



POST-HARVEST  
FISHERIES  
PROJECT

# NEWSLETTER OF THE POST-HARVEST FISHERIES PROJECT



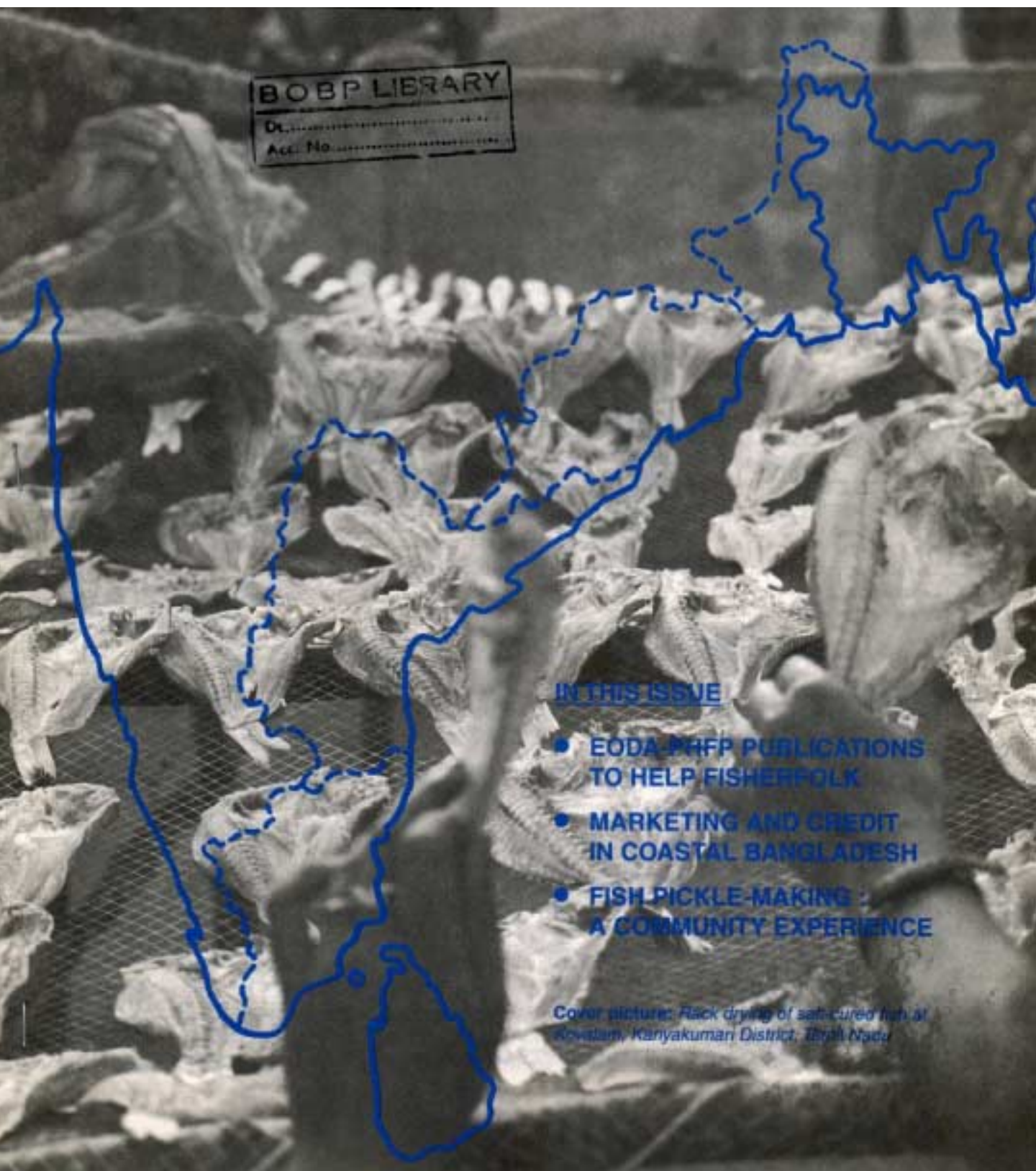
Overseas Development Administration



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*Cover picture: Rack drying of salt-cured fish at Kovadam, Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu*

