

Community-based tourism policy in the Windward Islands.

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1.0 Introduction:

Policy remains an ambiguous and sometimes misunderstood component of government operations in the Windward Islands, a group of four islands in the Eastern Caribbean, West Indies. This phenomenon may not be unique to these islands, as it is not uncommon that when policies are articulated or stated, other factors militate against those prescribed positions or objectives. The fact that policy is *a course or principle of action adopted or proposed*, by a government in this case, it does not carry with it any compelling commitment to fulfilment. Policy is therefore an unreliable tool to measure government intent. But even when past government actions may be compressed into a policy direction, those directions are often inconsistent.

What are those factors that often compromise genuinely stated government policy? These tend to be, more often than not, economic/fiscal considerations consequent to changes in global economic or political fortunes. As a result matters of short-term economic importance override long-term environmental, social and cultural imperatives.

The government policies of the Windward Islands on community-based tourism, can only be summarized from their adopted actions as proposed actions or policy statements have proven to be less reliable. Policy does not operate outside of the political culture. Moreover, moving towards a new workable policy for tourism, generally, will only be accepted if it demonstrates unequivocally, a significant contribution to tangible results within a four-five year period. This is the constitutionally approved length of governance for an elected government in most Caribbean democracies, including the Windward Islands.

Therefore, why investigate policy? To the extent that the examination of policy provides an indication of the course of action a government is more or less likely to take in response to a particular situation, is a justification. This paper describes the policies of Windward Islands' governments based on documents as well as actions, and demonstrates the value of developing specific and workable policies towards the achievement of a more harmonized sustainable community-based tourism for the islands.

2.0 Community-based Tourism

In examining community-based tourism (CBT) policy in the Windward Islands, it becomes apparent that there is no structured or clearly articulated CBT strategy in any of the islands with the exception of St. Lucia. Instead, sections and snippets of tourism development policies, such as tourism master plans, budget speeches and tourism development plans, promote or propose actions or plans that relate to certain aspects of CBT.

What is community-based tourism? CBT is a process and not an end in itself. It is not a type of tourism as “heritage tourism” and “ecotourism” are. Rather, it is a process that aspires to achieve greater sustainability in community, as well as tourism development. CBT in the Caribbean is a part of mainstream tourism and it operates within this context. This study attempts to investigate and analyse how existing policies of Windward Islands’ governments are relevant to this process called CBT, and then to make recommendations for a policy development process that allows CBT to achieve its goals. It should also be noted that the assumption that CBT is the accepted path to sustainable development is also a fallacy. The practice of CBT, to date, has not proven itself despite its noble aspirations. This misunderstanding is at the heart of much of the debate over developing sustainable models for tourism development using greater community participation.

However, it is widely accepted that the participation of host communities in tourism development is critical to achieving the objectives of sustainability. Livelihood Impact Assessment (LIA) attempts to measure community empowerment through participatory processes that focus on activities that impact positively on the livelihoods of the community. It involves local people, development agencies and policy makers deciding together how progress should be measured and results acted upon. The LIA approach differs from conventional evaluations in its central focus on “*people’s lives*” rather than on resources or defined project outputs. (Estrella and Geventa, 1998:14)

For the proponents of LIA, well-being does not only mean increased income. It involves issues like food security, social inferiority, exclusion, lack of physical assets and vulnerability to external shocks (Ashley and Carney, 1999). The value therefore, of community-based

approaches to tourism development, lies in the ability of the community to develop the capacity to be less vulnerable to changes in international tourism that would affect its capability to survive. It makes a call therefore for integrated development that does not replace traditional livelihood occupations with tourism. In this way, economic self-reliance can be realized.

In addition, the mutual satisfaction of visitor and host community is a critical factor in sustaining tourism.

“Sustainable tourism requires that the host population achieves rising living standards, that the tourist ‘guests’ are satisfied with the product and continue to arrive each year. It also requires that the natural environment is maintained for the continued enjoyment of the hosts and guests, all of which requires careful management.” Goodwin, 1996:283

For the purpose of this study, the key characteristics of CBT, developed by Geoghegan (1997) and generally accepted among sustainable tourism practitioners in the sub-region, are used in the analysis of the policy positions of the various islands. The four broad characteristics are:

- Involves and strengthens the community
- Protects the resource base
- Provides opportunities for local enterprise and employment; and
- Sustainability

3.0 Status of tourism in the Windward Islands:

This section attempts to give a synopsis of the wider tourism context within which community-based tourism operates. Three relevant areas namely cruise, stayover and marketing will be examined briefly to demonstrate this context, and critical questions will be raised about the opportunities for CBT approaches.

3.1 Cruise:

The cruise sector continues to be the fastest growing component of the tourism industry in the Windward Islands. As such, all governments have adopted policies in support of this sector with continued investment in supportive infrastructure like port enhancements. This is occurring much

to the displeasure of the stayover sector, who claim that they make a far more important contribution to the local economy and are not receiving parallel levels of investment by national governments.

