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Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

December 2010



RFLP momentum builds during a strong first year



Small-scale fisheries play a hugely important role in South and Southeast Asia, directly or indirectly employing many millions. However small-scale fishers are often extremely vulnerable; relying on fish stocks which are increasingly depleted due to overcapacity, access conflicts and inadequate management.

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP), funded by Spain, seeks to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale fishers across the region. We draw on the strengths and potential of fishing communities and their supporting institutions such as district fisheries offices to create empowerment and partnerships while boosting skills and ability. By doing so, we hope to create improved livelihoods and more sustainable fisheries resources management.

This has been a strong first full year for the RFLP. We have worked hard to get national teams in place and to help them operate effectively. A wide range of activities have also been successfully carried out in all six participating RFLP countries. Ranging from training sessions on safety at sea to the formulation of fisheries management plans, these activities will provide real benefits for those individuals, communities, agencies or institutions which participate. This newsletter highlights just a few of the activities that took place in 2010. More information on all of our activities will be available at our website www.rflp.org.

RFLP is very much a collaborative effort. I would like to thank all of our national counterparts, the various FAO offices, the donor and of course all of the fishing communities and other stakeholders for their excellent support during the year. Together, I am confident that we can build on our achievements and help make an even greater difference to the lives of fishers across the region in 2011.

Jose Parajua

Regional Programme Manager

“The RFLP seeks to improve the livelihoods of fishers and their families while fostering more sustainable fisheries resources management practices in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.”

RFLP in action - Post harvest



The RFLP'S Pedro Rodrigues shows off the ice.

Clean and cold in Timor-Leste

The lack of availability of ice at fish landing centers in Timor-Leste greatly impacts the quality, hygiene, and marketability of fisheries products. In recognition of this, the RFLP has looked at the possibility of making ice at a number of fish landing centers.

International consultant Mike Christensen was brought in to evaluate possible methods of producing ice. After a number of field visits, he suggested it would be more effective for ice to be produced and distributed from a limited number of centralized production centers.

Mike also helped install an ice machine belonging to the National Directorate of Fisheries. While doing so he provided on the job training to staff in how to install and maintain the equipment. A small pilot project was set up using this ice machine which proved the feasibility of delivering ice from a central location to two districts.

The RFLP's activities paid unforeseen dividends when half way through the consultancy the Ministry of Tourism called to say it had four unused ice making machines.

"We realized the machines had the capacity to provide enough ice for all of Timor-Leste. Mike therefore devised a system for nationwide distribution of ice based on the use of these four machines and we will need to speak with other donors as to how this plan could be put into practice," said Enrique Alonso, RFLP advisor in Timor-Leste.

In addition, Mike worked with the RFLP team to help devise basic manuals on how fishers and fish processors can increase catch quality and salable life by establishing a cold chain and observing basic hygiene measures. Training was then provided to trainers from district fisheries offices as well as staff from a local NGO. The manuals are currently being translated into the local language and will soon be available on the RFLP website.

RFLP in action - Safety at sea



A risky business

Reporting on accidents at sea

Fishing is said to be the world's riskiest occupation with fishers everywhere vulnerable to accidents, injuries and death. Yet little hard data is collected in the RFLP countries on the true extent of accidents at sea.

For this reason RFLP is piloting an accident reporting and analysis system for small fishing vessels, in selected areas of Cambodia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The system involves the establishment of simple reporting formats and the training of community reporters and district level information gatherers. Following the six month pilot scheme a regional workshop will be held to review the results and to consider the next steps.

Suhendra, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for RFLP Indonesia said, "A simple but effective information gathering system is vital if we are to understand the true extent of accidents in Indonesia. From this data we will then be able to consider appropriate actions to safeguard fishers' lives."

Safety training in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, RFLP has organized safety at sea training for small-scale fishers on safety measures, the use of safety equipment and first aid. So far, six awareness creation and training programs have been successfully implemented with the participation of 314 community leaders, fishery officials, fishers and commercial divers operating in the RFLP area.

Through practical demonstrations, learning by doing and the use of audio visual equipment the training has had high impact.

"There has been huge demand from participants for more training," said Nishan Dissanayake of RFLP Sri Lanka. "One told me that he previously didn't know that this type of equipment was for and now knows that there are several things he could do to ensure safety at sea. He wanted us to hold more sessions so that he could ask all his colleagues to join."

