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



Making a difference:
Stories of change from the Regional
Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for
South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

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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) RFLP 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 participating countries. RFLP sought to support small-scale fishers through activities under six main areas namely:

- To put in place mechanisms and capacity for joint management of fisheries between the fishers and government authorities.
- To implement measures to improve safety at sea and reduce vulnerability for fishers and other community members.
- To address the loss of income from fish and fishery products due to poor handling, preservation and processing practices while improving marketing systems.
- To strengthen existing (or introduce new) income activities and provide support for their implementation.
- To facilitate access to micro-finance services for fishers, processors and vendors while helping community members better understand savings and credit mechanisms.
- To pool together, analyze and disseminate lessons learned in the different countries.

For more information on the RFLP see www.rflp.org

The change stories in this publication were a result of the efforts of all those who worked with RFLP or who provided support to the programme. They are as follows:

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Life can be hard for those living in small-scale fishing communities.

For many, existence is truly 'life on the edge'. Settlements are often remote, with poor access and few services. Over exploitation of marine resources leads to falling catches and declining incomes. As if this wasn't enough, fishing remains the world's most dangerous occupation with many thousands of fishers dying every year and their families often cast into poverty.

It is within this context that the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) sought to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

At the heart of RFLP's actions were capacity building activities. We trained fishers, their wives and government staff at a variety of levels. Ranging from how to better patrol community fishing grounds and use life jackets, to how to make a better tasting fish balls or sew a pair of ladies underwear the variety of activities supported by RFLP was considerable. Yet all had a common thread: delivering tangible benefits to participants and practical skills for them to both enhance their livelihoods and more effectively manage marine resources.

During the lifetime of the programme RFLP staff made a concerted effort to document the results of these activities as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts. This publication features a selection of change stories illustrating some of the impacts of RFLP. While the subject areas may differ what remains constant is the undoubted motivation and commitment of those featured to put what they have learned into practice.

These are some of the faces and stories of those who have worked with and benefited from RFLP. They are testimony to how Spanish aid, combined with FAO expertise, as well as national counterpart and community commitment has made a very real difference to the lives of many.

Jose Parajua

Regional Programme Manager

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



Enhancing
co-management
of marine
resources

Reefs, poles and patrols: decreasing illegal fishing in Cambodian Community Fisheries

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Cambodia

June 2012 - The deployment of anti-trawling structures such as cement poles and cubes as well as regular patrolling activities appears to be helping decrease illegal fishing in Cambodian Community Fisheries (CFis) while improving catches made with hand-held fishing gear.

RFLP has supported these activities as part of its actions to facilitate better fisheries and resource management within a number of CFis in coastal provinces of Cambodia.

Support was provided to 15 CFis to develop Community Fisheries Area Management Plans, which were formally agreed in May 2011.

The plans detail activities and goals that the communities will work towards to improve resource management and community development. Developed through a participatory process they marked an important step in the empowerment of communities to manage their resources.

The deployment of the anti-trawling devices and enhanced monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) capacity for the communities formed part of the plans. Anti-trawling devices were deployed in six CFis between August to December 2011 while 13 CFis received patrol boats from RFLP in March 2012 as well as other MCS equipment such as binoculars, cameras and radios.

Mr Kun Chap, age 26, captain of patrolling team in CFI Chumpou Khmao goes out with his team once a week to patrol the community conservation area and blood cockle refugia.

“The main types of illegal gear being



Mr Kun Chap, captain of CFI Chumpou Khmao patrol team

used are blood cockle push nets. Small size meshes are also used to catch juvenile crabs,” he says.

Mr Chap recognizes the need protect community fisheries resources from illegal fishing mainly carried out by fishers from other local communities. Monthly meetings supported by RFLP have facilitated regular and direct interaction between the communities and the Fisheries Administration. One of the benefits of this improved working relationship has been better collaboration when it comes to confronting illegal fishers.

“At first we advise the violator not to carry out illegal fishing here. If they do not listen we call the Fisheries Administration and Marine Police to come. They can then confiscate the illegal gear,” Mr Chap says.

“The patrol work is very important for the CFI as we have to stop illegal fishing for the community. Better collaboration with the Fisheries Administration is key to combating illegal activities effectively. Resources seem to be improving and we feel our work will make a difference.”

Despite the success of the patrols, CFI sometimes face difficulties to afford the fuel costs. “The Chief (of the CFI) has to use own money to pay (for fuel),” says Mr Chap. “Fines from illegal fishers go to the Fisheries Administration with some part for the CFI. But if we don’t catch

anyone then we don’t get any income.”

RFLP is also working with the community to strengthen and/or diversify its livelihoods options.

A rice bank is being established in Mr. Chap’s community and once it is operating the increased income it generates should contribute towards patrol costs.

Anti-trawling devices deployed by RFLP have also had some success in combating illegal fishing, the concrete blocks snagging and breaking a number of illegal motorized push nets.

“The illegal fishers are not happy with us as it is now harder for them to operate. They are marking the position of the blocks with sticks but we take them down every time we see them,” Mr Chap added.

Caught in the net! Leon Postigo Fisheries Law Enforcement Team snags illegal fisher

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

January 2012 - A Fisheries Law Enforcement Team from Zamboanga del Norte's Leon B. Postigo municipality which was formed with RFLP support arrested an illegal fisher on Monday, 21 November 2011.

Fishery authorities nabbed a beach seine operator from Sindangan municipality, at around 2.00 p.m. in violation of the 2006 Municipal Fisheries Code for operating an active gear, beach seines¹ or baling during designated ban periods. This coastal municipality allows beach seine fishing only during the first quarter of the year.

Community fishwardens spotted 18 beach seine operators floating in the coastal waters of Barangay Talinga, waiting for the mass of tiny fish called *anga* (gobie) to rush up to the shores towards estuary banks so they could harvest them.

Villagers noticed that the transient fishers had already gathered 19 containers of fresh gobies and had reportedly been fishing from dawn to 9.00 a.m. in the morning.

Local police officers brought the offender to their headquarters for questioning. There the offense was recorded and the perpetrator reprimanded and fined Php 500, a small amount as it was considered a first offense. The arrest however is a signal to fishers from the neighbouring town that the local government of Leon B. Postigo is serious about enforcing its fishery laws.

"We could not arrest the other alleged offenders who were just floating on the sea even if they had the intent to fish illegally. We need pri-



Fisheries Law Enforcement Teams in action

mafacie evidence! At least we caught one who had actually cast and pulled off his net to shore," explained Ricardo 'Carding' Mahinay, Leon Postigo's Municipal Fishery Technician.

"Beach seine fishing is popular along the coastlines near the mouth of the Talinga river, because the famous tiny fish, *anga* or *hipon* thrives during the months of October until December along the river banks."

"These fishers were easily spotted by our community fish wardens because everyone in the village knows that nobody from Leon Postigo does beach seine fishing during the ban period. Since we implemented a numbering scheme for our fishing boats, those coming from outside the municipality are noticed right away by community fishers," Carding added.

Jose Talledo Sr, 49, along with Editho 'Eddie' Langomez, 43, and Jonathan Ponce, 25, are members of the Municipal FLET team which was recently re-organized as a result of

training on fishery enforcement for fish wardens held by RFLP from 27-29 September 2011.

"As fish wardens, we were trained not to carry out arrests but only to provide information to law enforcers and act as witnesses to the offense. We leave the police to carry out arrests as we are unarmed as well as to protect ourselves from retaliation from violators," explained Eddie.

Jonathan added, "We also educate the villagers about fishery laws and advise them to refrain from violating them. If they do so, we will be compelled to contact the police to arrest them."

The Municipal Fishery Technician declared that it is only now through RFLP support that Leon Postigo's FLET has been formed.

"We now have beautiful collaboration from the community. Local fish wardens now tip us off about information unlike before when we could hardly get any," Carding said.

¹ Beach seines are nets with mesh size smaller than the government prescribed 3-cm limit such that it catches juveniles of different fish species.

Timor-Leste officials gain better understanding of fisheries laws

Steve Needham, RFLP Information Officer

December 2011 - Officials in Timor-Leste’s National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NDFa) are now more confident about explaining fisheries laws to fishers following training provided by RFLP.

One of the main problems facing fisheries officials is actually being able to understand the laws that they are supposed to enforce.

Timor-Leste’s fisheries legislation was written originally in Portuguese, which although one of the country’s official languages is not always widely spoken. It was then translated into the local Tetum language. However as there are no Tetum words to describe certain concepts a number of terms remained in Portuguese or were directly (and not very clearly) translated.

To help overcome this obstacle, RFLP has worked with local NGO Empreza Di’ak to produce a Tetum glossary of concepts included in current Timor-Leste fisheries law as well as explain them to officials that interact with communities.



Mr Fernando da Silva

“The law is written in Portuguese and some technical words were very hard to communicate,” explains Mr Fernando da Silva, Chief of the resource management section at NDFa. “For example we could not explain fishing gear terms such as ‘purse seine nets.’”

“I learned a lot of information about fisheries laws from Empreza Di’ak as they gave us very short and very good explanations.”

“Now I have learned a lot more about the different legal articles and am much more confident to explain them. I understand now how resources relate to the articles and can answer questions from fishers relevant to their activities.”

“I went to two districts and explained the laws to fishers. There were many questions from participants but I could respond very well,” he said.

Mr da Silva’s comments are mirrored by Mr. Lourenco dos Reis Amaral, Interim National Director for Fisheries.

“We can all read the laws okay but it is not always easy to understand. Some terms we cannot translate. We needed time and training to understand the content (of the laws). Not just the technical parts but also the judicial points,” he says.

“For example when we are talking about mesh size the term ‘Polygata’ which means one inch is used. Fishers cannot use a mesh size smaller

“Now I have learned a lot more about the different legal articles and am much more confident to explain them. I understand now how resources relate to the articles and can answer questions from fishers relevant to their activities.”



Fernando explains fishing regulations to a community

than one inch and so it is very important that we understand the exact meaning of this term.

“Before we were always trying to find out what the difficult words really meant, but as a result of the training staff now have a much clearer idea of the law.”

“Some of the staff are now disseminating the law to the fishers. Training has made us much more confident. We now know more and can inform everyone.”

Task forces reduce illegal fishing activities in Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

July 2013 - Task forces set up with RFLP support in Viet Nam's Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue provinces are having success in helping reduce illegal fishing activities.

A number of households in Viet Nam's Quang Nam province have voluntarily agreed to give up illegal fishing practices while others have turned in illegal fishing gear following the establishment of commune task forces and awareness campaigns, also supported by RFLP.

Six task force teams were set up by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Quang Nam communes in early 2012 to combat illegal fishing. Each team is headed by the Commune Chief Police Officer and has from 9-17 members depending on the actual situation and available personnel. The establishment and operations of the task force teams was officially recognized by the local authorities.

One of the very first activities conducted by the teams was conducting a survey on the severity of illegal fishing. They came back with a list of nearly 300 households identified through local consultations as currently practicing such activities. In addition, a detailed description of these fishing gears and their impacts was also developed.

These households were encouraged to sign a written commitment that they would stop destructive practices such as using explosives or electric fishing. They agreed not to fish inshore using boats over 20 HP and also committed to report any violations that they were aware of.

Following the first round of the awareness raising campaign, nine households voluntarily agreed to make their fishing activities legal while 13 households handed over prohibited fishing gear.

Meanwhile in Thua Thien Hue, task forces have been established in five

project communes with RFLP support. Patrolling regularly they had, by June 2012, managed to seize 12 illegal fishing gears.

The newly formed task forces are working very closely with Fisheries Associations to undertake both patrol and educational activities.

Radio broadcasts in both provinces have also helped to disseminate government regulations on capture fisheries to create better awareness in the communes.

Mr. Nguyen Song Ha, RFLP's National Project Coordinator pointed out, "These initial results are very encouraging. The inventory of prohibited fishing activities will help task force teams effectively carry out their role. Meanwhile collaboration with local communities helps them developed better awareness of destructive practices. We look forward to the day when illegal fishing is totally given up and substituted with sustainable practices."

Following the first round of the awareness raising campaign, nine households voluntarily agreed to make their fishing activities legal while 13 households handed over prohibited fishing gear.



A Quang Nam fisher hands in an illegal electric fishing device

Fisheries officer puts new skills to use in Cambodia

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Cambodia

January 2013 - Mr. Em Phea is the Chief of Division, Fisheries Administration Cantonment of Cambodia's Kompong Som province and has been working for the Fisheries Administration (FiA) for more than 20 years.

As a key figure in the Kompong Som FiA the 45-year-old Mr Em has worked closely with RFLP.

He was trained by RFLP in marine survey techniques from May to December 2011 and also participated in a ten-day aquaculture good practice training course in October 2011. In addition, Mr Em has been involved in the monthly and bi-monthly meetings between the FiA and Community Fisheries supported by RFLP as part of the co-management process.

According to Mr Em after being trained on marine resource survey techniques he has put the skills to use conducting research at Koh Rong Sanloem on coral reefs, fish catch and species. Along with his team he dives and collects different types of data.

"I could dive before but did not know how to dive deeper, have any proper equipment or know data gathering techniques. If FiA want to carry out more research I am now much more confident. Before I did not know how to do this but now I can do so with a team. I have learned up to 80 percent but would like to learn more," he said.

"Before attending the training on good aquaculture practice I had limited knowledge on this area. The training has helped me to be more confident in interacting with farmers. I have put the training to use as lots of people in the area are doing small-scale aquaculture. After the training, there was a field activity



Mr Em Phea

conducted and I had the opportunity to transfer what I have learned to the farmers in my district. I could tell them if they are doing it properly or not."

"I have put the training to use as lots of people in the area are doing small-scale aquaculture."

"I often visit fish ponds. These are mainly fresh water aquaculture of tilapia, silver barb and snakehead.

During my visit, I could see that farmers now pay a lot of attention to aquaculture and ask me many questions on techniques and practices."

"Aquaculture is an important livelihood option for many people. Before there may have only been a few families doing it but now many more, maybe 100 families in this district. Of these some sell the fish while others keep it for their own consumption. The main difficulty is that they do not know how to breed. If we can breed by ourselves it will be much better."

Liloy's coastal resource and fisheries management efforts deliver results

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

February 2013 - "It was through RFLP that we were able to come up with our Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management (CRFM) Plan. That is one thing that we can be proud of," declared Eusebio 'Boy' Gamil, Chair of the CRFM Technical Working Group and Municipal Budget Officer of the local government unit of Liloy, in the Philippines' Zamboanga del Norte province.

According to Gamil, the training on Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management as well as a 'Writershop' on CRFM Plan Formulation provided by RFLP has helped him considerably since he took on the role of Chair of the CRFM technical working group.

"RFLP's training program was very timely as I was detailed by our Mayor to rouse the Technical Working Group," Gamil said.

"Drafting the CRFM Plan was an uphill battle for us," he quipped.

"At the start, it was a push and shove-nobody wanted to take on the pencil pushing. With the help of RFLP consultants, everyone was very happy that the Plan was eventually completed," he added.

Although Gamil has fisher roots he never acquired any fishing skills and never understood the state of local fisheries nor how to manage it. He started working in local government in the Treasury Office then moved to the Municipal Accountant's Office until being promoted to Municipal Budget Officer.

"I think it was a blessing that RFLP came in while I was designated to head the Technical Working Group," Gamil said.

With his active leadership and enthusiasm, Liloy completed the CRFM



Gamil (in red) undertaking an RFLP-supported coastal resource assessment and habitat mapping exercise.

Plan in July 2012 which they considered a milestone for the LGU in terms of pushing forward its coastal resource and fisheries management program.

"We had to undergo rounds of focus group discussions in the different coastal barangays to understand the real situation, problems and needs of our small fishing communities. With this we were able to devise appropriate strategies to effectively manage our coastal resources and marine fisheries," stressed Gamil.

"I am happy to report that we have evidence of increased fish abundance in our MPAs. Today you can see fish splashing in the seawaters whereas before there were none. Large sea urchins and sea cucumbers can now be seen in no-take sanctuaries. I am convinced that protection of our marine resources really pays off," opined Gamil.

With the knowledge on CRFM he acquired from RFLP Gamil is now aware of the issues and problems facing the town's coastal resources

and fisheries. As Municipal Budget Officer, he also better understands how to effectively utilise the budget, which previously had been a problem.

"Our previous coastal resource management budget allocation was Php 200,000. However this remained unspent at the end of each year because of poor programming and implementation," Gamil said.

In 2012, his office, with the approval of the legislative branch, increased the CRFM budget to Php 400,000 in addition to seeking one patrol boat engine. For 2013, this figure will again increase to slightly over Php 400,000.

"If I were to rate RFLP's training program, I would rate it as excellent. The training program has been a big help in strengthening the LGU's CRFM program especially in improving awareness to the local government staff and the fishing communities we serve," he concluded.

National Fisheries Statistical System plays vital role in Timor-Leste rescue operations

Steve Needham, RFLP Information Officer

August 2012 - When fishers go missing or empty boats wash up on the shore it is vital to know the registration number, what vessels look like, who may have been in it and where they have come from. In Timor-Leste, the online National Fisheries Statistical System – www.peskador.org – launched by the National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NDFA) with support from RFLP is helping provide this potentially lifesaving information.

When two fishers went out to sea and failed to return from Liquica on Timor-Leste's north coast on 7 June 2012, Lourenco dos Reis Amaral, the Chief of the NDFA's Department of Fisheries Inspection immediately consulted www.peskador.org.

