Are we finding it

hard to catch fish ?

Is there a problem with our marine resources?

Our marine resources provide our homes with food and money. Many communities have overharvested their marine resources. What about us?

Are we catching less?

Are we catching only smaller sizes because the bigger ones have disappeared?

Are commercially important marine animals hard to find?

MAJOR CAUSES OF REDUCED CATCHES INCLUDE:

➤ More people fishing and catching too many fish

➤ Using modern or illegal fishing gear that catch small fish or make it too easy

➤ Catching fish before they have had time to breed

➤ Destroying areas that are important to fish such as coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves

➤ Activities on land such as logging or farming that can affect the sea through rivers and runoff

HOW CAN WE START?

We should discuss in our communities whether we can see signs of overfishing. If so are there things we can DO NOW? What about the management rules to the right?

We must get everyone in the community involved.

We also need to make other people aware of the need to manage and protect our marine resources and important marine habitats. We can distribute this poster and other information in clinics, schools, churches and other places where people congregate. We can discuss common problems – say in radio interviews and at public meetings. We can also seek assistance from national authorities or NGOs.

The most effective management of our marine resources (including mangroves, lagoons and coral reefs) will need us to all work together and take action!

WE MUST ACT NOW BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

Most of the reductions in fish catch are caused by humans – that is why we have to manage our marine resources. We have to have rules or regulations to protect our marine life and the places in which they live. National fisheries authorities and departments impose rules to help keep this important food and income coming in and we must support them. A marine ecosystem that collapses is difficult to revive again.

Some rules can be made by our local communities. We can:

▶ **Protect plant-eating fish**
Some fish, such as parrotfish, unicornfish and surgeonfish eat seaweeds that would otherwise over grow coral reefs.

▶ **Protect watershed areas**
Seek government support to reduce sediments and nutrients running off the land; these cause damage to many marine habitats.

▶ **Protect habitats**
All species need places to eat, live and grow. Some species use different habitats in different parts of their lives. Important habitats include coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves.

▶ **Leave sleeping fish**
Ban underwater torches and spears at night when fish are sleeping.

▶ **Leave small fish & shellfish**
Allow individuals to breed at least once before they can be caught.

▶ **Leave some big fish & shellfish**
Larger individuals produce many more eggs. Protect or leave some of the large fish so they can continue to reproduce and provide fish for us to catch.

▶ **Establish no-take areas**
Set up areas to protect fish habitat (coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves). No-take areas may allow fish catches in nearby areas to eventually improve.

When you want a coconut, you don't chop down the whole tree.

So, when you want a fish, DON'T kill the whole reef.

▶ **Ban damaging fishing methods**
People using poisons and explosives are destroying our coral reefs and the marine life which depends on them.

▶ **Ban or reduce fishing on spawning fish**
Ban fishing at times and in areas where fish are known to gather to spawn.

▶ **Ban small mesh net fishing**
Restrict the length of gill nets used. Limit the number of fish traps or fish fences.

Information for fishing communities

There are many other actions we can take. Not all of the above measures are appropriate for all species. A series information sheets produced by SPC (www.spc.int) and LMMA (www.lmmanetwork.org) is available. Each individual information sheet should be consulted for the management options that are appropriate for specific species.

Trochus

Sea cucumbers

Groupers

For further information, or to obtain copies of this poster and the *SPC/LMMA Information kit for fishing communities*, contact: