

**RESOLUTION on  
using co-management approaches for marine protected areas and other  
mechanisms for managing coral reefs and associated ecosystems**

*Adopted on 17 October 2013, at the 28<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting (Belize City)*

Cooperative management, or co-management, is a specific type of governance approach that entails sharing of management functions between government and a group, or groups, of stakeholders.

It can be an effective governance approach in countries where outcomes for coral reefs and associated ecosystems rely on strong partnerships for success.

Discussions held on the topic of co-management by ICRI members during the 28th ICRI General Meeting held in Belize City, Belize in October 2013 revealed that:

- Co-management can be achieved successfully through different arrangements, including (1) the complete delegation of management powers to a single entity such as a Non-Government Organisation (delegated co-management); or (2) the establishment of a decision-making committee which would include representatives from each stakeholder group with government acting a secretariat (collaborative co-management); or (3) the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives in decision-making processes through advisory bodies (consultative co-management).
- Whatever form co-management takes, it is important that co-management arrangements are clearly described in legal instruments to ensure that the identification of roles, responsibilities and powers is clearly understood and agreed by all parties and can be evaluated/audited against.
- For co-management arrangements to be effective, government departments involved should ensure they collaborate closely to avoid contradictions and/or conflicts in co-management arrangements and to streamline relevant regulations and processes. This applies to different levels of governments (i.e. local, regional, federal etc.) and to departments within the same level of governance (e.g. fisheries vs. forestry vs. environment).
- Support of co-management systems, and associated management plans among community members is essential to ensure effective levels of voluntary compliance and to reduce enforcement costs.
- Effective co-management arrangements should be based on existing social networks and stakeholder dynamics, and provide enough flexibility to cater for their evolution over time.

- Co-management arrangements should be supported by targeted capacity building programs (e.g. compliance, monitoring) for co-managers.

**For both delegated and collaborative co-management:**

- Sound funding arrangements (e.g. trust funds or tailored banking systems) should be established to ensure efficient and financially sustainable co-management.

**For delegated co-management:**

- The duration of co-management agreements should be long enough to ensure long-term, outcome-focussed management actions and provide a sense of security to co-managers involved.
- The selection of parties involved in co-management by government(s) should be based on sound criteria, including financial sustainability, management expertise, geographic location and credibility.

These findings underpin ICRI’s cornerstone principle of ‘capacity building’, which the ICRI Framework for Action 2013, notes as encouraging: “*reef stewardship through partnerships between governments, communities and the private sector, and encourage community-based management approaches*”.

**Accordingly, the International Coral Reef Initiative requests its Members to:**

**Consider** the merits of co-management arrangements to manage their marine protected areas or other mechanisms for managing coral reefs and associated ecosystems.

**Ensure** that these arrangements adequately reflect existing local social constructs and have a perceived high level of legitimacy among communities.

**Adopt and implement** systems which permit regular review of these arrangements, in order to allow changes which can reflect an adaptive approach to management.

**Engage** indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders in such reviews.

**Support** increased capacity and awareness of co-managers to improve or increase stewardship and compliance.

**Foster** high levels of trust with co-managers and communities to break down barriers, reduce conflicts and facilitate high compliance rates; which in turn increase management success of coral reefs.

**Communicate** success stories, lessons learnt and best practices in co-management with other reef managers facing similar challenges around the world, including through the ICRIforum and other ICRI media.