

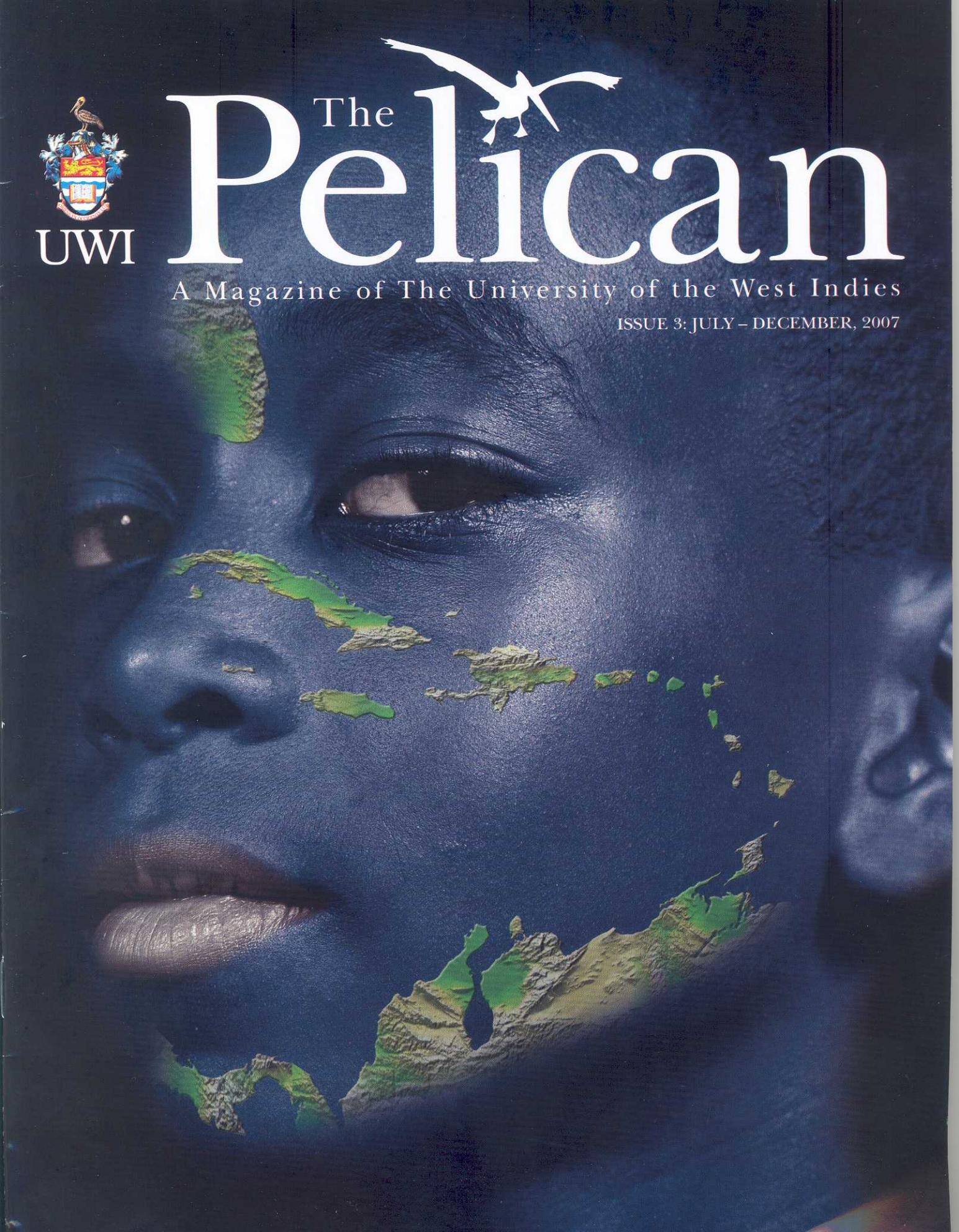


UWI

The Pelican

A Magazine of The University of the West Indies

ISSUE 3: JULY – DECEMBER, 2007





Small Islands and their Sea Resources

Perhaps not quite an epiphany, but it came close. In the 1990s, when Robin Mahon visited the Grenadines whilst working on a UNDP initiative on sustainable development, he was struck with a realization that grew and is now bearing fruit.