### INDIA

- The Tamil Nadu Government has constituted an Expert Committee to prepare a policy for fisheries development, fishermen's welfare and fisheries management. The report of the Committee is to be submitted to the Government by April 1996.
- The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced on March 13 several new welfare schemes and measures for both marine and inland fisherfolk, to be implemented during 1996-97 at a cost of about Rs. 14 crore (Rs. 140 million). The measures include:
  - free chemical treatment of catamaran logs by a mobile unit for 480 catamarans
  - construction of link and approach roads to fishing hamlets
  - erection of street lights (numbering 10 in each village) in 250 villages where government houses are to be constructed free of cost
  - bridges across estuaries at Keezhamanakudy, Pulicat and across the Paravanar river
  - increasing free house construction to 5,000 houses per year – to provide 1,000 houses for inland fishermen and 4,000 houses for marine fishermen
  - provision of a subsidy of Rs.4,000 per catamaran/vallam (sail boat) for 5,000 craft
  - provision of free motorized tricycles at a cost of Rs.20,000 each to 50 fisherwomen cooperatives, for their members to transport fish, etc., for marketing
  - provision of a subsidy of Rs. 2,000 towards new nets purchased per year per craft for 10,000 fishing craft
- expeditious payment in respect of relief measures during natural calamities from the Calamity Relief Fund
- action to remove sand accumulation/s and-bars at river/estuary mouths to provide free movement of fishing craft; and
- provision of a subsidy of up to Rs. 1,000 and a loan of up to Rs.4,000 to each fisherman to repair the houses constructed free of cost by the government for fishermen in earlier years.
- Two workshops on "Credit Availability for Marine Fisherfolk" were held on February 2 and 27, 1996 at Bhubaneswar and Hyderabad, respectively. The participants included senior officials from the banking sector, government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Two training programmes on post-harvest technology for Fisheries Extension Officers of the Andhra Pradesh Department of Fisheries were arranged by ODA-PHFP from January 4 to 10, 1996. The topics covered were post-harvest handling, spoilage, quality control and improved methods of preservation and processing. Practicals and field visits formed part of the training module.
- The Department of Fisheries, Andhra Pradesh, has undertaken extension activities in East Godavari district, along with the Backward Classes Society, to demonstrate the use of smoking bins to fisherwomen processors along the Godavari delta area, where smoking is traditionally practised.
- Nearly 150 HDPE 100-litre insulated ice boxes have been provided to medium-sized *nava* operators in East Godavari district by the district administration. The state government and PHFP will monitor the use of these boxes regularly to assess their performance over a period of time.
- Discussions were held with Oxfam, Calcutta, on the possibility of collaborating with PHFP in providing assistance in the post-harvest sector to NGOs in West Bengal.
- The Department of Fisheries, Andhra Pradesh has requested that the ODA-PHFP will participate in a one-day exhibition of value-added fish products and other post-harvest related tools (ice boxes, etc.) during May-June 1996 in Hyderabad. Various agencies working along the east coast will have an opportunity to promote their products to a wider audience. Sintex, a national manufacturer of high-density polyethylene insulated ice boxes, has agreed to be one of the sponsors.
- At the request of Project Swarajya, an NGO in Orissa, PHFP organized a training programme on fish handling and development of value-added products in the first week of February 1996 at Paradeep and Chandrabhaga-Konark.
- Following the demonstration of the use of drying racks for fish by the Department of Fisheries during 1994-95, large numbers of such racks had been put up along the central Orissa coastline. Collection of data at Sahana-Astaranga and Chandrabhaga-Konark is being undertaken to determine the benefits of rack-dried products as compared to sand-dried ones.
- At Sahana and Chandrabhaga, fisherwomen groups have been provided with 250-litre insulated

ice boxes to facilitate storage and better marketing of fish.

## SRI LANKA

- A delegation of officials from the Ministry of Aquatic and Fisheries Resources – consisting of Mr. H.S.G.Fernando and Mr. Shanta Bandara, and accompanied by Mr. Chandra Silva, Local Officer, ODA-PHFP – visited India from January 22 to 28, 1996. The primary purpose of the visit was to study the loan recovery mechanisms utilized by

cooperatives that cater to the coastal communities in India. The delegation visited cooperatives that are under the government and also in the non-government sector. The possibility of adopting in Sri Lanka the mechanisms studied is now under consideration.

ODA-PHFP is to extend the use of ice boxes on board 18-foot fibre-glass boats in Sri Lanka, and a set of prototypes on the basis of two alternative designs are under construction. The ice boxes are to be tested along the coast during the first two weeks of May.



Sri Lankan delegates in discussion with the President (facing camera at right) of the MATSYAFED Cooperative at Vizhinjam, Kerala

- Ice boxes are to be introduced for the use of motor and push cycle traders in the districts of Puttalam, Chilaw, Gampha and Tangalle in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank's Fisheries Sector Development Project. A set of boxes based on the work done by PHFP with cycle traders of St. John's Market, Colombo, is to be fabricated for use by these traders. The applicability of the design is to be tested during the first half of May.

## BANGLADESH

- A study on the identification and assessment of sources and types of credit available for traditional marine fisherfolk has been commissioned by ODA-PHFP. The study aims to identify the types of credit and capital support, and terms and conditions for accessing the credit that is available through formal and non-formal institutions.
- A needs assessment exercise was conducted in two urban slums of Chittagong with itinerant fish vendors to determine the possibilities of post-harvest interventions in collaboration with an NGO, CODEC (Coastal Development Centre).

## Editorial

### Importance of Credit for Fisherfolk

**C**redit is an important output required by fisherfolk for consumption and production purposes. It plays a crucial role in their livelihood and offers the opportunity of channelling their creativity into income-generating activities and creating self-employment.

Unfortunately, fisherfolk have difficulties in accessing formal sources of credit due to various factors related to administrative procedures and transaction costs. The ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project takes a very pro-active facilitation role in working with the government and banking

organizations to assist the fisherfolk communities in accessing formal sources of credit. It is also working with these organizations and other development agencies in designing and developing financially sound and efficient credit programmes for fisherfolk communities, and stressing the fact that credit should be made available to small-scale fisherfolk on terms and conditions in keeping with their generally weak economic position and special needs.

The importance of this topic was highlighted at two recent workshops, held in Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar,

on credit availability for marine artisanal fisherfolk in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, respectively.

