

## No one-size-fits-all approach

This response to an article in the last issue of *SAMUDRA Report* discusses rights-based schemes in fisheries

I refer to Derek Johnson's article, "Who is Sharing the Fish?", in *SAMUDRA Report* No 43 (March 2006), discussing the Sharing the Fish 2006 Conference that was held in Australia last February and to which the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) gave technical support. While the tone of the article is positive regarding the conference, and its outcome in supporting better-managed fisheries, I would like to emphasize a few points:

The FAO Secretariat has moved, beyond a doubt, on the matter of whether fishing rights are good or not. They are absolutely necessary and fundamental to the sustainability of the world's fisheries resources.

However, fisheries policies, management approaches—and fishing rights—need to be tailored to the specific context of countries and localities with respect to the fisheries in question, the social setting, culture, etc. Indeed, fishing rights have been allocated under long-standing programmes, such as the community development quota (CDQ) systems that have been operating in fishing communities in the Bering Sea; the various types of territorial use rights in fisheries systems (TURFs) such as those found in Japan, the Philippines, Samoa and Fiji; the Management and Exploitation Areas for Benthic Resources of Chile; and the beach management units (BMUs) found in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. It is for communities to decide on how efficient they would like their fisheries to be, with few or many boats of small or large size.

Fishing rights do not simply equate to the big individual transferable quota (ITQ) systems that have been designed for large-scale fleets. Moreover, fishing rights should not be limited to large-scale

fisheries. The current variety of schemes for formally allocating fishing rights has vastly expanded the range of fisheries and fishing situations to which rights-based schemes can be applied. They should apply to large and small fisheries, both with large and small boats. They are, by far, the best tool to re-establish and formalize traditional fishing rights and, thus, protect the rights of fishermen. Even ITQs need not threaten the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries, and they should not foster inequity if well designed.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and more attention needs to be given to appropriately sequence policies and policy reforms. Perhaps it is time to convene an international conference on the allocation of rights in small-scale fisheries, to which I am sure ICSF would be able to contribute.

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