



Policy Briefs

The purpose of these Policy Briefs is to ensure effective dissemination of information collected and generated as a result of the World Bank-funded Study of Good Management Practice in Sustainable Fisheries, the ACP Fish II Feasibility Study (EC), and a Workshop on Fiscal Reform in Fisheries (DFID and GTZ).

World Bank Study

During 2003, the project 'Study of Good Management Practice in Sustainable Fisheries' was undertaken by SIFAR with funding from the World Bank. This resulted in an initial (brief) report followed by the substantive report which have contributed to a recent internal World Bank process aimed at justifying future investments in fisheries sector development.

EC ACP Fish II Feasibility Study

During 2002/2003 SIFAR/FAO undertook a feasibility study on behalf of the European Commission (European Aid Cooperation Office - AIDCO). This comprised an extensive consultation process with fisheries sector participants from over 60 ACP countries, together with the preparation of a range of major project proposals covering capacity building for more effective fisheries management in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

14. Key policy issues in fisheries management performance

Overview

For much of the last half century fisheries managers have grappled with what is needed to achieve effective fisheries governance. It is argued that the factors that determine the success or otherwise of fisheries management tend to be so location-specific that it is not possible to offer a general prescription for improving fisheries management. While this is true, it is possible to identify certain issues that generally appear to have a determining impact on the success or otherwise of fisheries management. In a study commissioned for the ACP Fish II Feasibility Study Report (2003), 50 case-studies were analysed and issues were identified as having an impact on fisheries management performance⁽¹⁾.

Key issues

The issues that emerged from the study can be divided into **policy and governance⁽²⁾ issues**. The first set are identified as policy issues. They are those that provide the framework or process underpinning governance or, put differently, the context of fisheries management. The second set of issues is labelled governance issues because they include the fisheries management system *per se* and have an impact on the fisheries management mechanism.

POLICY ISSUES

Issue 1: Recognition of the potential value of fisheries

The extent to which government policy-makers recognise the value of fisheries is an important factor which will affect fisheries management performance. Failure by government to recognise the role and value of fisheries leads to little or no attention being given to policy design and implementation. This may result in the potential contribution of benefits, which fisheries might make to a country's development, being lost or used in a sub-optimal way. Governments need to assess the value their country's fisheries and realistically consider this in the development and implementation of fisheries policy⁽³⁾.

Issue 2: Use of appropriate policy narratives

The type of fisheries policy and management approach used by government will be underpinned by a particular understanding of events to explain developments in the fisheries sector, and forms the prevailing accepted account of what makes a fishery function in the way that it does. Such understandings gain the status of conventional wisdom and are referred to as policy narratives.

These narratives will be based upon a particular conceptualisation of the fishery system, and will be used to describe and characterise management issues and how to deal with them. Clearly, policy narratives represent a critical step in the policy process, as they are used as a basis upon which to develop an overall fisheries policy approach and to make management decisions. It is important that policy narratives reflect reality. They should include a wide range of multi-disciplinary perspectives in order to open-up opportunities for policy development and innovation.

DFID Fiscal Reform in Fisheries Workshop

In October 2003, SIFAR organised a Workshop and Exchange of Views on Fiscal Reform in Fisheries - to 'promote growth, poverty eradication and sustainable management'. This took place in the context of a wider OECD-DAC Initiative, promoted through the UK Department for International Development (DFID), examining issues related to environmental fiscal reform.

Issue 3: Context and nature of the policy process

The nature of the policy process itself is an important issue affecting fisheries management performance. The policy process includes both the design and implementation of policy, and it can be influenced and shaped by a wide range of factors. These factors can include the national policy context (is it supportive and enabling?), the ability and willingness of stakeholders to compromise and cooperate (is power distributed symmetrically?) and the effectiveness and credibility of the decision-making processes (objective, transparent and accountable decision-making? Responsive and adaptable?).

The effectiveness of the fisheries policy-making and implementation relates to the extent to which government can provide an 'enabling' environment for the policy process, which may involve targeting more general constraints that are not specific to the fisheries sector.

Issue 4: Participation in policy-making

The participation of fishery stakeholders (particularly primary stakeholders - the fishers themselves) in policy-making on fisheries management is an issue likely to affect the performance of the management systems, eventually, when they are implemented⁽⁴⁾. Globally, there is increasing recognition that the underlying fisheries policy process, to be effective, requires the participation of a full range of relevant stakeholders in both policy design and policy implementation. However, it is also recognised that in many countries, policy is made and then 'handed-down' by central government with only limited involvement by other stakeholders.

The participation of stakeholders in national policy-making will take place through various processes of consultation and flows of information between government and the representatives of key constituencies such as fishing organisations or communities.

In many situations, therefore, the challenge is two-fold: first, to encourage wider participation in the policy-making process, but, second, to ensure that the participation is appropriate and effective. Without this participation, the buy-in by stakeholders is poor and the possibilities for improved fisheries management performance is reduced.

