

Allen part of international project

Research to help small-scale fisheries

CLAYTON HUNT
COASTER

Sharmene Allen, a former resident of Harbour Breton, is currently a first year part-time doctoral student at Memorial University specializing in fisheries governance.

To help earn her PhD in Geography at MUN, Ms. Allen is a key part of an international project aimed at bringing a higher profile to small-scale fisheries around the world.

Ms. Allen is a member of a MUN team that is led by Dr. Ratana Chuenpagdee, the Canadian Research Chair in Natural Resource Sustainability and Community Development in the Department of Geography.

Dr. Chuenpagdee is the project director for the six-year, \$2.5 million funded project, Too Big

To Ignore: Global Partnerships for Small-Scale Fisheries Research.

The project, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, involves 15 partners including intergovernmental organizations, research and academic institutions and non-governmental organizations and 62 researchers based in Canada and 26 other countries.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to become part of the MUN project after meeting Dr. Chuenpagdee who convinced her to become part of the research team.

Allen said, "I have always had an interest in small-scale fisheries and, following my 12 years of work with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans I have developed a great respect for small-scale fish harvesters and would like to help this type of fishery move forward."

Small-Scale Fisheries

Small-Scale fisheries are defined as fisheries that operate using vessels less than 12 metres. This type of fishery is of vital importance to many parts of the world as it is to Newfoundland.

In 2011, small-scale harvesters landed \$81 million, employing about 6,000 fish harvesters (skippers and crews) and thousands of people in the processing and marine sectors.

However, despite the importance of small-scale fisheries in the world community, most of the data collected about fisheries centers on the large-scale, industrialized fishing sector, while small-scale fisheries are seriously understudied.

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Why project is necessary

In an article carried in the winter 2013 edition of *MLN's* research magazine, "Research Matters", Dr. Chuenpagadee said that in addition to providing employment, small-scale fisheries provide a food source for millions of people around the world.

People say that one way of addressing food security is through large-scale fishing. However, the fish caught by industrial fleets doesn't always go to the people who need it.

Fish caught in local waters by locally owned fishing boats can be supplied directly to local communities throughout the world and no one needs to go hungry. The key question is: If you remove the small-scale harvester, who is going to feed those people?

Dr. Chuenpagadee also stated that the needs and interests of this fishery are often ignored in decision-making and policy decisions by all levels of governments.

An estimated 560 million people, or 8% of the global population, directly or indirectly depend on fishing for a living. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, more than 90% of these people are involved in small-scale fisheries.

These figures suggest that small-scale fisheries are simply "too big to ignore".

Goals of the project

Allen said, "Small-scale fisheries are typically ignored by governments and often have a negative connotation. I don't believe that, and I believe this project will help change that attitude.

"We need to see attitudes towards this fishery change especially in light of the fact that over the last decade or so we've seen small scale fishers threatened by big industrial fisheries especially on the west coast of Canada.

"We also need to protect a

way of life in Newfoundland that has helped sustain rural areas for well over 400 years."

Allen said that her work in the project will focus on the small-scale fishery in the Coast of Bays.

"This area of the province has not seen any detailed study related to the small-scale fishery so I want to be a part of this work," she said.

"I want to know why the Coast of Bays survived the Moratorium, and I want to understand what the fishery means to the harvesters and the communities in that region.

"I also want to look at the interplay between the traditional fishery and the aquaculture industry. I think both can work together but it has to be done on a basis of cooperation and consultation.

"In addition to developing an internationally based databank of information on small-scale fisheries, the project's overall aim is to make governments more conscious of the small-scale fishery and to give it the respect it deserves.

"By earning this respect from the project, we would like to see harvesters and communities be a part of the decision making policies that will go into shaping the fishery of the future.

"Small-scale fisheries have a place in rural Newfoundland and rural Newfoundland really needs to play an active part in making sure that it's a part of this fishery's future.

"Needless to say I am very excited about the project and the opportunity to do research in the Coast of Bays Region. It is an opportunity for me to give back to the people and place that I cherish. It is important to me that the small-scale fishery remains the cornerstone of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is an important sector of the province's economy - and it needs to be recognized as such.

editor@thecoaster.ca



Dr. Ratana Chuenpagdee, the Canada Research Chair in Natural Resource Sustainability and Community Development in the Department of Geography at Memorial University is the project director of the SSHRC-funded project: Too Big To Ignore: Global Partnerships for Small-Scale Fisheries Research. There is an emerging and dedicated recognition worldwide that further erosion and displacement of small-scale fisheries should be prevented and concerted efforts must be made to promote global understanding of their importance to livelihoods, well being, poverty alleviation, food security, environmental sustainability, and community resilience. Submitted photo