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ARTISANAL FISHING SECTOR CONSOLIDATES ITS LEADERSHIP IN THE PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT OF THE GALAPAGOS MARINE RESERVE

The Artisanal Fishing Sector of Galapagos is leading a participatory process to improve the framework of fishing regulations in the Galapagos Marine Reserve (GMR).

This process, that is about to culminate with the signing of an executive decree by the President of Ecuador, represents a huge success for the Fishing Sector of Galapagos that has lobbied for many years for changes to the existing regulation that is full of irregularities. Representatives of the Fishing Sector not only succeeded in convincing authorities that a reform was necessary but also led, together with the Marine Reserve Participatory Management Council, a genuine participatory process that reached consensus on almost all of the 92 articles of the new regulation. Approval of the text by the Presidency will represent an important achievement for the democratically elected 2008-2009 Fishing Sector Board, but, significantly, it also represents the willingness of the new Board to provide support and continuity to a long term strategy of the Fishing Sector.

The approval of the new legislation also highlights the visionary nature of fisheries leadership within the participatory management regime of the Galapagos Marine Reserve. When the Participatory Management Council formed a special commission to guide the reform of the Management Plan Chapter on Fisheries Management, it was the Fishing Sector that proposed the need to first modify the legislation that provides the framework for fisheries management. In the light of the new legislative framework, the special commission can review the draft text for the chapter on fisheries management. Working at multiple scales, the fishing sector has, therefore, contributed to the development of a consensus-based legislative framework for



extractive activities within the Galapagos Marine Reserve, one that attempts to balance both conservation and sustainable development.



This hard work takes place in a context of high hopes within the Fishing Sector as new licenses for tourism activities in the GMR are about to be released. The new licenses favor fishermen who want to shift from fishing to tourism. These new licenses also represent the culmination of 10 years of negotiations through the participatory management system in which the Fishing Sector of Galapagos has insisted

on the need for the government to provide compensation and/or economic alternatives for the restrictions imposed on fishing activities within the Marine Reserve.

The new Board needs broad support from its constituent base and for this reason it has started an aggressive communication campaign directed to local fishermen. This has been possible through a signed agreement with the Japanese Cooperation Agency in Galápagos providing a comprehensive communication strategy including frequent press releases, radio news, monthly bulletins and text messages sent to cell phone mailing lists.

These tangible achievements show the strengthening of the role of the Artisanal Fishing Sector of Galapagos as a key stakeholder in the sustainable development of the GMR. It shows also that a proactive Board, together with appropriate technical support and advice provided thanks to the Overbrook Foundation partnership with FFLA, can build a strong leadership and can favor genuine negotiation with authorities that result in better conditions to conserve biodiversity.



Nevertheless, it must be understood that the organizational development of the Fishing Sector is a long-term process that cannot be fully achieved until the sector has technical and financial autonomy. Together with strengthening internal democratic and pre-negotiation processes, the next steps should also consider the strengthening of internal technical capacity and mechanisms for achieving operational autonomy.

REACHING AGREEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE IN NANGARITZA

With support from the Overbrook Foundation, FFLA contributes to biodiversity conservation and local development by strengthening the capacity of previously antagonistic actors to generate collaborative initiatives.

Following the violent conflict that occurred in 2001 over the declaration of Nangaritza as a State Protected Forest, and after 6 months of an intensive facilitated conflict management process, there has clearly been a transformation from confrontation to collaborative relationships among local inhabitants and government officials.



This new scenario has enabled local actors to address the underlying causes of the conflict and, therefore, to think about a new future for the area. With support from the Overbrook Foundation, FFLA has helped these previously antagonistic actors build a common vision for the future of the Nangaritza Area. This has involved putting on the table objective information about the area's environmental problems and threats to sustainable development; and establishing a forum for group reflection and analysis of the situation which serves to guide the decisions that will be taken by local authorities and community leaders in terms of the development of the area. The issues prioritized by this forum have now been adopted as the key issues to be addressed for the development of Nangaritza through a Local



Committee which was designated by the forum to follow up on the priority issues. The Local Committee is made up of representatives from each of the sectors involved in the original conflict. The Local Committee has technical support from several NGOs.

Health, education, agriculture, ecotourism, water, indigenous reserves for the future, cultural identity, forest management, and common positions about mining industry and road construction are the priority themes that the Local Committee has been working on since September 2007, with the support of FFLA. One of the key objectives of the Local Committee is to identify funding opportunities for new conservation and development projects which will contribute towards improving the living conditions of local inhabitants.

The Local Committee holds meetings each month enabling the local stakeholders to interact with representatives of government authorities and new NGOs in the area which are constantly seeking possible areas for support.

One of the challenges for FFLA's facilitators for the next months is to institutionalize this space, which has become a powerful and socially legitimized forum for participatory planning and management, in order to ensure its future sustainability. Merging it into the local town council structure is likely to be the best way to achieve a formal status and budgetary support for the Local Committee. In this way, FFLA is working, with the support of other local NGOs, to build capacities in members and local leaders to manage the Local Committee in the future.

