

**Capacity building workshop on Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication  
for Palghar and Thane districts  
4<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
10 am – 5.00 pm  
- Workshop Report**

The workshop was held at the Thane Macchimar Samaj Sangha hall, it was attended by 68 participants including 45 women and 23 men from fishing communities, Fisheries cooperatives, community organisations, government bodies and MMKS leaders (Appendix 1 – List of participants)

The workshop started with a brief welcome by Ms Jyoti Meher, vice President of Thane Macchimar Samaj Sangha, who explained the purpose of the workshop and welcomed dignitaries to the dais. This was followed by Shuddhawati Peke, Programme Associate, ICSF, informing the gathering about the agenda for the day. (Appendix 2 – Agenda of workshop). Mariette Correa, Senior Programme Coordinator, ICSF, gave a brief history and overview of the VGSSF explaining the process of its development, its key aspects and that it is located within a human-rights framework. She also spoke about Chandrika's role and participants observed a minute of silence to honour Chandrika's dedication to the struggle of small-scale fisheries.

Following this, Shuddhawati gave a succinct presentation on the substantive issues in the Guidelines sharing with the participants the key areas related to sustainable fisheries, tenure rights, gender, trade, labour, climate change and disaster management. She also spoke about the role of fishworkers organisations and the state which on which panel discussion was scheduled at the workshop. (Appendix 3 – VGSSF presentation).

There was last minute change in program schedule of workshop as one of the government official asked to speak before the lunch break as he wanted to leave early to attend other meeting. Administrative Officer with Palghar Municipal Corporation Mr Rathod spoke about Biometric survey that is being done by Palghar Municipal Corporation for unorganised vendors and hawkers including street fish vendors who occupy the space just outside Palghar station to prevent them from harassment. Govt has issued guidelines to provide basic facilities to them, skill development trainings, modern markets etc. Participants then asked questions to Mr Rathod. Women were particularly active in raising issues. Ms Mahananda Raut, Sarpanch of Datiware village raised question about insufficient space to accommodate all women vendors in newly built fish Market. Mr Rathod invited women to come forward for discussion regarding the market issue. Fisheries department official were then invited to speak. Mr. Patil, Fisheries Dept Palghar, spoke about the schemes operated by fisheries department. He particularly spoke about NFDB schemes and fish market design and role of Maharashtra Fisheries Development Corporation, 50 % subsidy for non mechanised boats from fisheries department, there used to be scheme for women in very early days not it has stopped. Mr. Patil responded to question over why there are not schemes for women, he said all the schemes of fisheries department gets implemented through fisheries cooperatives, fisherwomen should demand and proper survey of how much needs what then accordingly budgetary provisions can be made.

Participants were then divided into 7 groups based on 1-7 numbers to discuss the components of the SSF Guidelines. Each group was assigned to discuss on one component. So 7 groups discussed

on 7 components of SSF guidelines viz. Sustainable resource management, Governance of tenure, Social development, employment and decent work, Value chains, post-harvest and trade, Gender equality, Disaster risks and climate change, policies, institutions, information, research and capacity building. The key questions the participants were asked to discuss included what is the situation in their village and district viz a viz provisions in VGSSF , what can be done to improve the situation, customary tenure rights, management systems in fisheries, what policies needed etc. (Appendix 4 --Group discussion note)

