



A Civil Society Newsletter for 4SSF

Monday, 13 October

Civil Society Preparatory Workshop

- Reporting of groups on: *“Securing social, economic, and human rights”*
- *Strategy session*
- *Discussions*
- *Registration at FAO Conference*

More Inside

<i>Participatory management</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Interview.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Protect Ecosystems.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>First Nation.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Thai poem.....</i>	<i>4</i>

Securing Post-harvest rights

By WFFP Correspondent

The theme for the panel discussion for the day was on “Securing Post-harvest benefits”. Natalia Laino Lojo from Spain, detailed the work her group AGMAR (Galician Shellfishwomen and Men Association) in Spain had undertaken to ensure better living standards and increased wages for the shellfish workers. She spoke of how AGMAR communicated to consumers how Galician products are guaranteed and how they maintain stringent quality control. As a result, small-scale fishworkers have started receiving better prices.

Sid ‘ahmed Sidi Mohammed had a series of detailed examples and observations from his community on how to reap benefits from fish production. He stressed the importance of “organizing to survive”. “Four years ago, there was a problem of overfishing. Now Mauritania’s octopus stocks are doing well. Management is necessary and that’s how we have effectively made ourselves relevant in the current environment. That is the only way we can be profitable.” And thanks to management measures with community participation, fishers get more fish now.

Ephraim Patrick highlighted key issues in small-scale fisheries in the Philippines. “Finance and credit are important factors. Normally, those in the capture sector are linked to traders. In the Philippines, women play an important role in post-harvest processes. “Women can go in for co-operatives. Buyers prefer to deal with organised fishworkers and co-operatives”, he said.

Mamayawa Sandouno highlighted issues faced by women fishworkers in Africa, especially Guinea Conarky. Mamayawa highlighted the importance of securing post-harvest benefits that will enhance the community’s overall financial condition. She spoke about the health hazard issues for women who smoked fish. “They work in harsh conditions. Women are completely dehydrated and suffer from various health problems by the time they are 40. We need to improve their lives by removing fish smoking sites altogether.”

Jorge Adalberto from Honduras expressed concern about trade pacts. Jorge felt that they are the root cause of the suffering of small-scale fishers. He wanted fishers to have better access to national markets. “How can there be post-harvest benefits if fish are bought by intermediaries and they keep all the profits,” he asked.

(Contd pg.2)

The moderator of the session, Rene Scharer (Brazil), summarized the discussion before opening the topic for further debates within language groups. Rene said: “Countries could follow the Mauritanian experience to make their produce more profitable. Rene highlighted Mamayawa’s presentation by underlining the importance to improve working conditions for women in Guinea and the significance of credit for women.



Access participatory rights and fisheries management

By René Schärer, Brazil

Brazilian fisheries authorities have recently been making an effort to introduce participatory management of high value fisheries resources like the spiny rock lobster (*Panulirus argus*). After a futile attempt from 2000 to 2004 where fishing industry and company interests dominated the technical working group for the lobster fishery, at the expense of artisanal fishers, a second committee was formed by the government of President Luis Inácio da Silva Lula in 2005.

Under the leadership of fishers and civil society organizations like the Brazilian Fishermen’s Movement (MONAPE), Pastoral Fisher Council (CPP) and Terramar, a 16 member group with equal representatives from government and non-governmental organizations, revised the lobster fisheries regulations.

These regulations address the serious situation of near collapse of the lobster resource caused by a lack of any political interest in the fishery, poor industry compliance and a growing fleet using compressor for diving, along with lobster aggregating devices and the use of gillnets in an illegal manner.

Fisher representatives succeeded against industry opposition to secure over 1,500 lobster licences for the previously illegal artisanal sail fleet. Additional licences are pending due to a court intervention in the Ceará State.

Approved in December of 2006, the new management plan was introduced at the end of the closed season on June 15, 2007. Miraculously, the government spent over US\$20 million in management costs, to buy back illegal gear and fleet, and for enforcement. The plan seemed in the right direction as many illegal boat owners were intercepted by sea and land enforcement teams, with a large fleet of cars, and even speedboats that impressed fishers when they came roaring along.

