



MINISTERIO  
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September 2013

## Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

# That's all folks!

## The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) comes to a close

Spanning four years, over 1,100 different capacity building actions, more than US\$16 million dollars and 35,500 participants the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) has finally come to a close.

This was a highly ambitious programme that sought to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Over four years we have had some considerable successes. RFLP has helped drive forward the process of co-management of marine resources in all six countries that it worked. Lives have been saved as a result of our safety at sea activities. The quality of post-harvest fisheries products has improved, in some cases to a huge extent. Livelihoods pilots have helped generate extra income and empower women. Our micro-finance activities in Sri Lanka have been so successful that they have been replicated nationwide. Meanwhile, RFLP leaves behind a legacy of lessons learned and information materials that should benefit other projects, donors, governments and communities for years to come.

This final newsletter highlights some of our key achievements, lessons learned and recommendations. This material is based upon our final programme report and the six national programme terminal reports. A considerable amount of additional information is included in these reports which can be downloaded from [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org)

Finally, recognition must go to all those involved with RFLP's activities. This includes the RFLP teams and our government counterparts for their considerable efforts in all six RFLP countries. I must also thank the Kingdom of Spain for their funding and support as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization staff in Rome, Bangkok and South and Southeast Asia for their backing and technical expertise. Communities taking part in RFLP livelihoods actions must also be applauded. Without their dedication, motivation, hard work and belief little could have been achieved.



José Parajua  
Regional Programme Manager  
Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

# Significant RFLP results and achievements



The completion of a first ever national census of fishing vessels and fishers in Timor-Leste resulted in 96% of fishing boats being registered.

## RFLP results and achievements

A visual presentation of RFLP's results and achievements is available at <http://slidesha.re/16tjWIE>

RFLP carried out a wide range of activities in its six thematic areas of action spanning the improvement of fishers' livelihoods, institutional capacity building and providing advice on national and regional policy. Significant results and achievements include the following.

### Capacity among participating fishing communities and supporting institutions strengthened

Over the course of RFLP some 35,500 fishers including 13,357 women (38%), members of fisher communities and government staff took part in over 1,150 capacity building activities. These took place at the national and regional level and encompassed a wide variety of areas ranging from fishery resource management planning to handicraft production and from chicken raising to the use of fish finders. Many participants in capacity building activities have already and are continuing to put their new skills to use.

### Co-management mechanisms established for sustainable utilization of fishery resources

In all, 65 various co-management mechanisms or bodies and 41 resource management plans were either created, developed, strengthened or implemented throughout the six participating RFLP countries. This included commune Fisheries Associations established in Viet Nam, Fisheries Committees created in Sri Lanka, Fisheries and Aquatic

Resources Management Councils in the Philippines and Community Fisheries in Cambodia. Amongst the highlights of resource management plans were the development of innovative Village Regulations in Indonesia and the documentation and institutionalisation of traditional Tara Bandu management measures in Timor-Leste.

### Gathering and generating data for informed fisheries management

RFLP gathered and generated significant data and information on fisheries and communities in its areas of geographic coverage. A major highlight was the development of a National Fisheries Statistical System in Timor-Leste. This saw the successful completion of a first ever national census of fishers and fishing vessels that recorded 96% of the nation's fishing fleet, as well as the piloting of a community-based IUU reporting system. In all countries this information was important for the development of informed fisheries management plans.

### Measures help improve safety and reduce vulnerability for fisher communities

Safety at sea activities took place in all six RFLP countries

In the Philippines RFLP provided training to help add post-harvest value to fisheries products. This small enterprise took up a new RFLP recipe for better quality shrimp paste following the participation of one of its staff in the training.



including basic training and the provision of equipment such as lifejackets. In three documented incidences 18 lives were saved through the use of RFLP supplied safety equipment and training. In Sri Lanka a fisher was saved by a lifejacket provided by RFLP, while a diver put his safety training to use and did not panic while lost at sea. In Timor-Leste a dry pack provided by RFLP to keep mobile phones dry proved its worth when a boat with 16 passengers on took water on board and began to sink and the phone was used to call for help.

