

Building Civil Society Capacity for Conservation in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories

UK Action Learning Group

Notes of Meeting

10 September 2010

Present: Sarah McIntosh (SM - Caribbean Natural Resources Institute); Mark Collins, Vijay Krishnarayan (Chair and notes) (MC/ VK - Commonwealth Foundation); Gillian Cooper (GC – CANARI Consultant); Ana Delgado (AD - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs); Dick Beales (DB - Department for International Development); Janice Panton (JP - United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association); Mike Pienkowski (MP - United Kingdom Overseas Territories Conservation Forum).

Apologies: Eric Blencowe (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs); Richard Young (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust); Tara Pelembe, Nikki Chapman¹ (Joint Nature Conservation Committee); Colin Clubbe (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew); James Millet (JM - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds); Robert Wild.

Introductions

A brief introduction to the project was provided

Action: Project concept note to be circulated by the Commonwealth Foundation.

During the round of introductions, MC provided an update on project management, reporting that Junaid Habib (formerly the project focal point at the Commonwealth Foundation) had left and that it was not the Foundation's intention to recruit a replacement. MC assured the meeting of his personal support for the project and new arrangements that the Foundation would be putting in place for its management (Vijay Krishnarayan is the new focal point for the project at the Commonwealth Foundation).

DB reported that he was standing in for Anna Ballance, but that in future DFID would be represented by Christine Roehrer and so she should be added to the e-mail list for the UK ALG group.

It was also agreed that Gillian Cooper and Ana Delgado should be also be added to the list.

Follow up from last meeting

MP made the following correction to the notes of the meeting held 13 January 2010: *“Dr Pienkowski outlined UKOTCF’s work over some 20 years in capacity development in the Caribbean and other UKOTs drew attention to the availability of documents about this on www.ukotcf.org.”*

Feedback from First Action Research Learning Group (ARLG) meeting

SM provided a verbal report on this activity, which took place in March 2010. There was participation from Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and Montserrat. The methodology called for each National Trust to participate with a counterpart (it was noted that Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands were not able to). SM reported that JM of the RSPB was able to attend. The meeting focussed on organisational development, using relevant case studies of strategic planning (e.g. the experience of the St Lucia National Trust). Planning against a backdrop of declining income (both from government grants and tourism) was a common theme.

In discussion MP observed that building organisational resilience needed to consider the peaks and troughs that many organisations in the sector experience. JP commented that people in public life in the OTs often wore a number of hats and this could mean several organisations being reached through one participant. DB confirmed that these observations were in keeping with the experience of the Overseas Territories Environment Programme.

The next ARLG meeting is to take place in February/March 2011.

Action: Report of First Action Research Learning Group meeting to be circulated to UK ALG by CANARI.

LTS Review of First Year Report

SM provided an overview of the generally favourable report on the first year undertaken by LTS. Many of the issues raised also surfaced at the meeting of the Action Research Learning Group in March.

Action: The LTS review of the project's annual report to be circulated to the UK ALG by the Commonwealth Foundation.

Update on Small Grants

SM explained the rationale behind the small grants element of the project, which was designed to enable the type of organisational development activity, which it is often difficult to find funding for, such as strategic planning. There was some concern that only one application had been received and this did not meet the criteria. This prompted a wide ranging discussion on the nature of civil society in the OTs and its capacity. Similar experience from other projects was shared. JP volunteered to follow up with the Montserrat organisations provided CANARI sent her the relevant documents.

Options for Study Visit

GC presented the rationale for the study visit component of the project, which aims to benefit both the host organisation and those that are visiting. She reported that the Dutch Caribbean territories presented some interesting examples of civil society involvement in biodiversity conservation and that their experience might be relevant and could provide material for a case

studyⁱⁱ. It was noted that there was currently a review of the relationship between the Netherlands and the territories and this might affect the potential for collaboration. The tentative date for the study visit is November 2010.

ALG Information Sharing

MP

- A call for papers on biodiversity research in “outermost regions” will soon be issued by the European Commission; and
- UKOTCF is about to start work on a project in three territories on conservation and economic development.

AD

A briefing document on the Darwin Initiative and the projects that it has funded is in production.

DB

A call for applications to OTEP has been made, however there has been no firm commitment to the programme at a time when all such spending is under review.

JP

- There is good cooperation between UKOTA and counterparts from the Netherlands; and
- This year the UK Overseas Territories Consultative Council will take place in London on 17 November.

JM

(Via SM) RSPB are working on several projects including: feral cattle in Montserrat; Dog Island habitat in Anguilla; and a strategy for local partnerships in conjunction with the Island Resources Foundation.

SM

CANARI have produced materials on disaster and climate risk reduction (see www.canari.org).

VK

The issues related to capacity raised during the meeting were consistent with the Foundation’s experience using similar methods but in different sectors. This suggested that there was scope for research on the capacity needs of civil society in OTs.

Next Meeting

The meeting ended – it was provisionally agreed that the next ALG should be held in January 2011.

ⁱ Nikki Chapman intended to join the meeting by phone, but this was not possible

ⁱⁱ The other case studies will probably feature the Montserrat Centre Hills Project and one other that will focus on funding mechanisms for conservation