But the cruise sector argues to the contrary and contends that first of all, the impact on the natural resource base is minimised as most activities are conducted on-ship; and secondly, that although the islands are expected to provide facilities to handle ship-generated waste and to supply basic provisions, an environmental tax has been levied on cruise ship passengers to fund solid waste management activities in the islands.

The opportunities for increased foreign exchange earnings channelled directly into government coffers is an incentive to governments to support the cruise sector when compared to the difficulties in recovering occupancy taxes collected on behalf of government by the stayover sector. In addition, the informal sector purports to benefit more directly from the cruise sector, as there is greater access for vendors, taxi drivers and tour providers. This is the cruise sector perspective on the debate as to which sector is more amenable to facilitate opportunities for CBT approaches.

3.2 Stayover

Collection of hospitality taxes from the stayover sector continues to be a problem in all of the islands. The hotel sector expects greater budgetary allocations for marketing and in some cases there are claims for 100% of those taxes to be put towards marketing efforts. The Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association has argued that a greater portion of occupancy taxes used for marketing the sector will encourage hotels to pay up their taxes and to feel less as government tax collection agencies. The Government of St. Lucia has conceded to a request from the small hotel sector to allocate 100% of their Hotel Accommodation taxes to marketing efforts on their behalf. This decision was taken in view of the financial difficulties consequent to annual occupancy levels averaging below 30%. How this will contribute to the sustainability of the small property sector is still unclear. What opportunities exist for CBT development from either the small hotel sector or the large hotel sector requires further analysis. There are linkages that can be developed through agriculture or the provision of other services like tours, transportation, or souvenir vending. But those linkages have proven to be more elusive than ever.

3.3 Marketing

Most major hotels take full responsibility for their marketing needs, and reap the benefits of annual occupancy levels in excess of 65%. But smaller properties that simply do not have the marketing budget depend on the promotional activities of their respective Tourist Boards in the case of St. Lucia and Grenada; or on the small Department of Tourism in St. Vincent; or in the case of Dominica, the National Development Corporation. But these smaller properties are, reportedly, the most delinquent tax-payers. That aside, the efforts of marketing of the islands by statutory agencies set up largely for this purpose; make only a dent in the promotions of the islands. Most visitors do not indicate their knowledge of the island from the activities of the government marketing agencies but from the major hotel chains like Sandals Resorts. Research conducted by the Centre for Responsible Tourism, University of Greenwich, supports this position. The study indicated that only three (3) out of twenty-one (21) British based tour-operators selling St. Lucia had ever heard of “Heritage Tours”, a small locally owned marketing group for nature/heritage products, and that even the principal agent selling St. Lucia, Thompson Holidays, had little knowledge or information about the heritage tourism products on offer (Ashley et al. 2001).

There are negative implications therefore, for the development of community-based accommodation facilities that are inherently small-scale. Marketing linkages to support those properties must be developed independently of the traditional methods used for promotions and marketing. How can the enabling environment be created to support the small-scale tourism sector? Is there need for a special policy shift on the part of governments to provide opportunities for the development of this sector, if it promises to aid community development more directly?

4.0 Overview of tourism policy development and discussion on relevance to the characteristics of community-based tourism.

This section attempts to examine several policy documents emanating from speeches, budget addresses and debates, tourism master plans and policy papers, as well as studies of the tourism sector carried out by various professionals. The broad tenets of the tourism development strategies are captured and outlined and some chronology of the development of the tourism policy is attempted in some cases where the information affords this. Based on this analysis, a picture of the policies of Windward Island governments as it relates to community-based tourism becomes apparent. The characteristics of CBT outlined in section 2.0 are used in reference to the

various policies. It will be observed that there is no structured or clearly articulated community-based tourism strategy actively being pursued in any of the islands with the exception of St. Lucia, and Dominica to a lesser extent.

4.1 Dominica

The tourism development strategy of the 1970's identified "beach-based tourism" as important to incorporate into the tourism development strategy of Dominica (Shankland Cox & Associates, 1971). The Caribbean was emerging as an important winter vacation destination, and Dominica was simply trying to fit itself into the mould.

However since the early 1990s Dominica has opted to market itself as an "ecotourism" destination, in recognition of its limited availability of white sand beaches, as well as its comparative advantage in providing a distinctly "green tourism product" in the Caribbean. This new developmental strategy was in response to the fast growing ecotourism market, and was viewed not as a complementary product but as an alternative (Esprit, 1994). This strategy emerged out of a National Search Conference on Nature Tourism held in 1992.

By 1997 it was clear that Dominica had made a clear market-image shift and was "not a traditional sun, sea and sand destination". As real competitiveness in tourism lies in diversity, and with the Dominica product being largely based on mountainous terrain, lush vegetation, rivers, waterfalls and natural attractions, the country decided to opt for nature-based tourism as its own special niche.

