A Process for Community-based Fisheries Co-management*

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Abstract

There are many similarities, and some differences, between community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM) and co-management. When CBCRM is considered an integral part of co-management, there is a new category of co-management which can be called community-based co-management. Community-based co-management is people-centered, community-oriented, resources-based and partnership-based. The implementation of community-based co-management has four components: resources management, community and economic development, capability building, and institutional support.

Co-Management

Fisheries co-management can be defined as a partnership arrangement in which government agencies, the community of local resource users (fishers), non-government organizations, and other stakeholders (fish traders, boat owners, business people, etc.) share the responsibility and authority for the management of a fishery (Fig. 1). Co-management covers various partnership arrangements and degrees of power-sharing and integration of local (informal, traditional, customary) and

centralized government management systems. There is a hierarchy of co-management arrangements or types. Sen and Raakjaer-Nielsen (1996) identified five broad types of co-management according to the role played by government and resource users. These are: instructive (minimal information exchange), consultative (consultation exists), cooperative (cooperation as equal partners), advisory (user advice to government), and informative (delegation of authority to users). They further state, "However, this typology is a simplification of a very complex situation. There is a multitude

of tasks that can be co-managed under a different type of co-management arrangement at different stages in the management process." The amount of responsibility and authority that the government and fishers have will depend upon country- and site-specific conditions. Determining what kind and how much responsibility and authority will be shared among the partners is a political decision.

Co-management is a middle course between state-level concerns on fisheries management for efficiency and equity, and local-level concerns for self-governance,
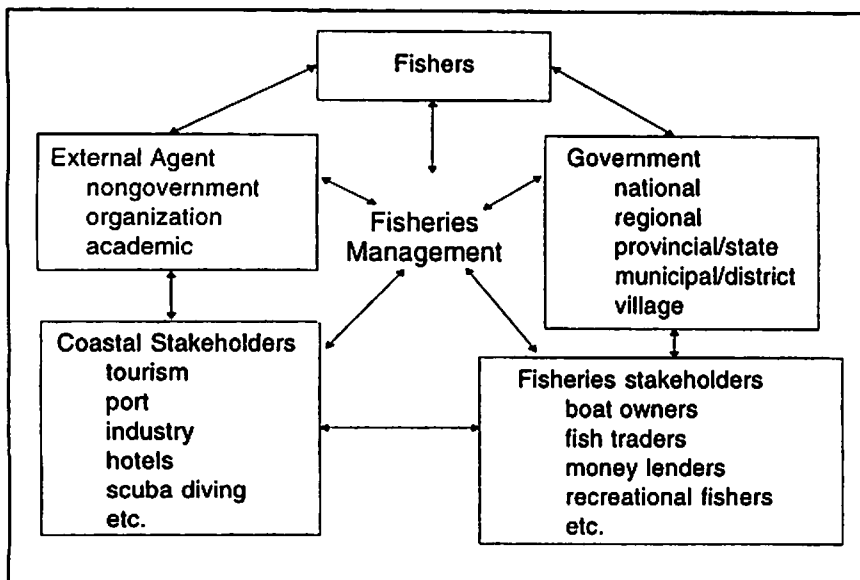

Fig. 1. Fisheries co-management is a partnership.

self-regulation and active participation. Co-management should not be viewed as a single management strategy. There is no one model of co-management. Instead it should be seen as a process of resource management: adjusting and maturing to changing conditions over time and involving aspects of democratization, social empowerment, power sharing and decentralization. Co-management is not a regulatory technique but should be seen as a flexible management strategy in which a forum or structure for action on participation, rule making, conflict management, power sharing, leadership, dialogue, decision-making, knowledge generation and sharing, learning, and development among resource users, stakeholders and government is provided and maintained. Partnerships are pursued, strengthened and redefined at different times in the co-management process, "depending on the existing policy and legal environment, the political support of government for community-based actions and initiatives, and the capacities of community organizations to become government partners"

(Rivera 1997). The co-management process may include formal and/or informal organizations of resource users and stakeholders. The establishment and successful operation of fisheries co-management can be a complex, costly and multiyear effort (Pomeroy and Williams 1994).

