



Increasing the Visibility and Influence of **Data in Decisions** for Biodiversity and Protected Area Management

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1. Introduction

There is a disconnect between the increasing pool of ecological, social and economic data and decisions made in management and policy in the area of biodiversity and protected area management. Technological advances and increased capacity over the last couple decades have allowed for significant improvements in the accuracy, frequency of collection, and potential usage of data. Yet decisions affecting biodiversity and its management are being driven by economics and political will instead of sound data and expert opinion.

The use of different 'languages' by scientists/practitioners versus decision/policy makers is perceived to contribute to this present disconnect and therefore rectifying this disparity becomes a high priority action area, if the current level of biodiversity decline is to be slowed or even halted. **Data must first be translated and packaged in ways that are useful to decision/policy makers and secondly be injected into the decision making environment.** The keys to achieving this are the development of a deeper understanding of the decision making environment, the production of tailored data communications and the development of ways to better incorporate this information in the decision making environment. Within the Caribbean region, the Caribbean Protected Areas Gateway is seeking to begin addressing this disconnect through the development of a series of communication products, such as the State of Protected Areas (SoPA) for the Caribbean, to increase the visibility of available data and ultimately influence decisions.

2. Data to Decisions Environment

Practitioners in marine protected area and fisheries management across the Caribbean were interviewed in 2018 to begin investigating the decision-making environment and identify challenges and opportunities. Key findings include:

Socioeconomic information is the most important type of information to decision-makers (Figure 1). Practitioners believe that socio-economics are driving decisions that impact coastal zone management including marine protected area designation and enforcement, with stakeholders' interests in livelihoods and revenue thought to be most persuasive to decision-makers.

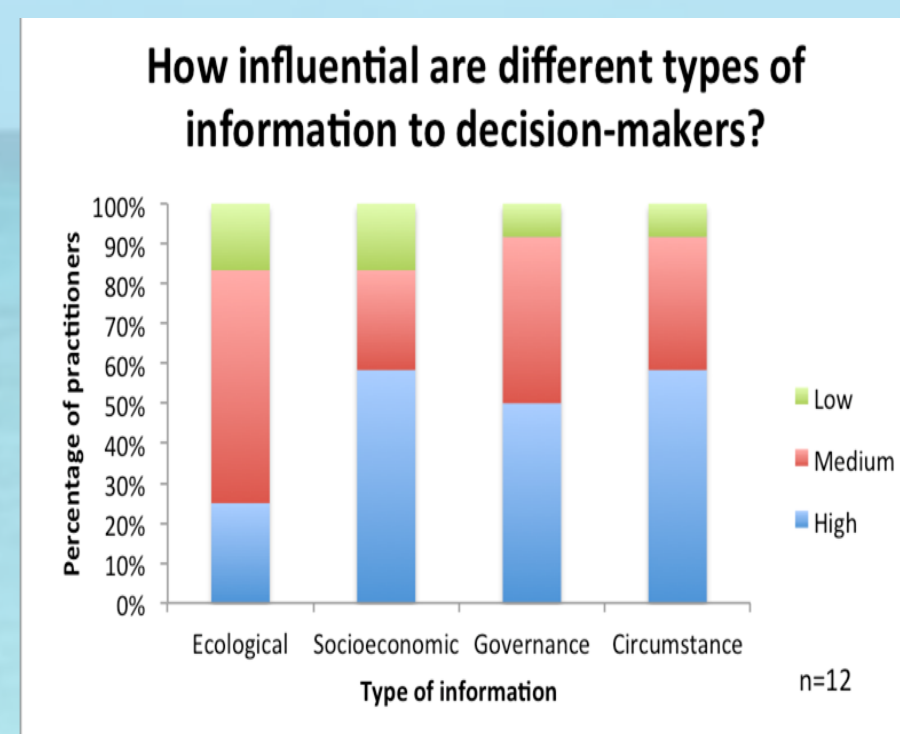
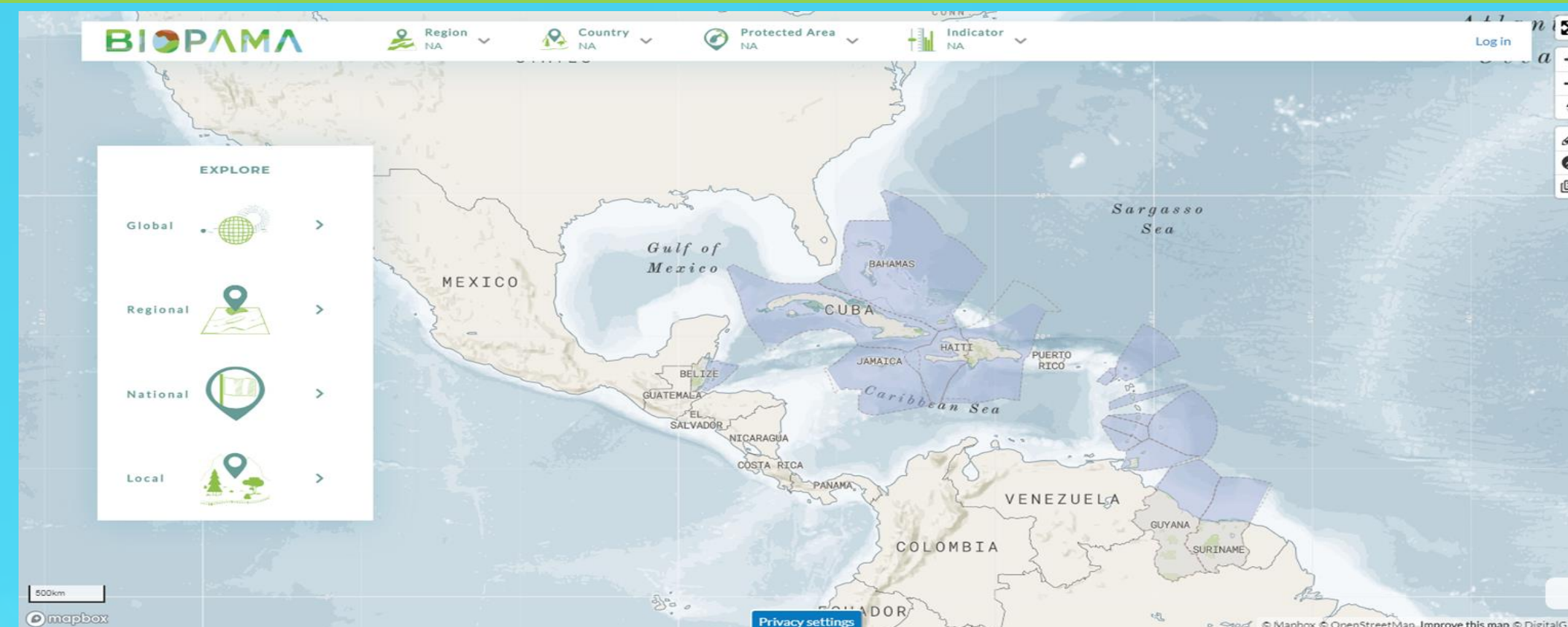


