CONTRIBUTION 2.4

A Review of National Intersectoral Committee (NIC) Governance Arrangements for Shrimp and Groundfish in the Northern Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (NBSLME)Fisheries Sector

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Abstract

In the context of climate change and blue economic growth, the sustainable use of marine resources (including fisheries) is of national importance and interest. The countries within the Northern Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (NBSLME) are faced with many fisheries governance challenges. The movement of some shrimp and groundfish stocks across national marine jurisdictional boundaries requires national-level management measures that are well-aligned with transboundary approaches.

The successful implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) across the wider Caribbean is an objective of several international and regional partners. In 2019-2020 the Food and Agriculture Organization on the United National (FAO) and the University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES) collaborated under the Caribbean Large Maine Ecosystem and Northern Brazil Shelf (CLME+) Project (2015-2020) sub-project on "Ecosystem Approach to Shrimp and Groundfish Fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem". One of the key activities of the sub-project was an assessment of participatory governance arrangements, specifically national intersectoral committees (NICs) for marine and ocean governance, their existence and function, in three study countries (Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago).

This paper presents a review of the assessment of governance arrangements conducted for each country under the sub-project. Primary and secondary data were collected through literature review, content analysis, key informant interviews, workshops, and observations. For the purpose of this paper, key stakeholders in each country were consulted in June-July 2023 in order to validate and update information relevant to the current status of NICs. A main finding of the country assessments was that Fisheries Advisory Committees or Councils, where they

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean region has, for decades, been working towards a more integrated and coordinated approach towards marine governance (Mahon and Fanning, 2019; McConney and Compton, 2020). The coordination of several economic sectors across multiple levels of governance with diverse stakeholders at each level, has been identified as critical to achieving good and effective governance (Mahon et al., 2010; McConney et al., 2016; FAO, 2017; McConney and Compton, 2020).

Over the most recent decade, there have been many internationally and regionally funded projects, programmes and initiatives that have placed more focus on multi-level governance within the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) region. The rationale for such focus has been to operationalise governance networks and arrangements for improved and effective marine and ocean governance (Mahon and Fanning, 2019). Central to national-level governance, are national coordination mechanisms such as national intersectoral committees (NICs) – multi-sector, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder arrangements. NICs in theory, should function as the operational mechanism for good governance (McConney et al., 2016 and Compton et al., 2017) since the implementation of management actions and policies occurs primarily at the national level. Good and effective governance of marine resources, especially transboundary resources (e.g., fisheries), is fundamental to progress (i.e., achieving national, regional and global ocean policy goals and objectives).

International and regional agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) and the University of the West Indies – Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI-CERMES) – have collaborated on projects geared at achieving sustainable fisheries management through integrated, coordinated, participatory governance (CERMES, 2020).

The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) is one of the leading frameworks for the management and sustainable development of fisheries globally (FAO, 2019). The successful implementation of EAF and ecosystem-based management (EBM) across the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) hinges on the existence and operationalisation of NICs (Compton, 2020). The countries within the Northern Brazil Shelf LME (NBSLME) are faced with many governance challenges. The movement of some shrimp and groundfish stocks across national marine jurisdictional boundaries requires national-level management measures that would inform transboundary approaches (CLME+ PCU, 2016). National-level governance arrangements are critical to integrated/transboundary management.

The FAO has projects and activities globally aimed at supporting EAF. The successful implementation of EAF across the wider Caribbean is an objective of the FAO along with its international and regional partners. Under the Caribbean Large Maine Ecosystem and Northern Brazil Shelf (CLME+) Project (2015-2020), a ten-year Strategic Action Programme (SAP 2015-2025) was development. The CLME+ SAP has six main strategies and four sub-strategies. Strategy six is focused on EAF and EBM for the Continental Shelf and has a sub-strategy (6a) that specifically addresses the shrimp and groundfish fishery. In 2019-2020 FAO and UWI-CERMES collaborated under the sub-project on "Ecosystem Approach to Shrimp and Groundfish Fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem", in which some of the activities were led by UWI-CERMES under a subsidiary Letter of Agreement (LoA) with FAO. The aim of the sub-project was to maximize, "in a sustainable way, the contributions of the

shrimp and groundfish resources to human well-being and socio-economic development in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) region, while conserving the structure, diversity and functioning of the ecosystems that host these species" (CLME PCU, 2016 pg. 21).

To realise this goal, one output of the project was to support participatory governance arrangements such as NICs by strengthening/establishing these arrangements (e.g., Fisheries Advisory Committee, Fisheries Advisory Council, Ocean Governance Committee, etc.) at the national level to facilitate implementation of EAF, for sustainable national and transboundary management of shrimp and groundfish fishery.

The North Brazil Shelf LME supports one of the more important export-oriented shrimp and groundfish fisheries (CLME+ PCU, 2016). It's been reported that shrimp and groundfish production in recent years is ~300,000 tons annually with an estimated value USD 400 million (Gov. of Antigua and Barbuda, 2020). Shrimp and groundfish value to human socio-economic well-being and their transboundary nature, require an integrated approach management and ecological sustainably, a function NICs can provide.

