

Case Study # 3: *Sustainable Solutions*

Sustainable fisheries improve food security and preserve natural resources

Through partnerships with community and private sector institutions, USAID is supporting sustainable fisheries in Bangladesh and Central America.

Eight years ago, a full fishing net was a rare sight on the shores of the Hail Haor wetland in northern Bangladesh. For the poorer residents of the area, whose food and income depend on wild and aquatic plants, life was increasingly desperate. Households competed to buy fishing rights from the local elite, who controlled access to local bodies of water.

Today, thanks to the USAID-funded Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH, which translates in Bangla as “fish”), conflict over fishing rights has been replaced by cooperation. Through an innovative system of “co-management” of wetlands led by community institutions and the local government, MACH successfully revived fisheries in three



Credit: Sirajul Hossain

degraded wetlands, benefitting 184,000 of Bangladesh’s poorest citizens. Over seven years, fish catches rose by 140 percent, consumption went up by 52 percent, and average daily household incomes increased by 33 percent.

On the other side of the globe, high demand for lobster in recent years has led to overfishing and destructive practices in Central America. Lobster stocks were estimated to be down by at least 35 percent and fishers were being forced to travel farther and fish in deeper waters at great personal risk due to unsafe diving practices. Furthermore, the worldwide economic crisis drove the price of lobster lower than the cost of production.

USAID, in collaboration with private sector and civil society partners, established the Global FISH Alliance (G-FISH), to promote sustainable fisheries and responsible aquaculture. The world’s largest full-



service restaurant company, Darden Restaurants, is the major private sector stakeholder in G-FISH and has been critical to its collaborative action. Darden Restaurants is one of the largest buyers from G-FISH’s first targeted effort, the Spiny Lobster fishery in Honduras and Nicaragua. While the fishery provides a major source of income for coastal communities, it has significant environmental consequences and labor issues. G-FISH takes a comprehensive approach that balances economic, environmental, governmental, and social components to enhance livelihoods, ensure sustainable supplies of fish products, and conserve marine biodiversity. In Honduras, the application of innovative social change methodologies is galvanizing support among public and private stakeholders in the value chain for major, large-scale reform of the fisheries sector.

Through Feed the Future, we will focus on bringing together the private sector and local communities to create truly sustainable solutions. We are learning from these experiences and investing in climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable agricultural development. We will build on our successes and also seek innovative ways to work with the private sector and other development partners to drive sustainable and equitable solutions.