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**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION TO
LAUNCH A NATIONAL FISHERFOLK ORGANIZATION
IN ST. LUCIA**

**CRFM Secretariat, Belize
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Report of the National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk Organization in St. Lucia

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Report of the National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk
Organization in St. Lucia

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1.0 Introduction

The Secretariat of the Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), in its efforts to promote co-management of fisheries in the Caribbean region and to enhance the overall capacity of the resource users for their involvement and participation in the resource management process, has implemented a series of activities aimed at realizing this objective.

In 2003/04 CTA/CARDI/CRFM embarked upon a capacity building programme to empower fisher folk in the region and to enable them to take up their role as partners with government as it related to fisheries resource management and development in the Caribbean region. In this regard, the CRFM conducted an organizational needs assessment study aimed at determining the strengths, weaknesses and status of fisher folk organizations in the member states and recommended strategies for addressing the needs identified.

Upon review of the said recommendations at a CTA/CARDI/CRFM Regional Workshop held in Belize from October 12-14, 2004, a specific recommendation was made to launch a Regional Network of National Fisherfolk Organizations (CARNUFO). This proposed body would be comprised of National Fisherfolk Organizations (NFO) establishing relationships and linkages to form a network geared towards capacity building and institutional strengthening among the fisher folk organizations of the Caribbean region, with the overall objective being to improve earnings, foster higher standards of living of fisher folk and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Caribbean. It was determined that CARNUFO could only be established when at least 50% of the ACP countries + 1 would have NFOs.

In June 2005 a Strategy and Medium Term Action Plan 2006 – 2010 was developed for the institutional strengthening of Regional Fisherfolk Organizations. It was aimed at addressing issues such as lack of critical mass for establishing CARNUFO, insufficient access to information, weak management skills and limited communication and advocacy skills of fisherfolk organizations. In this regard a proposal was developed and later refined into the Project: Development of Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, September 2006 – July 2008.

The Project was aimed at delivering the following outputs:

- Creation of NFOs and CARNUFO facilitated.
- Management, communication and advocacy capacities of NFOs and CARNUFO strengthened.
- Fisherfolk and other interested parties better provided with relevant information on regional fisheries issues.

Under this Project, the CTA/CRFM Training of Trainers Workshop for Fisheries Extension Officers to enhance their Skills to Provide Better Information, Advisory and Training Services to

Primary and National Fisherfolk Organizations, was conducted in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from December 4 to 14, 2006.

The National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk Organization in St. Lucia is part of the project aimed at promoting the establishment of National Fisherfolk Organisations (NFOs) in the Group II countries.

2.0 Welcome and Opening Ceremony

The National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk Organization in St. Lucia was held at the conference room of the Fisheries Department in Castries on the 23rd of July 2007. The Chief Fisheries Officer, Mr. Vaughn Charles gave the opening remarks, during which he gave a short history of the formation, successes and failures of fishers' cooperatives in St. Lucia.

He mentioned that fishers' cooperatives in St. Lucia were developed for the administration of duty free refunds on fuel and other concessions given to fishers by the Government. As a result only boat owners were attracted to forming such organisations since there was no incentive for other fishers, such as non-boat owners, to get involved. He also pointed out that the first national fisher folk organization (NFO), National Association of Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited (NAFCOOP) was registered in 1978, and was given the responsibility for the importation of fish pot wire. Problems arose when persons other than fishers who also used wire seemed to be benefiting from the scheme as well. In addition, he indicated that the NFO experienced many problems and became defunct, noting that management of the cooperative was not closely monitored and it did not meet regularly to address the status of the financial and other operations of the organization. The demise of this NFO was mainly due to inactivity on the part of the member primary organizations.

The Chief Fisheries Officer pointed out that all cooperatives were now individually importing fishing gear and equipment for their members, but this effort needed to be consolidated to improve on their financial gains. In the community of Laboree, the fishers co-operative had expanded its operations to include a consumer section to involve a wider cross section of the community. The Chief Fisheries Officer advised the participants to be cautious in the use of NAFCOOP as an example on which to base their decisions, as in the minds of most fishers, the failures tended to be the most prominent recollection.

He indicated that among the benefits that could be derived from an NFO might be health benefits and pension plan for the fisherfolk of St. Lucia, noting that these were issues which had been pursued in the past. However, the advanced age range of most of the fisherfolk which comprised the organization made it unattractive to the financial agencies that were approached. Younger fisherfolk were required to make the scheme viable, with members having to contribute to the scheme as well.

In ending, he encouraged participants to present their ideas and to participate fully in the consultations, noting that the Fisheries Division was ready and available to support their activities and the establishment of the NFO for St. Lucia.

Mr. Terrence Phillips, Programme Manager, CRFM Secretariat, thanked the CFO for taking time from his vacation to address the participants and for his words of encouragement. He pointed out that it was an indication of his ongoing commitment towards the Project and the formation of an NFO in St. Lucia.