This issue of credit, its availability, and the conditions under which it is supplied will be explored in forthcoming issues of this newsletter. An article in this issue discusses the ties between marketing and credit in coastal Bangladesh, and is based on a long-term social and economic study to investigate the coastal fishing communities in that country to identify possible interventions. A full report on the two workshops on credit availability will appear in the next edition (July 1996) of this newsletter.

# ODA-PHFP Publications to Help Fisherfolk

**E**ight leaflets have been brought out by the Overseas Development Administration-funded Post-Harvest Fisheries Project (ODA-PHFP).

Seven of the leaflets are available in English, while some have also been published in the local languages of the east coast of India – Tamil, Telugu, Oriya and Bengali. One of the leaflets is also available in Malayalam. Finally, one leaflet has been produced in Sinhalese specifically for cycle traders in Sri Lanka.

The leaflets seek to assist fisher-folk by conveying information on how to improve the quality of fish landed by them and also of fish products, thereby increasing their market value.

How are the leaflets being used?

They are being widely distributed in several areas of the east coast:

- during demonstration visits to fishing villages by project officials
- at meetings and training workshops organized for fisherfolk
- through fisheries officials in various states
- through non-governmental organizations working with fisherfolk communities.

The leaflets are needed because fish is prominent in the diet of much of the population living in the Bay of Bengal region. It is often the most favoured, and least expensive, form of animal protein available. Poor post-harvest techniques, however, cause substantial material and nutritional losses in fish. Most commonly, unhygienic handling of fish after

capture leads to rapid spoilage and inevitable lowering of value. Subsequent poor or inadequate processing, marketing and distribution practices tend to lower quality and bring about low market values. The ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project seeks to change this by creating a better understanding of post-harvest problems and an improvement in the situation. These are an important link between ODA-PHFP and the fishing communities.

The leaflets, containing simple illustrations and explanatory notes, have been conceived with the purpose of reaching as many of the artisanal fisher-folk as possible. They deal with four types of activities carried out in India and which have generated interest and fairly wide acceptance among the fisher-folk communities and non-governmental organizations.

Following is a list of the leaflets:

(continued on page 6)

Sl. No.	Title of Leaflet	English	Tamil	Telugu	Oriya	Bengali	Malayalam
1.	How to Make High-quality Dried Anchovies	✓	✓	✓	—	—	✓
2.	A New & Better Fish Marketing Container	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3.	How to Use Ice Box on Navas	✓	✓	✓	✓		
4.	insulated Fish Boxes: Types, Specifications and Usage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
5.	Permanent Ice Box: Construction Specifications	✓	✓	✓		✓	—
6.	Improved Credit System for a Better Quality of Life	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—
7.	Ice Boxes Add Value to Your Fish Catch	✓					
8.	Use of Ice Boxes for Cycle Traders	In Sinhalese language					



ODA-PHPF publications in different languages

(continued from page 4)

Another leaflet, *A New & Better Fish Marketing Container*, tells the story of fisherwomen vendors who use fish baskets to transport fish as head-loads or by bus for retail marketing. The new aluminium fish container designed by ODA-PHFP is a boon in this context. The other advantages of these containers-they last longer, are clean, attractive and leak-proof, and easy to transport by bus under passenger seats -are also highlighted.

### Use of ice

Four leaflets deal with the use of ice for the preservation of fish on board boats and also ashore.

They are:

(a) *How to Use Ice Box on Navas*, which explains briefly how to install (as a semi-permanent fixture) an ice box in a boat, below and in between the thwart for easy lifting of the lid and with the drain plug backwards for easy flow-out of melt water. It also describes the quantities of ice to be taken for a fishing trip, and advises on the handling and packing of fish with the ice. In addition, it provides information on the maintenance of the box.

(b) *Insulated Fish Boxes: Types, Specifications and Usage*: This leaflet points out that fish stored in ice in an

insulated box keeps fresh longer. This box helps to reduce ice melting and thus to improve fish quality and increase the user's income. It discusses various designs of insulated boxes and explains how a fisherman can obtain them: he could buy them from a local supplier or construct the boxes himself using low-cost and readily available raw materials. Details regarding the construction of a wooden ice box are included in the leaflet.

(c) *Permanent Ice Box: Construction Specifications*: The construction and material specifications for a two-tonne shore-based ice box are provided, together with diagrams and a design drawing. Cost estimates are provided, as also the procedural details for constructing the box and the lid. Advice on how to use the box to the best advantage includes the following: keep only quality fish and arrange them properly between layers of crushed ice; ensure proper maintenance by draining melt water, keeping the lids properly closed, checking on stock and ensuring rotation; and clean the box by scrubbing.

(d) *Ice Boxes Add Value to Your Fish Catch*: This leaflet, based on a scenario where fishing is done with different types of craft, indicates the

options available to fisherfolk to benefit from the use of ice in insulated containers. The ice caters to needs both on board craft and on the shore.

Yet another leaflet, *Improved Credit System for a Better Quality of Life*, tells the story of a petty fisherwoman who buys fish on credit for retail vending. It suggests simple methods to overcome financial problems and increase the family income.