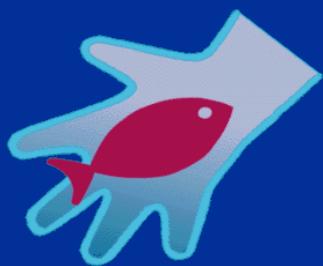
Issue 5: Nature of the legal framework

The laws of a country define the rights of fisher stakeholders and give expression to the specific rules that regulate the operation of a fisheries management system. The successful implementation of fisheries policy will depend, to some degree, upon an appropriate and workable (for all stakeholders) combination of regulatory tools defined in laws and regulations, and must be implemented and enforced. This has proved to be a challenging task in many countries. It requires the development of innovative approaches, probably linked to government decentralisation and the creation of partnerships between local government and communities, referred to as co-management arrangements.

FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

Issue 6: An appropriate institutional framework

The performance of a fisheries management system is affected by the nature of the institutional framework within which it must operate. By 'institution' we mean the framework of rules (both formal and informal) which define and govern the relationships between different stakeholders within the system (e.g. fishers-fish traders-government officials) and between the stakeholders in relation to particular fisheries resources (e.g. property rights over particular fish stocks or access to benefits).



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There is a wide array of different institutional arrangements in fisheries, depending on the type of fishery, and the socio-economic, cultural and political characteristics of the associated stakeholders.

The development of an appropriate institutional framework (or set of rules) for fisheries management will require the participation of all stakeholders. It must take into account existing institutional frameworks, both modern and traditional, and be prepared to deal with the difficulty of trying to modify or replace institutions in the face of this type of complexity. This in turn may require a long and gradual process of persuasion and consensus-building guided by effective leaders.

Issue 7: Adequate management capacity

The performance of fisheries management systems is related to the capacity of the fisheries management authority to make available the necessary management and technical skills, and to provide other assets. The management bodies (or administrative entities) have to operate within the context of agreed institutions or rules. They set objectives for management, and apply the necessary technical, human and financial capital (or assets) to achieve these objectives. Clearly, if a management organisation lacks this type of capacity, then the performance of the management system overall is likely to be impeded.

An assessment of management capacity is an essential part of introducing co-management initiatives or transfers of responsibilities within fisheries. Capacity-building also requires careful design and implementation, but can have immediate and positive effects on target organisations or other entities such as community groups.

Issue 8: Participation in fisheries management

The role of stakeholder participation in policy-making was discussed in Issue 4 above. Distinct from this is the importance of stakeholder participation and, therefore, influence on the performance of fisheries management. It is generally acknowledged worldwide that the participation of stakeholders in fisheries management has a positive effect on fisheries management performance and is thus desirable.

However, effective participation is also problematic to achieve. It cannot be simply 'handed-down' by government decree that it should happen; stakeholders need to internalise the need for participation. Its successful introduction depends on a careful assessment of opportunities and constraints, and the development of appropriate capacity-building, preferably using a process approach.

Issue 9: Fisheries information and assessment

The flow of relevant and timely information is a fundamental feature of an effectively functioning fisheries management system. The type and quality of the information is dependent upon the assessment methods used and applied within different areas of the system. The international literature reveals an increasing trend towards multi-disciplinary perspectives on fisheries management issues and problems. In turn, this requires a sound base of multi-disciplinary information using an appropriate portfolio of assessment and study techniques from both natural and social sciences.

An effective management system should be able to use this information to adapt to changing conditions. Information for decision-making should be used in a responsible and transparent manner.

Issue 10: Political will and leadership

The final issue which can influence the performance of a fisheries management system is that of

political will and leadership. In many ways, this is an issue which cuts across all of the other nine issues above. In fundamental terms, the term 'political will' tries to express the extent and nature of support which a government and its policy-makers provide for fisheries in real terms. Clearly, without the support of government and policy-makers to create an enabling environment for policy design and implementation, the performance of fisheries management systems will almost certainly be constrained. Creating an enabling environment is not sufficient, however. Effective fisheries management also requires a champion to take forward the changes that are inevitably involved.

Political will or support from government for fisheries management is an essential prerequisite for the effective implementation of policy. It most readily appears once the value of fisheries is recognised.

Key literature

SIFAR/FAO (2003) [Feasibility Study Report for a proposed programme on “strengthening fisheries management in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries”](#) (ACP Fish II FSR):

- Appendix 3A. “A review of fisheries management performance in developing countries, with particular reference to issues of policy and governance”.
- Appendix 3B. “The role of fiscal reforms in fisheries in promoting growth, poverty eradication and sustainable management”.

(1) This study was undertaken by Arthur Neiland (IDDRA) and Christophe Béné (WorldFish Center). This Policy Brief draws on their work.

(2) See: Policy Brief 12 [Key concepts I: Fisheries management systems and governance](#), and Policy Brief 13: [Key concepts II: Policy, policy process and policy analysis](#), in this series.

(3) For a discussion of resource rent and wealth generation see [ACP Fish II FSR. Appendix 3B](#).

(4) See discussion of 'control with consensus' in Policy Brief 13: [Key concepts II: Policy, policy process and policy analysis](#), in this series.

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