

A photograph showing the aftermath of a natural disaster, likely a tsunami. In the foreground, a young boy in a dark green shirt and bright blue shorts walks barefoot across a sandy beach covered in debris, including large logs and broken pieces of wood. Behind him, several boats are damaged and beached. One boat on the left is dark brown with white and yellow decorative patterns and Thai script. Another boat in the center is white with a red stripe. A third boat on the right is orange and white. The background features lush green trees and a clear blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of devastation and the impact on coastal communities.

Assis

Affected
the ASEAN-SEA



Disaster-Stricken People

by the Tsunami
FDEC Collaborative Framework

Yasuhisa Kato

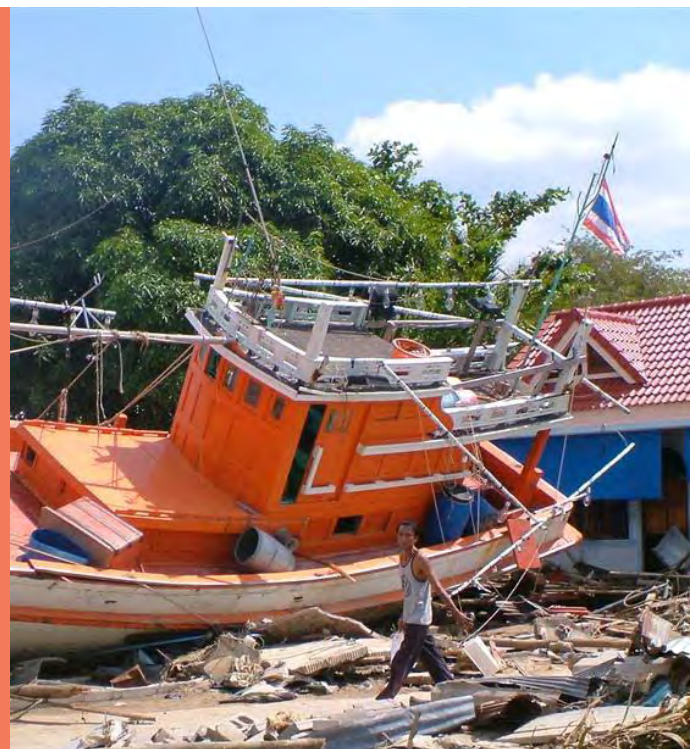
The exceptional scale of the earthquake on 26 December 2004 and the tsunami that followed caused tremendous damage to people and communities living along the coastal areas in various parts of the Indian Ocean. Huge efforts have been made to provide for the affected people by governments, international donors groups and other institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in order to support urgent humanitarian needs and to re-build survivors' livelihoods. Such large-scale support, in terms of mobilization of human and financial resources, is steadily helping people to recover from the disaster.

The fisheries sector is the largest sector affected by the tsunami. In addition to the loss of family members, a large number of people have lost the means of their livelihoods, such as fishing boats, fishing gears, aquaculture facilities and required supporting facilities like jetties and hatcheries. Although the concerned government agencies managing the fisheries sector initiated relief activities

fisheries is not appropriate considering the short-term negative socio-economic impacts on people living by the sea. As a consequence, comprehensive fisheries management programs have not, therefore, been targeted at the small-scale sector in Southeast Asia. Yet the number of fishers has continued to increase as a result of the continuous inflow of people to coastal areas. At the same time, technology has vastly improved, building an unsustainable pressure on fisheries resources.

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immediately after the disaster, it is likely that such rehabilitation efforts may be more effectively conducted after emergency humanitarian needs have been appropriately fulfilled, giving first a chance for people to recuperate from the trauma and losses endured as a consequence of the disaster.

It is often believed that the implementation of stringent fisheries management measures for small-scale

As a result, there has been a drastic deterioration of coastal fisheries resources and a subsequent sharp decline in the income of small-scale fishers. Such vicious cycles of resource reduction and devastating poverty are the current paramount problem for small-scale fishers. Now these same small-scale fishers have been radically affected by the tsunami. While the immediate requirement is to rebuild their livelihoods as quickly as possible, the issue

of over-capacity must be recognized and any planning of relief efforts should take this into account, by aiming to avoid rebuilding this excessive pressure on fisheries. Overwhelming external support has been promised, which includes the provision of fishing boats, fishing gear and other necessary goods. Although these have been promised based on goodwill, it is a serious issue that such provisions may unfortunately undermine the long-term sustainability of coastal fisheries, since there is no appropriate regulating system in place for the sub-sector. There lies the real challenge, in compromising between short-term humanitarian assistance programs which support social welfare of the affected people, and the long-term sustainability of fisheries.

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A few months after the disaster, the long-term rehabilitation program supporting the fisheries sector and the people involved in fisheries has started in each affected country, in many cases with the support of external assistance. Within the international and regional framework to assist the sector and the people, a Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami-Devastated Nations (CONSRN) was inaugurated at a Regional Workshop on

the Rehabilitation of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Coastal Communities of Tsunami Affected Countries in Asia, held from 28 February to 1 March 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Consortium is based on an inter-agency coordination mechanism that includes the Bay of Bengal Intergovernmental Organization (BOB-IGO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO), the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) and the WorldFish Center (WFC). CONSRN aims at coordinating and harmonizing the individual partners’ assistance to tsunami-affected areas in the Indian Ocean. Since then, the CONSRN has periodically exchanged experience and information on the assistance provided by the individual partners, and plans to develop flagship programs that will jointly support the tsunami-affected countries on a regional basis.