Community-based Coastal Resources Management

Community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM) is a central element of co-management. There is some debate, however, over the similarities and differences between co-management and CBCRM. Community-based resource management, as explained by Korten (1987), includes several elements: a group of people with common interests, mechanisms for effective and equitable management of conflict, community control and management of productive resources, local systems or mechanisms for capture and use of available resources, broadly distributed participation in control

of resources within the community, and local account-ability in management. Sajise (1995) has defined community-based resource management as "a process by which the people themselves are given the opportunity and/or responsibility to manage their own resources, define their needs, goals and aspirations, and to make decisions affecting their well-being." Sajise further states that "CBRM as an approach emphasizes a community's capability, responsibility and accountability with regard to managing resources. It is inherently evolutionary, participatory and locale-specific and considers the technical, sociocultural, economic, political and environmental factors impinging upon the community. CBRM is basically seen as community empowerment for resource productivity, sustainability and equity."

Ferrer and Nozawa (1997) state that "CBCRM is people-centered, community-oriented and resource-based. It starts from the basic premise that people have the innate capacity to understand and act on their own problems. It begins where the people are, i.e., what the people already know, and builds on this knowledge to develop further their knowledge and create a consciousness." They further state that "it strives for more active people's participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of coastal resource management programs. CBCRM allows each community to develop a management strategy which meets its own particular needs and conditions, thus enabling a greater degree of flexibility and modification. A central theme of CBCRM is empowerment, specifically the control

over and ability to manage productive resources in the interest of one's own family and community. It invokes a basic principle of control and accountability which maintains that control over an action should rest with the people who will bear its consequences".

Fellizar (1994) writes, "CBRM can be looked at in various ways. It can be as a process, a strategy, an approach, a goal or a tool. It is a process through which the people themselves are given the opportunity and/or responsibility to manage their own resources, define their needs, goals and aspirations and make decisions affecting their well-being. A strategy for achieving a people-centered development, CBRM has a decision-making focus in which the sustainable use of natural resources in a given area lies with the people in the local communities. CBRM is an approach through which communities are given the opportunity and responsibility to manage in a sustained way the community resources, define or identify the amount of resources and future needs, and their goals and aspirations, and make decisions affecting their common well-being as determined by technical, sociocultural, economic, political and environmental factors. It is a tool which facilitates the development of multilevel resource management skills vital to the realization of potentials of the community. Also, CBRM stands for people empowerment for achieving equity and sustainability in natural resource management. The key concepts are community, resources, management, access and control over resources, viable organizations and availability of suitable technology for resource management and utilization."

Rivera (1997) states that the CBCRM approach has several characteristics. It is consensus-driven and geared toward achieving a balance of interests. The emphasis is on communities, and at its core is community organization. It is a process of governance and political decision-making and it is geared toward the formation of partnerships and power-sharing. He writes "It can be argued that CBCRM is a politically negotiated process of making decisions on the ownership, control and overall policy directions of coastal resources. Questions of resource allocation, distribution of resource benefits and management arrangements among stakeholders will always have to be included. Moreover, CBCRM's central concern is the empowerment of groups and social actors and a sense of self-reliance at the micro level that stimulates a more synergistic and dynamic linkage to the meso- and macro-levels. Further, it can be argued that CBCRM is the route to co-management. It is maintained that power issues are central to the formation of co-management schemes. Hence, partnerships between government and communities should take careful consideration of the capacities of communities in making and sustaining these partnerships." Rivera (1997) states that in the Philippines, much of the work of NGOs on CBCRM can really be considered as co-management. Co-management is referred to by the NGOs as tripartite formation between government, community and NGO. NGOs also refer to co-management as "scaling up", i.e., the recognition that the state cannot be ignored in sustaining local actions. The scaling up efforts of NGOs includes project replication, expansion of the geographic scale of management efforts (i.e., single community to jurisdictional), building grassroots movements, and influencing policy reform.