Following the lunch break, one representative of each of the 7 groups presented what they discussed. Several important issues were addressed. The first group on Governance of tenure had Mr Rajan Meher presenting their discussions. He said tenure means in simple language user rights or ownership over resources. Fishers still dont have their costal lands in their names. Same issue with fisherwomen's user rights over their fish markets and fish processing land. He ended with demanding implementation of two social security schemes, one fishers' relief cum saving scheme and pension scheme. He said like other coastal states Maharashtra government should follow saving cum relief scheme where fishers saves 1000 INR per month for 8 months and government contributes equal amounts, this total amount then redistributed to fishers in monsoon months to cope up with loss of income. Likewise pension scheme for old age fisher who are no more able to work can get pension through government through some contributory scheme to live life of dignity and comfort even when they are not earning. Their group highlighted the need for a strong fisheries policy, fishers right over the land on which their houses are built, coastal land user rights are still not in the name of fishers so they strongly put forward demand for relevant policies to establish tenure rights of fishers on land. Pradyna Tare then added to some of the missing points from speaker's presentation, she said that Grampanchayats have autonomy to spend 15 % of it's budget and it is mostly get used for tribal regions likewise there should be provision for costal panchayats. Panchayat samittee should also make provisions specifically for coastal panchayats. She felt worried over recent clashes among fishing groups from different districts over fishing grounds. She said fishing spaces must be reserved for locals to avoid such clashes.

Mukta Deo of second group presented on sustainable fisheries management, she asserted rights of traditional and small scale active fishermen to fish in coastal waters. Her group demanded that all the fishers should get 7/12 extract transferred in their names. She also said women are active in fishing business but not in decision making processes at community or policy level. Her group felt fishers should strictly follow monsoon ban from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 15<sup>th</sup> august for regeneration of fish production. Third group spoke on social Development, employment and Descent work. Moreshwar Vaitee and his partner shared reality in fishing villages in the department of health, education and sanitation. They said situation of government primary and secondary schools in fishing villages is poor. Lack of sufficient teachers, poor teacher to student ratio, same situation is with primary health centres and district level civil hospitals, facilities tends to be poor, total neglect from administration for patient, poor health workers to patient ratio. There is issue of potable water availability in many fishing villages as their water connection gets dries up till it reached to their village. Social security department for fishers is also dry with rare schemes for their safety and income security. Old age, disabled, children and women are the most neglected in all the schemes meant for fishing communities.

Nandkishor Patil, fisheries department representative then presented their groups discussion over Gender equality. He started with taking stock of women situation in fishing communities observing that though women are active in business they are not taking active part at social level. Ideal gender equality is not seen in fishing communities. Working places of women like fish markets landing centres are prone to accidents and occupational hazards, so their concerns have to be considered in policy making. He said women participation in cooperatives needs to be

strengthened like making changes in bylaws or reserving 50 % seats for women etc. Or there should be separate cooperatives registered for women fish vendors and fish processors. He observed that women organisations are not to be seen at village or district level so separate such organisations needs to build up with the support of male members and fishing communities. He insisted traditional fishers' rights bill 2009 needs to be implemented. This way there will some protection and decision making power to Gramsabhas in Coastal Panchayat for upcoming projects and ports. His group recommended reservation for women in different fields to catch up with their men folk. For empowerment and entrepreneurship development women should get economic and capacity building support from government.

Later Vaibhav Vaze presented group on disaster risks and climate change, he touched upon many issues in his presentation including pollution, solid waste management, oil spilling, sand mining, ghost fishing, sea safety and labour linking all it with ground reality and real life examples. Their group discussed two main issues climate change and disaster risks of which first issue they found most important. He said there is rise in sea level compared to past 15 year's sea level. It has also impacted to sea temperature and wave patterns, to some extent wave patterns affect North West Monsoon. These changes not only induced by environment impacts but by manmade influences like land reclamation, polluted industrial waste, unrestricted fishing, destructive fishing methods etc. Fishers can play important role in combating climate change by controlling fishing practises, monitoring waste treatment plan of local municipalities like many of them don't follow standards and release untreated water. Fishers need to demand legal provisions like mandatory 10 % of water recycling for each facility. He also shared menace of air pollution and nuclear pollution near Tarapur atomic centre where as one goes southwards fishing villagers like Ucheli, Satpati, Dandi there are many cases of cancer, infertility but as one goes northwards such deficiencies reduces one reason may be in downstream movement of water, though atomic centre people claim they treat water after using it water might contain radioactive traces which effect fish and water and people eat those fishes impacting their health slowly. Next issue he spoke about was disaster risks it can be manmade or Natural. He addressed some of the neglect that happens on the fishermen's part; he said to ensure fuel efficiency a fisherman needs to take care of their engines and needs trained personnel on boat. He also informed participants about the technique called Kaizen which is widely used in Japan. To ensure productivity in fishing business fishermen needs to get training on their beaches or in villages itself. Their group felt need to have trained villagers at the time of disasters and these villagers then need to have coordination with district and state level authorities. Ujwala Patil a group member added to his point saying there should be fishers' representation in all disaster management committees.

