

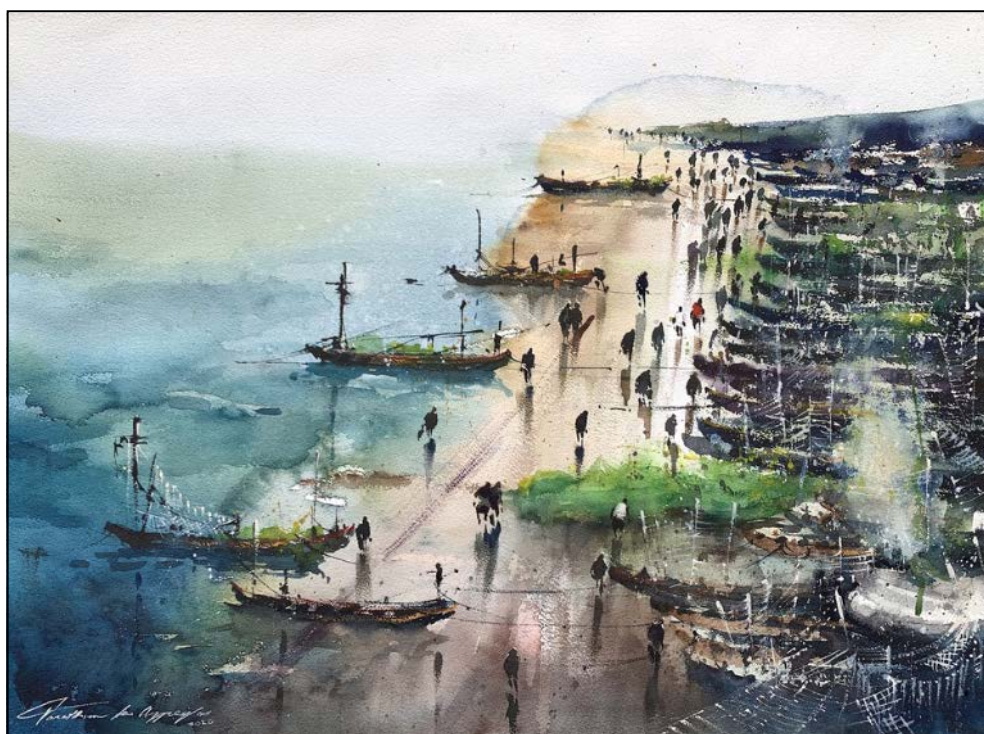
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SAMUDRA

REPORT

THE TRIANNUAL JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS



IYAFA 2022: Asia Workshop

UN Ocean Conference 2022

35th Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI-35)

Migrant Workers in Taiwan's Fisheries

Pole-and-line Tuna Fishery of India's Lakshadweep Islands

Assessing the SSF Guidelines



ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is in status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-governmental International Organizations. It also has Liaison Status with FAO.

As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF's activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns

and action, as well as communications. *SAMUDRA Report* invites contributions and responses. Correspondence should be addressed to Chennai, India.

The opinions and positions expressed in the articles are those of the authors concerned and do not necessarily represent the official views of ICSF.

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Fishermen in Asajaya, Sarawak in Malaysia / DANNY CHIAM

SAMUDRA

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DAVID MILLS / WORLDFISH

FRONT COVER



Journey through the Coast II
Painting by Jonathan Kwegyir Aggrey
Watercolour, 2020
Courtesy: Nubuke Foundation

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A wet market in the port city of Dumaguete in the Philippines
WAYNE S GRAZIO



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BRIANNA BRADLEY / WORLD FISH
Dried fish vendor in the town of Ilora in Nigeria's Oyo state

Scaffolding for the Future

The social pillar of sustainable development ought to be strengthened to protect the future of lives and livelihoods in the small-scale fisheries subsector

Five years ago, on 05 December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed the year 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) and invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to serve as lead agency for the International Year. On small-scale artisanal fisheries alone, hundreds of events have so far been organized worldwide (see <https://www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/events/events-list/en/>). ICSF has also organized two regional IYAFA workshops for Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022, and regional workshops for the Europe and Africa is planned for the year 2023.

These events, undoubtedly, have raised the visibility of small-scale fisheries subsector—one of the key objectives of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)—and its contribution to food security and nutrition. The visibility of small-scale fisheries was further demonstrated in several countries across the developing world, when all mainstream economic activities dried up in the wake of COVID-19, and the subsector provided lifeline support to coastal communities in employment, income and food security.

Despite the improving visibility and recognition of small-scale artisanal fisheries, the ICSF-IYAFA Statements (see page 12) show that the subsector continues to be disadvantaged in enjoying access to resources in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, threatened as it is by upstream and downstream activities, as well as by events adjacent to its geographic areas of engagement. These include: threats from unfair allocation of freshwater resources; reclamation of marine and inland water bodies; location of economic zones; pollution; expansion of infrastructure and forced resettlement; and conflicts with destructive and inequitable fishing gear and practices—to name a few. Threats to the subsector arise also from losing traditional and customary rights, or access, to land and water bodies due to changing economic priorities, and unsafe living and working conditions arising from climate change and extreme weather events.

Visibility aside, what is still amiss about small-scale artisanal fisheries is the persistent lack of recognition

of their rights as fishers, fishworkers, and as fishing communities, as men, women, youth or as Indigenous Peoples in spite of their role in food supply, and an absence of political will to protect their rights. There is also an obstinate reluctance to grant the status of right to traditional or historic unhindered access to resources as enjoyed by fishing communities, whether land, water or fish. Small-scale fishers are presumptively considered dispensable to more dominant economic discourses. As resonated in the ICSF-IYAFA Statements, institutionalizing the rights of fishing communities to uphold culture and to enjoy decent life and livelihood from the aquatic, riparian and coastal living spaces and resources, in a sustainable and responsible manner, is the need of the hour. This is particularly relevant in the case of the vulnerable and marginalized.



The human-rights-based approach elucidated in the SSF Guidelines, therefore, needs to be actively protected, not neglected, in the context of commons' fisheries, to provide robust scaffolding to develop legislation, policies and strategies from the local to the national, with the meaningful participation of the above stakeholders to protect their lives and livelihoods, and to visualize a better future for their children in the subsector. New legal instruments such as

the WTO Agreement on Fisheries subsume social standards under environmental standards. This needs to change.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-change impacts, and with communities facing dispossession of their coastal commons, as observed in the ICSF-IYAFA Statements, it is time to assert the social pillar as an independent leg of sustainable development, similar to the economic and environmental pillars, and to uphold the agency of local communities. Strengthening the social pillar of sustainable development could enhance financial allocation to social assistance and insurance, and could, in the process, mitigate climate-change impacts. The responsibility of the coastal State (as well as of the continental State in relation to the inland fisheries of land-locked countries) needs to be sufficiently upheld to address the social issues pertaining to fishing communities so that the coastal and riparian fishing communities can continue to see their small-scale fisheries as the granaries of their future—this ought to be the abiding message of IYAFA. **3**

Determination Renewed

ICSF's Bangkok workshop was a vibrant start to a series of international events to commemorate the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYafa 2022)

In 2017, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed that 2022 was going to be observed as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYafa 2022). Its lead agency is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), in collaboration with other stakeholders. A core function of IYafa is to promote the implementation of the Voluntary

addressing these issues; and to amplify the voices of women in the inclusive development of small-scale fisheries.

This was the first in-person meeting organized by ICSF internationally since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following all COVID-19 protocols, ICSF was able to bring in a diverse group of 50 participants from the Asia region. The representation included men and women from fishworker organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) from 11 countries in the region. They are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Special efforts were made to ensure gender parity in representation.

This was the first in-person meeting organized by ICSF internationally since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

In this context, ICSF and its members decided to organize four regional workshops and women's exchanges in 2022: one each in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, in partnership with global fishworker bodies and civil society organizations. The first in this series of workshops was the 'IYafa Asia 2022 – Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries', held in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 5-8, 2022, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF).

The main objectives of the Asia workshop were to increase the international engagement of fishworkers' organizations with issues of food security, tenure rights and social development in small-scale fisheries (SSF) in the region; to deepen cooperation between fishworkers and like-minded organizations in

Kick-off

The workshop opened with opening remarks from SDF director and ICSF member Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk. She encouraged participants to have deeper conversations on SSF, encompassing themes of livelihood security, human rights, social development and sustainability, to go beyond food security or healthy fish stocks. She stressed the importance of women in fisheries and drew attention to the issues faced by them, particularly the challenges they face in realizing gender equity in the sector.

In his inaugural address, Taworn Thunaji, the Deputy Director General of Thailand's department of fisheries, emphasized the importance of ensuring sustainable utilization of natural resources for equality and fairness towards SSF, adding that sustainability is the key to ensure livelihood and food security. He elaborated on the aim of the Government of Thailand to bring together multiple stakeholders

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Participants at the IYAFA Asia Workshop in May, 2022. The meeting brought together 50 fishworker and civil society representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam

in its processes, and detailed the government's efforts to support artisanal fishers and small-scale fish farmers.

While detailing the issues faced by SSF in Thailand, Piya Thedyaem, chairperson of the Thailand Association of the Federation of Fisherfolk, remarked on the similar challenges observed in fisheries across the region.

Panitnart Weerawat, senior instructor at the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC), pointed to the challenges in quantifying the vastness of the small-scale sub-sector, in terms of employment and production. She further discussed the collaborations of SEAFDEC in capacity building, marine resource management and development. Following the inaugural address, participants watched an introductory video celebrating SSF across the 11 countries represented at the workshop.

Introducing the workshop and its objectives, Sebastian Mathew, ICSF's executive director, drew attention to the institutional and legal structures ensuring the rights of SSF. He urged

participants to use regional initiatives to contextualize the international SSF Guidelines within countries' national circumstances, and to base the discussions surrounding the SSF Guidelines on the rights and dignity of the people engaged in SSF. He also highlighted the importance of collaborative governance cutting across various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and development partners, to ensure the sustainability of the sector and protect the rights and social development of the people involved.

Access to resources

The inaugural address was followed by a presentation on access to resources by Maarten Bavinck, ICSF chairperson. He observed the emerging shifts in labour and livelihood patterns among the fishing communities in the region, linking them to insecure tenure rights to both fishery and other resources. He cited the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), the SSF Guidelines (2014) and other instruments. He emphasized

the relevance of tenure in sustaining the lives and livelihoods of fishing communities. Explaining formal and informal systems of tenure prevalent in fisheries in Asia, he called for holistic policy and management approaches that recognize diverse forms of tenure rights, in order to sustainably manage fish stocks and protect the rights to resources of small-scale fishing communities. ICSF member V. Vivekandandan chaired the session.

Thereafter, the participants came together in groups of two-to-three countries to discuss the major challenges for SSF communities to access resources. Individual country experiences emerged through this exercise. Vietnam and Cambodia, for example, reported that tenure rights of SSF were protected in law, but there was concern about poor implementation. The participants from these countries also pointed to climate change and ecological degradation limiting access to land and water bodies, further complicating tenure rights in fisheries.

Similar conditions prevail in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Myanmar, where tenure rights were protected; in Malaysia even preferential access was given to SSF. However, fishers' rights were disregarded by coastal reclamation and development projects.

In contrast, Sri Lanka and Pakistan participants stated that they had no legal protection for customary tenure rights of SSF. Participants from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand said they have constitutional or legal protection of fishers' access rights to coastal resources. However, they noted the precarity of these rights: governments can claim coastal land and resources at any time for other uses and industries.

The participants reiterated the need to address the disconnect between policy and implementation, regressive changes in national legislation, disregard for the customary rights and institutions, and the challenges from new developments in coastal, marine and inland areas. The participants unanimously agreed on the need to formally recognize the rights of fishing communities to both land and fishery resources; they emphasized that

creating spaces for dialogue among stakeholders, capacity building and organizing communities are the ways forward.

Social development

The second day kicked-off with Mathew's presentation on social development in SSF. Citing several international legal instruments guiding social development policy, he drew on the linkages between well-being and environmental sustainability. He noted that social development is key to enhancing human rights, through policies that include vulnerable and marginalized groups, and ensure their economic equality and empowerment, thereby incentivizing conservation and resource management.

Mathew stressed that social protection is a major component of social development, along with housing, sanitation, health and education services to which fishing communities should have access. He drew attention to diverse formal and informal structures for social protection, and invited participants to point out specific examples in their national contexts. He also presented a cogent case for organizing fishers into a formalized workforce to negotiate their rights to social services.

The presentation was followed by an enthusiastic discussion; the participants deliberated the need for collaboration between government agencies (guided by fisheries departments); institutional arrangements to ensure delivery of services; political participation of fishing communities; and how a universal, rather than sectoral, perspective to social protection will be preferable to include relatively small sectors such as fisheries and its workers.

This was followed by group discussions guided by questions on the availability and accessibility of social development measures in national contexts. The participants from Sri Lanka pointed out that the economic crisis in their country might further deprive vulnerable fishers of welfare measures.

The Bangladesh team compared the national averages of development indicators like income and literacy rates to that of small-scale fishers to

highlight the socioeconomic position of SSF in the country. They pointed to the need for targeted schemes for fishers, considering their unique vulnerability in the face of natural hazards, climate change and other environmental factors.

The Thai participants drew attention to the poor living and working conditions of fishworkers in their country. Participants from India and Pakistan shared similar experiences.

Describing the universal primary health and education schemes in their countries, representatives from the Philippines and Vietnam noted the inclusion of fishers in these schemes. However, they also mentioned that fishing communities usually live and work in remote locations or areas; all too often, this limits their access to drinking water, housing, power, waste management and other services.

The Cambodian representative talked about the pitiful conditions of people living in the floating villages of Tonle Sap, without access to any infrastructure and social development schemes. He also talked about the

income diversification strategies employed in Cambodia.

The Indonesian participants noted the lack of data on fishers and fishworkers, hindering the planning and delivery of government programmes. The Malaysian representative painted a different picture: SSF workers are included in government development schemes and are covered under social protection measures.

Most of the country representatives said there were large gaps in awareness of, and access to, universal schemes and basic services. The participants called for an improvement in essential services, and reiterated the need for strong social protection measures, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties in the sector.

Voices of women

The third day of the workshop was dedicated exclusively to exchanges on women's roles and experiences in fisheries. Drawing from the workshop photo exhibition, participants used images of women fishworkers to highlight the crucial role of women

TRAIPHOB SANGKUM



Workshop participants discuss issues around access to resources for small-scale fisheries. They emphasized the need to formally recognize the rights of fishing communities to land and fishery resources

Looking to the Future

Reflecting on the Workshop, two participants discuss the range of commitment and contributions needed to strengthen fisherfolk movements around the world

A Foundation for Collaboration

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) organized a workshop titled ‘Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries’ in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 5-8, 2022. It commemorated the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022.

Holding an international meeting in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge. However, all fears and anxieties were overcome by the longing to meet and share stories with friends from small-scale fisheries. The workshop was, first and foremost, an opportunity to understand common challenges.

The whole world—all sectors—suffered the impact of the pandemic. The fisheries sector was no exception. All workshop participants from fisher organizations, NGOs, cooperatives, and woman fishworkers gave strong testimonies of how this crisis reached their fishing villages. In Indonesia, small-scale fisheries felt the impact in various ways. From restrictions on fishing activity, to difficulties in selling their catch, to decline in fish prices, and even in the lack of access to social assistance provided by the government.

The climate crisis is another challenge for the fisheries sector. Starting from the migration of fish stock to changes in the marine food chain due to ocean acidification and coral bleaching, each has had impacts direct and indirect on small-scale fisheries. Fisherfolk cannot predict the time and location of fishing. There is also the high risk in going to sea during extreme weather. Sea level rise and extreme weather due to climate change also cause destruction to coastal villages from waves and tidal flooding.

Unclear coast

The workshop identified another key challenge: conflicts over coastal areas and resources, with fishing communities often threatened by other users. This ‘ocean grab’ to control and utilize coastal and marine resources weakens social well-being and exacerbates ecological damage. Ocean grabbing also occurs when trawling or other destructive fishing methods decrease the availability of fish for small-scale fisherfolk, interfering with their rights to resources.

The Bangkok workshop was a very important opportunity. It provided a space for consolidating discussions between social movements in Asia and for reflecting on the achievements and challenges in each country. The contributions of small-scale fisheries in providing food in the world can no longer be underestimated. In order to ensure the availability of fresh and nutritious fish, the fishing areas for traditional fishers need to be protected. The marine environment must also be maintained in order to remain sustainable. The point is to make the sea a foundation for food sovereignty.

In addition, countries must be encouraged to be more active in providing protections for small-scale fisherfolk at the national level. The SSF Guidelines, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, as well as other relevant international instruments, need implementation to strengthen the roles of small-scale fisherfolk in food supply, employment generation and well-being.

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Abundant Diversity, Common Challenges

Atending the IYAFA Asia Workshop organized by ICSF and SDF was a remarkable experience. One of its highlights was the opportunity to meet and interact with the fisher representatives and organizations from 11 Asian countries.

The four-day workshop, divided into multiple sessions, provided all participants an opportunity to discuss the issues related to their specific region and present them to the forum to find common ground. All the sessions were insightful; there was ample time to engage with each of the topics with experts from the relevant sector. The sessions on access to resources, on the SSF Guidelines and on women in fisheries were particularly useful. They will help me elaborate on these issues with the stakeholders in my region of work.

The roundtable discussions showed that the issues discussed by Sri Lanka and Pakistan were very similar in nature to those faced by fishers in India, such as those related to coastal resource grabbing in the name of development, displacement of fishers for infrastructure and tourism, degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems, and the destruction of mangrove forests.

One of the main problem identified is the lack of recognition of the customary rights of fishers, worsened by the fact that national governments see the coasts as a way to boost their economy. Trawling and marine pollution were reiterated as big threats to the health of the marine ecosystem and to the future of fishing communities in almost all the participating countries.

The issues that resonated with all the Indian participants were related to women fishworkers, dilution of coastal regulations, and the focus on further mechanization of the sector while ignoring the needs of the small-scale fishers. The imperative to define small-scale fisheries was discussed in depth by the fisher representatives from India. We also highlighted the issues faced by migrant fishworkers during the COVID-19 lockdowns in India.

Most countries stressed the need for proper implementation of existing laws for the protection of the coast, fish stocks and rights of small-scale fishers, as also the need for the governments to take the SSF Guidelines into consideration while drafting new fisheries policies and legislations. The workshop statement was a sound summary of the issues discussed over the four days.

I hope this statement is considered seriously by Asian governments while developing policy for the fisheries sector. That they go one step ahead and become a reference for international fisheries negotiations of the future.

*This article is written by **Madhuri Mondal** (madhuri.mondal@dakshin.org), senior programme officer with Dakshin Foundation, India.*

TRAIPHOB SANGKUM



Indian and other South Asian participants all echoed issues related to women fishworkers, the dilution of coastal regulations, and mechanization of the sector, which marginalizes small-scale fishers

10

in the sector. Women participants shared their experiences, recognized the common challenges they face and outlined the collective actions that are needed to achieve gender equity in their fisheries.

Thereafter, a recorded presentation by Arlene Nietes Satapornvaint, a specialist on gender issues in Southeast Asian fisheries, focused on how the invisibility of women in the sectoral policies and discussions is in sharp contrast to the large female fisheries workforce – formal and informal, paid and unpaid, full-time and part-time. Their invisibility is reflected in the lack of appropriate infrastructure for women in post-harvest fisheries, and of targeted programmes for women in fisheries policy. She remarked that fisherwomen often bear a triple burden, with their productive, reproductive and organizational responsibilities.

Kyoto Kusakabe, professor at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, stressed the importance of post-harvest fisheries. “Fishing provides the fish, but post-harvest activities are what turns it into income,” she said, detailing the wide

scope of women’s pre- and post-harvest activities, ranging from net making through fish processing to fish vending. She highlighted the social, economic and human rights challenges women face. Recognizing the role of women in fisheries through gender-disaggregated data and assessments of their needs through a gendered analysis of the sectors is the best way to address discrimination against women, she said.