Community-based Fisheries Co-management

The above definitions of community-based resource management show that while there are many similarities between the concepts of co-management and CBCRM, there are differences in the focus of each strategy. These differences center on the level of participation of government and when the government becomes involved in the process. CBCRM is people-centered and community-focused, while co-management focuses not only on these issues but also on a partnership arrangement between government and the local community and resource users. There is also a difference in the way the process of resource management is organized, with co-management having a broader scope and scale than CBCRM. The government most often plays a minor role in CBCRM. Co-management, on the other hand, has a major and active role for government. Government serves a number of important functions including provision of supporting policies and legislation such as decentralization of management power and authority, the fostering of participation and dialogue, legitimization of community rights, initiatives and interventions, enforcement, addressing problems beyond the scope of the community, coordination at various levels, and financial and technical assistance, among others. Government provides legitimacy and accountability to CBCRM through co-management. Government must establish commensurate rights and conditions and devolve some of its own powers for both co-management and CBCRM to be effective resource management strategies. Only government can legally establish and defend user rights and security of tenure

at the community level. Co-management often addresses issues beyond the community level, at regional and national levels, and of multiple stakeholders, and allows these issues, as they affect the community, to be brought more effectively into the domain of the community. CBCRM practitioners sometimes view government in an external role which is only brought into the project at a later stage or as needed. This often leads to misunderstandings and lack of full support from government. Co-management strategies involve government agencies and resource managers early and equally with the community and stakeholders in resource management, developing a trust between the actors.

When CBCRM is considered an integral part of co-management, a new category of fisheries co-management can be characterized that is called community-based co-management. Community-based co-management includes both the characteristics of CBCRM and co-management, i.e., people-centered, community-oriented, resource-based and partnership-based. Thus community-based co-management has the community as its focus, but recognizes that "to sustain such action, a horizontal and vertical link is necessary" (Rivera 1997). Successful co-management and meaningful partnerships can only occur when the community is empowered and organized.

A Process of Community-based Co-management

The implementation of community-based co-management (when implemented as a development project) can be viewed as having three phases: pre-implementation, implementation, and phase-out and post-implementation (Fig. 2).

(It should be noted that the following discussion includes only one. possible process of implementing co-management arrangements. Other approaches do exist.) The pre-implementation phase of co-management usually starts with a problem recognition by the resource users and stakeholders, open discussion about the problem, negotiation, consensus building, and the development of agreement on a plan of action. The community may seek assistance from outside agencies such as government, NGOs and other. Government, non-government organizations and/or donor agencies may enter at this point to assist the community in preparing a project plan and strategy. Initial approvals for the project may be obtained from different levels of government. Government begins to work directly with resource users and stakeholders and linkages are established. The development and strengthening of these linkages is a continuous process throughout the life of the co-management activities. It should be noted that most of the co-management activities are continuous and overlapping, especially during the implementation phase.

Implementation of co-management has four components: resource management, community and economic development, capability building and institutional support. The resource management component involves resource protection, conservation, rehabilitation, regulation and policy. The community and economic development component involves alternative and supplemental livelihood development, community services and infrastructure, and regional economic activities. The capability building component involves people empowerment and participation, education, leadership and

organization. The institutional support component involves conflict management mechanisms; individual and organizational linkage development; interactive learning; forums for knowledge sharing, power sharing and decision-making; and institution building/strengthening.