## Quality of fishery products and market chains improved

Efforts to support post-harvest fisheries producers (mainly women) took place in all RFLP countries with a wide range of actions supported to improve production techniques, product quality and marketing efforts. A highlight was a women's group producing seaweed snacks in Indonesia seeing its products become available in supermarkets across the country when formerly they were only sold in local shops.

## Boosting access to micro-finance

RFLP successfully worked with communities in a number of its countries to boost access to micro-finance with emphasis placed on enhancing levels of financial literacy. For example, in Sri Lanka a total of 5,787 loans with a total value of US\$ 636,900 were disbursed by Fisheries Societies to fishers and RFLP's micro-finance strategy is being replicated in fishing villages nationwide. This follows

a series of capacity building activities that saw Fisheries Societies offer far more professional services and resulted in higher savings and repayment rates. Products such as life insurance were also made available to fishers for the very first time.

## Income generating opportunities identified and established

RFLP launched or supported around 40 different livelihoods initiatives with fisher communities across all six participating countries in order to diversify or strengthen income opportunities for fisher families without increasing pressure on natural resources. Communities played a major role in the assessment and selection of livelihoods options. Pilots included both fisheries and non-fisheries activities ranging from fish sauce and backyard catfish raising to chicken raising and handicrafts.

## Recognizing and enhancing the role of women

Recognizing the considerable role women play in small-scale fisheries RFLP mainstreamed gender into all of its activities. Sixty five percent of the livelihoods pilots supported by RFLP were with women. Key results included the Sri Lankan government revising national legislation so that women can participate in fisheries planning and a rapid increase in the number of women joining Fisheries Associations in Viet Nam.



## RFLP by numbers

**35,498**

Fishers, family members and government staff who participated in RFLP capacity building activities

**1,155**

Capacity building events organised by RFLP

**65**

Co-management mechanisms established, strengthened or supported

**41**

Resource management plans created, developed or strengthened and then implemented

**96%**

of Timor-Leste's fishing fleet registered by an RFLP-supported census

**18**

Lives reported saved through the use of RFLP supplied equipment and/or training

**40**

Livelihoods pilots launched or supported

**US\$ 636,900**

Loans disbursed by Sri Lankan Fisheries Societies strengthened by RFLP micro-finance activities

**38%**

of participants in RFLP activities were women

**200+**

Lessons learned, case studies, change stories and other publications produced by RFLP

# Uptake and replication of RFLP activities

As a result of RFLP activity actions under a variety of thematic areas have been considered for uptake and or replication by other organizations. These include.

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) in Indonesia indicated that it plans to replicate the RFLP approach to sustainable livelihoods in other areas of Indonesia.

RFLP's strategy to support access to micro-finance for fisher communities is being replicated nationwide at the behest of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development.

RFLP's technical input and experiences were fully integrated into Sri Lanka's National Plan for the Safety of Fishers and Fishing Vessels at Sea. As a result, RFLP experience should be replicated nationwide.

South Korea plans to support the establishment of a Fisheries Technical School in Timor-Leste. This formed a key element of the human resources development plan for the National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture devised by RFLP.

The National Aquaculture Development Plan (2012 – 2030) for Timor-Leste, which was created with significant support from RFLP is being implemented by New Zealand.

The Timorese government has agreed to create a National Maritime Authority as a coordination body to deal with IUU fishing and maritime rescues. This is a result of RFLP activities which highlighted the need for a single government entity to coordinate in these areas.

The government of Timor-Leste has indicated its intention to scale up the RFLP-implemented use of personal locator beacons to report IUU to become national strategy.

The Provincial Fisheries Association in Quang Nam (Viet Nam) plans to establish two more Commune Fisheries Associations in Hoi An Town in 2013 as a result of its experience setting up pioneering FAs under RFLP.

The success of boat master training courses that provided nationally recognized certification for fishers in Viet Nam led to its replication for over 2,000 fishers in other non-RFLP communities and provinces.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the Philippines indicated it would provide financial support for alternative livelihoods activities initiated by RFLP support.



Vietnamese community members take part in a post-harvest capacity building activity.

NGO partners in Indonesia which worked with RFLP to develop pilot Village Regulations for marine resource management will continue the work and seek to further facilitate similar development in other communities.