Group discussions then identified the key challenges women face in terms of recognition, access to resources and markets, social development, and participation in decision making. Participants shared their insights on how to address some of these problems, including mobilizing women to demand action (as expressed by participants from the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and India); generating gender-disaggregated data (India, Bangladesh); integrating women fishworkers into fisheries cooperatives (Sri Lanka); and using innovative marketing and technology to improve women’s incomes (Vietnam).

Integration of women into existing cooperatives was identified as an imperative to further the collectivisation efforts of women. Formalization based on inclusivity, consultation and social protection is integral in improving the visibility and recognition of women fishworkers, leading to the protection of their rights, it was noted.

In the concluding session to develop a regional plan for action on gender, the participants pointed to the need for more gender-disaggregated data, meaningful participation, capacity building, networking and dialogue. Some called for a regional platform to share knowledge, challenges and success stories.

MEL framework

Considering the long-standing interest to monitor and learn from ongoing initiatives to implement the SSF Guidelines, the last session of the workshop was dedicated to a discussion on the FAO's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework - a set of indicators and tools that governments, civil society and other stakeholders can use to assess the progress made on implementing the SSF Guidelines in their national contexts.

Lena Westlund from the FAO traced the process to develop the MEL Framework. She detailed its principles and enabling conditions: policy coherence, research and communication, implementation support and monitoring. She said that the framework is participative, gender-sensitive and in alignment with the SSF Guidelines. Elyse Mills, programme associate at ICSF, explained the work undertaken by the organization to refine the assessment indicators and to prepare a handbook for users of the MEL Framework.

A group discussion on improving SSF Guidelines implementation in the country context followed the presentations. Country participants (from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Bangladesh) held that CSOs and CBOs need to be actively involved in the implementation of the guidelines. The need to build capacity of communities (Thailand, Myanmar), to include inland fisheries (India), to mainstream gender equity (Indonesia),

and to draft appropriate fisheries policy (Pakistan) were discussed and debated at length by the participants.

Reaching a consensus

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the Workshop Statement, prepared in consultation with the participants, listing their recommendations and aspirations for IYafa 2022. The statement noted the unique importance of fisheries in the Asia region (in terms of employment and production) and highlighted fishers' and fishworkers' experiences with regard to the three main focal points of discussions at the workshop: tenure rights, social development and gender.

Cognizant of the major disruptions in the sector associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it called upon governments, the private sector, CSOs and the international community to address these challenges. To ensure fair and equitable distribution of resources, while protecting the customary tenure rights of fishing communities and their active participation in governance.

The statement also called for the recognition of women's contributions in fisheries, greater access to resources and markets, enhanced social protection and social development measures, and capacity building of fishers and fishworkers, especially women.

The Statement urged governments to redouble efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines, upholding a human rights-based approach. Reading the final statement together, participants brought to a fulfilling conclusion four days of intense discussions and planning. They parted with the promise of looking to the future with renewed determination to make the SSF Guidelines a reality. 🍀

For more



Asia Workshop: IYafa 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 5 to 8 May 2022, Bangkok, Thailand

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/asia-workshop-iyafa-2022-celebrating-sustainable-and-equitable-small-scale-fisheries/>

ICSF's SSF Guidelines

<https://www.icsf.net/ssf-guidelines/>

ICSF IYafa 2022: Asia workshop statement: Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-iyafa-2022-asia-workshop-statement/>

Agenda for Action

The following Statement was made at the 'Asia Workshop: IYFA 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries', organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) at Bangkok, Thailand from 5 to 8 May, 2022

We, the representatives of small-scale fishworker associations, co-operatives, trade unions, community-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations from 11 South and Southeast Asian countries* that account for nearly 30 per cent of global capture fishery production (marine and inland) and nearly 45 per cent of the world fishers' population;

Having met in Bangkok, subjected to all COVID-19 protocols, during the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYFA), as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/72, appreciating its emphasis on the participation of small-scale fishery stakeholders in policy development and fisheries management strategies and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines);

Upholding the principles of regional and international co-operation as well as collaboration among all forms of small-scale fishworker and support organizations, plus consultation and participation in all development activities affecting the land or water bodies of interest to small-scale fishing communities;

Celebrating the knowledge and skills of marine and inland small-scale fishers and fishworkers;

Cognizant of the continued relevance of small-scale fisheries, marine and inland, in the context of food and nutrition security, poverty eradication and cultural heritage;

Aware of the important role that women play in the inclusive development of small-scale fisheries;

Concerned about losing traditional/customary tenure rights of small-scale and Indigenous Peoples to water bodies and land to live, operate fishing gear, and to process and market fish (especially for women), including the drying of fish. (Such loss occurs as a result of: reclamation/conversion for tourism-related activities; special economic zones; real estate projects; navigable waterways; coastal aquaculture, wind farms and power plants; infrastructure development, including ports; compulsory resettlement of fishing families; and impoverishment of fishers to wage labour or contract labour in fish farms and other forms of marginalization.);

Further concerned about the adverse impacts of sea-level rise, climate change, extreme weather events and pandemics;

Conscious of how conservation and sustainable use of living aquatic resources and components of the marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems is fundamental to the enjoyment of all forms of tenure rights; and how tenure rights can protect access of women and men to their resources and markets (SDG 14b);

Taking note of women facing a range of challenges across the Asian region, some of which follow from different national contexts, it is recognized that there are many common challenges. Women often face a quadruple burden, trying to balance household responsibilities (caring for their families and children); engaging in post-harvest activities (drying, salting, selling); participating in community organizations and mobilizations; and dealing with discriminatory social and governmental conditions; and

Further concerned about the range of impacts of COVID-19, the subsequent lockdowns and economic crisis on fishing communities, plus the need to promote social development and provide effective social protection schemes to all persons along the fisheries value chain;

Call upon Asian governments, private parties, civil society organizations, and the international community to:

- Address threats from upstream dams to national and transboundary rivers that reduce water flow and availability of fish in the downstream fishing grounds of small-scale fishers; in this context, provide adequate compensation to small-scale fishers for damages suffered from degradation of the ecosystem;
- Adopt fair and equitable allocation of water to allow small-scale fishers and fishworkers to practice their fishing for livelihood activities round the year, taking note of the multiple uses of freshwater resources;
- Allocate and raise awareness about tenure rights to land and water bodies, and further strengthen capacity of local communities, including women, to enjoy these rights in an unhindered manner, especially in the context of the recognition of co-management and community-based management rights under national legislation in inland and coastal fishing grounds;
- Protect traditional/customary tenure rights, to restore these rights if they be denied, and to provide reparation and just compensation to affected communities, should these rights be annulled after due consultation;
- Promote greater security of tenure in consultation with fishing communities; in this context governments should make adequate provisions to extend budgetary support to improving security of tenure in relation to land and water bodies (marine and inland);
- Provide space for women to participate in fisheries governance and co-management processes, both so their concerns are heard, and so they can contribute directly to developing programmes for addressing the obstacles they face;
- Recognize women's labour for its crucial contributions to the fisheries sector. Women's work is too often invisible, and seen as familial duties without economic compensation. Yet, women's household, care, pre- and post-harvest work are central to the functioning of the fisheries sector;
- Facilitate women's organizations and space for network building where women can discuss common challenges, support each other, and develop ways to address the issues they are facing;
- Undertake industrial, as well as aquaculture and domestic effluent treatment before it is released into marine or inland water bodies;
- Provide improved access to healthcare and medical facilities including to treat diseases caused by exposure to industrial pollution in coastal areas;
- Develop and institute legal measures to proscribe or phase out the use of destructive fishing gear and practices that have a negative impact on equity and sustainable use of aquatic resources and biodiversity. Measures must be put in place to phase out bottom trawling from internal, archipelagic, territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone within a reasonable period of time;
- Improve access to sustainable fishery resources for small-scale fishers using non-destructive and responsible fishing gear and practices, including through the provision of affordable fuel to ease their hardships;
- Consider alternative livelihood opportunities for small-scale fishers and fishworkers during off-seasons;
- Discourage arrest and detention and promote humane treatment of small-scale fishers for unintentionally crossing into waters under the jurisdiction of other States; in this context, create inter-governmental mechanisms to deal with issues related to transborder movement of fishing vessels;
- Provide accident, vessel and gear, life, natural calamity and pandemic insurance schemes for all fishers through government subsidies and closed season allowance irrespective of their membership status in fisheries cooperatives or

associations and ensure timely access to benefits from these schemes at times of accident, illness or death, or for permanent or partial loss of fishing equipment or opportunities;

- Ensure maritime safety agencies are well-equipped to improve disaster preparedness and marine rescue operations in light of increasing incidents of cyclones/typhoons and sea surges;
- Develop a database of migrant fishers and fishworkers and remove all forms of discrimination against them including denial of membership in cooperatives and trade unions and access to social protection schemes;
- Extend to fishers and fishworkers all social protection benefits for which the workers in non-fishery sectors are eligible. In this context, improve awareness about social protection schemes at various levels that can benefit small-scale fishing communities;
- Ensure that men, women and children of fishing communities at the national level enjoy the same level of access to education facilities as other citizens in the same country. Capacity-building of women at the community levels is crucial. This includes increasing their access to education and training programmes, technology, and opportunities to learn from and be inspired by women leaders;
- Document the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities and their ability to recover and provide support to move towards greater resilience;
- Provide adequate budget support, especially to poorly-funded local governments to improve sanitation, industrial and domestic waste management and to implement effective pollution control measures;
- Improve access to electricity of fishing communities and facilitate power supply to remote fishing villages through innovative power distribution mechanisms;
- Protect easement zones at the local level assisting pre-harvest and post-harvest activities as well as docking and launching of small-scale fishing vessels from being displaced by the tourism industry to establish resorts and hotels;
- Build capacity of local governments to be at the forefront of social development for small-scale fishers and fishworkers;
- Strengthen capacity of fishers and fishworkers to participate in designing social protection policies and schemes, to monitor the quality of these services and to report to the authorities;
- Strengthen sex-disaggregated registration of all fishers, fishworkers, and members of fishing and fish farming families to bring authenticity to beneficiaries and greater visibility to small-scale fisheries stakeholders;
- Protect autonomy of fisheries administrations and encourage them to coordinate with agencies in other fields on issues outside of their mandate;
- Improve sea safety by: (i) reducing intrusions of larger vessels into the fishing zones designated for small-scale fishers; (ii) providing training on safety at sea to small-scale fishers; (iii) enforcing life-saving equipment on all small-scale fishers in light of greater uncertainty and unpredictability at sea from climate change and extreme weather events by integrating it with the registration process for fishing vessels.

In this International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022), we are fully aware that the implementation of the SSF Guidelines within a human-rights-based approach can help governments at various levels to address our concerns and to take up our recommendations in South and Southeast Asia.

Implementing the SSF Guidelines, we believe, can promote justice and fair treatment of men and women, protection of tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities and promotion of participatory and effective management regimes, as well as the achievement of social development of children, youth, men and women of fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples in coastal and riparian areas.

* Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

From Blue Fear to Blue Trust

Representatives of small-scale fishing communities – the most numerous ocean users – launch a Call to Action at the United Nations Ocean Conference 2022

The Second United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 2022), hosted by the governments of Portugal and Kenya, brought together 6,000 participants in Lisbon from June 27 to July 1. Its ambition is set out in the ‘Lisbon Declaration on Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility’.

Its focus was to take stock of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14): Life Below Water. It includes 10 targets. Launched in 2015 to be achieved by 2030, the 17 SDGs are interlinked global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”.

Small-scale fishers (SSF) and coastal communities are the most numerous users of the ocean, even though they are often the most neglected. SSF activities provide a vital source of food, livelihood, socioeconomic and cultural benefits locally and equitably to millions of people around the world, more so in the global South.

Their close relationships with the seas and coasts over the centuries have given them a rich reserve of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Through their daily activities at sea and on the coast, small-scale fishers garner insights into the seas, about the seasonal changes in fishery and other marine resources, and weather patterns and associated phenomena. This experiential knowledge enhances their skills as seafarers, as food producers and as guardians of the seas. This represents a massively underutilized but potentially game-changing knowledge base.

Life above and below water

Together, the TEK and experiential knowledge of SSF form part of a rich biocultural diversity, contributing to diverse cultural landscapes and

seascapes. Defending and promoting biocultural diversity is key to the sustainable use of the natural resources in the oceans, seas and coastal areas.

It is highly appropriate that SSF should have a special place in the targets set for SDG 14. Of particular importance is target SDG 14b that aims to provide access to marine resources and markets for SSF.

Conserving life under the water and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources are vital to sustaining human life and well-being above the water. In the main, UNOC 2022 in Lisbon brought together two main protagonists: those clamouring for

Through their daily activities at sea and on the coast, small-scale fishers garner insights into the seas, about the seasonal changes in fishery and other marine resources, and weather patterns and associated phenomena

reforms in ocean governance to ‘Save Our Ocean’ (that is, save human life on our planet), and those clamouring for reforms to open up the ‘Blue Economy’ and pave the way for giant steps in investment, industrial development and wealth creation, notably in energy generation, mineral and living resource extraction, food production, bioprospecting and shipping.

Call to action

The complexity of multi-stakeholder, multi-pathway international ocean governance makes navigating the decision-making processes difficult, even for the most adept policy wonk. Add to this the cost of international travel, translation of policy documents into local languages, and bringing information in a digestible form

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UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE



Youth and Innovation Forum at the UNOC 2022. The conference brought together two main protagonists: those clamouring for reforms in ocean governance to 'Save Our Ocean', and those clamouring for reforms to open up the 'Blue Economy'

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to remote, marginalized fishing communities, and it is no wonder that all too often, SSF are absent from the decision-making process.

Moreover, others, who are better connected and better resourced, but who are remote from the daily realities of SSF, albeit with the best of intentions. These interlocutors invariably do more harm than good by not consulting SSF

are very well able to express their own demands, hopes and fears.

This is how a group of around 20 small-scale fishing representatives from six continents found themselves among the 6,000 official delegates registered for the UNOC 2022. With support and coordination from a network of regional civil society organizations (CSOs), these representatives were able to make an early start on their road to Lisbon.

... a group of around 20 small-scale fishing representatives from six continents found themselves among the 6,000 official delegates registered for the UNOC 2022

Representing themselves

The organizations engaged in this process included the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network from the Pacific, Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI) from Indonesia, the Federation of Indian Ocean Artisanal Fishers (FPAOI), the African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fishers (CAOPA), and a Mesoamerican network bringing together indigenous communities from Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras and Mexico.

They were supported in this endeavour by the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA),

and misrepresenting their interests, leaving them more invisible and disempowered.

Hence for the Lisbon UNOC 2022, SSF wanted to be there in person. The clarion calls summarized their mood towards such interlocutors: "Talk with us, not for us!" and "There is nothing about us without us!" If enabled to participate by such interlocutors, SSF

CoopeSoliDar R.L., and Blue Ventures. Joining their voices to the Call for Action were other SSF groups from Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The initial work involved meeting and sharing experiences of their daily lives, their working conditions, their hopes and fears. This was made possible by specialists in communications, interpretation, facilitation and coordination, working alongside these frontline workers to enable them to express themselves clearly and be understood. Step by step, they began to build an alliance, based on empathy, trust, and mutual respect, and to understand the boundaries of their common cause.

This is expressed in their Call to Action, demanding governments provide secure and preferential access to healthy oceans and ecosystems for small-scale fishers; to develop science-based, transparent, inclusive and participative fisheries management; to address threats posed by pollution and competition from Blue Economy industries; to invest in long-term resource management, ecosystem restoration and innovations, building on local initiatives of men and women from fishing communities; and to develop national strategic plans to implement five key areas of action by 2030, with adequate funding and guided by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) and other relevant regional policies.

They call to five key areas:

- Urgently secure preferential SSF access and co-manage 100 per cent of coastal areas.
- Guarantee the participation of women, support their empowerment and foster recognition and respect for the roles they play.
- Protect SSF from competing Blue Economy sectors.
- Establish transparency and accountability in fisheries management.
- Build the resilience of communities to face the threats of climate change and enhance the prospects for youth

Make fisheries sustainable

The week in Lisbon was abuzz with frenetic activity, with many informal events, workshops and meetings going on around the formal UNOC 2022 sessions. However, a lack of interpretation made these difficult for the SSF delegates to engage meaningfully.

One such event was 'Future of the Ocean: finding cooperative pathways towards 2030'. The moderator and architect of the 2014 European Common Fisheries Policy, Ernesto Penas Lado, proposed that ocean activities needed to be "legitimate and compatible" in order to qualify for space in the emerging ocean governance framework. Competing interests would have to engage in meaningful dialogue to secure ever-diminishing slices of access, with non-traditional users of ocean space encroaching on traditional fishing grounds, for example. There would be winners and losers.

Vivienne Solis of CoopSoliDar, Costa Rica, speaking for CSOs, said that such a framework also had to be

... the moderator observed that we need to transition from blue fear to blue trust, with dialogue and inclusion being essential to that objective

equitable. Currently, seats at the table go to those with the most power and influence. This must change. Dawda Saine, general secretary of CAOPA, observed there is no consensual view on what the Blue Economy actually is. This has led to many SSF participants referring to it as the "Blue Fear". Summing up, the moderator observed that we need to transition from blue fear to blue trust, with dialogue and inclusion being essential to that objective.

Lavenia Naivalu, a traditional leader of her community from Fiji, spoke on behalf of the LMMA Network. She highlighted how communities like hers are entirely dependent on fisheries resources; they work cooperatively to manage and sustain them. She called for greater transparency and accountability, especially to ensure that


gender-sensitive data are collected and that information about women's roles is made available, particularly that pertaining to food security, livelihoods and conservation.

Javier Garat, president of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) and the European fishing vessel owners' association Europech, said it was essential for artisanal and industrial fishers to work together to reach food security through sustainable use of marine resources. This is rather like the chair of agribusiness associations calling for small-holders practising agro-ecology and industrial farming companies to work together.

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) responded that it is prepared to work with anyone in a constructive dialogue, so long as the historic injustices suffered by small-scale fishers are recognized. That it must reflect their rights to fair access to resources

2050. Also, achieving a climate-neutral decarbonized fishing sector will require radical changes in technology, economy and working practices.

Blue food is also firmly on the menu. Although largely undefined, this could be the thin end of the wedge, boosting environmentally destructive feed-lot aquaculture in our coastal waters, paving the way to industrial production and extraction of marine algae and seaweeds. The future may be Blue, but for SSF there is little optimism that this gives any grounds for Blue Hope.

UNOC 2022 was an inspiring and energizing event. In particular, it provided the possibility to build meaningful synergies with counterpart associations and forge alliances with like-minded organizations from around the world. It helped us to gather strength, coordinate and prepare for the struggles ahead. 

The future may be Blue, but for SSF there is little optimism that this gives any grounds for Blue Hope

and markets in practical support and management measures, with adequate protection from the encroachment of large-scale fishing.

Interactive dialogue

Several SSF representatives were granted permission to speak in the plenary session on 'Making Fisheries Sustainable'. Josefina Mata from Mexico, along with a member of the delegation of indigenous communities from Mesoamerica, spoke powerfully about the struggle of women, often heads of single-parent households, to put food on the table and educate their children.

The "blue fear" mentioned by CAOPA is a real and present danger. In Europe, the EU's Green Deal offshore energy-generating targets commit to increasing capacity from current levels of around 12GW to over 300 GW by

For more



UN Ocean Conference Altice Arena, Lisbon, Portugal, 27 Jun - 1 Jul 2022

<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022>

Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14)

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14>

SSF Lisbon declaration

<https://caopa.org/en/unoc-2022-final-declaration-of-small-scalefishers/01/07/2022/news/4539/>

Eyes on the Prize

Small-scale fisheries and the SSF Guidelines were front and centre at the Thirty-fifth Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI)

The 35th session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI-35) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was organized in the hybrid mode on September 5-9 at the FAO headquarters in Rome. The committee reviewed current issues and challenges related to fisheries and aquaculture. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and reiterated the contributions of SSF to food security, sustainability, livelihoods and social and cultural well-being.