Community entry and integration are usually the first steps in implementation. Field workers and community organizers conduct a series of meetings and discussions with fishers, stakeholders and government officials to introduce and explain the concept of co-management. Other activities include identifying key individuals and groups, explaining and answering questions about the project, awareness raising, participating in community activities such as fishing and conducting a general household census to collect some basic socioeconomic data. Participatory research is conducted as a second step to collect and analyze baseline data on the community and its natural resources through: (1) a resource and ecological assessment (REA), (2) a socioeconomic assessment (SEA) and (3) a legal, policy and institutional assessment (LPIA). Traditional and indigenous knowledge is both sought after and included in the baseline data. Once the community feels comfortable with the community organizers, a community problem, needs and opportunity assessment is conducted as a third step through a series of community meetings, key informant interviews, surveys and one-on-one discussions. Information from the baseline surveys and the problem, needs and opportunity assessment is shared with the community and government to help in preparing

management and development objectives and strategies. Education and information dissemination, step four, to community members and government on a range of topics including environmental and resource management and community development will allow for awareness raising and to assist in making more informed decisions and to developing solutions. Community core groups and organizations are established for community participation and management as a fifth step. Leaders within the community are identified. Core groups and organizations may be established from existing groups within the community. These groups and organizations are the foundation for the co-management activities as they will take over the authority and responsibility for management and development activities and be the venues for representation and power sharing. It is during this step that delineation and clarification of the roles and responsibilities of organizations and stakeholders are undertaken. As a sixth step, the core groups and organizations, working in a partnership arrangement with government and other stakeholders, will develop specific objectives and strategies for a management and development plan including co-management agreement. With technical and funding support, the activities of the management and development plan are implemented through specific projects as the seventh step. These projects may include capacity building, alternative and supplemental livelihood, resource management such as marine reserves and enforcement, and community infrastructure such as water wells. Monitoring and evaluation should be central elements of the overall co-

management activities, and indicators of success should be identified and agreed upon by all participants in step eight. The monitoring process allows for interactive learning and a feedback system.

Post-implementation activities include evaluation of project activities and adjustment of plans and activities as needed. Where feasible and possible, replication and extension of results to other communities are undertaken. Every co-management project should have a schedule for the phase-out of outside assistance for the project. At this point, the co-management arrangements become truly self-sustaining.

Fisheries co-management is no panacea for sustainable fisheries management. It is but one alternative strategy for resource management. It is, however, a strategy which is receiving more attention from resource managers, policy-makers, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and donors worldwide.

