

SPECIAL REPORT

Inland Fisheries Management in the Southeast Asian Region: Promoting Habitat Conservation in Lao PDR and Indonesia

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The Southeast Asian region is endowed with enormous areas of inland waters resources, such as rivers, lakes, floodplains, reservoirs, dams, and wetlands. Fisheries in inland waters have long been a vital component of food security and livelihood for the local people living in the vicinity of inland water bodies. However, the inland waters are also utilized by other sectors such as water transportation and palm plantation that pollute the habitats, which would negatively impact the aquatic organisms and fishery production.

SEAFDEC/IFRDMD is playing a significant role in promoting and establishing the management of inland fisheries in Southeast Asia. The Department has implemented the five-year project “Promotion of Responsible Utilization of Inland Fisheries in Southeast Asia” from 2014 to 2019 funded by the Japanese Trust Fund VI. In cooperation with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) of Lao PDR and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) through the Fishery Services of Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia, the Project conducted habitat conservation and resource enhancement activities in the inland waters of Lao PDR and Indonesia. Technical assistance was provided to the stakeholders in Lao PDR and Indonesia through institutional building and conservation area selection.

The purposes of habitat conservation are to maintain the populations of fish stock, sustain fish production, protect the endemic species and ecosystems (spawning grounds, nursery grounds, and feeding grounds), as well as to maintain the populations of vulnerable and endangered species. Thus, the demarcation of conservation areas in inland waters should be coupled with the establishment of relevant community rules and regulations and integrated with the rights-based fisheries approach to regulate fishing activities in the conservation areas. Workshops were therefore organized with the local community to discuss and define the functions and responsibilities in controlling and managing the demarcated areas for conservation. The Project has set up eight signages in Lao PDR and Indonesia to strengthen the enhancement of recruitment of stock. The signages contain the regulations for fisheries management of fisheries community zone, which do not allow any person or group of people to fish in the conservation area. Written in local languages, the signages also include the information on the importance and benefits of conservation areas.

In Lao PDR, Nam Xouang Reservoir was built in 1981 in northern Lao PDR with the main purpose of providing water to irrigate the rice fields. Also, the reservoir support the fishing activities of the people in the surrounding area providing them with food and income. The government established a Fisheries Management Committee in Phonhong District and Naxaythong District to support the fisheries in the reservoir.



Setting up of the signboard in Nam Xouang Reservoir, Lao PDR



The ceremony of installing the signboard in Nam Xouang Reservoir



Discussion with Fishery Management Community in Nam Xouang Reservoir, Lao PDR

SEAFDEC and DLF have installed the buoys to mark the conservation areas which had been declared as no-fishing zones in order to enhance the recruitment of fish stock. The SEAFDEC/TD, SEAFDEC/IFRDMD, and the DLF provided technical assistance by conducting training to the enumerators to collect fisheries and fish biology data including the daily



Sharing of information with Fishery Services, Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia



The ceremony of installing the signboard in Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia

data on weight-length, total catch, fishing operation, and fishing gears. For the socio-economic and gender data, the enumerators collect data from 60 fishers in Phonhong District and 40 fishers in Naxaythong District.

For Indonesia, three lakes, namely Ulak Lia Lake, Cala Lake, and Siarak Lake in Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province were selected for habitat conservation. These lakes have the deepest pool of floodplain and are always inundated, have high fish diversity, and serve as nursery area. The floodplains are utilized for capture fisheries through leasing auction activity held by local government. The winners of the auction can recruit other fishers and authorized to manage their territory. The licensed fishers utilize the inland fishery resources and participate in the decision-making process where they agreed to use responsible fishing gears and fish beyond the conservation zones to secure stock recruitment. The area in the lakes with 5-10 m water depth had been appropriated as a conservation area where the water level, circulation, and quality are maintained even during the dry season. Meetings were organized to educate the local government and enhance their understanding of the concept of co-management and rights-based fisheries approaches in managing the conservation zones.

Even though the habitat conservation strategies in each country varies due to differences in problems, needs, and government regulations, the participation of the local community in decision making and resource management should be promoted until the local community could establish their own management bodies with support from the government. It should be considered also that the determination of conservation zones should be based on sufficient scientific information. ❏