The first problems came up in August when a fisheries enforcement division boat was stopped by the Brazilian navy for lack of documents and permits and when the military police started to have difficulty to recruit policemen for seagoing duty. Fisher communities and some municipal governments made up for this by actively supporting enforcement with fishers as volunteer agents, enforcement boats and even cash raised among fishermen.

But by the end of October 2007 for some strange reason – financial, political or both – fisheries authorities gave up enforcement and the speedboats were not seen again. This was the signal the illegal fishers and boat owners had been waiting for. They hedged their money for turning in illegal fishing gear. This continued till June 2008. They were the kings of the sea and applied their very efficient harvesting skills with the use of lobster aggregating devices and hookah compressor boats. The illegal fleet grew in response to the lack of enforcement and when the legal fleet came out of the closed season to catch lobsters, there wasn’t much left.

At the meeting of the management committee on August 29 2008, fishers and civil society members made it very clear that they wanted to have Mr. Carlos Minc, the new Minister of the Environment, to publicly speak out and guarantee funds for enforcement until the illegal fleet was removed from the sea. Since nothing happened the members of the Ceará state lobster fisheries committee have declared publicly that they will only return to the management group after talking to the minister or President Lula personally. The deadline expires on October 30 2008 and fishers and vessel owners are ready to take their protest to the streets of Fortaleza.

Brazil might be missing the opportunity for the first successful co-management effort in a commercially lucrative fishery, and that would be a shame.

Asserting rights!

Supaporn Pannarai and Tanu Nap Nien, Coordinators, Fishermans Network, Federation of Southern Fisherfolk (FSF), Thailand

How significant is the global conference for FSF?

It is significant that issues of small-scale fisheries is taken up at this forum, as it helps in linking local issues of communities with global processes and organizations like WFFP. It is a rare event, as it provides space for communities to share experiences, and highlight problems and concerns of the small-scale fishers at the international level, where governments, international agencies and people's organizations are coming together.

We expect a good policy document to come out of the conference, to influence governments. FAO is looked upon as an organization to influence the national government. If they are not serious, discussions will not materialize into good quality document nor will there be faithful implementations of the same. If there is no faithful implementation, then the whole process loses its opportunity. The opportunity is there. It is just a matter of willingness to make it happen.

What are FSF's expectations from the workshop and the conference?

The issues of the fishing communities are also the issues of the larger public, for example pollution of the seas, the degradation of resources, etc. We expect these issues that are important to the fishing communities are discussed and debated in the meeting, and not just confined to the meeting room, but efforts should be made to educate the public about these issues. We expect a common and clear position from the workshop, so that participant organizations can work collectively towards formulating strategies.

We also expect communities to be given opportunities to express their views without any hindrance, otherwise it is reduced to just an intellectual exercise other than reflecting the real concerns of the communities. Such process where their views are not taken onboard will mean nothing to them and will not significantly change the present situation.

What is FSF's perception of rights?

The small-scale fishers do not use the word "right". The fishers realize that they are not somehow equal and are invisible, discriminated and the larger society is not being just to them and are pushing the fishers into more difficult situation, more than they could express. As people they should be treated better, equal to others, recognized as citizens of the country and not just as fishers. They need right to: secure livelihood for present and future generations, make their own decisions, to actively participate in decision-making processes, disagree, continue their way of life, express their views, access natural resources, and conserve them as they see fit. For a woman the scenario is even worse. The present policy does not recognize these rights, and it is time for change. Fishing communities will go ahead with asserting their rights, with or without the recognition of the law.

Protect Ecosystems

*Right to protect the ecosystems,
By Paul Molyneaux*

Fish is food; trade is secondary. Ecosystems must be protected. Fishing communities can demand the right to protect the ecosystems that support them. This last statement evolves from my interviews with Pisit Charmsnoh, director of Yadfon, an NGO operating in southern Thailand. Pisit sees healthy linkages between communities and their surrounding ecosystems as the foundation of sustainability.

