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## **Participatory monitoring of perennial reservoir fisheries management**

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### **Abstract**

The Fisheries Community Development and Resources Management Project (FCDRMP) has facilitated community-based fisheries management (CBFM) approaches in eight perennial reservoirs in the southern dry zone of Sri Lanka since 1999. Empowering the fisher communities to manage their own resources and reducing the need for government intervention are an important prerequisites for functional co-management. Communities must be able to analyse their own situation, make decisions, and take actions accordingly. In order to develop this ability, Fisheries Management Committees (FMCs) were strengthened to formulate their respective management plans and monitor plan implementation. This paper describes different stages of the participatory planning process and presents details on visioning, fears and expectations, roles and functions, as well as goal and objectives of these plans. Historic trends in reservoir fisheries are used to illustrate management concepts, objectives and targets. A participatory monitoring system was developed with the fishers in order to assess the progress of plan implementation with regard to gear and effort restrictions and other regulatory measures, which were jointly agreed upon. Initial economic and social impacts were discussed and recorded in monthly monitoring meetings. Participatory fish catch monitoring allowed the identification of catch rates, financial returns and seasonal fluctuations of fishing effort. Participatory planning and monitoring are essential components in CBFM approaches. They help to develop a sense of ownership among resource users, but still require considerable external facilitation. This service should be provided by extension staff who are sensitized to participatory processes and work in an enabling institutional environment.