Empowering small-scale fishers to reduce rural poverty

LESSONS LEARNED FROM INDIA AND COSTA RICA

18 November 2016
Poverty is one of the biggest obstacles to human development and economic growth. About 900 million people continue to live in extreme poverty. Most of them (some 75 percent) live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, including fisheries, for their livelihoods and food security. In 2002, FAO estimated that 5.8 million small-scale fisheries were still living under the poverty line.

With the adoption of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries have renewed their commitment to fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition, recognising that inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth is key for achieving sustainable development and eradicate poverty. Empowering small-scale fishers and building their organizational capacity is key to help them move out of poverty and achieve a decent standard of living through their livelihood.

Getting rural people organized increases the chances of long-lasting poverty reduction. Through collective action, small-scale fishers can improve their bargaining power, access to markets and productivity, increase their participation in decision-making processes and influence the formulation of national policies affecting their livelihoods. This seminar will discuss the role of cooperatives, fishers’ organizations and other institutions in strengthening the bargaining power of small-scale fishers as a strategy to reduce rural poverty.

In particular, the seminar will show how small-scale fisheries contribute to poverty reduction, community development and food security around the world and will present successful examples of collective action for poverty reduction in the fisheries sector from India and Costa Rica.

**SPEAKERS**

**Jentoft Svein** is a sociologist and a professor at the Norwegian College of Fishery Science at UIT – The Arctic University of Norway. Throughout his career he has worked extensively on fisheries and coastal issues, including resource management, industrial organization and community development in his native Norway as well as in many other countries. Jentoft has published more than 25 books and numerous journal articles on fisheries and coastal governance and is a found member and cluster leader within the Too Big To Ignore small-scale fisheries research partnership. His most recent book is “Interactive governance for small-scale fisheries: global reflections”, co-edited with Ratana Chuenpagdee was published by Springer this year. He is currently working on a book about the implementation of the SSF Guidelines globally.

**Vivienne Solis Rivera** is a biologist with extensive experience on interdisciplinary and inter-institutional initiatives in conservation, human rights and sustainable use of biodiversity. A founder of Coope SoliDar, a cooperative of people who appreciate differences and share strong values in solidarity, Vivienne delights in working with communities especially small scale-fishing communities in Central America. She works to support them in the sustainable use of wildlife, sustainable fishing and other natural resources, often via co-management and community governance. In the last several years, she has focused on community governance of fisheries in Central America.

**Maarten Bavinck** is professor in the Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies (GPIO) of the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Governance and Inclusive Development programme group. He also holds a chair in coastal resource governance at the Norwegian Fisheries College of the Norges Arktisk Universitet in Norway. Maarten is specialized in the governance of capture fisheries, particularly in the South, and is especially interested in the fate of small-scale fisher peoples. His own fieldwork is concentrated in South Asia (India and Sri Lanka). Maarten’s theoretical perspectives are interactive governance, legal pluralism, and political ecology. He has authored two monographs and several edited volumes, as well as a large number of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Maarten is founder and co-director of the social-science Centre for Maritime Studies (MARE), and founding associate editor of the journal Maritime Studies. He also co-edits (with Svein Jentoft) the MARE Publication Series, published by Springer Academic Publishers.

In its work to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty, FAO has identified five key priorities, each channelled through a Strategic Programme. This initiative is being implemented in the context of: [www.fao.org/about/what-we-do/so3](http://www.fao.org/about/what-we-do/so3)

**The FAO Strategic Programme to REDUCE RURAL POVERTY**

Photo credits (cover): Tunisian fishermen repairing nets on the dock; ©FAO/Giulio Napolitano