CARIBBEAN NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE (CANARI)

Fond Gens Libre: Who benefits from the Gros Piton trail?

*A mini-case study produced by CANARI based on analysis conducted by
the Forests and Livelihoods Action Learning Group
during their field visit to Saint Lucia in February 2009*

1. FOND GENS LIBRE AND GROS PITON TOURS, SAINT LUCIA
Visited during the fourth ALG, February 2009

1.1 Background

Location	Fond Gens Libre, a small community in the foothills of the Gros Piton in Saint Lucia, within the Pitons Management Area World Heritage site. The area is mainly state land, managed by the Forestry Division, and some private land. Soufriere Regional Development Foundation manages the terrestrial aspects of the World Heritage Site which includes the sulphur springs and other interpretive sites such as the Pitons.
Type of forest	The dominant vegetation is tropical moist forest grading to subtropical wet forest with small areas of dry forest near the coast and on steep slopes, and small areas of wet elfin woodland on the summits. On the Pitons especially, small undisturbed natural forests remain, preserved by the steepness of the land. At least 148 species of plants have been recorded on Gros Piton, and 97 on Petit Piton and the ridge. Many Saint Lucia species are found only or mainly there. Many mosses, lichens, orchids and bromeliads thrive in the rainforest conditions. There is a relatively high level of endemic or rare species: the endemic shrubs *Acalypha elizabethae*, and *Bernardia laurentii*, found only on the summit of Petit Piton, also, on the slopes, the rare shrubs *Justicia carthaginensis and Piper reticulatum, the rare vines Gonolobus coriacea, Amphilophium paniculatum* and *Melothria pendula* and a herb, *Eipatorium* microstemon. There are also eight rare species of tree: one found only on the summit of Petit Piton - the pencil cedar *Juniperus barbadensis* (VU), also Ocote*a coriacea, Guarea kuntheana, Krugiodendron ferreum, Picrasma excelsa, Forestiera eggersiana, Randis nitida* and *Myrcianthus fragrans.* http://www.unep-wcmc.org/sites/wh/pdf/PITONS%20ST.LUCIA.pdf

Who are the key stakeholders?	Key stakeholders include (in no particular order):
	1. Fond Gens Libre community
	2. Gros Piton Tour Guide Association (currently non-operational)
	3. Gros Piton Tours
	4. Forestry Department
	5. Soufriere Development Foundation
	6. Fond Gens Libre Development Committee (currently non-operational), which includes those listed above and other stakeholders such as:
	    o Heritas
	    o Ministry of Community Development

Decription of the initiative	Current situation • Gros Piton Tours (GPT) is a private company, which conducts tours of the Gros Piton, using tour guides from the community of Fond Gens Libre. It is run by a single individual who receives all the revenue and then pays the tour guides. No documents relating to the

| | structure of the company or its accounts were made available to participants on the field trip (and it is understood that these have not been made available to anyone). However it appears to be a sole proprietor operation, with a registered trading name; it is not clear whether the company itself is registered.
- GPT operated originally under a one-year tri-partite agreement between itself, Gros Piton Tour Guide Association (GPTGA) and Forestry Department. It apparently continues to operate with the informal sanction and occasional support of the Forestry Department but there is no formal arrangement between the two parties and no revenue is returned to the state. This has created considerable controversy, both locally and nationally, reinforced by the perception of conflicts of interest given that the owner of GPT also holds key positions in many of the organisations that sit on the now largely non-operational GPTGA management committee (see below).
- GPT is the major employer in the community, continues to provide tour guide training and English language skills (as their main language is Kwéyòl) and has also contributed to securing improvements in infrastructure, including building a paved walkway, drainage, lighting, concert and kitchen facilities.

