



Case study:

Oeba Fish Landing Centre - Improvement through better management and infrastructure



Overview

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) has sought to improve fish quality, to reduce post-harvest losses due to poor handling and to reduce food safety risks posed by the lack of basic services (clean potable water, ice, electricity, etc.) at Oeba Fish Landing Centre in Kupang municipality, Nusa Tenggara Timur province, Indonesia. A combination of infrastructure improvements and consensus building for the management of the installation has been key to improving the conditions at the landing site.

Key lessons learned

- The main lesson learned was the absolute need for a realistic management plan agreed and developed through a participatory process with all users. Without such a plan it is highly unlikely that any infrastructure developments would be effective.

Context - The Oeba Fish Landing Centre

Kupang is the capital of Nusa Tenggara Timur province in Indonesia, and has an estimated population of 349,344 people (2011). It is also the biggest city and port of the island of Timor. The Oeba Fish Landing Centre (OFLC), situated in Kupang municipality, plays an important role for landing and sales of aquatic products from the surrounding Kupang Bay and Savu Sea. Aquatic catch is landed and distributed through Oeba Fish Landing Centre to surrounding districts and small amounts are also sold and exported across the border areas to neighbouring Timor-Leste. Supporting services performed at OFLC include fishing vessel berthing, ice production and sale, and trading of fresh products which comprise mainly fish, but also include shrimp, squid, etc. About 120 fishing vessels, 200 fishers, and over 100 traders work at the centre and utilize the facilities, which are owned, maintained and operated by the provincial state government.

The issues

Despite the importance of this landing site for Nusa Tenggara Timur, it was apparent that it was not functioning effectively. RFLP carried out an assessment and identified a number key issues, mainly relating to inadequate management and building design deficiencies. In particular, the assessment revealed that:

- Traders refused to utilize the main trading building because the tile floor was slippery and dangerous when wet.
- Most fishers and traders conducted their transactions in unhygienic conditions outside the building.
- There was a lack of clean (potable) water and electricity, as well as no waste

management, which resulted in stinking fish waste and other garbage littering the site.

- At the heart of the problems facing Oeba was ineffective management of the facility, mainly due to unclear delineation of powers and competencies, between the municipal and provincial governments. According to Indonesian Law, facilities in a region that are developed using National Government funds, have to be managed by Provincial Government as the representative of the National Government, unless there is a specific written agreement stating that the facility should be managed by the district level government.

As a result, the landing site was not fulfilling its purpose, to the detriment of the quality of aquatic products being landed. The attempts of the RFLP to improve the conditions of the OFLC began in 2011, but they did not move forward due to a conflict of interests between fish traders. Local fishers complained that the OFLC was benefitting fishers from other locations instead of them, while traders feared that plans to relocate their operations (within OFLC) would be bad for business and therefore they resisted the process.



Selling fish on the outside hall before renovation



Problem identification

The initiative

In view of these issues, RFLP focused on building trust among the different stakeholders and enhancing management and conditions at the Oeba Fish Landing Centre. This formed part of its strategy to improve fish quality and food safety as well as to reduce losses and human health risk posed by poor handling and the lack of basic services (clean potable water, ice, electricity, etc.).

Activities were carried out with the support of the OFLC management, a group of local graduate trainees trained by RFLP in post-harvest activities, and the Institute of Cross-Timor Economic and Social Development (INCREASE), which is local NGO and facilitator specializing in conflict management.

The process

In 2012, RFLP teamed up with INCREASE to facilitate a process of consensus building amongst the landing site users in order to improve its management as well as to rehabilitate the basic infrastructure. Activities were carried out in two key areas:

- **Formalization of a mutual management agreement:** A written agreement that clarified

how, and by who, management of the facility was to take place.

- **Improvements to the landing site facilities:** Physical improvements to the infrastructure which were funded by RFLP.

Formalization of the mutual management agreement

In order to better understand the needs of the users, information was gathered and problems identified through technical discussions with experts and meetings with fishers and fish traders. Public hearings were also held to help gain consensus. All of these steps took place in a sequential and participatory manner involving fish traders, fishers, boat owners, and the local government.

A management agreement was subsequently drawn up for the OFLC. It defined the competencies of each stakeholder involved in managing the facilities, and management information, such as the right to use vending tables, where cool boxes could be stored, daily financial contributions from traders, sanitary issues (including waste management), parking rules and the roles of coordinators.

“Improving Oeba has been quite a challenge. Some traders were like warlords, using their power and money to influence others. This problem was solved by approaching other opinion leaders to support us and by not carrying out the rehabilitation in a rush. Problem mapping and identification were needed so that RFLP assistance would be on target.” Akhmad Rikhun, RFLP Post-harvest consultant

The main functions of the coordinators were to coordinate activities and better manage the fish-landing centre and to maintain its cleanliness. They were assisted by an operator who collected agreed fees from traders.