RFLP in action - Co-management



Sardine survival in the Philippines

“Bottled sardines is an industry that cannot be allowed to collapse,” said Benjamin Francisco from RFLP’s team in the Philippines. “If it does it will adversely affect many thousands of people.”

Sardines play an important role in the economy of Zamboanga del Norte province, which is the center of the Philippines bottled sardines industry as well as the home to RFLP activi-

ties in the country. Sardines are a big export commodity and money earner for the province but sardine bottlers are worried as the sardine catch in 2009 was significantly down compared to previous years.

In response, RFLP in collaboration with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has brought in specialists to work on devising a sardine fisheries management plan for the area.

“It is vital to look for ways to arrest the decline,” said Benjamin. “Every fisher and every bottler knows that from December to January the sardines are full of eggs. A sardine fisheries management plan will therefore look at the feasibility, acceptability and workability of implementing seasonal or spatial management measures to protect sardine reproduction and recruitment. The measures must be acceptable to everyone. The sustainability of the industry depends on it.”

Experiencing co-management first hand in Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, the RFLP team has been conducting a study tour to give government staff working in the provinces where RFLP operates the chance to observe co-management activities set up by other projects. When the study tour is finished an experience sharing workshop will be held with results feeding into the development of co-management activities in the areas of RFLP operations.

“It is interesting for provincial project management units to see co-management activities for themselves. This is a good starting point for us to develop further actions as participants can see how co-management works in the field. It becomes more real to them, rather than just a concept,” said Miss Phuong Thao from RFLP’s Viet Nam team.

RFLP in action - Livelihoods



Extra income from grilled squid

Evaluating livelihood options in Cambodia

In Cambodia the RFLP team has been evaluating the feasibility of alternative livelihood options in coastal fishing communities. A series of consultation workshops have taken place to discuss with villagers how they would like to improve their livelihoods and what activities they are confident of doing.

Possible options considered include chicken raising, vegetable plantations, fish culture, rice banks as well as eco-tourism. Detailed feasibility studies are carried out into possible options and training provided to community business groups. Local involvement and interest is vital with communities working hard to prepare local business plans.

RFLP consultant Khim Wirya stressed the importance of getting things right. “The stakes are high when you deal with people’s livelihoods and you cannot afford to make mistakes. We really need to ensure that the villagers can do these activities sustainably and do them well.”

“The stakes are high when you deal with people’s livelihoods and you cannot afford to make mistakes.”

RFLP in action - Micro-finance



Could micro-finance help your business?

Assessing micro-finance options for fishers

Access to credit and other financial services helps small-scale fishers manage risks and reduce economic and social vulnerability. However, few micro-finance institutions or commercial banks are willing to provide small loans to small-scale fishers. RFLP is working with the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) to carry out a study in the

six RFLP countries to assess specific needs for micro-finance in the project areas as well as possibilities for micro-finance institutions to adjust their lending policies.

The RFLP's Xavier Tezzo said, "Access to micro-finance gives households the chance to increase income from both fisheries and non-fisheries activities, especially during lean and off-seasons when little or no income or food is generated."

RFLP in action - Gender



Listening to the ladies in Cambodia

Recognizing the role of the 'invisible' woman

The fisheries sector has long been considered a male domain. However, the involvement and contribution of women is significant.

As part of its efforts to promote gender equity to improve fisheries livelihoods, the RFLP is developing a field handbook that gives guidance on taking gender into account in all phases of small-scale fisheries development

projects. The handbook includes a number of tools designed to help assess gender considerations in fishing communities.

"In many cases there is an incomplete understanding of the contribution of women or the complexity of gender roles in fishing communities," said the RFLP's Angela Lentisco. "Lack of attention to gender can result in policies or programmes failing to improve livelihoods or reduce vulnerability of fishing communities."

What is the RFLP?

The Regional Fisheries Livelihood 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 fishers and their families while fostering more sustainable

fisheries resources management practices.

The four-year (2009–2013), USD 19.55 million 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 national authorities in participating countries.

For more information

Please see www.rflp.org or contact the Information Officer, Steve Needham at steve.needham@fao.org or on tel +66 85 4803988



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