4.1.1 Ecotourism Development Plan

The setting up of the European Development Fund Project Management Unit in 1999, initiated commencement, in collaboration with the National Development Corporation, of an Ecotourism Development Programme. The project is expected to be implemented in 2002 and has the following programme heads.

- Institutional Strengthening
- Human Resource Development
- Destination Marketing
- Eco-Tourism Product Development
- Community Development Programme.

The absence of a programme for policy development in the Ecotourism Development Plan is instructive. This is perhaps not an oversight, but based on the recognition that policy is driven by actual programmes. These programmes should inform, as well as provide the advocacy for influencing government policy in support of creating the environment for genuine ecotourism development, if that is the desire.

The second most insightful component of the Ecotourism Development Plan is a clearly articulated Community Development Programme that speaks to a specific focus on poverty alleviation. This inclusion is reflective of a policy that tourism development of itself does not translate automatically into economic equity, and as such, a deliberate programme area must be implemented to ensure some level of social and economic justice. This policy is consistent with the characteristics of CBT on community involvement and opportunities to foster local empowerment.

4.1.2 Environmental Management Systems

The operations of many hotels in Dominica fall way below best environmental practices globally. Ecotourism and the required environmental management practices are concepts that are alien to the hotel sector. However, this cannot be said for eco-attractions and dive operators where there is a voluntary approach to natural resource protection (Caribbean Futures Ltd., 1997:36). Clear policies or mechanisms to protect the natural resource base are yet to be articulated clearly, even though the NDC is working on the development of a certification system for sites and attractions called the Nature Island Standards of Excellence (NISE).

4.1.3 Protected Areas

Dominica has attracted a reputation in the Windward Islands for its proactive approach to establishing protected areas, through the designation of national parks and a world heritage site. Most of these are managed by government agencies and relations to the local communities, in terms of management or employment opportunities, continue to be inadequately developed.

4.1.4 Community Involvement

One other major concern is that site development is occurring at a faster rate than community involvement (Ibid:37). This is most evident in the development of a model Carib Village to be used as a tourism attraction in the Carib Reserve. Members of the local Carib community have complained of insufficient community involvement in the planning, design and construction of the attraction. The responsible development agency argues that the charges of non-involvement

of the local community are inaccurate. These contending views are symptomatic of the inherent dilemma in facilitating community-based tourism development. Synergy between product development and community involvement continues to be a challenge to achieving sustainable ecotourism development.

4.2 St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Most tourism development activities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have been concentrated almost entirely in the southwest enclave of the main island and on the smaller Grenadine islands. This is because St. Vincent is primarily an agricultural island and tourism is relegated to the coastal rim. This characteristic is not unique to St. Vincent but is perhaps most noticeable among the Windward Islands. The Grenadines have provided greater opportunities for the development of the tourism sector because of their natural attributes of white sand beaches and remote privacy for the rich and famous.

4.2.1 Yachting

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has emerged as the premier yachting destination in the Eastern Caribbean, largely because of the Grenadines. The yachting sub-sector is the largest in terms of arrivals having grown by 5.1% since 1996 (Eustace, 2000). But the rapid expansion of tourism particularly in the Grenadines is resulting in concerns about the inadequacy of the infrastructure and support services to maintain the levels of growth. It is also felt that the contributions of yachting to the tourism sector are still largely untapped as there is no legislation to force yachts to clear at the port of entry. There is also insufficient advantage taken to increase visitor spend from yachts persons (Central Planning Division, GOSVG, 1991).

4.2.2 Private sector incentives:

Recently, there has been a concerted effort on the part of government to encourage local private sector investment in the tourism industry. Incentives include “*duty free concessions to enterprising Vincentians who invest in facilities for refreshments and washrooms at strategic points*” along the main routes used by tourists. Exemptions from custom duties have also been applied to tour buses and boats to encourage aspiring tour service providers to take advantage of the burgeoning cruise industry (Eustace, 2000).

4.2.3 Community empowerment:

In addition, there has been a movement by government in support of devolving power to local communities to manage and reap the economic benefits from natural attractions that reside within respective communities.

“It is critical that local communities where tourist assets are located, are able to identify with the potentials of those assets to generate economic returns to the residents of those communities...This can more readily come about where the local community is involved in the management of those assets” Eustace, 2001.

4.2.4 Attracting the Cruise sector:

The island has been severely affected by poor solid waste management practices resulting in the loss of Princess Cruises two years ago. But the government has recognised that the yachting and cruise sub-sector has been the most resilient sector in the wake of the global economic downturn as well as the terrorist events of September 11, 2001. As such the Government has recognised the need to further encourage the development of this sector and has proceeded along a two-prong approach. The first is to re-examine the issue of the cruise ship tax and to adjust it downwards in an effort to bring it in line with other OECS destinations as well as to offer volume discounts to cruise lines.