“The UNDP initiative did not lead to a concrete project,” he recalled in a recent interview. “But the experience made me acutely aware that these small islands were very dependent on the sea and were facing several problems of a complex nature. Small island issues were very prominent: low human capacity, multiple use issues between sectors — fishing, transport, tourism, recreation—land-based impacts on the sea, all set in the context of a very rich yet vulnerable marine ecosystem with coral

reefs, seagrasses, mangroves and adjacent oceanic areas. It was clear that the area could benefit greatly from assistance and inputs to build local capacity to deal with these issues.”

Mahon, Professor of Marine Affairs and Director of UWI’s Centre for Resource Management & Environmental Studies (CERMES) at the Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, is the lead researcher in the Sustainable Grenadines project (a collaborative project spearheaded by CERMES, and supported by the Caribbean Conservation Association, Projects Promotion Ltd. of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Carriacou

PHOTO ABOVE: **SEEDING** Martin Barriteau (second from left) working with community members from Ashton, Union Island, Petite Martinique and Carriacou to seed lines for an experimental seamoss plot.



Environmental Committee of Grenada, NGOs in the Grenadine Islands, and the Governments of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada).

In many ways, the Grenadine Islands are emblematic of the rich but vulnerable nature of the marine ecosystems of the region. The chain of more than twenty islands, from Bequia to Carriacou, lies on the Grenada Bank and straddles the boundary between Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They remain some of the few largely unspoiled natural wonders of the Caribbean, but the islands, nine of which have permanent settlements with two being resort islands, are extremely vulnerable to the encroaching developments around them.

Both the Grenadian and the Vincentian Governments perceive their Grenadine Islands as having high potential for tourism and associated development.

In addition to the marine-based activities pursued by many of the area's inhabitants, tourism and burgeoning tourism development are regarded as the biggest economic winners. What holds promise for economic development also signals a serious threat to the fragile marine and terrestrial resource systems of the area, which occupies about 1,500 sq. km. This large area, however, is shallower than 50 m and supports the most extensive coral reefs and related habitats in the south-eastern Caribbean.

This realisation, coupled with the recognition that civil society possessed real and potential capacity to contribute to sustainable development for its own benefit, prompted the birth of the Sustainable Grenadines project.

"civil society has a lot of capacity or potential capacity to contribute to sustainable development"

The project, in simple terms was conceptualised around the broad goal of building the capacity of civil society to play a major role in sustainable development in the Grenadines Islands. According to Mahon, "it is based on the view that government cannot do all that is needed and that civil society has a lot of capacity or potential capacity to contribute to sustainable development for their own benefit. In order to realize this potential there is the need to build civil society capacity."

When Mahon joined The UWI, Cave Hill Campus after stints as Chief Scientist in CARICOM's Fisheries Resource Assessment and Management Programme, and later as a self-employed consultant, he was able to devote attention to building a team and pursuing the project.

"When I came to UWI, it was clear to me that the Grenadines also provided an excellent opportunity for students to learn about small islands issues in a compact area," said Professor Mahon. "I therefore began to pursue the development of the project with stakeholders including both Governments and NGOs. I was fortunate to find a donor who was like-minded and saw the value of taking this long-term approach."

The donor, The Lighthouse Foundation, based in Germany, agreed to fund the first phase of this project which involved scoping and planning. When it was completed, the Foundation consented to fund the

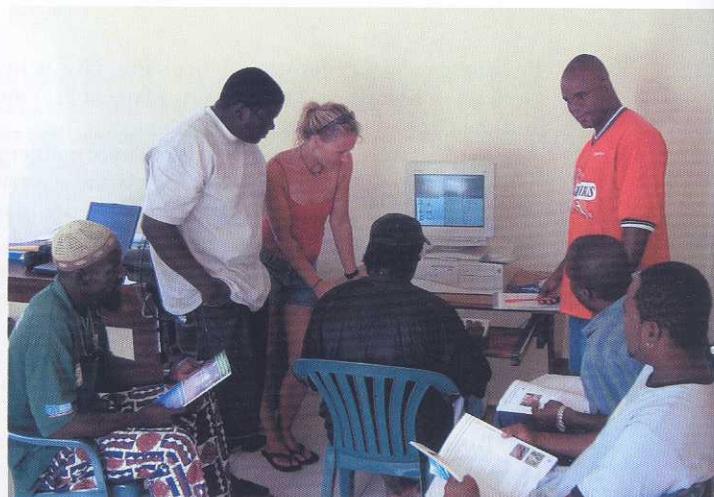
implementation of the project over a five-year period, from November 2003 through December 2008.

