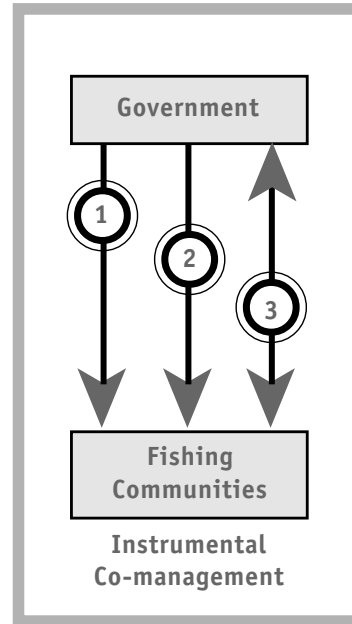


Reforming governance institutions

Governance of fisheries involves: 1) setting management *objectives*, 2) defining and providing the *knowledge base* for management and 3) ensuring *implementation* of management decisions.

In most countries around the world the fish resources are state property and thus, governments need to play an important role in governing these resources. Governments have institutionalised the fisheries management process and a global mainstream approach has evolved, which can be characterised as the 'modern fisheries management' approach because it reflects modern rationality or the scientific approach used in fisheries management. In the modern management approach decisions are taken at the central level (top-down), management objectives have primarily focussed on conservation aspects and the knowledge base has primarily been defined as resource biology. Implementation has been through policing. The involvement of fishing communities has been rather limited in all respects and the management system is top-down in relation to setting management objectives, defining the knowledge base and implementation as illustrated by the arrows in the figure.



Fisheries co-management

Co-management has been widely recognised as a promising option for reform of fisheries governance institutions. Early cases of co-management have been documented by Jentoft (1989) and Pinkerton (1989). The co-management concept as a basis for natural resource management was introduced by Kearney (1984). Frameworks for understanding common property resources including co-management arrangements were developed by Oakerson (1992) and OECD (1996). The early conceptual development and frameworks for analysis were open for wide interpretation. An attempt to use a more specific terminology by classification of co-management arrangements along one dimension was introduced by Sen and Raakjaer Nielsen (1996). A broad institutional analysis framework was developed to study co-management cases under the Fisheries Co-management project at the WorldFish Center formerly known as ICLARM (Pomeroy et al. 1994). The concept of co-management has, however, been used to cover a large range of institutional arrangements which have very little in common and has been adapted very differently in various situations. The acceptance of co-management as an important correction to modern fisheries management has thus been associated with the concept being adopted so vaguely that it has lost substance in the process.

Definition of co-management

Co-management can broadly be defined as an arrangement where management responsibility is shared between the government and fishing communities. It can be viewed as a set of institutional and organizational arrangements (rights and rules) that define the cooperation among the fisheries administration and relevant fishing communities (Raakjaer Nielsen and Vedsmann 1999; Pomeroy and Berkes 1997).

Rationale for co-management

The emergence of co-management has been based on considerations of both democracy (involvement of citizens in decisions concerning their own livelihood) and efficacy (to reduce implementation costs and improve compliance). Co-management is considered to represent a more democratic governance system because it implies increased involvement of users and delegation of decisions to be taken as close to the users as possible. It has been expected to improve the efficacy of fisheries management because acceptance of management measures is assumed to be higher when users are involved in the decision-making process and the contents of management measures is assumed to be more adequate and better reflect the actual situation if users knowledge is included in their development.

Different co-management arrangements may be distinguished by their relative emphases on democracy and efficacy aspects.

Instrumental co-management

Co-management can be an innovative change to the modern fisheries management approach as it implies a power sharing arrangement between government and fishing communities to undertake fisheries management. However, the practical adaptation of the co-management approach by governments has most often been limited to involving fishing communities in the implementation process – an ‘instrumental co-management’ approach. Governments have generally not perceived co-management as a means to introduce more democratic principles into fisheries management, but have recognized co-management as an instrument to reach its management objectives more efficiently by involving fishing communities in the implementation process. Governments have not been prepared to expand user-participation to setting management objectives (this has only been observed in a few cases of limited consultation) and determining what knowledge to include in the management process (there are no documented cases where fishermen’s knowledge have been used as a basis for management decisions on equal terms with research based biological knowledge).