Secondly, the government has adopted a “*policy of ‘zero tolerance’ to any violation of existing legislation which touches upon the environment and related concerns*”. This environmental legislation specifically include: “*litter on the streets and in drains; discharge of fuel or effluent in the sea and noise pollution*” (Gonzalves, 2001:21-22).

The importance of the cruise sector to community-based tourism has been discussed in section 2, and encouragement of this sector is in direct support of furthering the immediate objectives of community-based initiatives.

4.2.5 Heritage Tourism Project

The Heritage Tourism Project (HTP) funded by the Organisation of American States (OAS) for the period 1996-1999 focused on four broad objectives:

- Public awareness of traditions and heritage
- Craft development for teaching, production and sale
- Heritage tourism product development and marketing

- Documentation and presentation of cultural heritage

The project results have not been made available to this study. However, the components of this project support CBT approaches to tourism development and present the best example of this in St. Vincent.

4.2.6 Sector Development Plan

The National Tourism Sector Development Plan (2001-2006) makes limited reference to the achievements of the HTP, or the incorporation of its achievements into the plan. This new development plan will have six major components:

1. The Product
2. Marketing
3. Infrastructure
4. Site development
5. The Environment
6. Human Resources

The plan endorses the government policy to empower local communities to develop and manage attractions with a view to greater equity in the distribution of benefits from tourism. Product enhancement with respect to heritage tourism is confined largely to the built cultural heritage particularly in the capital of Kingstown; and catering primarily to the cruise market. It recommends that marketing efforts should be focused on the European market and should attempt to be more cost effective. In other words, St. Vincent should begin to consider niche marketing and develop *“its own brand image probably based on quality marine and eco-tourism”*.

The plan goes on to suggest that institutional arrangements need to be reconfigured with the introduction of a National Tourist Organisation to handle marketing; a National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority to be responsible for site development and maintenance; and the EU funded Agricultural Diversification Project to spearhead new approaches to land use, environmental management, heritage preservation and agricultural linkages to the tourism industry.

It determines that human resource development should focus on making the industry more

“customer driven in terms of quality, service and value” and training of employees should become standard practice in all tourism establishments.

The five-year sector development plan has four main policy objectives.

1. Creating the enabling environment that will allow tourism to flourish
2. Policies that will encourage tourism initiatives to result in overall increase tourist spending
3. Translating economic benefits into greater social benefits for local communities
4. Encouraging inter-sectoral linkages including agriculture and the service sector.

4.2.7 Opportunities for linkages to tourism

Because St. Vincent has maintained a strong agricultural base, the basis for developing linkages with the formal tourism sector is available. Government’s stated policy to encourage inter-sectoral linkages with agriculture can lead to community development in rural agricultural communities.

Although the final HTP report was not made available to this study, the work programme and the interim report included craft skills development in rural communities with a view to participating in the tourism industry. Therein lies other opportunities to capitalise on the work began by the HTP.

4.3 St. Lucia

Tourism has emerged as the leading growth sector similar to the other Windward Islands. However, St. Lucia has led the way in terms of product quality and diversity, marketing, institutional arrangements and overall management of the sector.

The tourism industry in St. Lucia is somewhat of an enigma as it displays characteristics of both a mature destination as well as that on an emerging destination. For example, there exist features of low density, selectivity, long-staying and high spending visitors, as well as diversification of product offerings, whilst also demonstrating such features typical to the high density mass market such as low seasonality, short stays, price sensitivity, relatively high proportion of large hotels, and tour charters (Wilkinson, 1993). But there is a geographical spread between the two

types of tourism on the island whereby the southwest region of Soufriere displays the emerging market character whilst the northwest Castries region portrays that of the more mature destination.

The characteristics of the south and southwest parts of St. Lucia may prove more amenable to community-based approaches to tourism given the less mature nature of the tourism industry in these parts.

4.3.1 Hotel development and Incentives regime

The first piece of legislation in support of the tourism industry came as early as 1959 with the Hotel Aids Ordinance. This ordinance gave hotels and other guest accommodations a seven year income tax holiday with duty-free concessions on all materials and equipment required for construction. But these incentives only began to take effect in the early 1970's when there was a construction boom, albeit short-lived as a result of the oil crisis. This period also saw direct government involvement in tourism with a 90% equity share held jointly by the Government and British Commonwealth Development Corporation to undertake major infrastructural works at Rodney Bay, thereby creating 400 acres of development land including 70 acres of prime tourism development lands, a marina lagoon and 4,500 feet of new beach through the reclamation of a link between the mainland and Pigeon Island.