Ashok Hambire then presented on his group discussion asserting importance of conservation measures. They suggested having equal span of monsoon fishing ban in all states. Regarding capacity building his group felt that those who are educated till 12<sup>th</sup> and graduation and have inherent swimming and fishing skills must get priority in coastal security related, marine research, Naval army jobs, government should ensure that fishers with skills get those jobs rather these who doesn't even have seen sea in their lifetime. He gave his observations about recent fishing expeditions, once he started to get mature Bombay duck (nearing to egg laying) he knew this year there won't be a much Bombay duck also he said there needs to be research on why fish getting early maturity, why they are not reaching to certain size limit. He ended with little poem invoking hope in fishermen's heart.

Lastly group on post harvest spoke about issues post harvest sector faces particularly women fish vendors and fisheries cooperatives in fish marketing whether domestic or export markets. Mr Vijay said Arnala, Satpati and Tembhi village members were present in their group. His group felt that in post harvest as well as pre harvest activities women participate actively but to support their activities there needs to have strong cooperative structure. Currently there are less women

members in general fisheries cooperatives so he observed that workshop had more attendance of women members and he requested them to take membership in fisheries cooperatives if in case they are not member. On the question of whether they get capacity building and organisational support their group felt that there is no such help this sector receives from the government or their own community organisations. They observed that there is lack of infrastructure facilities like jetty, landing centres in many fishing villages even today. Their group felt that women in post harvest sector has important role to play in fish conservation measures. Women have to refuse to buy fish within certain size limit, they have to sensitise their men folk against destructive fishing techniques. He shared one of the experiences where in Arnala they involved women in scientist meeting from CMFRI where they presented on how fish production going down and future situation, women were on the verge of crying and so much touched after presentation, these women can insist for strict monsoon ban, conservation measures and fight against purse seine net fishing. Their group discussed on low cost technologies and research available to improve post harvest sector and came to conclusion that there is neither such information nor facilities available. They need deep freezing plant to support their export potential in their districts. They think their cooperatives provide them information and institutions like CMFRI give them training but there is scope to improve information exchange between fishers and related bodies.

The last session was a panel discussion in which the speakers were asked to talk about the role of their organisations in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Rambhau Patil, President of Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samittee shared his experience of participating in SSF negotiation workshop at FAO in Rome and his experiences in movement. He started off on sad note questioning future of his community specifically small scale fishers who entirely depend on fisheries for their livelihood against the back drop of dwindling fish production, pollution, global warming, and costal land grabbing and capitalistic fisheries. He went back to 1992 struggle when NFF marched against government's decision to allow foreign fleets in Indian waters. That was great victory when government has to withdraw its policy and even United Nations Organisation took notice of it in their annual report. He recalled in old time's each fishing village used to have village panchayats, they used to manage fishing, how many dol net should be there, who to fish where, these panchayats used to control and resolve fishing operations and conflicts ensuring just benefit to all. But then under democracy fishers' got in administrative panchayat along came government servants and old days was forgotten and paves ways for destruction of traditional fishing management. Fishers have been using these coastal and sea spaces for even before British when there were no maps now when project comes they just ask fishers to vacate the place and in compensation they allure them with money but when fisher goes to collect money they ask for proof of land which is not yet officially in fishers' name. Then question come in his mind, there is no political will, each new government neglected customary right of fishers. He ended with message to take these guidelines forward in their villages, their organisations to act upon it.