"I called the Marine Police and UN Police Maritime Advisor and told them to look on the website so they could see what the boat looked like and to be sure who the owner was. He was not on the boat, but two

family members were," said Lourenco. The fishers were later found safe in Oecusse (54 nautical miles away) after having drifted at sea for two days.

"We believe that their engine broke down and the wind and waves blew them to Oecusse. We (the NDFA and Marine Police) now communicate with each other much more. Things are now much more transparent and

"We (the NDFA and Marine Police) now communicate with each other much more. Things are now much more transparent and we can contact each other more easily. We can really feel the benefits of the website."

we can contact each other more easily. We can really feel the benefits of the website."

The system was also put to use when on 29 May 2012 when an empty boat washed up on Atauro Island. "I contacted the UN authorities and they asked for details about the vessel. The UN helicopter pilot was on the computer searching for weather information while speaking to me on the phone and I told him how to go to the website so he could see the boat details and the photograph. This ability to see the information first hand helps us all as sometimes communication over the phone is difficult. Because we had the registration number of the boat, we knew it had come from Lautem. We also found out that it had gone to sea on 25 May, before washing up four days later on Atauro, 87 nautical miles away. However, despite the UN helicopter carrying out a search and rescue mission we unfortunately could not find the fisher."

In addition to providing vital support to the authorities when fishers go missing, the practical use of the system is also helping show fishers the benefits of licensing their vessels with the authorities.

"Without the registration numbers we would not be able to help them and would not know where the boat came from," said Lourenco. "Our district field officers have communicated this lesson back to other fishers. Beforehand communities would get upset when our staff visited however now we are trying to build up relations."



Lourenco dos Reis Amaral studies vessel information online

Up in flames! Destructive fishing gear meets fiery end

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

October 2012 - A total of 52 sets of illegal box-like traps known as *lu* were burnt during a Fisheries Festival at Loc Binh Commune, Phu Loc District 21 September 2012.

Destruction of the *lu* marks a major achievement for local Fisheries Associations which have been supported by RFLP and are now regularly patrolling protected fishery areas.

Recognising the damage caused by *lu* the authorities issued specific regulations in an effort to better control it. One of the most effective mechanisms to enforce these instructions has been through commune Fisheries Associations which have proved their worth in helping manage Fisheries Protected Areas in the lagoon.

Hoi Nui Quen Fisheries Protected Area (FPA), one of seven FPA in Tam Giang-Cau Hai Lagoon, was officially recognized in 2011 by Thua Thien Hue Provincial People's Committee. As a part of the provincial orientation for community-based conservation, this FPA is designated to be under the management of Loc Binh 1 commune Fisheries Association (FA), established in 2003.

However, despite the government decision providing a legal framework intensive work was still required to operationalize this FPA. This was especially critical against the background of imbalance between fishing and conservation activities with low-selective gears booming out of control.

For this reason RFLP decided to help strengthen the role of Fisheries Association as part of its support to

the process that would see both the fishing communities and authorities co-manage the FPA.

RFLP helped translate the decision into reality through the demarcation of the FPA boundary on maps and the installation of concrete poles and signboards in the lagoon to make clear the boundaries. FA members were mobilized to implement the work so as to enhance their sense of ownership.

After a series of consultations with the FA, a community-based FPA management regulation was developed and endorsed by the FA members. In order to enforce the regulation, training was provided for the Fisheries Association. One important highlight was the establishment of the patrol team who were equipped with a patrol boat by RFLP in December 2011. Patrol missions have been organized regularly and effectively, resulting in the confiscation of these illegal fishing gears by FA members.

The destruction of these fishing gears in this kind of festival was symbolic of people's commitment to better preservation and management of lagoon resources. According to RFLP's Mr. Luong Quang Doc, "This is particularly important because it is purely a local initiative. There is no precedent for burning fishing gear



Illegal fish traps are put to the torch

Patrol missions have been organized regularly and effectively, resulting in the confiscation of illegal fishing gears by Fisheries Association members.

at a Fisheries Festival, which is the occasion for fishers to pray to God for a better catch throughout the year. Today, the whole community and the authorities were united in their effort to reduce harmful fishing practices. If this spirit can be retained, fisheries resources will be preserved not only for these fishers catch but also for their children."

Check out the link below for the news broadcast of the event on local television station (in Vietnamese)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVQrUz0SWfg&feature=youtu.be>

Putting data gathering skills to use in Timor-Leste

Yessy Betty, RFLP Timor-Leste Communications Assistant

February 2013 - The effectiveness and efficiency of data gathering activities carried out by staff of Timor-Leste's National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (N DFA) have been improved following capacity building provided by RFLP.

RFLP has worked with the N DFA to put in place mechanisms to gather a variety of fisheries-related data which is then entered into the online National Fisheries Statistical system www.peskador.org. One of the key areas in which data is being gathered relates to fish landings and prices.

In order to build the capacity of the N DFA staff RFLP conducted a series of training sessions on data gather-

ing and entry during 2012. Amongst those who took part were Emilio Gomes and Elsa Carvalho, District Fisheries Officers (DFO) from Viqueque district and Covalima district respectively. Both feel that they benefited from the training as their data collecting efforts are now more efficient, effective and less time consuming.

"Previously I provided the fishers with a log book, pen, and weighing scale to collect the data. The fishers would then fill in the logbook with the type and volume of fish as well as the prices they fetched every time they went fishing," explained Emilio.

"To collect data from the logbooks, I went to each fisher's house and then entered it into the computer. Once the data entry was completed, I traveled back to Dili to deliver the data to the N DFA. However I faced some difficulties as this was time consuming and sometimes the fishers did not want to fill in the logbook as they did not see the importance of the data."

"The situation is different since we received training as well as equipment to gather and enter data, such as laptops, 3G internet connections, digital weighing scales, and geo-reference cameras. I no longer have to go door to door and the logbook is also not used. Instead I go directly to the fishing center and gather data at the site. This makes everything much easier.

"The situation is different since we received training as well as equipment to gather and enter data. I no longer have to go door to door and the logbook is also no longer used."

I also no longer need to travel to Dili to deliver the data as I can email it directly to the N DFA. When I show the data on www.peskador.org to the fishers they feel happy to see it," Emilio continued.

For Elsa Carvalho the provision of basic equipment has made a big difference.

"Before RFLP provided us with equipment such as digital scales, we would only estimate the weight of fish without weighing it. By using the digital scale the data we enter into the database is accurate. The system also helps fix errors if data fails to enter properly and is really efficient."

The data entry training has also benefited Jaime Alves, who carries out data entry for the N DFA's Fisheries Inspection Department.

"Previously we entered data into Microsoft Access or Microsoft Excel. If someone needed the data then we had to give them either a hard or soft copy. However, since the data has been entered into peskador.org it is easily accessible to all," he said.



A District Field Officer weighs a fish

Thieng Sao: from illegal fisher to fisheries protector

Lebun Botumroath, FAO Cambodia

March 2013 - Illegal fishing is common along Cambodia's coast. It offers big profits for some and a means of survival for others while posing a challenge for the fisheries administration, community fisheries and local authorities alike.

Amongst those who fished using illegal gear and methods such as motorized trawling, flying nets and undersized mesh nets was Thieng Sao. A resident of Preah Sihanouk's Prey Nup district, his main means of survival for over a decade was illegal fishing along the southern coast of Preah Sihanouk and Kampot provinces.

Sixty-year-old Sao is a well-built man, his muscular arms and legs evidence of a life spent carrying out the tough business of fishing. To generate more income from fishing activities, Sao says he was forced to use illegal gear. But when asked if he had ever been arrested or fined by the authorities Sao replied, "No."

"I told the officers I fished to survive. If I didn't fish illegally, my family and

I would have nothing to eat," Sao explains. "The patrol officers recognized my face and knew my name so they let me go without charges."

Yet even long-term illegal fishers can have a change of heart.

"If you can't beat them, join them," Sao says and that's exactly what he did. In 2004 he became president of Chumpou Khmao community fishery (CFi). That same year Sao was also recruited to join a Fisheries Administration (FiA) task force to combat illegal fishing activities. This unpaid job earned Sao the respect of the villagers and FiA alike.

According to Sao, his change of heart was to help save his community from the depletion of fish stocks due to over fishing, much of which was (and still is) carried out by illegal fishers.

"I wanted to use my skills to protect the seas for future generations," says Sao. "I want to make sure that my grand children can catch enough fish to eat."

"The illegal fishers escaped leaving me with bruises and a black eye"

Since joining the task force, Sao and his patrol team members have gone out to sea between two to four times a month, while also carrying out foot patrols twice a month against illegal mangrove cutting. They have succeeded in confiscating fishing gear from illegal fishers, but at times have also exchanged punches. In December 2012, Sao and two fishers set out to sea and confronted illegal fishers in an encounter that became violent.

"The illegal fishers escaped leaving me with bruises and a black eye," Sao exclaims. Though the team did not catch the men, they did collect some of the fish left behind.

During their many trips to sea, the team has confiscated fishing gear, batteries (used for illegal electric fishing), weapons and bamboo traps of various sizes. They have also made several arrests, imposed fines on fishers and warned them about the consequences of illegal fishing.

Chumpou Khmao community fishery is one of 15 CFis being supported by RFLP.

RFLP has worked with the CFis to develop resource co-management plans and enhance the livelihoods options for community members. Greater collaboration with government agencies such as FiA has been fostered, while nine wooden patrol boats and four speed boats have also been provided to help combat illegal fishing activities.



Thieng Sao (right) with illegal gear confiscated during patrols

Quang Nam Fisheries Associations gain confidence

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

July 2012 - Fisheries Associations in Viet Nam's Quang Nam province are reporting enhanced confidence and capacity to carry out their role since being established with RFLP support in 2011.

Local Fisheries Associations play a pivotal role in mobilizing fishers, representing their interests, and working with the local authorities as partners in fisheries resources management.

By mid 2012, the six newly established Fisheries Associations in Quang Nam were enjoying a better work environment as well as a greater sense of financial ownership and responsibility.

Each Fisheries Association is managing an operational budget of around US\$500. A management regulation developed by FA members and approved in a Congress governs the use of the funds. While the amount of money is relatively small, the feeling of ownership and responsibility for the fund counts for much more.

"This fund is just a starting point. We appreciate having a mechanism for financial management within the FA. Based on this, every member can monitor the expenditure and income in the future," pointed out a fisher in Tam Tien Commune.

Commune FA Executive Boards were also proud to show their organizational capacity during the recent traditional fisheries festival funded by RFLP.

"We've been trained a lot but this is the very first time that we have been in charge of actually implementing something. To be honest, I was really worried at the start of this important community event but now



Community members enjoy boat races at a festival organized by a Fisheries Association in Quang Nam

we have done it, we feel much more confident!," said Mr. Nguyen Huu Thap, Vice Head of Duy Nghia Commune FA.

Community members joined the boat races and traditional folksong contests had great fun. Mr. Nguyen Van Vu, the Project Coordinator for Quang Nam pointed out, "Through these festivities, community solidarity is strengthened. Equally important, the role and capacity of FA Executive Boards are consolidated through their mobilization of re-

"We've been trained a lot but this is the very first time that we have been in charge of actually implementing something."

sources by undertaking the coordination necessary for the implementation."

In addition, RFLP has helped equip the FAs so that they are able to function effectively.

In April, RFLP handed over basic equipment to each commune FA including a desktop computer, a desk, a cabinet and two electric fans.

"Thanks to RFLP, we no longer have to run around looking for an idle computer to type out our document. We now have the best facilities in the commune office!" proudly commented Mr. Nguyen Xuan Ban, Head of the FA in Binh Hai Commune.



Community members take part in a Fisheries Association meeting



Safety at sea and
reduced
vulnerability

Viet Nam rescue teams better prepared for action

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

Report - On 21 March 2012, a vessel operated by Mr. Nguyen Duc Hao got into trouble when its engine broke down 5 nautical miles from the coast. The rescue team led by Mr. Nguyen Trung with five members was able to rescue the crew and safely tow the vessel to the coast.

Accidents at sea in Viet Nam have risen in recent years. Although being well aware of the risks, declining catches have driven fishers to fish in rough seas. Unfortunately, they are often not able to cope with the strong winds and waves, especially during the night.

In view of this situation RFLP has helped support two rescue teams in Thua Thien Hue province's Phong Hai and Phu Thuan communes which were recently formed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

To date the Phong Hai team which comprises 20 voluntary members has successfully carried out seven rescue missions.

"Even before the establishment of the rescue team, it had been a part of our life to respond to calls for help at sea. However, we are happy to join this team as we wish to see rescue activities to become better organized," said Mr. Hoang Van Due, the rescue team leader from Phong Hai commune.

RFLP supported the development of the teams by funding the meetings for selecting the team members, facilitating the process for the team to be recognized officially by the commune authorities, organizing a study tour to a successful model in Quang



Members of the Phong Hai rescue team

Ngai and providing the team members with basic equipment such as raincoats, torches, life vests and life rings. Rescue team members also took part in training on disaster preparedness and first aid.

"The fishers know our phone number so they will call our team leader who will send a group to help tow their boats to shore. Now that we are working in a team, we are better prepared before heading out for the rescue. Before, being in a rush we even forgot to bring food along and everyone was hungry," added a team member.

"We are proud of the rescue team's work. But we are sad to see our fellow fishers heading out to the dark, rough sea to fish."

So far, thanks to these timely rescue missions, no one has been killed at sea. "We are proud of the rescue team's work. But we are sad to see our fellow fishers heading out to the dark, rough sea to fish. We wish to see the day when no one needs our service because they are sufficiently prepared for safety," said Mr. Hoang Tan, the Head of the Fisheries Association.

Mr. Nguyen Song Ha, RFLP Viet Nam National Project Coordinator, explained the project's approach to safety-at-sea enhancement in in-shore fishing communities "We take a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, we try to raise the awareness on safety measures. On the other hand, we encourage community efforts to help each other more effectively when accidents happen. We hope that the two rescue teams RFLP has supported are examples that can be replicated in all project communes."

Zamboanga's small-boat builders put new skills to use

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines



Mindanao boat builder Manuel Antipaso

September 2011 – “I have learned now how to measure using millimeters and the metric system,” narrated 49-year-old Manuel Antipaso, owner of Antipaso Boat Builder Manufacturers of Talinga village in Leon B. Postigo, Zamboanga del Norte province, the Philippines.

“It brought great advantage: measuring in millimeters (metric) provides certain preciseness as compared to using inches (English). When a buyer requires a certain specification set in millimeters, say 2,000 mm in bow length, I can now easily measure it. As before, I had difficulty figuring out such measures and end up using inches. The result is that I have had significant shortfall in the total measurement of the boat's dimension,” he clarified.

Antipaso is one of the 30 small-scale boat builders and carpenters who were trained by RFLP's Boat Building Training Course held on 30-31 May

2011 in Dipolog City as an activity of Safety at Sea component.

“It was the first time I have attended training on boat-building in my entire life as small boat-builder. I was very happy the local government invited me to attend the training,” declared Antipaso.

Small boat building in most of the coastal villages in the Philippines, such as Zamboanga del Norte's Leon B. Postigo town, is an age-old tradition. The indigenous knowledge

“The problem with local boat-builders is that everything is done *uwido*. In the Visayan language, *uwido*, means playing by ear.”

and skills of many small-scale builders are passed on through generations.

Small boat builders never got into formal schooling for boat-fabrication-there is no school available even. In fact, a lot of them have never gotten into high school nor college. They have just learned it by experience.

RFLP national consultant on Safety at Sea Ret. Capt. Henry Caballero declared, “The problem with our local boat-builders is that everything is done *uwido*.” In the Visayan language, *uwido*, means play(ing) by ear, taken from the Spanish word *oido* for ear. “Hence, strictly, local boat builders are not compliant to government prescribed safety standards!” he argued.

“Right after the training, I taught my brothers, sons and workers what I learned about using the metric system. Now, I laughed at times when I see my workers running to me rushing, asking how to solve shortfalls in measurement using millimeters,” Antipaso quipped.

Antipaso has been in the business of small-scale boat building for 20 years now. He started as a helper in small boat fabricator in Iligan City in northern Mindanao.

A father of three, Antipaso looks forward to more support from RFLP. “It would be good if the plan to hold training on fiber glass boat-making and a study tour to fiber glass boat makers in General Santos City will push through. That will give us a greater advantage here in the province,” he declared.

Training and simple equipment saves lives in Timor-Leste

April 2012 - Safety at sea training and equipment provided by RFLP helped save lives in Timor-Leste when a boat transporting passengers between the capital Dili and Atauro island got into serious trouble in February 2012.

According to reports, a vessel carrying 16 people across the 24 km stretch of water separating Atauro from the mainland was hit by high winds and strong tides on 1 February 2012.

Despite the efforts of those on board, the vessel sank until it was just under the surface of the ocean with its buoyancy stopping it sinking further.

His was the only mobile phone on board that could be used as all of the other's were damaged by water.

Tragedy was averted when one of the passengers, Mr. Jose Guereiru, a fisheries observer for the National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture, used his mobile phone to call for help to a fisher friend and the Maritime Police.

He had remembered his training from RFLP's international consultant for safety at sea Ms Nao Tsujimura who had advised fishers to always take their mobile phones to the sea covered in plastic bags to keep it dry. His was the only mobile phone on board that could be used as all of the other's were damaged by water.

During the two hours it took for the group to be rescued Jose also used his training and encouraged the others on board to remain calm and not panic. The entire group was rescued safely.



Jose Guereiru poses with his 'aquapack' mobile phone case



Basic safety training and equipment was provided by RFLP to Timorese fishers

Semau seaweed farmers benefit from safety training

Agoes Hekso, Graphic and Information Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

November 2012 – ‘If you drown at sea, then so be it’ is a common saying amongst the people of Uioa Village in Semau Island in Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara Timur province.