This paper presents a review of the assessment of governance arrangements, namely NICs, which was conducted for three project countries under the sub-project.

2. METHODOLOGY

The sub-project called for a three-country study (Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) in which the main objective was to support participatory governance by: increasing NIC awareness, promoting the establishment and/or consolidation of NICs, and developing recommendations and guidelines for improving NICs in each of the study countries.

The sub-project built upon the past and current studies documenting (i.e., the existence, structure, principles, function, performance) national intersectoral governance arrangements to monitor and identify progress for strengthening or establishing NICs. The intention was to provide needed support for NICs that, among others, would assist in the development and successful implementation of a sub-regional fisheries management plan for the shrimp and groundfish fisheries. Several methods were used to better assess participatory governance arrangements (i.e., NICs) in the three study countries. Primary and secondary data were collected. The focus was on identifying, understanding, and evaluating good practices and good governance principles that would be essential for arrangements to successfully implement EAF for the shrimp and groundfish fishery in the NBSLME.

The data collection methods used were identical in each country (***Figure 1***).

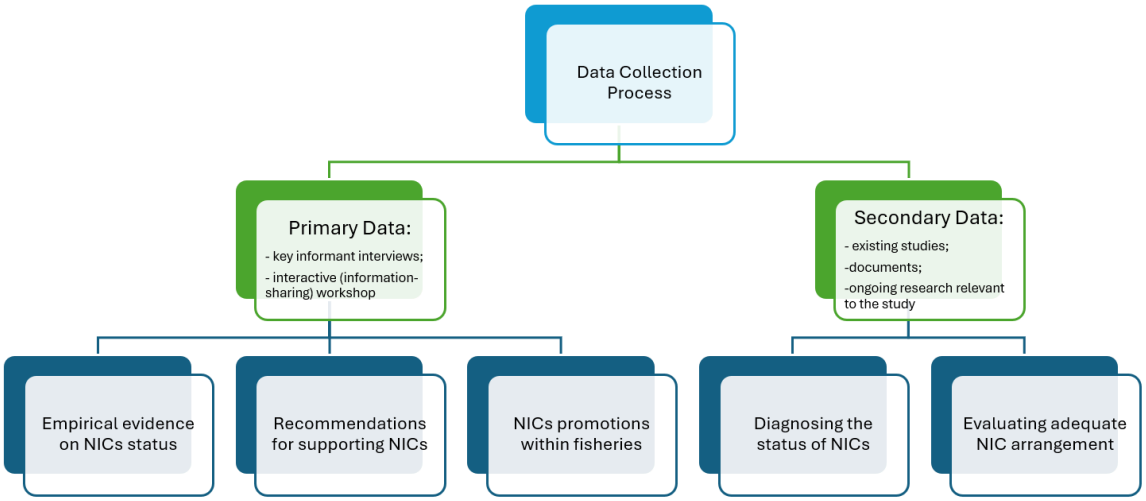

Figure 1. Diagram showing the data collection process used to gather primary and secondary data on NICs for fisheries governance across the three project countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname)

Secondary data were collected from: existing studies; documentation on past and/or present NICs (e.g. policies, procedures and meeting minutes etc.); national reports and government documents (e.g. management plans, white papers, circulars); regional reports; national, regional and international agencies (e.g. reports and technical papers from FAO, CLME+ Project, UWI-CERMES, etc.); published literature (e.g. peer reviewed articles); and on-going research relevant to the study.

Stakeholders during the 17 July, 2019 workshop engaged in group discussion as they review the NICs guidelines – Guyana.

Primary data were collected using key informant interviews and interactive (information-sharing) workshops. For each country, 5-day visits were completed; the field visit to Trinidad and Tobago was July 8-12, 2019; Guyana, July 15-19, 2019; and Suriname, July 22-26, 2019. During the field visit interviews were conducted with key fisheries stakeholders (i.e., stakeholders currently or likely to be involved in national intersectoral fisheries governance/decision-making processes) and a one-day workshops were held on: July 10th, 17th and 25th in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname, respectively. The country visits were geared at raising awareness of NICs through information sharing as well as to better understand the limitations of and capacities needed to support NICs.

Since this study was conducted in 2019, key stakeholders across the three countries were contacted between June-July 2023 in order to validate and update information relevant to the current status of NICs.

The next section of the paper presents the key findings of the assessment, specifically as it relates to the identification of the most suitable NIC for the shrimp and groundfish fishery in each country, based on ideal NIC.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected (in 2019) a few NICs or similar arrangements for fisheries governance were identified in each country. In Guyana: the Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC), the Seabob Working Group (SWG), and the Coastal Zone Management Committee; In Trinidad and Tobago: the Seafood Industry Development Company (SIDC), The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee (ICZM), and The National Working Group for the Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Trawl Fisheries (REBYC-ll LAC) Project; and in Suriname: the Advisory Council for Marine Fisheries, the Committee for the Regulation of Fisheries, and the Seabob Work Group.