Figure 1

Ecosystem/ecosystem services valuation are highly important for data translation into the language of decision makers. Policy decisions are based mostly on economics; even though social and natural capital are valuable; their significance is greatly diminished if their true value is not-represented in economic terms that can be discussed with financial capital.

Advocacy - The development of citizen groups that provide a unified voice and message for the decision-makers - their politicians - can increase the visibility and influence of management concerns in decisions.

3. The Caribbean Protected Areas Gateway



¹Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago

The Caribbean Protected Areas Gateway (Caribbean Gateway) is a hub for protected area research and innovation that contributes to effective and sustainable management of protected areas and biodiversity through the following services:

- maintains robust ecological, socioeconomic (livelihood) and governance (management effectiveness) data
- facilitates and promotes better decision making and viable decisions
- builds capacity
- supports networking and communications

Location: The University of the West Indies at the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES: Cave Hill Campus, Barbados).

For Whom: it is primarily supporting the Caribbean member countries¹ of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group

Purpose: aims to build institutional and technical capacities at the regional, national and site levels with access to and application of data to inform and strengthen policy decisions for improved protected area and biodiversity management actions.

The Caribbean Gateway therefore occupies a unique position to address the disconnect between existing biodiversity and protected areas related data and the decisions made pertaining to the same. Charged with data communications, the Gateway can act as a catalyst for improved data communication via the incorporation of elements highlighted within the data to decision making environment. These include (but are not limited to):

- dissemination of socioeconomic information pertaining to protected areas
- improved, more visually appealing presentation of data (e.g. coral reef report cards), that is translated into the language of decision and policy makers (e.g. policy briefs)
- incorporation of valuations (ecosystem and ecosystems services) to provide a monetary value to the economically and politically driven decision environment

Improved data presentation is critical (Figure 2). Products beyond a large, technical final report make data-driven results more accessible, meaningful and competitive in the decision-making arena. Just presenting information is not compelling nor convincing when placed alongside competitive interests which present tangible, near-term benefits.

