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Experience in community-based fishery management under an integrated approach for food security in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in Sri Lanka was launched by Food and Agriculture Organization in 2002. Its main objective is to assist the efforts of improving food security of poor rural and peri-urban communities. This activity is carried out in households of selected sites through a community based integrated programme for development of agriculture, water management, aquaculture and livestock farming. The programme was funded by the Japanese Government, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Lands and Irrigation and implemented by the respective Provincial Councils and Farmer Organizations (FOs). While mechanisms have been developed to monitor the programme at National, Provincial and Divisional levels, the integrated system was implemented at village level through the FOs consisting of interest groups representing agriculture, livestock and aquaculture sectors. Experience gained in community-based management of aquaculture under an integrated programme for agriculture and livestock and constraints and opportunities are discussed in this paper.

Successful community-based management in an integrated approach for food security depends on the participation of all stakeholders in decision making at all levels of planning, implementation and monitoring. Linkages among small interest groups themselves as well as with the main FO and with other stakeholders should be well established to enable them to develop their capacity to negotiate for inputs and other services. Strengthening of FOs with a view to increasing their self-reliance plays an important role in achieving a successful community-based management system.

The Community Action Plan (CAP) which is a rolling plan prepared by the farmers with the assistance of line agencies was implemented and monitored by themselves. Among the interest groups that have been established, the fishery group which consists of members from other groups as well, has to face many challenges in view of the multiple use and lack of ownership of water bodies. The authority over the water body is usually vested with the Department of Agrarian Development and the FO. While there are conflicts in the use of water bodies for fish farming in certain cases, there are other constraints such as political interference and sociological and religious factors. Therefore, the management aspects are complex under an integrated system where the interests of each group within the FOs have to be considered with a view to ensuring harmony among the rural community.

The concept of Farmer Group Development Plan (FGDP) in community-based management has been introduced for actual planning, monitoring and evaluation by the farmers. The activities undertaken should be technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally sustainable. The farmers and other stakeholders should periodically review the FGDP and necessary modifications should be carried out. For a sustainable community-based programme, the rules and regulations of the organization and the institutional set-up should be well established. Maintenance of an effective revolving fund and establishment of saving habit among members will strengthen the capacity of farmer groups.