History
- The initiative grew out of, and draws on capacities built under, an Environment and Coastal Resources Management Project (ENCORE)-funded project, led by the Forestry Department in conjunction with Soufriere Development Foundation and Heritas. This project was designed to provide alternatives to community livelihood activities that were damaging to the environment, such as pig farming, charcoal production and sand mining.
- The Forestry Department provided training to community members and some infrastructure to enable them to conduct tours up the Pitons and to retain the revenue generated. The community organisation was known as Gros Piton Tour Guide Association (GPTGA).
- The Forestry Department subsequently entered into a co-management relationship with the GPTGA and a management committee comprising Forestry Department, GPTGA, Soufriere Regional Development Foundation, and Ministry of Community Development.was created to oversee and support its activities on the Gros Piton Nature Trail.
- At the end of the Encore project, GPTGA capacity seems to have been inadequate at that point to sustain the initiative without external support. As the initiative was project-based, the necessary support (human, technical and financial) could not be sustained when the project funding expired.
- This created a vacuum that enabled a private individual, with family roots in the community and marketing skills acquired overseas, to create the company now known as Gros Piton Tours.
- The Forestry Department, GPT and other agencies such as the Ministry of Tourism have all provided funding for infrastructure in the community, e.g. visitor centre and associated facilities. |
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| **Brief background/ context of wider community** (e.g. population, economic activities) – livelihoods issues/ context | Fond Gens Libre is a small rural community located at the base of the Gros Piton, which took its name ('Village of Free People') from the fact that it was a hideaway for runaway slaves.

The area was considered to have high levels of poverty and limited livelihood assets and opportunities until the potential for eco-tourism potential was identified. |

1.2 Description of the forest management arrangements

What are the objectives / broad goals of the arrangement / any collaborative management initiatives?	There are very few clearly stated objectives or desired results in the documents which CANARI and the field trip participants received but those noted below are implicit.
	
	As noted above, the original objectives of the project led by the Forestry Department appear to have been
	  o to improve the conservation of the area and the management of visitors;
	  o to improve the livelihoods of the local community through building the capacity of community members for entrepreneurial activities related to eco-tourism, and specifically tour-guiding
	  o to create a sustainable community-based organisation that would co-manage the area, thereby generating revenue to improve the full range of livelihood assets (social, human, natural, financial, physical, political) in the community.
	
	The owner of GPT also stated that his objectives were to conserve the area and provide employment and infrastructure for the community. However, there is also clearly a personal revenue generating objective unrelated to the above.

Policies and laws	A new Forest Policy was in the process of being drafted at the time of the field visit. A review of policies and legislation by CANARI in 2003 identified a complex and often out of date legislative and policy framework for forest management in Saint Lucia: • Forest, Soil and Water Conservation Ordinance (1946) (amended 1983) • St. Lucia National Trust Act (1975) • National Conservation Authority Act (1999) • Wildlife Protection Act (1980) • Fisheries Act (1984) • Land Conservation and Improvement Act (1992) • Crown Lands Ordinance Cap. 108 • National Development Corporation Act (1971) • Water and Sewerage Act (2004) • Forest Management Plan 1992 – 2002 • System of Protected Areas in St. Lucia (1992) • National Land Policy (draft) • Coastal Zone Management Policy (2002) • National Environmental Policy and National Environment Management Strategies (2005) • National Water Policy (2004) • National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Multilateral Env. Agreements • Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora (CITES) • St. Georges Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability • Ramsar Convention on Wetlands • The Convention on Biodiversity • The Convention on Desertification • The World Heritage Convention • The Convention on the Protection and Management of the Coastal and Marine environment of the Caribbean, (Cartagena Convention) • Kyoto Protocol and UNFCCC
Relationships between	The relationship between Forestry Department and Gros Piton Tours appears to be cordial though informal, as does that between GPT and its guides.

organisations (formal/informal)	The Forestry Department also tries to maintain direct links with the community but these are constrained by lack of human resource capacity. Since the Management Committee has stopped functioning, there are no longer any formal relationships to assure oversight and capacity building support to the community. The informal relationships between the various entities making up the Management Committee are complex and increasingly so given that at the time of the visit, the owner of GPT was also a member of the Board of SRDF and head of HERITAS.
Institutional and organisational structures	There is currently no functional institutional structure for the management of the Gros Piton trail involving all key stakeholders. The Forestry Department indicated that there is a plan to formalise the co-management relationship between the Government agencies with Gros Piton Tours. The Forestry Department has an officer assigned to the area within which Fond Gens Libre is located. However, human resource constraints within the Department have resulted in periods when no officer was assigned. GPT is managed and owned by Jimmy Haynes. There is an Administrative Officer (from the community) who manages the day-to-day operations and 11 tour guides (ten from the community and one from outside of the area). SRDF is a non-profit company, registered under the Companies Act of Saint Lucia, although its website states that its Board Members are appointed by the Prime Minister. http://www.soufrierefoundation.org/site/about.html). Both the Ministry of Community Development and Saint Lucia Rural Enterprise Project have liaison officers but they did not appear to be active in the area at the time of the field visit.
Agreed practices and processes	Since the demise of the Management Committee, there do not appear to be any agreed practices and processes.
What is the degree and type of participation / perception(s) of key stakeholders of current type and degree of participation (see Appendix 1) and what changes have occurred since inception (speed/direction of change)	The intention of the Encore project was to engage in a participatory process that would result in increasing transfer of management responsibility to the GPTGA. There is little data on the process but the outcome was a (temporary) co-management arrangement. The type of participation achieved would seem to be characterised as either **Participation for material incentives** or **Functional participation.** With the transfer of management responsibility to a private sector entity, the degree of participation (as characterised in the table in the Appendix) is now minimal. There was little evidence during the field trip of community involvement in decision-making.

