

Preface

Fishing communities, occupying the very margins of the land mass as it were, were among the worst affected in the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004. Apart from significant losses of life and injury, fishing communities reported loss of houses, craft, gear, equipment and other means of livelihoods.

The period since then has seen considerable mobilization of aid towards relief and rehabilitation of all affected communities. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the interventions that have taken place to rehabilitate the fisheries sector and communities dependent on fisheries and to identify the issues and challenges emerging, ICSF commissioned studies in four countries, namely, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India, in October 2005. A particular area of interest was to understand the role, if any, that had been played by traditional institutions in fishing communities in mediating tsunami relief and rehabilitation, with a view to assessing the potential role of these institutions in longer-term rehabilitation and resource management.

These studies were presented at the *Regional Workshop on Post-tsunami Rehabilitation of Fishing Communities and Fisheries-based Livelihoods*, held in Chennai, India on 18 and 19 January 2006, with the participation of fishworker organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, policymakers and representatives of multilateral agencies, from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and Maldives.

A one-day NGO meeting was held prior to this, on 17 January, to enable organizations working with fishing communities in tsunami rehabilitation to share experiences and learn from one another. The meeting was also meant to identify some of the key issues/challenges emerging for longer-term rehabilitation, drawing on the country-level studies, and to put forth recommendations on basic issues that need to be addressed by ongoing rehabilitation interventions. These recommendations were presented to the workshop on 19 January 2006, and have since been widely circulated.

This publication, which contains the proceedings of the workshop, the reports of the country studies, and the recommendations made at the workshop, will be useful to those engaged in the post-tsunami rehabilitation of fishing communities. It is hoped that it will also influence the course of rehabilitation in ways that benefit small-scale fishing communities and help improve their livelihoods in the long term.