

Member State representation in regional fisheries governance

The Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) has initiated this outreach publication, *Policy Perspectives*, primarily in order to share some of the lessons from recent projects. Our interdisciplinary applied research projects emphasise learning-by-doing through the collaboration of researchers, beneficiaries and other parties. The information in these policy briefs may be used by policy-makers and their advisers to strengthen the linkages between research and policy in the Caribbean. This connection is often weak in natural resource management and governance.

Need a policy on routine representation?

When nation-states and territories sign on to institutional arrangements such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) they can expect regular requests for representation at various routine meetings of the body. This regularity should permit policies on representation to easily be developed in CRFM Member States interested in active participation in their organisation. What are the advantages?

Obtaining timely permission, at the policy level, to participate in meetings is a constant challenge in some places. Cabinet Papers have to be submitted sometimes two weeks before the Cabinet meets in order to ensure the item is on the agenda. It requires fairly full information on the meeting and its travel logistics (particularly financing or lack of it) to properly prepare the Cabinet paper. More information and time will be needed if important decisions are to be made and the inputs of various specialists or fisheries stakeholders are required.

The advantages of having a policy on routine representation in the meetings of a body such as the CRFM include:

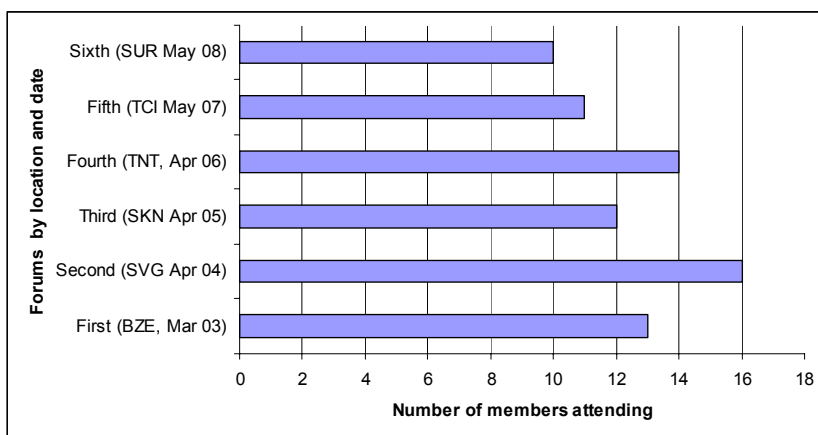
- Flagging organisational membership as important
- Recognising routine representation as beneficial
- Paving the way for easier approval of participation
- Providing authority for engaging stakeholders
- Aiding institutional memory through follow-up

It should not be difficult for CRFM members to develop such policies as means of sustaining their contribution to regional fisheries governance. In the next sections we look at patterns of representation in the Forum and how networking can play a role in improving this and policy implementation.

Patterns of member representation at the Caribbean Fisheries Forum 2003-2008

Since its establishment there have been six regular annual meetings of the Caribbean Fisheries Forum, the principal technical and policy advisory body of the CRFM. In addition to these there have been special meetings of the Forum and meetings of task-oriented working groups such as legal and socio-economic. However, all members should expect to attend the regular meeting of the Forum around the end of the first quarter in every year. Are there patterns of participation?

The chart below shows that participation of the members has generally been good, ranging from 10 to 16 and averaging 13. Although there seems to be a downward trend in the number



of members participating in the Forum over time, the time series is too short for meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

In another chart (shown overleaf) you can see the number of times, up to six, that each member has been represented

at the Forum. The range is from one to six times with an average of 4 meetings attended by the eighteen CRFM members that collectively have been represented at one time or another.

Several members have perfect attendance records, such as Belize, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. At the lower end, Haiti has attended once and Barbados twice. But its presence at the Forum, by itself, a good indicator of adequate representation? Perhaps it is not, unless there was preparation before and follow-up after each Forum. These should be part of policy.

Representation includes good preparation and follow-up with institutional memory

The representation in several cases has been by only one or two persons over the six-meeting period. This could be seen as a deliberate strategy to develop dedicated representation, it could simply reflect limited capacity in fisheries authorities, it may be that these were the only persons interested or many other interpretations. However, the end result is that at the meeting there is a greater chance of the representative having personal memory of the issues of the Forum, even if not well prepared. But what about developing institutional memory?

Unless member representation is by one person alone, it is essential that some institutional memory be developed. How?

