



UNDP MED4EBM Project Team Holds an Open Meeting with Aqaba Fishermen

Following signing a contract Between UNDP Jordan Country Office and Thaghr el Ordon Aqaba Fishermen Society for conducting a fisheries management data gathering campaign in the framework of the ENI CBC MED supported Project Mediterranean Forum for Applied Ecosystem-Based Management (MED4EBM), the Project's Team held a meeting on Tuesday September 5th 2023 in the open space in front of the New Fish Market in Aqaba with about 40 fishmen after completing their data delivery of the day. The meeting was friendly, direct, frank and touched on several aspects that concern Aqaba Fishermen.

The meeting started with the Project's Coordinator Dr. Mohammad Badran discussing the importance of the data gathering campaign and its expected benefits to the fishermen community and to the protection of marine resources and emphasizing Aqaba's name as a tourist attraction nationally and internationally for enjoying its attractions that include local fish meals as high ranking priority. With positive interactive discussion, Dr. Badran explained the indicators to be recorded and the best way have systematic and reproducibly data gathering.

In addition to appreciating the initiate of having Aqaba Fishermen Society as a main source and primary target for receiving the information on fisheries the fishermen expressed some of their professional practices in sustaining the marine living resources stocks and protecting the environment. They emphasized that they only use nondestructive fishing methods and avoid fishing during the reproductive seasons. They also fish far from coral reefs and don't use bottom nets. Surface nets, mainly for collecting bait, cages with wide opening and line are the main fishing techniques practiced. Fisherman also expressed that they are very careful in dealing with endangered species and nontarget bycatch. The fixed practice here is that these are returned to sea following best practices to return them safe and healthy.

Fishermen also expressed some challenges that they face and some of their concerns. Collecting live bait and the pressing need for them to use it due to lack of technological means of detecting fish aggregates is one of their daily challenges because sites of collecting live bait have been reduced for the wording of Aqaba Marine Reserve bylaw. Using Fish Finders as a technological solution for detecting fish aggregates and arrangements under consideration by Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority were discussed. The continued shrinking of fisheries due to coastal development was also brought up as a concern. However, some fishermen indicated that they are aware of possible alternative livelihoods like aquaculture that could be in practice shortly in Aqaba. Another important concern brought up by the fishermen and they strongly recommended to have it resolved is old marine litter remains on the seabed. Fishing lines may entangle with these remains and get lost in the sea resulting in financial and environmental impacts.

The meeting ended in an optimistic outlook that this short and intense intervention by MED4EBM Project will continue through upcoming initiatives keeping fishermen in the heart of informed fisheries management and working together for a bright future of sustainable fisheries in Aqaba Jordan.