The results presented in this paper are solely based on evaluating the identified NICs based on the ideal features of a NIC. According to McConney et al. (2016) and Compton et al. (2017) a well-designed NIC has: a comprehensive inclusion of stakeholders; a supportive environment that creates opportunities for stakeholder participation and encourages individuals to become champions and leaders; is politically endorsed both administratively and legally with clear mandates; has a well-established reviewing processes for evaluating effectiveness and enhancing growth through adaptation; has a national multi-level integration of sectors; can facilitate bilateral linkages between national and regional government processes; and has a scope and mandate that can address specific tasks.

Based on these ideal NIC features, the most suitable NIC (from the 2019 assessment) in Guyana was the FAC, in Trinidad and Tobago it was the REBYC-II LAC and in Suriname it was the Advisory Council for Marine Fisheries (Table 1). It can be observed that no NIC possessed all the ideal features, however at least three features were apparent in the most suitable NIC across the three countries - a comprehensive inclusion of stakeholders, having a mandate that addresses specific tasks and having a multi-level integration of sectors. While a NIC may not possess all the ideal features, this does not mean it is not or cannot be effective. Since NICs can come in various forms, their effectiveness and function as good governance arrangements still need to be better understood.

Between June-July 2023 some investigations were conducted to provide an update NIC to the 2019 assessment and it was found that: in Guyana the FAC still functions and remains the most ideal arrangement. The impacts of COVID-19 resulted in some interruptions in the FACs ability to meet regularly, however, there remains great capacity for strengthening; in Trinidad and Tobago the REBYC-II LAC project ended in 2021 and fisheries stakeholders are eagerly awaiting the approval of the revised Fisheries Act, which should see the establishment of a FAC; and in Suriname the Advisory Council is still active and continued support is needed for capacity development.

While the ideal features of a NIC provides good guidance, careful consideration should also be given to the good governance principles that guide a NIC's function. During the assessment of NICs, stakeholders were asked to identify which good governance principles were essential to a NIC. Accountability, Responsiveness and Transparency were the top good governance principles recognized by all three countries as being critical to supporting and sustaining NICs for fisheries governance.

These results based on the review of NICs across the three study countries suggest that specific features of NICs need to be better supported (i.e., enabling environments, fully endorsed with clear mandates and clear review and evaluation process) and a NIC with a mandate for fisheries governance needs to be established for Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 1. Ideal NIC identified based on a 2019 assessment of the most suitable governance arrangement for shrimp and groundfish fishery management in each of the project countries.

NIC Features	Most Suitable NICs in 2019		
	GUYANA - Fisheries Advisory Committee	TRINIDAD - Caribbean Trawl Fisheries (REBYC-II LAC) Project Working Group	SURINAME – The Advisory Council for Marine Fisheries
A comprehensive inclusion of stakeholders			
A supportive environment that creates opportunities for stakeholder participation and encourages individuals to become champions and leaders			
Be politically endorsed both administratively and legally with clear mandates			
Have well-established reviewing processes for evaluating effectiveness and enhancing growth through adaptation			
Have national multi-level integration of sectors; facilitate bilateral linkages between national and regional government processes			
Have a scope and mandate that can address specific tasks			
Key: green= definitely to mostly true; yellow=somewhat true and red =uncertain or absent			

4. SUMMARY

The shrimp and groundfish resources of the NBSLME, because of their value to human socio-economic well-being and their transboundary nature, require an integrated approach to manage ecosystem integrity and sustain ecological productivity. Participatory governance arrangements such as NICs can provide the support needed to facilitate the improved management and governance of these transboundary resources.

The development of a governance framework for supporting the shrimp and groundfish fisheries is gaining some momentum across the NBSLME. For example, Guyana launched the Guyana Marine Conservation Society (GMCS), which is their five-year strategic plan (2022-2027). This plan aligns with and supports the work in the government's new and expanded Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 (DPI, 2022). Both plans cover three critical areas: marine plans and policies; the protection of marine life and coastal ecosystems; and the support for the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources (GMCS, 2022). Movement towards a more integrated participatory approach to natural resources management in Guyana would now call for: 1) maintaining the FAC's active status as the primary advisory body [to the Minister] on all fisheries matters; and 2) the continuation of the SWG which has been responsible for Guyana's Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification.

In the context of climate change and blue economic growth, the sustainable use of marine resources (including fisheries) is of national importance and interest. With NICs in place and functioning well, countries would be better positioned for achieving international sustainability goals. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are well aligned to the goal of the sub-project in implementing EAF because consideration is given to the environment and its link to economic and social development (IMA, 2016). SDG 14 - Life below water - refers to ocean conservation and sustainable use of its sea and marine resources. Increased awareness of the value of goods and services provided by coastal and ocean ecosystems and their significant contribution to poverty eradication, sustaining livelihoods and economies is what has led to the concept of the 'blue economy' (IMA, 2016).

The current and future work on fisheries specifically on shrimp and groundfish in the NBSLME should ideally include support for NICs. Currently, international, and regional agencies are continuing to support NICs through collaborative initiatives. There is support for NICs under the: "Enhancing capacity for the adoption and implementation of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem Project" (EAF4SG); "Sustainable development of Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains in ACP Countries" (FISH4ACP); "Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus" (BE CLME+); and "Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's Natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-Economic development in CLME+" (ProCaribe).

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