

Project on Minimum standards for fish handling and reduced post-harvest losses in selected tsunami-affected communities'

The project is funded by Government of Spain and Implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in association with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering and the Ceylon Fishery harbours Corporation. The total estimated cost of the project is US\$ 521,799 and the period of implementation is one year from June 2009.

The project is focussed on improving the livelihoods of fisheries stakeholders, especially those affected by the tsunami disaster of December 2004. The defined project activities centre on reducing post harvest losses in coastal and offshore fishing activities, identifying the current constraints associated with fish marketing for domestic and export markets, while strengthening economic performance of coastal communities.

The targeted areas will be fisher communities on the south and east coast, but with a view to providing a development model to be applied to other ports and landing sites throughout Sri Lanka.

The proposed project has been identified and considered essential by the Government of Sri Lanka to achieve the longer-term objectives of the reconstruction and development programme for the marine fisheries sector. The project will assist the Government of Sri Lanka's efforts to revive tsunami affected economies while at the same time building back better livelihoods in the capture fisheries and post-harvest fisheries sector. It will also support achieve the results of the National Ten Year Development Policy Framework (2007-2017) for the Fisheries Sector.

The strategy for this will be supporting the implementation of a Government programme to establish minimum standards of fish quality, including regulations, guidelines, training, pilot schemes and dissemination and to enable the private sector (fisherfolk, fish processors and traders) to apply better fish handling techniques and practices.

Impact:

The intended long-term impact of the project is to improve value of sales generated for fishery communities and to optimise the marketability of fishery products for domestic consumption and export sales. The work from this project will focus on:

- fishers and trading intermediaries;
- the training organization (NIFNE);
- landing site management (CFHC and Fishery Cooperatives);
- the competent authorities (DFAR and the Ministry of Health).

Follow up action after completion of the project will include transfer of the knowledge, lessons learned and technologies through demonstration and extension trainings by NIFNE.

2.2 Stakeholders and Target Beneficiaries

Through the project, FAO intends to provide fish handling development support to some of the most seriously affected fishing and fish-trading families in the key harbours and landing sites of Hambanto, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts, covering the CFHC ports of Kudawella, Tengalle, Trincomalee, and the landing sites of Kudawella, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara Arungum Bay/Panama. These lie in the South and East of the country, an area badly hit by the tsunami. The focus of attention, and one consistent with the Government of Sri Lanka's principal policy objectives, is to support fish handling initiatives, and reduced post harvest losses, for both coastal fisher groups and Multi-day Boats (MDB) operators. Support strengthening of NIFNE trainers to provide a high standard of post harvest training to fishers, fisher wives and market vendors, and to DFAR, Ministry of Health and the Provincial health authorities.

The following five outputs will be achieved:

Output 1: Market and quality constraints relating to post harvest handling identified

- Activities will include confirmation of operational sites by meeting principal stakeholders (MAFR, DAFR Quality Control unit/ District staff, NIFNE and CFHC) and the Fisheries Co-operative Societies (FCS); Development of participatory dialogue to confirm needs and requirements for compliance; a simple monitoring and evaluation plan prepared at the beginning of the project and applied throughout.

Output 2: National capacity to deliver post-harvest extension and monitoring of fish quality strengthened.

The programme team will make an assessment of NIFNE staff capacity to train in hygiene and quality control issues; Experts co-opted from QC specialists from DFAR, the private sector and NARA's Technology Division

Output 3: Appropriate fish handling technologies and practices developed in selected tsunami-affected pilot communities.

Fisher training courses will be adapted from existing international modules and will comprise provision for on board handling and hygiene practices for tuna, billfish, other pelagic and demersal species including handling, de-blooding, gutting, pre chilling, icing and storage; Grading and labelling, establishing a clear grading structure in cooperation with processors; Vessel hygiene and cleanliness.

Market vendors and fisher women and intermediaries will be trained in market hygiene, cleanliness and handling, transport hygiene, cleanliness and handling;

CFHC/Market hygiene officers will be trained in health and sanitation; bacterial/biological testing; record keeping etc. The training component will also demonstrate to the users the economic benefits that can result from improved practices.

Up to 300 MDB fishers, 300 coastal fishers, 60 fisher women, 60 fish auction buyers, up to ten coastal buyers and 60 market vendors will receive training. Training will also be provided for 7 NIFNE QC trainers, 30 CFHC fishery hygiene officers, 20 Municipal market hygiene inspectors, 15 DFAR Quality Control Assistants and 15 Ministry of Health Public Health Inspectors (PHIs). During the course of participatory consultation equipment needs will be identified and procured.

Output 4: Food safety and quality control courses completed

Training in monitoring standards and compliance with Food Safety requirements and hygiene for the fishery sector:.

Output 5: Market and quality constraints relating to post harvest handling addressed

It is intended to ensure that the results of training processes are implemented by monitoring developments in post training and to resolve any outstanding issues; prepare an outline of lessons learned and formulate a strategy for extension of training activities, certification and inspection to other harbours and landing sites.

4.2 Strategy/Methodology

The overall approach of the project is to enable the fishery sector to deliver a better quality product that will increase the economic benefits from better market access. The mechanism for this will be to fully utilize the MFAR parastatal organizations to implement a programme of training, and to extend its system of quality control and food safety monitoring within the sector. At the same time, the training programme will enable/facilitate support to the marketing needs of the private sector/target beneficiaries.

NIFNE is the body responsible in Sri Lanka for training of fishers and fishery graduates. Government of Sri Lanka has earmarked NIFNE as the principal custodian for the management of this project, and the organisation that will be responsible in future for organizing training in quality control while ensuring good publicity for the training courses. Training modules will be prepared in Sinhala and Tamil.