In Cambodia, the application of the Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) manual developed by RFLP will be replicated in other Community Fisheries by the Department of Fisheries Post-harvest, Technology and Quality Control (DFPTQ).

# Major lessons learned

During the course of RFLP implementation a considerable volume of lessons learned were generated. Detailed lessons from each of the six participating countries are available in national project terminal reports at [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org). Likewise a series of lessons learned notes, publications and case studies also present RFLP's experiences in a wide variety of areas. These too are available at [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org).

Key lessons learned by RFLP include the following:



Kupang (Indonesia) seaweed snack producer 'Mama Fons' saw her output shift from the village to the national stage following comprehensive RFLP support.

## **Co-management needs time and commitment**

Co-management is a lengthy process that can take decades to truly become effective and which needs constant support and commitment from all parties involved. For a fixed-term programme such as RFLP which in reality enjoyed an effective implementation window of around 2.5 years the impact will always be relatively limited. In addition, co-management actions should fit within an ongoing and active national co-management strategy. High-level government support should be apparent from the very beginning of any project to oversee and support the implementation process.

## **Without an enabling environment project initiatives will struggle**

Many coastal communities where RFLP worked had limited access to clean water and poor sanitation. In addition to the basic health problems this can cause, they present a major obstacle to the success of project initiatives aimed at improving catch quality or hygiene standards on fishing boats or at landing sites.

## **Promoting fisheries related livelihoods can threaten inshore aquatic resources**

Alternative livelihoods for fishing communities can often be seen primarily as aquaculture of high value predatory aquatic species. With some species requiring wild seed for stocking and the use of trash fish as feed inputs this can result in additional fishing pressure on inshore resources. Certain post-harvest/livelihoods activities (e.g. shrimp paste, bottled sardines, shredded fish etc.) can, if successful also place additional pressure on stocks if not integrated within resource management measures.

## **The strong demand for non-fisheries livelihoods**

RFLP experience revealed the importance of not viewing or perceiving livelihoods for fisher communities through a narrow 'fisheries' perspective (e.g. aquaculture, dried



fish, etc.). In all RFLP countries except Timor-Leste (where livelihoods community-level interventions did not take place) there was very strong demand for non-fisheries livelihoods.

### **RFLP supported supplementary livelihoods rather than alternative livelihoods**

In general, livelihoods initiatives identified by communities and supported by RFLP were supplementary livelihoods rather than alternative livelihoods. In other words, fishers were not giving up fishing to do something new. Rather (usually) their wives were carrying out new livelihoods activities to generate additional cash income for the family.

### **The vital role women play in small-scale fishing communities**

Women played the dominant role in key RFLP thematic areas relating to post-harvest, livelihoods and micro-finance activities. This highlights the need for development projects and government initiatives to fully recognize and understand the vital role women play in small-scale fishing communities and to prioritize and plan accordingly.



In Cambodia, enhanced relations between fishing communities and the government led to more effective patrolling against illegal fishing leading to the confiscation of numerous types of prohibited gear.

### **The need for 'soft skills' and participatory processes**

While technical expertise on resource management, post-harvest techniques, etc., is extremely important, equally if not more important are 'soft' skills such as group leadership, group strengthening, conflict resolution, participatory processes, community cohesion, etc. These skills and approaches when applied in a participatory manner can act as a foundation for the success of almost all other activities.

### **Capacity building needs to be long-term and hands on**

RFLP gained most of its major successes through long-term mentoring of government staff and communities. This approach, whereby beneficiaries spent at times up to two years working with RFLP staff as well as putting their new skills into use with communities, also played a major role in sustainability and replication.

### **The importance of financial literacy**

Financial literacy should be seen as an enabling factor for small-scale fishing communities. It can make a major contribution to helping fisher households manage household budgets and reduce their dependence on money lenders and middle-traders.

### **The implementation time of development projects is limited**

The total operational life of RFLP was 48 months. However project implementation time was limited to approximately 32 months and in certain countries less due to the time taken for staff recruitment, reporting, handover, closure of offices, etc. The active implementation period of 2 to 2.5 years is too brief for producer/livelihoods/savings group to be strengthened/ formed, trained, operations implemented and to become sustainable.

