

Strengthening Small Scale Coastal Fisheries

Except for a small number of large commercial operators with modern facilities, the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka comprises mostly small-scale operators. The poorest workers in the sector are the fishermen who use small traditional boats, fish workers, small-scale vendors and low-paid workers, s. Overall, the fishing sector is one of the most vulnerable communities in Sri Lankan society.

The northern and eastern coastal belts cover nearly 60 percent of Sri Lanka's coastline and the armed conflict disturbances directly affect fishing community in these areas. While the situation results in a significant impediment to the overall progress of the fisheries sector, it is also responsible for the numerous hardships the communities face, including exposure to violence and displacement. The chronic governance failures of fisheries-related public sector agencies are closely linked to conflict dynamics and contribute to undermining growth of the sector. The 2004

tsunami further exacerbated these problems, affecting nearly all Sri Lankan fishing communities (only a handful along the western coast escaped), and the lack of security made it difficult to undertake rehabilitation efforts in the most severely damaged conflict-affected fishing communities. The result of the natural disasters, the armed conflict and poor public sector governance has made the fishers unable to recover and move forward.

Given the seasonal nature of fisheries sector, and other uncertainties (weather, ability to find fish, etc.), fishing communities find it difficult to secure a dependable livelihood.

Importance of the fisheries Sector

The population directly involved in the coastal fisheries industry is estimated at 171,000. Prior to the tsunami, coastal fishery accounted for 80% of fish production in the



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country, and the industry accounted for nearly 2.5% of the country's national income. Prior to war, 60% of the fish supply was recorded from both Eastern and Northern Provinces. Sri Lanka's fishers are also the primary managers of the shoreline, mangroves and coastal fishing zones.

Scale of damage

- Deaths of fisher family members and mostly internally displaced
- Destruction of fishing crafts and gear
- Damed to fish landing centres, anchorages, harbours and access roads
- Coastline breeding grounds for fish and other aquatic organisms have been severely damaged.
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- For months after the tsunami a decrease in consumption of fish lead to fishermen being unable to sell their catch.

Gaps identified in the rehabilitation process

- Beneficiary selection process was unsatisfactory.
- Lack of community participation in the post conflict developed process, leading to a mismatch of needs with supplied resources.
- Potential and existing capacity of affected fishermen to contribute towards rebuilding their livelihoods was completely ignored.
- Some of the distributed fishing vessels are not sea worthy.
- Lack of confidence of fishermen to resume their livelihood, due to the receipt of inappropriate gear.

- Lack of attention to support industries (eg. Boat yards)

In order to avoid further aggravating the above problems, an alternative approach to rebuilding fishery livelihood post conflict development is needed.

Practical Action approach to rebuilding in the post-conflict fisheries sector

Practical Action believes that communities affected are not just victims that they also have capacity and knowledge that should be taken into account in rebuilding programmes.

The process of participation will also allow understanding the likes and dislikes of communities and specificities that will make the outcomes of the programmes sustainable.

How Practical Action can support your efforts

Provide information on

- How to build fishing vessels with the participation of fishermen.
- Community based fisheries co-governance in lagoons
- Value addition to dry small scale dry fish sector

Provide training and capacity building in the areas of

- How to build fishing vessels with the participation of fishermen. These include:
 - I. sensitisation on the participatory approach to boat building
 - II. on-the-job training on fibre glass (oruthoni), wooden (kattumaram) boat building technology

This training is recommended for officials of organisations (NGO) , fisher communities and marine engineering students involved in rebuilding traditional craft and boats etc.

It is recommended that fishermen are given just the on-the-job training part.

- Building of community-based access roads to service re-settled communities (to provide access to fishing grounds and markets)

Practical Action's overall expertise

Disaster mitigation practices developed by Practical Action using cost-effective technologies, over the past 10 years, have been successfully adopted by vulnerable communities to minimise the physical and economic risks posed by natural disasters. With this experience, Practical Action can offer information and support to other institutions and individuals to help rebuild the lives of tsunami affected communities in Sri Lanka, covering areas such as;

- How to put people at the heart of post tsunami rebuilding efforts - mechanisms to include those who are unheard and ignored are at the heart of our

approach when developing technologies. (Practical Action develops any project by planning with people using community consultative processes. e.g. the land-use planning process would involve identifying the lifestyles and aspirations of the people using maps, role play, walking through the neighbourhood, interviews etc).

- Disaster sensitive approaches of planning the reconstruction of devastated homes and livelihoods - how to develop plans to reduce the future risk of vulnerable communities.
- Technology best practices in areas including appropriate boat building designs, cost effective houses, flood resistant housing and infrastructure (bridges, roads), disaster resistant housing and community shelters, renewable energy options and rain water harvesting methods, skills development, and technologies which provide access to information and markets.



Statement of principles

An outline of Practical Action's core values and aspirations guiding reconstruction

Introduction

All human activity is guided by a set of values and beliefs. Practical Action respects the diversity of human belief systems – social and religious – but has a set of principles underpinning all of its work. This section outlines the values and basic principles underlying the approaches and practices Practical Action adopts and encourages others to replicate.

Putting people at the heart of reconstruction

Technology options adopted in reconstruction should be people-centred. Technologies should concentrate on what matters most to the people with whom we work, respects their rights, and supports their own efforts to improve the quality of their lives.

Building in partnership

Poor people work hard to find their own solutions to poverty. In the aftermath of the tsunami it is evident that all sectors of society have suffered from the loss of life and possessions

yet the economically disadvantaged are perhaps most vulnerable. Reconstruction efforts should aim to help them to get access to information, knowledge and options - to identify their priorities and make choices for themselves.

Respecting diversity

Reconstruction efforts should respect basic human rights regardless of differences in gender, ethnicity, religion or physical ability. The practical expression of this respect should be evident in the dialogue that takes place to inform planning and resource allocation, in designing and delivering services that will contribute to rebuilding lives and livelihoods.

Showing concern for future generations

Reconstruction efforts and the related technology choices should aim to be sustainable - economically, environmentally, socially and institutionally.