To cater to the needs of cycle traders who carry out retail house-to-house fish sales in Colombo and other places in Sri Lanka, a leaflet in the Sinhalese language has been produced and distributed.

Some of the leaflets are being updated as part of the activities of the ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project currently underway in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Those interested in obtaining copies of any of the leaflets listed above may write to:

Project Field Manager  
ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries  
Project  
91 St. Mary's Road  
Abhiramapuram  
Madras 600 018

**A.D. ISAAC RAJENDRAN**

ODA-PHFP, Madras

## Post-Harvest Overview Studies: Information Bulletins

The ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project has produced some information bulletins which will provide, a better understanding of the post-harvest fisheries sector in India.

The report *Post-Harvest Overview Studies*, published as five distinct bulletins, provides a base line of information concerning the activities, institutions and constraints facing the post-harvest artisanal fisheries sector. It would have application for policy-makers,

government and non-governmental organizations and the private sector to inform them of the problems and prospects within this sector.

Following are details of the information bulletins, dealing with India and some of the states on the east coast:

India	...	Bulletin	No. 1
Tamil Nadu	. . .	"	No. 2
Andhra Pradesh	. . .	"	No. 3
Orissa	. . .	"	No. 4
West Bengal	. . .	"	No. 5

Information bulletin No. 6, *Credit Availability for Marine Fisherfolk of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa*, describes the findings of a study to assess the current demand for credit by fisherfolk in the two states. The study identified the strengths and weaknesses of the various credit delivery systems that are in operation in order to help improve the opportunities for enhancing the access of credit provision to fisherfolk communities by the formal and informal sectors.

D.K.

## Ties between marketing and credit in coastal Bangladesh

# SAFETY NET OR DEBT TRAP?

By M.E. Blowfield and Nasimul Haquet †

**F**ISHING is a risky business, and nowhere more so than in the seas off Bangladesh. Cyclones and tidal surges can cause years of investment in boats and gear to be washed away overnight. High winds or rain can mean days or weeks when those with small craft are unable to go to sea.

Even without the protection of bad weather, the Bay of Bengal is often reluctant to share its riches. For months the catch accessible to small craft is miserly, and by a cruel twist of fate the peak season for high-value *hilsa* coincides with the monsoon season, meaning that fisherfolk often have to stay ashore while the catch rots in their nets.

Uncertainty means that coastal fishing communities veer between boom and bust. During the *hilsa* season from June until September, the communities are crowded with buyers, boat repairers, salesmen and tinkers. When the season ends, the money stops and the strangers go away. Many of the communities turn to push nets or set bagnet, and household incomes are less than 5 per cent of what they are during the *hilsa* season.

But although the fish buyers do not visit the communities during the lean season, their presence is still felt. When a household needs credit at the local shop, or money to repair equipment, somebody will contact the buyer or his representative, because the buyers do not simply purchase fish: they are also moneylenders, the most available source of credit that many coastal fishing communities have.

The buyers-cum-lenders are known as *dadondar* and are often members of neighbouring farming communities. Their dual role distinguishes them from other fish traders (*paikar*) who do not offer loans. The *dadondar* are in turn linked to *aratdar*, large-scale traders who sell the *hilsa* to the major urban and export markets and who also have access to the large amounts of capital that the *dadondar* system demands.

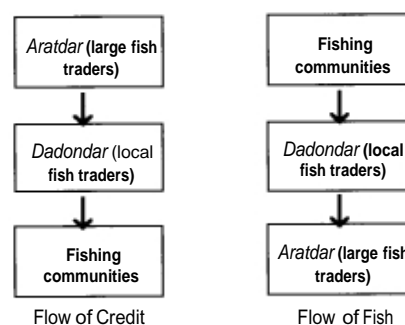
Of course, all this comes at a price, and *dadondar* loans carry high levels of interest. But for fisherfolk without access to banks and largely ignored by poverty-focused finance initiatives such as those of the Gramin Bank, the *dadondar* at least fill a real need, and earlier studies such as that of Bennett (1991) \* viewed the system favourably.

### The trap

But a closer look at the *aratdar*-*dadondar*-fisherfolk chain raises the question of whether the system is an engine of the local economy or in fact a brake. We studied three fishing communities on different parts of the coast, and each shared the same marketing-credit system. In Delipara, for instance, a Hindu fishing community near Chittagong, there are five *dadondar*, each with four or five agents. The *dadondar* or his agents make loans during the leanest fishing months, either in cash or by facilitating credit at local shops and kiosks. These loans are made to the boat-owners (*bohoddar*) or captains (*majhi*), who are responsible for their repayment.

The *dadondar* system is not therefore as simple as that described in Figure 1. It traces the economic

Figure 1: Theoretical model of flow of fish and credit in Bangladesh coastal fishing communities



hierarchy within the communities, providing loans to the wealthier *bohoddar* or *majhi*, who in turn provide loans to their crews. Anyone who is not a crew member does not have access to these loans. Boat-owners tend to prefer crews who own their own nets, in itself an indicator of wealth (Figure 2). And women, who are excluded from fishing, can only obtain loans through their husbands or other male relatives, limiting their access to capital for fish vending and also their control over the amount of money available for domestic purposes.

