

## The Other Social Science Disciplines

**T**oo often when we discuss fisheries social science, we think of only one discipline - economics. Yet, fisheries social science is a broad and varied area of inquiry including the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology, history and public administration, among others. While each discipline has developed its own concepts and methods of analysis, there has been a great deal of cross-fertilization of ideas, methods and theories between the various social science disciplines. As a result, a variety of subdisciplines has developed, such as political economy and social psychology, which integrate the various concepts from the different disciplines for improved understanding of social systems. Research work in all of these social science disciplines have provided us with more information and knowledge to make improved policy decisions about management and development in the fisheries sector.

Anthropology is one social science discipline which has grown through its integration of the concepts and methods of other social science disciplines. Much of the ground breaking research on fishers and fishing communities was undertaken by anthropologists. Economic anthropology and anthropology of maritime societies have become major subdisciplinary

areas. An anthropological approach differs from other social scientific approaches to the degree that it devotes: a) attention to the way that the community culture and political-economic structure influence individual and household decisionmaking; b) special attention to the heterogeneity among different socioeconomic or ethnic groups in a community; c) concern with the way local or national government policies affect small-scale fishers and their social institutions; d) special attention to historical changes in a community and how different groups of residents have reacted to or been affected by them economically; and e) an emphasis on groups such as the very poor, minorities, and women.

A greater appreciation is needed among both social and nonsocial scientists of the potential for increased understanding of the fisheries sector through the involvement of and collaboration between a number of social science disciplines in research. During Phase IV of the AFSSRN a priority will be given to supporting continued growth of non-economic social science fisheries research in Asia. There is a need to further strengthen the research capacity in these disciplines, especially sociology and anthropology, as well as multidisciplinary social science research. *R.S. Pomeroy*

# Common Property Regimes

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**C**ommon property regimes are forms of resource management grounded in a set of individually accepted rights and rules for the sustainable and interdependent use of collective goods. A collective good is defined as a resource that is managed and controlled by a group of users. A common property regime is composed of a recognized group of users, a well-defined resource that the group uses and manages, and a set of institutional arrangements (rights and rules) for the use of the resource.

Common property regimes as collective resource management systems have been shown to develop when a group of individuals are highly dependent on a resource(s) and when the availability of the resource(s) is uncertain or limited. If the resource problem is repeatedly experienced, such as low or no catch, and if it exists within a single community of users, the fishers are likely to develop a collective institutional arrangement to deal with the problem.

In the face of uncertainty in resource availability, group members are willing to trade-off some benefit from individual use of the resource, for the collective assurance that the resource will be used in a more equitable and sustainable manner. Institutional arrangements provide incentives for the group members to take certain actions to achieve the desired outcome. However, institutional arrangements require an investment of time on the members' part to develop. Coordination and information activities are initial aspects of building institutions. The process of developing and maintaining institutions will have transaction costs. For common property regimes, these transaction costs are part of the collective decisionmaking process. Long-enduring collective resource management systems are able to develop institutional arrangements in which the transaction costs of collective action do not exceed the benefits received.

An individual member of the group

relies on the reciprocal behavior from other members of the group regarding their adherence to the agreed upon rules for management. An individual's choice of behavior in a collective action situation will depend upon how he or she weighs the benefits and costs of various alternatives and their likely outcomes. An individual's behavior is often affected by limited information, the level of opportunistic behavior or self-interest users can expect from other resource users, and their discount rate.

In some situations, individuals may have incentives to adopt opportunistic strategies to circumvent the rules and to obtain disproportionate benefits at the cost of others. This may include rent-seeking, free-riding and corruption. The imperative of the common property regime is to establish institutional arrangements which can reduce or minimize transaction costs and counteract opportunistic behavior.

The principal problem faced by group members of a common property regime

is how to organize themselves. That is, how to change from a situation of independent action to one of collective action and coordinated strategies to obtain greater joint benefits and reduce joint harm. A sense of "commonality", commitment and compliance must be established for the collective good. Problems of the allocation of catch and assigning duties for resource use must be overcome.

Collective action entails problems of coordination that do not exist in other resource regimes, such as private property. In order to organize their harvesting, for

example, fishers must develop rules to establish how rights are to be exercised. Rules provide incentive structures that affect cooperation or conflict among fishers.

For institutional arrangements to be maintained over time, it is important to develop workable procedures for monitoring the behavior of fishers, enforcing against nonconforming behavior with sanctions, and settling conflicts. The ease and costliness of monitoring rules devised to organize the fishing activity depend upon the physical nature of the resource, the rules, and the level of conformity to the rules.

Common property regimes and their associated institutional arrangements need to be dynamic in order to adjust to new opportunities, internal growth, externalities and institutional difficulties. Institution-building is a long-term process and often is based on trial and error. Allocation rules, for example, may need to change as a result of poor harvest or a rule may need to be revised due to poor compliance. The structuring of institutions must be an ongoing process to meet changing conditions.

NEWSBITS

**IDRC Approves Phase IV of AFSSRN**

THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC) of Canada has approved a grant in the amount of US\$266,250 to finance Phase IV of the AFSSRN. Phase IV will commence on 1 April 1994 and continue for two years, until 31 March 1996.

IDRC has supported the Network since its inception in 1983 with the general objective to develop multidisciplinary fisheries social science research capacity in Asia on the subjects of capture fisheries management, coastal resources management and aquaculture development. The following, more specific objectives of Phase IV of the AFSSRN are designed to contribute to this goal:

- to encourage and develop networking within and among Network institutions and countries;
- to enhance the professional capacities of the Network members through training, advance study, and collaboration with individuals and institutions with special skills useful to the research and teaching program;
- to support collaborative research programs in the social sciences that will generate results of value in the formulation of fishery resources management and aquaculture systems development programs and policies;
- to promote the use of research results through more effective dissemination; and

- to identify and encourage membership of additional institutions both within current Network member countries and in new countries.

The scope and methods of the Network programs are taken up under five general categories related to the objectives stated. These are (1) Networking, (2) Education and Training, (3) Research, (4) Dissemination of Results, and (5) New Members.

**AFSSRN Sponsors National Workshop**

THE ASIAN FISHERIES SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH NETWORK sponsored a seminar workshop last 15-16 February 1994 at ICLARM headquarters.

The two-day activity entitled Environmental Assessment and Management of Aquaculture Development was organized and conducted by the AFSSRN Philippine team leaders from the Bureau of Fisheries, S E A F D E C Aquaculture Department, Central Luzon State University and UP Visayas.

Representatives from the private sector, government

agencies, NGOs and fisheries associations participated in the workshop. The seminar-workshop was designed to identify priority research areas and programs supportive of the Medium-Term Fisheries Development Plan for the next seven (7) years in consonance with the economic recovery thrust of the Philippine government for the year 2000.

Invited resource speakers were Mrs. Simeona M. Aypa, Chief of Aquaculture Division, BFAR; Mr. Antonio M. Austria, President of SPCMBY Fisherfolk Federation of Seven Lakes; Dr. Danilo Israel, Philippine Institute for Development Studies; Mr. Nelson A. Lopez, Chief of Seafarming Section, BFAR; Dr. Graham C. Mair, Consultant, UCS-GMITP; Mr. Guillermo Morales, BFAR Director; Ms. Cecilia Pitogo, Head of Fish Health Section, SEAFDEC AQD;



Participants of the Seminar-Workshop on Environmental Assessment and Management of Aquaculture Development led by AFSSRN Coordinator Dr. Robert S. Pomeroy and the AFSSRN national team leaders.

