Gender Approach in the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Program at Sevilla, Cuba

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Introduction

Since 1999, actions have been taken in Cuba to introduce the integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) approach in post-graduate programs at Cuban universities. The development of capacity for ICZM in Cuba has its most significant antecedent in the Tier II Project: Education for the Integrated Management of Coastal Zones in Cuba, developed in 1994 and 2004 and financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in cooperation with Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. Today, over 100 graduates hold master’s degrees in science that are busy progressing ICZM practice in Cuba. However, ICZM programs have failed to delve into the gender approach to narrow the gender gap in Cuba’s coastal population, and there is no module that explicitly refers to gender issues in ICZM in the master’s degree curriculum in Cuba.

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In 2007, the Cuban Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) established the declaration process for Zones under the Regime of Integrated Coastal Management (Sp. ZBRMIC). This is a national process the objective of which is the assessment and approval of integrated coastal management initiatives in different areas of the country.\footnote{D. Salabarría and L. Brito, \textit{Declaración de zonas bajo régimen de manejo integrado en Cuba. Memorias de la V Conferencia Internacional de Manejo Integrado de Zonas Costeras} (Santiago de Cuba: CARICOSTAS, 2011, ISBN: 978959207409–5).} Each area is vetted to guarantee the minimum organizational, functional, technical, and methodological requirements to start integrated coastal management, however, there is no explicit reference to gender issues in any variables or indicators.

The project Local Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Southeast Cuba (2010–2014) introduced gender-based research in an ICZM program. This research explored the following questions: How does one move from gender indicators to concrete actions within ICZM programs? What does a gender approach contribute and what difference does it make in ICZM programs? How can one promote participation by both men and women in decision-making to resolve coastal zone conflicts? What tasks should be developed to empower women and men in a patriarchal cultural environment to assume the added vulnerability inherent in their gender role? This research tests the idea that social gender roles assigned to men and women culturally influence the level of their relations with coastal resources, so the management of coastal resources would be more equitable and sustainable if it incorporates gender perspectives in its program.

Among the key issues ICZM programs have dealt with are coastal water quality, coastal resources and ecosystems, and coastal threats and development. The programs are mostly related to conservation and protection and sustainability of resources and the coastal zone in general. ICZM programs focusing on physical, natural, socio-economic, institutional, and legal problems of the coastal zone seem unable to define differences in gender roles and power relations among men and women in the management and sustainability of resources.

ICZM is a valid management tool in Cuba given the complexity of environmental problems. The most threatening environmental issues for the Cuban archipelago are climate change and sea level rise, soil degradation, changes to forest cover, pollution from liquid and solid wastes, atmospheric emissions, noise pollution, dangerous chemical products and wastes, loss of biodiversity,