However, following training in safety at sea techniques and the provision of basic equipment such as life-jackets from RFLP, seaweed farmers in the area are now more confident about their safety. As a result they are able to plant seaweed further from shore where it grows better, hence they can cultivate larger quantities of a better product.

Located to the west of Kupang Municipality, Semau island is only a 30-minute boat ride from Kupang yet the conditions are very different. The island has a long dry season that sees no rain fall for several months. As a result, agricultural activities are difficult and the people make their living as sailors and fishers while some also farm seaweed.

Amongst the seaweed farmers there is little understanding of safe practices when working in the sea and

for that reason they rarely work when the tide is high.

Recognizing the vulnerability of this group RFLP provided basic safety at sea training in 2010 as well as safety equipment in November 2011. Materials provided included life jackets, tool kits and torches. A year on, this equipment is now benefitting some of the communities.

One group called ‘*Pancaran Kasih*’ (the shine of love), comprises eight men and seven women. It was established in 2007 by the 45-year-old Head of Uioa Village Mr Zefanya.

Before being given life jackets by RFLP the group cultivated seaweed around 50 – 100 meters from the beach. This was because they were afraid of being dragged out to sea in the deep water at high tide. Now they have the courage to use a small boat and cultivate seaweed further out: around 300 meters from the beach. They also wear the RFLP life jackets to make sure that they are safe.

By planting the seaweed further out it will remain covered by water at

“The waves here are dangerous at high tide and that’s why we weren’t able to get a good amount of seaweed when harvesting it.”

low tide, be less exposed to damaging ultra-violet sun rays and will not dry out. In deeper water the stronger currents also clean dirt and mud from the seaweed. This results in better quality and a more nutritious product.

Daud Koenlout, 33, is one of those who has benefitted from the life jackets. He was glad to have received one as he once had an accident when he slipped off the coral. “The waves here are dangerous at high tide and that’s why we weren’t able to get a good amount of seaweed when harvesting it,” he said.

Daud claimed that he could now harvest as much as 300 kg of seaweed a month. This is because he can now cultivate the seaweed in deeper water that results in better quality seaweed. Previously he thought he produced around 100 – 200 kg while the grow out time was also longer.

“We need to change their attitudes to safety. Slowly but surely, their awareness has increased over time. They have already benefited from RFLP assistance, now it is their task to pass down this wisdom to their children”, said Yulianto Beeh, RFLP National Consultant for safety at sea.



A Semau seaweed farmer at work

Training sees diver live to tell his tale

W. M. Chaminda Sugath, Kudawa Semuthu Fisheries Society

November 2012 – Fishers have always fished. However, the risks involved in their vocation have almost always been overlooked. Fishers lack knowledge on how risks can be mitigated, while ignorance about safety equipment and improper practices place them in unnecessary danger. All of these are simply seen as being a part of a fisher's life.

I live in the fisheries village of Kudawa in Kandakuliya, Puttalam. Belonging to a fishing family my vocation is to dive, catch and sell various types of fish such as chank, sea cucumber, lobster and ornamental fish.

This article, reveals my personal experiences of my fishing life. It also reveals the difference knowledge make to one's life.

It was November in 2008. As usual, I left the shore in a small boat at

around 7.30 a.m. with a helper and we went about 45 kilometers away from the land. I dived into the water with my diving suit and equipment on. I dived to a depth of about 90 to 100 feet and when the air tank was empty I returned to the boat to replace it with the help of my companion.

I started my second dive at about 10.30 in the morning. Having spent about 45 minutes under water I came back to the surface to change the empty air tank to another full one. However, all I could see was the empty sea; there was no sight of either my helper or the boat. Anxious and worried, I waited to try to catch a glimpse of them. However with time I began to realize the bitter truth that I was lost in the middle of the ocean.

Entrapped in anguish and horror, no words could explain the feelings that filled my head. Time passed first in minutes and then in hours. Not knowing what to do in such a situation doubled my fear and my endless screaming and attempts to swim towards land, even though I did not know where it was, only made me tired and exhausted.

The sun was burning red close to the ocean and it only made me realize that darkness would fall in a few minutes which would end all my hopes of survival. However, just a few minutes before the

sun set I saw a fishing boat coming my way that finally saved my life. Had I had to stay one more hour in the water, I know I would not have the strength to remain afloat.

Three years after this incident, on 15 February 2012 I faced a similar situation. Though the accident was similar, the way I reacted to it was very different. The reason for this was that I had undertaken training from RFLP on safe diving. During the training which included practical sessions we learnt how to react during such an accident and what precautions we should take.

I was not afraid when I found out that I was lost at sea and that I had missed the boat. Knowing that I could not swim to land as it was too far away, I remained calm and refrained from doing things that would make me exhausted. I immediately got rid of the extra weight of the diving suit. I followed all the steps that were taught to us to remain relaxed and afloat. We also learnt how to make use of the remaining air in the cylinder as a useful tool to stay afloat during an emergency. These steps gave me immense strength and confidence.

We were instructed to leave a note saying where we were going to dive before we set out to sea so that during an emergency those at home would know where we were. Having followed this advice it was easy for my relatives to find me just a few hours after the incident.

It was then I fully realized the importance of these safety measures which most the fishers are ignorant of. The training and knowledge I have acquired not only saved my life, but also secured the entire future of my family.



W. M. Chaminda Sugath

Putting first aid skills to good use in Timor-Leste

Yessy Betty, Communications Assistant, RFLP Timor-Leste

January 2013 - First aid training and basic equipment provided to fisher families in Timor-Leste is being put to good use.

Seeking to reduce the vulnerability of fishers and their families, RFLP held basic first aid and communication at sea training in seven sub-districts of Timor-Leste during 2012.

Basic first aid training has proven popular in a number of the countries RFLP works in. Primarily designed to help fishers deal with accidents that may happen at sea the training has also been warmly embraced by wives and other family members who also recognize its value in treating accidents in the home.

A total of 193 fishers and family members participated in the training in Timor-Leste with 63 first aid kits provided to fishers' families.

One of the participants in the training was 30-year-old Dulce Thomas from Liquica district. Dulce is the wife of a fisher and shares her

house with eight family members, including her four children.

"I used the first aid kit to treat my nephew who had an accident on his motorcycle. The accident was not severe but his arm and leg were injured," Dulce says.

The RFLP first aid kit contained a number of basic items including cotton wool, bandages for minor injuries, a sling, plasters, small scissors, and basic medicines and ointments for headaches, wounds, and burns etc.

"I used the cotton wool and anti-septic liquid to clean the wounds every day. I also used the bandage to wrap it. The recovery time was one month and now the injuries are healed."

Dulce usually takes her family members to the hospital or health post if they fall sick as she had idea how to treat them.

"From the training I learnt how to treat people who were bleeding,



Dulce Thomas

"From the training I learnt how to treat people who were bleeding, how to use the sling for arm injuries and carry out resuscitation."

how to use the sling for arm injuries and carry out resuscitation. Now I have these skills, I will be able to treat my family members if they experience these things," Dulce added.

Dulce is looking forward to learning more about first aid. She also wants to have these medicines at hand in case one of the family members is injured.



Dulce (centre) learns first aid skills

New boats provide safer, more cost-effective patrolling for Cambodian community fisheries

Steve Needham, RFLP Information Officer

April 2012 – “The new boat is much more stable than the old traditional boat. It will be very easy when we go out to catch illegal fishers as we will be able to load up a lot of people and they will be able to move around without us being afraid the boat will sink,” says Mr Phiv Sun, Patrol Team leader of Chroy Svay CFI in Cambodia’s Koh Kong province.

“The bottom is a little wider and so it rides better in the waves.”

The new boat design was introduced by RFLP in Cambodia in order to address the lack of stability of the traditional model. Boat builders were trained in the new design. Nine wooden boats provided by RFLP to community fisheries for patrolling their waters were also built to the new design and were handed over in March 2012.

“If there are no waves we will be able to get at least 20 persons on board. The old style boats could carry just as many but we would feel very worried as it would rock so much. With the new design we are much more confident. The old style boats have sunk before when we were chasing illegal fishers although no one was hurt as another boat was with us.”

Mr Phiv Sun also highlighted how the new patrol boat would benefit the community’s patrolling activities.

“As our community fishing zone is big, illegal fishers come to operate here as they can get a better catch. Normally, we catch from 2-10 cases of illegal fishing a month with the close collaboration of the Fisheries

Administration from Koh Kong Cantonment. We really needed to have our own boat and monitoring tools to patrol better. We like that our boat has the donor and Fisheries Administration logos on it too as it gives us more authority to stop illegal fishers in our area.

“In the past we had to rent a boat for patrolling which cost around 20 USD a trip. Now we no longer need to. In addition, the engine on the new boat consumes very little fuel. This has helped us to reduce the cost of patrolling a lot.”

Another fisher commented that the new boat looked strong and that it had proper lights and a radio which was much better than a telephone and could be used more easily.



Mr Phiv Sun



Patrol boats provided by RFLP

Changing the safety culture in Sri Lanka

Manoja Liyanarachchi, Communications Assistant RFLP Sri Lanka

August 2012 - K.S. Justin, a 44-year-old fisher in Kalpitiya on Sri Lanka's northwest coast is alive today because of a life jacket provided to him by RFLP.

Justin was just ten years old when he first began to fish at sea. "Our father died when we were very small. My elder brothers went fishing and I joined them as a helper. They taught me how to swim and dive as well as how to handle a boat. When I was eighteen I took a loan and bought my own boat," said Justin.

Fishing at sea using an 18-foot boat with an outboard engine, Justin provides the sole source of income upon which his wife and three children rely upon.

However safety at sea has never been part of the culture for small-scale fishers in the area as Justin explains.

"Even though I have been a fisher for more than 30 years, I knew very little about life jackets and other safety equipment. There's no one to teach us. We practiced things that we had learnt from our elders or that we have learnt through experience."

To address the lack of knowledge on safety at sea, RFLP Sri Lanka carried out a training programme for more than 800 small-scale fishers from the Negombo, Chilaw and Puttalam areas. Training included first aid, firefighting, survival at sea and navigation while RFLP also distributed safety equipment including life rings, life jackets and first aid kits as well as 250 GPS devices and 35 VHF radios to participants.

"I learnt about life jackets for the



Mr K.S. Justin

first time during the RFLP training," recalls Justin. "The training has been very useful for fishers like us. I was lucky enough to receive a life jacket and other safety equipment which saved my life few months back."

"It was 29 of April this year and I went to sea with a young boy of 14 as there were no skilled fishers to accompany me. Although this was the rough season we go fishing as and when time permits. We were about 20 kilometers from the shore and the weather was getting worse and the waves were getting bigger. I was at the back of the boat wearing the life jacket and all of a sudden a big wave hit us and I fell into the water."

"The boy got scared and stopped the engine. I shouted that I was safe with the jacket and to bring the boat towards me. I can swim, yet it was difficult as I have back pain, am unfit and am not as strong

"I am glad many others have become interested when they found out a life jacket saved my life"

as I was when I was young. Strong winds had blown the boat about 20 meters away and as the boy was inexperienced it took some time for him to re-start the engine and come in search of me. However, I was safe and from this experience, I fully realize how important this life jacket can be to fishers like us."

"Every fisherman should wear one. I keep telling people how important they are and I am glad many others have become interested when they found out a life jacket saved my life."

Engine repair skills benefit Antero

Yessy Betty, RFLP Timor-Leste Communications Assistant

July 2012 - Antero Baptista (43) used to be a fisher. He lives in Maquili village, Atauro Island (16 nautical miles from Dili), with his wife and a daughter. Antero gave up fishing in 2006 when he decided to use his boat to take passengers between Atauro and Dili. His wife and daughter help out by keeping a small shop in their house.

In 2002, Antero received an outboard engine from the Timor-Leste government. The engine broke a few years later so he took it to Dili to repair it at a workshop.

"I had to go to Dili if my engine broke down, because I did not know how to fix it. I had to spend a lot of money for repairing the engine and also pay other expenses," he says.

To fix the engine in Dili, Antero had to go by boat and pay for the travel costs. After arriving in Dili he then had to spend money paying for a car to carry the engine to a workshop, the costs of repair and finally the cost of getting back to Atauro.

In June 2011, Antero participated in basic outboard engine maintenance training conducted by Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP).

During the training, Antero and 44 other fishers learnt how to start the engines, inspect the gear oil, overhaul the carburetor and crank case as well as other basic maintenance. Antero and his fellow fishers worked with RFLP's Safety at Sea Consultant Theresa Nao to repair 23 fishers' engines, including his own.

A year later, his engine is still in good condition.

"My engine still works well. Now I have the skill to maintain the engine and how to fix it if it's broken," he says.



Mr Antero Baptista

By maintaining the engine regularly, Antero has been able to save money. He does not need to stop working and pay to have it fixed at the workshop in Dili any more. With the money he has saved he is able to meet his family needs and also upgrade his boat.

"I bought a toolbox and a new outboard engine. The toolbox helps me to carry out maintenance while I use both the new engine and the old one in rotation," he says.

"Now I have the skill to maintain the engine and to fix it if it's broken."

In addition, he often helps fix other fisher's engines, and shares information and experiences with a group of fisher friends who also took part in the training with whom he maintains a friendly rivalry when it comes to fixing outboard engines.

Antero is looking forward to learning more about outboard engine maintenance, especially how to deal with more serious problems such as power unit damage and assembling the crank shaft. He also wants to save money to buy a bigger boat so he can carry more passengers and further improve his life.



RFLP's Safety at Sea Consultant Theresa Nao



Improving
post-harvest
practices

Om Adi overcomes challenges to become a catfish entrepreneur

Agoes Hekso, Graphics and Communications Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

March 2013 - "I have farmed catfish since November 2007. Back then I started with 100 seed (baby catfish) using my own capital. Those catfish made good money for my family," says Sola Gratia Ratu Edo, who is better known as 'Om Adi'.

Living in Tode Kisar Subdistrict of Kupang Municipality in Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur Province Om Adi has worked with the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP) to improve his catfish farming skills. He farms the fish in his backyard, in several purpose-built small ponds.

Om Adi's first encounter with RFLP came about by pure coincidence. He was helping build a house for an officer of the Marine Affairs Agency (DKP) in Kupang DKP. The officer found out that Om Adi was interested in catfish farming and asked him if he wanted to join the RFLP supported training.

"I decided by myself to go into the catfish business. Although my name was actually listed by DKP Kupang as a catfish farmer I had never received any assistance," he says.

In 2011 Om Adi took part in RFLP catfish farming training which helped increase his knowledge and skills. During the course he received expert tuition on artificial spawning, catfish seed nursing and feed management.

As part of the course he also visited a successful catfish farmer in East Java to see firsthand how these skills could be put to use. In addition, Om Adi received basic equipment from RFLP to support his catfish business such as a tarpaulin, water buckets, and catfish seed. He is now part of a small network of catfish



Om Adi takes care of his catfish seed

farmers who are all RFLP beneficiaries. This helps the farmers share experiences, both good and bad.

"I once bought 7,000 seed but it was a failure. They all died and I lost at least Rp 7 million (approx US\$720). That was a hard time and very stressful for me and my family. My wife was very disappointed and asked me to stop, but I explained to her that this kind of loss was a risk when doing this business. I was determined to breed more catfish and after that it went very well," explained Om Adi.

Following this failure, Om Adi continued to learn better catfish farming methods. Now he can sell at least 70 kg per month at around Rp 30,000/kg.

"I earn at least Rp 1 million a month from selling ready-to-eat catfish," he explains about his income.

Om Adi has become a catfish en-

trepreneur. He is now able to breed the catfish seeds by himself which he sells to other catfish farmers who want to start up in the business.

"I once bought 7,000 seed but it was a failure. They all died and I lost at least Rp 7 million (approx US\$720). That was a hard time and very stressful for me and my family."

In addition, Om Adi can provide further assistance to other catfish farmers by passing on his skills to build catfish ponds, breed seed, provide routine treatment, feed the fish, and market the end product.

Ice means income for Cambodian fishers

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Cambodia

April 2013 - "Before I had the ice box, most of my catch was spoiled and I could only sell short-bodied mackerel for about 500-800 Riels (approx 10-20 US cents) per kilo. Now I can sell them for up to 2,000-3,000 Riels (approx 50-75 US cents) per kilo. I feel so happy when I open the ice box and see the bright colour of the fish after it has been chilled," says Mr. Rem Mi, a small-scale fisher from Cambodia's Kam-pot Province.

In Cambodia, a large proportion of fish caught ends up as waste or in an unmarketable condition due to improper handling, transportation and processing.

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) has worked with coastal communities to improve handling and address the loss of income from fish and fishery products.

Some 900 fishers, traders, and processors (over 60 percent women) from 15 Community Fisheries (CFis) took part in training on fish handling, hygienic practices and chilling techniques. In addition, a trial on the use of basic equipment such as gutting knives, cleaning tables, gum boots, gloves, ice boxes and fish baskets was held in six CFis.

In all, twelve fishing boats and four landing sites were selected for the trial. One of the boat owners was 51-year-old Mr. Rem Mi a small-scale fisher from CFi Trapaing Ropov. Despite having fished for more than 30 years, Rem Mi had never once used ice or an ice box to chill his catch. Normally spending 10-12 hours at sea fishing, the deterioration of the fish he caught led to a considerable loss of income.

After being trained by RFLP, Rem Mi

was provided with equipment including an ice chest, rubber gloves, baskets and boots.