1.3 Enabling and constraining factors that shaped the arrangement

External forces that have influenced the management arrangements and the way that benefits are allocated among beneficiaries (e.g. markets/trade regimes external donors funding priorities)	ENCORE project and its focus on participatory processes and management
National/local/internal environment that enabled and shaped the initiative and influenced the way that benefits are allocated among beneficiaries - policies or laws - roles played by key individuals - skills - technical help - funding - political support - equitable participation	Forces that have shaped the initiative and the allocation of benefits include: o Lack of capacity of all the key actors in the ENCORE project to sustain the community-based initiative, as originally conceived, beyond the end of the project. o Tacit acceptance by the Forestry Department of a private sector entrepreneur managing a for-profit activity on state land, with no direct financial benefit to the state. o Entrepreneurial and marketing skills of the individual running GPT facilitated rapid 'capture' of the initiative. o The increase in eco-tourism activity as a result of GPT marketing means that the community tour guides now receive more income than before but have forfeited their role in decision-making and management.
Capacities: *(internal capacities of partners in the arrangement)* What world view, culture, skills, knowledge, structure, adaptive strategies, relationships/linkages, material/financial resources do the partners have that: • enable the arrangement? • enable negotiation of their role in the arrangement? • enable their securing benefits from the arrangement? Are the existing capacities being effectively leveraged? Are key capacities lacking or weak?	The main partners have a range of technical skills and significant relationships including: o GPT: strong marketing and entrepreneurial skills and political assets o Community: basic-intermediate tour guiding and interpretation skills. o Forestry Dept: forest/ecosystem management skills; some officers also have strong skills in community relations and capacity building. However, no common world view or culture appears to have been established between the partners or the wider stakeholder base. As noted elsewhere, the structure is currently informal, which has resulted in a lack of transparency and accountability and inequitable distribution of benefits. The key partners other than GPT (e.g. Forestry Dept, SRDF, Ministry of Community Development) appear to lack the resources to provide the type of continuous support that would have been necessary to allow GPTGA to become independent and self-sustaining. GPT does not seem to be focused on transferring its expertise (entrepreneurial and marketing skills) to community members.

