

Most of recent attention focused on small-scale fisheries has been devoted to technical issues such as localized introduction of fish, initiation of aquaculture programs and development of better fishing gear. Consideration has often left out the socioeconomic aspects. Without an understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of fishermen and their communities, national development planners have faced difficulties identifying priority areas and have been unsure if their efforts are addressing the real problems. For effective policy changes, data such as incomes, expenditures, credit and tech-

Traditional gears, in most situations, were found less profitable than mechanized systems. In Thailand a very important interaction was identified between technology and fishing grounds. In other words, the profitability of any technology is dependent on the conditions prevalent in the area in which it is used.

In Sri Lanka, for example, the religion of the majority of the people is Theravada Buddhism. This branch of Buddhism believes that one should refrain from killing. There is thus an ethico-social stigma attached to fishing and aquaculture in particular where the intent is to raise fish with the ultimate objective of killing.

In Malaysia, the incidence of poverty

More Information Needed

As a result of the May 1981 meeting, issues came to light for which more information is required. One such issue is the technical feasibility, economic profitability, and social acceptability of coastal aquaculture as an alternative or supplementary income source. Information is also lacking on the present status of fishery resources. Other areas requiring more detailed research are: the various components which govern fish marketing systems; evaluations of government policies and strategies in some countries for fisheries development, and comparative studies of small and large-scale marine fisheries.

Thus, the network of projects has collected the largest body of data available in Asia on the socioeconomic problems of the small-scale fishing sector. The final reports of these country studies are being edited into one volume that should be ready for publication by IDRC early this year.○

Socioeconomics and Small-Scale Fisheries

MICHAEL GRAHAM

International Development Research Centre
Asia Regional Office
Tanglin P.O. Box 101
Singapore 9124

nologies are required.

To collect and analyze such data, the Social Sciences Division of the International Development Research Centre, through its Economics and Rural Modernization Unit, has sponsored a small-scale fisheries research network involving six countries over the last three years. Representatives from the Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Indonesia met in Singapore in May 1981 to review their studies and present their final country project reports. The general conditions of the small-scale fishing households were described in relation to other socioeconomic groups, and an effort was made to identify the reasons for these differences. Generally, it was found that income levels in fisheries were lower than comparable groups within the same community. However, country differences were found. Some of the factors identified as responsible for these income differences were: type of gear and how it is used; marketing structure; some non-economic factors such as race, religion, or caste; government programs; and the introduction of aquaculture.



in the fisheries sector declined from 73% in 1970 to 45% in 1980. This improvement was brought about primarily through government measures aimed at productive employment creation, out-migration, and production subsidies.

Aquaculture was observed to provide a source of rural employment, improve the provision of protein locally, and compensate for depleted fish stocks in over-exploited inland waters.

Small-scale fisherfolk in Sudan (*left*) and Thailand-Burma border (*below*). Research has to address the real problems, which include the socioeconomic.