COFI-35 was preceded by the SSF Summit – offering an opportunity to celebrate the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), to promote dialogue and collaborations between SSF organizations and stakeholders, and to review efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines across the world.

Qu Dongyu, FAO Director-General, inaugurated the IYAFA High Level Event at COFI-35, stating that “consumption is the real driving force” and highlighted the role of small-scale and artisanal fisheries in ensuring sustainability.

Margaret Nakato, winner of the 2020-21 Margarita Lizárraga Medal, represented the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Working Group on Fisheries. She spoke about how IYAFA 2022 encouraged activities to strengthen SSF globally. She noted the various activities supporting a smooth transition towards the uptake of the SSF Guidelines. These included enhancing women's engagement in the sector; raising awareness about the SSF Guidelines; developing national plans of action (NPOAs) for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines; and the formation of regional advisory groups. Christiana Louwa, representing (IPC) Working Group on Fisheries, also spoke at the high-level event.

Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, drew attention to the role of COFI in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in catering to global food security.

Stand up, get counted

Country representatives from Saudi Arabia and Indonesia opened members' statements by sharing their commitment towards the sustainable use of aquatic natural resources and their contribution to the healthy ocean agenda. Indonesia detailed its road map for a Blue Economy, inclusive of fishers and fishworkers.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and reiterated the contributions of SSF to food security, sustainability, livelihoods and social and cultural wellbeing

Thailand described its actions to strengthen SSF and aquaculture by improving fishers' participation in policy-making. Madagascar detailed its efforts against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and called for collaboration at various levels to build resilience. While reaffirming the vital role of SSF, Madagascar said that Blue Growth should become a pathway to sustainability.

Peru said the COVID-19 pandemic and other international crises continue to have a negative impact on fisheries across the globe. As the chair of the IYAFA Steering Committee, Peru shared its vision for national policies that are inclusive of artisanal fisheries, calling for worldwide efforts to formalize the sector through better visibility, credit availability, improved infrastructure and capacity building.

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While noting the interconnectedness of SDGs, the European Union (EU) representative remarked that sustainability ought to characterize SSF. The United States noted the contribution of SSF to livelihood and nutrition security, drawing attention to structural issues like invisibility of women in the sector.

As the observer for Latin America and the Caribbean region in the IYAFa International Steering Committee, Chile discussed an action plan agreed upon by the sub-regional committee from the Meso-American region, including fishing authorities from Mexico and Central America. The action plan encouraged the inclusion

important in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Costa Rica underscored the importance of adopting a human rights perspective, with special attention to gender equity and decent work. The Indonesian representation encouraged FAO to develop a regional strategy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, urged FAO and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to create joint agreements and initiatives in support of small-scale aquaculture. Brazil explained their recent initiatives like modernization of the national fishers' registration system and regulation of artisanal activities for the sustainable development of small-scale and artisanal fisheries, and shared their hope towards the availability of improved data on SSF and strengthening of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF).

The Philippines and Cameroon stressed the need to integrate community knowledge in conservation efforts. The EU commented on the specific challenges faced by SSF in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciated the call from SSF organizations at the UN Ocean Conference in June 2022 to address these challenges and to ensure that SSF are protected and continue to contribute to economies, health, culture and well-being.

Mexico requested FAO's technical support to close development gaps in SSF. Russia supported the SSF Guidelines and pointed specifically to the need to protect the indigenous communities in SSF. Tanzania urged the African Union to establish a regional committee on IYAFa to enhance visibility of SSF at the regional level. Welcoming the call to continue the SSF Summit prior to COFI-35, Norway promised its continued support to SSF, especially in post-harvest fisheries and women's rights. Uganda, Kenya and Chile highlighted the need to have effective participation in decision-making processes and appreciated the role of women and youth in SSF. The United States said effective co-management is crucial for the sustainable development of the sector.

Non-governmental voices

Civil society participation was significant at COFI-35. The IPC Working Group on Fisheries expressed

FAO members listed legislative and governance measures undertaken to implement the SSF Guidelines in their countries

of artisanal fishers and aquaculture workers into national social-protection systems, the creation of a Meso-American network of small-scale fishers and aquaculture workers and capacity building of small-scale fishers to improve their resilience.

Maria Helena Semedo, the Deputy Director-General of FAO, while delivering the closing remarks on the IYAFa high-level event, assured COFI members and observers that the agenda on SSF will be reflected in the plenary sessions and outcomes of COFI-35. She urged all stakeholders to make 2022 the beginning of a new era in support of SSF.

The global SSF agenda

The agenda item on 'Supporting Small-scale and Artisanal Fisheries' ignited extensive discussions on the SSF Guidelines. FAO members listed legislative and governance measures undertaken to implement the SSF Guidelines in their countries. They acknowledged the role of IYAFa 2022 in supporting sustainable SSF and increasing the sub-sector's visibility. Ecuador noted social development and food security of small-scale fishing communities consistent with the SSF Guidelines as a pertinent issue, stating that data collection at different scales is



Qu Dongyu, FAO Director General inaugurating the 35th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (5-9 September 2022) at the FAO Headquarters, Rome

its concerns about the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), considering the persistent discrimination against women, Indigenous People and other vulnerable groups in the sector. IPC reiterated its commitment to work closely with the governments and FAO in strengthening the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. It also called for mechanisms to deal with IUU in the traditional small-scale fishing zones.

The African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries (CAOPA) urged FAO to take concrete actions to improve the lives and livelihoods of SSF. CAOPA also called for a participatory surveillance involving fishers to combat IUU. The Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) called on FAO and its members to ensure preferential access to SSF and to develop strategic national plans to guarantee access to resources and markets for SSF.

Supporting the call for an SSF summit prior to each COFI session, ICSF stressed the importance of meaningful participation of fishing communities, calling for expansion of legal spaces for fishworker associations at the national

and sub-national levels. The ICSF statement also requested disaggregated catch data on shares of different gear groups in the forthcoming Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) study by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish.

Responding to the discussions, Nicole Franz, FAO's Fishery Planning Officer, appreciated the progress in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and the SSF summit, and stressed the need for having enabling policy environments for strong fisherworker organizations.

The chairperson opened the discussions on the proposal to establish the sub-committee on fisheries management by stating that it will ensure improved participation and availability of resources. Most of the members agreed to the establishment of the new body within COFI, while a few—Costa Rica, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico and Peru—pointed to the increased financial implications it will have on developing countries. Norway supported the establishment of a new sub-committee and promised its support. Australia said that a new sub-committee should ensure that it does not duplicate the discussions in the

COFI sessions. The United States noted that SSF should be the core agenda item of the proposed sub-committee on fisheries management.

During the discussion on addressing climate change in fisheries and aquaculture, member states noted the interconnectedness of climate change and fisheries, acknowledging the sector's vulnerability. Suriname flagged climate change as the "serious development challenge of the Caribbean"; New Zealand called it "an existential issue". The Dominican Republic and Tanzania emphasized the need to strengthen early warning systems and other measures to make fisheries more resilient against natural disasters.

The EU and Canada insisted on adopting an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to understand the interaction between climate change and fisheries. Australia called for a transparent and collaborative approach to mitigate the same. The Secretariat commented on the need to mainstream climate change in national fisheries policies, highlighting the specific needs of the most vulnerable communities.

On agenda item 10 on mainstreaming biodiversity in fisheries and aquaculture, members stated that biodiversity is an economic and social good and urged FAO to actively engage in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process. Members detailed various threats to biodiversity and their impacts on fisheries. While stressing the importance of area-based fisheries management strategies and collaboration with regional fisheries bodies, the CBD Secretariat mentioned that mainstreaming biodiversity in fisheries is important and the proposed Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework has direct linkages to fisheries and aquaculture. They urged countries to adopt the same in their fisheries policies. In its statement, ICSF stressed the need for conservation efforts to recognize the human rights of local communities, to involve them in managing coastal areas and to take into account their free, prior and informed consent.

The EU, China, Malaysia, Australia, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, the UK, India and the United States were among the FAO members and regional groups that welcomed the WTO Agreement on

Fisheries Subsidies. While welcoming the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, ICSF encouraged further development of the overfishing and overcapacity pillar in the agreement; it called for the extension of special and differential treatment to low-income, resource-poor and livelihood fishing—a proxy for small-scale fishing—in developing countries. ICSF concurred that FAO provides technical support to WTO with regard to overfishing.

COFI-35 and the preceding SSF Summit provided renewed momentum for States, civil society and other stakeholders to collaboratively implement the SSF Guidelines, to discuss new and persistent challenges facing SSF communities, and to draw attention to issues relevant to SSF, including social development, access to resources and markets, gender equity and human rights. It reaffirmed the interconnectedness of fisheries, biodiversity loss and climate change; it shed light on the need to address these challenges by adopting an approach based on human rights and through international and intersectoral collaboration.

Meeting in person after four years, and coinciding with IYAF 2022, COFI-35 saw wide participation from member States and observers from civil society, UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations. They offered hope that fishing communities and their supporters can redouble their efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines to achieve a sustainable and thriving SSF in the future.

For more



Committee on Fisheries Thirty-fifth Session, 5-9 September 2022 Rome, Italy

<https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/documents-cofi35/en/>

Report of the 35th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (5-9 September 2022)

<https://www.fao.org/3/nk497en/nk497en.pdf>

Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on Agenda Item 5: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Statement by ICSF

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/cofi-35-icsf-statement-agenda-item5/>

Leap Year

At the 35th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), governments and civil society reiterated their commitment to the SSF Guidelines and the IYAFA Global Action Plan

The occasion was the 35th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI-35), the intergovernmental forum of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The purpose was to review and discuss issues and challenges related to fisheries and aquaculture. Campaigners for the rights of small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples once again joined forces to collectively voice their perspectives and advocate for the principle of food sovereignty.

They did so through the space of alliance and coordination offered by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), an autonomous and self-organized global platform of small-scale food producers, rural workers' organizations and grassroots/community-based social movements to advance the Food Sovereignty agenda at the global and the regional level.

The IPC Working Group on Fisheries comprises major civil society networks representing small-scale fisheries (SSF); the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP); the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF); the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC); and La Via Campesina (LVC). The working group is supported by Crocevia Centro Internazionale; the Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN); the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF); and the Transnational Institute (TNI).

COFI is the main intergovernmental political space for the participation of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries. It has made key advancements, particularly through the development and endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

A turning point

COFI-35 was a pivotal moment for SSF and Indigenous Peoples. Not only because 2022 is the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) but also because COFI's last in-person meeting occurred four years ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic. The IPC Working Group on Fisheries seized this opportunity to collectively celebrate SSF movements. They brought a large group of IPC delegates to Rome, connecting with other agencies active around the world.

On August 31 and September 1, Rome hosted 32 IPC delegates to prepare for COFI. The preparatory

The IPC Working Group on Fisheries seized this opportunity to collectively celebrate SSF movements

meetings offered the delegates the opportunity to rebuild internal cohesion and solidarity, which had suffered for two years, limited to online meetings. They defined common messages to take to COFI. Delegates arrived from across the world: India, Gambia, Tunisia, Nicaragua, Argentina, France, Mexico, Panama, the US, Indonesia, Thailand, Mauritius, Ecuador, South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Belize, Sri Lanka, Bahamas, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

Afterwards, the IPC delegates hosted the first IYAFA SSF Summit on September 2-4 with support from FAO, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the SSF Hub. This Summit aimed to promote dialogue and collaboration among SSF

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CHRISTIAN MANTUAN / FAO-GFCM



Fishworker representatives at the SSF Summit to commemorate IYAFA 2022 in Rome. The SSF Summit brought together Small-scale Fishers from across regions

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actors, including fishers' movements and organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A full day was dedicated exclusively to SSF organizations, creating an autonomous space for dialogue, opening up the possibility of regional collaborations to advance the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

The event drew attention to the importance of small-scale fishers as holders of their rights, not merely artisanal actors

Many SSF organizations joined the event from around the world. There were representatives from the Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale (CAOPA); the Ibero-American SSF network (Ripapa); the Sambo Creek Fishers Association and Garifuna Indigenous Peoples; the Central American Network of Indigenous Peoples; and the Norwegian Sámi

Association, among others. The open discussion laid the foundation for building a common vision among various organizations and movements for strengthening fishing communities worldwide.

The IPC and members of the SSF-GSF Advisory Group (AG) presented their first preliminary report; it provided data and analysis collected by SSF communities on the status of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in various national contexts. This report emerged from the 'SSF People-Centred Methodology to Assess the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the national, regional, and global levels. It is a tool developed by the IPC members for communities to examine human-rights violations of SSF people worldwide, providing a basis for SSF movements' ongoing advocacy work at national and international levels.

Claiming their due

The event drew attention to the importance of small-scale fishers as holders of their rights, not merely artisanal actors. It explored how SSF communities and social movements

live and work in harmony with nature; how the environment interacts with human lives, shaping cultural diversities and local livelihoods. The event demonstrated that small-scale fishing is a way of life and not merely a profit-driven enterprise.

The meeting also focused on the rights of women working in SSF, still largely marginalized and unable to enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The IPC people-centred assessment showed that women's rights are frequently violated. Cultural and structural factors play a role in undervaluing their vital contributions, keeping them largely invisible. In the framework of leadership renewal, there was an emphasis on affording more space to youth, paving the way for the next generation of SSF activists.

Immediately after the SSF Summit, COFI's 35th Session was held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome. Despite the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IPC worked hard to strengthen its network. Global movements had the opportunity to engage in face-to-face meetings with governments delegates. However, their right to speak in the COFI plenary was compromised when the chair cited a lack of time and stopped allowing observers to make interventions in some plenary discussions relevant to SSF, such as the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, biodiversity, and climate change.

After being approached by several COFI actors, the chair then allowed a minimal number of observers to make one-minute interventions, as opposed to the customary three minutes. This denied SSF and Indigenous Peoples the opportunity to contribute to the debate, preventing government delegations from hearing the voices and perspectives of millions of small-scale fishers from around the world.

A short shrift

Unfortunately, this was not the only concern. Government delegates gave much higher priority to the expansion of industrial, export-oriented aquaculture as a solution to the food crisis and to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. This has dangerous implications for biodiversity

conservation, for the resilience and adaptability of marine ecosystems. It has already caused large-scale marginalization and displacement of coastal communities, endangering their rights, livelihoods and traditions.

Much attention went to increasing investments under the Blue Economy agenda; to strengthening international fish trade driven by profits, undermining local food security and sound fisheries management. Moreover, almost all COFI members welcomed both the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and the progress made toward achieving SDG14 and the 2030 Agenda. IPC called upon governments to bring back discussions on fisheries subsidies to FAO and COFI, providing participation in the negotiations to SSF organizations.

One positive development was the governments agreeing to pursue the IYAFA Global Action Plan in the coming years, while also calling upon FAO to organize SSF summits every two years, back-to-back with COFI sessions. This again confirmed the willingness of FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) to continue to support small-scale fisheries, including through the ongoing implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

IPC members will undertake further reflections and political analyses, further developing their strategy. The IPC Working Group on Fisheries has come through this process stronger and readier to continue the good fight. The struggle continues! 🦋

For more



IYAFA Global Action Plan

<https://www.fao.org/3/cb4875en/cb4875en.pdf>

IYAFA 2022 | Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Summit 2022

<https://www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/events/events-detail/en/c/1601136/>

IPC WG on Fisheries COFI 35 statements

<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/cofi35/>

Not Without Our Consent

The following Statements were made by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) at the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) during 5-9 September, 2022

Statement on Agenda Item 5: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We agree with the observation that the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies with the current focus on overfished stocks and IUU fishing will have a global positive impact on the SDG indicator 14.6.1. The impact, in our view, can be far more positive if the overfishing and overcapacity pillar is further developed and also balanced by special and differential treatment of low income, resource poor

access rights of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources, it may be noticed that it remains a major challenge and needs a concerted action from FAO Member States, especially to develop effective legal and policy frameworks with the active participation of small-scale fisheries organizations to ensure that small-scale fishers are not displaced from their fishing grounds and that small-scale fishing communities are not denied their legitimate living spaces adjacent to marine and inland waterbodies.

We fully support the observation that we need robust, effective, participatory and integrated monitoring and reporting frameworks to track the progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

... we encourage FAO Members to develop national plans of action upholding the principles of equity, fairness and justice

and livelihood fishing in developing countries—a proxy for small-scale artisanal fishers and fishworkers as we understand it.

FAO should provide technical assistance to WTO in matters related to dealing with overcapacity and overfishing issues and in determining appropriate treatment of small-scale fisheries in developing countries.

Towards increasing the share of sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP in SIDS, LDCs and other countries in relation to SDG indicator 14.7.1, it will be good to know if there is data to show if Members who seriously implement CCRF and the SSF Guidelines indeed have increased their share of sustainable fisheries as a percentage of GDP.

When it comes to legal and institutional framework to protect

Statement on Agenda Item 6: Supporting Small-scale and Artisanal Fisheries

We notice that small-scale fisheries (SSF) have an important role in FAO's Blue Transformation Programme Priority Area. Based on the FAO tool box, its guidance document on applying a human rights-based approach, and IPC's people-centred methodology for assessing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, we encourage FAO Members to develop national plans of action upholding the principles of equity, fairness and justice. These action plans may draw from the action points developed by CSOs in relation to IYAF 2022. We also support the call from IPC to organize an SSF summit, similar to the one organized in Rome prior to this COFI meet, to develop regional plans of action for the SSF.

It is crucial that all initiatives in support of SSF promote meaningful participation of fishers, fishworkers

(both men and women) and Indigenous Peoples (IP) in decision-making processes related to fisheries development and management, and biodiversity conservation. It is pertinent to enhance legal spaces for the operation of unions, associations and cooperatives of fishers, fishworkers, fishing communities, and IPs at national and subnational levels.

To complement State efforts, innovative approaches are needed to create a mindset to broaden the scope of these organizations to undertake new tasks such as fisheries management, including co-management, recognition of a diversity of governance models for protected areas, safety in fishing operations and social protection, also within the framework of gender equity. FAO may develop guidance documents to support these organizations, and to assist in their training and capacity-building needs.

While welcoming the salient findings of the Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) study, we request that it shines a light on the respective shares of different gear groups under SSF, especially small-scale trawl and purse seine catches in total fish production. It is important to know the range of fishing vessels that is reported as SSF vessels. A clearer understanding of the structure of small-scale fishing fleet can assist in valorising equitable, sustainable and selective small-scale fisheries.

Statement on Agenda Item 10: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Fisheries and Aquaculture

My name is Felicito Núñez, and I am going to speak on behalf of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the signatories of the Call to Action from Small-Scale Fisheries, which asks FAO members to develop national strategic plans guided by the SSF Guidelines to implement five priority actions by 2030.

In my community, we Garifuna fishers are worried when we see that tourism destroys the coral reefs that we have taken care of for more than 200 years. Or when large industries come and displace us in the name of the Blue Economy. Or the conservation of marine species.


Regarding the agenda item that concerns us now, we want to stress that the 30x30 process is only possible if indigenous and fishing peoples' human rights are recognized, respected and ensured by law. Conservation needs are to be addressed with our 'Free, Prior and Informed Consent' and with absolute respect for our forms of traditional governance.

Marine Protected Areas and other area-based solutions only prevent immediate human impacts, such as prohibiting fishing or oil exploration, but do not provide a solution for ocean warming or acidification. To protect ecosystems, increase their resilience to climate change and enhance their potential to mitigate climate change. The drivers of resource degradation and biodiversity loss that also affect the remaining 70 per cent must be addressed. In our call, we therefore seek that we are guaranteed preferential access and allowed to co-manage 100 per cent of the coastal areas.

We also demand to be protected from the competing sectors of the Blue Economy. That FAO members do not allow nor support any new use of the oceans that may have a negative impact on ecosystems and the communities that depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods.