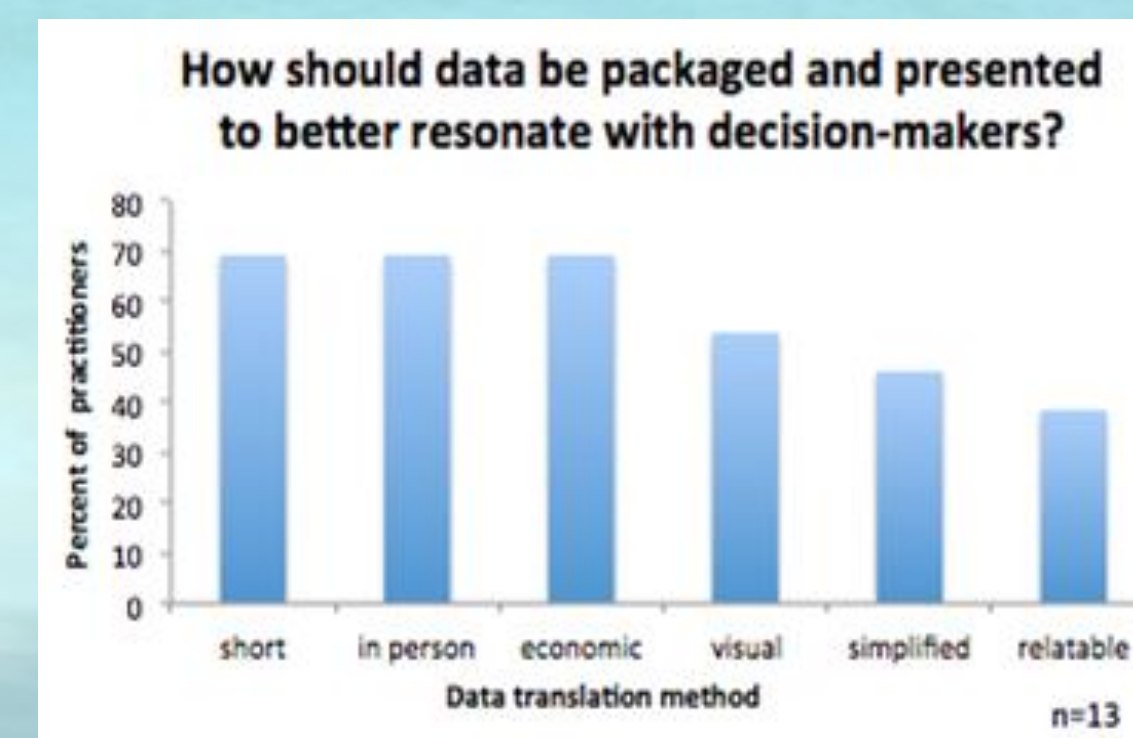


Figure 2

4. Marketing and Communication of Data

One initiative which the Caribbean Gateway has embarked upon to increase the visibility and potential application of biodiversity and protected area related data in the decision environment, is the creation of a suite of data communications related to the **State of Protected Areas (SoPA) within the Caribbean region**. The suite of data communications are intended to include, but not be limited to:

- a full technical report which provides a comprehensive regional assessment of protected areas and systems
- a concise, easily digestible, visually appealing version
- a policy brief targeted at the decision and policy makers

The data communications will:

- provide facts and figures required by governments and others to make informed decisions
- function as a baseline for tracking progress in meeting national and international targets
- facilitate a better understanding of successes and key challenges the region is facing and highlighting strategies towards addressing them

The first suite of communications are expected to be published late 2019, with follow up communications to follow by 2023.

5. Useful Links

- **BIOPAMA programme** (<https://www.biopama.org/>)
- **Caribbean Protected Area Gateway** (<http://caribbean-rris.biopama.org/>)
- **Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies** (<http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/cermes/home.aspx>)
- **SocMon-Caribbean** (<https://goo.gl/jRdHQJ>)
- **GCRMN-Caribbean** (<https://goo.gl/3HWRDh>)

6. Contact Information

To contribute in anyway to the Caribbean Protected Areas Gateway or for more information please contact:

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The Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme (BIOPAMA) aims to provide tools, services and funding to improve biodiversity and protected areas management and governance in the ACP. It is an initiative of the ACP Group, funded by the EU under the 11th EDF.