### **The value of skilled consultants**

The areas in which RFLP delivered its best results were largely due to the quality of national consultants engaged. The dedication, field skills and expertise of these staff working on long-term contracts made a huge difference. Conversely, many areas in which RFLP struggled to make any lasting impact corresponded with an inability to recruit suitably qualified national staff.

# Recommendations

A series of recommendations can be made based on RFLP's activities, experiences and lessons learned as follows:

## **To create an enabling environment**

Emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring an 'enabling environment' for small-scale fishing communities. This would provide the means for communities to help themselves where possible, as well as act as a foundation upon which future development can take place. Key elements of an enabling environment should include: access to clean drinking water, basic sanitation, access to basic health and education services, access to regular/affordable electricity, access to a mobile phone signal, basic hygiene training and basic financial literacy training.

## **To place emphasis on data gathering**

Government agencies should place emphasis on the ongoing collection of fisheries related data which can serve as the basis for policy making and the development of appropriate programmes/interventions. Where possible communities should be trained for and involved in these processes.

## **To increase the availability of new expertise to small-scale fisher communities**

The strong demand for non-fisheries related livelihoods in RFLP areas indicated the need for the injection of new skill sets into fishing communities. Efforts should be made to engage government agencies/departments in addition to the agency responsible for fisheries to work collaboratively to support the development of non-fishery related livelihoods activities in small-scale fishing communities.

## **To recognize the importance of gender and act accordingly**

Women played the dominant role in the key RFLP thematic areas related to post-harvest, livelihoods and micro-finance improvements. It is therefore vital that any actions in these areas fully recognize the vital role women play, with gender an integral element of development actions relating to small-scale fishing communities and not an afterthought.



Saved by RFLP: This Sri Lankan diver put his RFLP training to use when he became separated from his boat some 60 km from shore. He was rescued.

## **To ensure a commitment to co-management**

Central level authorities need to review/ensure that sufficient management powers and resources have been devolved to local level so that effective co-management can take place. At the same time, efforts need to be made to ensure that there is high-level support for the co-management process at the central level including necessary inputs and resources to combat large-scale illegal fishing.



## **To build capacity and confidence of co-management bodies to take 'hard decisions'**

Co-management bodies need time to gain confidence and acceptance so that they are able to take 'tougher' decisions relating to gear restrictions, fishing closures, etc., especially with regards to the prohibition or restriction of actions by the community itself (rather than directed towards outsiders). While it is critical to balance extractive livelihoods like fishing to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, inshore coastal aquatic stocks in most South and Southeast Asian countries are already overfished and in decline, which leaves little scope for manoeuvre.

## **To prioritize promotion of non-fishery dependent livelihoods when fisheries are heavily or overfished**

Where inshore fisheries are already under heavy fishing pressure or overfished promoting fisheries related alternative livelihoods options will likely put additional pressure on the fishery, therefore greater emphasis should be given to identifying and promoting non-fishery related livelihoods.

## **To regulate (and enforce) where necessary**

In certain instances national/provincial regulations (e.g. governing use of life jackets, boat building standards, ice production standards, etc.) should be developed and actively enforced as voluntary compliance is unlikely. At the same time campaigns should also take place to raise awareness of the need for these measures.

## **To build financial literacy skills**

Priority should be given to enhancing financial literacy of small-scale fishing community members. Emphasis should also be placed forming and/or strengthening community based credit and savings groups.

## **To continue to build capacity of government staff**

Government extension staff from appropriate ministries and departments should be given training on sustainable livelihoods approaches to ensure that livelihoods options are acceptable, suitable and sustainable. Emphasis should also be placed on building the soft skills of government staff (e.g. group strengthening, group leadership, etc.).

For more information see [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org)



'Maggot free fish sauce' Communities in Viet Nam worked with RFLP to produce better quality, more hygienic fish sauce that generates higher profit margins.

## **To ensure sufficient time for development project implementation**

Sufficient implementation time is necessary for development projects especially those like RFLP which focus heavily on longer-term processes that involve building the capacity of groups (e.g. producer or livelihoods groups, savings groups, etc.). The sustainability of groups is directly related to the length of time they can be mentored.