Thereafter he began investing around 2,000-3,000 Riels (50-75 US cents) each day to buy 7-10 kg of ice from a local ice plant to be used with the ice box.

According to Rem Mi his first day fishing with the ice box made him realize what a difference it could make to catch quality, with the fish still fresh and brightly colored when returning to shore.

He also put the other equipment to good use adding that, "When I first used gloves to remove fish from the nets, other fishers made jokes at me for being different from everyone else in the village. But after seeing that I could remove the fish faster and without cutting my hands, they started to copy me and are now using both ice boxes and gloves."

Mr. Dourng Proeung was another recipient of hygiene training from RFLP. A fisher from CFi Trapaing Ropov, he has started to use ice boxes, gloves and ice every time he goes fishing.

He told RFLP that, "I started using ice, ice boxes and gloves because I learned from the project that if I use all these materials I will not lose my catch. I attended most of the project's awareness raising activities and even though I was not selected for the trial, I bought ice boxes myself and use ice to chill the fish to keep them in good condition. Before, if I caught 300 kg I would lose at least 75 kg as the fish went bad because of insufficient ice, non-insulated ice boxes and not knowing how to chill the catch properly. Now if I catch 300 kg, I will lose no more than 10 kg."



Mr Rem Mi

Epa Lomi Ga: From employee to business owner

Agoes Hekso, Graphic and Information Assistant RFLP Indonesia

October 2012 - With his beard tied into a pony tail he looks different to most people in the city of Kupang, in Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur province. Yet despite his fierce appearance, Epa Lomi Ga is a hard worker who has found success through his determination to never give up learning new skills.

Originally from Sabu Island, Epa runs his own business making shredded and smoked fish (se'i ikan) in Kupang City. His processor group is called 'Sisuka', an abbreviation from Bahasa 'Semua Suka Makan Ikan' (Everybody loves to eat fish) and comprises three women and two men.

Epa started his business back in 2001 after resigning from his relative's business which also produced shredded fish. While working there he learned about how to make good quality shredded fish and was never too shy to ask for advice from those with more experience.

"Back then, I was only paid around Rp 75,000 (approx US\$ 8) per month. But that didn't stop me from learning. I never worried about the small salary as it was that knowledge that was important," said Epa.

Although Epa only graduated from vocational high school, he always liked to read books and take part in entrepreneurship training. He realized that success would need patience and determination.

"Patience is the key, at the same time I maintained the quality of my product. This was to make it different to others. The food business is still profitable because people still need food to eat. Besides, NTT Province has many advantages as it produces a lot of fish," said Epa.



Shredded fish producer Epa Lomi Ga

Epa came to RFLP's attention in February 2011 when he was identified as one of the area's most promising processors by the Marine Affairs Agency (DKP) of Kupang Municipality. As a result RFLP began to work with Epa to help further enhance his products.

"RFLP gave me training on fish-based food processing, product certification, and financial literacy," said Epa.



Better labels help Epa's products stand out

"I was helped by RFLP to develop my label and packaging. My products now look great and my customers like it."

With the assistance of RFLP, Epa developed a business proposal that highlighted the potential of his group's shredded fish and smoked fish fillet products. He then sent the proposal to state-owned companies that had Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.

"I finally managed to get a loan from PT Jasa Raharja (Indonesia Insurance Company) worth Rp 5 million (approx US\$500) for three years with only 0.1% interest per month. It has been six months now since I got the loan," he said.

Epa used the loan to develop his business and to meet raw material costs of each production run which stand at around Rp 1 million.

"I was helped by RFLP to develop my label and packaging. My products now look great and my customers like it. I sell the shredded fish for Rp 30,000 per pack and send it to stores and minimarkets around Kupang City," explained Epa.

From the sales Epa can generate revenue of around Rp 5 million a month. However despite his success he is continuing to innovate and is now developing a smoked fish product made of skipjack tuna.

Quality catch, quality sardine products

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Jonelo Sobreguel, national consultant RFLP Philippines

October 2012 - "We can produce good quality products if only we use quality fish raw materials!" asserted Dapitan City sardine processor Jocelyn Gaso.

"The freshness of fish really matters," she added.

Twenty-seven-year-old Jocelyn and husband Lemuel own and manage Gaso Food Products located at Barangay San Pedro, Dapitan City. They employ a work force of seven experienced bottled Spanish sardine production workers.

Jocelyn is one of the trainees of RFLP's post harvest component and took part in a month-long Training of Trainers session on Fisheries Post-Harvest and Marketing conducted from June to July 2011. Areas covered included fish processing technologies, good manufacturing practices (GMPs), hygiene and sanitation, fishery value-chain and improved marketing.

"Now, I have to instill in my workers the importance of sanitation. Even though I am a nurse by profession, I did not pay much attention to hygiene because I relied so much on my workers who are seasoned sardine plant workers from different processors in Dipolog City. For example, before I did not mind if my workers wore jewelry at work." Jocelyn narrated.

"But that has to change! The RFLP training reinforced what I also learned from European Union-supported training provided by BFAR. We were taught that wearing of personal accessories is not allowed when entering the workplace. Trimmed fingernails and proper hand washing are also very important practices before beginning work. Therefore a washing area is vital. I have installed one already both for hands and feet, which are pedal-operated."

The Gaso manager argued that maintenance and supervision of san-

itation practices among the workers is vital as some, from time to time, take short-cuts with regards to good manufacturing practices. For example, some come to work without aprons or hairnets while others bring dirty ones.

"Sanitation is very important. It is the backbone of the production process!"

At the fishing port Jocelyn now advises or warns fishers/dealers to clean their fishing boats to make sure that their fish catch is hygienic.

"I advise my fish dealers to place plastic mats or tarpaulins where they put the fresh fish rather than just let them lie on dirty and soiled cement floors as most fishers do," she said. Because of her advocacy, at least for some of her fishers, there have been changes in their practices in maintaining the cleanliness of their fish catch.

"Sanitation is very important. It is the backbone of the production process!" stressed Jocelyn. She maintains, "Selection of good raw materials especially fish is another important consideration in production. These are very important lessons I learned from RFLP," she added.

"Even if I have to go without sleep I will do so to make the business grow. I have started it from scratch and now it has grown. I am thankful to RFLP to have provided me the knowledge for ways to improve the production," concluded Jocelyn.



Jocelyn poses with some of her sardine products

More ice means more money for Timorese fishers

Steve Needham, RFLP Information Officer and Abrani Manuel, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Timor-Leste

December 2011 - "In the past if we did not sell the fish we caught straight away we would need to dry it. Then we would have to sell it for less," said Timorese fisher Joao Desi Bao.

"Now we have ice we can keep it in a much better condition. The price we receive is the same as for fresh fish and our income has increased."

Thirty-seven year old Joao has spent all his life in Atabae, some two and a half hours drive from Timor-Leste's capital city, Dili.

With its golden sands and children playing happily in crystal clear seas life in Atabae appears idyllic. However for fishers such as Joao life as small-scale fishers can be precarious. Any additional income to be made from the daily trips in small outrigger-canoes fishing for sardines or flying fish can make a big difference.

With no electricity Atabae fishers have no way to make the ice that would help preserve their catch and allow them to sell it for a slightly higher price. As a result they either sell their catch to traders who wait on the beach for fishers to return or string it up in the hot sun by the side of the road, waiting for a buyer.

A pilot project set up by RFLP in collaboration with the National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture has seen ice produced in Dili delivered to a number of communities in Baucau and Bobonaro districts, helping fishers such as Joao.

"I go out to sea at four in the morning but sometimes cannot catch anything and so have to stay out all day, and only return in the evening. By that time the middle-trader has gone home," explains Joao.

"If there are no traders waiting to buy our catch we have to keep it ourselves. Without any ice it would not be in a good condition when the middle-trader came the following morning. We therefore have to dry it and sell it for less."

The difference in price can be significant. Ten fresh flying fish go for US\$1 however it takes twice as many dried fish to bring in the same amount of cash, and that doesn't include the time and effort needed to process them.

The extra income Joao is receiving from the sale of more fresh fish goes towards family needs and school expenses for his children. It also helps Joao pay back his loan to micro-finance provider Moris Rasik with which he has opened a small kiosk in the village to sell coffee, sugar and other essentials as well as purchased a small generator to run the TV and other household appliances.

Note: Electrification of Timor-Leste's north coast was completed in late 2012 and in June 2013 RFLP installed four ice making machines at community fish landing centres.



Joao Desi Bao

"Now we have ice we can keep it in a much better condition. The price we receive is the same as for fresh fish and our income has increased."



An ice machine installed by RFLP in operation

Once a housewife, now an agent of change

Agoes Hekso, Graphics and Information Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

July 2012 - "I had the intention that all the women in my neighborhood could participate in my production process and make some money," said Mama Nurhayati.

Nurhayati Kalurung was once an everyday housewife in the Wetabua Sub-district of Alor in Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur province. However her big dreams and determination to build a better life have made her well known in her neighborhood.

A graduate with two children, Nurhayati works as a civil servant. Although sometimes her civil servant's salary isn't enough to pay for the family's needs or for the children's school fees, her husband's income as a longshoreman helps support the family.

Mama Nurhayati realized that there were many fish in the area and that she could harness the potential of this resource to improve the situation of her family and others in the community.

As a result, in 2001 she formed the Sartika fish processors group producing fish balls.

There are six women members in the group. Two are fish traders who

help a lot since they can provide cheap fish for the raw ingredients while also acting as a marketing channel. A room in Nurhayati's house doubles as a 'small factory' where the members gather to carry out the production process.

Nurhayati's group came to the attention of RFLP in 2011 as part of its strategy to enhance and add value to the production of small groups processing fisheries products. RFLP sought to boost incomes of producer groups in coastal communities and give them the confidence to develop their own products.

The group received both training and basic tools from RFLP including a freezer, stove, blender, basins and a dust bin. They were taught better hygienic production techniques as well as how to make two new

"I'm very glad that now the women in my neighborhood now gossip less and are able to be more productive."

products, jerked and shredded fish (abon ikan). RFLP also introduced improved packaging for the shredded fish product. Subsequently the products were registered and officially acknowledged by the Provincial BPPOM (Indonesian Food and Drug Control Agency).

The products are sold in the Alor area, using a consignment method. This sees items placed in offices, small shops and stalls and the group being paid at the end of the month for what is sold. They don't sell outside Alor since they feel it is already too hard for them to fulfill local customer demands.

All products are priced at Rp 20,000 and the group sells approximately 100 per month. This gives them a profit of around Rp 270,000 (approx US\$ 27). After deducting money for the next production run the profit is divided amongst the group. It is mainly used for daily needs for the children such as transport to and from school.

"I'm very glad that now the women in my neighborhood now gossip less and are able to be more productive. The family burden had been reduced since they can contribute to family income, along with their husbands," she said.



Nurhayati Kalurung

Direct marketing boosts sales for Quang Nam Fisheries Association

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

July 2012 - A Fisheries Association in Viet Nam's Quang Nam province has carried out direct marketing activities to boost awareness and sales of its products for the very first time and received a number of orders as a result.

RFLP supported the establishment of Binh Minh Commune Fisheries Association (FA) in 2011 and has helped build the capacity of the FA through operational training and financial assistance.

In order to start generating income for its members, the FA is seeking to directly market local fisheries products to potential new customers. This process was facilitated by staff from Quang Nam Department for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Quality Assurance (Sub-NAFIQUAD) in close collaboration with RFLP.

The fishers and traders in Binh Minh commune were very excited about the prospect of this new business approach.

With assistance from RFLP and NAFIQUAD, they approached retailers at business matching events held in mountainous districts of Hiep Phuoc, Phuoc Son and Nong Son in Quang Nam. In addition they also introduced their products to representatives of the Metro Cash & Carry, a large wholesaler.

Immediately after the product promotion took place six new orders were received from customers in the mountainous district. In addition, the Metro Cash & Carry agreed to appraise the products further.



Binh Minh Fisheries Association members present their products

Immediately after the product promotion took place six new orders were received from customers in the mountainous district.

More business relationships are expected to be established in the future as the FA members now have a better idea of what their potential clients want.

Mr. Tran Bon, Vice-Head of Quang Nam Sub-NAFIQUAD, commented, "This is the very first time direct marketing has been conducted by a community group. As a result, we hope to see higher profits to go to

the communities as they now have more direct contacts with potential customers. As a government technical and management agency, we are pleased to see this trade promotion activity help identify more outlets for local products."

On behalf of RFLP, Mr. Nguyen Thai Minh pointed out that, "While local communities are expert processors, they have problems making their products known outside of traditional customers. With the marketing skills learned through this process, the communities can increase both sales volume and profit margin. This is significant, as FA members have committed to limit capture fisheries for resource protection."

'Mama Fons' products go national

Akhmad Rikhun, national consultant RFLP Indonesia

October 2012 - Crunchy seaweed snacks produced with RFLP support by a group in Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province are set to debut on the national stage as part of a national branding programme.

Shinta Lona, 41, or 'Mama Fons' as she is commonly known comes from Sulamu Village, Kupang District. Besides fishing, seaweed farming is a major livelihood activity in the village and Shinta's family like most others relied heavily on income from her husband's work as a seaweed farmer.

However, Shinta was also making crunchy seaweed snacks (pillus) for sale and over the last two years has worked closely with RFLP to improve all aspects of her products.

"My first encounter with RFLP was a turning point for me. Since then my life has changed significantly," said Shinta.

Pillus is made from processed seaweed, flour and other ingredients. With RFLP assistance, Shinta learned about product hygiene, better packaging and marketing while also encouraging women in her village to form a processor group and urging her fellow seaweed farmers to produce higher quality seaweed.

"I also joined an exposure visit to a successful processor in Java to learn new knowledge about processing seaweed. This was facilitated by RFLP," explain Shinta.

Shinta is now reaping the benefits of her hard work as her seaweed pillus under the 'Mama Fons' brand has been chosen to be promoted by the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries at the national level through the 'national branding for fisheries product' programme. This programme promotes leading fisheries products from provinces to the network of retail giants Carrefour, Alfamart and Alfamidi.

"My first encounter with RFLP was a turning point for me. Since then my life has changed significantly."

These products will be sold under a new brand called 'Freeze and Fresh'.

As part of the programme the products will be improved further. They will be sold in attractive, modern packaging, laboratory tested to verify safety and nutritional content as well as provided with a barcode and Halal certificate.

A key challenge for Shinta and her group will be to produce the 200 kg of seaweed pillus needed every two weeks for delivery to the national retail chains. Shinta and four other women were previously producing a maximum of 10 kg per week which they sold for Rp 15,000 per pack (US\$ 1.5).

To boost production, the group is seeking to obtain loans from microfinance institutions and will also be given additional equipment such as a pillus machine by RFLP. In addition, Shinta plans to recruit 20 more workers to join her group.

"I am proud that my products will be widely marketed in large cities. This product used to be packaged in simple plastic bags. Now it looks nice and is better quality following the assistance and support of RFLP and DKP. I also hope that the level of income for my village is increased by this programme," said Shinta.



Shinta Lona, better known as 'Mama Fons'

Liloy shrimp paste producers turn up the pressure

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Philippines

November 2011 - "It is our great joy that RFLP gave us the capital we needed so we can boost our *alamang* (shrimp paste) project", declared 53-year-old Monica Soria, President of Barangay Villa Sudiactal Rural Improvement Club (RIC) Women's Association in Liloy town, Zamboanga del Norte.

On 9-11 November 2011, RFLP turned over post-harvest and food processing equipment including a freezer, pressure cookers, food processor, heavy-duty burner stove with 50-kg LPG tank, weighing scales, and assorted kitchen utensils. In addition the village organization received a set of raw materials, 700 glass jars and packaging supplies.

Training provided by RFLP saw the women learn new techniques to process shrimp paste by using pressure cookers. This ensures that finished products are safe to eat unlike the previous methods used which saw sauteed paste packed immediately into glass jars.

Formed in the 1980s through the local Social Service and Development office in the municipality, this women's group transformed into a Rural Improvement Club in 1998 and registered with the government's Labor and Employment department with 25 members.

Soria explains that her group has twice previously received training on shrimp paste production. The first was provided by the Department of Trade and Industry and the second through a local foundation based in Davao City. However they did not sell enough shrimp paste to roll the profits into more production.



"This project failed to take off as an organizational endeavour as we didn't have enough funds. Each member could not afford to put up capital," she said.

"But on our own three of us: Dionesia Rebosa, Arlene Balucos and myself decided to make shrimp paste at home. Fortunately, later on, our *alamang* paste became popular through endorsements by local government officials and employees and eventually by word of mouth. There were times we were worried how to cope up with huge orders-hundreds of bottles of shrimp paste-from local and provincial government contacts. Our products were sent to Pagadian, Cebu, Manila, Zamboanga and other areas during regional or provincial trade fairs or festivals for showcasing as a product from Zamboanga del Norte. This product, in fact, has been displayed in some government offices in the Province," Soria explained.

"We were introduced to using pressure cookers to lengthen the shelf life of the shrimp paste."

Soria was endorsed by the Municipal Agriculture Office to participate in RFLP's post-harvest training in June and July this year where she gained new knowledge and skills in fish food processing. One of these was improved shrimp paste processing through pressure cooking.

"We were introduced to using pressure cookers to lengthen the shelf life of the shrimp paste. But at home, I don't have these so I improvised. I used boiling pots (*kaldero*) to pressure cook the bottled *alamang*. It is tasty! The spices get really cooked and the ingredients are mixed well," Soria declared.