In order to ensure transparency, the money collected was managed by the 'Mina Aditya' cooperative unit, which performed a micro-finance role allowing members to both save and borrow money.

The agreement was then signed by representatives of the small-, medium- and large-scale traders, as well as the government appointed head of Oeba Fish Landing Centre.

A re-zoning of the site also took place to better facilitate fish trading and more efficient movement of aquatic product through the OFLC.

INCREASE acted as a facilitator in this process, working towards building consensus among the different stakeholders involved, and managed any conflicts that arose.

Improvements to landing site facilities

Physical improvements to the Oeba facilities included rehabilitation of water pipelines, taps, and water hoses in order to guarantee a clean potable water supply. Improvements also included repair of the drainage facilities, removal and replacement of the slippery tiles in the trading hall with a non-slippery floor, vending table improvement, upgrading of the electrical supply and installation of additional lighting around the landing site to improve night security. Re-zoning of the site also took place to better facilitate fish trading.

Results

A number of improvements were achieved to the Oeba Fish Landing Centre, which will ultimately benefit the quality of aquatic products and the cold-chain in Kupang municipality and possibly further afield. The site is now actively managed, thanks to the consultative process undertaken involving traders, vendors and government management staff.

In addition to cleanliness and waste management, a number of other improvements have been



Coordination meeting

facilitated. An area where vehicles can be parked has been agreed. The large-scale traders have also been re-allocated a zone for selling their fish, which is closer to where the boats land their catch.

Following these improvements the trading hall now bustles with activity as traders do their business in far more hygienic conditions. The renovated floor is no longer slippery even when wet. Meanwhile traders hope that the better conditions and improved organization of the facility will also attract more customers.

The small-scale traders also appointed a coordinator, 30-year-old fish trader Ms. Erni Muskanan who lives close to Oeba Fish Landing Centre. "Leading these mostly male traders may be difficult because I am a young woman. But since they mostly come from outside of Oeba, it should not be that hard because they are outsiders, who have to respect the local people. That is my advantage," said Erni.

Lessons Learned

- Strong leadership and management, as well as community cohesion is vital to fair, open, transparent and effective landing centre/market operation. Without this, infrastructure upgrades should not take place.
- A management plan must be in place before any upgrades are made.
- It is vital that all stakeholder groups are consulted in an open and transparent manner when any proposed changes or upgrades are under consideration.
- Make efforts to enhance 'ownership' of facilities by users.

- Carefully assess the feasibility and cost benefit of any improvements.
- Improvement of facilities should take place in conjunction with efforts to raise awareness of the importance of hygiene and sanitation for aquatic product food safety.
- Advocacy should take place for improvements to water supply, storage, drainage, waste (solid and liquid) disposal etc., that may be beyond the resources of any development programme.

Recommendations

The challenge now is to maintain the management of Oeba Fish Landing Centre and to keep the fish traders involved. Some additional efforts are still needed to improve sewers and drainage, as well as to further enhance fish trader awareness and discipline about hygiene and cleanliness.

The provincial government supports the new management plan for Oeba Fish Landing Centre and it is important that, to ensure the sustainability of these improvements, this support continues in the form of both budget and management assistance.



Trading inside the Oeba Fish Landing Centre

Ongoing discussion and collaboration should take place between the local and provincial governments to ensure that OFLC receives the ongoing support it needs beyond the lifetime of the project.

It is important for the provincial government to place capable people in management positions at the OFLC. The complexity of the problems at OFLC can only be handled by those who understand the work of the fish landing centre and the regulations relating to it.

The management of Oeba Fish Landing Centre should ensure effective collaboration with the fish traders through their coordinators, as well as with the cooperative unit on site. The collaboration should be on a daily and on-going basis. It should be based on mutual trust and guided by the agreement that has been signed by all parties, while avoiding making promises that are unlikely to be fulfilled.

Den Adoe was chosen as coordinator to lead and manage the daily activities of the medium- and large-scale fish traders. As a trader at OFLC, he was well aware of the challenges he would face in his new role. "The different backgrounds of these people sometimes make them very selfish and that is why meetings often never reach any conclusion. However, this is a mandate that I will carry out responsibly. I may not have boats or a permanent stall. I may be only a middle-trader, but if these people want me as their coordinator, I will need their support to back me up whenever we make a decision," Den said.

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About RFLP

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) sets out to strengthen capacity among participating small-scale fishing communities and their supporting institutions in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. By doing so the RFLP seeks to improve the livelihoods of fisher folk and their families while fostering more sustainable fisheries resources management practices. The four-year (2009 – 2013) RFLP is funded by the Kingdom of Spain and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) working in close collaboration with the national authorities responsible for fisheries in participating countries. For more information about the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) see www.rflp.org or contact the Regional Information Officer Steve.needham@fao.org