# RFLP publications and knowledge sharing material

During its lifetime some 200 change stories, case studies, lessons learned notes, process notes, reports and publications were produced by RFLP. These document the experiences of those who have been involved in RFLP activities as well as provide a valuable body of practical material that should benefit donor/NGO projects and government initiatives alike. Key publications from RFLP include the following:

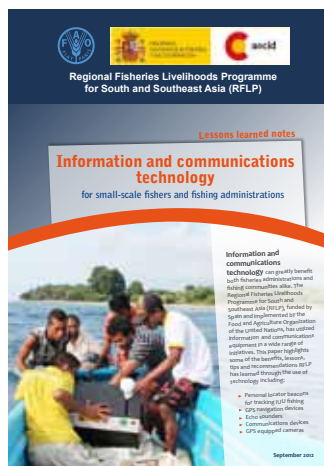
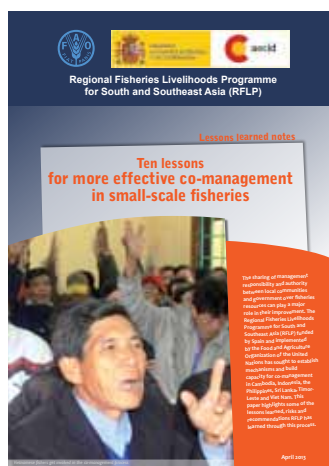
## Case studies

A total of 21 case studies was produced covering a wide range of RFLP thematic areas and all of its participating countries. These have been collated in single publication that can be downloaded at [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org)



## Lessons learned notes

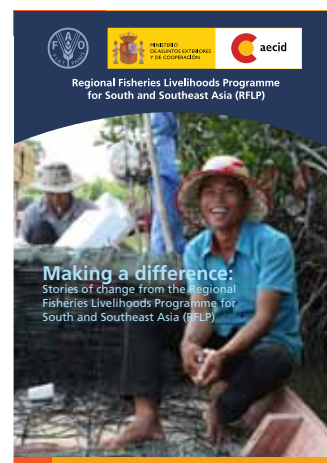
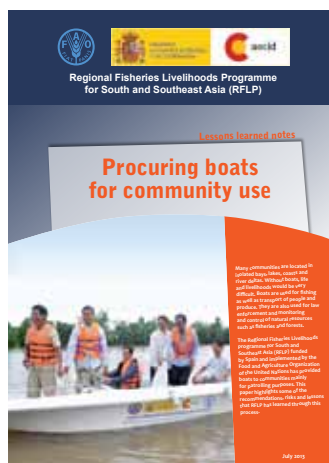
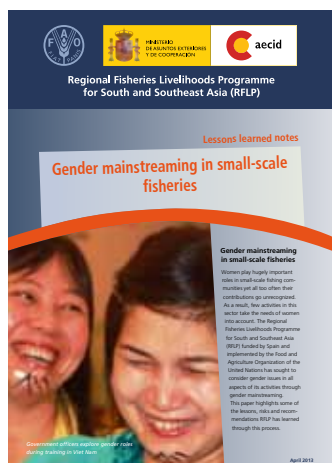
RFLP produced lessons learned notes on its co-management, post-harvest, gender and livelihoods actions as well as on information and communications technology for fishers and boat procurement. These are available at [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org) and at [www.apfic.org](http://www.apfic.org)



## Stories of change

A collation of 58 first-hand testimonies and accounts of those who have worked with RFLP and either put new skills to use or benefited from their engagement with the programme.