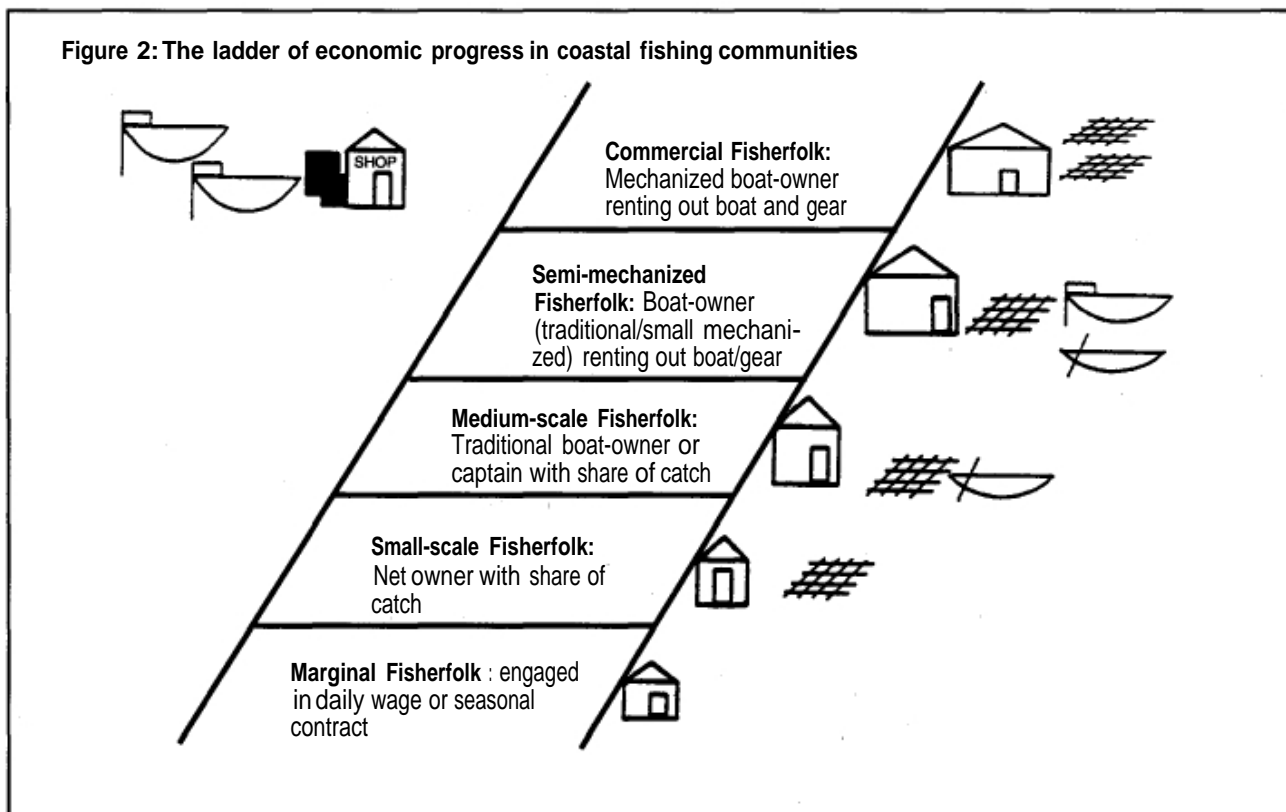
The *dadondar* set the rate of interest for these loans – 60 to 150% per annum, depending on the community and the credit record of the *bohoddar*. As most *bohoddar* are illiterate, the *dadondar* also serve as book-keeper in the transaction. A condition of the loan is that the *bohoddar* must sell the *hilsa* catch to the *dadondar*, and the *dadondar* sets the buying price at several taka less than the price offered by other traders. Furthermore, payment is only made at the end of the *hilsa* season.

But there is a special twist to the *dadondar* system. No matter what the size of the loan, the *bohoddar* must

† M.E. Blowfield is a social anthropologist with the Natural Resources Institute in the U.K., currently working with fishing communities in India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Nasimul Haque is community development officer for the ODA - PHFP's set bagnet community programme in Bangladesh.

\* Bennett, C.J. (1991) Report on a visit to Bangladesh to study socio-economic aspects of estuarine set bagnet fisheries for the BOBP Fisheries Programme; Natural Resources Institute, Chatham, U.K.

Figure 2: The ladder of economic progress in coastal fishing communities



promise to sell his catch through the *dadondar* for that season. Thus, a fisherman who requires a loan of 1,000 taka and one requiring a loan of 10,000 taka must both hand over exclusive rights to their entire season's catch to the *dadondar*. If a loan is not repaid in one season, it is carried over to the next season and the *bohoddar* must again surrender the right to sell his fish on the open market.

Table 1 gives an example of how loans are carried over from year to year, taken from the Muslim community in Rehanian Hatia Island, where 12 *dadondar* control more than 90% of the *hilsa* trade. In the Buddhist community of Rakhainpara, near Cox's

Table 1: Outstanding loans to *dadondar* amongst Rehanian fisherfolk

	Number	%
Number of boat captains	14	
Number of crew members	98	
Number of captains with outstanding loans at end of season	13	93
Value of outstanding loans (taka)	226,500	

Data from Rehanian fishing community, 1994

Bazar, failure to pay loans has led to one of the community's largest boat-owners going out of business, which in turn has forced his former crew members to leave the village in search of work. But the most severe case is Delipara, where years of trying to reduce dependence on *dadondar* loans, including the establishment of community savings and loans groups, ended with the 1991 cyclone, which destroyed boats and gear and drove the community back to the *dadondar* in order to obtain new capital.

