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**Information-sharing for Sustainable Development**

# **There is not Enough Support for Community-based Initiatives in St. Lucia – The Case of the Des Barras Sea Turtle Watching Initiative**

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Despite the early success of the Des Barras Sea Turtle Watch Programme, the failure of policies and mechanisms to sustain this initial success, contributed to its decline.

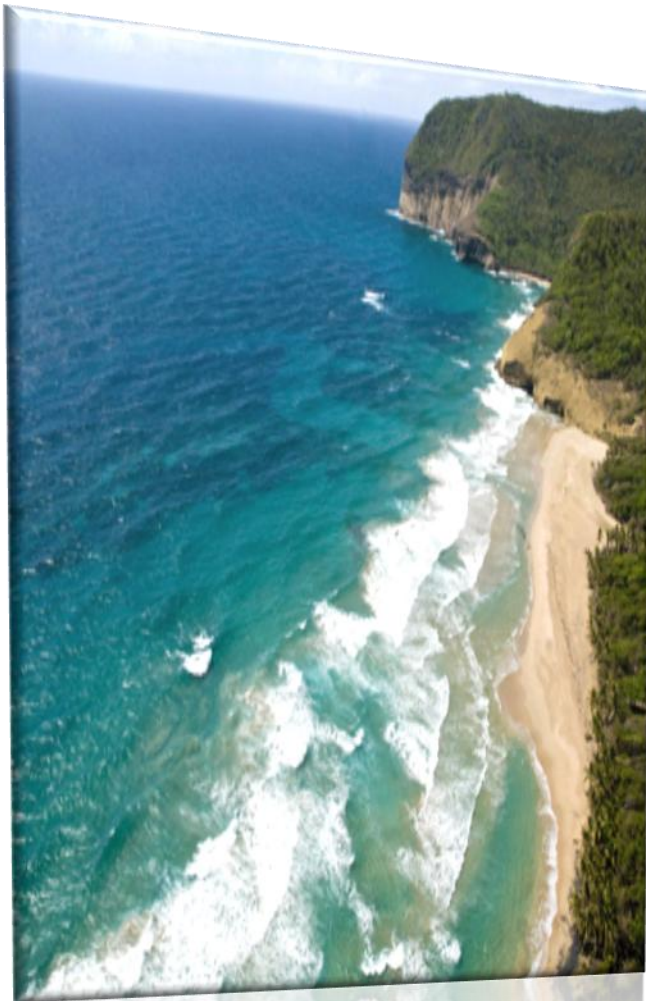


# Background

Des Barras – rural hamlet on East coast, just north of Grand Anse Beach

Grand Anse - Important landing site for leatherback turtles in Eastern Caribbean; but unsuitable for swimming and water sports

Road to Grande Anse passes through Des Barras and is in poor condition

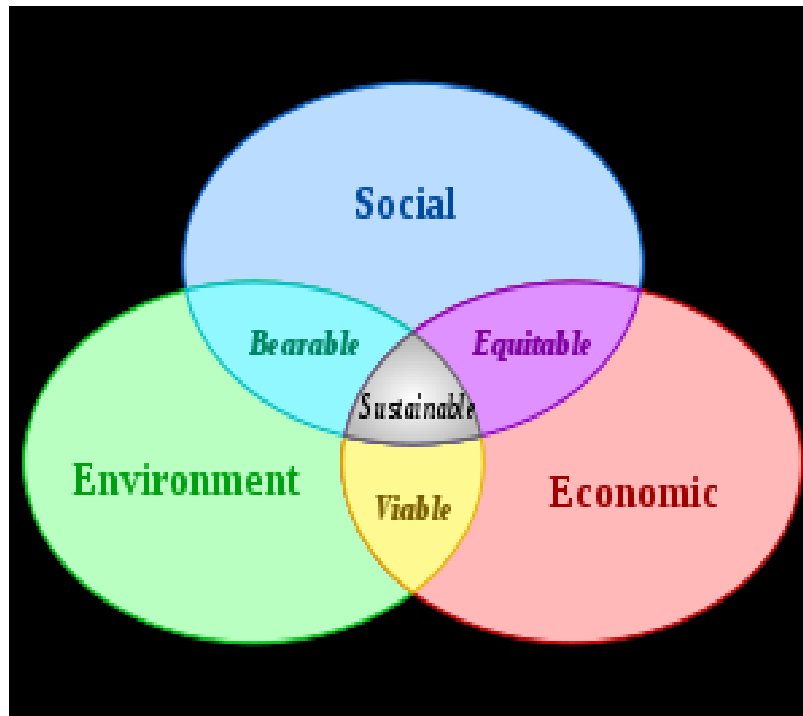


# History of Turtle Watching at Grand Anse

- Initially conducted by Naturalist Society and Department of Fisheries with hotel guests
- Focus was conservation of sea turtles
- Later involved young persons from Des Barras who showed interest
- SLHTP initiated formal engagement of the Des Barras community through training and preparation to manage and benefit from the tours



# Tenets of Sustainable Development



# Equity – socioeconomic balance



- At least 1 young person from almost every household was trained as a tour guide (so that almost every household could benefit)
- Persons in the community were trained in various aspects of craft production
- Training was provided to 1 person who would prepare meals for the tours.



