

CASE STUDY



FISH PROCESSOR



COVID-19 Effects on the Fisheries Sector in the Gulf of the Mottama



The Products Are Ready!

Fishery provides incomes and foods for the people in the Gulf of the Mottama (GoMP). Fisheries sector plays a vital role of domestic income and food security. Fishery products served as a major role of protein, supplementary foods and diets for the people. Department of Fisheries reports about 70 % of fishery products are produce for direct consumption and about 10 % is processed as dried fish and algae for production of fish sauce, paste, spices, salted and agaragar by the coastal and the inland fishing communities. This is how the open fisheries provides basic food and protein for the small scale and subsistence fishers.

The inland fisheries of the GoMP can be seen as a significant role economic driver of the fishers that composites with leasable fisheries, indigenous managed fisheries and habitat conservations, wild capture, pond culture and capture based system for sustainable fish production. The GoMP has been injecting the people through improving fisheries livelihoods and its value chain.

The global pandemic brings a shock within shocks and stresses to the people those who are working in the fisheries production. Despite the uncertainties and numbers of challenges are associated with COVID-19 effects, People in the GoMP have been continuing fisheries activities and businesses within available resources.

Daw Yicho, a woman fish processor from Paung Township

Daw Yicho, a woman processor from Paung have seen positive and potentials future of her family business. She recalls the tragedies of COVID-19 that has effected reduced of income and discontinuation of processing functions. She is leading a small processing business over one year with four female workers. The processing activities are dried fish, dried shrimp, fish paste, shrimp paste, fish sauce, shrimp sauce, and salted fish.

"I have started this small business with four female workers in 2019. We are ready to sell the products once the restrictions were released."

Daw Yicho was an active community member in the GoM project. Since 2019, she had participated in the project activities such as awareness events, village

action planning process, community formation of fishers, receiving business supports and livelihoods trainings.

Were the processors from the GoMP able to overcome the crisis of COVID-19?

From catch to products, fish and shrimp processing functions are specific and systematic. Basic processing skills and techniques are required for the particular products of dried or paste or spices or salted. While the business was running with low income and profits, COVID-19 lessened processing activities and size of products. She could not provide regular salaries and had a thought to reduce the labours. Since less orders received from traders, collectors and local vendors, stocks of the products mounted like a big store. However, she could lead the business with her present workers and have faced challenges associated with the travel restrictions, limited access to the market and exposure risk to the virus.

Income and production a month	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic	Difference In %
Two tides a month	6-7 Million K	5-6 Million K	▽ 25%
	50-60 viss	55-65 viss	△ 10%
One tide a month	3-4 Million K	2-3 Million K	▽ 25%
	25-30 viss	27-35 viss	△ 10%

Income of a processing business before and during the pandemic

According to the fishing schedule for a month, one tide for 15 days, she lead her team to make fish processing on the boats and dry shores naturally. The monthly income from her processing business could get four to five million kyats for two tides in normal operation. During the pandemic, it has reduced about 20% to 25% of monthly income. Due to potential increased of the fish and shrimp stocks, she could produce more of the products about 10% compare to the normal season. This condition can be found the same in other processors.

Access to market is restricted

During COVID-19, the price of salt has decreased from 9,000 K to 6,000 K a viss and most of the processors could not access the sufficient amount of salts to produce the salted products. Availability of ice is limited with same vale as of normal condition 5,000 K per 10 KG (2 sq ft size box). The closing of fishing season from June-August has favored positive increasement of fish stocks in the GoM. Travel restrictions and imposed quarantine measures in towns were main challenges for the processors to send their products or sell the produts freely.



Drying fishes with the bamboo trays

How could the GoMP get back the normalities of fisheries activities?

She has shared her opinons to resume the normalities of the fisheries that need coordinated actions from government, companies, community and NGOs. She has asked the Gulf of the Mottama Project to support substantial loans, diversified livelihoods and income opportunities, non-fishery livelihood alternatives, such as agriculture, livestock and aquaculture, off-farm skills, and access to financial services. She suggested the GoMP to facilitate the discussion with companies and buyers to stick the present market chain that practiced by the traders access to sell to mid buyer and mid buyer sell to small buyers. And she thought that the logistical and accessible issues which are still remaining in the hands of small and medium scale processors, more than one to two hours drive from home to markets and retails. She hopes to address these issues through the supports of GoMP, DoF and companies in the light of implementation of Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP).



Fish and shrimp pastes contained in the fishes with the bamboo trays

“Address the issues through the supports of GoMP, DoF and companies in the light of implementation of COVID-19 Relief Plan”.