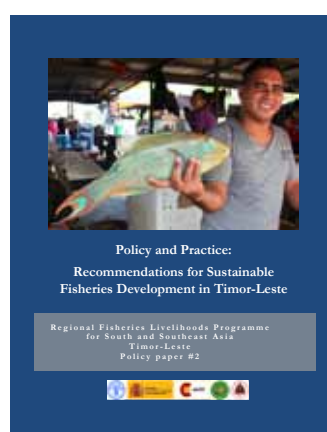
These can be downloaded at [http://www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/Making\\_a\\_difference.pdf](http://www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/Making_a_difference.pdf)





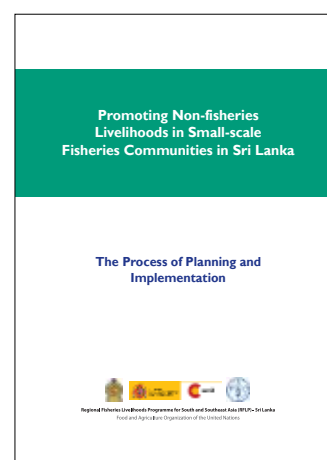
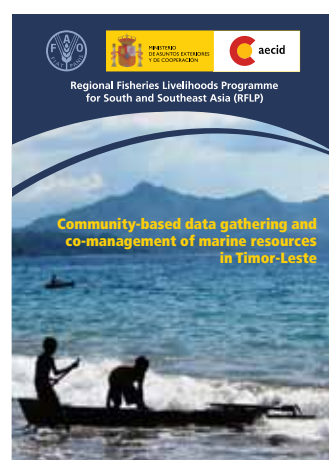
## Policy papers and advisory notes

RFLP produced policy papers on the development of the small-scale fisheries sector in Timor-Leste as well as safety at sea issues in that country. An advisory note on the use of Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices by artisanal fishers was also produced.



## Process notes

Longer notes detailing RFLP's activities in a certain thematic area. These include post-harvest actions in Indonesia, micro-finance and livelihoods actions in Sri Lanka and co-management and community-based data gathering in Timor-Leste.



## Project field reports

Over 100 field project reports were developed encompassing all areas of RFLP activity. A full list can be downloaded here [www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/Key\\_RFLP\\_publications.pdf](http://www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/Key_RFLP_publications.pdf)

## Terminal reports

National terminal reports were written by each RFLP national team. These give detailed information of activities, results, lessons learned and recommendations for each country. An overall programme terminal report is also available at [www.rflp.org/RFLP\\_final\\_reports](http://www.rflp.org/RFLP_final_reports)

## Video material

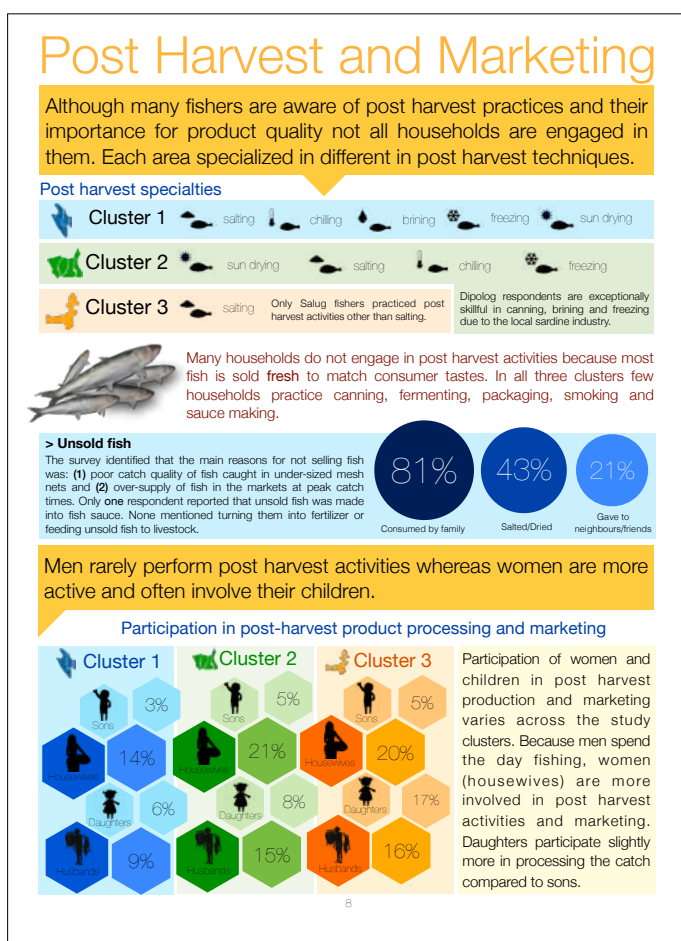
Video material including the process of building a new design fishing boat in Cambodia, RFLP activities in Viet Nam, the operation of a community dock in Cambodia and RFLP gender actions can be viewed at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) when searching for 'RFLP fisheries'

## RFLP online

The RFLP website [www.rflp.org](http://www.rflp.org) will remain live until the end of 2014. In the meantime all RFLP material will be migrated to

## Baseline surveys

Baseline surveys were undertaken in each RFLP country revealing a wide range of useful information. Graphic versions of the surveys were also developed in order to help make the findings more accessible.