# Viability – eco-efficiency

- ★ Revenue increased steadily:

Year	Approximate Gross Revenue Generated
2002	EC \$7 K
2003	EC \$ 29 K
2004	EC \$73 K

- ★ Tours expanded from weekends to week days
- ★ Poaching and Sand mining decreased significantly



# **Carrying Capacity – socio-environmental balance**

- Tours did not leave a significant or indelible footprint
  - There was a waste management plan (solid and liquid)
  - Tour group sizes were limited
- There was a policy on the use of re-usable materials and limiting the use of plastics and disposable items on tours
- The non-consumptive use of the turtles and preservation of their habitat through the limiting of sand mining would ultimately improve these natural resources of the area





# Emerging Problems

- ★ Sand mining and turtle poaching increased significantly
- ★ The quality of tours became inconsistent and bookings decreased
- ★ Internal issues plagued the tour guides and the group became fragmented



# What Went Wrong

- SLHTTP came to an end, and so did the mentoring, monitoring and support
- HERITAS (also an SLHTTP product) took over sales and marketing and introduced a more economically feasible business model that increased tour sizes and decreased the number of tours per week; and discontinued paid security patrols on non-tour nights.



# What Went Wrong

- ★ In advance of Cricket World Cup in 2007 incentives were offered for construction to house the anticipated influx of visitors and no provision was made for the protection of Grand Anse Beach which was notoriously mined for construction.
- ★ A moratorium on the harvesting of sea turtles established in 1996 was lifted in 2004



# Weaknesses

- Marketing
- Enforcement (poaching and sand mining)
- Penalties
- Information flows
- Community involvement
- Entrepreneurial spirit



# Gaps



- Monitoring and evaluation
- Ongoing training
- Transparency
- Public awareness and education
- Mentoring



Weaknesses , gaps and the occurrences  
of events all pointed to policy issues



# Environmental Policy Issues

- ★ The legal hunting of some species of sea turtles outside the nesting season some of which appear on the IUCN list of endangered species when the country is signatory to the Biodiversity Convention
- ★ Not all building inspectors sanction projects using beach sand





# Economic Policy Issues

- Suspected political sympathy for sand miners (claims fault both leading political parties)
- The initiative did not consider the sand miners and poachers as stakeholders, but the problem, so their opportunity costs, livelihoods and their perceived right to access the resources was not considered.



# Social Policy Issues



- Neighbouring communities were identified as the source of poachers and sand miners, but these communities were not engaged as partners in any aspect of the initiative



# Social Policy Issues

- Issues emerging related to group dynamics and management persisted because the group lacked the experience resources to address them and they did not have the support of an external agency to provide that support.



# Social Policy Issues

- ★ The roles of most support agencies were not clearly defined (except for the Police, HERITAS and the Department of Fisheries).



# Benefits

- Tour guides - source of money/livelihood (seasonal),
- Poachers - seasonal activity
- Sand miners - year round activity;
- Fisheries - protection of the resources by the presence of persons during tours warding off poachers and sand miners;
- HERITAS - commission





# Challenges

- Convincing persons that sand mining and poaching are unsustainable as practiced now;
- Supporting the initiative in the absence of clear policy;
- Roles of agencies seem to be governed by personal interest (passion).



*Turtle nest: Photographer – Alicia Valasse*

# Recommendations

- ★ Training to improve and maintain standards – little was done beyond 2000/2001
- ★ Regular data collection and record-keeping to help with funding opportunities and performance evaluation
- ★ Performance evaluation should be undertaken by external agencies to ensure objectivity and transparency





# Recommendations

- ★ Development of policies and institutional arrangements to support the management of CBT projects once funding has expired.
- ★ Clarification of the roles of stakeholder agencies and identification of a champion agency as the lead support, and facilitator of the inputs of other agencies.



# Recommendations

- ★ An assessment should be made of the real livelihood contribution of poaching and sand mining and viable alternative livelihoods for practitioners sought.
- ★ Consideration should be given to including persons from the neighbouring communities the opportunity to join the DSTWG.



# Recommendations

- ★ Mechanisms should be found to engage the Des Barras community more in the DSTWG, both through activities like the beach clean-ups, but also in other creative ways that would allow more community knowledge of the activities of the DSTWG. This may allow for community elders to mediate internal conflicts.



# Recommendations

- ★ Review of the constitution and the incorporation of mechanisms to address the contentious issues. Terms-of-reference should be developed for administrative functions. This should be audited by external advisors, circulated and agreed on by all members of the DSTWG.



# Recommendations

- ★ In community initiatives such as this, creation of wealth does not supersede creation of opportunities and equity. Joint ventures may create more wealth, but if it is driven by market forces and the generation of profit, which could limit opportunities for more persons to benefit. It also limits capacity development and does not empower the community.



# Recommendations

- ★ Education and awareness needs to be strengthened to help erode the market for turtle meat and beach sand and foster a more conservation-focused public. Both can assist the DSTWG.
- ★ The moratorium on sea turtle capture should be reinstated as all species in St. Lucia are endangered or critically endangered based on the IUCN Red List.



**Thank you**