We are caretakers of the territories where we live and their natural resources. We ask FAO members and their partners to listen to us in our efforts to manage our marine resources. We insist on the urgent need of implementing a human rights-based approach to marine conservation.

Nobody enters another person's house without asking. Any decision about the conservation of our territories must have our opinion and consent.

Thank you very much. 

For more



Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on Agenda Item 5: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Statement by ICSF

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/cofi-35-icsf-statement-agenda-item5/>

ICSF's SSF Guidelines

<https://www.icsf.net/ssf-guidelines/>

Committee on Fisheries Thirty-fifth Session, 5-9 September 2022 Rome, Italy

<https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/documents-cofi35/en/>

A Safe Harbour

Securing the rights of migrant workers in Taiwan's fisheries is an ongoing and evolving process

Taiwan is an island country. The fisheries in the surrounding seas are crucial to its development. This informs the government's policy on marine fisheries. The flourishing capture fisheries are one of the country's main economic activities. Unlike the more stable and favourable land-based economic activities, capture fisheries are risk-prone and labour-intensive; this has lowered the willingness of people to work on board fishing vessels in recent years.

To meet the labour shortage, it has become a norm to recruit migrant fishers, especially for Taiwan's distant-water fishing vessels, numbering an estimated 1,140 Taiwan-owned and -flagged fishing vessels, and 230 Taiwan-owned, foreign-flagged fishing vessels. Nowadays, fishers on board mainly comprise workers from Southeast Asia. In 2019, migrant workers comprised an estimated 11 per cent of Taiwan's 300,000-plus fisheries workforce, of whom 12,476 worked in coastal and offshore fisheries and 22,302 were in the distant-water fishing fleet. Most migrant fishers come from Indonesia, with the Philippines, Vietnam and other Asian countries accounting for the remaining.

The 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, published by the United States Department of State, identified excessive working hours, abusive working conditions, verbal and physical violence on the Taiwanese distant-water fishing fleet. The US Department of Labor also includes the fish caught by the Taiwanese distant-water fishing vessels in its 'List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor'; this points to labour violations in the Taiwanese fleet, including wages not paid in full, poor living conditions and care on board, and operations lasting for months at sea without stopping at a port of call. Altogether, these create a

negative impact on the development of the fishing industry.

In order to provide the international community with the correct information and to ensure that the distant-water fisheries are sustainable, the Fisheries Agency of Taiwan recognizes the need to advance relevant protection of human and labour rights in the sector. It fits relevant domestic laws and regulations with international standards such as the C188 'Work in Fishing Convention' adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2007 (hereafter, C188).

In view of this, the Executive Yuan, the executive branch of the Taiwanese government, had convened the Co-ordination Conference for Human Trafficking Prevention and the Human Rights Promotion Task Force on December 30, 2020. It also tasked the Council of Agriculture to formulate the Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights, as a sub-plan of the National Action Plan for Human Rights, in collaboration with relevant governmental bodies.

This plan was submitted to the Executive Yuan on April 21, 2022, and approved within a month. It is expected that its implementation would strengthen the protection of human rights and labour rights in Taiwanese fisheries, maintain the reputation of Taiwan, and ensure the sustainable development of the industry.

Ongoing process

In recent years, the protection of rights and benefits of migrant fishers on board Taiwanese-flagged fishing vessels has received increasing attention from international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Fisheries Agency has been entrusted to improve the protection of the rights and benefits of migrant fishers through institutional guarantees. That is, relevant laws and regulations have



To meet the labour shortage in Taiwan's fisheries, especially its distant-water fishing vessels, it has become the norm to recruit migrant fishers, the majority from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam

been examined and amended in phases to meet the ILO standards and enforce their implementation.

The Act for Distant Water Fisheries, published in July 2016, and the Regulations on the Authorization and Management of Overseas Employment of Foreign Crew Members, promulgated in January 2017, are the legislative basis for the management of migrant fishers employed overseas. These regulations were revised in May 2022. Their enactment was benchmarked to C188; they include resting hours, the use of the standardized contract to guarantee minimum wage, insurance coverage and other basic rights and benefits to crew members.

Additionally, the Fisheries Agency took several steps with relevant government bodies to address human trafficking and labour violations in the fisheries sector. The Regulations on the Approval of Investment in or the Operation of Foreign Flag Fishing Vessels were amended, prohibiting Taiwanese nationals from engaging in human trafficking and other illegal activities by flying 'flags of convenience' (FOC). The draft amendment notice of Regulations on the Management and

Approval of Foreign Flag Fishing Vessels Entering into Ports of the Republic of China stipulates that a vessel will be denied entry to the port if a domestic court decides, or an international organization or foreign government reports, that the vessel is in violation of human trafficking or forced-labour laws.

Indicators of forced labour have been included in the Standard Operation Procedures for Reporting and Processing Cases of Foreign Crew Members Employed Overseas Onboard Distant Water Fishing Vessels Suspected of Violating the Human Trafficking Prevention Act so as to identify human trafficking cases. Cases requiring further investigation will fall under criminal matters.

In order to meet C188 standards for onboard accommodation of workers, Taiwan has partially waived the requirements for building new vessels or rebuilding existing ones. From November 2020, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications requires all vessels over 24 m (or smaller distant-water fishing vessels) to meet the minimum requirements of ILO.

The Fisheries Agency has also completed the construction of seven showering facilities in fishing ports with a large migrant fisher population, with plans to construct more in other places, if needed. The agency, jointly with the labour ministry, conducted an inspection of distant-water fishing vessels when they returned to ports in 2020. It invited fishery worker groups to review recruitment agents. It also invited NGOs to join the interviews of migrant fishers, holding two seminars with these organizations to discuss the findings.

Further improvement

Responding to labour issues identified by the civil society, the agency further improved the rights and benefits of migrant fishers by amending its regulations in May 2022. The template of the employment contract between distant-water fisheries operators and foreign crew members employed overseas has been revised. It raised the minimum monthly wage of migrant fishers from US \$450 to US \$500, subject to adjustments after annual reviews. The amendments stipulate the means of payment, ensuring it does not go to any foreign agent.


The claimable amount of life insurance has been raised from NTD 1 million (US \$31,300) to 1.5 million (US \$47,000). The coverage of pay-as-you-go medical insurance now cannot be less than NTD 300,000 (US \$9,400). The amended regulations stipulate that records of daily working hours of crew members be maintained on board fishing vessels. Crew members are entitled to a minimum 77 hours of rest in any seven days, in accordance with Cr88.

Foreign agents recruiting workers overseas will have to meet the same requirements as domestic agents. Foreign agents will require the approval of each worker's home country to recruit them. If a migrant crew member wishes to return home before his contract expires and if his continuous service on a vessel is more than one year, the employer will be required to pay the full return airfare. For employment durations between three months and one year, transport expenses are to be reimbursed *pro rata*.

For a period of less than three months, the crew member will have to pay.

If an employer terminates a contract early, severance pay will be calculated according to the length of service. If a crew member dies due to injury or illness during employment, the employer shall arrange and pay for the repatriation of the bodily remains. The regulations also stipulate reasonable compensation to be made for the loss of personal belongings of the crew in the event of accidents on the vessels.

The Taiwanese government has initiated other actions to enforce the rights and benefits due to migrant fishers, including revising the labour contract template in July 2022 and amending the care service plan. The Fisheries Agency has instituted an annual review of recruitment agents in the sector; strengthened crew inspection and interviews at domestic and foreign ports; improved the management of foreign-flagged vessels; established and deepened international cooperation; and strengthened collaboration mechanisms with NGOs. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Taiwanese authorities provided free rapid tests and antigen tests, managing quarantine measures for foreign workers.

The rights and benefits of migrant fishers can be further improved with additional funds and manpower, supported by the Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights, and through cooperation between relevant authorities to promote implementation in a multidimensional and systematic manner. 

For more

A review of migrant labour rights protection in distant water fishing in Taiwan

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354961194_A_review_of_migrant_labour_rights_protection_in_distant_water_fishing_in_Taiwan_From_laissez-faire_to_regulation_and_challenges_behind

The 2020 Trafficking in Persons: Report

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

Conservation in Context

Interview with marine biologist and fisheries scientist Ray Hilborn on how area-based conservation measures can be made more inclusive of sustainable fisheries

The Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is scheduled for December 7-19 in Montreal, Canada. The parties are expected to negotiate and approve a set of global targets in the 'Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework' that will guide collective efforts to safeguard biodiversity over the next ten years. ICSF spoke to Ray Hilborn, professor at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, about the importance of the new biodiversity targets to fisheries livelihoods and sustainability. The transcript of the interview has been edited for length and clarity.

ICSF: FAO fisheries statistics shows that while most fish stocks (nearly 70 per cent) targeted by marine capture fisheries are at sustainable levels, the proportion of the unsustainably fished stocks has gone up from 10 to 30 per cent in the past few decades. Would you say that we are in a crisis and that overfishing is as much of a problem today as it was in the 1980s or 1990s?

Ray Hilborn (RH): It all depends on where in the world. I would say in developed countries, overfishing was quite commonplace in the 1990s and that has been reduced considerably. The data suggest that the proportion of stocks classified as overfished by FAO has been increasing globally. In some parts of the world, it is obviously much higher than others. One of the 'mysteries' is that in China and South and Southeast Asia, catches have been rising or typically stable. One of the theories is that a lot of long-lived species are overfished but the abundance and yield of lower trophic level fish and small pelagic species in general hasn't declined.

But there is no question that lots of stocks in the world are fished too hard

and we need to reduce that. Whether it is really a lot different now than it was 40-50 years ago—it may well be. We just don't know enough. For instance, China, India or Indonesia do not publish stock assessments. And this is more than 28 per cent of the world's marine fish catch.

ICSF: Fisheries management has historically focused on some fish stocks and target species. To what extent have fisheries managers, the fishing industry and other stakeholders been successful in integrating biodiversity or ecosystem considerations into fisheries management?

RH: Again, it all depends on where you are in the world. My three countries of primary work have been the United States, Canada and New Zealand, but with a lot of experience in Australia and the tuna fisheries of the Pacific and a fair amount of work in Latin America. If we start with the United States, fisheries management is dominated by concerns about biodiversity. Certainly, the regulations everyone concentrates on are managing the target species, but almost every fishery in the United States is constrained by concerns about biodiversity: by-catch of charismatic species, impacts on benthic ecosystems from mobile bottom contact gear—those tend to dominate. I would say it's the same story in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. There is a lot of regulation, a lot of concern about protecting various components of biodiversity.

As you get to less intensively managed fisheries, a lot of countries have historically not been managing even the target species. Again, I don't know enough about China, South and Southeast Asia, but I don't think that biodiversity concerns have played a very prominent role in fisheries discussions. It's been mostly about food security. And frankly worrying about biodiversity is

*This interview with **Ray Hilborn** (hilbornr@gmail.com), professor at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, was conducted by **N. Venugopalan** (icsf@icsf.net), programme manager, ICSF and **Manas Roshan** (manas.roshan@gmail.com), an independent consultant on 29 October, 2022*

ALESSIA PIERDOMENICO / FAO



Ray Hilborn at the International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability organized by the FAO in November 2019

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a higher priority for richer countries. What it means is we constrain our fisheries to protect biodiversity and either import aquaculture-raised fish (with associated biodiversity costs) or wild caught swordfish or other species that have lower environmental standards. So, we are exporting the environmental impacts of fisheries to a great extent.

ICSF: The question of biodiversity conservation spills into area-based conservation measures. Several countries have declared no-take marine protected areas (MPA) in their waters. Many developing countries cannot declare no-take MPAs easily, because of the large population dependent on fish for their food security and livelihoods. It is true that we need to do more to maintain biodiversity by regulating overfishing and overcapacity, but developing countries need different models. What is your opinion?

RH: The advocates for MPAs always argue that you increase fisheries yield by putting in MPAs. There is essentially no evidence for that except in places where overfishing is very severe and the fisheries are not effectively regulated. But a paper recently published in *Science*

magazine¹ argued that these large closed areas in Hawaii in the United States led to fishery benefits. There was almost no fishing in that area to begin with. And that's been the case for most of the declared large MPAs.

The advocates would deny it is not a trade-off, because you are going to have more fish because you have the MPA. Really there is no empirical evidence for that. Also, in the United States and in most developed countries, they are not interpreting 30x30 [*the proposed CBD target to conserve 30 per cent of marine areas by 2030*] as 30 per cent no-take areas. The United States has moved very far along the line towards interpreting it as protecting biodiversity [using] other effective conservation measures [*OECD, a new designation recognized by the CBD*] seem very likely. I think Australia are going the same way. They are going to recognize a much wider range of management actions that protect biodiversity as contributing to 30x30.

ICSF: Our previous work on MPAs studied the social impacts of conservation in both no-take zones and multiple-use marine protected areas in Latin America, Africa and Asia. We saw

that many protected areas were both designated and managed in ways that were quite inequitable and that hadn't been consultative, which led to several livelihood and other human rights issues. The CBD has promoted such areas as one of the most effective tools in conserving biodiversity and the global biodiversity target for 10 per cent is now proposed to be increased to 30 per cent. You have repeatedly pointed out that MPAs don't really reduce overall fishing effort and also do not address other big threats to the oceans such as climate change, acidification and pollution. What makes MPAs so popular?

RH: I would say it is the delusion of the marine conservation movement. MPAs are striking if you put them in place and you see a two- or three- or four-fold increase in the abundance of fish. Because they rarely look at what's happening to the fishing effort that has been displaced. There were some really stunning examples of how you saw a lot more fish in no-take areas and they've developed this narrative.

I think that is changing to a great extent. A research paper published in 2019 had as its lead author Ben Halpern, a long-term advocate of MPAs.² They evaluated threats to ocean ecosystems and the top threat was climate change; the second set of threats were terrestrial impacts on the ocean: pollution, coastal development and shipping. Fishing was the lowest threat to ocean ecosystems in their analysis. Recently, both in Australia and New Zealand there were official reports on threats to the marine environment that have listed climate change and terrestrial impacts as higher priorities than fishing. I think there is a big change underway. Will we be swept over by 30x30 before that happens? I just got an email yesterday from a leader of a small fishery in Fiji saying, "Look, our government is going to close 30 per cent of the area with no effective consultation. They just want to be part of 30x30." So, I am not sure what the dynamics at the international level would be.

ICSF: In the context of this year's UN Biodiversity Conference and Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to what extent should the proposed MPA target be a cause for concern for artisanal, small-scale fishing communities?

How can conservation be made more equitable and participatory?

RH: I think the answer to the first question is yes because the small-scale fishers, particularly in the developing world, typically have very little political power. In the developed world, fisheries are sometimes well organized and their national fisheries agencies are influential. The national fisheries agencies' objectives are to manage fisheries to produce benefits for the country whereas the environmental agencies' mandate is to protect the environment.

The MPA advocacy movement has been very successful at going right to the head of State and saying, "You will be an environmental hero if you sign on to this." That's really what happened in Kiribati and in Seychelles. They completely went around any kind of science-based planning. The same thing happened in the United States—two presidents (Bush and Obama) declared expansions of no-take areas with absolutely no scientific evaluation of the proposals. So, it's not just the developing world that sees that happening.

What I would argue is: Let's identify the problems we are trying to address and the alternative tools to solve those problems, rather than relying on a single tool like protected areas and having all your discussion around that. An MPA isn't a proven effective technique to increase yield and isn't a proven effective technique to increase regional abundance of fish; it is a proven effective technique to increase the abundance of fish inside the closed area. As we move from target species to by-catch species, that's where MPAs look even less effective. Whereas we know from lots of experience that technical changes in fishing gear and fishing method have been known to reduce by-catch. So again, I go back to 'what's the problem, what's the best tool'.

I know an interesting development in the United States, New Zealand and Canada: Indigenous Peoples have, in many cases, very strong legal rights due to treaties that were signed. So, they have been able to really get a seat at the table in a way that would have been unlikely fifty years ago. And that's made a big difference. For instance, the Prime Minister of New Zealand told people

in the fishing industry that bottom trawling needs to stop within five years. What she seems to ignore is that bottom trawling produces 68 per cent of the catch in New Zealand and half of the fishing rights in New Zealand are owned by the Maori. And the Maori have really strong rights. Trawling is important to the Maori people. They own big fishing companies that catch most of their fish by bottom trawling.

The same is true certainly in Alaska where local people have a major financial stake in a range of fisheries and their voice is going to be heard. In New Zealand and the United States, Indigenous People have a lot of political power due to the treaty rights. This gives them quite a bit of leverage in fisheries matters.

ICSF: How can fisheries management be both effective and equitable? In the countries you have studied or observed, are there examples of good practices that can provide lessons for others?

RH: I would say the developed countries that I know well have been quite successful at stopping overfishing and generally making fishing economically profitable by what's called rationalization in the United States. That is, limiting open access, stopping the race to fish. But one of the downsides of that is the corporate concentration in the industry. Even in a small boat fishery like the New Zealand lobster fishery, the quota is now largely owned by processors and investors. The idea of the New Zealand system of the 1980s, that the small boat owners would own their share of the fishery, has not transpired. The small boat owners have sold their share of the fishery and are now working on a for-hire basis, which both reduces their incentive to contribute to sustainability and it really hasn't led to enabling this class of fishermen because only the fishermen who were granted the fishing rights early on profited greatly if they didn't sell too early.

So, we've got the conservation part right in the developed countries. The allocation and the equity...no, I don't think we've got it right at all. For small-scale fisheries, the mantra has been community-based co-management. For many years we used the Chilean system

of territorial fishing rights for fishing co-operatives as this is the way to go. But that story is falling apart to a great extent. Most of those co-operatives are unable to survive on the rights they were granted; many have withdrawn from the territorial rights system. I think there is still a deep belief that co-management is the way to go. But I am not sure we've worked out the best way to do it yet.

ICSF: Considering that the 30x30 target might be adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, would you recommend spatial conservation or management tools in particular instances, say, to regulate bottom trawling? Or do you have any hesitations about that?

RH: I suspect that closing areas to certain gears is going to always be an effective tool, whether it is in tropical or temperate waters. It is widely recognized that certain habitats or marine ecosystems are very sensitive to bottom trawling. I don't think there is any question that closing areas that have that characteristic to bottom trawling would conserve biodiversity at a very low cost to food production because, in general, those are rare habitats. Most bottom trawling takes place on mud and sand. I think MPA advocates just hate to recognize that you can achieve major benefits by closing areas to some gears but not others. You don't see them wanting to accept areas closed to bottom trawling as counting towards your 30 per cent target.

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For more



Hilborn Lab

<https://rayhblog.wordpress.com/>

A Responsible Line

A community-based, bottom-up regime of fisheries management, rooted in traditional ecological knowledge, is practised in the pole-and-line tuna fishery of India's Lakshadweep Islands

India is home to a large number of small-scale fishers (SSF) using diverse craft-gear combinations along the country's long coastline and island systems. One standout entry is the pole-and-line (P&L) tuna fishery of the Lakshadweep Islands. Compared to other fisheries, this is not mentioned much in the outside world—or even on the Indian mainland. Yet this unique and sustainable fishery deserves a sharper focus during the ongoing International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA).

The P&L fishing gear comprise a fishing line with a barbless hook attached to a bamboo or fibreglass pole. The fishing method uses plenty of live fish as bait to attract the tuna. The 'baitfish' are small pelagic and reef fishes caught from lagoons and reefs surrounding the islands. P&L fishing is considered one of the most sustainable fishing methods.

P&L fishing is practised across the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian oceans, with minor-to-significant variations. For example, the Japanese P&L fleet is highly mechanized with robotic pole-and-line apparatus; the main boat is supplied with fresh, live baitfish from time to time. Meanwhile, in Senegal, multiple P&L boats first collect reliable amounts of baitfish and then proceed to fish for tuna, together using each other's boats as huge fish aggregating devices (FADs).

In Lakshadweep, the P&L fleet consists of vessels 40-60 feet long and crews of 8-12 fishers. They begin their fishing day with baitfish fishing and then proceed to catch tuna. Baitfish are kept alive in aerated holding tanks onboard fishing vessels before being used as bait for P&L fishing. Fishers locate and approach tuna schools in the open sea by taking cues from the preying seabirds or, at times, with the help of FADs.