Sabina's story: Fish balls for a better life

Abrani Manuel, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Timor-Leste

December 2011 - A resident of Timor-Leste's Atauro Island Mrs. Sabina Ximenes lives the life of a normal busy housewife. She looks after the house and her four young children, taking them to school every morning and picking them up in the afternoon. Her husband is a secondary school teacher earning just enough to feed the whole family. To supplement the family income Sabina also sells dried fish in the local market every Saturday. However she has still found time to set up a successful business producing and selling fish products, a business that is changing her family's life.

Sabina decided to start her own business making fish balls and dried-fish after attending training covering basic hygiene and simple processing techniques for fishery products organized by RFLP and the National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture in June 2011.

With support from her husband, who helped by making a grinder from local materials because they could not afford to buy a proper one, Sabina has managed six production cycles and made around US\$40 net profit. She also used bookkeeping skills passed on by her husband to control costs and keep track of income.

"I used \$50 from my savings to start this business. I have sold fish balls and dried fish six times now during market days and have earned a total profit of around \$40. I am very happy about this business because it is very helpful to me and my family," said Sabina.

With this new and steady source of income, she has been able to buy school uniforms and new shoes for the kids and can also afford more household necessities.

"Our life is getting better," she says. Sabina plans to continue and even expand her business in Atauro because currently there are no competitors with very few people on Atauro Island having the skills to make fish balls. Because of the current lack of transportation between Atauro and Dili Sabina has no plan to expand to the larger Dili market. However, Atauro Island is becoming a popular tourist destination and she is looking forward to having more tourists visit Atauro and buying her products.

RFLP will also promote Sabina's story to other communities in Timor-Leste as an example of what can be achieved through dedication and the willingness to try something new.



Sabina fillets fish for the fish balls

Sabina now has more courage and confidence in herself and her family's prospects.



'Look no maggots!': improved fish sauce methods adopted in Quang Tri

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

November 2012 – "Please come in! There's no bad odour at all, although I have more than 10 tanks of fish sauce in my house," said Ms Le Thi Hue from Hai Khe Commune, in Viet Nam's Quang Tri province.

Opening one of the tanks, a good smell of fish sauce in the early stage of fermentation fills the air. "Take a look, no maggots, you see! Totally different from the traditional method where the surface would be covered with a layer of maggots."

Growing up in a fishing community, Le Thi Hue has been passionate about making fish sauce for over 15 years. Along with her husband, a small-scale fisher, she visited and tried to learn techniques from famous producers in neighbouring provinces.

Yet Ms Hue is especially excited about her experiment with the "filtration" method of producing fish sauce which has been supported by RFLP. While the filter system employs a similar fermentation process to the traditional method, it can deliver a better quality product (more hygienic, food safe, consistency of product quality and higher in protein content) and also allows easy scaling up of production volumes.

At the base of the tank, a special filter is constructed using various materials such as gravel or rice husks that lead to a drain-off tap. As fermentation proceeds, the liquid is drained off daily and poured back into the top of the tank. This allows metabolites such as ammonia to blow off more effectively than would be achieved through stirring in the traditional vase system. These metabolites are the cause of bad odours and flavours in fish sauce.

Meanwhile, by strictly following methods introduced by the RFLP consultant, especially to use strong salt solution to clean the upper part of container regularly there will be no maggots at all.

Although fish sauce making is a traditional craft, it has often been an ineffective means of generating income. Key problems include the labour intensive nature of the business, low/irregular output volumes, inconsistent product quality and lack of brand name products, especially when attempting to penetrate markets in other provinces.

Rather than provide support on an individual basis, RFLP helped set up six groups to facilitate shared learning and undertake a collective business among the members. For example in Hai Khe Commune, Ms Hue has been joined by five other women with a shared interest in making fish sauce.

Practical training was given on the better production method involving the filtration system. In order to encourage trainees to put these into practice, new tanks, fish and salt were also provided. An experienced consultant worked closely with these groups to give hands-on support especially during the first stages of implementation, followed this up with regular visits and responded to urgent questions when needed.

It is planned that the fish sauce will be bottled for sale during the Lunar New Year Holiday when people are willing to buy larger volumes than usual as fish sauce is an important ingredient in many traditional dishes.



Ms Le Thi Hue

"Take a look, no maggots, you see! Totally different from the traditional method where the surface would be covered with a layer of maggots."

To boost sales, support is also being provided with regards to marketing. Participants have been taught basic principles of marketing and small business management. They will also be assisted with regards to bottling techniques and labeling while for the first time, this local product will also be registered.

Kupang processor group picks up first prize

Agoes Hekso, Graphics and Information Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

October 2012 – “My product is now better quality, lasts longer and costs me less to make,” says Dortia Sonia Mbura, a 53-year-old widow from Kupang City in Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara Timur province.

The quality of the fish snack products made by Dortia or Bu Dorce as she is known and the rest of her ‘Setia Kawan’ group was recognized when they took first place in a contest recognizing Small and Medium Enterprises producing fish and seaweed-based products.

The contest was organized by the Marine and Fisheries Agency (DKP) of Nusa Tenggara Timur to mark Indonesia’s Independence Day.

The Setia Kawan group comprises ten women including Bu Dorce. The women are from different backgrounds such as housewives, weavers, stall owners, and small traders.

“I was producing snacks to earn some money to fulfill my daily needs. I produced various types of *zweiback* and sold them to stores, friends and family. I managed to produce 30 packs in a week and sold them for Rp 12,500 (just over US\$ 1) per pack,” Bu Dorce said.

Bu Dorce was also producing *abon ikan* (shredded fish), however although she felt it could be improved she had little knowledge of how to do so. Sometimes she used too much oil resulting in more expense and a low quality product.

“The problem ended when RFLP gave me training (in June 2011). I learned about the cold chain system, how to pick good quality fish, working hygienically, and better ways to produce shredded fish with effective processing practices. My product is

now better quality, lasts longer and costs me less to make,” says Bu Dorce.

In addition to training Bu Dorce and the members of the Setia Kawan group, RFLP provided basic equipment including a sealer, basins, stove, dustbin, hand gloves, cleaning tools, cutting boards and knives. RFLP also helped Bu Dorce and the group with improved packaging and labeling for her products.

“My product is now better quality, lasts longer and costs me less to make.”

Bu Dorce and her group are now able to produce as much as 15 kg of shredded fish while previously they produced only around 5 kg. They also produce about 3 kg of jerked fish (*dendeng ikan*) and some 5 kg of fish sticks (*stik ikan*) a week.

Profits are shared equally amongst members who have joined the production run by contributing to the initial costs. The group now makes a profit of around Rp1–1.5 million a week compared to Rp 500,000 to 750,000 (approx US\$ 150) previously.

In Bu Dorce’s case the income proved useful to support her family needs.

“I used the money to pay for my children’s college tuition. Thank God that all three of them have now graduated and already got jobs,” she says.

“Usually I place my product in gift shops, hotels or stores. I wish I could have a bigger market and more places to sell my products. I also wish to have more training because I still want to be more creative,” said Bu Dorce on her future hopes and challenges.



Bu Dorce proudly poses with her group's trophy

RFLP trainee teaches boss new recipes

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

April 2012 - “In February we harvested lots of shrimp but could not dry them due to unfavourable weather. As usual, we had to ferment them using salt. But the buyers didn’t show up!” narrated Manuel Dionaldo, 63, of Barangay Talinga, Leon Postigo, in the Philippines’ Zamboanga del Norte province.

“Charita suggested, ‘Manong¹, why don’t we try making *bagoong alamang* (sautéed shrimp paste). I can teach you. I was trained by RFLP in Dipolog City for almost a month in different fish processing techniques’. We were surprised when we tasted it. It was yummy!” Manuel said.

So the Dionaldos decided to give making bottled sautéed shrimp paste a try and it is now a new addition to the products made by this family enterprise.

“The people who have tasted it kept on coming!”

Charita is one of the graduates of RFLP’s Trainers’ Training on Post-Harvest Fisheries conducted between June to July and September 2011. Participants were taught various fish processing techniques by an international consultant such as bottled pickled sardines; fish fermentation and fish sauce making; as well as high-value processed products like fish balls, tempura, spicy fried anchovy, fish nugget, and bottled sautéed shrimp paste, among others. They also learned the proper methods of fish handling, personal hygiene and sanitation, good manufacturing practices, and other food safety practices.



Manuel Dionaldo and family members Roselyn and husband Kennard with Charita Omilig standing at the back.

RFLP National Consultant on Post-Harvest Jonelo Sobreguel described Charita positively. “She is hardworking, diligent and resolute in what she does. With constant guidance and mentoring and with the help of handy learning kits, Charita has become a good barangay extension trainer on post-harvest fisheries,” he explained.

“We started cooking this new product in February. Manong Manuel released Php 10,000 (approx US\$ 235) as initial capital. So I accompanied him to the city and bought utensils, bottles, caps, and other del raw materials,” Charita narrated.

“I taught them everything I learned from the training. Things like the proper ways to prepare food to ensure a hygienic and safer food product. I also introduced the wearing of hairnets, aprons, towels, and masks and proper hand washing,” Charita said.

She also taught the family team to use food grade stainless utensils instead of aluminum. In the absence of pressure cookers, she improvised the use of cauldron pots boiling for two hours to sterilize the final product after capping. This prevents the product spoiling.

With 45 kilos of fermented shrimp, the team produced about 300 bottles. Selling price is at Php 65 with Php 5 as seller’s commission.

“I told Charita, with His providence, this would bring a great improvement to our lot when successful,” declared Manuel.

Roselyn Dionaldo, Manuel’s daughter who acts as a production team leader said, “We are hopeful this business will succeed. So far, everything has turned out good. The people who have tasted it kept on coming!”

¹ A name used in reverence for elderly men.

Cool boxes help Rote fish traders deliver better quality fish

August 2012 - Rote Ndao District is located on Rote Island, in Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timor (NTT) province. The people in this area rely on farming, animal husbandry, and of course fisheries.

“I usually depart from home at 5.00 AM and get back at 11.00 AM. However if need be I can still sell the fish at 2.00 PM as they are usually still in good condition because of the cool box”



A trader with the new design cool boxes

Paulus Giri, 37, and Andrias Leuwana, 60, are two Rote fish traders. Using their motorcycles they sell *ikan nipi* (barred garfish) to the scattered communities in the district. Buying the fish first thing in the morning from fishers, they store it, and then sell it.

“We were using jerry cans that were fixed to both the left and right sides of our motorcycles. After buying the fish from the fish market, we stored it in a Styrofoam box, piled on ice to preserve it, then put it in the jerry cans and went to sell it,” said Paulus.

“It is a long way from the fish market to the city and it would take some two hours just to transport the fish before it could be sold. We therefore needed to find a better and more effective way to transport

the fish without the quality being impacted,” said Akhmad Rikun, National Consultant of RFLP for Post-Harvest and Marketing.

Whilst travelling, the traders had problems preserving the fish in good condition. The fish were sometimes exposed to the sun and wind for too long, making the ice melt faster. With insufficient ice the quality of the fish would degrade. And no

customers would buy fish if they were poor quality.

“I usually sell fish to 6-7 different villages in one day. That means I have to travel for more than 50 kilometres. The jerry can was not a good way to preserve the fish,” said Paulus.

RFLP identified this problem and sought to help the fish traders. After a series of assessments, it was decided to help by providing purpose built cool boxes for their motorcycles, an innovation developed by RFLP. Eighteen sets were handed over to traders in December 2011, with recipients also receiving training on better hygiene and sanitation practices.

“Now we don't need to move the fish two times. We simply clean the fish, add some ice and put it in the cool box. After that, we are ready to sell it,” said Andrias. The cool boxes also allow the traders to carry more fish as Paulus explains.

“In the jerry can, we could load 500-600 fish and made around Rp 300,000-400,000 (approx US\$ 30-40) per day. Now we can load up to 1,000 fish and make some Rp. 500,000-600,000 per day,” he says.

“I usually depart from home at 5.00 AM and get back at 11.00 AM. However if need be I can still sell the fish at 2.00 PM as they are usually still in good condition because of the cool box. In addition, I previously spent Rp 10,000 for ice, but now I only spend Rp 5,000. So basically I can make more profit,” Paulus added.

Both Paulus and Andrias spend the extra income on their daily needs. Moreover, Andrias stated that his children were now able to finish their studies as a result of selling more fish.

More food, safer food: Katipunan women ramp up sautéed shrimp paste production

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with input from Jonelo T. Sobreguel
RFLP Philippines Post-Harvest and Marketing Specialist

December 2011 - She may be small and thin, but 50-year-old Mercedita Laput, doesn't lack for hope, motivation and dedication.

President of the New Tambo Rural Improvement Club Women's Association in Katipunan town in the Philippines' Zamboanga del Norte province, Mercedita took part in post-harvest training organized by RFLP in July 2011. When asked how she had put the training to use her answer was emphatic.

"I applied the technology I learned from the training and our *bagoong alamang* (sautéed shrimp paste) has now improved!"

With a current membership of 28, this all-women association has been processing *bagoong alamang* for about two years now, albeit in small quantities.

"I don't want to keep the knowledge with me. I want to share this

to my colleagues so everyone can work and earn income no matter how small," she added.

Mercedita has passed on the skills she learned to her group. These include techniques to improve the mixture, better selection of shrimp paste raw material and ingredients, as well as proper hygiene and sanitation in food processing.

"There were 12 of us who started this livelihood project in 2009 with a capital of Php 1,440. Each one put up a share of Php 100 (approx US\$2.5)," she said.

With that amount, they were able to produce around 100 packs of sautéed shrimp paste per month.

"We did not have clear measurements to mix our ingredients before. It was all *mata-mata* (estimates)," Mercy narrated. She claimed that the taste has improved a lot after proper mixture ratios were applied.

"After the RFLP training, our ingredients are properly measured. The taste has improved! I think it is also because we are using corn oil for sautéing. Before, we used any ordinary coconut oil. Now, we see to it we use corn oil," she added.

"We also have to make sure that the saltiness of the fermented shrimp is just enough. Hence buying from a permanent source-a *suki-is* important," Mercy discussed. She also declared they have changed their packaging-from simple cellophane plastics before to disposable plastic cups. She plans to bottle their products so they can put them on display in shops.

"We did not have clear measurements to mix our ingredients before. It was all *mata-mata* (estimates)."

According to her, their sales have increased because of the improved taste. Mercedita also impressed how she has taught her companions about proper hygiene and sanitation. "I strictly impose on my members the use of aprons, hair nets and masks. They are now part of the production process. We learned that the major cause of food poisoning comes from poor personal hygiene, particularly a lack of proper hand washing," she declared.

Other members of the group also expressed that they had high hopes for the 'business'. All agreed that the project had helped them, providing food for the kids as well as additional income.



Community members learn better shrimp paste processing skills

Aerators and cool boxes boost income for Viet Nam fishers

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

June 2012 - Mr. Hoang Huu Due, a fisher from Phong Hai commune, was extra happy that morning in early June. Although the catch was small with only five kilos of blue swimming crab and two kilos of squid, he earned a profit of US\$25 which was higher than most other fishers and double what he would usually earn for the same catch.

"It's their first trip to the sea with me and I was able to keep my catch alive and fresh," he said with a broad smile, pointing at the new plastic cool boxes and aerators unloaded from his small vessel. With some quick mental calculation, he confidently claimed that he could earn an additional amount of US\$200 from ten fishing trips per month.

Mr. Due is one among fifty fishers in Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam who were provided with this basic equipment for handling fish on-board. They were also trained on how to preserve and handle their catch properly by experts from the Provincial Sub-Department of Fisheries Quality Assurance (Sub-NAFIQUAD). The provision of both the equipment and training was supported by RFLP.

A workshop was held in Hue on 26 June to share experiences of how the assistance had proven useful to communities. Taking part were technical staff from Sub-NAFIQUAD, representatives of the district and communes, fishers and their wives.

It was noted that without the equipment, the mortality rate of high-value crabs was up to 50 percent.

"Before, we just left our catch in the vessel hull with sea water and



An aerator and cool box provided by RFLP

were extremely disappointed to see that many crabs had died as traders paid a very low price for these. Now thanks to the oxygen aerator that we bring along and use as instructed, we can keep up to 80 percent of the crabs alive. Moreover, we can wait for each other at the landing site to gather our catch and sell it in bulk. This gives us better negotiation power, rather than selling individually at the price decided by the traders," added Mr. Ho Thien.

Mr. Ho Dang Thi pointed out another reason why he was happy, "Not only do we now earn more money from the same quantity of catch, but our customers can enjoy fresh and safe products. We are also practising food safety, aren't we?"

Mr. Nguyen Van Nuoi, the Vice-Chair of Phong Hai Commune People's Committee, emphasized "As the basic equipment is affordable by most of the fishers, the successful pilot should motivate the rest of the communities to take up these preservation practices."

Meanwhile, Mr. Hoang Ngoc Viet, Head of Fisheries Department, agreed with these sentiments.

"I wish to see the day when all the small-scale fishers in the Central coastal provinces of Viet Nam are equipped with proper preservation tools and skills. This successful pilot by RFLP is contributing to the government's policy on reducing post-harvest loss. The significance lies in its pro-poor aspect: most of our inshore fishers are poor. Better preservation makes up for the declining stock, helping to reduce poverty."

"Not only do we now earn more money from the same quantity of catch, but our customers can enjoy fresh and safe products."

RFLP's sweet-and-spicy anchovies recipe a hit

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Philippines

July 2012 - "After we presented the product in Dipolog City, people who tasted the sweet and spicy *dilis* (anchovies) kept on asking us where to buy it," said Kathryn Lim, Tita Rosa Food Products' general manager and a graduate of a month-long RFLP-organized training on fisheries post-harvest processing.

