

FISHERY CO-MANAGEMENT
A Practical Handbook

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FISHERY CO-MANAGEMENT

A Practical Handbook

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Foreword

It is estimated that there are 51 million fishermen in the world of whom 50 million are small-scale, subsistence, or artisanal operators mainly living and working in the developing world. Unfortunately, the common-property fish resources that these fishermen depend upon for their livelihood are in a precarious state. Why do we find ourselves in this critical situation and what can we do to correct it? Researchers and stakeholders are actively searching for new forms of fishery management, and one of the most promising forms centres around approaches involving the users – the fishermen themselves – working in some form of shared or collaborative management with government authorities.

For many years, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has maintained an active portfolio of projects examining co-management and community-based management in fisheries and other resource systems. Since the publication of *Managing Small-scale Fisheries* (Berkes *et al.*, 2001), there has been an increasing demand for guidance on what IDRC has learned about co-management, particularly across different geographical settings, socio-economic conditions, and histories of operation; and how it could apply to other types of fishing, link to other livelihoods, relate to other dynamic processes (such as the migration of fishermen), and respond to the seasonal nature of fish resources. This book attempts to respond to this demand by compiling recent experience from as wide a cross section of research as possible.

During the development of this book, both IDRC and the authors wrestled with the concept of co-management. Given the evolving nature of this science, for example, what does co-management cover and how widely is the concept accepted? Importantly, there has been increasing acceptance of the idea that co-management is not an end point but rather a process – a process of adaptive learning. Recognizing the diversity of both local contexts (ecological and social) and factors depleting the fishery (such as overfishing and habitat destruction), however, would it even be possible to put together a book of lessons learned? As you will soon discover, IDRC and the authors felt that it was neither possible nor desirable to produce a blueprint for fishery co-management. Rather, we agreed that it would be more useful to document the co-management process, as undertaken by both IDRC partners and others, and to put this experience into a form that could be shared with anyone interested in learning more about co-management and what others have learned. This shared and adaptive approach to learning is what this book is all about. In the pages that follow, you will

find a complete picture of the co-management process: strengths, weaknesses, methods, activities, checklists and so on.

IDRC will continue to field-test this publication. Our evolving support for research on the co-management of natural resources is part of IDRC's ongoing work around governance, decentralization and adaptive learning, most of which are managed through the Centre's Rural Poverty and Environment programme. Details on this and other IDRC programmes can be found on our website: www.idrc.ca.

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Preface

In travelling around the world working on fisheries co-management, the question that people always seem to ask is: 'I understand the concept of co-management and it seems to be a good management strategy, but how do we make it work in practice?' This question was really the driving force behind the writing of this handbook. There seemed to be a need to have a practical reference on a process for community-based co-management. While there were a number of very good publications available which discuss individual activities and components of the process of community-based co-management, there was no one publication which could serve as a reference to the process from beginning or pre-implementation, through implementation, to post-implementation.

This handbook is meant to be a companion volume to the book, *Managing Small-scale Fisheries: Alternative Directions and Methods*, authored by Fikret Berkes, Robin Mahon, Patrick McConney, Richard Pollnac and Robert Pomeroy (2001). It is meant to provide more detail on the application of community-based co-management in small-scale fisheries. This handbook focuses on small-scale fisheries (freshwater, floodplain, estuarine or marine) in developing countries. The community-based co-management process described may also be relevant to small-scale fisheries in developed countries, as well as to other coastal resource (i.e. coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, wetlands) management.

This handbook is based on years of experience conducting research on and practising community-based co-management in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and Latin America. There are far too many people who have shared their knowledge, experience and life with us to thank each one individually.

We hope this handbook will serve its purpose. We request feedback from you, the users, on how to improve the handbook. As co-management is a process, so is the development of a handbook. There is still a great deal to learn and share as we use community-based co-management to hopefully improve fisheries and marine resources and the lives of the people who depend upon these resources.

Robert S. Pomeroy and Rebecca Rivera-Guieb

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Robert S. Pomeroy and Rebecca Rivera-Guieb

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I

Introduction

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1

Why This Handbook?



IDRC, R. Ramlochand.

During the last decade, there has been a shift in the governance of fisheries to a broader approach that recognizes fishers' participation, local stewardship, and shared decision-making in the management of fisheries. Through this process, fishers are empowered to become active members of the fisheries management team, balancing rights and responsibilities, and working in partnership, rather than antagonistically, with government. This approach is called co-management.

