

CONSRN meets to review the rehabilitation of fisheries sector in tsunami-affected countries in Asia

The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) in collaboration with the Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami-Devastated Nations (CONSRN) organised a two-day Regional Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand from 30 to 31 March 2006 to re-assess needs and help coordinate the long-term rehabilitation that is now needed in the affected countries. The partners of CONSRN are APFIC, BOBP-IGO, FAO, NACA, SEAFDEC and WorldFish Centre.

CONSRN had first met earlier (28 February – 01 March 2005) and finalised the Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) for assisting the tsunami-affected countries (*Bay of Bengal News*, September 2005, pp. 8-10).

The goals and objectives of this second Workshop were to review the progress against the regional strategy, review and discuss national strategies and plan how CONSRN/ donors can further assist the affected countries.

Forty participants representing the seven tsunami-affected countries (India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand), representatives of donor agencies, Inter-Governmental Agency/ Association, NGOs, CONSRN partners, FAO Chief Technical Officers and Consultants, and FAO technical staff attended the two-day Workshop. Dr Y S Yadava, Director, and Dr S S Tabrez Nasar, Senior Programme Officer, represented BOBP-IGO in the Workshop.

Presiding over the opening session of the Workshop, Dr He Changchui, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific said “Turning crisis into opportunities, the 2004 tsunami has raised awareness of and mobilized world solidarity for poverty in coastal areas – a topic previously not high on



the international agenda”. “In restoring the livelihoods of coastal communities, we must ensure sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and sound management of the natural resource base such as land, coral reefs, mangrove forests and associated fisheries”.

Representatives of the seven tsunami-affected countries made detailed presentations on the status of the relief and rehabilitation work carried out in their countries. The relief work was almost over in most of the tsunami-affected countries and the focus was now on rehabilitation. These presentations included detailed assessments of damage to the fisheries sector and its impact on the communities and the national

economies, rehabilitation strategies and the achievements so far, fund mobilization from donors and internal sources, gaps and constraints, the challenges ahead and the long-term strategies to build back better. The representatives also outlined the mechanisms set up for implementing long-term rehabilitation programmes in their countries, which included constitution of high-level Ministerial Committees, Core Groups and Task Forces.

The Workshop expressed concern on things that went wrong in the process of rehabilitation such as excess quantity of boats and fishing gear supplied by governments and donors, poor quality of boats in many areas, perceived inequities in distribution of fishery and aquaculture inputs and

Participants at the CONSRN Workshop



lack of consideration of other important aspects such as post-harvest and markets. Many boats were not sea-worthy, and this raised the issue of safety of fishermen at sea. Concern was also expressed on the slow process of rehabilitation in some countries and the lack of evaluation of the asset distribution done so far. The participants felt the need to shift from simple asset replacement to programmes that serve the needs of the whole community with focus on vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly.

The Workshop discussed critical outstanding issues and possible solutions against the RSF agreed to by CONSRN consortium partners and governments from affected countries. The RSF included improving policy and institutions, providing appropriate physical assets, restoring the environment while ensuring equitable access, providing appropriate financial support, improving capacity in support of community livelihoods, and responsible coastal resource management, and the rebuilding of social assets.

The Workshop participants, divided into three working groups, brainstormed the outstanding issues under the six strategic elements of the RSF and each country presented the top five issues in the plenary session. These issues broadly included development of infrastructure facilities with focus on post-harvest collection and supply chain, improvements in the database and sharing of information, formulation and implementation of management plans, capacity building, establishment of early warning systems, scientific studies on post-tsunami environmental changes, mobilization of funds for ensuring long-term rehabilitation and better coordination between agencies engaged in the rehabilitation works.

The primary output of the Workshop will be a report which will include a review of progress towards achieving the goals set out in the RSF, a summary of country strategies and recommendations for future work for CONSRN partners.

CONSRN and post-tsunami rehabilitation activities

CONSRN members have been actively assisting the governments and the fisher-communities of tsunami-affected countries in the rehabilitation process. A large number of interventions have been undertaken, many of them successfully completed. Here's a sampling of the activities of CONSRN members:

BOBP-IGO www.bobpigo.org

Organised a Stakeholder Consultation in June 2005 to discuss the rehabilitation programmes for fisher communities in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, India.

Conducted a detailed damage and needs assessment of tsunami-affected fisher-communities in Tamil Nadu, India.

Organised the Third International Conference on Fishing Industry Safety and Health (IFISH 3) in association with FAO and NIOSH, USA, and a Regional Workshop to discuss the Post-tsunami Revival of Fisheries Sector and Rehabilitation of Fishing Communities.

FAO www.fao.org

Assisting governments efforts to re-establish sustainable fisheries activities, rehabilitate affected / damaged areas and restore fisheries-based livelihoods.

Helping fishing communities to resume their livelihoods through distribution of fishing gear and boat engines. Assisting in construction of boats and development of suitable designs to meet local needs.

Providing technical experts to help the tsunami-affected countries in rebuilding their fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

NACA www.enaca.org

Participated in technical assessments of the damage to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in both Thailand and Indonesia.

Established a *Special Program in Response to Impacts of the Tsunami* (SPIRIT) as a vehicle to focus the Network's contribution to the recovery. The first SPIRIT activities have got underway with initiation of field projects in several island communities in southern Thailand and in Aceh, Indonesia.

Awarded a 2-year contract by ADB to manage a project aimed at rehabilitating the aquaculture and fisheries sector of Aceh.

Assisting the FAO Emergency Coordination Unit in Colombo to organise and implement livelihoods analysis activities with communities in the tsunami affected districts of Hambantota, Ampara and Batticaloa.

SEAFDEC www.seafdec.org

Conducted a National Workshop on Tsunami Rehabilitation in Phuket in February 2005 in collaboration with CHARM.

Conducted an Informal Regional Consultation on SEAFDEC Support to Fisheries Relief Program for the Tsunami -Affected Countries of ASEAN in April 2005. Formulated the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategies on Rehabilitation of Fisheries of Coastal Community for the Tsunami Affected Areas.

Worldfish Center www.worldfishcenter.org

Introduced and developed models for GO-NGO cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture.

Conducted studies on coral reefs, which included collation of assessment data; guidelines for monitoring impact assessment in Myanmar and Langkawi.

Developed two series of policy briefs in association with CONSRN to assist rehabilitation efforts.