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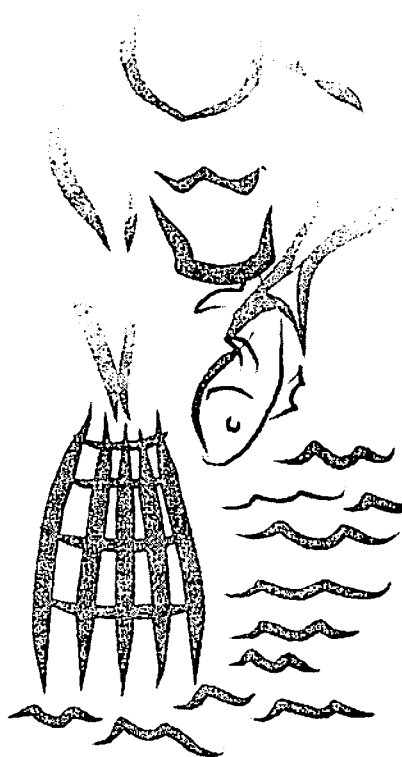
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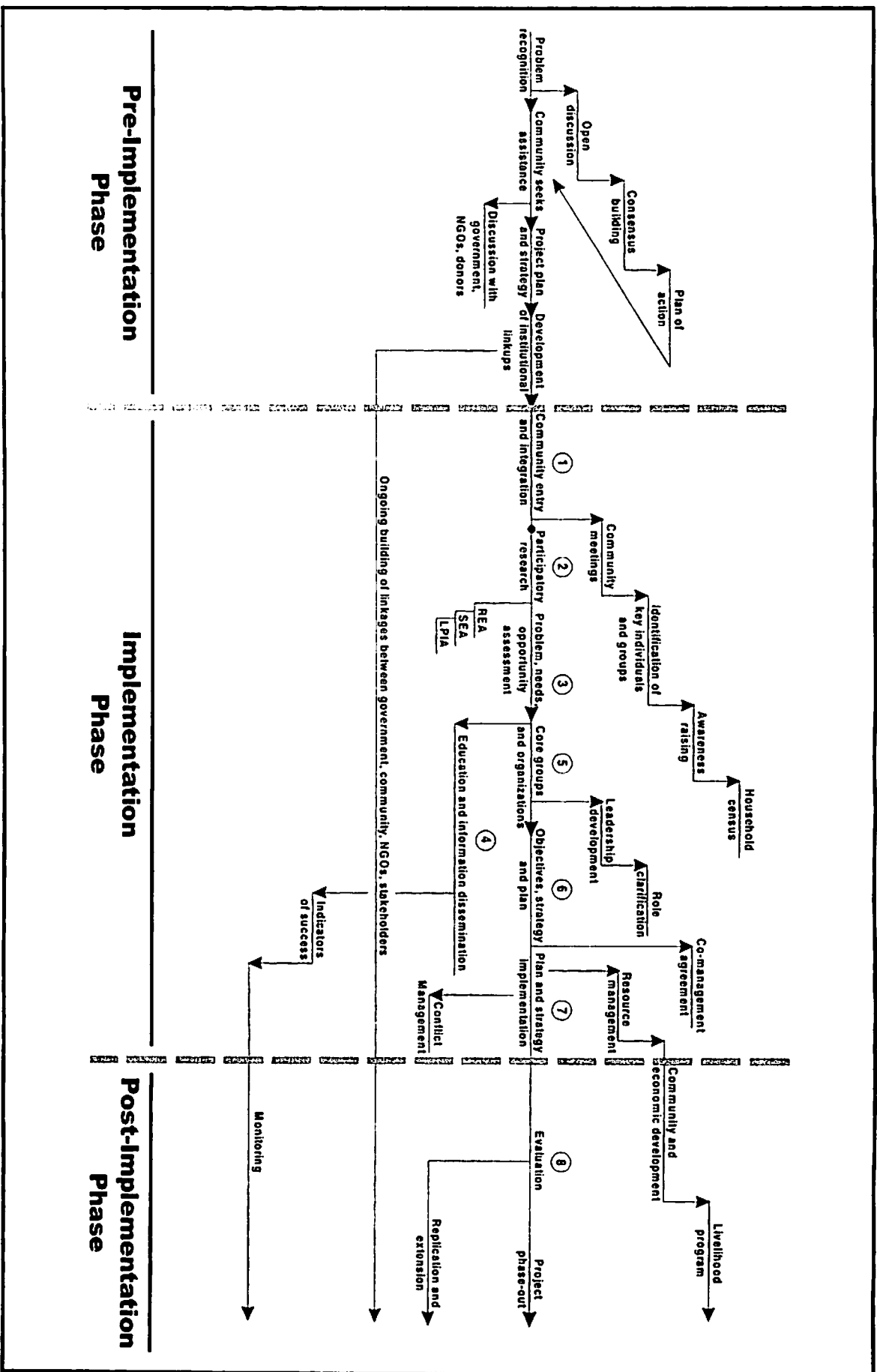
Pre-Implementation Phase

Implementation Phase

Post-Implementation Phase

Problem recognition → Open discussion → Consensus building → Plan of action

Community seeks assistance → Project plan and strategy → Development of institutional linkups

Discussion with government, NGOs, donors

Community entry and integration ①

Participatory research ② → Community meetings → Identification of key individuals and groups → Awareness raising → Household census

Problem, needs, opportunity assessment ③
REA
SEA
LPIA

Core groups and organizations ⑤ → Leadership development → Role clarification

Education and information dissemination ④

Objectives, strategy and plan ⑥ → Co-management agreement

Plan and strategy implementation ⑦ → Resource management → Community and economic development → Livelihood program

Conflict management

Indicators of success

Ongoing building of linkages between government, community, NGOs, stakeholders

Monitoring

Evaluation ⑧ → Project phase-out

Replication and extension

Fig. 2. A process for community-based fisheries co-managemen[t]