Quality assurance supervisor Daisy Medija, another RFLP trainee, added, "We were surprised there was a repeat order!"

Both Kathryn and Daisy agreed to venture into producing deep fried sweet and spicy anchovies. "The recipe RFLP introduced is so easy, the product is unique and very tasty, we thought why not try and sell it!" Kathryn said.

In August 2011 following the RFLP training, Daisy and Kathryn made a test run of the new product. Using left over plastic pouches and an unused band sealer in the plant, they cooked nine kilograms of dried anchovies bought from neighbouring Pagadian City in Zamboanga del Sur province.

"They must be good! Employees of the Rural Bank of President Roxas, Tita Rosa Food Products' sister company, kept on asking for more. People from the provincial governor's office who have tasted it also ordered more!" said Kathryn.

And so Tita Rosa Food Products finally launched the sweet and spicy anchovies in March 2012. Spicy *Dilis* is now another regular product from the firm and is sold at Php 30 per pack (approx US\$0.65).

Tita Rosa Food Products, Inc., a family-owned medium-scale corporation, was founded by the late Mrs.

Rosa Lim in 2008. Its processing plant is located in Barangay Langatian in Roxas town, Zamboanga del Norte with 15-30 line workers operating on a production basis depending on the season and volume of supply. Most of its food handlers are wives of fishers.

Bottled Spanish sardines and its many variants is the main product of Tita Rosa. Its fish sardine (*Sardinella lemuru*) raw materials come from Barangay Pasil in Roxas during peak seasons from March to October.

The plant is a Philippine FDA approved facility, HACCP compliant since 2008 and certified Halal by the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines. It is currently completing its requirements for registration with US FDA. It owns a liquid quick freeze machine, mechanical dryer, a boiler and a retort.

RFLP National Consultant Jonelo Sobreguel explained the rationale for working with SMEs.

"One of our aims in introducing fisheries post-harvest processing technologies to small- and medium-scale processors and to encourage them in value addition is to address production issues during lean seasons especially of bottled sardines which is a major income earner of both companies and their employees in Zamboanga del Norte," he said.

"As firms venture into other processed fish food products and diversify product lines year round, labor demand remains absorbed thereby



Tita Rosa's Daisy Medija (centre) on the frontline during the RFLP's post-harvest training in Dipolog City

"The recipe RFLP introduced is so easy, the product is unique and very tasty, we thought why not try and sell it!"

creating almost permanent decent jobs. In addition, the production capacities of plant facilities and equipment are continuously utilized and optimized," he added.

Tita Rosa's General Manager told RFLP, though, of one major constraint currently faced with the production of spicy *dilis*: the continuous and accessible raw material supply of dried anchovies or *bulinao*.

"The dried anchovies suitable for the product are uncommon in Zamboanga del Norte; we need to purchase them from neighbouring Pagadian City or Zamboanga City to ensure high quality," explained Kathryn.

Dicayas fisher-wives take up tempura business

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

August 2012 - “Moasenso na gyud mi ani, Sir! (This will make us rich!), giggled Ella Dael, Chair of Dicayas Rural Improvement Club (RIC) Board of Directors.

“The good thing is we can now help our husbands. We will no longer keep asking for money from their earnings and can now shell out from our own pockets for whatever household needs we have!” Shirnabie Omictin, President of the RIC explained.

Officers and members of Dicayas RIC told RFLP recently that their fish tempura business is a great help to augment incomes of their fisher-husbands. It provides them the opportunity to earn their own income and not solely rely on their partners.

The 27-member Dicayas Rural Improvement Club (RIC) is a recipient group of the Department of Labor and Employment’s (DOLE) Nego-Kart Project (negosyo sa kariton, business on a cart) in partnership with the city government of Dipol-

og. These women are housewives, their husbands being small-scale fishers or workers on fishing boats operating in the province.

RFLP assisted the group by providing skills training on Processing of Fish Value-Added Products using surimi technology such as fish tempura, fish balls, kikiam, and fish burger/patty, among others.

The skills were then passed on at the barangay village level so that more members could learn them. With working capital of Php 300 (US\$7.32) lent by an advisor to Dicayas RIC, who works for the city government, plus the contributions of members—each pays a one-time membership fee of Php 10 and monthly dues of Php 5—the group was able to boost its capital from the profit they gained from the initial production run.

Since April, the group has completed four production runs. Processing of surimi takes place at one time and involves all the members. This

Selling the products is not a problem as customers keep on coming. They even complain that the group takes too long to cook and sell the products during mornings.

is done in houses of members who have good, potable water sources. Cooked fish tempura is sold in the neighborhood at Php 3 each. Selling the products is not a problem as customers keep on coming. They even complain that the group takes too long to cook and sell the products during mornings.

The fish tempura recipe taught by RFLP is nutritious. To ensure cleanliness and food safety as taught by RFLP, women processors practice proper hygiene measures such as washing hands properly, taking off jewelry, the use of hairnets and aprons, etc.

Profits are shared each day so that earnings can be used for household and personal needs - laundry soap, a kilo of rice, cooking ingredients (salt, oil, condiments) and other household items. The women declared they can receive at least Php 35 per person weekly. For every production team, the association gets one share of the day’s profit. The association’s share is used to maintain the cart and stove. The daily profit sharing also provides husbands with evidence that their wives are not wasting their time participating in this livelihood project.



Members of the Dicayas Rural Improvement Club with their cart

Engine training gives Leonardo confidence for the future

Steve Needham, RFLP Information Officer

December 2011 - Having fished all his adult life in Timor-Leste's rich waters, Leonardo Barbosa has long been able to carry out basic maintenance on the Yamaha out-board engine of his fishing boat.

However since taking part in engine maintenance training offered by RFLP, Leonardo's skills and ambitions have taken a big step forward.

"I already had some engine skills and could do basic maintenance," explains the chief of Tibor village in Liquica District, some 20 minutes drive from Dili. "But after the training I have become much more confident in how to fix them."

Leonardo already knew RFLP's engine specialist and trainer Teresa Nao and was enthusiastic to attend the training session she held to learn more.

A reliable engine is vital to Leonardo and his group of fishers. Going out to sea every couple of days, they can go far enough to catch a significant haul of fish that provides the group with a healthy income. "With an engine we can go much further out while a canoe (with no engine) you cannot go far at all," he explains.

"Even if my engine broke down at sea I would now be confident to fix it," he says.

However Leonardo wants to put his engine skills to more use than just fishing. He would like to open a workshop where other fishers can come to have their engines fixed. He has a plan and the money and is just looking for the right premises.

"I am now ready to help fix engines in Liquica and also around the coun-



Leonardo Barbosa

"Even if my engine broke down at sea I would now be confident to fix it."

try," he says. "I have been planning this for some time but before I was not confident enough. Now I am much more confident to do it. I enjoy fixing engines."

"I don't know what other people may have learned (during the training) but I learned so much. However, I still want to learn more."

Underwear provides the answer in La Concepcion

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

January 2012 - "This sewing project is a big help to us! We can now buy a kilo of rice from our earnings every Saturday and give our kids a few Pesos for daily allowance at school. And as it occupies us, we no longer have time to play *tong-its*¹ or be idle," explained Razel Anadeo, 50, leader of the La Concepcion Women's Association sewing project in Zamboanga del Norte's Sindangan municipality.

"I can now get laundry soap on credit from neighbourhood stores as I have a guaranteed weekly income from sewing," said another member of this women's group.

Teodora Mirabeles, 53, President of the La Concepcion Women's Association giggles, "We now also wear new panties, replacing the old ones!"

Sewing undergarments is a recent livelihood endeavour taking place in La Concepcion, a laidback coastal barangay (village) in the municipality of Sindangan, some 90 kilometres away from the provincial capital, Dipolog City.

However, La Concepcion is at the mercy of the weather as it faces Sindangan Bay and the East Sulu Sea. Fishers are 'locked up' in their homes especially during the northeast monsoon months from December to February.

"We are happy RFLP supported this project as it is indeed an alternative livelihood!" exclaimed Judith Laguna, 52, the sewing project's Production Manager. "It really saves the day's income when our husbands can't go out to fish during bad weather," she added.

In August 2011, RFLP called the group to attend to a business-planning workshop in response to their letter requesting livelihoods assistance. Three of them came including Teodora Mirabeles and Judith's husband, Fernando Laguna.

"The RFLP organizers asked us what kind of project we planned to put up and so we discussed the options for seaweed culture, fish sauce-making and *payao*². But RFLP consultants argued these are seasonal and highly dependent on the sea so that sustainability was suspect. Fernando suggested undertaking sewing and dressmaking as the livelihood project for the group," narrated Teodora.

"We now also wear new panties, replacing the old ones!"

She thought sewing would have potential as Judith and Fernando have the knowledge and skills and could teach other women members to master the craft. Judith was a skilled dressmaker having worked in a garment factory in Metro Manila for years. However, the couple's plan of putting up a dressmaking shop has been stalled for lack of capital as the investment needed was not small.

Judith was initially upset that her husband had agreed that sewing



The fruit of the loom: underwear made by La Concepcion Women's Association

should be the group's project. "That was meant to be our planned business!" Judith explained.

"But my husband said why would you not share the skills for the good of the many? Later I realized this project would help alleviate our misery, not just for us, but also for my fellow women as well." Judith added.

In October 2011, RFLP trained 18 women on sewing panties and briefs. The programme also provided them with equipment including sewing machines, sewing kits, textiles, accessories and other materials.

"Other than the earnings we receive, the project will also provide 1 to 2 percent from the net income for the operation of the marine sanctuary located in the village as proposed by RFLP," Razel declared.

"At least we have contributed to the management of our fishery through provision of incentives for fish wardens," she added.

1 A form of gambling similar to playing poker.

2 A form of fish aggregating device placed in near shore waters where fishers come to harvest from time to time.

Home gardens provide new path for fisher families

Manoja Liyanarachchi, Communications Assistant, RFLP Sri Lanka

April 2012 - Thirty-three year old M.D. Siranika, a young mother of two children, lives in the village of Pubudugama in Wanathavilluwa.

Energetic and enthusiastic, her daily tasks are well organized to manage her multiple roles as a mother, wife, housewife and income earner.

"I used to occasionally grow some vegetables for household consumption. As I was busy doing household activities and helping my husband with fishing activities, I didn't have much time to spend for home-gardening," said Siranika.

Her husband is a lagoon fisher and everyday Siranika goes to the landing site to help her husband with net clearing and net mending. It was during this time, she got interested in the RFLP home gardening programme.

"Even though I did grow some crops in my garden, I didn't expect I could have so many crops at once. I learnt lots of things I didn't know about home gardening before. Now I have cultivated a larger area of land with many crops like banana, chili, tomatoes, peanuts and capsicum. I gained lots of knowledge on how and when to apply organic fertilizer instead of chemical fertilizers. We also do the composting on our own," she mentioned.

By providing an income opportunity for fisher families, home garden development is also helping to reduce fishing activities and hence pressure on the fishery resources which are at the risk of depletion.

"My husband used to cast a net with 60 pieces, now he uses only 40 or 50 pieces," said Siranika. Her husband, Nevil Weerasinghe who has just re-



Home gardeners Siranika and Nevil

turned from the landing site added, "Now my wife doesn't come to the landing site. She has lot of work at the garden. I help her whenever I have some free time."

"Planting and taking care of the garden makes me feel happy. Home gardening also brings harmony and togetherness. My husband, children and I, work together and share our day to day life while working."

The pride of owning a garden full of vegetable crops could be seen in her eyes. "By watching what I am doing, my nine year old son has planted his own bed of vegetables; it has become his new hobby! He attends to it whenever he's not studying."

"I sell the harvest to a shop on the main road and earn about 1,000 rupees a week. We used to buy vegetables from the shop nearby but sometimes even the shop ran out. Now we always have several vegetables on our plates. Best of all, I am very much relieved that my children don't fall sick as they used to do before. They are much healthier."

"I sell the harvest to a shop on the main road and earn about 1,000 rupees a week. We used to buy vegetables from the shop nearby but sometimes even the shop ran out. Now we always have several vegetables on our plates."



Rice banks improve food security and generate income for Cambodian coastal communities

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Cambodia

April 2013 – “Being a member of the rice bank means that I don’t need to be afraid of paying high interest rates to middle-traders. The rice bank business is very important for poor farmers in the village like me,” says Mrs. Foet Mass from Cambodia’s Banteay Brey community fishery (CFi).

Mrs Foet is one of the fisher-farmers from Cambodian coastal communities who have been able to improve their food security and generate additional income as a result of village rice banks established with the support of the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP).



Mrs Foet Mass with her rice harvest

A shortage of rice normally occurs between July and November during which time farmers are forced to borrow either rice or money from middle-traders at high interest rates.

In response, RFLP has helped three CFis from Prey Nup District in Preah Sihanouk province to establish rice banks. This is a totally new approach for these predominantly fishing communities despite the fact that most of the residents possess rice fields and have traditionally also cultivated paddy rice.

However, although some of the farmers have enough rice to last them from harvest to harvest, many face shortages leaving their families with insufficient rice to eat and no rice seed to plant for the following season’s rice crop.

The aim of rice banks is to help the poor farmers by lending them rice when they need it and to help them generate additional

income from selling rice when they have a surplus. Farmers who are CFi members can join the group and upon doing so need to contribute 10 kg of rice to the rice bank as their membership fee. In addition, they have to contribute a further 100 kg of rice each year to the bank. Anyone wishing to leave the rice bank and withdraw their rice can only do so after having ‘paid in’ to the bank for three years.

Members who have joined and save



The rice bank

rice in the bank regularly are allowed to borrow rice in times of need, usually ranging from 300 – 600 kg of rice at a time, depending on how much rice is in the bank. When they harvest their own rice paddy later, they repay the rice they have borrowed with interest. It is a slow process to build up the rice bank stocks, so the rice groups will begin paying out interest shares after the scheme has been in operation for five years.

“Before, my family did not have enough to eat but this year we have more than enough and we have been able to sell the surplus and use the money to fix our house. Before the rice bank was launched in my village I often borrowed rice and money from middle-traders who always charged me very high interest. If I borrowed 300 kg of rice from them I had to return between 450-500 kg. But if I borrow the same amount from the rice bank, I only need to return 360 kg,” she added.

A brighter future for disadvantaged youth in Indonesia

Agoes Hekso, Graphics and Information Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

August 2012 – “We have urged them to keep working for a year, but the larger goal is that these young people can become entrepreneurs,” says Roland Tuella, the founder of an NGO in Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province.

Roland was concerned by a common social problem in NTT; young people dropping out of school and having nothing to do but be a burden for their parents.

“I was concerned about the young people in Kupang, especially in Tenau district (the port area). I heard that they had been doing bad things like stealing rice in the harbor. Moreover, the people around these youngsters didn’t think about getting them back to school or how they could be successful. With this in mind, I established an NGO called Suara Masyarakat Flobamora (Voice of Flobamora) as a development channel for youth,” said Roland.

Roland himself took part in training provided by RFLP in collaboration with the ILO East project to learn how better to identify business and employment opportunities and to develop vocational training to provide employment and business opportunities for youth.

“The training was something new for me and was very good indeed. I learned how to build a sustainable project and how to continuously monitor and evaluate it”, said Roland.

Following the training, the participants such as Roland studied the needs of the market as well as those of young people in the area. Based on the findings, a series of

entrepreneurship and vocational training activities took place for unemployed young people on various subject areas based on Indonesian National Work Competency Standards.

One of the skills taught was fibre glass production and airbrush work in recognition of the considerable demand existing in NTT for such products and services.

Roland himself trained eight young people with cool boxes designed and developed by RFLP in order to improve the quality of fish distributed within the districts being one of the products the trainees worked on. The cool boxes allow mobile traders using motorcycles to keep their products fresher, to use less ice and results in higher incomes.

“I proposed this cool box to many organizations, institutions and companies hoping that the result of the training from RFLP could be useful, ” said Roland.

“I was concerned about the young people in Kupang, especially in Tenau district (the port area). I heard that they had been doing bad things like stealing rice in the harbor.”



Airbrush work on a fibre glass cool box

However, the support and training provided to young people by Roland not only aims to give them the skills to earn an income. Through considerable mentoring and by encouraging the youngsters to stick at the job, Roland aims to help them become more independent and to take a longer-term view of the future and their prospects.

Roland therefore decided to team up with RFLP to train and guide local youth to produce fibre glass products such as cool boxes.

The cool boxes have been a success based on a lengthy process of capacity building not only of the former school drop outs who make them but also for local NGOs involved in promoting this initiative and training the young people.

“RFLP successfully pioneered the development of these cool boxes and it is great that our idea has been adopted and will hopefully be widely spread to other areas,” said RFLP’s Akhmad Rikhun.

Archer Noel: championing Dapitan City's livelihoods development

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

February 2013 - "I have no formal training in livelihoods development except that I always have the desire to help people. Whenever I am put into a particular job, I always take it as a mission to uplift lives," said Archer Noel, Livelihoods Consultant of the City of Dapitan in the Philippines' Zamboanga del Norte province.

As Dapitan's livelihoods guru, Noel has long experience in livelihoods development. However since taking part in business planning training supported by RFLP on 5-8 March 2012 he has been able to put his skills to more effective use supporting the city government's One Barangay, One Product (OBOP) program.

Noel was hired in June 2011 to implement the OBOP which although it had been launched, did not have any activities running.

"My tasks involved the establishment of new livelihoods groups in different barangays. It also included reviving livelihoods activities that had already been initiated in communities," Noel declared.

