Sharing the benefits of the blue economy with communities associated with MPAs



Lucito Ayuso
MPAConnect mentor
Grenada, October 22 2026

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

SusGren
Sustainable Grenadines Inc.

MPA connect

NOAA CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

GCFI
Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, Inc.

Sharing the benefits of the blue economy with communities associated with MPAs

1. **Why** work with communities?
2. Community engagement **strategies**
   a. Reef Protectors **youth education** programme
   b. Boat-to-boat **interpretive enforcement**
   c. **Sustainable livelihoods**/micro-enterprise development
3. Roatan Marine Park case study



Promotes **compliance** through soft approaches and provides intelligence for more strategic enforcement

Builds future stewardship and promotes best practices for conservation of marine resources



Shapes more **resilient communities** through **improved livelihoods**

Golden Rules for Community Engagement

- ✓ Need for c**ommunity liaison resource person**
- ✓ Listening, respecting and **building trust** with stakeholder communities goes a long way
- ✓ Networking and consulting with key leaders/groups in the communities and other partners will **make your work a lot easier**
- ✓ Remember to **work with the communities' timing** not your timing



Golden Rules for Community Engagement

- ✓ **Funding for salary** of community liaison is essential
- ✓ Establishment of **partnerships** with other NGOs, government agencies, civil society and private sector entities to drive community outreach



Strategies for Community Engagement

Reef Protector Program

- Youth education – fun, dynamic, outside, real world skills
- Raise awareness about marine protected areas and their role in conservation, respect for rangers
- Introduce and provide practical experience in marine research and monitoring methodologies



Strategies for Community Engagement

Boat-to-Boat Outreach

- Explaining regulations, enabling fisher stewardship
- Increase awareness and compliance with fisheries regulations
- Improve communication between fishers and resource managers (Fisheries Department, BAS)



Supplemental Livelihoods/Micro-enterprises





Objective: To promote income diversification opportunities to reduce fishing pressures on the MPAs

- Small businesses are geared to supplement the livelihoods of beneficiaries (fisherfolks and their families)
- Small businesses include beekeeping, agro-processing, lionfish jewelry

Drivers for successful micro-enterprises

- Capacity building in entrepreneurial and human development skills
- Promoting value adding and marketing of products and services
- Monitoring and evaluation of small businesses is essential





Our Partners

- BELTRAIDE
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Department of Cooperative
- Reforestamos, Mexico
- Credit Unions
- U.S. Embassy
- Donors including NOAA
- MPAConnect Network





Other benefits of working with communities-TASA

- Promoting **gender** mainstreaming
- Strengthening support for conservation of MPAs





20 ROATAN MARINE PARK
YEARS OF CONSERVATION

CONNECTING STAKEHOLDERS & CONSERVATION IN ROATAN

SUPPORTED BY

MPA connect

Roatan Marine Park Socio-Economic Study and Community Engagement Strategy

Five pillars of concern for MPA management:

- Livelihoods & Income
- Awareness & Perception
- Governance and Trust
- Resource Dependence and Alternatives and
- Communications











Results and Recommendations

20 ROATAN MARINE PARK
YEARS OF CONSERVATION

MOVING FORWARD

1. Invest in people and strengthen partnerships
2. Improve Communications including storytelling and real-life testimonials to create emotional connections with the MPA
3. Link livelihoods to conservation
4. Leading with Science & Equity
5. Improve RMP's image as more than just an enforcement ngo, highlight its community programs and conservation successes through special events.



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

SHORT TERM (0-1 YEARS)

The initial phase focuses on immediate communication, trust-building, and foundational education to rapidly increase awareness and engagement across the communities.

- Clarify MPA rules and boundaries via signage, maps, and infographics.
- Create stakeholder-specific WhatsApp groups for direct outreach.
- Host coordination events to immediately begin building trust.
- Establish advisory councils (e.g., youth, women, tourism).
- Launch a multifaceted communication strategy to improve RMP's image.
- Develop targeted educational materials based on literacy levels (e.g., visual/oral content).
- Promote financial literacy on budgeting and conservation.
- Strengthen education and outreach via schools, hotels, and community events.
- Use storytelling and real-life testimonials.
- Organize fairs, cleanups, and community events to drive participation.
- Support fisherfolk with better gear and facilities.
- Provide community-based technical and entrepreneurial training.

MID TERM (1-3 YEARS)

The mid-term focuses on operationalizing new governance structures, establishing economic resilience programs, and solidifying training tracks.

- Form the Local Advisory Board (LAB) as a formal governance structure.
- Continue hosting coordination events to build co-management stability.
- Continue efforts to improve RMP image beyond enforcement.
- Expand education and upskilling programs in eco-tourism and conservation.
- Provide financial support to vulnerable women.
- Support existing microenterprises with essential business services.
- Promote eco-business incubators to diversify income.
- Continue supporting fisherfolk with better gear, facilities, and training.
- Continue providing community-based technical and entrepreneurial training.
- Continue efforts to strengthen education and outreach.
- Continue leveraging storytelling and real-life testimonials.
- Continue organizing fairs, cleanups, and community events.
- Continue developing and establishing advisory councils.

LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

The long-term phase involves scaling successful programs to achieve sustained resource management, fully embedding conservation as a permanent local economy driver.

- Expand education and upskilling programs in eco-tourism and conservation to maintain a skilled workforce.
- Continue strengthening education and outreach across all sectors.
- Sustain the promotion of eco-business incubators (e.g., lionfish products).
- Continue providing community-based technical and entrepreneurial training.
- Maintain the use of storytelling and real-life testimonials.
- Maintain the multifaceted communication strategy.
- Sustain fairs, cleanups, and community events as annual fixtures.

THANK YOU!