

Opening the doors to markets and credit for poor fisherfolk

Better information about how to sell their catches and where and how to borrow money is improving fishers' livelihoods. When they know how fish market chains and distribution work they have better chances of getting good prices for their catches. It's also very helpful for them to know where they can borrow money at reasonable rates.

Participatory methods of collecting data have already proved useful in understanding markets and distribution chains for fish in Bangladesh. Governments, not only in Bangladesh but also in Cambodia and West Africa, international development agencies and local non-government organisations are adopting these techniques to study fish marketing chains and plan pro-poor development. Fishing communities in particular stand to benefit from better information on markets and credit.

A practical guide for development practitioners

A Guide to the Analysis of Fish Marketing Systems Using a Combination of Sub-sector Analysis and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach looks at fisheries in the context of wider development issues. The guide sets out methods for development practitioners, planners and policy makers, together with fishers, traders and distributors, to analyse fish marketing chains from a livelihoods perspective. These methods are particularly useful for involving fishing communities and sub-sector stakeholders in planning initiatives and developing policies.

The guide contains checklists and clear step-by-step guides for collecting data by both participatory and questionnaire survey methods.





Photo: S. Mann

Participatory methods encourage buy-in

Case studies from India and Bangladesh show how analysing fish marketing chains and investigating how the poor access credit can help plan fisheries development.

In India, the focus was on how globalisation and seafood trade legislation affect poverty. In Bangladesh, the analysis of the marine fish distribution chain and the problems the poor have in getting credit improved understanding of livelihoods in coastal fishing communities. The stress was on participatory methods involving government officers, non-government, donor agency and civil society organisations, and representatives of fishing and trading communities. This meant that the resulting policy recommendations aimed at benefiting the poor were fully endorsed by all.

A basis for projects and plans

Methods described in the guide are already being used to implement projects, and develop policies and plans. The Community Development Centre, Chittagong, uses the guide in project programming—for example in a project to integrate development initiatives for coastal women and children for CARE Bangladesh. This Centre is also using methods described in the guide to prepare their Strategic Action Plan 2007-2011. Another non-government organisation championing the methods is the Coastal Fisherfolk Network. This Network used data from the Bangladesh case study to identify alternative income and employment opportunities for coastal fishers.

Nationally, the Bangladesh Fisheries Sector Review, prepared by the Government of Bangladesh in collaboration with major donors in 2002, also took into account data from the Bangladesh case study. This review guides fisheries development in Bangladesh.

The guide is also being used in the global development arena, for example in a FAO study of the implications of fish trade liberalisation for developing countries. Local researchers in

Bangladesh, India, Guinea, Uganda, and Vietnam, used the 'fish market chain and access to credit framework' for their country case studies.

The methods and case studies are also being used to develop fisheries education and research, such as in research projects in the Marketing and Sociology Departments, Chittagong University.

Reducing vulnerability to risk

Fishing communities are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding or cyclones. These methods integrate consideration of livelihoods issues, environmental problems and marketing chains. Such information helps coastal communities, and the organisations working with them, to anticipate and make plans to cope with the effects of climate change.

For more information

For further technical information go to the RIU online database at www.researchintouse.com/database and type in **PHF04** or email riuinfo@nrint.co.uk

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