

Workshop on Post Tsunami Rehabilitation of Fisheries in Nagapattinam District

13 March 2005

Summary Report and Recommendations

A workshop on the Post Tsunami Rehabilitation of Fisheries in Nagapattinam was organized by the Department of Fisheries in collaboration with the NGO Coordination Centre at the District Collectorate Conference Hall on the 13th March 2005. The conference was inaugurated by the District Collector Dr.J.Radhakrishnan and was presided over by Shri Pankaj Kumar Bansal, Additional Director of Fisheries. Shri P Mohanasundaram, Joint Director of Fisheries welcomed the gathering while Shri B.Antony of South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies proposed the vote of thanks.

The workshop was attended by over 150 persons of whom at least 100 were from the various NGOs involved in rehabilitation activities in Nagapattinam District. In addition, there were a good number of officials from the fisheries department, leaders from the fishing community and media representatives.

The following experts made detailed presentations on the occasion.

Name	Organisation	Topic
Dr.Mohammad Kasim	Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Madras	Fisheries Resources of Tamil Nadu—Current level of exploitation and future prospects
Dr.Shanmugham	Annamalai University, Chidambaram	Tsunami and Coastal Environment
Dr.Ramalingam	Fisheries Survey of India, Madras	Prospects of deep sea fishing
Dr.Senthil Murugan	National Institute of Ocean Technology, Madras	Lobster and cage culture programmes for coastal beneficiaries
V.Vivekanandan	South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies, Trivandrum	Post Tsunami issues in rehabilitation of fisheries sector of Nagapattinam
Kaliaperumal	Deep sea fisherman, Nagore	Experiences in deep sea fishing using “payaos”
Tom Thomas	PRAXIS, New Delhi	Profile of a coastal village from a PRA exercise
Sonya Lejeune	Save the Children	Rapid livelihood assessment of coastal districts in Tamil Nadu

The workshop started at 10.30 am and went on till 6.30 pm and was punctuated by a number of lively discussions and debates.

Recommendations

Fleet size/fishing capacity

1. Given that the fish resources on the continental shelf are already exploited close to the level of the maximum potential yield and that the fish catches of Tamil Nadu are stagnating for the last few years, increasing the size of the fishing fleet to beyond the pre-tsunami levels could lead to over capitalization, uneconomic operations and even resource depletion. Hence it is strongly recommended that the fishing fleet should not be increased beyond the pre-tsunami level.
2. The up-gradation of *kattumarams* to motorized FRP boats should not be encouraged in the rehabilitation phase. Motorisation of small boats is an ongoing process and needs to take place at its own pace ensuring that fishing is economical at all stages and fish resource exploitation is not beyond safe levels. If up-gradation is encouraged in the rehabilitation phase, this could lead to indiscriminate distribution of fishing assets.
3. The trawl fleet of Nagapattinam, as well as that of Tamil Nadu, is over capitalised and struggling to work on profit in the last few years. Even a return to the pre-tsunami fleet size in this case is not advisable. As some trawler owners themselves are willing to shift to alternate employment, it may be advisable to make modifications to the package of financial assistance announced by the Government. The financial assistance of Rs.3 lakhs for partially damaged boats and Rs.5 lakhs for fully damaged boats must also be given to boat owners who are willing to quit trawling operations and move into alternative livelihoods, whether fishery based or non fishery based. In this case, the Department of Fisheries should ensure that new trawlers are not introduced subsequently, nullifying the effect of some trawlers leaving the fishery.

