

# Prospectus

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## Introduction

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Millions of people in the Asian region depend on fisheries for a living, and the sector is a major source of food security, employment, income and foreign exchange. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), of the 41.4 mn fishers worldwide engaged in fishing and fish farming as a full-time, or, more frequently, part-time, occupation, as many as 36.3 mn, or 88 per cent, are in Asia. China has the maximum number of fishers and fish farmers, followed by India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines. The majority of fishers and fish farmers are small-scale, artisanal fishers, eking out a living from coastal and inland fishery resources.

These figures are likely to be underestimates. An FAO study in Southeast Asia, for example, suggested that the figure reported to the organization for the number of inland capture fishers worldwide (4.5 mn, full-time, part-time or occasional) is easily exceeded by those fishing in inland waters in just eight countries covered by the study, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Further, these figures do not include those involved in other fisheries-related activities, such as marketing, processing, net-making, supplying ice, boat building, and so on. Importantly, women play an important role in several of these activities. Assuming a ratio of 1:3—that is, for every person who fishes, there are three others on shore engaged in fisheries-related activities—a conservative estimate would place the total number of people involved in fisheries-related activities in Asia at about 110 mn. The total number of people dependent on the sector in Asia is, no doubt, much higher.

Significantly, 90 per cent of the catch from small-scale fisheries worldwide caters to human consumption. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), artisanal,

small-scale fisheries in Asia are estimated to contribute to at least 50 per cent of total fisheries production, providing extensive rural employment.

Total fish production in Asia in 2004 was estimated at 86.2 mn tonnes (world total: 139.6 mn tonnes), of which 40.6 mn tonnes were from marine capture fisheries (world total: 85.8 mn tonnes) and 5.5 mn tonnes were from freshwater capture fisheries (world total: 8.6 mn tonnes). In 2004, ten Asian countries—China, Indonesia, Japan, India, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, Malaysia and Myanmar—were among the top 20 countries in terms of production from marine capture fisheries, contributing to 42.4 per cent of total production. Similarly, nine Asian countries—China, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Pakistan, Vietnam and Philippines—were among the top 20 countries in terms of freshwater capture fisheries.

Fish is an important source of food security in the region. For more than 1.6 bn of the 3.5 bn people in the region, fish provides more than 20 per cent of the animal protein consumed. This figure rises to more than 50 per cent in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

## Background

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Since its inception in 1986, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) has been working on issues that concern small-scale and artisanal fishworkers, with a particular focus on seeking recognition for the rights of small-scale fishing communities to fisheries and other coastal resources, as well as their right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods.

In Asia, where fisheries are important from a social, economic and cultural perspective, ICSF has had a long history of engagement with fishworker organizations (FWOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on issues relevant to small-scale fishworkers and their communities. Several

workshops and training programmes have been organized, notably the South Asian Workshop and Symposium on Coastal Area Management, in 1996; Forging Unity: Coastal Communities and the Indian Ocean's Future, in 2001; and the training programme, Empowerment through Information, on international legal instruments of relevance to fisheries, in 2003.

Given the pre-eminence of artisanal and small-scale fisheries from an economic, social and ecological perspective, the importance of protecting and securing the rights of small-scale fishworkers and their communities to livelihoods and resources—both on land and sea—has been a recurrent theme in all the events organized by ICSF. Participants at the Coastal Area Management Workshop and the Indian Ocean Conference highlighted, for example, the importance of guaranteeing preferential rights of coastal fishing communities to the coastal areas where they live and the aquatic resources to which they have customarily enjoyed access for livelihood.

The Vision Statement issued at the conclusion of the Indian Ocean Conference stressed the need to reduce the capacity of the industrial fleet, particularly where the small-scale sector is in a position to harvest the same resources with a smaller ecological footprint. Further, drawing attention to the development of relatively small boats with long endurance capabilities for targeting highly migratory resources such as tuna, it highlighted the need to recognize the rights of the small-scale sector to sustainably harvest such resources, in keeping with Article 5 (i) of the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), which requires coastal States and States fishing on the high seas to take into account the interests of subsistence and artisanal fishers.

The importance of small-scale fisheries, and of protecting the interests and preferential access rights of small-scale fishing communities, is recognized in several international instruments (for example, Chapter 17 of Agenda 21; UNFSA; and the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, CCRF). However, putting in place effective systems that recognize and protect these rights that

help move towards sustainable fisheries, remains a challenge.

### **Rationale for the Workshop**

For fishing communities, both marine and inland, safeguarding their rights to access fisheries resources and to the continuous possession or enjoyment of coastal residential habitats and other lands traditionally used by them, is of paramount importance

This is the case for communities dependent on marine fisheries who have limited access to other alternative resources, as well as for full-time inland fishers or those involved part-time with other agrarian pursuits. These rights are currently being threatened in various ways, due to developments both within and outside the fisheries sector. At the same time, recognition of these rights, within the framework of sustainable utilization of living natural resources, is considered necessary if fishing communities are to progressively share the responsibility of managing coastal and fisheries resources.