1.4 Livelihood benefits and costs from the initiative

	Benefits To whom? Are the poorest benefitting? Was the allocation of the benefits equitable, e.g. proportionate to the rights, responsibilities and interests? Was the allocation of benefits transparent? Are there identifiable elites? Are some people marginalised?	Costs To whom? Are these intended (i.e. meeting stated objectives) or unintended?	Potential benefits Are there potential benefits that have not yet accrued?	Trade-offs Have there been trade-offs between the different assets? Between different beneficiaries? Have these trade-offs been negotiated. If so, how and by whom? If not, how was it decided?	Sustainability Are the livelihoods sustainable (e.g. resilient to stresses and shocks, not dependent on external support, do not compromise the productivity of the resource base, do not undermine the livelihoods of others)?
Human (e.g. education, skills, knowledge, health)	The tour guides received basic training including in speaking English. Leading tours up the Pitons contributes to the health of the guides. Women have equal opportunities to men as tour guides	Not stated	Empowerment of the people to shape how the area is managed coupled with the education to make such decisions.	The community has traded off its right to be involved in decision-making and management for employment in a privately operated tour operation (but it is not clear that this has been done consciously).	The vesting of all virtually all management and decision-making in a single individual who is not accountable to anyone is inherently unsustainable.
Social (e.g. family, community and wider social networks and relationships):	Ability to work locally generally improves social cohesion and family life.	Not stated	Reactivation of GPTGA has the potential to contribute to community cohesion and development of new relationships	Again, the trade off is one of employment as individuals versus collective processes of decision-making.	
Physical (e.g. standard of and access to infrastructure, transport)	There have been significant physical benefits to the area, including drainage, a paved walkway, electrical lighting along a pathway from car park to interpretive centre, landscaping, development of concert facilities etc.	Not stated	Community expressed interest in development of a library	Unclear to what extent the community has been involved in the prioritisation of physical infrastructure; although they benefit, the facilities are primarily for the use of visitors.	Presumably it is in the interest of GPT to maintain the infrastructure in order to generate revenue but long-term sustainability if institutional arrangements change is unclear.
Natural (ownership of or access to healthy natural resources, including land and ecosystem services)	Maintenance of ecosystem services Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as fewer persons are travelling to the cities for jobs and charcoal production has stopped.	Not stated			Likely to be sustainable so long as tours are generating more revenue for the community than other (potentially more damaging) uses of the resources.
Political (access to and influence over decision-making processes)	GPT's owner has high political influence through his affiliation to a particular political party. It is unclear whether the community has benefited from this.	Not stated	Community members stated that they have more self respect than in the past due to infrastructure improvements – they now consider themselves to be	Affiliating with a political party is likely to result in marginalisation when the other party is in power.	Politically-affiliated community-based organisations are generally less stable and sustainable than those which maintain political neutrality although they may have less immediate access to assets.

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			"folks". This has the potential to translate into wielding greater political influence through advocacy.		
Financial	Tour guides receive regular income GPT's owner has stimulated a culture of saving by the tour guides by paying salaries through the bank. The tour guides say that they now have healthy savings and are not living from pay cheque to pay cheque.	Not provided.	Complementary revenue-generating activities could be developed, including cultural activities, accommodation, specialised tours, food and beverage etc.(the catering for the field trip was done externally as the community does not currently have the capacity.	The community earned less money when GPTA was managing the site but have lost their decision-making power.	Not sustainable as run by a single individual.

1.5 Lessons learned

How effective are the arrangements in achieving the stated objectives (socio-economic benefits or other benefits)?	The arrangements have facilitated some capacity building (tour guiding and interpretation skills) and an improvement in financial benefits (to the tour guides and therefore indirectly to the wider community) and some physical assets. The anticipated levels of improvement in social, human and political assets and equitable participation in management and decision-making, which were anticipated under the ENCORE project have not been achieved under GPT.
Is there a relationship between different levels/types of participation and the level of benefits?	This is difficult to assess in the absence of data and notably the accounts of GPT, but it appears that there has been a trade off between increased financial earnings by the tour guides and the amount of management and decision-making power that the community has. This may have been beneficial in the short term but appears to have resulted in a large proportion of the benefits (particularly financial and political) to accrue to a single individual, who resides outside the community.
Other	Government and other support agencies may be ill-equipped, both in terms of skills and resources, to facilitate the development of an entrepreneurial activity. In this case, this facilitated the 'capture' of the initiative by an individual with relevant skills but a different world view and culture. A better alternative would be for government agencies to contract people with entrepreneurial skills to develop community capacity and to preface this by building consensus on the vision and world view.

1.6 Recommendations

Recommendations from stakeholders on how the institutional arrangement, external or internal forces or capacities could be changed to improve livelihood benefits	Reconstitution of the Management Committee to facilitate greater participation of the community in management, decision-making and more equitable distribution of benefits. Negotiation of a management agreement between the key stakeholders that results in sustainable management of the resource and equitable distribution of the benefits, with a focus on improving the livelihoods of those in the community. Transfer of entrepreneurial skills to the community.
How benefits could be measured on a consistent basis	Baseline study is needed, followed by systematic collection and recording of relevant data, including income generated by GPT and extent to which profits are redistributed into community assets.

Type	Characteristics
1. Manipulative participation	Participation is simply a pretence, with 'people's representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power
2. Passive participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views
4. Participation for material incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. [People] … are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end
5. Functional participation	Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to mete predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision-making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be co-opted to serve external goals
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures and practices
7. Self-mobilisation	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilisation can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

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[1] From Bass, S., Dalal-Clayton, B. and Pretty, J. (1995) Participation in Strategies for Sustainable Development International Institute for Environment and Development. Environmental Planning Issues No. 7