

Net benefits: the power of co-managing small fisheries



Bringing together local people and government to co-manage fisheries is a successful alternative to centralised, top-down management. Policy makers can promote co-management to boost incomes, secure fish supplies and ensure a healthier environment.



Usually, governments manage small coastal and inland fisheries centrally. However, this strategy is failing—endangering the livelihoods of millions of rural people in developing countries who depend on these fisheries for food and income. Over the last decade, studies have proven that co-management of resources provides a workable alternative.

Above: A successful co-management partnership in West Bengal, India. Fishers (left) patrol the fishery to enforce rules and work with government staff (centre) to collect data. Government staff (right) analyse the data and regularly provide fishers with the results in an easy-to-understand form. Photos: R. Arthur and P.K. Pandit.

Co-management builds on strengths

Co-management is a new and flexible approach in which all groups with a stake in a fishery work with government authorities to manage it fairly and effectively. Rather than a 'one size fits all' solution, co-management takes into account the needs of fishers and other resource users on one hand, and government objectives and national policies on the other. Government and local stakeholders both share responsibility and authority.

Partnerships to co-manage small fisheries: who does what	
<i>Fishers and resource users</i>	<i>Government</i>
Decide management plans	Decide co-management policy
Implement management plans	Implement co-management policy
Evaluate management plans	Evaluate co-management policy

For more information contact Research into Use at riuinto@rint.co.uk. See also Research into Use Pocket Guide No. 1: "New ways to manage small fisheries".

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Co-management cuts costs and empowers stakeholders

Co-management has many benefits. It improves compliance with regulations and cuts the cost of enforcement, for example. It also reduces the cost of collecting data and monitoring. Finally, it makes use of valuable local knowledge, empowers local communities and helps to manage conflict.

Policy action needed to create the conditions for successful co-management

Policy should give local stakeholders the power to create and implement locally appropriate rules and plans. Decision makers therefore need to:

- Identify clear policy objectives
- Create and support an enabling environment
- Establish property rights and rights of access
- Legitimise local management and decision-making
- Ensure policies address the needs of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised
- Provide support and develop capacity—through training, information, conflict-resolution, and extension.



Photo: S. Mann

What is the purpose of this brief?

This Policy Brief was produced to show that complex subjects can be explained very quickly and simply to busy policy makers. It is part of a series that showcases proven technologies, policies and new approaches in order to demonstrate the importance of high-quality scientific communication.

Through its Policy Brief and Pocket Guide series, Research into Use aims to encourage partners in both the developed and developing worlds to invest more in their communication efforts. Only in this way will useful technologies be widely adopted, helping the people that they were intended to help and contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

What is Research into Use?

The Research into Use Programme aims to do exactly what its name says—to get research findings into use by resource-poor farmers in the developing world. The natural resources research programmes funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) produced many significant findings over their 11 year existence. Research into Use is working to put these results into practice—in order to reduce poverty on a very broad scale in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

A key part of this work will involve helping partners to better understand how the promotion and widespread use of such research will help to cut poverty and boost economic growth.

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