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Lessons for out-scaling and up-scaling from *Fisheries and poverty reduction*

Key points

- Well-managed fisheries bring in government revenues that can be used to provide services to reduce poverty, such as health and education.
- Declining fisheries are seldom the sole cause of poverty in fishing and coastal communities. The root causes need to be addressed.

Lessons learned

Government revenues from industrial-scale fisheries can help to decrease poverty.

But to do this, the benefits need to be invested in health and education for the poor. Policy makers must be helped to understand the value of fisheries and should include the development of sustainable fisheries in poverty reduction strategies and national development plans (Box 6.1).

Box 6.1

Licensing foreign fleets provides an opportunity to cut poverty

Governments of less developed countries issue licenses to foreign fleets to fish in their Exclusive Economic Zones. This can bring in significant revenues. However, to reduce poverty these benefits:

- need to be redistributed so that low-income growth is greater than overall growth
- need to be reinvested in public services such as health and education for the poor.

Everything depends on fish stocks. A fishery is likely to collapse if it is over-exploited or its habitat is destroyed. If the fish resource disappears, there is no way it can benefit the poor. This means that ways must be found to make sure plans for fisheries to benefit the poor take into account the information generated by research on how to sustain fish stocks (Box 6.2).

Fisheries stocks cannot be managed at the household or community level where poverty exists. And, it needs to be remembered that unless there is a coherent management structure, actions at different levels have limited impact.

Acknowledge and work with trade offs between costs and benefits. Economic, social and environmental goals for fisheries usually conflict. For example, maximising export revenue

Box 6.2

Disconnected actions at different levels have little impact

Actions need to be implemented as part of a coherent management structure. Examples of those that can have benefits for fisheries include:

- making sure fishers take part in making decisions on fisheries management and in stock assessment
- putting more fish into inland fisheries by stocking them with fingerlings
- providing tools for assessing stocks appropriate to the people who will use them (fishers, communities, fisheries managers)
- managing water flows for fisheries as part of integrated natural resource management plans (for example the World Summit on Sustainable Development water efficiency plans), so that the fisheries stocks on which poor rely do not suffer

from a fishery conflicts with selling fish in the domestic market at local prices. The results of fisheries research can only be taken into account if they are fed into the process of resolving conflicts and setting priorities. This means working with governments to develop coherent policies that recognise and maximise the ways that fisheries can contribute to reducing poverty. Poverty reduction strategies and national development plans present openings to do this.

Involve people affected in managing the fishery and train them.

Fisheries management is becoming more decentralised and is involving more and more types of stakeholders. At all levels, people need to learn new skills and adapt to new roles. Training people at all levels to adapt and change is a way of putting research on participatory management into use. The education and training systems available in less developed countries currently do not equip citizens with adequate knowledge and skills to take part.

Use-rights and access rights to fisheries are fundamental to reducing poverty.

Ownership of fishing rights determines who benefits from a fishery. For example, the poor can be allocated rights, while influential people can be prevented from 'capturing' benefits and excluding the poor²³. Ways need to be found to put in place systems to allocate rights and apply codes of conduct for the responsible management of fisheries (Box 6.3).

²³ Cunningham, S. and A. Neiland. 2005. Investigating the linkages between fisheries, poverty and growth: policy brief. Portsmouth: IDDRA Ltd.

Box 6.3

Access rights to small fisheries are fundamental to reducing poverty

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, if widely adopted by governments, could maximise the contribution that fisheries make to reducing poverty. The Code:

- recognises how important small fisheries are in providing employment, incomes and food security
- recognises the vulnerability of small-scale fisheries
- advocates that small-scale fisheries should receive special assistance and protection so that fishers have a 'secure and just livelihood'

Box 6.4

Poverty in fishing communities often has non-fisheries related causes²⁴

Poverty among fishers is often likely to be caused by factors other than the state of the fish resources. Research in West Africa found that the factors that keep the people involved in fisheries poor include:

- lack of information, skills and education
- lack of credit
- poor organisation and political representation
- unexpected losses of human or other capital assets
- lack of alternative employment
- lack of infrastructure and access to markets

Poverty in fisheries communities often has non-fishery causes. Initiatives to alleviate poverty in fishing communities need to be holistic, rather than just looking at the fisheries aspects of poverty. Addressing fisheries issues in isolation generally does not work. This means efforts need to be part of integrated efforts to deliver better services that tackle the root causes of poverty (Box 6.4).

This synopsis of lessons learned for up-scaling and out-scaling research into use is based on:

MRAG/DFID. 2006. 'Fisheries and poverty reduction', FMSP Policy Brief 1, London: MRAG Ltd.

See

http://www.fmssp.org.uk/Documents/keylessons/FMSPBrief1_Poverty%20Reduction.pdf

²⁴ Bene, C. 2002. 'Poverty in Small-Scale Fisheries: A Review and Some Further Thoughts, Small-Scale Fisheries and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries', Proceedings of the DFID/FAO/CEMARE SFLP International Workshop, Cotonou (Benin), November 2001.