### Escape

There is constant tension between fisherfolk and *dadondar* which has sometimes resulted in violence, destruction of property and, in one case, death. Freedom from the *dadondar* system is a commonly voiced desire in the fishing communities, even among wealthier people. But finding a solution is not simple.

The large poverty-focused credit programmes, which have proved so successful in agricultural communities, have mostly avoided fishing

communities. Fisherfolk have a poor reputation for repaying loans, although the Bay of Bengal Post-Harvest Fisheries Project is working with fisheries-oriented savings and loans schemes in southern India that have repayment rates in excess of 90% — far higher than the rates for clients of commercial banks.

The Coastal Development Centre (CODEC), a Chittagong-based NGO, was one of the first to develop savings and loans groups in fishing communities. These suffered a setback with the 1991 cyclone, but are still operating in 13 coastal communities. However, they have not succeeded in replacing the *dadondar* system. In part, this is because the savings and loans model, based on that of the Grameen Bank, encourages regular saving and borrowing, and is unable as yet to respond to the seasonal nature of fishing community borrowing. Most loans are required prior to the *hilsa* season, but the current model is unable as yet to respond to this sudden peak in demand.

CODEC's approach, which is now being copied by another NGO

working in Rakhainpara, has however made loans available to a wider section of the fishing community. It has set up women's groups which, as has been the case with schemes in agricultural communities, have proved more dynamic and effective than men's groups. But while the *dadondar* system remains strong, the major economic opportunity for women (i.e., trading) remains closed as they can obtain neither enough fish to market nor the necessary capital to expand their present activities.

The experience of Santhidan, an NGO in Tamil Nadu, India, which has

been supporting women's savings and loans schemes in fishing communities for more than 13 years, is highly relevant to the future of existing and future schemes in Bangladesh. Santhidan accept that they will never rid the communities of moneylenders: the savings and loans groups simply offer a greater choice. But, above all, the groups are not just there to meet economic needs. For Santhidan, a savings and loans group is a focal point for community organization, raising awareness of fisherfolk's social and economic position and helping to provide them with a higher profile so that they can lobby for policy change.

Without such awareness, groups cannot survive the inevitable periods of pressure. And as the examples from Bangladesh show, it is during these periods that the *dadondartighen* their hold.

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**Note:** This article is based on field work carried out between May 1993 and June 1994 in three coastal fishing communities in Bangladesh. The work was part of the U.K. Overseas Development Administration's Bay of Bengal Post-Harvest Fisheries Project, which is managed by the Natural Resources Institute.

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## Learning from People: Some Experiences

**K**NOWLEDGE and learning transcend boundaries. One can learn from anybody, anywhere and about anything. What is necessary is an open mind to take in information, process it and interpret it.

This is one of the reasons behind the Management Traineeship Segment (MTS) programme being part of the academic requirement at my Institute (Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Gujarat). This supports the classroom sessions. It gives us an opportunity to put into practice what we have been taught within the four walls of the classrooms. Besides this, as a part of the MTS assignment, we are also required to help organizations evolve strategies to solve specific problems.

The views expressed in the articles in this Newsletter are those of the authors / contributors concerned, and not necessarily of the Overseas Development Administration.

My interest in fisheries dates back to the time when I had taken up fisheries as a topic for the purpose of an assignment. This, coupled with a course on project management, made me decide to take up my MTS assignment with the Overseas Development Administration Post-Harvest Fisheries Project (ODA-PHFP) entitled "Feasibility study on establishment of a salt fish processing facility at Tranquebar". Of course, the fact that I would be working close to home was an added attraction.

With these objectives in mind, I arrived in Madras from Anand, in Gujarat.

Discussions with various ODA-PHFP officials helped me to understand things in greater detail. To begin with, I did not know what was meant by 'sardine'. My knowledge of fish names was limited to Tamil. Moreover, I also had to develop some understanding of various fish processing techniques and background on existing techniques in different areas. After clearing these,

I began planning for the actual field work.

I phased out my entire assignment into two parts. In the first, I decided to concentrate on studying the supply side of the market for oil sardines, trace the market linkages from Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu to Kerala, besides assessing the leadership styles, participation patterns and group dynamics existing with the sangam formed by an NGO, Rural Organization for Social Action (ROSA), whose villages were the target of my study. The second phase would focus on studying the wet processing of oil sardines followed in Quilandy, besides identification and intensive study of major markets for oil sardines in Kerala.

The first thing that struck me about Tranquebar and nearby fishing villages was their ancient history of association with the Danish. I was also aware of the risk that surrounded life in these villages. The sea that was a part of their existence could also be the reason for their destruction. The hard-working

men and women in these villages and the uncertainties surrounding their lives made them different from the agrarian villages I had visited earlier. A good catch of fish could make them rich overnight, while poor landings could drain their resources. The fisherwomen and their abundant experience in marketing made them different from other rural women.