The Sustainable Grenadines project addresses a wide range of activities from enabling organisation for NGOs through training to providing opportunities for learning by doing. An overarching focus has been providing access to information and creating well-informed civil stakeholders to provide continued impetus to the project. The project has embraced its goals in a variety of ways: by providing for stakeholder identification and analysis of capacity; participatory planning with stakeholders to determine needs and directions; institutional assessment of NGOs; training to meet needs; planning workshops in specific areas to determine directions for future work; attachments to other organisations that can provide hands-on experience and exposure; funding and implementation support for mini-projects so that NGOs can learn how to do projects; assistance with preparing proposals; obtaining funding and implementing projects; networking and communication among people so that they can learn from and support each other.

Professor Mahon appears uniquely suited to undertake the challenges of managing a team to achieve these results. Long committed to the preservation and successful management of fisheries in the Caribbean, Professor Mahon in 1974 undertook postgraduate studies at University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. After



WATER TAXI PLANNING. Water taxi operators from around the Grenadines come together to plan ways to improve their efficiency, safety, customer service and environmental practices.



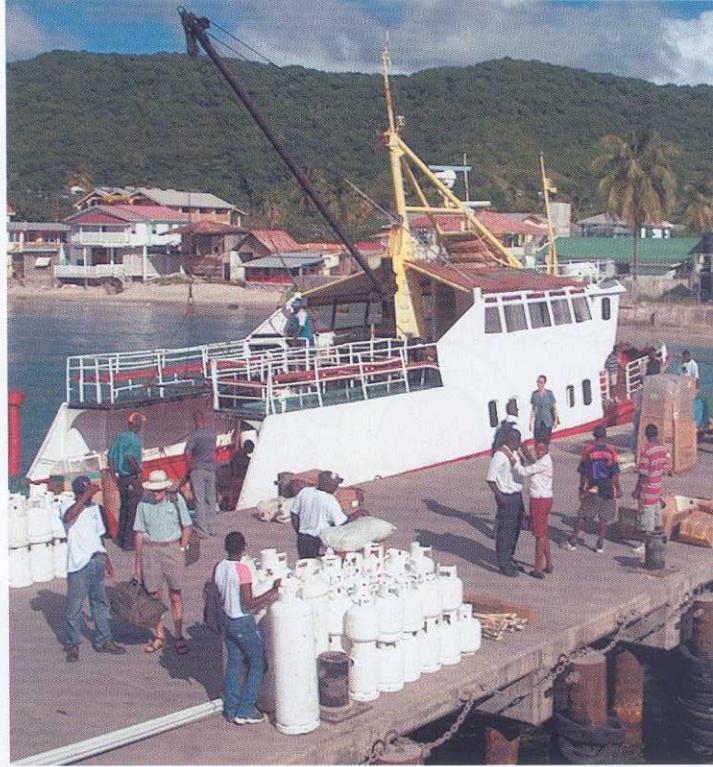
TCMP RANGERS ENTER RC DATA. Rangers from the Tobago Cays Marine Park enter reef survey data assisted by Kim Baldwin from CERMES.

graduating with his PhD in 1981, he worked as a Fisheries Scientist with the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans on Canada's east coast for several years before returning to the Caribbean in 1986 to serve with the United Nations FAO in the eastern Caribbean. When CARICOM started its fisheries resource assessment and management project in 1990 he became the Chief Scientist. In these job situations and subsequently as a self-employed consultant, he saw first hand that the struggle for rational use of marine resources was mainly about managing the people, not the fish. His attention shifted steadily from the science of fisheries to the institutional arrangements for managing them at local, national and regional levels, and has produced a wide-ranging body of scholarship reflecting these research interests.