In 1977, the Central Planning Unit developed a St. Lucia National Plan stating a policy on hotel development that would;

“... actively promote the development of smaller hotel units and guest houses in the future with concentrated development confined to the Rodney Bay area where, through the development company, every effort is being made to attract investment on the basis of an imaginative proposal to develop a series of flexible-unit low rise holiday villages.” (GOSL, 1977:35)

This policy has not been consistent with the re-commencement of hotel expansion in the late 1980s. It is fair to conclude that the creation of jobs appeared to take precedence over the development of a sustainable industry. In addition, the absence of a policy on training for the tourism industry *“appears to be symptomatic of emphasis being placed upon development of the*

physical plant without the development of human resources to service the plant". (Wilkinson, 1993:67)

The Tourism Incentives Act of 1991 increased the income tax holidays from 7 to up to 15 years for new hotel constructions and 10 years for renovations. A minimum of six rooms was required to qualify for the incentives. This automatically excluded the development of "homestays" or small guesthouses.

A new tourism act is currently being discussed with a view to making it more inclusive of the informal sector and to address wider areas like tour guiding, the taxi sector, vendors and other service providers.

In addition, incentives are to be introduced soon to encourage hotels to purchase locally produced goods and services. The Tourism Incentives Act will be amended to extend the existing 15 years duration of the concessions for hotels by an additional year for each EC\$10 million invested up to a maximum of 20 years (Anthony, 2001).

4.3.2 Cruise

The challenge to the cruise industry by the stayover sector, discussed in section 3.0, is refuted by a claim in St. Lucia that the steady increase of cruise visitor patronage of local tours and attractions has brought in an estimated EC\$10 million for the informal sector (Rambally, 2001). The cruise sector is also responsible for approximately EC\$1 million gross earnings for Heritage Tours (a marketing group of heritage tour providers) in its first two years of operations (CANARI, 2001). The average daily expenditure for cruise ship passengers for St. Lucia is estimated at US\$52 per person from US\$42 five years ago (Rambally, op.cit.). It is further argued that the multiplier effect of the cruise dollar is far greater than the stayover dollar making cruise a better replacement industry for bananas. The cruise sector continued to grow during 2001 when the stayover sector had experienced a 20% fall in arrivals.

4.3.3 Special Events

It was recognised that a major problem in international tourism was seasonality and that a strategy to attract regional tourists would help to bridge the low occupancy gap between the seasons. This lull in tourism arrivals every year during the months of May to June, was first met by "Aqua-Action" in the late 1980's, a water-based tourism extravaganza; and followed by the more successful Jazz Festival in the 1990s. A recommendation to place the marketing of major festivals like Carnival under the jurisdiction of the Special Events Department of the St. Lucia

Tourist Board is being actively considered. Opportunities for greater community benefits from such special events have not been analysed. Emphasis continues to be placed upon hotel occupancy and not sufficiently upon increasing visitor spend within the local economy.

4.3.4 Devolution of power

Regional development plans for Vieux-Fort and Soufriere have been less successful, with Soufriere using its natural attractions of the Sulphur Springs and the Pitons as a catalyst for tourism investment. The devolution of power to the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation in 1989 to manage the Soufriere port and the Sulphur Springs represented a major shift in government policy to empower communities to manage their own resources for the purpose of community development (Brown, 1997).

The setting up of the Southern Tourism Development Corporation in 2000 in the southern town of Vieux-Fort, with a subsidy from central government for operations is further expression of the willingness of the government to allow communities to manage tourism development in their respective communities.

All off-shore islands, with the exception of one that is privately owned, have been vested in the St. Lucia National Trust for management and protection. It is clear that there is a culture in government to devolve power to CBOs and NGOs for management purposes.

4.3.5 Plan for Protected Areas

A System of Protected Areas for St. Lucia (1992) was initiated by the St. Lucia National Trust and attracted a cross section of public and private sector participation as well as the wider civil society. The plan identified several areas requiring management as national parks, landmarks, reserves and protected areas. Whilst the plan has not been formally endorsed by government, it is used regularly as a guide for physical development planning purposes.

4.3.6 Community-based nature heritage tourism

The St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme arose out of concerns about the sustainability of the tourism industry as well as equity with respect to returns from the development of tourism in St. Lucia. The Programme embarked on five broad programme areas that ran concurrently with various degrees of success. These included:

- Policy
- Capacity building

- Technical Assistance
- Product development
- Marketing
- Public awareness and community mobilisation

The Programme used two complementary approaches:

1. Facilitating a broader distribution of the benefits of existing tourism (cruise and stayover)
2. Creating a new complementary sub-sector, identified as “heritage tourism”

The greatest achievements of the Programme have been in:

- a) raising awareness of the opportunities for poverty alleviation and increased economic livelihoods through heritage tourism;
- b) promoting of environmental management standards particularly among members of the newly establish sector;
- c) making in-roads into the established tourism industry through the marketing initiatives of the Heritage Tourism Association of St. Lucia (HERITAS), and increased market share particularly of the cruise industry;
- d) creating new products and attracting visitors away from the beach and into inland initiatives; and
- e) raising the profile of local tourism operators.