Noel has begun to breathe life to the OBOP program. Out of the 50 barangays in Dapitan City, 16 have started livelihoods activities since he commenced work in mid 2011. He is now putting his business planning skills to use on a regular basis.

"The business planning training workshop organized by RFLP provided the opportunity for me to make business plans for livelihood groups in the city. The training was very useful and I am using it now," said Noel.



Archer Noel

"The business planning training workshop organized by RFLP provided the opportunity for me to make business plans for livelihood groups in the city. The training was very useful and I am using it now."

Noel has put to use the knowledge and skills he gained from RFLP in a number of new livelihoods projects. These included the business plans for production of *balot* (boiled duck eggs) in Barangay Pulo and bamboo crafts in Barangay Banbanan.

"The business plan is a road map that can help foresee the profitability of a business venture. For example, the business plan drafted during the RFLP-organized business planning session by the

huri handicraft project of the Baylimango Alternative Learning System Weavers Association was so useful that organization members are now producing products regularly," Noel declared.

"Every time I assist a livelihood organization, the business planning skills I learned from RFLP are put to use. The more I do business planning, the more skilled I become. And I am happy with that!" he quipped.

When Noel began working with the Baylimango *huri* weavers group he introduced the concept of livelihoods development and used his RFLP training to develop a business plan. As a result of the business plan, the activities of the group have expanded to even benefit non-members who now sell *huri* leaves and strips to the group.

"What is more important is that the business plan has opened the minds of villagers. They have become aware of the world of business—that doing business is a serious matter and that quality matters! While the main reason for doing business is making profit, there is also the philosophy of business that has to be considered and that is to support social development," Noel added.



The Baylimango buri weavers group at work

RFLP engine training helps Mathias become a trainer

Mario Pereira, national consultant RFLP Timor-Leste

May 2013 - Engine maintenance skills provided by the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP) in Timor-Leste have led to a fisher launching his own training course to pass on this expertise to other fishers.

Mathias de Araujo, a fisher from Beloi village, Atauro Island, participated in engine maintenance and repair training provided by RFLP in June 2011. Along with other fishers attending the training Mathias received a certificate from RFLP to show he had mastered basic maintenance skills.

Mathias used his certificate from RFLP as well as three others he received during the Indonesian occupation to request support from the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training Policy and Employment (SEPFOP) to provide basic engine maintenance training for other fishers in the western part of Atauro Island.

“Many fishers in Atauro have problems with their engines, but do not know how to fix them. I had experience of engine maintenance when I worked in Indonesia as a mechanic. I came back to Timor-Leste on 2001, and learned more about outboard engines from RFLP. I want to share my experience with other fishers in Atauro by providing training on basic engine maintenance. Hence I made a proposal to SEPFOP.”

Mathias made a proposal to SEPFOP in 2011 for assistance totalling US\$ 6,600 so that he could carry out training and in September 2012 SEPFOP agreed to fund 50 percent or US\$ 3,300.

“I used the money to hold training for one month from the middle of October to mid November 2012. I bought a complete toolbox and also gave a combination spanner and screw driver to each fisher who participated. In all eight fishers from seven villages in western part of

Atauro participated.”

“To teach fishers about basic engine maintenance, I used the method which RFLP showed me, because it’s very practical, simple and easy to understand. The fishers were very enthusiastic because they learned new skills which they need. Now these fishers have basic maintenance skills they can fix their engine by themselves and so far engine problems in the western part of Atauro are decreasing.”

“To teach fishers about basic engine maintenance, I used the method which RFLP showed me, because it’s very practical, simple and easy to understand.”

Mathias is committed to carrying on supporting fishers in Atauro and is confident that he will receive further budget from SEPFOP to train more fishers.

“I will use further budget from SEPFOP to hold similar training in other parts of Atauro where fishers still do not know how to fix engines. Since I have a complete toolbox I also plan in the future to build a workshop so that the tools can be put to wider use. I will also use the money to buy engine spare parts. I hope in the future many more fishers will participate in the training.”



Mathias de Araujo

Sri Lankan ladies put new IT skills to use

Manoja Liyanarachchi, Communications Assistant RFLP Sri Lanka

August 2012 - Young Sri Lankan women who participated in an IT vocational training course supported by RFLP are putting their new skills to use teaching children at schools in fishing communities.

A group of 10 young women aged between 20-25 have benefited from RFLP Sri Lanka's Youth Skill Development Programme by taking part in a full time, 6-month IT course offered by the Vocational Training Institute of Sri Lanka.

The Programme sets out to develop vocational skills amongst young people from fishing communities to help provide alternative income generating activities other than fishing.

The women who took this IT course are from a remote and under-privileged village named Udappuwa, in Puttalam District in the northwestern part of Sri Lanka. Most of the people in this fishing community are Tamils and almost one third of the 3,446 inhabitants are active fishers.

As part of their NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) certificate course all of the students need to carry out on the job training.

Four were assigned to work at the Puttalam Office of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources while another five have been assigned to two schools in Udappuwa as IT instructors. Returning to the schools where they once studied the women now deliver the knowledge they have acquired to hundreds of school pupils who previously did not have proper access to IT education.

The vice-principal of the Udappuwa Tamil School, Mr. Sivasubramaniam was pleased to hire the services of these local, Tamil-speaking girls.



Passing on IT skills to the kids

"The school has an IT lab with 23 computers. Currently we have an IT teacher but unfortunately she cannot communicate in Tamil language as she is Sinhalese. These Tamil IT instructors not only help teaching IT but also bridge the communication gap," he said.

Soniya and Ananda are two of the trainees. Soniya lives in Andimunei, a village a few miles away from this school. She has four sisters and three brothers and her father engages in beach seine fishing.

"Initially I was scared to teach. So we started teaching the lower grades. Now I enjoy it a lot. Teaching helps me to remember the lessons we learnt in class."

Ananda Janani lives with her mother who works as a laborer for a dried fish business. "I love teaching. Teaching is a good opportunity to learn more and more. When students ask questions that we don't

"Fishing is a lot of hard work and there are many difficulties. Even if I get married to a person in the fishing trade, I will not allow my children to work in this sector."

know, we ask the teacher so we learn new things too," she said.

Both of them are happy to back at their old school as teachers. Clad in saris, they are proud of their newly gained prestige with the little girls and boys calling them 'teacher'.

"Fishing is a lot of hard work and there are many difficulties. Even if I get married to a person in the fishing trade, I will not allow my children to work in this sector," said Soniya.

From sewing to selling through saving

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Philippines

September 2012 - “We started this sewing business in October and up until December last year, I earned Php 2,400 (US\$ 60). This has been a big help to me and my family,” declared Nenita Razo, one of the members of Linay Women’s Association (LIWOA) here in the municipality of Manukan, Zamboanga del Norte.

The Linay Women’s Association is one of the recipient groups of RFLP’s livelihoods diversification component. The group received training, support and small equipment such as sewing machines from RFLP to produce bags and caps for sale.

“This sewing business has brought great relief in meeting my family’s financial needs especially when my husband could not find work,” 42-year-old Nenita added.

Nenita’s husband, Bernie Razo, is a carpenter (who also does masonry) but works intermittently depending on jobs around the community and in neighbouring barangays. Bernie used to be a fisher but switched to carpentry when fish catches started to decline. From carpentry he receives Php 250 daily including meals or Php 350 excluding meals. On average, Bernie works for around 12 days each month. However, payment never comes in a lump sum; it is made weekly while at times, full payment is delayed upon the request of cash-strapped house owners.

That is how precarious the family’s budget is and Nenita is thankful for the income from the women’s group’s sewing business.

“There was a time last year when the sewing business received good orders and my husband could not



Nenita Razo

find any work—that was one of our most trying times. My earnings were a big help in meeting our needs. It was from there (Nenita’s earnings) that we got our food, kitchen needs and money for electricity bills,” narrated Nenita.

“At that time RFLP’s assistance was very timely and I am very grateful for this sewing project. Without it, I don’t know how we could have survived.”

Nenita hopes that the sewing business will continue through the diligence of co-officers and members.

“We long to pursue advanced training on uniform sewing and other products so we can maximize the sewing machines RFLP provided us,” she explained.

In addition to using her income to meet family needs Nenita also started selling food in June 2012 after managing to save Php 500.

“At that time RFLP’s assistance was very timely and I am very grateful for this sewing project. Without it, I don’t know how we could have survived.”

“I sell home-cooked food items in my store for Php 5-10 per serving. Vegetable viands are the saleable ones. At least I can now give my son his weekly school allowance from the profit I earn from food vending,” declared Nenita.

Nenita’s 20-year-old son dropped out from school last year due to the family’s financial difficulties. However he re-entered college to take a criminology degree in June this year.

From fish to chicken: new skills bring in money for Quang Tri women

Hoang Thi Phuong Thao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Viet Nam

May 2012 - With a broad smile, Ms Le Thi Lung tells how she earned profits of some four million VND (equivalent to US\$200) from selling chickens after taking part in an RFLP livelihoods initiative.

The six month production cycle saw the villager from Hai Khe commune in Quang Tri province sell her chickens in time for Tet – Viet Nam’s lunar New Year celebrations. As a result she was able to make good profits compared to previous production cycles.

“We have never raised this species of chicken before,” Ms Lung said, pointing to the tiny baby chicks in the coop. The profits Ms Lung made from the sale were spent on the Tet celebrations however she has already re-invested in a new production cycle of 150 chicks.

The free-range chickens that were introduced are known as *ga ta cai tien* in Vietnamese (*Amplio pul-lum*). While this species is not new in farming villages in the district, few people in fishing villages knew about it before.

Ms Lung’s story began when her household, which is part of a small-scale fishing community, was selected to take part in RFLP’s chicken raising initiative. Her family received chicks and technical advice from extension workers and was able to make a success of the pilot. As a result, neighbors have come to learn from her experiences with some already starting their own production.

Declining catches have also encouraged the men to become more involved in home-based activities.

“It’s not hard work at all for me because we use industrial feed and not trash fish or vegetables like before. My husband does not go fishing very often these days, so he takes care of buying feed,” she added.



Le Thi Lung

Ms Lung has also gained more experience in how to raise chickens. Extension workers instructed her about the importance of keeping the coop clean and never letting the chickens get hungry.

Chicken production models are part of RFLP’s strategy to introduce and reinforce non-fishing livelihoods options for inshore fisheries communities. A total of 14 households were selected to implement this model, each of which was provided with practical training, 100 chicks and regular technical assistance during

The initiative has helped expose extension workers to the needs of fishing communities for agricultural technical assistance as they become more involved in non-fishing related livelihoods.

the implementation.

The initiative has also helped expose extension workers to the needs of fishing communities for agricultural technical assistance as they become more involved in non-fishing related alternative livelihoods.

Building on this success, RFLP will work with the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Extension Centres to implement other alternative livelihoods models in project communities.

“We would like to see more of these kinds of initiative in our communes. Not only do they help families make money but they also brings happiness as our fishers can stay home more often with their families instead of spending their days at sea with no guarantee of a good catch,” commented Mr. Ho Xuan Duc, the Vice Chair of Trieu Van Commune People’s Committee.

Linay women see better prospects in sewing than fishing

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Philippines

January 2011 – “I have earned Php 760 (US\$ 18) now for three days running. Not bad for days without any catch,” says Modesta Villarín, 55, of Linay village in the municipality of Manukan, Zamboanga del Norte, the Philippines.

Moding, as she is fondly called by group mates and community members, turned to sewing when fish catches started to dwindle in the early 2000s.

“Since then fishing has never been the same,” Moding says. “From 1992 to 2000, we were able to send our five children to school through my husband’s fishing. Using drift fish nets (*pukot*), he used to harvest two boxes, that is, 80 kilos of fish a night or about 35 kilos when multiple hooks and line (*pasol*) were used.”

“But fishing has never been good since then! Now, my husband is lucky if he gets any catch for the night. Even though I am already old, tired and in pain from arthritis, I am forced to pedal the sewing machine to augment my husband’s income and finance the studies of my remaining child in college. For the last 10 years, our finances have never been easy” she said.

Moding is one of the beneficiaries of an RFLP initiative to provide assistance to a sewing project run by the Linay Women’s Association (LIWOA). RFLP provided the organization two brand new disc-o-matic sewing machines, a single stitch high-speed Juki brand machine and another high-speed sewing machine as well as Php 32,000 worth of sewing kits, textiles, threads and other raw materials. Eighteen mem-

bers of the group also took part in a sewing skills enhancement training course from 17-21 October 2011 with the first production cycle commencing soon after.

“I realized that a number of women from our village had already received sewing training from previous government programs,” said Melissa Belagantol, Linay’s barangay captain.

“The first training session was held in 2006 in Barangay Irasan here in Manukan. For one month, 15 of us were trained in making panties, blouses, skirts, briefs, slacks, pillow cases and TV covers by the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO). It was fun! As the PSWDO didn’t have many resources we had to bring our own provisions and to hitch a ride using the municipal ambulance to and from our homes just so we could complete the training,” she said.

“We received more training in 2010, again sponsored by the PSWDO. The same 15 trainees were taught bag-making and dressmaking,” narrated the village chief.

“We decided to continue with sewing as an alternative livelihood option and asked RFLP to help us.”



Modesta Villarín

However due to a lack of capital and equipment the group was never able to translate the knowledge and skills they had into increased incomes.

“We decided to continue with sewing as an alternative livelihood option and asked RFLP to help us,” added Melissa Belagantol.

Three women from Linay including Melissa participated in a business planning workshop organized by RFLP in August 2011 where they brainstormed ways to improve the production and financial feasibility of sewing operations. As a result of these discussions the group decided that they would focus on bags and caps/hats.

“We had to select those who already had sewing skills as priority beneficiaries for the RFLP project. Later on, we will train other women members who don’t have the skills so we can spread the benefits of this project,” said LIWOA president Maria Bautista Bohol.

Shiwanthi's life begins to look more beautiful

Manoja Liyanarachchi, Communications Assistant RFLP Sri Lanka

July 2012 - Thirty-two year old Shiwanthi Perera lives with her father and two children in Sri Lanka's Negombo district. Up until a year ago her father produced and sold dried fish in Negombo market but when he fell ill and could no longer work the family found itself with little money to meet expenses.

In 2001 Shiwanthi had taken a beauty culture course offered by the National Youth Council of Sri Lanka. However the practical skills she gained from the course were not enough for her to find employment. Instead she found a job in a garment factory in Katunayake, through which she managed to save enough to build a small home with the support of her relatives. However, when she needed to look after the children she had to stop working at the factory.

Ten years later, in 2011, Shiwanthi had the opportunity to participate in the RFLP sponsored beauty culture course conducted by the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) in Sri Lanka in Negombo.

She started the course in December last year and as a result, has been able to gain the theoretical and practical skills needed to work as a professional beautician.

As a result of the vocational training, Shiwanthi has already opened a small salon in a building owned by her brother. Studying during the day, she opens her salon during the evening as well as at the weekend and now earns more than US\$ 110 per month. This income is mainly spent to buy medicine for her father and meet the school expenses of her children. She expects to open another salon in Negombo city in August this year once she completes the course.



Shiwanthi Perera at work in her salon



Shiwanthi

"This course was a blessing for me to achieve my dream of having a salon. Now I am capable of running my own salon as a result of the excellent theoretical and practical trainings I received from the course," she says.

RFLP teamed up with the VTA to offer

"This course was a blessing for me to achieve my dream of having a salon. Now I am capable of running my own salon as a result of the excellent theoretical and practical trainings I received."

vocational training for a total of 120 young people from fishing communities. Courses were offered in three subjects: beauty culture, dress making and information technology. This was the first time that such courses had been made available to those in coastal communities and there was an overwhelming response to take part, especially from young women.

Biogas helps NTT households reduce dependence on kerosene

Agoes Hekso, Graphics and Information Assistant, RFLP Indonesia

October 2012 - The use of biogas equipment provided by RFLP is helping one Indonesian housewife to save money while putting to use the waste from her livestock.

In Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur province kerosene is commonly used for cooking and is a basic need for families alongside rice and cooking oil.

Seeking to help coastal families save costs on purchasing kerosene while at the same time helping the environment RFLP has introduced biogas technology to a number of beneficiaries. Biogas is basically a fuel generated from animal manure, in this case the wastes from pig and cow rearing.

RFLP is promoting the use of biogas in eleven sites in Kupang District and Kupang Municipality. Eleven biogas digester systems have been distributed to selected coastal households.

One of RFLP beneficiaries who is benefiting from biogas technology is Dorkas Rohi, 51, from Noelbaki Village, Kupang District. She is a housewife who helps her farmer husband take care of nine cows and four pigs on their farmland.

"I used to dump the manure out onto my farmland. Now after being trained by RFLP, I can use it to produce biogas," said Dorkas.

"By using biogas for cooking activities like frying eggs and boiling water, I can save my kerosene for more urgent needs," she added.

Dorkas stated that she used to buy at least five liters of kerosene in a week. The official retail price of 1 li-

ter of kerosene is Rp 3,000 (approx US\$ 3), but sometimes the price can increase to Rp 5,000. She would therefore need to set aside up to Rp 25,000 per week just for kerosene.

"After using biogas, the five liters of kerosene will last for more than a week. It is the same as reducing the cost of kerosene a week. I'm happy because I can save some money," stated Dorkas as she explained the financial benefits of using biogas.

"I'm glad that I can use the biogas as a cheap alternative energy for our daily needs."

Dorkas then explained how she worked with the biogas. She usually put 10 liters of mixed manure with water into the barrel. She needs to wait for at least two days for the

gas to be collected in a tire inner tube. After having collected the gas and when the tire is full, she can use it to light the stove for at least 45 minutes.

