

Impact of Corona virus in Fisheries Sector

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Introduction

Starting from Wuhan City, China, on December 31 2019, COVID-19 pandemic has immobilized the world by its health and economic shock (Hongzhou et al., 2020). By observing the terrible extent of the outbreak, World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global emergency on January 30 2020 (Sohrabi et al., 2020). As the disease is highly transmissible and vaccine has not been developed, so the ways to "flatten the curve" (Nicola et al., 2020) include the imposition of self- quarantine, social distancing, travel restrictions, close down of different public facilities, transportation, even lockdown of the entire country (Dev & Sengupta, 2020). The mortality rate is 3.5 percent globally (WHO, 2020a), but its psychological and economic strike is pernicious (Chohan, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly spread around the world with extensive social and economic effects. This pandemic affect small-scale fish farmer, fish market, fish processing industry and coastal fishing communities. The consequences of covid 19 included complete shut-downs of some fisheries, knock-on economic effects from market disruptions, increased health risks for fishers. Some positive outcomes during covid 19 such as food sharing, the revival of local food networks, increases in local sales through direct marketing and deliveries, collective actions to safeguard rights, collaborations between communities and governments, and reduced fishing pressure in some places. While the crisis is still unfolding, there is an urgent need to coordinate, plan and implement effective short- and long-term responses. Thus, we urge governments, development organizations, NGOs, donors, the private sector, and researchers to rapidly mobilize in support of small-scale fishers, coastal fishing communities, and associated civil society organizations, and suggest actions that can be taken by each to help these groups respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indian Fisheries in the pre-COVID-19 period

The COVID-19 shock is playing out in almost a similar manner in all around the world by squeezing out demand and supply and the consequent economic slowdown. In India, the problem might be long-lasting because before the pre-COVID-19 period Indian economy had deteriorated

Highlight Points

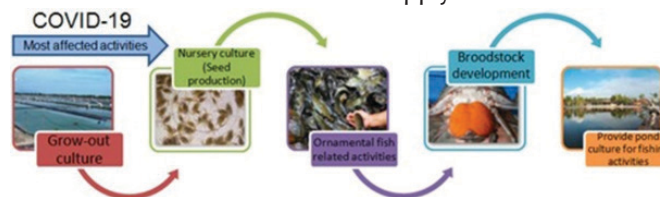
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly spread around the world with extensive social and economic effects.
- ▶ The pandemic affect small-scale fishers, marketing, processing industry and coastal fishing communities.
- ▶ Its disruption of demand and supply chain of agricultural commodity like fish and fishery products for the prolonged nation-wide lockdown will directly affect 14.5 million people associated with the sector.
- ▶ Thus, we urge governments, development organizations, NGOs, donors, the private sector, and researchers to rapidly mobilize in support of small-scale fishers, coastal fishing communities, and associated civil society organizations to help and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

significantly after years of infirm performance (Dev & Sengupta, 2020). In 2018-19 India's fish production was 13.34 million metric tonnes which was about 6 percent greater than the previous year (Seafood Source, 2020). As per seafood export is concern, it is the fourth biggest exporter in the world (Seafood Source).

COVID-19 pandemic affect local / global fish food chains?

Fish and fisheries products are among the most traded food products in the world, with 38 percent of fish/seafood entering international trade. At the same time, fishing and fish farming are important at local level for the livelihoods of many fish-dependent communities, as well as for low-income countries and small island developing states.

Measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. closure of food services, cessation of tourism, reduction of transport services, trade restrictions, etc.) have caused disruption in both domestic and international supply chains.



What are the implementations for most vulnerable

The pandemic has created in an unprecedented economic, social and health crisis with impacts on the most vulnerable groups including women (harvesters, processors and vendors), migrant fishers, fish workers, ethnic minorities and crew members. Many individuals are not registered, operate in the informal labour market with no labour market policies, including no social protection and no access to relief package/aid. These conditions might exacerbate the secondary effects of COVID-19, including poverty and hunger.

Working conditions and the safety of fishers at sea will be negatively affected should the number of fishers available to crew vessels be reduced. The availability of crew may be reduced for various reasons including inter alia contracting COVID-19, restrictions on movements or wider lockdowns. In addition, it is difficult for fishermen to maintain physical distancing measures of a metre apart on board fishing vessels. Should fishing vessels be forced to operate with fewer crew members, this may result in working longer hours, which will compromise safety measures and thereby put the well-being and health of fishers at risk.

Impact of pandemic in the Aquaculture sector

The aquaculture sector and its practices are recognized for the importance in providing food (high quality proteins) and employment for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. The rapid, global spread of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (COVID-19) and the effects of control measures may have threatened jobs and incomes, generating food-insecurity and threatening the social capital. The pandemic will exert a detrimental effect on the global population both exacerbating and creating new sources of inequality and poverty.