#### *Rights to fisheries resources*

Fisheries have a long tradition in the Asian region, both in the inland and coastal areas. The sector has been, and continues to be, an important source of income, food and livelihood for millions in the region. Fishing communities along coasts, rivers, lakes and other water bodies have been living and fishing in the same area for generations. Migration of fishers, mainly in pursuit of migratory fish stocks, has also been a common and accepted feature. It is not surprising, therefore, that several communities have developed their own norms to regulate access to resources, resolve conflicts, and ensure equity. They often have clear perceptions of 'claims' to the resources (land and water/sea-based) on which their lives and livelihoods depend. Their perceptions and claims have, in some cases, obtained wider social acceptance in the larger community and attained the status of unwritten 'rights'. These 'rights', and the norms and institutions associated with them, are yet to be formally recognized by the State, in most cases. These customary rights have also weakened over time, with the influx of capital and technology, adaptations of

fishing methods and fishing vessels, and the growth in fish trade as well as the competing uses for inland and coastal spaces.

Today there is growing global concern about declining fishery resources, both in marine and inland water bodies, and recognition of the need to manage fisheries resources. Poor performances in fisheries, including inefficiencies in resource conservation, have often been attributed to deficiencies in the institutions that regulate access; and the importance of adjusting such institutions to the conditions of resource scarcity has been highlighted.

There is increasing emphasis on rights-based approaches to fisheries management, advocating the introduction of some form of rights to resources—for individuals or groups. However, discussions on rights-based approaches have largely been restricted to fisheries in temperate ecosystems. The solutions offered are, in the main, not wholly conducive to the context of the techno-ecological or socioeconomic dimensions of small-scale fisheries in developing countries. This is particularly true in the context of Asia, which accounts for the largest share of small-scale fishing operations.

The assumptions underlying rights-based approaches are threefold: (i) There is excess fishing capacity in both small- and large-scale fisheries, and fisheries the world over are largely overfished, and face the threat of collapse. (ii) The core problem of resource overexploitation and stock depletion, as well as the building up of excess fishing capacity, lies in the open-access nature of most fisheries. (iii) Rights-based approaches are the only effective way, in the long run, of meeting the biological, social and economic objectives of fisheries management. The solutions offered include introducing a menu of property-rights regimes, such as individual transferable quotas (ITQs) for some fish stocks and territorial use rights in fisheries (TURFs) for some others.

A widespread adoption of rights-based approaches to fisheries could have major implications for the lives and livelihoods of small-scale fishworkers and their communities. It is thus essential to examine both the underlying assumptions and the solutions that

follow from them. It is particularly important to analyze whether the fisheries management measures being put forward are coherent with the customary rights of coastal fisheries and their communities, within a framework of sustainable fisheries.

Further, it is important to explore this debate in conjunction with the long-articulated analysis, positions and demands of artisanal fishworkers vis-à-vis allocation and management of fisheries resources, and to identify areas of convergence and departure, so as to propose coastal and fisheries management regimes appropriate for both small- and large-scale fisheries in the Asian context.

#### *Rights to coastal lands*

Fishing communities have lived along the coasts of seas, rivers, lakes and other water bodies for generations, given their need for being close to fishing grounds. However, with the growing competing uses of coastal spaces, fishing communities in several parts of Asia find themselves displaced from their traditional lands, or facing the threat of displacement. In many areas, communities lack formal titles to the lands they have customarily lived on and used for berthing boats, drying fish, gathering crabs, shellfish and seaweeds, doing subsistence farming, and so on. Several of these activities are often the responsibility of the women of fishing communities. The dimensions of this problem need to be better understood, and ways sought to secure the rights of communities to the coastal lands they customarily use. In this context, the coastal management frameworks being put in place by countries in the Asian region must be examined.

These are some of the issues that the proposed workshop hopes to address.

#### **Objectives of the Workshop**

Specifically, the workshop will:

- review the experiences of traditional and modern rights-based approaches to fisheries management, and discuss their relevance and scope in the Asian context;
- contribute to improving the overall effectiveness of fisheries management by promoting

responsible small-scale fisheries and the rights of small-scale fishing communities; and

- advocate for policies that recognize the rights of fishing communities to the coastal lands and resources customarily used by them.

### **Results Anticipated from the Workshop**

It is expected that the workshop will lead to:

- documentation/greater visibility of traditional and extant community-based systems for regulating/managing fisheries in an Asian context, and an understanding of their present relevance to fisheries management;
- documentation/greater visibility of issues facing fishing communities and their rights to inhabit and use coastal lands;
- greater capacity of fishing communities and their organizations to advocate for policies that secure the rights of fishing communities to the coastal lands customarily used by them;
- greater capacity of fishing communities and their organizations to advocate for policies directed at equitable and sustainable coastal and fisheries management regimes appropriate for small- and large-scale fisheries in the Asian context; and
- recognition among policymakers of proposals articulated by fishing communities and their organizations for coastal and fisheries resources management.

### **Structure of the Workshop**

A three-day workshop for FWOS, NGOs, researchers and activists from the Asian region will be followed by a two-day symposium to which policymakers and representatives of regional and international organizations will be invited.

### **Participants**

#### *Workshop*

A total of about 50 participants, representing FWOS, NGOs, and activist and research groups from Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines, Bangladesh and Laos, are expected to attend.

#### *Symposium*

Apart from the above, policymakers and representatives of regional and international organizations working in the region are expected to participate.

### **Venue and Dates**

The workshop will be organized in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 3 to 5 May 2007. A field trip on 6 May will be followed by a two-day symposium on 7 and 8 May 2007.

### **Pre-workshop Country Case Studies**

Prior to the workshop, case studies will be undertaken in six countries—India, Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand—on rights-based fisheries management and attendant issues. The case studies will draw on published data as well as primary research. Information and analysis from the studies will form the basis for discussions at the workshop. 3

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