Co-management is one of a number of promising new and alternative management approaches that have emerged in recent years for fisheries

management. These new management approaches are part of a discussion of new directions for fisheries management presented in a recent book authored by Berkes *et al.* (2001), a companion volume to this publication. The authors present a vision for small-scale fisheries that sees the linkages between human and natural systems and recognizes the need for management approaches that address these linkages. It is a vision with a human face and a people focus – fishers and fishing communities. It recognizes that the underlying causes of fisheries resource overexploitation and environmental degradation are often of social, economic, institutional and/or political origins. It recognizes that fisheries management should focus on people, not fish, *per se*.

It is becoming increasingly clear that governments, with their finite resources, cannot solve all fishery problems. Local communities will need to take more responsibility for solving local problems. In order to do this, however, communities must be empowered and resources provided to make decisions locally and to take actions that meet local opportunities and problems. The assistance and support of government will still be needed to achieve these results, although the role and responsibilities of government will also need to change.

It is important for the fisheries manager to be creative and innovative. There is no blueprint formula for managing a fishery; each one is different. Different approaches will need to be tried and integrated. There will be success and there will be failure. There must be learning and adaptation. The community of fishers and the government, through a co-management arrangement, will need to work together to decide the best combination of approaches for their situation.

The concept of co-management has gained acceptance among governments, development agencies and development practitioners as an alternative fisheries management strategy to the top-down, centralized government management approach. However, the actual process of co-management has often been problematic as the definition of co-management is quite broad and means different things to different people. In addition, the complexity of issues and relationships and the time involved in planning and implementing co-management arrangements has also led to problems with implementation. This has often led to misunderstandings among the co-management partners and vague adoption of the concept as a fisheries management strategy.

1.1. What This Handbook Is

One of the difficulties in planning and implementing co-management is the lack of specific direction on 'how to do it'. There are a number of different activities and interventions in the process of community-based co-management. While there are a number of very good publications (many often difficult to obtain, especially in a developing country) which discuss individual activities and components of the process of community-based co-management, there is no single publication which provides a reference to the

process from beginning or pre-implementation, through to implementation, and to turnover to the community or post-implementation. That is the purpose of this handbook; to provide a practical reference on a process for community-based co-management for use by the various co-management partners. This handbook is meant to be a working document that is revised and adapted to a specific situation.

This handbook focuses on small-scale fisheries (freshwater, floodplain, estuarine or marine) in developing countries. The community-based co-management process may also be relevant to small-scale fisheries in developed countries, as well as to other coastal resource (i.e. coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, wetlands) management. Community-based co-management seems to be found in, and be most relevant to, developing countries due to the need for overall community and economic development and social empowerment, in addition to resource management (see Chapter 2, Section 2.8 for more discussion about different types of co-management).

1.2. What This Handbook Isn't

It should be noted that this handbook will not present a 'one size fits all' or blueprint process to co-management. It will also not present step-by-step procedures to co-management. This is not possible as there are as many approaches to co-management as there are communities. Each situation in which co-management may be used is different and will require a unique response. Rather, this handbook will present a process which is 'generic' in that it will provide the handbook user with a place to start and with an understanding of how 'a' process works and the variety of activities and methods that can be used to plan and implement co-management. This handbook will serve as a source of information for the practical planning and implementation of co-management at the community level. The process presented is meant to be 'a' process that should be adapted to the local situation. Each co-management activity and method will be covered in enough detail to allow the handbook user to understand and use it. However, it would be impossible to completely address in depth each activity and method in this publication. References and internet links will be provided for the user to obtain additional information.

1.3. Who This Handbook is For

This handbook is written for use by the initiators and facilitators of co-management – government, change agents, community leaders and community members, as well as motivated fishers. The handbook is written to allow each partner in co-management to clearly understand their role and responsibility in the co-management process, and how to relate to the other partners in co-management. The handbook is meant to be used to plan and implement co-management, as a reference source to specific co-management

activities and as a training reference. More will be said about each partner and their roles and responsibilities in Chapter 4.

1.4. Using This Handbook

This handbook is meant to support a process of community-based co-management for fisheries. As discussed, it is not a step-by-step guide. Rather, the handbook provides ideas, methods, techniques, activities, checklists, examples, questions and indicators for planning and implementing community-based co-management.

The user should become familiar with the complete process presented, think about the situation where co-management will be considered for use, and adapt the co-management process to the community. The community may just be beginning co-management or it may already be implementing a process of co-management. Some or all of the activities and methods may be relevant. Other activities and methods may need to be undertaken. When you have identified an activity or method that is appropriate, you can read more about it in the handbook and in the additional references cited.