

**Framework for a Pro-Poor Regional Strategy on Sustainable Aquatic Resources
Management in Asia-Pacific:
A Statement of Understanding and Recommendations**

This statement was prepared by the participants of the *FAO/NACA-STREAM Workshop on Aquatic Resources and Livelihoods: Connecting Policy and People*, 17-19 March 2005, in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. This was the concluding event of the FAO Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) project entitled "Assistance in Poverty Alleviation through Improved Aquatic Resources Management in Asia-Pacific." The purpose of the workshop was to review and share experiences of the NACA-STREAM Initiative, build consensus on the value of livelihoods approaches in aquatic resources management and poverty alleviation, and identify ways of promoting livelihoods approaches throughout the region.

The statement was endorsed by the workshop participants for adoption by the 16th NACA Governing Council Meeting, 20-23 March 2005.

As we work toward Millennium Development Goals – and in the context of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and National Strategies for Poverty Reduction – we recognize the limits on aquatic resources and the importance of their management to the food security of poor and disadvantaged fishers and farmers.

In order to better identify poor people and understand the contexts of their lives and how they use aquatic resources, to understand their needs and objectives, and the role of local culture and indigenous knowledge, a comprehensive and broader approach is needed, that goes beyond a focus on resources and technology alone.

A *livelihoods approach* involves learning about the resources that people can command, the choices they make, and the circumstances of their livelihoods. The livelihoods approach means putting people at the center of development planning in aquatic resources management.

Livelihoods analysis is a systematic yet flexible approach to understanding situations, access to resources, vulnerabilities and influences. It makes use of participatory approaches for learning from individuals and groups within communities. This often means that the people involved in livelihoods analysis work may need to take on new roles.

Participation and shared understandings of all stakeholder groups are made possible through a livelihoods approach, which builds community capacity, develops trust and encourages ownership. This approach minimizes adverse impacts and reduces conflicts during changes to community development policy, the introduction of co-management and the consideration of options for people's livelihoods. These approaches can be a bridge between communities and policy-makers and can also play useful roles in the assessment of the impact of decision-making processes and policies on people.

Therefore, policy development should not only depend on technical knowledge about aquatic resources management. It requires government investment and interventions in planning and implementing fair and equitable development strategies based on information about poor people in communities.

Recommendations to:

National governments

- Develop and implement policies that prioritize poor communities and poverty alleviation in the aquatic resources-related sectors.
- Obtain high-level government support to strengthen the formulation and implementation of development policy and programs which promote effective communication and livelihoods approaches in national development plans.
- The STREAM National Coordinators should play a role in advocating the benefits of livelihoods approaches in policy- and decision-making, and in monitoring the impacts of such policies and decisions on people's livelihoods.
- National Coordinators should report on the progress in implementing livelihoods approaches through their respective NACA Governing Council representatives.

NACA

- Continue the STREAM Initiative as a special regional program to support governments in adopting livelihoods approaches.

NACA-STREAM

- Continue to strengthen communications, networking and capacity-building among countries, and with partners and communities.
- Assess the impacts of livelihoods approaches through STREAM's Monitoring and Evaluation System, incorporating 'standard indicators for poverty' which can be applied globally.
- Develop country-specific guides for livelihoods approaches and analysis.
- Continue the livelihoods approaches process in countries where the work has not been carried out.

FAO and other international development agencies

- Promote understanding of, and communicate the importance of aquatic resources to the livelihoods of poor people.
- Increase the level of support for livelihoods approaches, including support for livelihoods-based work through the NACA-STREAM Initiative.
- Incorporate livelihoods approaches into program and project development.
- Consider revision of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) to include provisions on livelihoods approaches for aquatic resources management.
- Introduce livelihoods approaches into working papers (e.g., small-scale fisheries) of the next COFI meeting.
- Recognize the opportunity to utilize the capacity of STREAM Initiative Country Offices, National Coordinators, Communications Hub Managers and Regional Office to implement activities that require the use of livelihoods and other consultative approaches.