By establishing the right to protect and restore productive ecosystems, fishing communities establish the right to benefit from their efforts, harvesting the surpluses—the interest generated by natural capital. Rather than fight allocation battles over scarce resources, Yadfon helps small-scale fishers fight for the right to increase resource availability. There is real power in taking this position, as fishers in southern Thailand have found. Villagers at the mouth of the Palian River abandoned use of destructive fishing gear, such as the push net, which destroys sea grass beds.

They have created sanctuaries, and as their fisheries rebound they are helping promote the benefits of ecosystem protection to upstream communities. By putting the ecosystem first, and harvest rights second, fishing communities establish their rights of governance over critical areas, and these in turn become less vulnerable to exploitation from outside interests.

As exemplified by the work of Yadfon, demanding the right to protect ecosystems has high publicity value; consumers can be encouraged to support good work—ecosystem restoration for community benefit—by refusing to buy shrimp from farms that pollute the waters communities are trying to protect.

They can be encouraged to demand that the global food production system that fosters export oriented fisheries and aquaculture, not displace local food production systems. This premise of action that Yadfon has nurtured in southern Thailand, offers a useful model for artisanal fishing communities wondering where their power rests. From what I have seen in southern Thailand, fishers' real power rests in restoring and protecting the ecosystems that sustain life.

First Nations

The Coastal Learning Community Network is a Canadian group that includes coastal indigenous and non-native organizations from across Canada. The network recently held a workshop that developed a position paper called Subsistence Fishing in Canada. The following are some excerpts from the statement.

Subsistence harvesting is the hunting, fishing, and gathering of natural resources to meet the food, fuel, clothing, and livelihood needs of individuals, households, and communities. The exchange of subsistence products is embedded within the social relations existing with communities and can take various forms such as gift, reciprocal exchange, barter, and sale.

At a policy and regulatory level, subsistence fisheries stand in contrast with commercial fisheries. Before and during most of the Twentieth Century, the distinction between subsistence and commercial fisheries was not easily made. Most fisheries had components both of subsistence and sale of products to markets external to the community. Today commercial fisheries are conducted by professionally certified fishers with highly capitalized vessels and licenses usually within a corporate structure and selling their products largely for export in global markets. However, within this commercial fishery, there still exists significant numbers of smaller-scale fishing enterprises with strong community attachments.

As a community of First Nation and non-aboriginal residents of Canada, we are committed to working together to reverse restructuring and to foster livelihood fisheries through the restoration of fish, habitats, the commons, and community. We embrace the indigenous view of respect and relationship:

- *We respect all of Creation,*
- *We are related to the earth, forests, and oceans,*
- *We will provide for our existence in humbly respecting our place in the web of life,*
- *We respectfully acknowledge those who have passed on so that we might live,*
- *Our greatest restoration must be in restoring our relationships to each other and with Creation, while working toward a common vision to ensure a healthy world for our children.*

We urge others to form learning communities that are inclusive, collaborative, and engaged in a process of learning by doing through the identification and analysis of common issues and in taking actions together for their solution.

Poem from Ban Ra Wai Village, Rangu District, Sathorn Province, Thailand

*We are the people located along the coast line, on the island and along the canal,
We are fishers,
We use different boats for different culture and ecosystems,
We use different nets for different fish,
We do not greedily go after everything that is living in the sea,
We use net for shrimp, net for crab, net for fish,
Whatever type of boat and gear we use,
We with our sweat and labour make our own survival,
We collect seaweeds,
We collect shells from the beach and the seashore,
We also collect food from mangrove forest,
These form our food, our medicine and our livelihood and income,
Our survival depends on the rich natural resources,
Sea is our life, and it needs to be taken care of,
We learn how to look after the sea,
We will protect it for our next generation,
We are those who are called small-scale fisherfolk.*

“The best way to add value to fishing communities is to send children to school. They represent savings and pension.”

Mamayawa Sandouno

“Daily Rights” is a newsletter brought out by the co-ordinating committee set up to engage with the 4SSF. It is an initiative of WFFP, ICSF, FSF, SDF and IPC.

It will be available everyday from 11 October 2008 to 18 October 2008 in four languages—English, French, Spanish and Thai. The language versions are not identical, and are meant to represent the perspectives of the language groups.

All issues in different languages are available online at:
<http://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries>

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