People in these villages were my major source of data. Discussions with them revealed that oil sardines started occurring along the east coast from the year 1967, after a major cyclone hit Nagapattinam. Since then there has been a steady migration of oil sardines from the west coast into the east coast, with the size of landings going up every year.

On an average, there is a landing of about 100 tonnes of oil sardines every year during the peak season, which extends from January to August. During this period, large quantities are exported to Kerala at a price of Rs. 110 for 100 pieces of fresh fish. All transactions take place through commission agents. Dried fish commands very low prices and is therefore sold at throwaway prices. These fish (fresh or dry) have no market in the local area. The entire amount is sent to Kerala. There were no local practices for processing the fish for human consumption.

### **The demand side**

My next objective was to investigate the demand for processed oil sardines in the major sardine market – Kerala. A visit to Quilandy in Kerala helped me to understand the commonly followed wet processing technique for oil sardines. A cement tank of 200 kg capacity is used for processing. The head, scales and guts are removed, after which the fish are mixed with salt in the ratio of 1:1 and placed in the tank. The fish are then covered with bamboo mats, and large stones are placed on them so that the water and oil come out onto the surface. The fish are removed

periodically till about six months, depending on sale demand at high prices.

A study of the Kerala markets revealed that there is a good demand for wet processed oil sardines. Though not equalling its fresh counterpart, this product commands a good price in the markets. The price is highest during January-April (Rs. 20-25 per kg) when the Kerala coast is low on oil sardine landings. Demand for this product is high in Kozhikode and Sultan's Battery in Wynad. Other markets include towns in Thrissur district. Markets in Alappuzha, Thiruvananthapuram and Munnar are low in their demand for the processed product during the low season for fresh sardines.

Most of the data was obtained from traders and wholesalers through group discussions. It was interesting to note that these traders, who were predominantly male, were a little sceptical in sharing their market experiences with a person of the opposite sex; some of them also mistook me for a government official. What would happen most of the time was that they would send me away saying that they were busy. However, my persistence won them over and they began sharing information with me.

The possibility of establishing a processing unit in Tranquebar was the next issue under study. The data obtained from the supply and demand sides were processed so as to work out the possibility of processing the sardines at Tranquebar itself and selling the product in Kerala. The possibility of obtaining a better value for wet processed oil sardines when compared to poultry feed was looked into. However, it was found that fisherfolk could obtain Rs. 3-4 per kg of sardines when sold as poultry feed when compared to the efforts involved in producing wet processed oil sardines, which would fetch them a similar price (after taking care of various related costs like transport charges, price of salt, etc.).

Besides this, my experience with fisherfolk in Tranquebar made me realize that though they were very enthusiastic about the project, their inherent lack of cooperation makes it difficult for them to function as a team. The NGO involved should be well prepared to tackle the problem that could arise out of this.

### **Problems for NGOs**

These two months in the field have enriched my knowledge in many other ways. It has helped me to understand some of the uniqueness in the marketing of fish, which, being a perishable commodity with a low shelf life, has different problems associated with its marketing compared to other natural resources. Besides, its seasonality makes it all the more difficult in planning strategies involved in efficient marketing. Of course, the NGOs ROSA and Beach Blossoms have been working through groups, which has helped in bringing about many positive changes.

However, one of the major hindrances that NGOs face when it comes to marketing interventions is the lack of focus on marketing. The various problems which an NGO encounters in working with people make it difficult for them to devote time to marketing.

These are some of the experiences that I am taking back with me. I am sure they will help me grow professionally besides helping the organizations in their work. It is my belief that it is only through such experiences that one learns. Therefore they are not confined to one's student life alone. They go on right through one's life!

**K. JAYANTHI**

*Institute of Rural Management,  
Anand, Gujarat*

# Fish Pickle-making: A Community Experience

**C**HINNAKUPPAM is a small but beautiful fishing village in Chengalpattu-MGR district of Tamil Nadu. One day there was excitement all round when some members of the ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project (ODA-PHFP) and COPDANET (Coastal Poor Development Action Network), a partner non-governmental organization, arrived at the village. The occasion was a demonstration of pickle preparation with fish.

The members of the local fisherwomen sangam, while unloading from the vehicle the ingredients for pickle preparation, jokingly remarked in excitement: "Dowry articles brought for us by the visitors!" The excitement infected the men and children also, who crowded round to watch with interest the goings-on.

The location for the pickle-making had to be a modest house, in the absence of a large common facility or hall. With the guidance of the Technical Officer from PHFP, the women got busy in the various preparatory activities. A few went to the shore to purchase fish, some sat around cleaning, peeling and washing ginger, garlic, green chillies, curry leaves and other ingredients. These had to be cut, chopped and ground to a paste individually. Cleanliness was essential and insisted on by the Technical Officer.

Those who went to the landing shore procured the fish, called *Paarai* in Tamil (Horse mackerel). A sharp knife was brought and the fish, after being deheaded, gutted and cleaned, was filled and later cut into small pieces under the guidance of the Technical Officer. The quantity of fish

procured was not sufficient, and so some women rushed again to the shore and were lucky to get some more fish from the last catamaran that had just landed, after some coaxing and pleading with the fishermen who were taking the catches home. This fish was also cleaned and cut into small pieces, as was done earlier. The total cost of the fish was Rs. 350, but everyone smiled in satisfaction that the required quantity of fish had been secured.

