

Fisheries Co-management

Co-management developed due to an attempt to improve the success of fisheries management as many of the aquatic resources risked being or were already depleted. The aim was to involve the community in the decision-making process so that there may be an increased adherence to the regulations set by the government.

The top down approach of fisheries management has frequently failed as it often goes against the community and their internal structure. Furthermore, the reason for the new governmental regulations and laws such as a decrease in total allowable catch (TAC) or catch per unit effort (CPUE) were often poorly understood by the community due to lack of education. Without proper enforcement or co-management, the community would often disregard the law and continue as they previously were, often despite the detrimental impact this may have on the ocean.

Cooperative management or co-management can be defined as a partnership arrangement in which the community (the people living in an area or a group or groups of people who share common interests) of local resource users (fishers), government, other stakeholders (boat owners, fish traders, boat builders, business people, etc.) and external agents (non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic and research institutions) share the responsibility and authority for the management of the fishery (Fig. 1). Through consultations and negotiations, the partners develop a formal agreement on their respective roles, responsibilities and rights in management, referred to as 'negotiated power'. Co-management is also called participatory, joint, stakeholder, multi-party or collaborative management.

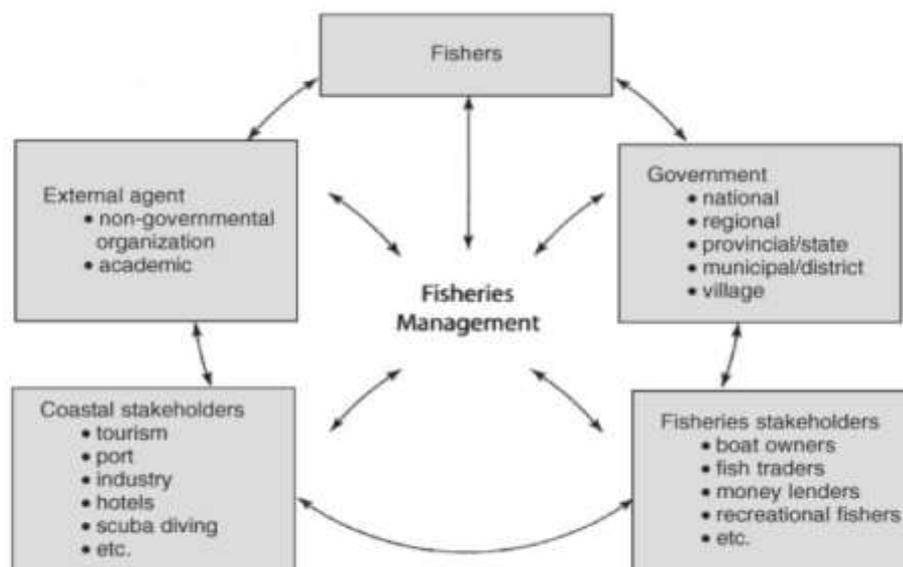


Fig. 1

Co-management covers various partnership arrangements and degrees of power sharing and integration of local and government management systems. Fisheries co-management can be classified into five broad types according to the roles government, fishers and stakeholders play:

I. Instructive

Instructive management is top down management from the government. The government instructs the fishermen as to what laws and policies they are required to follow. Information is only shared with the community towards the end of the planning process.

II. Consultative

In consultative management, the government consults with the community either through public hearings or advisory boards. The government is not required to implement any of the suggestions or comments into the policy given by the stakeholders. This consultation can also serve merely as a symbolic gesture rather than something that the government will necessarily implement.

III. Cooperative

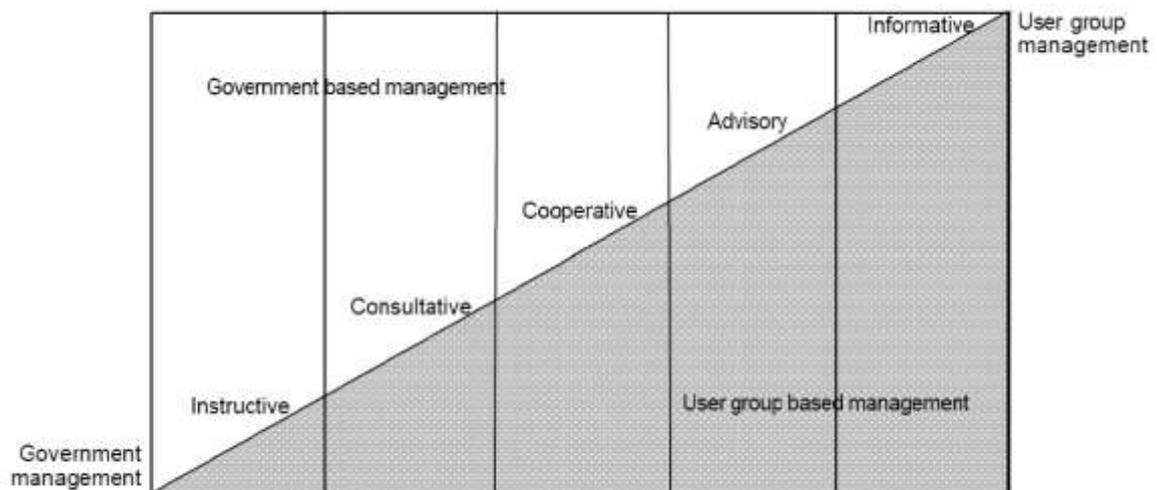
In cooperative management, there is a degree of co-management of the resource by the government and the user group. The responsibility is shared by both parties.

IV. Advisory

In advisory management, users decide what decisions should be made and advise the government as such, the government then endorses the decision.

V. Informative

In informative management, the user group makes all of the decisions, and informs the government once they have decided.



Difference between Community based management and Co-management

- **Advantages**

- Democratic and participatory system.
- More economical than centralized management systems; requiring less to be spent on management administration and enforcement.
- Makes maximum use of indigenous knowledge and expertise to provide information on local basis.
- Improved stewardship of aquatic and coastal resources and management.
- Management is accountable to local areas. Fishing communities are able to devise and administer management plans and regulatory measures that are more appropriate to local conditions. (Localized solutions to local problems.)
- By giving the fishers a sense of ownership over the resource, co-management provides a powerful incentive for them to view the resource as a long-term asset rather than to discount its future returns.
- Since the community is involved in the formulation and implementation of co-management measures, a higher degree of acceptability, validity and permission to plans and regulations can be expected.
- Increased communication and understanding among all concerned can minimize social conflict and maintain or improve social cohesion in the community.

- **Disadvantages**

- It may not be suitable for every fishing community. Many communities may not be willing or able to take on the responsibility of co-management.
- Leadership and appropriate local institutions, such as fisher organizations, may not exist within the community to initiate or sustain co-management efforts.
- In the short-run, there are high initial investments of time, financial resources and human resources to establish co-management.
- The risks involved in changing fisheries management {total allowable catch (TAC) or catch per unit effort (CPUE)} strategies may be too high for some communities and fishers.
- Unease of political leaders and government officials to share power.