For the Sustainable Grenadines project, he noted, there is an overarching theme of creating a civil society architecture that supports the continued preservation and development of terrestrial and marine resources.

"In general, there is a strong focus on the marine environment and livelihoods derived from the sea," he explained. "However, in small islands, the land and sea are very closely linked and there is the need to consider them both together. The Grenadines exhibit and exemplify most of the sustainable development problems that are typical of small islands."

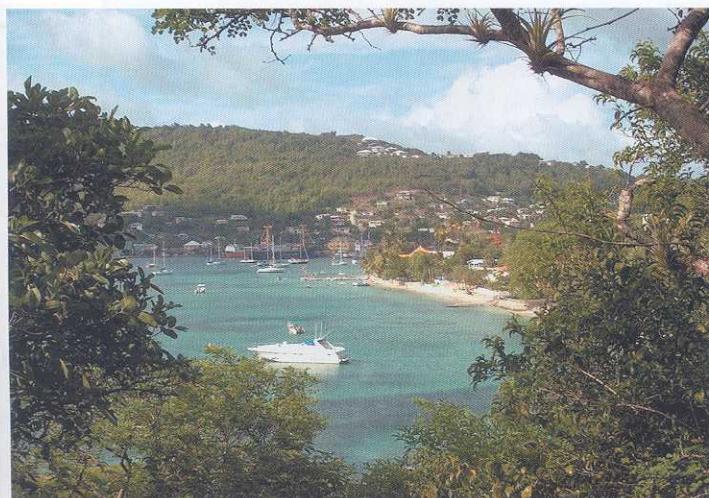
So far, these problems are being progressively addressed through the efforts of the Sustainable Grenadines project and promise to produce a cutting-edge model that can be successfully applied in other areas around the region. Professor Mahon, who in his long and brightly burnished career has



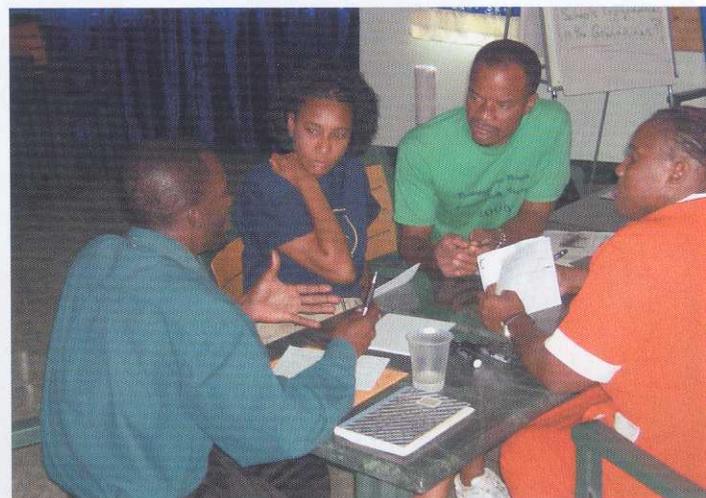
CARRIACOU HILLSBOROUGH JETTY. The jetty in Hillsborough, Carriacou, the main entry point to the island, is a hive of activity as water taxis, cargo vessels and ferries come and go.

undertaken numerous projects, is excited about the prospects for this one.

"This has been a very rewarding project," he noted with a smile, "as one gets to work with a whole range of dedicated and inspiring people. In terms of impact, a project of this type has a long-term orientation, as it is trying to change the way that systems work and people operate. Even though OECS Governments have recognized the important role of civil society in the St. George's Declaration, it takes a long time for them to actually include civil society as partners in their plans and programmes."



BEQUIA POINT ELIZ FROM HILL. Marine-based tourism, fishing and trade characterize the Grenadines, as seen here in Admiralty Bay, Bequia, where activities of yachts, cargo vessels, water taxis and fishing boats intermingle.



TEACHERS GROUP WORK. Teachers in a workshop in Carriacou discuss ways of bringing environmental education into Grenadines secondary schools.