On locating a school of tuna, fishers throw the live, shiny baitfish from the boat to attract the tuna toward the boat. Fishers onboard scatter baitfish and simultaneously spray water to mimic a feeding frenzy for tuna. In this situation, the tuna start biting on anything shiny, even the silvery hooks. As the tuna takes the bait, the fishing crew standing at the back of the boat with their fishing poles immediately cast their lines into the tuna school. On hooking a tuna, the fishers skilfully hurl it onto the deck behind. The barbless hooks make it easy to disengage the entangled tuna with a mere flick of the hand; the fishing continues, one tuna at a time, till the feeding frenzy ceases.

The P&L technique is said to have evolved centuries ago in the islands of the Indian Ocean, including Minicoy, the southernmost island of Lakshadweep

The P&L fishery has a low impact on the marine ecosystem. Being an offshore operation, it alleviates the fishing pressure on the islands' sensitive coral reef ecosystem. It makes a major contribution to the socioeconomic well-being of the community, being a primary source of income for a significant number of Lakshadweep's residents. It contributes nearly 15 per cent to India's total tuna landings, as of 2019.

The P&L technique is said to have evolved centuries ago in the islands of the Indian Ocean, including Minicoy, the southernmost island of Lakshadweep. The Lakshadweep Fisheries Department introduced the technique from there to other islands in 1963. Initially, it was backed by development programmes, policies and

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SHWETHA NAIR



Tuna landing in Agatti. The increased demand for—and declining availability of—baitfish has made fishing arduous. Fishers now spend more time, fuel and labour searching for bait, increasing costs

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subsidies to enhance the livelihoods of the local fishers. Now, it has acquired a more production-centric path because of supportive policies and incentives for multi-day fishing and scaling-up production. These policies have intensified fishing activities on the islands and have subsequently increased fishing pressure, not only on the tuna resources but on the baitfish resources as well. Baitfish are a critical limiting resource.

Challenges ahead

The last ten years have seen an increase in the size and number of P&L boats in Lakshadweep due to policies and subsidies that are encouraging higher tuna catches. This has consequently led to an increased demand for bait, subsequently intensifying baitfish fishing. For example, over the past few years, many boats have been fishing for baitfish species like the silver striped herring (*Spratelloides gracilis*) using 'light fishing', employing artificial light emitting diode (LED) from night time till before dawn, to attract the baitfish.

Although the short-term benefits of using artificial lights to attract fish

are undeniable—higher catches, less effort, fuel savings—experts have demonstrated its negative effects like overfishing and increased bycatch. The herrings form spawning aggregations before dawn; they are drawn towards the lights and then caught. This can impair recruitment and affect local baitfish stocks. A majority of fishers reported that light fishing is a major reason for the perceived decline in the availability of baitfish. Continued light fishing can endanger the sustainability of baitfish stocks.

The increased demand for—and declining availability of—baitfish has made fishing arduous. Fishers now spend more time, fuel and labour searching for bait, increasing costs. Salahudeen, a P&L fisher from the island of Agatti with the highest number of tuna fishers, said, "Earlier, we would begin baitfish fishing at daybreak; there was ample baitfish for all. Now, everybody rushes to the fishing ground before dawn or even at midnight to land enough baitfish for the day."

While there is a lack of information on the exact magnitude of the impact of

such fishing practices on Lakshadweep's baitfish stocks, it is vital to take prudent precautionary measures to manage these resources sustainably.

Masmin, the smoked staple

Masmin or *hiki mas* is a smoked and sun-dried product of Lakshadweep's tuna; the processing increases its shelf life. It is similar to the Japanese *Katsuobushi* and *Velho mas* of the Maldives. This processing technique has spread through the Lakshadweep islands along with P&L fishing. As of 2015, over 90 per cent of Lakshadweep's P&L caught tuna is converted into masmin. Very likely, this is due to the absence of infrastructure to store and transport fresh fish to the mainland.

Lakshadweep masmin is mainly exported to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asian countries through supply chains consisting of traders and agents from the Indian mainland. This complete dependence on a handful of traders has created a monopoly in the market. Owing to this market structure, a slight disruption in the supply chain can make fishers highly vulnerable to price volatility.

This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. The price of masmin halved from INR350-500 (US\$4) per kg to INR120-180 (US\$2) per kilo, exposing the vulnerabilities of fishers due to their reliance on a single supply chain. This freefall worsened the fishers' limited access to markets and low value for their masmin.

In transition

Direct and indirect socioeconomic or ecological challenges can push small-scale fisheries towards unsustainable practices. With the P&L fishery facing issues like declining baitfish resources and the lack of adequate returns, Lakshadweep's fisheries are seeing a transition to reef fishing, adding pressure on the sensitive coral reef systems that constitute this archipelago.

Lakshadweep is also facing intrusion of illegal, foreign and mainland Indian fishing boats into its waters, a concern for many fishers. Moreover, changing developmental priorities of the government present other external challenges. For example, there is currently a push for large-scale

tourism development in Lakshadweep. This can negatively impact the islands' fisheries sector, limiting fishers' access to fishing grounds and the coastal commons.

Although tourism can be encouraged, its implementation has to take an equitable and balanced approach by considering the concerns of the fisheries sector that is critical for the livelihood of the Lakshadweep's population. Tourism models must be compatible with the unique social-ecological context of the islands.

Fisheries management now

Despite the complexities and challenges of P&L fisheries, there is a dearth of active cooperatives to help fishers undertake collective action to address pressing issues. The islands have had collectives in the past; they did not endure, with the exception of those initiated by the fisheries department. These societies are primarily engaged in selling boat spare parts and providing other fishery-related services.

Decisions concerning fisheries in Lakshadweep are made within a

... there also exists a community-based, bottom-up regime of fisheries management on Minicoy Island, from where P&L was introduced to the other islands

conventional, top-down, bureaucratic system; the directives that trickle down the hierarchy are designed to fulfil the overarching national fisheries goals. Such a bureaucratic system is beneficial in driving government interventions, it does not necessarily reflect the nuances and complexities of issues at the local level. Lakshadweep's P&L fishery faces complex, multi-dimensional and ever-changing challenges. They require holistic solutions developed through multi-stakeholder involvement.

In addition to the conventional, top-down management system, there also exists a community-based, bottom-up regime of fisheries management on Minicoy Island, from where P&L was introduced to the other islands. Minicoy Island has its customary systems of resource management, rooted in

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The P&L fishing method uses plenty of live fish as bait to attract the tuna. The 'baitfish' are small pelagic and reef fishes caught from lagoons and reefs surrounding the islands

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traditional ecological knowledge, preventing the overharvest of resources. Learning from such unique examples and, wherever possible, incorporating their elements into contemporary fisheries management could be a step towards making resource management more inclusive, contextualized and sustainable.

Tiding over the challenges

What remains undisputed for enabling inclusive fisheries governance is awareness, motivation and empowerment among stakeholders. Dakshin Foundation, an organization working on coastal and marine systems in India, has been engaged in research and interventions aimed at preserving the P&L fishery and creating systems for participatory fisheries management in Lakshadweep for almost a decade. Dakshin's Community-Based Fisheries Monitoring (CBFM) programme is aimed at empowering fishers through participatory knowledge generation for long-term and sustainable management.

The CBFM programme has gained traction among the fishers over the years. It has provided a good entry point for mobilizing support for making

decision-making more inclusive. In turn, this has fostered dialogue around the creation of a multi-stakeholder fisheries governance platform in Lakshadweep.

The initial consultations on this front have been favourable. Getting various stakeholders together to operationalize such a platform requires more work. Such participatory governance systems have the potential to go beyond resource management; they can enable fishers and other stakeholders to collectively address the larger challenges facing the island fisheries.

The way forward

The ongoing IYAFA period that celebrates small-scale and artisanal fisheries is not merely a reminder to the world about the significance of SSF like the P&L fishery. In fact, it compels us to ask critical questions about ensuring equity and justice for small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities. It is imperative to address these questions now, in the face of the rapacious pursuit of fish in a hamstrung environment.

To ensure a viable future, we strongly recommend the need for well-coordinated action at local and national levels. This will ensure fishers' participation across the various levels of resource management through novel and dynamic approaches like participatory, community-based or cross-scale governance. Investing in small-scale fisheries in this way can be a global investment toward a sustainable future for fisheries and healthier oceans.

3

For more



Where Tradition is a way of life: Traditional Knowledge in the U.T of Lakshadweep, India

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/where-tradition-is-a-way-of-life-traditional-knowledge-in-the-u-t-of-lakshadweep-india-2/>

Dakshin Lakshadweep Fisheries

<https://www.dakshin.org/lakshadweep-fisheries/>

A Capital Choice

A participatory, bottom-up approach will go a long way in ensuring sustainable livelihoods for communities in the small-scale fisheries sector of Nigeria

Nigeria's small-scale fisheries are very diverse, providing livelihood and food for millions of people engaged in the fisheries value chain. Fishing activity occurs in the vast network of inland water bodies, such as lakes, wetlands, creeks, estuaries, rivers, streams and lagoons, as well as in the sea. The country's waters are rich in a wide range of commercially important species, both freshwater and marine, such as catfish, tilapia, prawns, crayfish, croakers, shiny nose, shrimps and many others.

The country's small-scale fisheries can be described as multi-gear, multi-species, multi-technique enterprises that preserve the culture of the fisherfolk. However, in recent times, the small-scale fishing communities have been confronted with many challenges.

The environmental problems include climate change, aquatic weed infestation, pollution, salinity intrusion, coastal flooding and erosion. The socioeconomic challenges comprise a long list: rapid coastal development, excessive sand mining, rising inflation, inadequate government-subsidised fishing inputs and gears, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices, inadequate fish preservation and processing facilities, pricing monopoly by middlemen, piracy, insecure tenure, and a general lack of governance in the fisheries. All these make it very difficult for fisherfolk to sustain their livelihoods.

Forms of capital

Sustainable livelihoods can be described as the capabilities and availability of assets—social and material—as also activities that can absorb and recover from shocks and stress, enhancing resources and capabilities for present and future use without negatively

affecting the natural resource base. The sustainable livelihood framework uses the concept of capital as the key feature and considers its interaction with the vulnerability context, transforming structures and processes to create livelihoods strategies that result in different livelihood outcomes. The types of capital that small-scale fisheries in Nigeria can use to build their livelihoods are natural, social, cultural, human, physical, financial and political capital.

Natural capital refers to all natural resources utilized for fish production in the aquatic environment—rivers, streams, lakes, creeks, estuaries,

The types of capital that small-scale fisheries in Nigeria can use to build their livelihoods are natural, social, cultural, human, physical, financial and political capital

wetlands, mangroves, lagoons and the sea. These water bodies are usually open-access but traditional authorities and individuals control fishing rights in most inland water bodies in Nigeria. Diverse fish species inhabit them; their harvest meets the protein and micronutrient requirement of the fishing communities and provide livelihood for the fishers.

Social capital connotes the networks and connectedness of fishing communities; it increases their trust and ability to cooperate, form relationships and access wider social institutions that support their livelihoods. Fishing communities draw on social networks—neighbourhood, nearby relatives, cooperative societies and other associations—for financial aid for fishing activities and livelihood sustenance. Most fishing communities

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lack health institutions, and the few available usually lack basic drugs and qualified health personnel; thus, fishing communities resort to treatment from traditional medicine or spiritual practitioners.

Human capital refers to the skills, knowledge, leadership, capacity to work and good health of fishworkers; these can be utilized to develop and multiply the benefits derivable from other resources. This capital is exhibited by artisanal fishers in various forms, including in the use of local materials such as branches of trees, worn-out tires and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipes to make fish aggregating devices and fish fences. However, their adoption of modern techniques of fishing is limited by the low levels of education among fishing communities. Fishers are known

... most fishing communities are isolated and inaccessible, with no direct contact with their elected representatives...

to draw on their fishing experience to anticipate the weather conditions and tidal currents; they collectivize resources to decide the time and location for fishing, multiplying their catches, also forecasting demand to obtain higher prices for their harvests.

Physical capital consists of material infrastructure and private assets: fishing craft, gear and engines, landing centres, jetties, roads, storage facilities, potable water, shelter, energy, transport, and communication; it includes equipment for production and processing. Most fishing communities in Nigeria's coastal and inland areas are not accessible by road. Hence, the waterways navigable by boats, canoes and ferries remain the only viable means of transportation to areas such as creeks and estuaries that are very difficult to access for researchers, fisheries officers and fish dealers, thus denying the fishing communities opportunity, in terms of fisheries assessment, extension services and better pricing from urban markets. Most fishing communities lack storage and processing facilities due to the lack

of electricity, resulting in significant post-harvest losses. It is very evident that the essential physical capital is mostly unavailable to fisherfolk.

Financial capital refers to the economic or monetary resources. They can take the form of savings, credit, regular remittances or pensions. Most fishers have no access to formal sources of credit; they rely on personal savings and loans from family, friends, cooperatives and moneylenders. These sources of capital are usually limited, they hardly meet the fishers' financial requirement.

Cultural capital refers to how people perceive their world, how they operate in it, including through their traditions and language. It determines whose views are respected and who holds influence in a community. It expresses in the novel ways they think, strategize, create and innovate to adapt to emerging challenges. Cultural capital can be seen in the adoption of *beel* fishing and brush park fishing by artisanal fishers operating in inland areas, examples of aquaculture-based fisheries enhancement to bolster productivity.

Political capital refers to people's ability to access power, authority and important institutions; to establish a sound relationship and communication with the government; to influence their decisions and obtain resources for development and governance of their communities. This can be accessed by the fisherfolk through persistent complaints and appeals to the government and relevant organizations. Fishers can lodge complaints with the head fisher, who relays this to the traditional authorities that are in a better position to pass them on to the local authorities. However, most fishing communities are isolated and inaccessible, with no direct contact with their elected representatives; hence political capital is mostly unavailable as a part of their livelihood strategy.

Obstacles

The challenges small-scale fisheries face—their vulnerability—are the risks, shocks, threats and stresses affecting their artisanal livelihoods. It comprises three layers: shocks, seasonality and



Orimedu fishing village in Lagos state. The challenges small-scale fisheries face—their vulnerability—are the risks, shocks, threats and stresses affecting their artisanal livelihoods

unfavourable trends. Shocks include climatic and non-climatic factors like floods, storms, tides, coastal erosion, invasive aquatic weeds, market forces, multiple user conflicts, loss of a family member, piracy, unregulated movement of timber on water bodies, sand dredging and other destructive activities that affect fishing communities. Some fishermen are also involved in IUU fishing, transshipment and other related activities such as cross-border smuggling of banned goods.

Critical trends like rural-urban migration and population increase pose daunting challenges to livelihoods, food security and employment. Coastal fishing communities like the Maroko, Ilubrin Otodogbame, Itedo, Ilubirin and Ebute Ikate have recently been displaced from their dwellings to pave the way for urban development along the Lagos waterfront. More fishing communities along the waterfront will likely suffer the same fate, thus adversely affecting the livelihood of communities that depend on fisheries resources for survival.

Nigeria has two distinct seasons: wet and dry. The rainy season lasts from

April to October; the dry season from November to March. Fishing is highly seasonal; catches vary according to the season due to behavioural changes in the fish, induced by fish morphology and a combination of changes in water temperature and other hydrological parameters. Seasonality in fisheries is responsible for the migratory nature of fishers and is more prominent in flooding rivers. Recently, climate change has affected the seasonality, disrupting the predictability of fish catch and production. During peak fishing seasons, fishers suffer significant post-harvest losses due to the lack of storage facilities and poor processing techniques, leading to poor prices.

Prospects

Sustainable livelihoods in small-scale fisheries are dependent on the effectiveness of the governance system, the structures and processes of both formal and informal institutions, organizations, policies and legislation. This regulates access to the various forms of capital, determining the success or failure of fisheries

livelihoods. It includes traditional authorities participating in resolving conflicts among fishers, between fishers and other users of water bodies, thus reducing their vulnerability.

The awareness of the multiplicity of problems confronting the fishing communities and the need for proper management, control and sustainable exploitation of artisanal inland and coastal fisheries resources led to a response in 1975. That's when two fisheries research institutes were set up for freshwater and marine environments, respectively. These have intervened in several areas. Yet small-scale fisheries remain vulnerable to dynamic political and economic processes, resulting in higher cost of fishing inputs and reduced investment returns.

For instance, home-grown improved fish smoking kilns developed to upgrade fish-processing practices and assist in minimizing post-harvest losses have not been adopted widely. This can be attributed to low awareness; in some cases, the new technology is unaffordable. The research institutes are hamstrung by a paucity of human capacity and resources. This retards their ability to provide evidence-based inputs to fisheries authorities for them to recommend appropriate policies and management measures in monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries resources.


The fisheries authorities concerned are the Federal Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the national level and the State Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at regional level, respectively. Some states in Nigeria lack fisheries edicts; those that exist are already outdated, out of sync with current realities. The fisheries authorities are underfunded, lack qualified manpower and resources, bogged down by bureaucratic rules that limit their capacity to effectively govern the sector. Thus, the small-scale fisherfolk are mostly left on their own to devise strategies to combat their various challenges.

A long-term outlook

Livelihood strategies can be described as the dynamic process by which people come together and make choices, taking

into cognizance their vulnerability and the transforming structures and processes that result in livelihood outcomes. Livelihood strategies in fishing communities mainly depend on natural capital assets. Artisanal fishing is a usually multi-species and multi-gear venture; thus, various fishing gear are deployed, depending on the season, the target species and the type of craft employed. Due to the seasonality of fisheries, off-season migration is one option. Fishers have adopted a number of alternative livelihood strategies, diversifying into animal husbandry, crop farming, aquaculture and trade to minimize their vulnerability.

For example, the small-scale fisheries in Lokoja, Kogi had been seriously affected by flooding induced by climate change, as also by excessive sand mining along the banks of River Niger. This destroyed the nursery grounds, causing aquatic species to migrate, thus reducing catches. The fishers, consequently, utilized the capital available to them, adopting strategies to change the fishing duration, effort and location; they also began fishing in deeper waters. Accordingly, they have shifted to mechanized boats, banned chemical fishing and finally diversified into aquaculture.

Successful interventions can certainly fortify livelihood strategies. However, strengthening the governance system and adopting a participatory, bottom-up approach will go a long way in ensuring sustainable livelihoods and abating the challenges for the small-scale fisheries in Nigeria. 

For more



Fear of Flight

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/fear-of-flight/>

A Heavy Blow

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/a-heavy-blow/>

Small-scale fisheries in the context of traditional post-harvest practice and the quest for food and nutritional security in Nigeria

<https://agricultureandfoodsecurity.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40066-017-0110-z>

Restricted Entry

Shrimp farms in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu have proliferated despite a 1996 Supreme Court judgement to regulate coastal aquaculture

Given an option, I would move away from this village to nearby Chidambaram town because, year after year, the fertility of my agricultural land declines.” This was told to us by a lamenting farmer concerned about the expansion of shrimp farms in Pichavaram, a village situated near the backwaters and mangroves of Cuddalore district in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. In the neighbouring fishing village of Thandavarayanancholaganpettai (T.S. Pettai), a fisher echoed a similar sentiment when he complained about the menial jobs he undertook in the Middle East for 15 years because, as he put it, “shrimp farms had polluted the adjacent Uppanar river and the fish resources within it.”

Despite these voices, brackishwater shrimp aquaculture continues to expand and even, some would say, flourish. India’s overall shrimp exports, according to the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), amounted to 590,275 tonnes with a value of US \$4,426.19 million in 2020-21; of this total, 88 per cent comes from culture species. While aquaculture, both fresh and brackishwater, is being promoted by international organizations that support livelihoods and strengthen food and nutritional security, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), shrimp aquaculture is blossoming because of its international demand and foreign exchange potential. In villages such as Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai, shrimp aquaculture is promoted with export markets in mind and with promises that aquaculture is a better option to agriculture in increasingly saline coastal ecologies.