At the Ministerial Meeting after the 26th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) organized by FAO, the Rome Declaration on Fisheries and the Tsunami was

**ASEAN-SEAFDEC PLAN OF ACTION ON REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR
THE REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION OF FISHERIES IN THE ASEAN
TSUNAMI-AFFECTED AREAS**

We, the representatives of the fisheries sector of the ASEAN and SEAFDEC Member Countries (the Member Countries), express our sincere sympathy to Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand and their people who are the victims and affected by unprecedented and devastated scale of earthquake and tsunami on 26 December 2004,

Recognizing the sovereign rights and policies of each affected Member Country and cultural context of coastal community,

Recognizing the different scales of damages of the tsunami impacts in each affected Member Country and their localities,

Acknowledging the importance and guidance given in the ASEAN Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004,¹

Recognizing the direction for rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries given in the 2005 Rome Declaration on Fisheries and the Tsunami² as well as the initiatives of the Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami Devastated Nations³ (CONSRN),

Recognizing the major role of SEAFDEC in fisheries development in Southeast Asia and its potential contributions in rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries as well as coastal communities in tsunami-affected countries in ASEAN region,

Taking into consideration the resource capacity of SEAFDEC and the Member Countries on the scale, timeframe and competency needed for supports to the rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries for the tsunami affected areas,

Hereby agreed the following Plan of Action to assist fishers, fish farmers and their communities on the rehabilitation of their livelihoods and restoration of fisheries:

1. To formulate a regional cooperative framework, including strategy and guiding principles, to support the affected Member Countries and areas as well as their communities and people.
2. To identify areas of required technical support based on the assessments made by the respective tsunami affected Member Countries.
3. To identify and mobilize donor supports for the required regional assistance.
4. To develop the required regional programme, identifying the appropriate scope of work and work plan in consultation with ASEAN and affected Member Countries.
5. To coordinate the activities with programmes developed by other organizations in the same areas on the required regional programme.
6. To mobilize technical resources from SEAFDEC Departments and from among the Member Countries.
7. To develop a regional information base to monitor the rehabilitation and restoring progress in the affected areas.
8. To continue to collaborate with the activities and programme of the Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami Devastated Nations (CONSRN).
9. To periodically evaluate the progress and impact of the regional programmes and report the outcomes to ASEAN and the Member Countries, and to incorporate the regional programmes into the national sustainable fisheries development.

We further agreed that SEAFDEC implements the above Plan of Action in close consultation with the Member Countries.

¹ Adopted by the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 6 January 2005

² Adopted by the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries held in Rome, Italy on 12 March 2005

³ Comprises the Bay of Bengal Programme – Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO/RAP), the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC), and the WorldFish Center (WorldFish).



adopted as the international policy framework and as guidelines to support fisheries rehabilitation and restoration activities for the tsunami-affected countries.

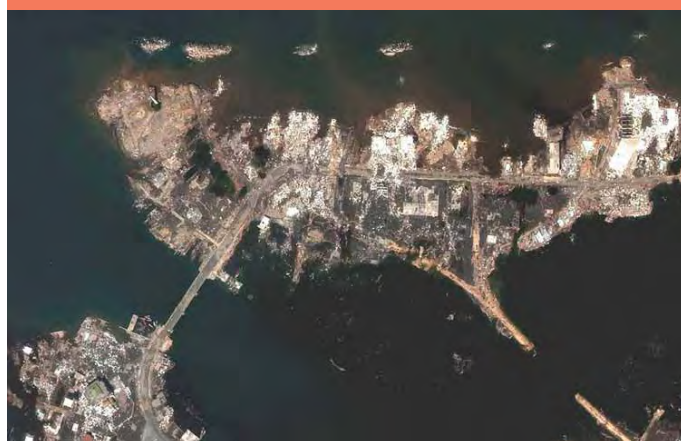
At the regional level, an informal consultation on the tsunami issue was organized by SEAFDEC in early April in Hanoi, Vietnam. The consultation aimed to clarify regional needs and priorities, and to prepare a plan of action. This was done in conjunction with the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Fisheries Consultative Group Meeting and the 37th Meeting of SEAFDEC Council, thus involving the participation of high rank officials of ASEAN-SEAFDEC Member Countries. The consultation recognized the importance of the various initiatives started in each tsunami-affected country, as well as the value of the assistance provided by various sources. It also reviewed the various national, regional and international frameworks and mechanisms already set in place.

On this basis, the meeting identified the necessity to formulate an ASEAN framework to assist, in a collaborative manner, the rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries for the people in the four affected countries of the region. It was also understood that such a collaborative framework was required as a specific follow-up action on fisheries based on the ASEAN Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention in the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004, as adopted by the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia, shortly after the tragedy.

“...support should be provided in the long run, even after public interest in the issue has faded”

The Member Countries thus adopted an ASEAN-SEAFDEC plan of action on regional cooperation for the rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries in the ASEAN tsunami-affected areas, as presented in the box below. This plan of action was adopted during the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries held in May 2005 in Yangon, Myanmar. It will eventually be submitted to ASEAN senior officials for their consideration, as the plan of action can be considered as an ASEAN policy guideline and as opening the door for wider implementation of such collaborative frameworks among ASEAN Member Countries.

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As mentioned above, assistance to fisherfolks and other people whose livelihood are linked to fishery resources may not be straightforward. Special emphasis has been given to short-term relief. But the long-term sustainability of fisheries must also now be considered as part of the rehabilitation of the sector, especially considering the pre-existing overcapacity. In addition, as learned from other large-scale natural disasters, support should be provided in the long run, even after public interest in the issue has faded. It is therefore important to develop an appropriate policy and strategy to support long-term rehabilitation while continuing to work for the achievement of more sustainable fisheries.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yasuhisa Kato, Ph. D. in population dynamics and marine ecology, was successively President of Overseas Agrofiseries Consultants Co., Director of the FAO's Operation Services and later on Policy and Planning Division. He is today Special Advisor for SEAFDEC, based at the Secretariat, Bangkok, Thailand.