In a large vessel, water to which salt had been added was kept on a kerosene pressure stove. When the water was boiling well, the cut fish pieces were added and kept in the boiling water for a few minutes. Later, the water was drained and the fish pieces were removed and mixed with turmeric powder. Other ingredients like green chillies, garlic, ginger and curry leaves, chopped and ground separately to a paste, were sautéed in hot oil and kept separately.

After completing all these preparatory activities, the actual pickle-making commenced. Sufficient cooking oil was kept in a big vessel on the stove, and when it was quite hot, the fish pieces were added and fried to the required texture; the other ingredients were also added one by one and fried, mixing the stuff all the time. Finally, red chilli powder was also added, and the whole lot fried till it gave off the proper flavour.

## "A surprise"

It was quite late in the evening when the pickle-making was completed, and the mixture was allowed to cool overnight. The next day, when the mix had cooled sufficiently, preservatives were added.

That evening, men, women and children who were anxious to taste the pickle were each given a teaspoonful. "Ah, what a surprise!" remarked a few, "even fish can be made into pickle like the commonly known pickles with lime, mangoes and garlic."

The cooled pickle, with the preservatives added, was packed in 200 gm capacity bottles. Some 25 fisherwomen purchased a bottle each then and there for their families. Other fisherwomen were also eager to buy, but could not do so for want of money because of the poor fishing season.

The pickle-making demonstration was conducted in a small house, and a large percentage of the village population who could not see it felt that the exercise should be repeated not only to enable more people to watch it but also to gain follow-up hands-on experience to attain perfection in pickle-making. The village women felt that with good training in fish pickle preparation they could take it up as a small-scale activity for the generation of additional income.

Leaders from the neighbouring villages of Alikuppam and Periakuppam visited Chinnakuppam and purchased some bottles of fish pickle for their consumption. They made a request that training in fish pickle-making be given to the women of their villages also. The fisherfolk of these villages feel that for poor fisherwomen fish pickle-making could be a suitable income-generating small-scale activity.

**K. JOSEPHINE**  
Animator, Chinnakuppam,  
Tamil Nadu

## M. Jeyalakshmi: Working for the Community

A first-person account by Ms. M. Jeyalakshmi of her work as a community organizer with an NGO at Tranquebar, Tamil Nadu

I had a strange notion that to work as a nurse is social work for the community, and hence wished to be a nurse myself. I had no knowledge then about governmental or non-governmental organizations engaged in social welfare activities.

However, after my studies, there was no possibility of my ever becoming a nurse, and so I took up part-time employment as an animator in the Adult Education Centre run by the Government at Tranquebar. During this period, I studied privately for the XII Standard (Plus 2) examination. Later, I joined the non-governmental organization ROSA (Rural Organization for Social Action) as an animator.

During my work with ROSA, I had the opportunity to take part in various training programmes, mostly related to the needs of fisherfolk — like thrift and savings, group formation, and fish handling, processing and marketing. Earlier, as a schoolgirl, my movements and contacts had been restricted to my **school and my house**. I had no deep knowledge about other people—their way of life, their happiness and their problems. However, when I started working, I had to meet and talk with many people having varied views on interests in, and approaches to, life situations. As I gained experience in my work and knowledge and skills at the training courses, I was able to teach in a manner that helped the adults to learn with ease.

My assignment with ROSA landed me at Kuttiyandiyur — a fishing hamlet **where** the fisherfolk had reservations and doubts about me, ROSA and our

activities. I was then quite inexperienced and did not have the benefit of any training. Hence, I used to feel disappointed at the local fishing community not being able to appreciate or realize the sincere efforts made by me and the organization for their welfare. Meeting the fisherwomen, talking with them and motivating them to come together for a short time to chat with each other, sharing their happiness and sorrows, achievements and problems, and also encouraging them to talk about their profession and its needs — all this was an uphill task.

But now, with perseverance and the skills gained in training programmes and with guidance from ROSA, I have organized a women's sangam in the village that is functioning well. The initial motivation was mainly thrift and securing credit for professional needs.



Ms. M. Jeyalakshmi

The fisherfolk have slowly developed respect for and confidence in me and ROSA, which is quite gratifying and

encourages greater involvement in my work to serve the community better.

### Assistance from ODA-PHFP

When the members of the sangam were confident with group participation activities, training programmes related to fish handling, preservation and processing were organized for them with the assistance of the ODA Post-Harvest Fisheries Project (PHFP). I had to absorb the skills taught in the training courses and provide practical hands-on experience to the sangam members. The members feel that clean, hygienic handling and icing of fresh fish, and gutting and gilling of fish for drying with or without the application of salt, result in quality products which help in easy marketing and realization of higher value.

I have now developed the capability to understand the feelings of others and move with them in such a way as to avoid unnecessary confrontations, and also help them to solve their problems amicably by themselves in their own way.

Among the rural communities, it is rare for a girl of my age not to get married; in fact, it is considered as an undesirable situation. I had to face the sarcastic remarks of others about three or four years ago, and felt bitter about it. My association with ROSA, getting involved in social work and attending training courses have made me a mature person capable of handling and facing such situations. I have self-confidence and feel sure that I am an equally important person in the community who is contributing to its welfare in a great measure.