

ETHICS IN PRACTICE:

Although different ethical theories may have different priority principles and reasoning behind them, a consensus has been forming about the main principles of bioethics:

- Human dignity, human rights and justice, which refers to the duty to promote universal respect for the human person. In the context of fisheries, this principle relates, for example, to fishers' self-determination, access to fishing resources and the right to food. It is best represented by a rights-based approach in ethics that emphasizes the protection of the personal domain of each individual. It may require, however, the establishment of individual or community rights, the exact nature of which will depend on local conditions.

- Beneficence, which concerns human welfare, reducing the harms and optimizing the benefits of social practices. In the context of fisheries, this principle needs to be observed when the effects of policies and practices upon the livelihoods of fishing communities are evaluated. The principle relates to working conditions (safety on board), as well as food quality and safety. The issue of genetically modified organisms should also be addressed in this context (FAO, 2001b). This principle invites an ethical approach to fisheries that puts consequences to general welfare in focus.

- Cultural diversity, pluralism and tolerance, which relates to the need to take different value systems into account within the limits of other moral principles. The pressing moral issues in fisheries take different shapes across different cultures, and it is an important moral demand that people themselves define how their interests are best served in a particular cultural setting. This principle squares well with dialogical ethics, which stresses the actual participation of those concerned.

- Solidarity, equity and cooperation, which refers to the importance of collaborative action, sharing scientific and other forms of knowledge, and nondiscrimination. In the context of fisheries, this principle underpins the moral imperative to eradicate poverty in developing countries and ensure equity within fisheries and between sectors. It also requires transparent policies and stresses the need to reduce the gap between producers and consumers. This principle is

relevant at the level of policy as well as at the individual level of virtues and professional duties to further trust and tolerance among stakeholders.

- Responsibility for the biosphere, which concerns the interconnections of all life forms and the protection of biodiversity. This principle stresses that ecosystem well-being is a sine qua non condition of sustainable fisheries providing for the needs of future generations, as well as for the lives of those who currently rely on the natural environment and are responsible for its use. This principle combines ethical reasoning based on rights and on consequences for human welfare, as well as on individual virtues and duties to respect the environment.