The successor programme for the SLHTP will concentrate on creating the enabling environment to facilitate growth of the sector through capacity building initiatives for collaborative organisations in support of the sector. This should result in Environmental Management Systems; Financing arrangements; Marketing arrangements; flagship projects demonstrating the principal components of heritage tourism; and demonstrated projects showing the contribution of heritage tourism to rural development.

4.4 Grenada:

Tourism has developed more slowly in Grenada than any of the other islands and therein lays the opportunity for a more diversified economy as the country is not yet overly dependent on tourism. However, the pressure to move single-mindedly in the direction of tourism is fuelled by a steady decline in the agricultural sector due to an aging farming population, fluctuating prices on the international market, high cost inputs and the lack of adequate diversification (Ramdeen-Joseph, 1999). *(The structure of this section differs from that of the previous. This is so because the documentation reviewed and interviews conducted did not provide the basis for a historical appreciation of the policy developmental process. Rather the recently published Tourism Sector Master Plan was used extensively to construct the policy environment for community-based tourism.)*

4.4.1 Nature Tourism

In 1988, a plan was initiated to establish the management of a System of National Parks and Protected Areas. Twenty-seven areas were identified in Grenada and sixteen in Carriacou, and five management categories were proposed. They were National Parks, Natural Landmarks, Cultural Landmarks, Protected Sea-capes and Multiple-Use Management Areas.

The natural attractions of Grenada lend themselves to a wide variety of nature-based tourism activities including mountain climbing, hiking, biking, snorkelling and scuba diving; as well as less strenuous activities like camping, picnicking, bird-watching and the general appreciation of nature and the outdoors.

In 1991, a sub-regional project sought to develop a nature/heritage tourism strategy as a basis for economic development, environmental conservation and enhancement of the country's heritage resources. The primary aim of the project was to involve communities in identifying, developing and managing resources within their respective communities for tourism purposes. Out of this project was born the National Advisory Council on Nature Tourism. In addition there has been a significant amount of awareness-raising about the potential for "Ecotourism" and the need for environmental protection and conservation. Two projects, the Royal Mt Carmel Falls and the development of trails for a nature tour for Carriacou, were completed.

The Master Plan for the Tourism Sector identifies a consultative role for the National Advisory Council on Nature Tourism.

4.4.2 *Master Plan for the Tourism Sector*

In order to derive maximum benefits, a Master Plan for the sector was developed. It advocates the following:

- a) Stronger links with other sectors including agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, services, handicrafts and creative arts.
- b) Even and equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism
- c) Promote local goods and services to ensure increased visitor spend
- d) Encourage the employment of local artists and entertainers on cruise lines
- e) Planned and coordinated development of the sector to minimise negative impacts on physical, social, economic, cultural and the general quality of life of residents

4.4.3 *Control of Tourism Development*

- In order to ensure that tourism development is managed and in line with the objectives of the National Environmental Action Plan, desirable carrying capacity level for the country in respect of both stayover and cruise and yachting tourism will be established.
- The Land Development Control Authority will exercise responsibility for establishing and implementing comprehensive procedures for the control of development.
- The coastal monitoring programme will be expanded to establish a continuous and reliable database on beach changes and water quality.
- NGOs and CBOs like the National Trust and the National Advisory Council for Nature Tourism will be accorded a consultative role.
- Government is committed to signing all international conventions that will ensure the safeguarding of the Caribbean Sea as a pollution-free zone.

4.4.4 *Product Development*

- Expansion of the all-inclusive resort concept outside existing tourism development areas, and bed and breakfast accommodations will be encouraged particularly in areas outside of St. Georges.
- Strategies to support the small hotel sector and to ensure its viability.
- Collaboration with cruise lines and private sector to ensure increases in cruise ship visits.

- New or expanded facilities for golf as a means to enhance and diversify the tourism product
- The progressive implementation of a network of high quality visitor attractions both natural and man-made.
- Promote the preservation and enhancement of the historical and unique qualities of urban buildings in St. Georges
- Upgraded and expanded marina facilities along with supporting services for the yachting sector.
- Expanded and upgraded duty-free facilities by the private sector, as well as for vending with the inclusion of proper restroom facilities.
- Casinos will not be entertained at this time.

4.4.5 Investment

- Expediting the process of investment proposals
- More pro-active role for the Industrial Development Corporation in encouraging potential investors for the tourism sector.
- Additional incentives for investors who locate developments outside of the main tourism development area (south St. Georges)

4.4.6 Air Access

- Charter traffic to be regulated and restricted to 50% of all available services
- Carriacou Airport to be developed to serve as major hub of the southern Grenadines

4.4.7 Marketing and Promotion

- Marketing policy will emphasize focused target marketing
- Domestic tourism to be encouraged through the provision of attractive rates and packages.