3.0 Introduction of Participants

All participants present at the consultation introduced themselves and indicated the organisations that they represented. It was observed that all of the fisherfolk present represented a primary fishers' cooperative which was very encouraging. The resource persons, including the Fisheries and Cooperative Officers also introduced themselves and explained that their role at the Consultation was generally for the provision of advice and guidance to the participants. The team from the CRFM Secretariat, Barbara Bradley, Executive Secretary of the National Fishermen Producers Co-operative Society Limited, Harold Guiste, Facilitator, and Terrence Phillips, Programme Manager, introduced themselves and set out the order of business for the consultations thereafter. (see list of participants set at appendix 1. See agenda for the consultation set at appendix 2).

4.0 Overview of CTA/CRFM Project: *Development of Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations*

Mr. Terrence Phillips, Programme Manager, Fisheries Management and Development, CRFM Secretariat, gave an overview of the CTA/CRFM Project: Development of Caribbean Network of Fisher Folk Organizations which helped to introduce the Project to the participants and provided information on the objective of the Consultation. He also commented on the need for making fishers and fisher folk groups more aware of their role in the participatory approach to fisheries management and to get them involved in the decision making process. In addition, he emphasized the need for networking of fisher folk organizations at the national and regional levels, bearing in mind the shared nature of the fisheries resources and the need for collaboration in the management of said resources.

He encouraged the fisheries department to share copies of the document entitled, "Fisherfolk organizations in the Caribbean: briefing note on networking for success", with the participants so that they could better appreciate the rationale relating to the formation of the NFO and CARNUFO.

The participants were informed of the production of the Fisher Folk Net Newsletter which was soon to be produced to provide information to FFOs, Fisheries and Cooperatives Departments and other interested agencies and persons. He also mentioned that the Fisheries Departments in the respective Member States would be asked to ensure that the newsletters were being distributed locally in electronic and hard copy form as required.

4.1 Discussion

The need to make information available in a timely manner on fisheries and related matters in formats that could be easily utilized by the various stakeholders or target groups was identified as being very important.

5.0 Fisherfolk Organization in the Caribbean: *Networking for Success*

This presentation was made by the Facilitator, Mr. Harold Guiste. He indicated that the main objective of the presentation was to provide information to the participants on the benefits of forming umbrella organisations, challenges involved, and the importance and benefits of networking among individuals, groups and organizations.

A brief history of the reasons for the formation of FFOs in the Caribbean was presented, with the causes for successes and failures being identified. The different types of fisherfolk organizations, primary, secondary, apex, and regional, were defined, and the rationale for the formation of NFOs given. The concept of the formation of CARNUFO and the likely benefits as it related to using an organized network to help fisherfolk realize increased earnings, enhanced social status and conservation of the fishery resources were pointed out.

Some critical requirements for ensuring the viability and success of a network in terms of purpose and function were explained to the fishers. Types of networks that could possibly be used were provided, along with a schematic diagram of how the NFOs would be positioned in such networking arrangements.

5.1 Discussion

The participants indicated that they understood the rationale for the formation of NFOs and agreed with them, but indicated that they would now have to seek “buy-in” from their members. It was agreed by all that an NFO was required but the type of organization formed would have to be inclusive, providing opportunity for all FFOs to join, as this would be critical to the success and sustainability of the organization.

Participants noted that the failure of the NAFCOOP, which was the first attempt at forming an NFO, was a bad experience and they did not want to repeat it. They indicated that among the reasons for its failure were:

- i. poor or no communication between the NAFCOOP and its unit PFOs.
- ii. roles were not clearly defined or understood.
- iii. poor financial management
- iv. no oversight of its operations to ensure accountability.

They indicated that they would use the lessons learnt from that experience and be sure to enforce the rules governing the operations of the organization by the regulatory agencies.

The participants recognized the challenge of setting up an NFO that would attract boat owners and non-boat owners and recognized the need to work to involve the latter. They also recognized the need to bring in other stakeholders such as net makers, boat builders, etc.

6.0 Launching of a National Fisher folk Organisation (NFO); Rationale, Legal and Institutional Requirements, Objectives, Role and Functions, Membership, Decision –Making.

This topic was presented by a former cooperatives officer, Mr. Augustine Joseph, who had been hired by the Cooperative Division to promote the formation of an NFO among the primary fishers cooperatives of St. Lucia.

He explained that there were eight registered fishers' cooperatives on the Island and that discussions had been held with their membership regarding their willingness to form an NFO. From these discussions, five had passed resolutions to form an NFO while the other groups were yet to be convinced. He indicated that they would go ahead and form the NFO with the five, while continuing to work with the others to encourage them to become part of the organization.

He further indicated that draft by-laws that dealt with membership, shares, voting rights, etc., were already prepared and only needed to be reviewed once the NFO was formed. Also, a business plan would have to be developed.

6.1 Discussion

Participants indicated the areas in which they thought that they would like to see the NFO function. These were identified as: advocacy, institutional development and training of PFOS, representation on such bodies as the Fisheries Advisory Committee, bulk purchase of fishing gear and material, and participation in activities to conserve and manage the fishery resources.

7.0 Formation, Objectives, Structure, Role Functions and Operation of a National Fisherfolk Organisation: The Belize Experience.