Examples of attempts at instrumental co-management approaches from Southern Africa and Southeast Asia are the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMAGE) in Zambia, the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe, the development of marine parks in Malaysia and the co-management arrangement in San Miguel Bay, the Philippines. The practical adaptation of the co-management concept in the two regions and elsewhere in the world, has almost entirely been focussing on the implementation process, thus taking an instrumental approach.

On the ground experiences from the two regions strongly indicate that the present problems of making the co-management arrangements successful can be related to the instrumental approach to co-management taken. One of the best-documented examples is perhaps the co-management arrangement introduced at Lake Malombe, Malawi. When the project was initiated the expectations in the local fishing communities were that empowerment was going hand in hand with the introduction of co-management, but it turned out differently. The Beach Villages Committees, which were established to represent communities in this co-management process, felt that they entirely became an implementation body for the Fisheries Department. In addition, the Beach Village Committees felt that the support from the Fisheries Department was insufficient in the implementation process.

The lack of support from governments to local co-management initiatives is a general observation from the case studies. One reason for this might be the lack of adaptation in the organisational structures of government departments to cope with new management concepts. The extent of the change in scope required to move from top-down management to co-management even in the most rudimentary instrumental form has generally not been realised by governments. The situation is further complicated by the fact that most fisheries departments have been staffed nearly exclusively with biologists and have mainly been driven by resource conservation concerns.

In reality the instrumental co-management approach does not differ significantly from the modern management approach and the efficacy has in most cases not been much better. The current trend might actually lead to a situation where it will do worse because the frustration among fishing communities will increase due to the lack of empowerment and this will consequently undermine the legitimacy of the management system. When co-management was initiated, it created huge expectations for a genuine participation and empowerment, but the practical adaptation of the co-management turned out to be business as usual and not an institutional reform.

Empowering fisheries co-management: an institutional innovation

The limited success of instrumental co-management may be due to its lack of involvement of users where it really matters - in defining management objectives and in identifying the knowledge to be considered a valid basis for management decisions. It is a radical institutional change to involve fishing communities in setting management objectives on equal terms with government. It should be anticipated, as a consequence hereof, that management objectives will be modified and, in some situations, in contrast to the previous biological/resource oriented focus. Socio-economic considerations are likely to play a more prominent role within an empowering co-management arrangement.

Empowerment of fishing communities is a mechanism to give the people within the fishing communities a chance to influence their own future in order to cope with the impact from globalisation, competing use of freshwater and coastal environments, and other fisheries related issues. An empowering co-management approach will apparently – to a higher degree than previous or present management approaches – fulfil the overall management objectives, although these objectives are likely to differ from management objectives set by governments in the past.

The empowering co-management approach is a demanding concept, as it requires:

- A rethink of the logic for management and subsequently a change in the knowledge base for management.
- A major restructuring of the institutional and organisational arrangements supporting management.
- A substantial change in attitudes from both governments and fishing communities towards their role in such arrangements.
- Aspiration from fishing communities and government to proceed along this avenue.
- Capacity-building at several levels both within governments and fishing communities.

The empowering co-management concept is a learning process for all involved parties. It takes an adaptive approach to management. In order to deal with the very complex issues the process will be a “muddling through”. The participants might from time to time perceive it as chaotic. Finally, it is important to emphasise that it will be a troublesome exercise without any guarantee for success, but it promises to improve the efficacy of fisheries management in small scale fisheries in developing countries or for that matter in fisheries management in general.

An empowering co-management arrangement will to some extent challenge the objectives set by main stream international conventions within fisheries management e.g. the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and the precautionary approach for fisheries management, which is an attempt to ensure that all uncertainties in respect to stock estimation and fisheries management implementation are included to protect the fish stocks. This may be at the short-term expense of fishing communities as their ability to generate income and food is correspondingly diminished. The approach taken in the international conventions is quite similar to the modern fisheries management approach. In this sense, the international decision-making community may have underestimated the limitations of this approach. A balance between conservation and socio-economic concerns need to be found. In this respect empowering co-management can actually facilitate the process by exposing governments to the impacts felt by fishing communities of the international conventions and assist national governments in making arguments to balance the various objectives in international decision-making fora.