4.4.8 Human Resource Development

- Correlation between output of the educational system and the occupational demands of the tourism sector

- Integration of tourism and hospitality studies into the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels

5.0 Impact of Community-based tourism policy in the Windward Islands

The attempts at inserting sustainable development initiatives in the Windward Islands can be best described as “well-meaning but piece-meal”. The term “community-based tourism” continues to be ambiguous and unclear to most tourism officials. It is also used interchangeably with ecotourism, as well as nature and heritage tourism. There is a clear need to begin to define those terms and to distinguish between an approach to tourism development and a product type. It should be noted as well that product types like ecotourism and heritage tourism have been ascribed characteristics that refer to community-based approaches to their development.

St. Vincent wishes to market itself as a “*quality marine and ecotourism*” destination (Tourism Sector Plan 2001-2006.Executive Summary, p8.). Yet there is very little in the master plan that addresses the fundamentals of ecotourism in the way that Dominica has, for example. Dominica’s ecotourism strategy has a clear community development component when compared to St. Lucia’s Heritage Tourism Programme that focused primarily on the development of a new tourism sector. Grenada has stated clearly that nature-based tourism will be a complement to its existing tourism product and not an alternative as Dominica has emphatically stated.

5.1 Incentives

All the islands have some incentives regime dating back to the late 1950s and are designed primarily to attract hotels, and in the case of St. Vincent to attract hotels with casinos. St. Vincent is the only island with gaming facilities to date, although St. Lucia has since passed legislation to facilitate this. Grenada has an explicit no casino policy, at least for the time being. In St. Lucia, tax holidays range from 10 to 15 years, with additional years based on level of investment. Most incentive packages throughout the islands are designed to attract hotels. There is still a deafening silence on incentives for the informal sector or financing arrangements for small to medium enterprise development in tourism. It is noteworthy, that whereas explicit incentives are articulated for the hotel sector, in successive government statements, reference to the informal sector is consistently vague.

5.2 Cruise

Lewis (1999:10) notes that contribution to government revenues in St. Lucia from the cruise sector in 1998, was EC\$2.2 million when compared to EC\$14.4 million from the hotel stayover sector. There is a growing concern about the size of Caribbean government investments in supportive infrastructure for the cruise industry like docking berths and port facilities, and the corresponding shrinking size of tax revenues and visitor expenditure (Pattullo, 1996; Wilkinson, 1999).

However, all the islands have a strong pro-cruise policy with significant investments in port enhancement over the past 5 years, with the notable exception of Grenada. But port expansion or relocation is currently under active consideration in that island. Contribution to the informal sector is far greater than from the stayover sector even though local service providers complain about ship agents operating as both ground handlers and tour operators as well. St. Lucia has demonstrated the potential to capitalise on the benefits of the cruise market for the heritage tourism sector. The Carib Reserve in Dominica is also reaping some economic benefits from the cruise industry through the collaboration of a private sector agency.

5.3 Yachting

St. Vincent is largely dependent upon this sector for its survival, and is the fastest growing sub-sector. But the Grenadine Islands carry the weight of the yachting business. However, St. Vincent lags behind St. Lucia in terms of infrastructure to take advantage of increased visitor spend. Grenada also depends heavily on the yachting sector. The potential for the yachting sector in support of community-based initiatives is still largely under explored. St. Lucia has recently increased the length of stay for yacht-persons from 6 weeks to six months partly in recognition of their potential to spend within the local economy. This has significant implications for benefits to local communities where marinas are located.

5.4 Stayover

All the islands suffer from low accommodation capacity but large hotels dominate the stayover sector, except Dominica, which also has the highest level of local ownership of hotels and guesthouses. Both Grenada and St. Lucia have articulated policies to encourage the development of the small hotel sector but this has not been matched by adequate incentives. Small properties continue to face low occupancy and suffer from inadequate marketing. Grenada has indicated a

willingness to introduce all-inclusive hotels to its accommodation sector.

The need to link sites and attractions to the small-scale accommodation sector has not been explored sufficiently in any of the islands. There is a potential for attractive packaging that can match accommodation to desired vacation experience.

5.5 Devolution

St. Lucia has the best examples of devolution of power to local communities for the development and management of tourism resources for community development. St. Vincent has articulated a clear policy in that direction and Grenada has indicated greater consultation with and involvement of NGOs and CBOs in future tourism development.

But as desirable as devolution may be, a strategy for devolution must be conceptualised. The management guidelines for the Pointe Sable National Park on the south east coast of St. Lucia recommended that existing management agencies within the proposed Park, should “*retain their authority over specific areas, sites and resources*” (PSNPPC, 1999:4). Such a position can foster stability particularly where new institutional arrangements consequent to devolution, may be the cause of already significant disruption. Basically, the process of devolution should seek to minimise disruptive activities, by optimising the use of existing pieces of legislation and institutional arrangements. But there are some other critical questions that must be asked in relation to devolution.

