

**ANALYSIS OF THE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES MARKET SYSTEM IN ADEN:
RICH FISHERIES, POOR FISHING COMMUNITIES**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES MARKET ANALYSIS



Fishing communities are one of the poorest groups in Yemen and are extremely dependent on extracting resources from the sea, which is a seasonal activity highly exposed to a variety of risks. **Small-scale fishers** are hardly involved in the other more lucrative segments of the fish value-chain. Before the war, the unstable political situation, the lack of appropriate legislation that caused fish stock depletion and the destruction of fish habitats, and poor infrastructure have hampered the development of the fisheries sector, and contributed to maintaining small-scale fishers in a weak position in the fisheries market system.

Fisheries cooperatives play a central role in fishing communities and have continued to provide social protection to their members. Because of the conflict, their traditional social support has been extended to normally less vulnerable members who have also been directly affected. Many cooperatives are chronically indebted to the local middlemen, thus further reinforcing the latter's dominant position in the fisheries market system. It is not clear how the Ministry of Fish Wealth collaborate with the Ministry of Social Affairs on social protection.



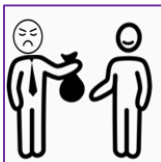
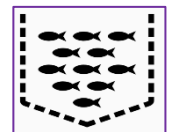
Most **marine resources were overexploited** before the crisis, and although there are no recent reliable statistics, the incapacity since 2015 of the responsible authorities to enforce existing regulations has encouraged opportunistic behaviours from national and foreign industrial fishing companies.

The crisis has enhanced **illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing**: fishers are desperately trying to generate more income by extracting more marine resources, disregarding existing regulations and further avoiding the authorities' taxes by bringing their catch to unofficial landing sites often managed by private or unlicensed auctioneers. Overfishing from small-scale fishers might have been mitigated by their restricted access to some fishing grounds and the loss of vessels and other productive assets, but there is no clear evidence of that.



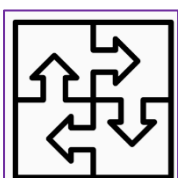
The commonly shared belief that "**Women** are not involved in the fisheries sector" is not correct: it is true that their involvement in fishing is limited, but they play a role, often not recognized, in maintaining the fishing gear (eg: repairing nets), and more importantly in fish processing at home on a small-scale level (drying, smoking and frying fish), and particularly in large-scale fish processing plants, where women represented, before the conflict, half of the workforce.

Developing **aquaculture/fish farming** is a large component of the 2012-2025 National Fisheries Strategy (which is still very relevant), as there is a strong potential in Yemen that is totally untapped.



Traditional humanitarian donors seem tired of giving money to Yemen. **New sources of funding** are needed if we are serious about alleviating the suffering of vulnerable and conflict affected Yemenis.

Fatigue and frustration from the fishers consulted were palpable, as many organizations have been "fishing" for information without necessarily providing assistance, and when that assistance was provided, the level of satisfaction was not particularly high. Satisfaction was however high for most assistance received from the national body supporting small and micro enterprises (SMEPS), as it allowed to get access to quality productive assets such as boats and engines.



The majority of challenges faced by fishing communities are structural ones, that have just been made more acute by the conflict. The severity of the structural challenges compounded by the effects of the conflict demand **integrated interventions**, as only addressing the negative effects of the conflict, for example by replacing lost fishing gear of a few vulnerable fisher households as a stand-alone intervention, is not sufficient to reduce fishing communities' chronic vulnerability. ICRC has shown over the past few years a consistent interest in supporting fishing communities, and I believe our

voice and role are respected by the different stakeholders (except private sector actors probably). Considering their existing knowledge of fishing communities and of the fisheries sector, as well as some levels of complementarity in the previous interventions implemented (eg: cash-for-work project to rehabilitate stairs to facilitate access from the main road to the beach & landing site, supporting fishers with assets and those without assets to create indirectly job opportunities for the crew members), the ICRC teams in Aden and Taiz should thus be confident in their ability to bring value to the humanitarian sector's interventions targeting fishing communities.



1.2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ICRC YEMEN DELEGATION



A. Secure funding beyond our traditional donors:

- IFAD, World Bank, JICA and GIZ have been historically engaged in fisheries in Yemen, and most of their ambitious plans have been lambasted by the conflict; ICRC with its emergency work and network on the ground is well positioned to play a key role in the Nexus and use humanitarian diplomacy to engage the various stakeholders. A starting point could be sharing an external version of the full report to trigger a debate on fisheries, within the newly created Livelihoods working group for example.

- Commercial private sector actors (large traders, exporters and international fish buyers) have strategic interests in Yemen and ICRC could help connect good willed private sector actors and fisheries cooperatives, within a decent work framework, so that fisheries cooperatives gain a more powerful position in the fisheries market system.

B. Engage with national and cooperation partners that have a track record of supporting small-scale fisheries to harness synergies between interventions (for example, the fishers trained by NRC in fiberglass repair and engine maintenance could be recruited to train some of the cooperatives we will be supporting, and could provide services via a voucher system).



C. Help fishing communities diversify their livelihoods, by adding value to the natural resources exploited rather than just depleting them:

- within the current fish value-chain (improved equipment and fish handling, improved processing and marketing)

- within the current fisheries sector but outside the traditional fish value-chain (ie: more focused on small-scale fish farming)

- outside the fisheries sector but closely connected to it (ie: integrated fish and chicken farming, seaweed farming, using fish waste to produce animal feed)

D. Ensure that our interventions do no harm and do not contribute to strengthening the structural drivers of fishing communities' vulnerabilities (at minimum), but ideally, we need to ensure that all our interventions contribute to reducing their vulnerabilities (ie: increase their resilience).



E. Use a "Push & Pull strategy" to support fisheries cooperatives, so that the fisheries market system works better for poor fishing communities.

- Push interventions: material assistance is accompanied by training. We need to closely check the quality of the items and exact specification before placing an order from a supplier. We need to better assess when procurement from domestic suppliers is feasible. Procuring fishing gear from local traders can help stimulate the local economy and indirectly support local traders.

- Pull interventions are needed to create a more enabling market environment for fisheries cooperatives (eg: facilitate access to low interest loans from one of our existing FSP, help connect fisheries cooperatives more directly with buyers). This means helping fisheries cooperatives gain more power in the market system.

- Strengthen the fisheries cooperatives' natural role as social protection provider

F. Invest more in monitoring at outcome level, not just at process and output levels (using remote monitoring).



1.3 METHODOLOGY

This market analysis followed the steps recommended in the RCRC Movement Market Analysis Guidance (MAG), with elements from the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach, essential in the efforts to tackle some of the structural issues affecting fishing communities. This study was led by the Geneva-based cash & markets specialist in Aden in March 2020, with close support from the resident cash & markets specialist based in Sana'a, but who travelled to Aden for this market assessment that took place over 6 days. 4 fisheries cooperatives were consulted during focus group discussions, and other key informants included representatives from SMEPS, NRC, FAO, UNDP, Polish Humanitarian Action, the Ministry of Fish Wealth and a limited number of traders, middlemen and restaurants. The limited timeframe did not allow for extensive interviews with other important actors in the fisheries market system, such as exporters and representatives of fish processing plants. The small-scale fisheries market system map below helped the analysis team visualize the complex web of actors and factors at in this sector.

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES MARKET SYSTEM – CURRENT SITUATION - Aden