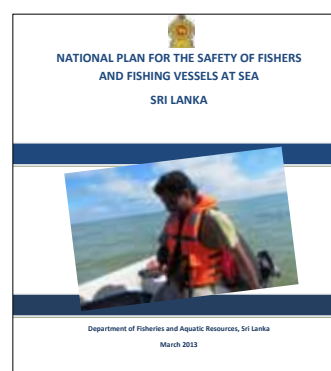
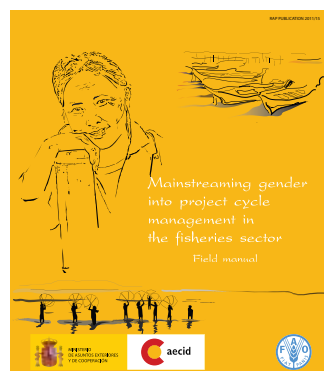
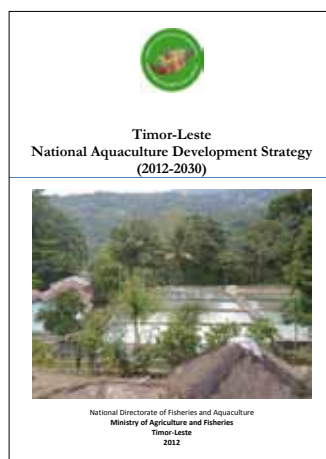


pages within FAO's Fisheries Department website where it will remain. All key documents have been uploaded to FAO's Corporate Document Repository where they can be publicly accessed and found with search engines such as Google. Major documents will also be uploaded to the website of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) at [www.apfic.org](http://www.apfic.org)

The Asian Fisheries Livelihoods Network Facebook site will continue as an ongoing online presence to publicise and draw attention to issues relating to small-scale fishers in South and Southeast Asia. Please contact [steve\\_needham@yahoo.com](mailto:steve_needham@yahoo.com) for further information.

## Other significant publications

RFLP developed or contributed to a series of other important publications and strategies that were published. These include an illustrated manual of how to build a safer 12-meter timber fishing craft in Cambodia; gender mainstreaming in small-scale fisheries projects; a national aquaculture development strategy for Timor-Leste; and a National Plan for the Safety of Fishers and Fishing Vessels at Sea in Sri Lanka.



## RFLP results and achievements

A visual presentation of RFLP's results and achievements is available at <http://slidesha.re/16tjWIE>

### Final contacts

With the end of RFLP official FAO email addresses of its staff will be discontinued. Should you wish to contact RFLP staff please do so at the following email addresses: Jose Parajua (Regional Programme Manager) [jose.parajua@gmail.com](mailto:jose.parajua@gmail.com); Don Griffiths (Chief Technical Advisor) [griffiths.don@gmail.com](mailto:griffiths.don@gmail.com); Steve Needham (Information Officer) [steve\\_needham@yahoo.com](mailto:steve_needham@yahoo.com)

### About the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) set out to strengthen capacity among participating small-scale fishing communities and their supporting institutions in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

By doing so the RFLP sought to improve the livelihoods of fishers and their families while fostering more sustainable fisheries resources management practices. The four-year (2009 – 2013) programme was funded by the Kingdom of Spain and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) working in close collaboration with the national authorities for fisheries in the six participating countries.



### Follow RFLP on Facebook

RFLP is now on Facebook. Get updates on RFLP news, events and resources by joining RFLP's Facebook site at [www.facebook.com/FisheriesLivelihoods](http://www.facebook.com/FisheriesLivelihoods)