The story of brackishwater aquaculture is, however, more

complicated. Aquaculture is as much a cause of salinity as it is a solution to it. Moreover, while there are potential winners—those who have the capital to invest and the ability to take risks—there are many more losers, such as those who bear the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of degrading agricultural lands and polluted water bodies.

Looking back at Indian aquaculture

India’s tryst with aquaculture goes back to the late 1940s. After establishing fisheries stations for both inland and marine fisheries, the Indian government set up the Central Inland

... shrimp aquaculture is promoted with export markets in mind and with promises that aquaculture is a better option to agriculture in increasingly saline coastal ecologies

Fisheries Research Institute in 1959; two years later came the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. While the main focus was on capture fisheries, aquaculture also received attention during the Blue Revolution.

Soon to follow was a National Aquaculture Development Plan aimed at improving the technical expertise in aquaculture. In 1987, the Central Institute for Brackish Water Aquaculture (CIBA) became the nodal agency for research in the sector. The Central Institute for Fresh Water Aquaculture (CIFA), a sister organization, was also established. MPEDA, charged with promoting exports, had a major role, too.

With the state significantly invested in brackishwater shrimp aquaculture, it is no surprise that it has grown since

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the 1980s. In 1985, the total aquaculture (fresh and brackishwater) production in India, according to FAO data, was only 0.63 million tonnes, but by 2019, it had risen to 7.8 million tonnes. It accounted for approximately half the total fish production, which had peaked at 14.2 million tonnes.

Though freshwater aquaculture still accounts for over 85 per cent of the total production, a couple of reasons explain why brackishwater aquaculture is likely to grow. Firstly, fisheries experts predict a declining availability of fish in the ocean due to 'overfishing'. Secondly, according to CIBA, more than 80 per cent of the potential land for brackishwater aquaculture in India is unutilized, indicating the direction of future growth.

Salt of the earth

Cuddalore's brackish water shrimp aquaculture growth story is a microcosm of India's. In the late 1980s, aquaculture farms were established both in the north and south of the district. *Penaeus monodon* (tiger prawn) was the preferred species. Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai, located in the south of the district, were two of many villages in the Killai area where aquaculture expanded.

State agencies had identified Killai as a suitable site for brackish water shrimp aquaculture. A merchant from neighbouring Chidambaram town established the first shrimp farm in 1988. Many others—mostly outsiders—followed suit, triggering significant growth of shrimp aquaculture in the 1980s and 1990s. When widespread diseases struck that species in the 1990s, many non-locals sold their ponds to economically-powerful people in the villages.

Aquaculture's growth had a cascading impact; increased salinity hit agricultural productivity, turning it unviable. People in T.S. Pettai have another factor to explain increased salinity and the expansion of aquaculture: the 2004 tsunami had a long-lasting impact on aquifers. Scientists say the tsunami's effect would have been short-lived, receding in the long run. This suggests that shrimp farms were most likely

responsible for the sustained high levels of salinity.

Polluting with impunity

India has long witnessed the warning signs and then the adverse socioeconomic and environmental impacts of brackish water aquaculture. In the 1980s, aquaculture was mostly taken up by both foreign and Indian multinationals. Activists and many local people saw aquaculture as a form of land grab. They also highlighted how aquaculture led to environmental problems such as salinization, land degradation and water pollution.

In 1996, the Supreme Court directed the Indian government to establish a regulatory Coastal Aquaculture Authority (CAA) and ordered that no shrimp farms be constructed in coastal zones protected under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

However, in villages such as Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai, the Supreme Court's judgment seems a thing of the past, if at all it was ever taken seriously. Many of the licensed farms in Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai, covering an area of approximately 40 acres according to official records, are situated in ecologically sensitive areas in violation of CAA rules, either on the banks of the Uppanar river or close to the backwaters and mangroves that are supposed to be no development areas. The main aim of CAA was to ensure a precautionary approach to development on the coast. Ground reality illustrates that the approach taken is anything but precautionary.

Besides being located in prohibited areas, some farms are very close to village habitations despite CAA guidelines stipulating that farms should be minimum distance of 100 metres away from villages if the human settlement has a population of less than 500 and 300 hundred metres away if the population is more than 500. Shrimp farms are also located too close to storm water drains and do not maintain adequate spaces between ponds as is mandated, so as to contain contamination of water bodies and ground water aquifers. And perhaps most noteworthy, many farms do not have valid licenses at all. No license



Many of the licensed farms in Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai are situated in ecologically sensitive areas in violation of the rules of the Coastal Aquaculture Authority. Farms do not maintain adequate spaces between ponds, contaminating water bodies and groundwater aquifers

means no electricity connection, but this does not prevent farms from operating.

Violations galore

Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai face a host of other environmental problems. Agriculture-dependent families watch crop yields decline year by year. Disadvantaged families from the Scheduled Castes such as Paraiyar and Schedule Tribes such as Irular have lost agricultural work, left with few alternatives. Those with cattle have to travel longer distances to graze the animals as both private lands and commons have come under aquaculture.

Women in Pichavaram complain about the salinity of drinking water, squarely blaming the shrimp farms. They say that the groundwater quality has deteriorated over the years as shrimp farms have expanded. Many women told us that they often have to travel up to a kilometre for drinking water in the morning; this is a real burden as that's the time they have to ready their children for school. Some families are now buying drinking

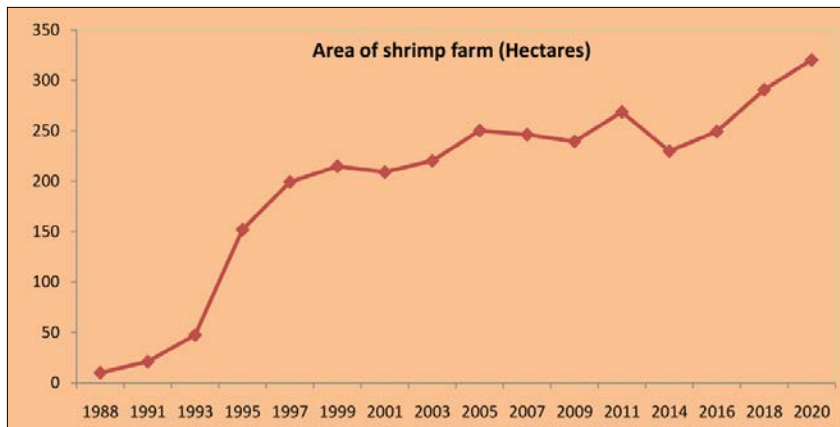
water, multiplying the stress of their threatened livelihood.

Fishers have been equally affected by the discharge of untreated effluent into the river and the backwaters. One fisher in T.S. Pettai told us that several species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans that they caught earlier in the Uppanar river are no longer available. Fishers could earlier predict the movement of species according to the tides; water pollution prevents this now.

Both Scheduled Caste men and Irular women who gleaned for shrimp say they have lost both a livelihood and an important source of protein. They now catch polychaetes, widely used in aquaculture feed. Irular women and men are almost fully dependent on this work. Commercial agents transport Irulars to the nearby backwaters of the Vellar and Kollidam basin to catch polychaetes, which are then smuggled to shrimp hatcheries in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh.

A wider pattern

These problems are not specific to Cuddalore. They exist throughout



Graph showing the expansion of shrimp farms (area in hectares) in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu (Source: CAA, Landsat 5 and Landsat 8)

regions, in practice shrimp aquaculture in Tamil Nadu seems to benefit the economically and politically powerful. In Pichavaram and T.S. Pettai, most of the aquaculture farm owners are connected to powerful political parties in the state.

Aquaculture requires substantial capital investment and the ability to take several risks. The feed agency shop owner told us that it “costs almost INR 1.4 million (US\$ 17,000) per hectare for one three-month cycle of shrimp culture”. This is not possible for most people, even those who now feel that shrimp farming is the only option due to high levels of salinity.

Those who can invest also depend on financial support from feed and marketing companies such as CP, Shenglong and Avanthi that also provide seed and feed and then claim the advance back post-harvest. In case of loss—quite common in shrimp aquaculture—the farm owner should be able to sustain losses and repay the dues. That is why one shrimp owner said: “Not everyone in the village can run the show.”

the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu where shrimp farms have proliferated. Take, for example, the expansion of shrimp farms in Thalajiyayiru village of Nagapattinam district. Where paddy cultivation was once dominant, effluent now pollutes arable lands. Vaippar village of Thoothukudi faces a different problem: here, shrimp farms encroach upon land allocated to Scheduled Caste cooperatives for salt production.

In a recent judgment by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), CAA was directed to demolish all illegal

Aquaculture requires substantial capital investment and the ability to take several risks

and unlicensed aquaculture farms operating near the Pulicat Birds Sanctuary in Thiruvallur district. Prior to this order the District Collector submitted a report which indicated that there were only 52 licensed ponds while others were all unlicensed. Given the unsuccessful attempt to regulate shrimp aquaculture and the failed history of legal remedies, one wonders what impact the NGT order will have?

Only those with capital

While being envisaged as an alternative livelihood for small farmers especially and a solution to salinity in the coastal

For more

S. Jagannath vs Union Of India & Ors on 11 December, 1996

<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/507684/>

Aquaculture in India : The Supreme Court Verdict

<https://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/premierdph/fiche-premierdph-4040.html>

The Price for Ilish

Conservation of fisheries in Bangladesh has become heavy-handed and militarized while poverty in fishing communities remains unmitigated

Early on the night of March 16, 2021, police opened fire on a small fishing boat and killed a young fisher named Mohammad Masud in the Meghna River. The shots were fired in the river north of Chandpur, the town famous for its well-known trading centre of *ilish* (hilsa), Bangladesh's most prized fish. It was reported that Masud, 24, went fishing with some others during a seasonal ban imposed by the government to protect juvenile fish. The police said they opened fire in self-defence after the fishers threw brick chips and attacked the police with sticks. When a journalist visited the deceased Masud's house, his family did not have even a "handful of rice" to feed themselves.

Official estimates tell us that the catch in mixed-species open-water fisheries in Bangladesh has been increasing throughout the last decade. The catch is rising in the *ilish* fishery also; this is the single largest fishery in volume and economic value. Still, fishing families like Masud's are either ultra-poor or poor in the official categorization of poverty. Fishers go hungry during fishing ban seasons. Armed police, the coast guard, and navy patrol the fishing grounds to enforce the ban. In recent years, the air force has also conducted aerial surveillance. During such a season in 2020, at least 5,533 fishers were jailed. How did conservation in Bangladesh become so heavy-handed and militarized despite the poverty in fishing communities?

An old tale

The history of systematic injustice, economic and environmental, towards peasants and fishers dates back to the British colonial takeover in Bengal. The East India Company established its new land administration and revenue regime by the Permanent Settlement

Act of 1793. It transferred all lands and water bodies, including rivers and inshore waters, as estates to a newly created small group of landlords called *zamindars*.

The empire is long gone. Yet successive governments have failed in making significant efforts to address distributive and procedural injustice against traditional artisanal fishers. There have been no legal reforms to recognize their customary tenure. The government does not invest meaningfully in artisanal fishing communities to enable them to secure a fair share of the income from fisheries.

The history of systematic injustice, economic and environmental, towards peasants and fishers dates back to the British colonial takeover in Bengal

For decades, capture fisheries were shrinking due to a wide range of pressures. Reduced water flow in trans-boundary rivers due to dams, barrages and diversion of water upstream significantly impacted the aquatic ecosystems in Bangladesh. Industrial and agricultural runoffs have polluted the water. Aquatic habitats are reduced and degraded by changes in land use—intensive farming, flood control measures, water infrastructure, draining wetlands for agriculture or land development, and encroachment, to name some. Water engineering, including embankments, has especially impacted fish biodiversity, population and the unit value of the catch.

No efforts have been made to restore and conserve fish habitats; or to mitigate or prevent the impacts of external threats. Rather, the government has prioritized

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Most of the factors behind the endemic poverty of fishers in Bangladesh can be traced back to the absence of distributive and procedural justice

aquaculture, in the wake of shrinking capture fisheries. Wealthy landowners in the rural areas have profited from large-scale intensive aquaculture, often responsible for degrading aquatic biodiversity in the country.

Misplaced priorities

In the late 1990s, Bangladesh experienced a decline in the total estimated catch in capture fisheries. Even then, the government did not address these factors on priority in its fisheries management plans. For instance, the Hilsa Fisheries Management Action Plan (HFMAP) in 2003 was mostly used to establish no-take zones and seasonal bans.

The management plan started with a target to protect *jatka* (juvenile ilish under 23 cm in size). Several top-down interventions have been gradually put in place since 2003 to increase the ilish

catch. These interventions include spatial and temporal restrictions on fishing; limitations on the use of fishing gear and the size of the ilish catch; regulations for fishing vessels; and the distribution of food rations among a limited number of fishers during the fishing ban season.

Under the HFMAP, the most notable temporal interventions for the conservation of ilish are two seasonal bans on fishing: One to protect the *jatka* and another to protect the brood ilish (mature and about-to-spawn). To protect the brood, there is a 22-day-long ban on catching, carrying, transporting, offering, selling, exporting or possessing ilish fishes in the country. This period is evenly divided before and after the first full moon of the Bengali month of *Aswin* (usually in October). The second ban, to protect *jatka*, is for seven months every year, from November 1 to May 31. During this time, catching, carrying, and selling of *jatka* is prohibited.

The government does not adequately compensate fishers during the fishing ban seasons, though since 2004, the authorities have distributed a limited amount of rice as ration through the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme. Using a heavy hand, the government forces fishers to comply with these regulations. For instance, from 2011 to 2013, the mobile courts reportedly imposed 2,462 prison sentences and fines amounting to US \$106,509 on law-breaking fishers. The mobile courts are, in fact, non-judicial ‘summary courts’ run by ‘executive magistrates’ embedded with law-enforcing agencies.

Fishers be damned

Several no-take sanctuaries for ilish run along the Ganga and Meghna river systems, as also in Bangladesh’s coastal waters. There are two declared marine protected areas (MPAs) in offshore waters to protect megafauna species of conservation interest. Planning and designation of these riverine and MPAs did not adequately consider social outcomes. Consequently, these protected areas are underperforming in “effectiveness and social equity”, according to recent studies. Most of the factors behind the endemic poverty of fishers in Bangladesh can be traced back to the absence of distributive and procedural justice. Yet, from the beginning of state interventions to govern and manage open-water fisheries, the erratic efforts were hardly participatory. More than two decades later, it has morphed into heavy-handed, top-down, enforcement-based and increasingly militarized conservation.

And now new users of inland and marine waters in Bangladesh are creating new threats to artisanal fishers. For example, unregulated navigation and shipping, sand dredging, rapidly increasing unsustainable economic activities in coastal and marine areas, coastal roads and other mega-infrastructure projects, including military instalments, ports and power plants.

The government does not see the well-being of fishing communities as an integral part of sustainability in fisheries. Instead, the authorities are

MOHAMMAD ARJU



A family of artisanal fisher fishing for ilish (hilsa), Bangladesh's most prized fish in the Meghna river estuary, the coasta plain estuary on the coast of Bangladesh

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focused on increasing the volume of catch at any cost. That cost, finally, is borne by the fishing communities. The government's priorities do not include equity and justice for fishers. This gets reflected in the existing fisheries policies and plans, such as Conservation of Fish Act 1950, the National Fisheries Policy 1988, the Marine Fisheries Act 2020, the Eighth Five Year Plan, and the Workplan for Marine Fisheries Resources Management.

What's left out?

To begin with, the fisheries laws and policies should prioritize addressing all threats to capture fisheries in a holistic manner, rather than prioritizing only top-down enforcement on poor fishers. The overall legal/policy framework in fisheries and water governance needs reformation with a new major goal: ensuring justice and equity for small-scale fishing communities. The legal/policy framework should prioritize removing structural barriers to procedural and distributive justice in the backdrop of external threats, of systematic deprivation of land rights and fisheries tenure of artisanal fishers.

The first step in this direction is to recognize the colonial nature of the current fisheries governance and management—it must be consciously decolonized. It must undo the colonial approach of taking away from the commons open-water fishery habitats. Land reforms began after the British colonial control ended in 1947. The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act was passed in 1950. This, however,

It must undo the colonial approach of taking away from the commons open-water fishery habitats

largely excluded restoring customary tenure of traditional artisanal fishers.

Which is why a good first step is to abolish the practice of riverine *jolmahals* (fishing grounds leased out to private parties), introduced in 1995. the Fishing communities have not reaped the benefits of that policy change because of the absence of public

Artisanal fishers want the abolishment of private-access fishing in all public water bodies

investment in fishing communities or the lack of legal recognition of their customary tenure rights.

After the establishment of open-access fishery in the rivers, the *de facto* ownership of riverine fisheries is still not with the fishing communities! Local investors and moneylenders now own most fishing operations. Legal provisions must be designed to transform this exploitative pattern of ownership over the means of fishing operations.

Giving exclusive fishing rights to artisanal fishing communities in such open-access fisheries should be a good starting point. This depends on a change in policy changes to recognize the customary right of traditional artisanal fishing communities to govern and manage their rivers, wetlands and inshore waters.

At least half of the people in small-scale fisheries are women, especially in shore-based post-harvest activities. Yet their rights are rarely recognized. In fish drying yards and shrimp processing plants, in particular, women fishworkers endure hazardous conditions, poor wages, risks to their health. A significant number of women are active fishers. Their role needs wider acknowledgement. The government, the civil society and the media must ensure their representation in all conversation on fisheries.

When discussing Bangladesh's fisheries and related policy, we must keep in mind that the main strength of fisheries in Bangladesh is small-scale artisanal fisheries. They bring in most of the catch, year after year. Justice and equity should not be distant dreams for them.

No matter what legal/policy reform is proposed, its efficacy depends on how the public agencies responsible for water, fisheries and wildlife governance embrace the principles of equity and justice. Discussions on environmental and economic justice for fishing communities have a chance to become a reality if fisheries authorities take the initiative to ensure the participation of artisanal fishers and fishworkers in policy-making. 3

Both inland and near the coast

In non-riverine public water bodies like wetlands, private access to fishing is still allowed legally, as in the jolmahals. Artisanal fishers want the abolishment of private-access fishing in all public water bodies. On the other hand, fishers who work as labourers in small-scale commercial fisheries need good job opportunities. To begin with, they need to be formally recognized as labourers under labour laws.

In the case of nearshore waters in the Bay of Bengal, there is already a legal provision to reserve fishing areas with a depth of 40 metres or less for small-scale fishers. It is commonly known that large-scale industrial fishing fleet do not comply with this provision; they regularly fish in the coastal area. Fisheries authorities should strengthen monitoring, surveillance and control on the industrial fishing fleet; this will allow marine artisanal fishers to operate in their exclusive nearshore fishing zone without risking conflict with trawlers and other large-scale fishing fleets.

For more



Hotter, Wetter, Saltier

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/hotter-wetter-saltier/>

Increasingly Vulnerable

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/bangladesh-social-development-increasingly-vulnerable/>

Poverty in small-scale fishing communities in Bangladesh: Contexts and responses

<https://d-nb.info/1072046261/34>

Getting the True Story

The IPC people-centred methodology to assess the implementation of the SSF Guidelines is a call to action in support of small-scale fisheries

Programmes and schemes often have evaluation procedures that focus on the outputs. Have X number of training programmes been held? Were Y amount of funds disbursed as credit support? Has the income of Z per cent of people gone up, or has it gone down?

These are targeted outputs; they can be evaluated. But how do you evaluate guidelines that are supposed to enable the development of an entire community? The best way is to ensure that the evaluation comes from the community itself.

That said, it is really not as easy as it sounds. Especially with trying to understand an international instrument such as the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). This is the first internationally negotiated instrument dedicated specifically to small-scale fisheries (SSF), endorsed by member countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2014. It is packed with what should be done to ensure that the conditions of small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their families improve worldwide, adopting a human rights-based approach.