Role of NGOs

4. The NGOs/Donors must be encouraged to partner with the Government in the implementation of the financial package for replacement of damaged boats. Since the Government package only provides for 50% subsidy on FRP boats and that there exists no proper mechanism for recovery of bank loans, it is advisable for NGOs/Donors to top up the Government subsidy and help the concerned fishermen replace his lost fishing assets. The Government may share its beneficiary lists with NGOs willing to partner it and encourage the NGO to organise the supply of equipment in consultation with the concerned fishermen.
5. Independent distribution of fishing equipment by NGOs/Donors parallel to the Government package may not be advisable and the Department of Fisheries should ensure that NGOs are made aware of this and work out registration formalities prior to construction/supply of boats to avoid such instances.
6. The component meant for rehabilitation of livelihoods as per G.O.25 dealing with public-private partnership should not be used for distribution of boats or fishing equipment but for other forms of livelihood support. The District Administration or State Government may bring out guidelines in this regard.

Boat distribution to crew, group ownership

7. Distribution of boats to crew members with the intention of improving their lot should be strictly avoided in the rehabilitation phase as it will lead to proliferation of boats and lead to uneconomic operations. Such schemes completely ignore that fishing incomes are shared and there is no wage labour in the Nagapattinam fishery.
8. Group ownership in the name of equality is another impractical scheme and has not succeeded so far despite many attempts in the past. This is another idea to be avoided in the rehabilitation phase.

Deep Sea Fishing

9. There is ample scope for deep sea fishing beyond the continental shelf, off the Nagapattinam coast. This is testified by the success of a few groups of pioneering fishermen in Nagore who are using the Philippines method of using a fish aggregating device (*payao*) to attract tuna and other fishes at a distance of 35-40 km from the shore. The operations of the Sri Lankan multi-day fishing boats that use gillnets and long lines are also testimony to this. However, various ingredients including enhancement of endurance and storage capacity of the boats, improvement to on-board handling of fish, and processing and marketing arrangements have to be in place for deep sea fishing to take off. The Department of Fisheries, Central Scientific institutions and technically capable NGOs should collaborate to develop a sound deep sea fishing sector in Nagapattinam.
10. Deep sea fishing however should be promoted on the basis of up-gradation of the existing fleet of mechanised as well as motorised boats rather than the introduction of so-called “deep sea” vessels from outside. Similarly deep sea fishing should be seen as an opportunity to those involved in fishing as a traditional occupation to improve their lot rather than as an investment opportunity for outside investors. Therefore encouragement of deep sea fishing should go hand in hand with caution to avoid the anarchic growth process of previous interventions like trawling.
11. While initial steps needed for the development of deep sea fishing should be taken early, large scale promotion of deep sea fishing without all the above mentioned ingredients being in place may not be advisable in the rehabilitation phase. The offer made by the Fishery Survey of India to organise a demonstration cum training event for deep sea fishing off the Nagapattinam coast may be followed up.

Mariculture, Post harvest

12. There are a number of proven technologies available with central scientific institutions for mariculture like lobster fattening, mussel culture, pearl oyster culture, etc. The fisheries department should develop a detailed site specific plan in consultation with the Central institutions for the promotion of suitable technologies, taking into account economic viability and social feasibility.

13. There is a need to improve the post harvest and processing aspects. Trainings and other support activities to encourage women to use the low cost and appropriate technologies available with the central scientific institutions may be taken up by NGOs and the Department of Fisheries. The Department of Fisheries and the NGO Coordination centre may organise a separate programme for this.

Research, Management

14. Various changes have perhaps taken place in the marine ecosystem as a result of the tsunami. Various scientific studies are currently underway to document and understand these changes. The Department of Fisheries should be in touch with the concerned academic and scientific institutions and collate all the results and make them available to the NGOs and fishing communities.
15. The tsunami has exposed the various limitations in the fisheries management system of the state. A good fisheries management system based on sound principles and participation of the fishing communities needs to be developed in the state at the earliest. The Department of Fisheries and NGOs with the relevant expertise should collaborate in creating such a system.

General

16. The workshop appreciated the openness of the District administration to ideas and suggestions from NGOs, fishing communities and scientists. Similar workshops and consultations should be organised on other relevant topics and sectors connected with the rehabilitation of tsunami affected areas/communities. The NGO Coordination Centre may take the initiative in this regard to organise such programmes.