Impact of pandemic

- Lockdown
- Restaurants limited working time
- Ban of celebrations
- Consequences in Aquaculture production:
- Low demand, decreased sales (40-50%)
- Uncertainty of production/market for next period

Support for aquaculture industry to reduce the impact of pandemic

- No specific measures/interventions in aquaculture sector
- Economic measures
- Support of payment of minimal salary amount for employees
- Subsidized contributions for the employees
- Delayed and reprogrammed repayment of loans to the Bank
- Non-interest credits for small and medium enterprises

The economic impact of COVID-19 on national fisheries

- The COVID-19 impact on both coasts east and west and economic impact has been swift and severe.
- As restaurants closed, a primary distribution channel for seafood closed with them.
- Another significant percentage of seafood sales has traditionally involved shipping product to overseas markets.



- However, with the grounding of international flights, getting produce to markets created additional hardships.
- National Fishermen, the nation's fisheries reported a sales decline as high as 95%. Unlike other agricultural sectors that have seen a significant increase in grocery store sales as a result of restaurant closures, stores have cut back on seafood purchases

How Pandemic Is Affecting Fisheries and Aquaculture Food Systems

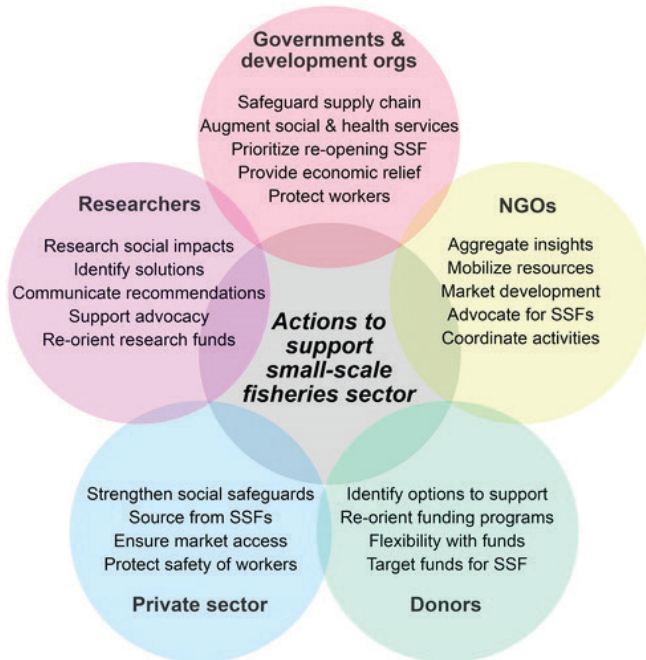
The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) started as a locally circulating infection. On 11 March 2020, WHO characterized the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic with a growing number of cases reported outside of China, from Eastern Asia to Europe and North America (WHO, 2020a). In the first half of 2020, the pandemic entered all regions of the world, some worse than others, including many major fish-producing and/or fish-consuming countries and global suppliers of fish feed. While fishing and aquaculture and the distribution of their products are considered an essential activity in most countries, the measures adopted to contain the spread of infection caused significant direct and indirect challenges to the sector, as explained below

The direct impact of COVID-19 on commercial fishermen's safety and health

- In addition to economic challenges, reducing the spread of COVID-19 on commercial fishing vessels presents its own unique challenges.
- Work environments, even onboard larger commercial fishing vessels, provide little space for workers, with sleeping bunks and communal eating areas.
- Typically laid out in close quarters.
- Fishermen are also often required to accommodate fisheries observers (scientists who gather data for monitoring fisheries).
- These workers live in close quarters with fishermen and travel from vessel to vessel, which can further elevate potential COVID-19 exposures.

Conclusion

COVID-19 outbreak has been deemed a global health emergency, and its impact on developing countries like India is one of heightening concern. With 1.3 billion populations and the precarious situation of the economy in the pre-COVID period, prolonged lockdown would be ruinous for the economy. While there are some positive initiatives and outcomes, these are likely far outweighed by the negative consequences, especially for groups that



are most vulnerable to these changes. Furthermore, the crisis is far from over. The short-term impacts that we have highlighted here are likely to be followed by long-term crises related to economic hardships and global food crises. Globally, the SSF sector plays a vital role in food and livelihood security. Thus, we emphasize the need for rapid mobilization by all parties in support of the SSF sector. Short-term responses must be swift and targeted to the most vulnerable. Especially agriculture and the allied sector will be in a most vulnerable condition. India, with its apt governance, took the situation as a challenge and doing in all way of possibilities to combat with the pandemic. At the same time, the government and policymakers need to be prepared to minimise the impact of the shock and V-shaped recovery of the economy in the post COVID period.

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