Eight years have passed since the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines. There is no clarity yet on how well these Guidelines have been understood or implemented at the national level. There is little empirical evidence based on practical experience of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. There is evidence, though, that globally, SSF seem to be worse-off in some areas, with markedly reduced fish production, unsafe working conditions, insecure access to coastal resources, and battling impacts of climate change on land and at sea.

There was a need for a people-centred mechanism, to “assess from the communities and with the communities the progress of the SSF Guidelines implementation and examine the human rights violations of small-scale fisher people worldwide”. Accordingly, the Working Group on Fisheries of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) has developed a methodology by and for fishworker social movements and their supporters. Of course, it may be used by others, too.

The methodology suggests a five-step approach: one, form a steering committee; two, put together a research team; three, develop a plan for data

There is little empirical evidence based on practical experience of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

collection (primary and secondary) as well as field work; four, conduct meetings and workshops; and, five, apply the findings for advocacy.

The evaluation builds on some of the guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines, especially participation, transparency and human rights. It keeps in mind the principles of food sovereignty. The handbook suggests a “few tips to start”, of which an important activity is to define SSF at the national level. This is important, considering the diversity of SSF globally.

Chapter seven of the methodology provides guiding questions to be used in the evaluation process. It does not strictly look at the SSF Guidelines chapter-wise. There are questions to help build background information on the fishery and then take it forward by examining key issues related to the

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IPC



IPC's monitoring tool to assess the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The publication builds on its guiding principles: participation, transparency and human rights

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SSF, in line with several sections of the SSF Guidelines. At the end, there is a format for the report to be prepared. The conclusions and recommendations from the report are to be used for advocacy.

The sustainability of SSF depends on the success of governments, civil society and other stakeholders in addressing the vulnerabilities of the sector

A useful methodological guide, the tool may help fishworker organizations to get a good understanding of what their constituencies prioritize in the SSF Guidelines and how these Guidelines can be used to advocate for action by governments. The sustainability of SSF depends on the success of governments, civil society and other stakeholders in addressing the vulnerabilities of the sector. 3

For more

International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)

https://www.foodsovereignty.org/working_groups/fisheries/

SSF people-centred methodology for the SSF Guidelines

https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EN_People-centred-monitoring-of-the-implementation-of-the-SSF-Guidelines.pdf

The Insider

Remembering Paul Onyango, researcher of small-scale fisheries in Lake Victoria, who passed away on 10 April 2022

I first met Paul Onyango at the MARE Conference in Amsterdam in 2001. He later enrolled in my university's International Fisheries Management Master Program, where he graduated as scheduled after two years. He became a PhD student in the PovFish project (2008–2011), which I coordinated, and again I was his supervisor. After completion, he returned home to Tanzania and obtained a faculty position in the fisheries programme at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he excelled.

Paul was an important member and a regional coordinator of the Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) research network for Africa. When he tragically passed away on April 10, 2022, only 52 years old, I lost a dear friend and a great colleague. In an obituary for the TBTI newsletter, I reflected on his contribution to our mutual area of research and the lessons he left.

Paul's PhD fieldwork took place in two small-scale fisheries communities, Nyakasenge and Kasheno, on the southern shores of Lake Victoria. When the PovFish team met in Tanzania, he brought us to Nyakasenge so that we could visit the people he worked with and see how they lived. We talked to some of his informants and met with community members on the beach. We encountered nothing but friendliness and curiosity about our mission. They shared with us their ideas and aspirations for the community and fishery and what they thought the government could help with.

Poverty was easy to notice, like in the housing conditions and in absence of any infrastructure. The community had neither schools nor health clinics. Artisanal fishing was the only source of income. With the fish and the backyard gardens where they could grow vegetables, people had food.

When we were there, a vehicle had showed up on the beach to transport the fish to the city. Living close to nature has merits but also risks. Paul said that the first time he came to one of the communities, he was invited to contribute to the funeral of a girl who had been attacked by a crocodile while fetching water.

Happiness and well-being

Much to Paul's puzzlement, he did not find those people in anguish despite their poverty. "I did not see certain characteristics which have been used to describe the poor, such as misery, hopelessness and powerlessness," he

Being poor is apparently not the same as being unhappy. People tend to adjust their expectations and preferences to what they can realistically attain

wrote in his thesis. He wondered how it could be that people who have so little of worldly goods and opportunities "can wake up every morning with a smile on their face", as he phrased it. "Poverty was part of their life, but certainly not everything", he wrote.

Being poor is apparently not the same as being unhappy. People tend to adjust their expectations and preferences to what they can realistically attain. Still, there are some basic needs that must be fulfilled to experience happiness, or wellbeing, as it is frequently termed. Food security would be one aspect of wellbeing, which their fishery provided for. But other things matter as well. Paul wondered what those things could be.

The Nyakasenge community members had complaints about government policies. But these

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complaints did not completely darken their views on their situation. They could still appreciate what they had, like their community.

Paul argued that poor people's self-perceived contentment should not be an excuse for government indifference. They have legitimate concerns that governments and other governing actors can help with. As a minimum, fisheries people need secure rights of access to resources and markets. Otherwise, they cannot have a sustainable livelihood. Also, without human rights that the SSF Guidelines say should underpin small-scale fisheries governance, people cannot experience the full measure of wellbeing, happiness and dignity. Likewise, poor small-scale fisheries communities have their own customary institutions and practices, which the SSF Guidelines suggest should be respected and nurtured. Communities may be poor, but they are not without human and social resources. Paul's thesis describes what these are in the communities he studied.

Invisible presences

When in the field, we do not always find what we are looking for. Instead, we find something else. Paul's observations led him to redirect his research perspective from what poor communities lack to what they have and what they do with it to cope with their poverty. Despite the 'visible absences' that Paul called them, people may still have attributes that help them manage and retain their self-respect. He started searching for those attributes. People may not always know what they do not have, like the things that people in developed countries have come to take for granted. Neither may they be fully conscious of what they do have.

Despite their lack of material wealth, poor people have one another and their community. They have social networks that tie them together. Economists and sociologists call this 'social capital' and think of it as a resource in times of need. Networks are a set of social relations that can be mobilized for individual and collective gain. Along with his PhD thesis, Paul submitted a documentary film he made on his communities. Here he argues that efforts at poverty alleviation

should not necessarily commence from the 'visible absences' but from the 'invisible presences'. In other words, development initiatives should build on what communities possess to provide what they are lacking.

The experience of community is not fully captured by economic or sociological concepts alone. There is more to explore than the community's structure and function. We need to look beyond what Paul calls the visible absences and systematically search for the invisible presences. Community is a living experience. People also have identities rooted in a sense of togetherness and belonging, which give them a base for building their life.

Community is a 'social fact', to use the term that Émile Durkheim introduced. We inherit it. It was there before we were born. To become a member, we must learn its norms, rules and terminologies. We internalize its values. A community also works at a psychological level. Social facts like community have a feel. Belonging has a feel. Dignity, or the lack of such, is deeply felt. The same with poverty. It is not only about lack of material necessities; it is also an emotional experience. Paul had reason to expect that the people he met in the Lake Victoria small-scale fisheries communities would feel depressed about their life situation. Instead, he met a functioning community, which, despite its visible absences, had important things to offer their members, like a home.

Moral commitment

We register and observe, but we also evaluate. We ask whether our community works or not, and whether it fulfils our expectations. We act on what we feel about things. It is not a personal bias, but a fact of life which is not beyond reason, as the sociologist Andrew Sayer argues in *Why Things Matter to People*. It is a sentiment drawn from experience and, therefore, susceptible to evidence and moral argument, according to Sayer, whose argument reminds me of Paul's work.

As we observe and seek to explain poverty, like Paul did, we may rightfully be upset by it. Sayer notes that we have legitimate reason to respond to situations which challenge our ethics and morality: "If you are still doubtful...

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try recalling occasions when you felt a burning outrage at some injustice, cruelty or selfishness, whether to yourself or to others". Poverty is social injustice and a moral issue.

Therefore, poverty is not just a social fact, a characteristic of a world that people are born into and learn to accept as reality. As researchers, our stance on the injustice of poverty should not be distanced and 'objective'. To help eradicate poverty is a legitimate mission also for an academic. We choose our research topics not only because they are intellectually intriguing but also because we care about them, because they matter. Paul was such a social scientist. For making social science matter, it must address things that matter to people.

As social researchers, we should explore in detail what it is about community that makes people in small-scale fisheries, regardless of their insufficient, material wellbeing, feel happy about themselves and their community. The cause may not be very different for the poor and the rich. We all yearn for the respect and dignity we receive from our 'significant others'. When we lack it, we do not wake up with a smile.

Again, Sayer notes; "In thinking about the nature of wellbeing, it's easy to get drawn back to the physical aspects of health and security, but dignity is sometimes valued more highly than those, and it is much more dependent on how others interpret and treat us, particularly in terms of relations of equality and difference." Dignity is not just a matter of the mind. "Where inequalities are structural features of societies, then people cannot stand in dignified relations to one another," writes Sayer. Dignity is a sentiment that must also be understood sociologically.

Without equity, people cannot have dignity, and without dignity, people cannot have the self-esteem needed to become proactive in building their community. And without community, they cannot have dignity. The causal arrow of poverty and wellbeing runs forward and backward in a potentially virtuous circle. This is also the topic of Paul's documentary film in which he shows how local people were drawing on their invisible presences to fill visible



Paul Onyango conducting research in Tanzania for his PhD. Despite what Paul called "visible absences," he noted that people still have attributes that help them retain their self-respect

gaps. As they did that, they felt proud of what they were achieving and good about themselves. They discovered their latent individual and collective capabilities.

Optimism and social entrepreneurship

Sayer suggests that as social scientists, we should think of ourselves as members of the community in which we work. We are there to engage, not just to observe. Paul noted: "In my own assessment I became an insider." He experienced the community members perceiving him as one of them despite initial uncertainty about who he was and what brought him there.

Paul was a committed social scientist. He was not pretending to be a neutral observer. He was there with his moral self. He did not choose his research topic randomly but was upset about government failures and the all-too-visible problems in small-scale fisheries communities in his region. He was in it, not just with his knowledge and mind, but also with his heart because he cared. It did not blur his vision; it gave him a reason for looking and learning from what he saw.

Paul writes in his thesis introduction: “I learned to appreciate how [the fishers] relate to their fishing not as an occupation of last resort, but as something they value regardless of the income it provides”. He argued that there is more to small-scale fisheries than work and livelihood; it is also a way of life, and a source of personal satisfaction. He observed that the joy of being on the water together with members of the family and community, bringing home food and income, is associated with pride and happiness. Paul writes: “Being able to manoeuvre the winds and currents is a delight to fishers besides receiving a favorable appraisal from fellow fishers at the beach.” A fisher told him: “I feel that I have some level of control.” Yet, fishers are fully aware that being on the water involves danger. Therefore, they look out for one another, and offer help when needed, Paul observed.

Paul could see the communities not just from the outside, ‘etic’ perspective, as he was trained to do. His engagement with the people also allowed him to see the community from the inside, and from the inside out, from what social scientists call an ‘emic’ perspective. Then he could see what they saw, and by that build on their own ideas of what poverty eradication would involve in the communities he worked in. He could assume the perspective of those who experience poverty.

By detecting the invisible presences, he saw possibilities for economic and social development. This led him to be optimistic about the future of these communities, to talk about them with his own smile, which is one trait we remember him for. In Paul’s observation, the invisible presences made community members take social responsibility to collectively carry out infrastructure projects that improved individual and community wellbeing. For ‘social entrepreneurship’, which was one of his themes, optimism matters materially for building communities and by that, a more dignified life. This is what his documentary film demonstrates.

Governance interaction

Paul’s work on poverty in small-scale fisheries communities convinced him

that local people must be involved as equal partners in the governance process. They are after all ‘poverty experts’ because they live it, he argued. They know what poverty is and feels like. They have ideas about what would make a positive difference in their community, many of them simple things.

What you get when involving local people is not just their practical, experience-based knowledge. You also then create a governance process where the poor small-scale fisheries peoples’ own values and moralities would matter – because they bring them to the table. A governance system that is oblivious to their concerns and morality is bound to fail. A governance system that takes their knowledge and values seriously, that listens to their opinions and arguments, has a larger chance of success.

Paul, therefore, concluded:

“The study shows that there is inconsistency in the way poor fishers, riparian to the Lake, and governing actors in Tanzania understand poverty in the fishing communities and how to confront it. This inconsistency exists at the meta-governance level i.e. with regards to values, norms and principles. The study proposes that to alleviate poverty, a solution to this difference should be sought from a governance mechanism that addresses the dissimilarity. This must be a process which provides governing actors and the poor opportunities to interact in order to influence policy.”

For more

Poverty in Small-Scale Fisheries: Governance Challenges in Lake Victoria Fishing Communities, Tanzania

<https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/3551/thesis.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

Responsible Governance of Tenure in Lake Victoria Fisheries: Report on the Responsible Governance of Tenure in Lake Victoria Fisheries

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/responsible-governance-of-tenure-in-lake-victoria-fisheries-report-on-the-responsible-governance-of-tenure-in-lake-victoria-fisheries-2/>

Picturing the Coast

The 14th edition of the *Pêcheurs du Monde* film festival in Lorient, France, showcased the resilient cultures of fishing communities around the world

Discovering the world of fishers can be exciting and enriching. About 2,500 spectators made that discovery in Lorient, France, and in its surrounding towns from March 20 to 27 on the occasion of the 14th edition of the *Pêcheur du Monde* (Fishers of the World) film festival. It featured the screening of 30 films, followed by discussions in the presence of directors, scientists and marine experts. The films depicted a great variety of fishing and geopolitical conditions from across the world, highlighting several common points.

Adapting to change

How fishers carry out challenging tasks at sea in conjunction with the natural elements in a magnificent but risky environment is depicted in *Des Hommes à la mer* (Men at Sea) by Alexandre Ruffin, which depicts fishers constantly adapting to variations of weather and economic or administrative conditions.

Bryony Stokes's *Plenty More Fish?* features the creativity of the inhabitants of British Cornwall; they are taking up the challenges of tomorrow's fishing in the face of climate change.

In *The Long Coast*, Ian Chenay analyzes the situation in the Northeast of the United States. Fishworkers here are engaging in alternative activities after the disappearance of cod from their coasts. The film draws out the route fisheries products take from the sea to the consumer's plate, unknown to most people. It invites us to create a new link with the producers.

Pushing back

Across the world, imposed development projects are excluding fishers from traditional coastal waters. Blanche Bonnet's film *Bargny, quand le futur s'enfuit avec ses lendemains* (Bargny, where the future runs away with its tomorrows) documents one such reality. The building of a district based on the Dubai model and a coal-fired power plant threatens to evict fisher families in Dakar, Senegal.

The films depicted a great variety of fishing and geopolitical conditions from across the world, highlighting several common points

In *Xaar Yallà*, Mamadou Khouma Gueye shows the sadness, dignity and revolt of the women of the port of Saint Louis, Senegal. They face the destruction of their homes due to sea level rise and the development of a new oil field that will ruin fishing activity. The inhabitants are being 'evacuated' to an arid area.

In the completely different setting of the Bay of Saint Brieuc in France, fishers are protesting against a wind farm project commissioned in the middle of their fishing areas. Mathilde Jounot's film *Océan 3, la voix des invisibles, la drôle de guerre* (Ocean 3, the voice of the invisible, the comical war) reports on their distress and struggle. The discussion on this film was a lively affair, led by

This article is by **Jacques Chérel** (jacquesfran.cherel@wanadoo.fr), president of the *Lorient Pêcheurs du monde* (Fishers of the World) film festival

PECHEURS DU MONDE



A special mention from the festival jury was awarded to *Iorram* (Boat Song) by Alastair Cole. It shows how fishing is part of the culture of a country, in this case, the Hebrides in Scotland

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Alain Le Sann of the Collectif Pêche et Développement and a member of the film festival's board.

Plundered resources

In *Aza Kivy* (Morning Star) the Malagasy filmmaker Nantenaina Lova investigates the Vezo nomadic fishermen of Tulear, Madagascar, who follow the shoals of fish southwest

Everywhere, people of the sea are asking to be recognized, to be involved right from the beginning in the development projects along their coasts

of the big island. A respectful relationship with the sea and its rituals, and an affirmation of the link between the ancestors and the living are expressed in a strong cultural identity, backed by bewitching music. Today, large foreign trawlers, often Chinese, are depleting the fish stocks and ruining the traditional practices of the community.

In addition to this plunder, an industrial mining project and the building of a port threaten the coastline and the forest in the interior. The Vezo and Masikoro, whose activities are complementary, are resisting these developments. Despite repression and imprisonment during their demonstrations in the main city of Antananarivo, their determination overwhelms the filmmaker. In an interview at the festival, Nantenaina Lova makes their message known: "Leave us alone with our way of life, which despite being traditional, preserves the environment. It's a simple fact that without the looting, this country would not be dependent on foreign aid." The mining project is now frozen but the Vezo remain vigilant.

Struggles of the invisible

Everywhere, people of the sea are asking to be recognized, to be involved right from the beginning in the development projects along their coasts. They also question the validity of these projects: Is it really a question of meeting energy needs and remedying global warming,

or rather a race for profit by 'colonizing the sea' after the land, as the journalist and festival jury member Catherine Le Gall says in her book, *L'imposture océanique*?

If it is necessary to reduce the environmental divide between humans and non-humans, we cannot ignore the colonial dimensions—read slavery and colonization—that continue through the plundering of marine and mineral resources.

The show *Danser l'océan* (Dancing the Ocean) put on by Betty Tchomanga and Mackenzy at the fishing port in front of more than 200 people drew attention to this theme.

Biodiversity preservation

Au nom de la mer (In the Name of the Sea) by Caroline and Jérôme Espla alerts us to the seriousness of the ecological disaster in the Mediterranean. The Lorient festival initiated a discussion on 'Fishing of the Future' by proposing a first debate led by Agathe Le Gallic, a graduate in maritime law, on how to reduce the impact of plastics on water quality.

It explored several critical questions. What solutions do the industrialists offer? What initiatives are possible for the sake of fishers' interests? What do high school and college students think?

David Constantin's *Grat Lamer Pintir Lesiel* is a moving plea from fishers, following an oil spill. It is a rare post-disaster story about the inhabitants of Mauritius struggling to regain their livelihood and their link with the sea.

Jury awards

The festival proposed a competition of seven feature films and four short films from seven different countries. The jury of professionals from the film and fishing industries and the other jury of young students of maritime and classical studies were unanimous in their choice. The film *Ostrov, the Lost Island* by Svetlana Rodina and Laurent Stoop won the Feature Film Award and the Audience Award. The film intricately explores the situation of poor Russian fishers on an island in

the Caspian Sea, echoing the current events in Ukraine and Russia.

The award for best short film went to *Xaar Yalla* by Mamadou Khouma Gueye. The jurors were moved by the message of the women driven from their homes.

Azadeh Bizarti's Iranian film, *The People of Water*, is a tribute to the women who have to fish to survive in southern Iran. It received the Chandrika Sharma Award for a film highlighting the role of women in fishing.

A maritime culture

A special mention from the professional jury was awarded to *Iorram* (Boat Song) by Alastair Cole. It shows how fishing is part of the culture of a country, in this case, the Hebrides in Scotland.

