

## **Emerging ICT applications for strengthening of fisheries information system; A Sri Lankan experience**

H.D. Wimalasena, D.D.G.L. Dahanayaka\* and K.H.M.L. Amaralal

National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency  
(NARA), Crow Island, Colombo 15, Sri Lanka

\*Corresponding author: ddgdahanayaka@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

At present, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used across the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Sri Lanka for resource assessment, capture or culture to processing and commercialization. Especially in fisheries sector, ICT is widely used in applications such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for navigation and location finding, mobile phones for trading, information exchange, and emergencies, Satellite Remote Sensing (RS) for fishery forecasting and culture site selection, and radio for communication with fishers. But usage of web-based information and networking resources of these sectors are still emerging in Sri Lanka.

Efficient information sharing system among resource users and fishery managers are essential for the sustainable management of aquatic resources. To fulfill this requirement, National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) had foreseen the setting up of a user friendly system and launched the 'Fisheries Information Centre (FIC) on 07<sup>th</sup> May 2013, to provide timely and accurate information on fisheries related problems for all stakeholders. The aim of this paper is to discuss the present status of the FIC and its role on development of Sri Lankan fisheries sector with evolving ICT applications.

At the initial phase, FIC provided mobile phone interface to connect with the centre for their information needs. It can facilitate dialogue among fisheries communities and with government planners, researchers, and technical experts in sharing information for improvement in the efficiency and profitability of the fisheries industry. Through this dialogue FIC is able to disseminate scientific and legislative information, professional experiences and good practices to the fisheries sector (fishing, aquaculture, fish processing and marketing). From the start, FIC was successfully engaged to solve more than 500 telephone queries, which were categorized under academic and research related services (37%); consumer and industry services (33%); fishermen welfare and disaster

related services (8%); trade and investment related services (6%); general comments and communications (16%). Delivering extension services such as conducting workshops for fishers and fishery related stakeholders, policy makers and politicians is another goal of FIC. Further, fisheries related information such as weather conditions, natural disasters, market fish prices, fishery forecasting etc. is also disseminated through the FIC. As the internet is emerging as a tool with potential to contribute to the development of Fisheries in developing countries like Sri Lanka, FIC focused on Setting up of a Web Portal for efficient information sharing between local and foreign stakeholders in near future.

**Keywords:** Sri Lanka, fisheries sector, ICT, information sharing