- Does it enhance benefits to rural communities and is it a means to rural development?
- What are the impacts of national parks or protected areas on solid waste management; on local economies and on rural households?
- Is there a corresponding educational programme?
- Do incentives that encourage devolution contribute to poverty alleviation?
- Who benefits from participation and does it really empower communities?
- Do communities have the capacity to manage the resources devolved to them?
- What role will government institutions play in the new relationship?
- Will certain sub-groups be alienated in the process of devolution?

These questions must first be asked if they are to be answered. But they will only be asked if

there is a commitment to tourism development that puts community development first. Therefore, a commitment on the part of policy makers to this type of tourism development is essential, and government actions must reflect this policy position. The critical question is: how does one facilitate this policy formulation process?

6.0 The policy formulation process

The absence of a deliberate programme for policy development in Dominica's ecotourism development plan has already been identified as signalling a shift towards a new understanding of the policy development process. It is a programmatic approach to policy development as opposed to the traditional process of developing policy as an academic exercise and then trying to implement it.

The unreliability of stated government policies on equity in tourism as well as greater benefits to local communities requires a re-examination of this policy development process. This is critical as many governments see tourism as a source for foreign exchange generation rather than as a means to address poverty (Ashley et al, 2001:13). Any "development first" strategy using tourism as the basis, as community-based tourism proposes, must include "*provisions for influencing the processes of policy formulation*" (Geoghegan, 1997:17).

6.1 Lessons

Some important lessons about the policy formulation process are as follows:

- Effective policy formulation takes a long time.
- The commitment of institutions and individuals to the process is an absolute prerequisite.
- Government acceptance of a policy is "paper thing". Implementation becomes a "people thing".
- It is naive to think that participation leads automatically to empowerment or that incentives directed at the rural small sector will lead to development of rural communities.
- Avoid the "*them and us*" situation. Solutions will only be realised when a "*win-win*" situation for all concerned is attempted.
- There is little value in "*re-inventing the wheel*". Policies can be made to adjust to various components of the small-scale sector.

6.2 Strategies for the way forward

Therefore, building a supportive policy framework for developmental tourism requires a framework within which to work. The following influencing strategies have been identified by Ashley et al (2001:15) and are relevant to the Windward Islands.

- Promoting participatory planning
- Increasing communication with government and establishing a voice for small entrepreneurs
- Lobbying government for supportive policies and legislation particularly with respect to land tenure, infrastructure and local planning.
- Promoting inter-Ministerial initiatives and coordination for infrastructural development
- More useful linkages with the institutions responsible for destination marketing
- Greater allocation of concessions to influence investors in a unique tourism product.

As such, tourism must be placed within the context of social and economic development. It must, as a matter of government policy, include a national strategy to address poverty, rural underdevelopment, heritage conservation and sustainability. This should be addressed through a review of incentives, provision of technical assistance and the exploration of suitable financing arrangements for the sector. This will require a major policy shift, and political leaders will be expected to collectively develop and promote a new vision for tourism in the sub-region.

Achieving sustainability will require seriously addressing the causes of leakages and improve on the development of linkages to agriculture, local craft and other relevant services. The strategy should also include research, particularly for the purposes of marketing. This is critical, as market options should be more strongly influenced by the product.

7.0 Conclusion:

CANARI (1999) argues that community-based approaches to tourism can provide the opportunities to ensure sustainable development. First of all, this approach allows local people to participate in decisions made about developments in their communities. Secondly, it allows them the opportunity to participate and take advantage of the economic opportunities that may accrue through provision of goods and services to visitors. Thirdly, by involving community persons in the industry, it aids empowerment whereby local people take responsibility for managing their resources, particularly those most vulnerable to tourism activities. Fourthly, the opportunities made available for skills development further allow persons to acquire the relevant talents to develop and manage tourism enterprises in their community.

But how successful have community-based approaches been in facilitating this community empowerment? The fact that tourism is normally controlled by external forces, results in inequitable involvement in tourism planning and development.

“Socio-economic dimensions refer to stakeholders and their interests in tourism. The question to raise here involves who controls tourism at the destination, who should tourism be sustainable for? Which group loses and which gains? ...These questions are clearly relevant and have rarely been addressed in the various plans...” (Din,1997:155)

The truth is that despite the preponderance of the rhetoric on equitable involvement as a prerequisite for sustainable tourism in the literature of the 1990's, as one examines the practice of this among the islands, it will be discovered that it is almost non-existent. The emphasis by both developers and governments has been on developing the tourism market rather than on maximising benefits at the local level (Geoghegan, 1997:3). This practice is clearly not sustainable as the satisfaction of the market is determined by the quality of the product and the satisfaction of the host community. An underdeveloped product and a marginalised local community will inevitably lead to decline.

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