FAO holds workshop on aquaculture rehabilitation in Aceh Province

**Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 25 July** More than 20 000 ha of tambak fish ponds were destroyed in wake of the tsunami, resulting in a major blow for the aquaculture industry in Indonesia, FAO said today.

The aquaculture sub-sector is socially, economically and environmentally important and plays a significant part in the livelihoods of inhabitants of many coastal villages in Aceh Province.

The main aquaculture system relies on brackish water ponds (locally known as tambaks). Before the tsunami, these ponds covered around 47 000 ha and producing mainly milkfish for domestic consumption, and high value shrimp, destined for export markets.

The tsunami destroyed income opportunities for thousands of households living along the north-east coast. There, tambak farming was a well established and important feature of the rural coastal economy.

FAO hosted a three day workshop in Banda Aceh on sustainable aquaculture rehabilitation in Aceh Province. The workshop took place in close cooperation with the Directorate General of Aquaculture (DGA) of the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia Pacific (NACA). The purpose of the workshop was to develop a strategy for improving the aquaculture sector in the shattered region.

“FAO wants to contribute to the review for re-establishment potential of the aquaculture industry in the tsunami affected region. Sound planning and a strategic approach to aquaculture development are very important to avoid unwarranted economic and environmental effects at a later stage,” Dr. Rohana Subasinghe, FAO Fisheries Department said.

“By starting to establish this strategy, I believe this workshop can achieve a positive step towards achieving this goal.”

The number of people involved in aquaculture in Aceh is highly significant and FAO estimates that approximately 40 000 people employed in aquaculture have been directly affected by the tsunami. According to FAO each hectare of pond supports around two people/ha, including labour and for 47 000 ha of ponds, the real number is likely to be as high as 94 000 people.

“FAO wants to move forward and assist in the rehabilitation process not only in aquaculture, but also in terms of the entire FAO rehabilitation programme that includes agriculture, forestry and livelihoods,” Peter Flewwelling, FAO Fisheries said.