaica. Those primarily responsible for the organization, coordination and liaison were: Peter Espeut of CCAM and J. William Wiener of FoProBiM.

The experience was judged very successful and worthwhile by the participants and organizers. It offered a unique opportunity for face-to-face exchanges with people of the same profession in another country, in living and working situations that are in some ways similar and in others different. The desired result indeed came about: cross-cultural learning plus fruitful exchanges of views, and some effective suggestions on how to approach and alleviate one's problems.

Following are two different accounts, written in spontaneous style by Messrs. Wiener and Espeut, of the venture. Here the reader obtains, in the first text especially, by J. Wiener, a summary of the achievements of the activity, plus a glimpse at some of the similarities and differences of the life-styles and working conditions of fishing populations on these two Caribbean Island countries – separated from each other by only a hundred miles or so. The more expanded, day-by-day narrative by P. Espeut provides interesting details on the participants, their interactions and their life experiences.

By Gary Wright,
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Haitian fishers look outwards

Report of the Haiti-Jamaica Fishers exchange

By Jean W. Wiener, Director, FoProBiM

Background/overview

In December of 1996, UNESCO, through its unit on Coastal Regions and Small Islands (CSI), organized a seminar in Haiti with the goal of gathering local information and support for promoting the protection and sustainable use of Haiti's coastal and marine resources. One of the recommendations at the end of this meeting was that there be an exchange of ideas among Haitian and Jamaican fishermen in order to share thoughts on 'wise-practices' being developed in each country.

Two counterpart organizations were chosen due to their previous activities with fishers groups to help execute this program. These organizations were the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (CCAM) in Jamaica, and the *Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine* (FoProBiM) in Haiti.

With the technical and financial support of UNESCO (CSI Unit in Headquarters, Paris, and the Organization's Office in Haiti) and the assistance of the Haitian National Commission to UNESCO, the marine transportation provided by the Jamaican Coast Guard, fuel provided by Jamaican fuel companies, and the unflagging efforts of CCAM and FoProBiM, the exchange was finally set to take place from 25 August to 5 September 1998.

The UNESCO Office (Haiti) as well as the Haitian National Commission to UNESCO aided in channeling the request to obtain official government approval from the relevant ministries for the entry into Haitian territorial waters of a foreign military vessel. It was later determined that this permission was not needed due to the fact that Haiti and Jamaica have an accord concerning this type of activity. Arrangements were made with Haitian immigration officials and the Port Authority to meet the Coast Guard vessel upon its arrival at the destination, Wahoo Bay Beach Hotel, located a few kilometers north of the village of Luly, as well as for the departure from Haiti, and the return of the Haitians one week later. The Jamaican consul agreed to help speed things along with the preparation of visas at the appropriate time, and indeed all visas were delivered within thirty minutes.

All the Haitian villages that participated were located in the Gulf of la Gonâve and included: Grand Goâve, Léogane, and Janti along the southern

coast, and Mitan, Cont, and Luly on the northern coast. Each of these villages is represented in COOPECHE, the departmental fishing federation, and each provided at least one participant. Along with representatives of these fishing communities the Director of Fisheries and the Director of the Natural Resources Division of the Ministry of Agriculture were asked to participate, but due to prior engagements they were not available.

Objective of the exchange

The exchange was organized to provide first hand opportunities, for the fishers and those engaged in activities directly related to fishing, to exchange ideas on practices which may be of value to their home communities. This was also done in order to help stem continued resource destruction and degradation. Hence, the basic function was an exchange of 'wise-practices'.

Activities

- 25 August. Arrival and settling-in of Jamaican fishers; meeting with FoProBiM to discuss the agenda for the visit;
- 26 August. Meeting with COOPECHE, fishing associations and area fishermen. Discussions revolved around differences between Haitian and Jamaican (a) strengths and weaknesses of fishing associations, (b) environmental law enforcement, (c) fishing types and activities, and (d) support or lack of support of government institutions;
- 27 August. Continuation of day two activities;
- 28 August. Visit to Port-au-Prince, coastal areas, and the fishing village of Luly to see fishing techniques, boats, and meet with local fishermen;
- 29 August. Departure to Jamaica; left Carries in Haiti at 16:00 aboard the HMJS P8 *Paul Bogle*;
- 30 August. Arrival at 08:00 in Jamaica at HMJS *Cagway* Coast Guard Station at Port Royal; transported to the Monymusk Gun, Rod, and Tiller Club in Portland Bight;
- 31 August. Visit of West Harbour, Barmouth Beach in Portland Cottage (viewed mangroves); stopped at PDW club and saw Juna bottles on the beach (from Haiti); on to Half Moon Cay (approximately half of debris found on beach was of Haitian origin) – Juna, Tampico, Ju Paím (Larco); onward to Little Half Moon Cay to observe Jamaican style fish pots (traps), spoke to fishermen who use the island as a base; onward to Two Bushes Island and frigate birds; return to Monymusk;
- 1 September. Visit of Old Harbour and discussions with fishermen and the local fishing cooperative;
- 2 September. Visit of Rocky Point and discussions with fish vendors and the local fishing cooperative. Meetings were also held on the beach with local fishermen to discuss types of boats, fishing methods, and fishing areas;
- 3 September. Attendance at a PBFMC Meeting;

- 4 September. Tour of Kingston (Jamaican Fisherman's Cooperative Headquarters); 21:30 departure aboard the HMJS P8 *Paul Bogle* and
- 5 September. Arrival at Carries (Wahoo Bay Beach) at 12:30.