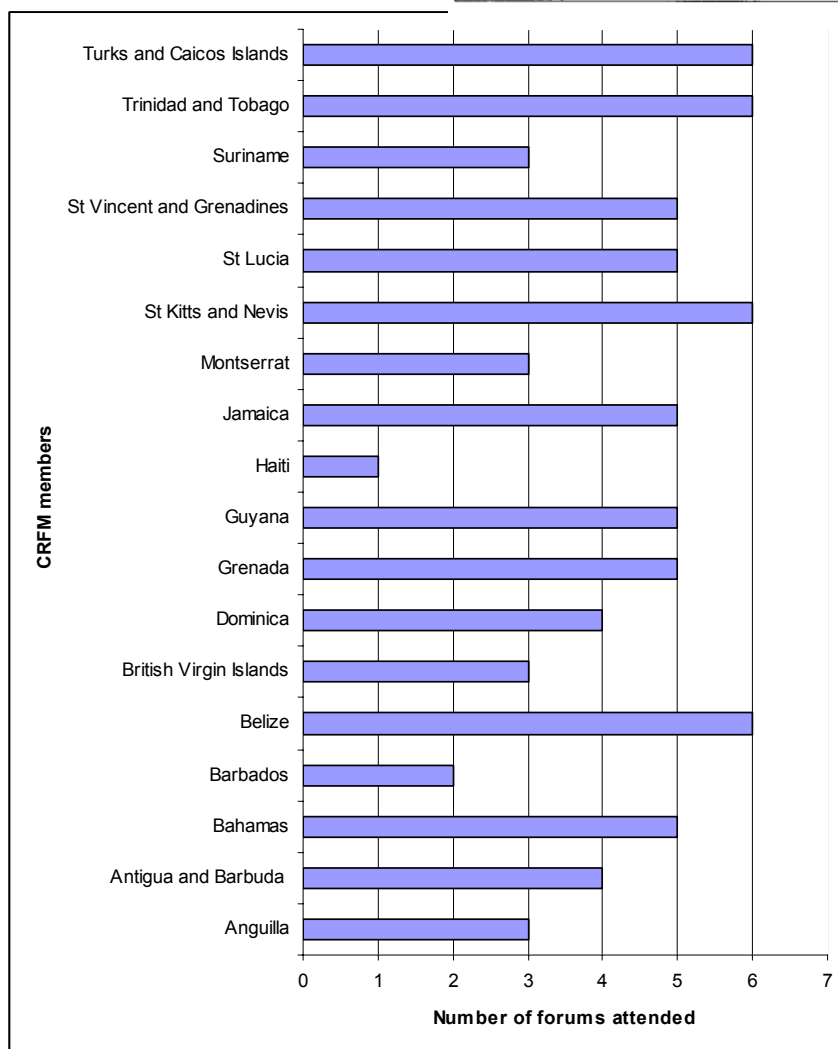
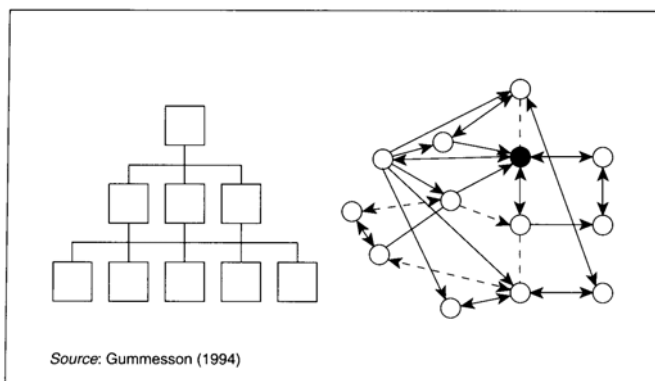
- Proper filing
- Thorough briefs
- Travel reports
- Staff updates
- Office library
- Share email
- Discussions
- Use e-group
- Exchange info

All of the above are part of good public administration and should be routine practice in most fisheries authorities.

The development of institutional memory is an element of the good preparation and follow-up. It is very necessary, but it is not sufficient for good representation. Consider networking.

Networking for results

Typical organograms show formal lines of communication and authority that seldom reflect reality. The diagram such as that shown here may depict a single fisheries authority or show hierarchical relationships in an entire fishing industry. In either case the message is that good preparation and follow-up often entails going outside of formal lines and structures to communicate most effectively to key actors and stakeholders. Use or build networks as part of the policy of ensuring representation.



For example, the key individual for representation (the black circle) may not be at the apex of the group, but he or she may be receiving direct input during the preparation phase and also the one to lead follow-up.

Networks work! If the news media and other means of communication are added to the network along with fisher folk groups and representative bodies of the stakeholders, then one can see a true effort at national or territory-level representation taking place.

These groups will be consulted prior to meetings of the Forum and obtain feedback after it to inform decisions.

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