

Statement on the Indian Ocean Tsunami

WorldFish Center Board of Trustees

At its 27th Session held in Penang, Malaysia from 14-18 March 2005, the Board of Trustees of the WorldFish Center examined the situation created by the high-intensity earthquake on the west coast of northern Sumatra and the subsequent tsunami waves that caused extensive loss of lives and damage to coastal communities throughout the southern Bay of Bengal, including Malaysia and East Africa. According to the information available, the disaster killed an estimated 300 000 people and caused economic damage estimated at approximately US\$ 7 billion, in addition to the social distress it caused, the cost of which can never be estimated nor compensated. The Board noted that the tsunami has been particularly devastating for fishers and fish farmers who suffered heavy loss of lives, damage to fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure (estimated at US\$ 500 million), destruction of or damage to more than 100 000 fishing vessels, and the loss of more than 1.5 million gear units.

The Board expressed its sincere condolences to the countries and the families of the victims, noting that the tsunami had its greatest impact on poor coastal fishing communities, the principal target group of the Center's work, many of which lost all or most of their livelihood assets.

It is the strong wish of the Board that the WorldFish Center should contribute to post-tsunami activities, including assessment of the overall impact on living resources, people and the environment as well as the reconstruction of livelihoods. The Board was informed of the various initiatives already taken or planned by the Center in collaboration with its partners, namely:

- Participating in the Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods and Communities in Tsunami-Hit Nations (CONSRN)-see box. This initiative

- received praise by the Ministerial Meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries;
- Co-organizing a workshop (to be held in June 2005) to assess the immediate and long-term impact of the tsunami and evaluate appropriate policy options to address the impact in collaboration with Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IFET);
- Participating in the elaboration of a strategy for rehabilitation and construction of affected areas in Indonesia in collaboration with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and FAO;
- Leading the development of collective action by CGIAR centers (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) and partners aimed at: (i) developing a cross-sectoral framework for livelihoods rehabilitation; (ii) implementing local rehabilitation options; and (iii) strengthening research and policy capacity in the affected countries;
- Participating in a collective action initiative led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) to undertake biophysical impact assessment of tsunami-affected areas;
- Contributing to the standardization of monitoring procedures for assessment of damage to coral reefs and collation of assessments in ReefBase (with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network);
- Compiling of lessons learnt from previous projects in the affected countries as inputs to reconstruction plans;
- Making expertise available to provide technical assistance and support on request.

The Board expressed its satisfaction for these fully justified initiatives, congratulating the Center's staff for its full availability and dedication. The Board expressed concerns, however, over the risk of negative impacts from rehabilitation efforts

if not appropriately designed and duly coordinated. It reflected, in particular, on the risks faced by the poorest communities and distressed households with no or limited informal rights.

The Board recommended that, within the established regional and national mechanisms of collaboration, the WorldFish Center should pursue and increase its efforts using budgeted resources as well as actively seek additional support to:

- Ensure that, in partnership with others, it contributes further to the rehabilitation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, providing an effective response to the needs of the affected fishing communities, in particular their poorest members;
- Ensure that such rehabilitation efforts seek to provide adequate protection from this and other types of environmental threats, and improve sectoral efficiency, sustainability and governance;
- Participate, in partnership with others, in cross-sectoral assessments of environmental, habitat, resource and infrastructure degradation (e.g., in pond systems, coral reefs and mangroves), focusing on immediate impact and possible rehabilitation scenarios;
- Stress the importance of user and access rights, even informal ones, for the sustainability of livelihoods, particularly for small-scale commercial and subsistence enterprises within the limits that natural resources can sustain;
- Contribute to rebuilding capacity in fisheries monitoring, assessment, policy advice, etc., in the concerned areas, enhancing as far as possible the capacity of poor communities to participate in the reconstruction process.

The Board also called on donors to assist the WorldFish Center in this complex endeavor.

CONSRN

The Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods of Communities in Tsunami Affected Nations (CONSRN) was conceived on 31 December and initiated at a meeting on 11 January 2005 convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Consortium consists of the Asia Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations through its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP), Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) and the WorldFish Center (WorldFish).

The initial response to disasters is based on the immediate needs of humanitarian assistance: shelter, clean water, food and hygiene, information on the losses (human and economic), and provision of counseling and support. In contrast, rehabilitation efforts focus on the longer term initiatives that must be undertaken to rebuild livelihoods and communities and are foreseen to take place over a period of at least five years. Lessons-learned from previous disasters have shown the need to couple rehabilitation efforts with reforms to avoid re-

establishing unsustainable management or inadequate legal or regulatory systems. It is in this latter sphere where CONSRN seeks to make its primary contribution to aid the recovery process.

The Consortium provides a mechanism to harmonize the activities of the core partners in several areas such as (i) collating and disseminating information, see CONSRN website, (ii) carrying out effective needs assessments, (iii) developing guidelines for rehabilitation, and (iv) building a common vision and framework within which the necessary activities can take place.

The vision for fisheries and aquaculture shared by the tsunami affected countries is one of a sector that (i) contributes to poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods and food security, (ii) is based on sound regulation and good governance, (iii) uses appropriate technologies with due recognition of the environmentally sustainable limits to harvesting natural resources, (iv) is managed according to the principles of integrated coastal zone management, and (v) has a well integrated supply chain from harvest to consumer that supports labor intensive post-harvest activities, equitable trade and ensures safe food for all.

Guiding principles have been developed for rehabilitation activities. In summary, they consist of (i) putting people first, a livelihood focused approach, (ii) rehabilitating the whole production and marketing chain for both fisheries and aquaculture, (iii) following existing international guidelines e.g., FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and (iv) following a multi-sectoral approach that ensures that the natural resource base of the coastal zone is sustained through equitable integrated coastal zone management.

Six strategies to achieve the vision have been developed recently with a number of priority activities to support them. The rehabilitation processes will follow a step-wise approach starting with detailed impact assessments and needs analyses.

Source: FAO. 2005. Regional Workshop on Rehabilitation of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Coastal Communities of Tsunami Affected Countries in Asia, 28 February-1 March 2005. FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand. RAP Publication 2005/06, 33 p.