This presentation was delivered by Mrs. Barbara Bradley, Belize Fishermen Cooperation Association (BFCA) representative, who gave a very comprehensive account of the structure and functions of the BFCA. She explained that the NFO engaged in training and education and performed an advocacy role for its members.

Mrs. Bradley, the Executive Secretary of the Belize National Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited (a PFO), also explained that this Cooperative performed a marketing service to its members and at least two other PFOs. They were responsible for sales and marketing of conch and lobster to the United States of America. She presented some aspects of the report of the 41st

Annual General Meeting of the National Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited and highlighted its financial standing.

A slide presentation on the processing of lobster was shown giving an idea of the magnitude of the operations of the Cooperative and the benefits which members enjoyed.

7.1 Discussion

Participants indicated that they were impressed by the operations of the BFCA and Belize National Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited. It was recommended that exchange visits should be arranged to expose fishers and the PFO/NFO executives to the operations of these cooperatives.

8.0 Way Forward

In St. Lucia there are eight fishermen's cooperatives and the defunct NFO. Five of these cooperatives were represented at the Consultation. The participants agreed to the following as the steps necessary to arrive at the formation of an NFO for St. Lucia, acting on the mandate given by the five fishers' cooperatives to pursuing registration of the NFO:

1. Review the by-laws and have them approved.
2. Apply for registration and work towards being registered by 31st August 2007.
3. After registration, hold the first general meeting and elect an executive body of the organization. This has to be done within 30 days of registration, so participants agreed that this should be done by 30th September 2007.
4. Produce a strategic business plan for the organization
5. Negotiate for representation by the NFO on the St. Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation.

Concerning the formation of a Caribbean Regional Network of National Fisherfolk Organisation, participants indicated their general interest with some degree of caution since they recognized that there was much to be done internally before launching out to form CARNUFO.

Closing remarks for the Consultation were given by Programme Manager, CRFM Secretariat, who thanked participants for their active participation, and commended them for their advanced state of readiness to form an NFO in St. Lucia.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

List of participants for the National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk Organisation (NFO) in St. Lucia.

Name	Organisation	Designation
Augustine Joseph	Co-operative Department	Former Co-operative Officer
Girard Charles	Castries Fisheries Cooperative	President
Julian Alexis	Soufriere Fisheries Cooperative	Manager
Alexander D'Auvergne	Soufriere Fisheries Cooperative	President
Ancelatus Joinville	Choiseul Fisheries Co-operative	President
Malinda Faucer	Choiseul Fisheries Co-operative	Secretary
Lindel Reggie	Dennery Fisheries Co-operative	Assistant Secretary
Patrick Augustin	Dennery Fisheries Co-operative	Manager
Nadine Estaphen	Co-operative Department	Senior Co-operative Assistant
Ebert Stevens	Co-operative Department	Co-operative Officer
Julitta Herman	Gros-Islet Fisheries Co-operative	Secretary
Peter Francis	Goodwill Co-operative	Manager
Marcel Edwin	Fisheries Department	Fisheries Assistant
Lambert Vitals	Goodwill Co-operative	President
Vaughn Charles	Fisheries Department	Chief Fisheries Officer
Sheperd Joseph	Fisheries Department	Fisheries Warden
Elvis JnBaptiste	Fisheries Department	Fisheries Officer
Petronila Polius	Fisheries Department	Extension Officer
Christoper James	Fisheries Department	Fisheries Officer
Arden Jan-Pierre	Fisheries Department	Fisheries Assistant
Terrence Phillip	CRFM Secretariat	Facilitator
Barbara Bradley	BFCA	Resource Person
Harold Guiste	Dominica Fisheries Division	Facilitator

Appendix 2

National Consultation to Launch a National Fisherfolk Organisation (NFO) in St. Lucia

Agenda

Opening Ceremony

09:00 - 09:25 Opening Remarks – Chairman Mr. Vaughn Charles, Chief Fisheries Officer

09:25 – 09:40 Brief Remarks - Mr. Terrence Phillips, CRFM

09:40 – 10.05 Break

Working Session

10:05 – 10:20 Presentation – **Overview of CTA/CRFM Project: *Development of Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations*** – CRFM Secretariat

10:20 – 10:30 Presentation -**Brief history of the National Fishermen’s Association of Grenada** - President , Southern Fishermen’s Association

10:30 - 11:00 Presentation – **Fisherfolk Organisations in the Caribbean: *Networking for Success*** - CRFM Secretariat/Facilitator.

11:00 – 11:15 Discussion

11:15– 11:45 Presentation – ***Launching of a National Fisherfolk Organization (NFO): Rationale, Legal and Institutional Requirements, Objectives, Role and Functions, Membership, Decision-Making*** –Department of Fisheries/Cooperatives Department.

11:45 – 12:00 Discussion

12:00 – 12:15 Presentation – ***Formation, Objectives, Structure, Roles, Functions and Operations of a National Fisherfolk Organization: The Belize Experience*** - Belize Fishermen Cooperation Association (BFCA) representative.

12:15 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

1:30 – 2:30 Discussions on the Formation of a NFO in Grenada – Objectives, Role and Functions, etc.

2:30 – 3:00 Way Forward