Haitian reaction to the exchange

The Haitians who participated in the exchange were of the universal opinion that this type of activity was extremely valuable in terms of the exchange of ideas, methods, and the formulation of friendships for possible future activities. They felt that they had much to learn from the Jamaicans in terms of the ability for actual management of coastal and marine resources, and improving fishing methods.

Conversations centered particularly around the differences, in the two countries, in government involvement regarding resource management and protection. In Jamaica it was noted that there is the active participation of a large variety of private and public sector institutions including the National Resource Conservation Authority (NRCA) and the Jamaica Co-operative Union. The NRCA, at least, has taken its role in regulation and management of marine resources seriously. On the other hand, most Haitian institutions, be they public or private (especially in the public sector), have, as some of the Haitian fishers liked to put it, 'resigned their role as functioning bodies'. In other words, the Haitian fisher feels that he or she has been abandoned by the government bodies which should be in the forefront of coastal and marine management activities. Therefore the Haitian fishers feel that it is up to them to organize themselves into bodies which will look out for their own needs and play the regulatory role missing from the government.

The Jamaicans found many of the Haitian fishing methods archaic, including the fact that most Haitians still have to row (scull) or sail to fishing spots whereas almost every Jamaican fisher has access to at least one outboard engine. One technique which almost brought out anger on the part of the Jamaicans was how Haitians use nets. The fact that sometimes nets are laid out for up to three days in Haiti was thought to be almost criminal by the Jamaicans; who usually lay out their nets for no more than three hours. The waste caused by the Haitian method is often significant whereas with the Jamaican method it is reduced to a minimum. The Haitians were also very impressed with the acreage and size of the Jamaican mangrove areas visited, and began to understand the true impacts of Haitian pollution on other countries with the discovery of Haitian trash on several beaches in Jamaica.

The fishpots observed were quite similar to those made in Haiti except that the traps in Haiti are made almost entirely of bamboo, while those in Jamaica are structured in wood but are covered with chicken wire.

One factor which especially interested the Haitians was the designation, by the NRCA, of the fishers themselves to be game wardens, whose activities include fisheries management and/or protection. The Haitians were very interested in having this type of activity in Haiti; but with serious institutional weaknesses in both the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, and in the Ministry of Environment, engaging in this type of activity in Haiti will remain a remote possibility for the foreseeable future. The Haitian fishermen did comment on such things as having all fishermen registered with the Ministry of Agriculture. This is already a requirement of the fishing laws but has never been enforced.

The Haitians were impressed by the style and capabilities of the Jamaican fishing boats, and are interested in possibly acquiring one for trials in Haiti.

Many of the cooperatives or associations in Haiti participate in several different types of activities in their local communities such as in schools, churches, and providing loans. Unlike the cooperatives or associations in Haiti, the Jamaican cooperatives do not get involved in the marketing of fish; they concentrate on the sale of fishing materials. The Haitians took note of the possibility of having the Haitian cooperatives concentrate their efforts more on one activity (fishing).

A Jamaican fishers' insurance program was discussed at the meeting, held in the Portland Bight Fisheries Management Council (PBFMC). Considerable interest was shown by the Haitian fishers regarding the possibility of having a similar type of program designed in Haiti. However, this program is still in the stage of having 'its bugs worked out' in Jamaica, where this type of activity is much more advanced than it is in Haiti. Hence, it is believed to be wiser to wait until a properly functioning program is developed in Jamaica from which the Haitians may then modify to their own needs.

Recommendations/follow-up actions

- Notes taken by participants are to be distributed at the next meeting of their respective associations;
- Fishers were interested in seeing a continuation of this type of activity with the help of UNESCO (CSI);
- Preparation of a plan in order to somehow increase enforcement of fishing regulations by the MARNDR (Ministry of Agriculture – Haiti);
- Follow-up on the possibilities of a bi-national program with UNEP;

- Enquiries should be made into the possibilities of:
 - an insurance program for the Haitian fishers;
 - modifications of the Haitian fishers cooperative or association structure for a more targeted approach aimed specifically at fisheries-related issues;
 - having Jamaican fishers come to Haiti again in order to help improve certain fishing techniques;
 - increasing the participation of women in fishing-related activities, especially marketing;
 - obtaining a Jamaican fishing boat for trials in Haiti.

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