



Photo: Oddgeir Alvheim

Hands-on training gives scientists and technicians experience with marine field-work and research methodologies.

Award to Norwegian development assistance in fisheries

For 30 years, the Nansen Programme has been supporting development in fisheries management and research in developing countries. The unique programme has assisted coastal states all over the world to survey their fish stocks, develop national research competence and establish management systems. On September 21, the Nansen Programme will be receive the Swedish seafood award for its sustained and successful efforts.

BY YVONNE ROBBERSTAD AND TORE STRØMME

Although the partners, source of funding and research technology applied have all changed in the course of the years, the principle of the programme has remained the same: to assist developing countries in taking own responsibility for the management of their fish resources. The Institute of Marine Research (IMR) has been the executing agency for the programme and

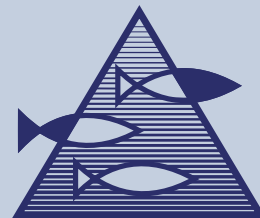
contributed substantially with its research expertise, while the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries has supported the partners in their efforts to build up responsible resources management systems.

RV "DR. FRIDTJOF NANSEN" AN IMPORTANT PLATFORM

The research vessel "Dr. Fridtjof Nansen" has been an essential tool for the Nansen Programme since its start in the Western Indian Ocean in 1975. With both the Norwegian and UN flags in the mast, the vessel was able to operate across national borders, even in conflict areas. This ship was replaced by a new, modern vessel in 1994, but the original name was retained.

During the first few years, "Dr. Fridtjof Nansen" was engaged to assist a number of Asian, African and Latin-American countries in surveying the resources in their own waters, looking for potential new resources. This was done under the auspices of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and was to a large degree financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Close to 60 countries have so far been assisted with surveys and training. Training in fisheries research was offered and many local scientists and technical personnel have gained practical experience in planning and carrying out research cruises while onboard.





INSTITUTE OF MARINE RESEARCH
HAVFORSKNINGSINSTITUTTET

Award to Norwegian development assistance in fisheries



NAMIBIA – AN EXEMPLARY CASE

In the course of the 1980s, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad, gradually took over the financing of the programme as FAO and UNDP were forced to reduce their contributions. New guidelines regarding which countries could receive support were applied, and cooperation was largely concentrated to countries receiving bilateral support from Norway, such as Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The combined focus on research and management was strengthened, but with different emphasis in the three countries. From 1994 onwards, increased importance was laid on strengthening local institutions through transfer of expertise. As the long-term aim was for institutions to be able to operate independently, an orderly phasing out of the assistance was built into the plan.

In Namibia, the programme has been especially successful. After 10 years the country could fully take over responsibility for monitoring of its own fisheries resources and after fifteen years of support from Norway the assistance has been phased out, leaving an independent institution behind. According to an international evaluation of the cooperative programme, carried out in 2005, the combination of practical training, close cooperation in research between two institutions and the long term education of Namibian students in Norway has been the main reason for Namibia coming out in top of the class in fisheries research and management in Africa.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Nansen Programme formally came to an end in 2006. However, the main concept will continue within a different framework and under a new name. The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) Programme is based on an agreement between Norad, FAO and IMR, and will follow the same principles as the Nansen Programme;

practical survey and research training on the one hand and support for strengthening of management systems on the other. FAO has prime responsibility for the new programme, while IMR continues to be responsible for the marine fieldwork and training in research methodologies. This closes the circle, with IMR once again in an international programme led by FAO.

ECOSYSTEMS IN FOCUS

While the Nansen Programme was largely based on cooperation with individual countries, EAF will adopt a more regional approach, focusing on the ecosystem. In the course of its first five-year period, efforts will concentrate on West Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. This autumn will see the start of a major effort to survey the marine ecosystem on the East African coast (Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya), and around its offshore island states (Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles). This phase will last for three years, during which time “Dr. Fridtjof Nansen” will alternate between cruises on the east and west coasts of Africa in collaboration with a total of five regional programmes.

This time, however, the main task is not to find new fisheries resources for developing countries, but rather to monitor in many cases overstressed ecosystems, in order to bring harvesting levels within sustainable limits. The effects of global warming on the marine environment will have serious implications for developing countries, and carrying out reference studies that allow changes to be monitored and documented have high priority. This will strengthen the hand of developing coastal states in future international negotiations.

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