"RFLP has given me easy-to-use equipment to produce gas. I'm glad that I can use the biogas as a cheap alternative energy for our daily needs. Moreover, manure can be easily found," added Dorkas.

Dorkas also hopes that this technology can be improved so that the biogas will last for longer and fully replace the use of kerosene in the future.

Whilst Dorkas and her husband are primarily farmers other beneficiaries of the pilot include fisher and seaweed farming families who are using the biogas to cook fried snacks and seaweed products. These are then sold to generate additional income.



Dorkas Rohi lights the bio gas for cooking

New techniques reduce chicken rearing times in Cambodia

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer RFLP Cambodia

January 2013 – “Chicken rearing is a home based job and not as risky as fishing,” says Ms. Pon Nhong, who lives in the coastal community of Trapaing Ropov in Cambodia’s Kampot province.

Chicken rearing is not new to Ms Pon. What is new however are the techniques she has learned which help her rear chickens quicker and to be better prepared for outbreaks of disease.

Ms. Pon was amongst the 148 members of Cambodian Community Fisheries to receive training on chicken rearing techniques provided by the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC). This formed part of RFLP’s efforts to strengthen livelihoods in the coastal communities in which it works.

Ms. Pon attended a three-day training session from 13-15 March 2012 and received five hens and one cock from RFLP the following October. She quickly put her new skills into practice. These included the construction of new chicken pens and cages, producing feed from kitchen waste and fisheries production leftovers, preventing and curing diseases, better hygiene, watering techniques, medicine production as well as vaccinations.

“Previously it took me between 6-7 months to raise chickens until I could sell them. Now it takes me only 4-5 months.”

“After I used the feeds I made myself following the CEDAC training, my chickens grew faster and healthier. Previously it took me between 6-7 months to raise chickens until I could sell them. Now it takes me only 4-5 months. It saves me a lot of time so that I can start a new production cycle quicker,” Ms. Pon said.

Ms. Pon also learned techniques to produce traditional medicines. She is especially serious about hygiene, making sure than before anyone enters the chicken pens, they first step on lime to prevent the transmission of viruses and disease.

At first sight chicken rearing may appear easy. However chickens are susceptible to disease as many of the participants of the training found out. Large numbers of the birds provided by RFLP died soon after being received and the causes of these deaths are being investigated.

Ms. Pon however did not lose a single chicken. “I was not affected by the death of chickens as other farmers were. All six of the chickens I received were a bit weak when I first brought them home but I knew how to take care of them. First, I gave them lemon-sugar drink and no feed for a whole day. I also put all six new chickens far away from my other chickens for a week.”



Ms. Pon feeds her chickens

According to Ms. Pon the six chickens she received from the project are still alive and are very healthy. Three hens have produced 36 chicks while the other two hens are laying eggs.

“I am very happy and in the next two months, I will give six chickens back to the other group members who did not receive chickens in the first batch. This is a regulation of the chicken rearing group,” she added.

Women's group gains financial freedom

Angela Lentisco, Monitoring and Evaluation consultant, RFLP

October 2012 - Noelbaki in Kupang Tengah Sub-district of Kupang District is located 30 minutes drive from Kupang City. Some 475 Timorese families settled in this area in 1999 following unrest in the run up to Timor-Leste's independence from Indonesia. The refugees mostly worked as farm laborers and crop planters and slowly but surely, they have integrated with the local people.

A woman's group operates in the community called *Kelompok Wanita Tani Damai* (KWT Damai). It seeks to empower women to become more economically independent and produces corn, banana, cassava and peanuts then processes them into food products for sale.

RFLP saw potential in this women's group however it needed capacity building support to keep members motivated and to encourage other women to join.

One of the areas in which RFLP supported the group was to help boost the capacity of the group's savings and credit system. The savings system however had problems due to conflicts within the group and a lack of awareness from its members about how to save money in a cooperative manner.

In 2011, RFLP joined forces with the BK3D Credit Union to provide group members with training on financial literacy as well as how the group could help facilitate savings and lending. As a result members are now saving in a systematic way.

"Each member has to save as much as Rp 23,000 per month," said Marta Kewuan who is responsible for the group's savings operations.



Members of the KWT Damai group

Through simple concepts such as focusing on needs instead of wants KWT Damai members now have Rp 10 million of savings (approx US\$ 1,000) under their control. The members are also allowed to borrow money from the group, with the loans being used as capital for business activities.

According to Klara Wenlu, the chair person of KWT Damai, group members have become more motivated since working with RFLP. They learned about being more active in

Group members have become more motivated since working with RFLP. They learned about being more active in discussions and expressing their opinions.

discussions and expressing their opinions. There was also motivation to produce more products and be more creative. She hopes that the group can produce better products with better packaging and labeling, areas in which RFLP has provided support.

Leading 25 women was definitely not an easy job for a woman like Klara who had never experienced anything like this role before.

RFLP encouraged and empowered the members to be active in many activities. As a result, the confidence of the women was enhanced and their status acknowledged by families and society alike.

"I didn't feel confident about myself at first. It was very difficult to lead 25 women with different ideas, backgrounds, personalities and race. But I had support from the other members. That made me more confident and I had courage to lead them," explained Klara.

Fisheries Cooperative Society records 100% loan recovery rate for first time

Manoja Liyanarachchi, Communications Assistant RFLP Sri Lanka

August 2012 – The capacity of Kandathoduwawa Fisheries Cooperative Society located in Sri Lanka's Puttalam district to effectively provide micro-finance services for its members has been enhanced considerably following support provided by RFLP. As a result, the Society has been able to record a 100 percent loan recovery rate for the very first time.

Established in 1990 with 30 members, the Fisheries Cooperative Society now has 142 active members. The Society helps provide welfare for the fishers by acting as a community-based savings organization, facilitating savings, issuing small loans and providing micro-insurance for fishers.

Mr Lucian Ranjan has been the chairperson of the Society since 2007 while Ms. Samurdhika Pethumanthi is the manager.

"We got to know about the RFLP training and capacity building programme in 2010. To be honest, we didn't have much faith at first as

such meetings we have attended in the past have done very little for us. However, after participating in the first micro-finance cluster meeting (organized by RFLP), I felt that this was different and now I am very happy about the progress we have made financially as a society and attitudinally as a society and as individuals," said Mr. Lucian.

"We are fishers. Even though we want to run the Society, we have very little knowledge about how to do so. What I like about RFLP is that they fix meeting times by consulting us. As a result, most of us can participate," he added.

"What we really wanted was knowledge and the RFLP micro-finance training provided a once in a lifetime opportunity."

"What we really wanted was knowledge and the RFLP micro-finance training provided a once in a lifetime opportunity. Knowledge we received varied and included financial management, savings mobilization, good governance, delinquency management, loans/savings product development as well as roles and responsibilities of clients. What we learn today is put into practice tomorrow."

Ms Pethumanthi recalled her experience with RFLP. "Managers of Cooperative societies received separate training where we learnt about micro-finance management. When I took over this position, I had neither prior experience in financial management nor was I given any proper induction. Having studied Arts subjects for my Advanced Level Examinations, the only knowledge I possessed about financial management was what I could gather from the former manager."

Previously the Society lacked confidence in how it should operate its micro-finance services as Lucian explains.

"RFLP guided us. We actually didn't have much of an idea of what to do before. There was nobody to cross check with or to ask whether what we did was right or not. With this programme we started to understand properly what we were doing. Thus we could correct our mistakes and develop our strengths. For example, we were giving only one loan per person while other societies gave people several loans at any one time. Actually we thought this was our weakness but now know that we were right. Had RFLP not advised us, we could have started giving multiple loans to people."



Ms Samurdhika Pethumanthi and Mr Lucian Ranjan

Cambodian Community Fishery savings group gains efficiency and members

Wirya Khim, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Cambodia

January 2013 - A community savings group in a Cambodian coastal village has seen its membership jump and operations improve following support provided by RFLP.

Community based savings and credit groups play an important role in rural and coastal areas by helping community members save and borrow money. They offer loans at lower interest rates and on more favorable terms than other lending sources such as middle-persons or formal micro-finance organizations (MFIs) and banks. In addition, they provide a social safety net for members.

Recognizing that a lack of access to capital is a major barrier to the reduction of vulnerability in coastal communities, RFLP has worked to boost financial literacy skills in 15 Community Fisheries.

Community members have been trained on book keeping, methods of charging interest employed by micro-finance organizations (MFIs), types of savings, family expense prioritization and setting family financial goals.

One of the CFIs included in the training was CFI Boeung Raing in Preah Sihanouk province. This Community Fishery is home to 375 families the vast majority of whom fish and grow rice for a living.

Prior to receiving support from RFLP, the savings group in CFI Boeung Raing had only 12 members. This increased to 15 following training conducted in March 2012 and rose again to 24 after further coaching was provided in August the same year. Importantly, the training gave the group the confidence and knowledge to improve the structure of the savings group.



Mr Samreth Kelia and Ms Kul Sony check the saving group records

According to Mr. Samreth the number of group members has increased significantly due to members fully trusting the new accountant.

Group member Mr. Samreth Keila who is also a Fisheries Administration Triage Officer said, "After RFLP conducted training we discussed the possibility of restructuring the savings group and decided to include an accountant and a leader."

According to Mr. Samreth the number of group members has increased significantly due to members fully trusting the new accountant. Previously members had neither trust nor confidence in the old management committee and that restructuring

the savings group has brought a big change to the CFI.

The newly elected accountant is Ms. Kul Sony, the 40-year-old owner of a beauty salon in the community.

According to Ms Sony following the restructuring of the savings group in November 2012 the number of members of the increased significantly from 24 to 65. The group savings also increased from 200,000 Riels (US\$ 50) in September 2012 to 6,500, 000 Riels (US\$ 1,625) as of 9 January 2013.

"Our group members have borrowed money to help improve their livelihoods. Some borrowed money to buy pigs, some borrowed to buy fertilizers for their paddy rice fields. One group member also borrowed 2 million Riels (US\$ 500) to buy a ploughing machine in early December 2012," she said.

RFLP Sri Lanka's micro-finance strategy to be replicated nationally at fisheries minister's request

Manoja Liyanaarchchi, Communications Assistant, RFLP Sri Lanka

April 2013 - The achievements of the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP) in enhancing access to micro-finance for fisher communities in Sri Lanka are set to be replicated nationwide.

At the request of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, RFLP is providing support to formulate a policy framework for the National Fisheries Federation (NFF) to implement RFLP's 'Fish Finance' strategy throughout Sri Lanka.

The development comes after RFLP presented its achievements to the minister in March 2013.

"The Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, Dr. Rajitha Senaratne recognized the unique approach RFLP has taken and the considerable impact it has made during a short period of time. He also encouraged the replication of this process nationally," said Dr. Champa Amarasiri, National Project Manager of RFLP Sri Lanka.

RFLP's 'Fish Finance' strategy has seen it work with 30 small-scale fisher organizations in the Negombo, Chilaw and Puttalam fisheries districts which are providing micro-finance services such as savings schemes and small loans to their members.

These organizations have undergone an intensive process of capacity building in areas such as financial management, savings mobilization, good governance, delinquency management and loans/savings product development.

Meanwhile the creation of an RFLP-supported Fish Finance Network As-



Fishers across Sri Lanka should benefit from RFLP's micro-finance efforts

sociation (FIFNA) is helping these organizations to develop further and provides greater economies of scale for their operations. FIFNA also helps facilitate better access to credit from larger lenders as well as other services such as micro-insurance for its members.

The process of replicating RFLP's 'Fish Finance' Strategy has already begun. Mr. Sextus Dayananda, Micro-finance Specialist of RFLP took the lead during a workshop to start formulating a national policy framework for micro-finance for the National Fisheries Federation (NFF), held 2 April 2013.

Taking part in the event were NFF representatives from the national, district and village levels across the country as well as government officials.

"It is a great opportunity for RFLP to share its experiences and to help for-

mulate a micro-finance component for the NFF that can be implemented nationwide," said Dr. Amarasiri. "Intensive capacity building of fisheries societies island-wide will be required as it will be the foundation of this entire policy."

Through its micro-finance activities RFLP has helped facilitate access to the Regional Development Bank loan scheme. Around 210 clients have received loans totaling almost US\$ 100,000 while 468 clients have opened savings accounts with the bank totaling over US\$ 27,000.

Access has also been facilitated to wholesale lending from the Sri Lanka Savings Bank with nine wholesale loan applications being approved. Meanwhile, a micro-insurance scheme has been offered to fishers for the first time in Sri Lanka with 73 clients taking out coverage totaling almost US\$65,000.



Mainstreaming gender

Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme
(RFLP)

Angelita Collyer: championing women's economic empowerment

Glenn Labrado, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, RFLP Philippines

March 2013 - "The potential was already there but I just didn't have the opportunity. It was only when I took part in training that my mind was opened. I believed that it could be done and now we are doing it!" said Angelita Collyer, a local government manager in the Philippines' Zamboanga del Norte province.

In 2010, Angelita Collyer or "Angie" took part in a workshop on best practices for mainstreaming gender in the fisheries sector that was held by the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP) in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

As Operations Manager of the Livelihoods Skills Development and Enhancement Center (LSDEC) of the City of Dipolog, Angie has been putting to use the tools and concepts she learned at the workshop.

For a year now, LSDEC has been developing various skills training modules incorporating gender and incubating livelihood activities for women that emphasize their empowerment.

Angie believes that the framework and tools she learned about from the RFLP training are very relevant to LSDEC's programme implementation especially relating to livelihoods development for women.

"We cater to many associations in the women's sector. These women are often constrained from engaging in economic activities because of the social structure they are part of," Angie explained.

The LSDEC Operations Manager noticed that women stopped implementing their livelihood projects when husbands ordered them to do so believing that their main job at home is to take care of the children, and other domestic chores.

"You cannot allow the mindset to prevail that women have to stay home and watch over the children even if their husbands cannot provide enough food. It is our mandate to improve the standard of living of these people and it is clear there are things that bar women from attaining better standards," she argued.

"I invited the women to one of our seminars when the topic was gender. There were discussions on empowerment and they were given the chance to speak out during the forum. We need to plant in women's minds the importance and value of their contribution. They need to realize that they have a voice," Angie opined.

"You cannot allow the mindset to prevail that women have to stay home and watch over the children even if their husbands cannot provide enough food."

"In LSDEC's values formation, we taught them the idea of the 'new' woman. We don't emphasize changing existing roles with their husbands especially when most are dependent on them. We only stress that women make an important contribution to the household. They must have a voice. They must have the capacity to decide on matters that affect them," she stressed.

LSDEC has integrated gender concepts into its seminar modules on values formation, basic entrepreneurship skills and time management. More recently, it has opened up its skills training program—those which are traditionally male-dominated such as plumbing, welding, heavy equipment operation, among others—to women.

Angie concluded, "I understand that RFLP will be finishing but I do not want that to be the end. The show must go on. I want to touch these groups even in RFLP's absence."



Angelita (centre) at work at the Livelihoods Skills Development and Enhancement Center (LSDEC)

Theresa Sañado: A lifelong commitment to Philippine fisheries

Mabel Batong of RFLP Philippines wrote the following article to mark International Women's Day 2013.

March 2013 - "It is not an easy job. I have to work even at odd times with the police and local rescue group, going out to sea to catch commercial boats encroaching on municipal waters, or fishers using illegal fishing gear," explains Theresa Sañado, the City of Dipolog's sole Fisheries Technician.

Theresa's comments aptly capture the working environment of this dedicated worker; an environment characterized by the pressures of enforcing the law for both small-scale and commercial fishers operating in waters around Dipolog City, in the Philippines' Zamboanga del Norte province.

Supporting Theresa, as well as her peers in 11 local government units and city municipalities in the province has been the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP).

Following training in various areas conducted by RFLP Theresa has learned more about coastal resource and fisheries management planning; fisheries law enforcement; information, education and communication (IEC); as well as gender.

These new skills have supported Theresa as she works to protect the environment and improve the lives of families living in coastal communities of Dipolog City.

"It is heart-breaking to go to the different barangays and see people without clothes or slippers. It is also challenging when dealing with drunks," she says.

Theresa has learned to effectively communicate to fishers and their families, explaining the importance of



Theresa Sañado

protecting fish habitats (mangroves, sea grass, and coral reefs) and the significance of the ban on fishing of sardines for three months a year. She also helps villagers become aware and take advantage of livelihoods support opportunities.

"I was born into a very poor family. This has been a strong influence in my life," explains Theresa.

Being born into poverty did not hinder Theresa from studying hard and earning valedictorian honors from grade to high school. As a result she was offered scholarships throughout her formal education.

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries Theresa has committed every ounce of her energy to this field. Even at 50 years of age Theresa retains her enthusiasm and drive, looking and acting as if she was still in her twenties.

"Sometimes I think that I am coming to the end of my productive years. Yet there is so much to do for our society. Even if I am faced with many demands and challenges at work, I

"I don't think gender is a hindrance in my work as long as one can help others and contribute to society."

do what I can. If I have to buy fuel for our boats, wake up early to respond to calls to catch commercial vessels encroaching into municipal waters or face a barrage of complaints from fishers who do not yet understand some issues I will do it because that is what I am committed to do and because I care."

"I am fortunate that as a woman working in the field of fisheries, I have not felt any difficulties because of my gender. I don't think gender is a hindrance in my work as long as one can help others and contribute to society. However, there are women in the coastal communities who may not have been as fortunate as I am and they would benefit from more access to opportunities such as education."



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