

Marine Fisheries Management and Coastal Zone Communities in the Commonwealth

The Role of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)

CHEC has, for several years and, been promoting the SEASCAPE¹ project, designed to analyse and build capacity for sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Commonwealth. This initiative was promoted in CHEC Parallel and Side Events at the Mauritius International Meeting in 2005. CHEC is delighted now to be partnering the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit in this major project to evaluate and strengthen the capacity of Commonwealth countries to develop sustainable fisheries and to secure the livelihoods of fisherfolk communities.

CHEC's role in the project will be to conduct case studies of fisherfolk communities and fisheries policy in selected countries across the Commonwealth, both to identify best practice and to address key challenges. CHEC will also support the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit in preparation of study visits to examine cases of best practice.

The case studies will follow the SEASCAPE methodology, which will analyse national capacity for negotiating fisheries agreements and policy in the international arena, as well as national capacity for domestic sustainable management of fisheries and fisherfolk livelihoods.

The proposed sequence of activities is:

1. Scoping each region of the Commonwealth with the assistance of regional experts to identify best practice examples
2. Analysis of national capacity for engaging with, and implementing international and regional fisheries and marine policy agreements
3. Multi-level 'top-down' analysis of capacity for integrated management of fisheries and the coastal zone, including investigation of the performance of market mechanisms, marine reserves and protected areas, and fisherfolk cooperatives, and
3. 'Bottom-up' analysis of the best practice examples using GIS-P participatory mapping and community focus groups, to identify community perceptions of the development of policy in the coastal zone over the last 25 years and preferences for its future development. This stage will address integrated coastal zone management, including the challenges from tourism, pollution from land based sources, and questions of coastal access and environmental rights of fisherfolk communities.

For further details of the CHEC contribution, as it develops, please contact the CHEC Fisheries Project Co-ordinator, Dr Nicholas Watts at nicholaswatts@mac.com or n.watts@londonmet.ac.uk or +44 (0) 7985 950 285. Please see www.chec-hq.org from 1 July 2008 for links to the project website.

¹ A collaborative project with the Caribbean Studies Centre, London Metropolitan University