

Improvement of the Socioeconomic Condition of Women in Small-Scale Fishing Communities

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The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was founded in 1947 under the United Nations charter to encourage the economic and social development of Asia and the Far East. The present name was adopted after a reorganization in 1974, and since then ESCAP has concentrated its efforts in six priority areas: food and agriculture; energy; raw materials and commodities; transfer of technology; international trade, transnational corporations and external financial resources transfers; and integrated rural development.

Chief of ESCAP's Agriculture Division, Sultan Z. Khan, kindly supplied this report on a current fisheries-related project. ESCAP also recently held an aquaculture study tour in China (see p. 20).

In 1981, ESCAP in collaboration with FAO initiated a project to improve the socioeconomic condition of small-scale fishing families through the activities performed by women. The project involved such communities in four countries, Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

The first phase of the project consisted of data collection to assess the productive role of women in small-scale fishing communities, since very little information existed on the subject. A survey planning meeting was held from 22 to 25 September 1981 at Manila, where government officials and consultants from the countries concerned drew up an outline of the village-level surveys to be conducted in selected fishing communities of the participating countries. The major points to be dealt with in the surveys were women's actual involvement in productive activities such as marketing, fish processing and net mending. The surveys formed the basis for



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the design and implementation of village action programs.

After the survey, during the second phase of the project, the consultants held another meeting in order to design pilot projects to test the possibility of increasing women's income by improving the quality and the productivity of the activities in which they were already engaged.

The pilot projects are now being implemented in the four participating countries. Activities include the creation

of loan funds for women to carry out fish processing in the Philippines and purchase of fishing gear in Fiji. In Papua New Guinea, it is planned that marketing facilities will be constructed to enable women to dispose of their catch under better conditions. In Indonesia, women's groups will carry out income-generating activities related to fisheries.

At a later stage, the governments concerned are expected to expand, on a nation-wide basis, the pilot project activities if they are found to be successful. ●