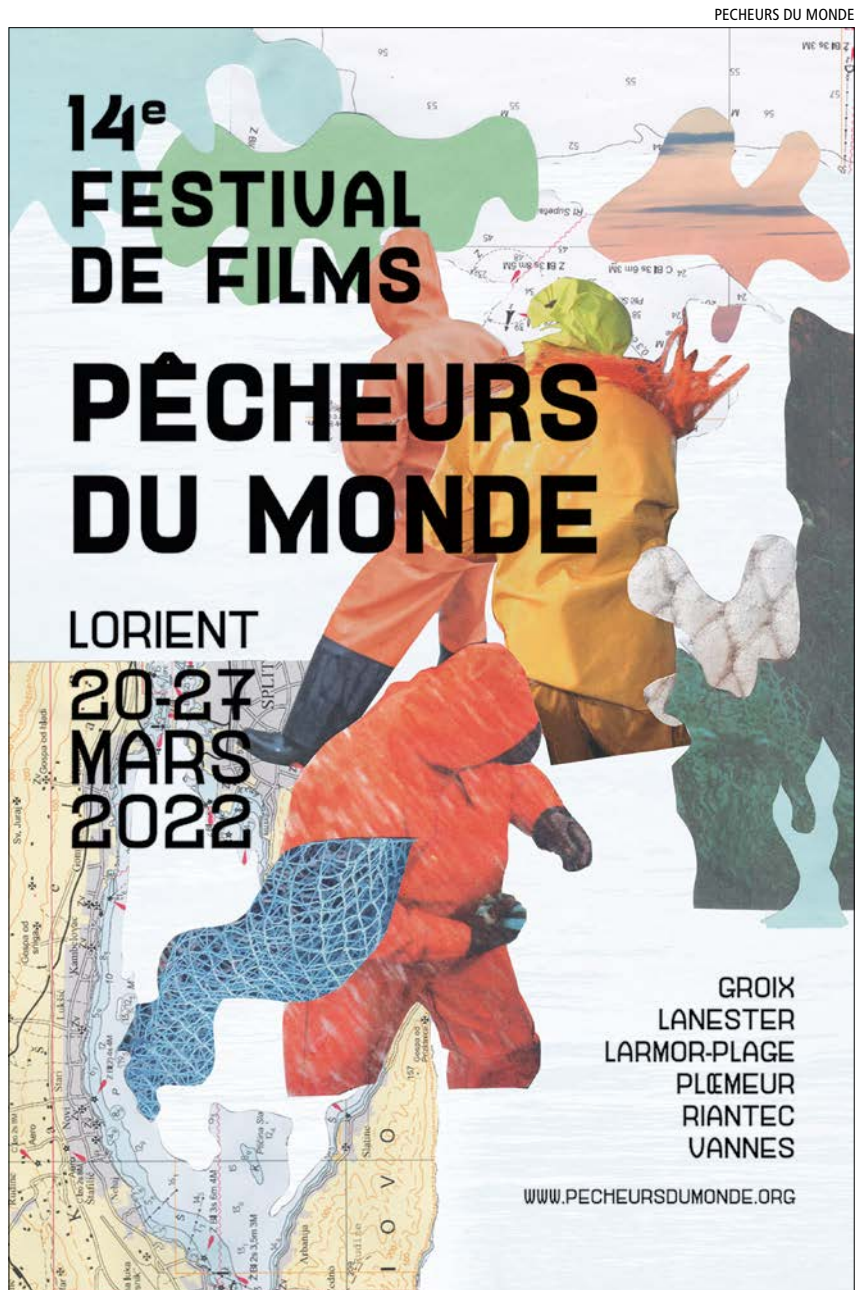
A whole section of the festival highlighted the heritage of the people of the sea. *Mémoire en conserve* (Canned memory) by Lizza Le Tonquer and Clémentine Le Moigne recalls the work of women in sardine canneries

A whole section of the festival highlighted the heritage of the people of the sea

in Brittany, France. Alain Pichon highlighted the image of the region's fishers through documentary films of the 1930s. He shows the importance of men and women in the dynamics of Brittany's coast, using archive films from the Cinémathèque de Bretagne.

The films in the festival constituted a testimonial to the world of fishers developing a specific culture of the sea and the coast, simultaneously participating in the wider culture of society at large. New initiatives underline the link between sea and men as demonstrated in the two-part show at the fishing port.

A film-concert titled *La Voix des Océans* showed images of plankton by Pierre Mollo and Jean Yves Collet, with music by Antonio Santana. It



The films in the festival were a testament to how fishers develop a culture of the sea and the coast, simultaneously participating in the wider culture of society at large

These were among the high points of the festival that immersed the public in the world of fishworkers

was followed by a dance performance by Betty Tchomanga and Mackenzy

called *Danser l'Océan*. Another concert in Ploemeur, titled *La part des singes*,

brought together more than 150 people to watch Yannick Charles' film on the fishing boat captains of Lorient. These were among the high points of the festival that immersed the public in the world of fishworkers.

Livelihood, the thrust

In the film *Fish Eye* by Iranian director Amin Behroozadeh, the world looks like an industrial seiner, roaming the Indian Ocean in search of tuna. Its crew is made up of Africans under the control


of white men. The boredom of the men who have difficulty communicating with their families, the agony of the fish, the gigantic size of the nets, the false appearances of understanding... All these images provoke contradictory reactions, turning the film into a metaphorical tale rather than a documentary. It questions the meaning of a productivist economic system cut off from life.

As the effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict remind us, there is an urgent need today to respond to increasing food insecurity, the effects of climate change, growing drought and unpredictably violent changes in weather conditions. The role of artisanal fishers in nutrition, poverty eradication and the sustainable use of natural resources is fundamental. The Lorient festival has taken up the campaign of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022).

It is claimed that fishing is very important because it contributes to feeding the population, but in reality, the opposite is true. If we continue to reduce the fleets on the Breton coast, we will have to import even more fish from Africa, Latin America and Asia, which will be taken away from the populations of these continents. Everywhere, the peoples of the seas are anxious about their future. The trust between the State and the people must be re-established.

The commitment of Malagasy and African directors such as Nantenaina Lova and Mamadou Kouma Gueye is worth noting. They organize screenings and citizen assemblies for debate in villages and shanty towns. They give a voice and a positive image to those 'neglected and despised' by the mainstream system. The Festival des Pêcheurs du Monde in Lorient helps to highlight these struggles.

Saving the oceans requires reflection on the value of the work of fishing communities, their relationship with the sea, and the

human relations between the North and the South. These are some of the themes that the next editions of the Festival Pêcheurs du Monde hope to present to the public. 

For more

14th Edition of the World Fishermen Film Festival from March 20 to 27, 2022

<https://www.pecheursdumonde.org/>

To Memory, Poetry...and the Future

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/france-film-festival-to-memory-poetry-and-the-future/>

A Fisheye View

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/a-fisheye-view-2/>

Hope, Despair, Courage

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/hope-despair-courage/>

BIODIVERSITY

Bangladesh balances energy needs with climate, conservation

Fish, rice, mangrove trees and the lush delta wetlands where the massive Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers drain into the Bay of Bengal.

It's not luxury. But for the farmers and fishermen who live by the world's largest mangrove forest, it's more than enough. Now, the environment is at risk.

A power plant will start burning coal near the Sundarbans this year as part of Bangladesh's plan to meet its energy needs and improve living standards, officials

say. Home to 168 million people, Bangladesh is among the most densely populated countries in the world.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-63559426>

CLIMATE CHANGE

Twin Crises

Experts and activists were hoping UN climate talks would end last week with a prominent mention of biodiversity in the final text. They walked away disappointed.

Some say delegates at the COP27 summit missed a key opportunity to acknowledge the connection between the twin climate and nature crises, which many believe have been treated separately for too long.

Failing to address both could mean not only further decimating Earth's life support systems, but also missing the key climate target of limiting warming to under 1.5 degrees Celsius, they warn.

"We're doomed if we don't solve climate, and we're doomed if we don't solve biodiversity," Basile van Havre, co-chair of the UN biodiversity negotiations, told AFP.

At the COP15 UN biodiversity talks next month, dozens of countries will meet to hammer out a new framework to protect animals and plants from destruction by humans. The meeting comes as scientists warn that climate change and biodiversity damage could cause the world's sixth mass extinction event. Such destruction of nature also risks worsening climate change. The oceans have absorbed most of the excess heat created by humanity's greenhouse gas emissions and, along with forests, are important carbon sinks.

<https://www.barrons.com/news/twin-crises-experts-say-nature-and-climate-can-t-be-siloed-01669345207>

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

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Jaffna District Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Unions

The Jaffna District Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Unions brings together ten cooperative fisheries unions in the northern Sri Lankan district of Jaffna. In turn, those unions represent 118 fisheries cooperative societies in coastal villages dependant on fishing. Most of the fisher families engage in nearshore fishing, using traditional methods.

The federation's mandate is to address the problems of the fisherfolk; mediate in rifts among fishing communities; facilitate the marketing of the catch; and oppose illegal fishing methods. Annalingam Annarasa, a fisher leader from the coastal village of Thambaati in the islands off Jaffna, is the federation's president.

The northern fishers have a serious problem in the form of trawlers from Tamil Nadu, India; they encroach into Sri

Lankan waters. Over the past few years, the federation has organized protests to draw the State's attention to this encroachment, to find a solution to the conflict. For the past two decades, federation representatives have held several rounds of talks with the governments of Sri Lanka and India, and with the fishers from Tamil Nadu.

The many resolutions adopted at these meetings have not been implemented. Both governments had agreed that trawling has devastating impacts on natural resources, that such fishing methods need to be stopped. However, steps to control such practices have been inadequate.

Annarasa claims that several species, including the milk shark (*Rhizoprionodon acutus*) and the trevally (locally called parai), are hardly caught by the local fishers because most of these

stocks have been overfished by bottom-trawling fishing methods. They also destroy fish banks and coral reefs, setting off cascading damage to fish production.

The three-decade-long Sri Lankan civil war seriously damaged the fishers' lives and livelihoods. After the violent conflict abated, the northern fisherfolk began to reel under devastating poaching. The fishing communities are also concerned about State-sponsored aquaculture projects; they believe these will spread diseases, impacting coastal fish stocks and further undermining nearshore small-scale fisheries.

Over the past three years, the COVID-19 pandemic was followed by a severe economic crisis in Sri Lanka; both have severely affected Jaffna fisheries. Most small-scale fisherfolk here rely on subsidized kerosene

for their fibreglass boats with outboard engines. The ongoing economic crisis has led to serious fuel shortages. Even when the fuel is available, its price has quadrupled, hitting the income of the fishing households, pushing many into destitution.

According to Annarasa, most families now face starvation; many families can afford just one meal a day. In these difficult times, the federation is continuing its struggle against trawlers and illegal fishing practices in the region. It wants to take steps to protect their natural resources and to make fishing a sustainable livelihood for their communities.

by Yathursha Ulakentheran (ulayathu@gmail.com), an independent researcher based in Jaffna, Sri Lanka and Ahilan Kadirgamar (ahilan.kadirgamar@gmail.com), senior lecturer at the University of Jaffna.

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

IYAF 2022

The United Nations designates specific days, weeks, years and decades as occasions to mark events or highlight topics to promote, through awareness and action, its developmental objectives. In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAF 2022) and nominated FAO as the lead agency for celebrating the year in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations (United Nations, 2018). The world faces many complex challenges, including hunger, malnutrition and diet-related diseases, an ever-growing global population that needs sufficient and healthy food and must reduce food loss and waste, and over-exploitation of

natural resources, in addition to the effects of climate change and other major issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. IYAF 2022 highlights the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for food systems, livelihoods, culture and the environment. Given that artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fishworkers produce a significant portion of aquatic food, they can be key agents of transformative change for sustainable use and conservation of living aquatic resources – with positive ripple effects on food systems and nutrition security.

The objectives of IYAF 2022 are to:

- enhance global awareness and understanding of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, and foster action to

support its contribution to sustainable development, specifically in relation to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and the use of natural resources; and

- promote dialogue and collaboration between and among small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers, fishworkers, governments and other key partners along the value chain, as well as further strengthen their capacity to enhance sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture and improve their social development and well-being

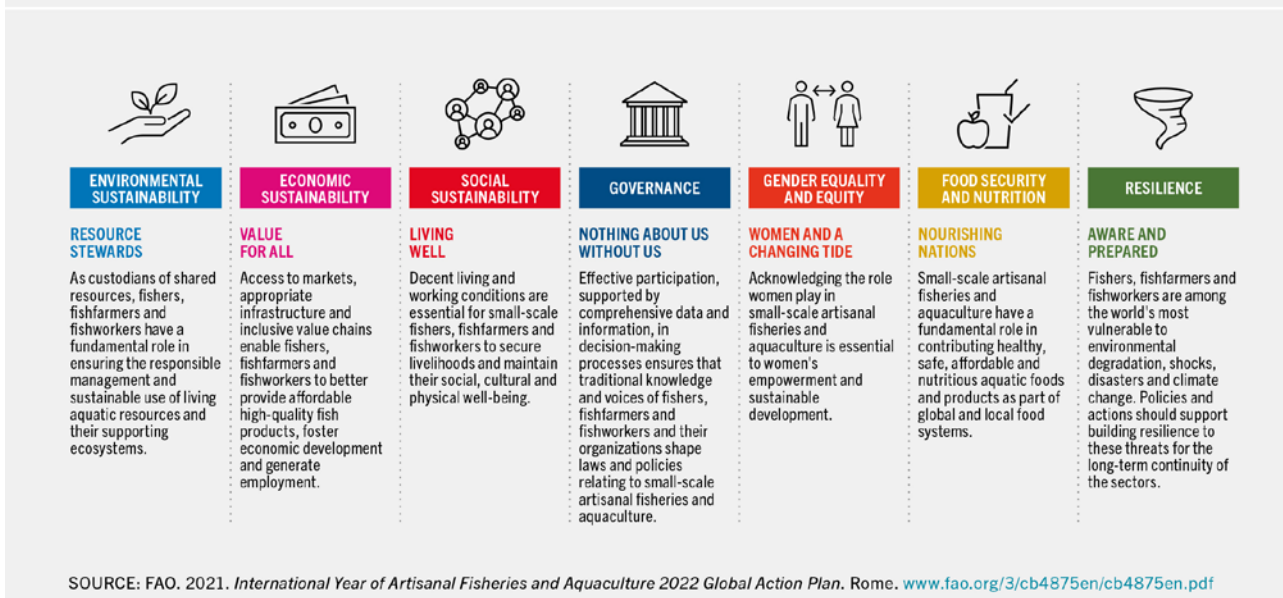
By elevating awareness of the role of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, IYAF 2022 aims to strengthen science-policy interactions, empowering stakeholders

to take action including building and strengthening partnerships. It showcases the potential and diversity of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture and highlights the benefits of facilitating partnerships and cooperation with fishers, fish farmers and fishworkers to achieve sustainable development of living aquatic resources. By sensitizing public opinion and governments and fostering the adoption of specific public policies and programmes, these subsectors and their communities can secure their rights and acquire best practices to operate in a sustainable manner.

Sources: *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022: Towards Blue Transformation*

<https://www.fao.org/3/cc0461en/cc0461en.pdf>

FIGURE 58 KEY MESSAGES OF IYAF 2022



INFOLOG: NEW RESOURCES AT ICSF

Publications and Infographics

Making Small-scale Artisanal Fishing Zones Work!: An ICSF Campaign by Vishakha Gupta, 2022
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-campaign-andhra-pradesh-tenure-rights/>

Research study on the tenure rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized fishers in Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Report on Asia Workshop – IYafa 2022: Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 4 – 8 May, 2022, The Berkeley Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand, 2022
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/asia-iyafa-2022/>

The Asia workshop was the first of the series of four regional workshops planned by ICSF in connection with the proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYafa) by the United Nations.

Report on National Workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India, 8 -10 April, 2022, Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, India, 2022
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/wif-india-2022/>

The national workshop facilitated in building a platform of women in fisheries to promote gender equality and equity, to recognize livelihood space and to improve the participation of women in decision making processes through various discussions that were held during the three days.

A Case for a Human Rights-based Approach to Indian Aquaculture Systems: A Literature Review by Neena Elizabeth Koshy, 2021
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/a-case-for-a-human-rights-based-approach-to-indian-aquaculture-systems-a-literature-review/>

This study is an effort to bring focus on this void and the facets that need to be examined if aquaculture is to become sustainable and is able to contribute towards various sustainable development goals as envisaged

Film: Unseen Faces Unheard Voices: Women and Aquaculture (Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, India), 2021
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/unseen-faces-unheard-voices-women-and-aquaculture-purba-medinipur-west-bengal/>

The documentary film Unseen Faces, Unheard Voices showcase the impacts of the boom in aquaculture on women in the floodplain regions of the Indian coastal state of West Bengal.

Socio-economic Analysis of Small-scale Fishers in Antigua and Barbuda in the Context of Social Development, Employment and Decent Work According to the SSF Guidelines by Ian S. Horsford
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-social-development-study-antigua-and-barbuda/>

This report hopes to provide a status report on the nature and extent of social development in the fisheries sector and within the context of the SSF Guidelines.

FLASHBACK

Cracking the Code for Small-scale Fisheries

There is need for both an international instrument and a global programme to address the specific needs of the world's small-scale and artisanal fisheries. Should the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) be "opened up" to include a special Chapter on small-scale artisanal fisheries? This was called for by the civil society organizations at the FAO's Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF) in October 2008. The call was reiterated by civil society at the 28th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 28).



The CCRF, while making several references to small-scale fisheries and fishworkers, does not provide specific guidance on how the small-scale artisanal subsector, which employs about 90 per cent of those engaged in fishing and fisheries-related activities, should be supported and promoted. The CCRF also lacks a gender perspective—especially to address the specific forms of discrimination faced by millions of women who are part of the fisheries worldwide, or to acknowledge the vital role they play at all levels. For civil society, these are areas that need urgent attention.

However, several delegations to COFI 28 opposed opening up the CCRF, which, it was argued, could prove to be a "Pandora's Box". If opened up for small-scale artisanal fisheries, then why not for other interests? While there was consensus on the need to support small-scale artisanal fisheries, there was no consensus on the best way to do so. Many Members expressed the need for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries, which could comprise a new article in the Code, an international plan of action (IPOA) and/or the development of guidelines that would guide national and international efforts to secure sustainable small scale fisheries and create a framework for monitoring and reporting. In addition, many Members called for the establishment of a new COFI Sub-Committee on small-scale fisheries. In the end, COFI 28 directed the FAO Secretariat to examine various options to carry these suggestions forward.

To follow up on the mandate given by COFI, the FAO organized three regional workshops in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in October 2010. This enabled a large number of both governmental and civil society participants to provide their views on how small-scale artisanal fisheries can be best supported and enabled to fulfil their potential. All the three workshops recommended developing a new instrument, complementing the CCRF, to address small-scale and artisanal fisheries issues.

ICSF feels that there is a need for both an international instrument and a global programme. With the world gripped by concerns about overfishing, excess capacity, declining biodiversity and climate change, as well as the challenges of food insecurity and poverty, it is increasingly evident that sustainable small-scale artisanal fisheries within a human-rights framework offers the most viable solution. There is recognition today that the small-scale artisanal fisheries subsector is relatively more sustainable, energy-efficient and less destructive, even as it supports millions of livelihoods across the world, and supplies diverse populations, and particularly rural and remote populations in food-insecure regions, with a rich source of nutrition.

—from SAMUDRA Report, No. 57, November 2010

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEETINGS

Africa Workshop: IYafa 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 15-18 February 2023
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/africa-workshop-iyafa-2023/>

Main SSF issues to address: Access rights (to resources, fishing areas and markets); social development, employment and decent work; implementation of the SSF Guidelines; women and gender in

fisheries; food security and poverty; climate change.

UN 2023 Water Conference, 22 - 24 Mar 2023, New York
<https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023>

On 20 December 2018, the General Assembly adopted the resolution on the "Midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028" (A/RES/73/226).

WEBSITES

Asia Workshop: IYafa 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/asia-workshop-iyafa-2022-celebrating-sustainable-and-equitable-small-scale-fisheries/>

Latin America and the Caribbean Workshop: IYafa 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries
<https://www.icsf.net/resources/latin-america-workshop-iyafa-2022/>

National Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop on the SSF

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/tot-ssf-guidelines-india-2022/>

Harvest strategies
<https://harveststrategies.org/>
 harveststrategies.org serves as a resource for fisheries scientists, managers, and other stakeholders, compiling information about how harvest strategies work and how implementing this pioneering management approach can lead to sustainable, profitable fisheries and successful recovery programs for many species around the world.



Endquote

*How still,
How strangely still
The water is today,
It is not good
For water
To be so still that way*

— Langston Hughes