Narendra Patil General Secretary of NFF was then invited to speak; he introduced international fisher's organisations like WFF, ICSF, WFFP and role of Chandrika Sharma in fishworkers struggle to the participants. He praised women for their active participation in workshop and highlighted provision for women in political representation citing examples of Pratibha patil and Sumitra Mahajan, politically leading women figures in Indian politics currently. He went through fishers struggle over the years, he recalled Kanyakumari march, CRZ consultations in 2008, resistance against foreign fleets through this he charted fishworkers organisation's role in protecting their rights over sea and land. In 1998 they had consultation on code of conduct for responsible fisheries in Arnala, institutions like CMFRI, FSI, and CIFE held consultations now fishers have opportunity through ICSF, who raised small scale fishers' voice at national and international level. He also cleared MMKS's role in defending rights of small scale fishers in state and National level. Through

struggle they have got facilities and benefits for fishers. They raised questions in Vidhansabha on bull trawling, purse seine fishing, line trawling and tried to get ban on those destructive fishing methods. MMKS took lead position in having equal monsoon ban from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 15<sup>th</sup> August and organisation is also fighting for unified national fisheries policy and even participated enthusiastically in CMFRI survey. They played important role in consultation on Meenakumari's report on deep sea fishing. He said MMKS played an important role and will continue to do so in fishworkers struggle.

Purnima Meher Vice President of National fishworkers Forum (NFF) spoke next drawing attention of everyone to sustainable development and women's role in fisheries. She participated in VGSSF workshop held in Philippines in 2012 through ICSF. She expressed discussing women's issues and their participation in meetings, workshops and policies is still challenging specifically she shared her experience and society's attitude towards single woman like her participating in meetings and speaking up in her own village and district. She said there were some important discussion points she picked up from groups she visited in between. Rajan Meher of first group suggested to have reserved spaces for certain period of time to give time to nature to reproduce its resources. She added, he was not referring to Marine Protected area (MPA) but voluntary commitment of fishers for sustainable fisheries management. She felt need to focus on food security part of the guidelines; she said community and related bodies must convey the message proudly about their work to provide nutritious food like fish enriched with Omega fatty acids to larger society. Otherwise many new projects and industries may end up on their coasts. She finally said that these guidelines are part of long struggle and many have putted their efforts in it so fisher's needs to take ownership of it now and implement it. Mr Narendra Patil requested to add few points and made an announcement. He said NFF is organising campaign on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March in Delhi with two major demands to have "National fishers act" same as "forests rights act" to recognise customary right of fishers over land and waters and to include fishers in disaster management plan and rehabilitation.

Mr Narayan Vindhe, Chairman of Thane District cooperative federation started off with constitutional rights given to citizens to form their organisation to discuss and represent their issues. He said using the same right institutions like fisheries cooperatives, MMKS are asserting their rights over sea and coastal lands and that is the important role these organisations play. He reflected on position of fishers vis a vis farmers and Tribals, 79 years has passed since independence and still fisherman cannot say that he has undisputed right to use land on which his house is built or sea where he spend most of the time. He stressed on the upcoming Vadhavan Bandar which is going to affect fishing villages and coastal ecology, he said fishers don't have land or good education capital, once government and private entities capture their sea where will they go. Will they turn in to goons and thief? Organisations role is to ensure that these voices and concerns reach to the government while deciding future of fishers and their next generations.

Ujwala Patil, Women Organiser of Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samittee introduced work of women's wing and advocated strongly for supporting women's cooperatives within communities and organisations as well as from government bodies. She sadly gave encounter of process of changing bylaws and response she got from all the above stakeholders. She said to avail economic and other benefits women needs to have strong cooperative network like general fisheries cooperative which not necessarily focus on women's needs as their objectives are different. Women work in post harvest sector, in some fish markets there are 300 active women fish vendors, they are engaged in large numbers in fish drying, fish salting, prawn peeling, value added produce, ready to eat seafood but one thing common in all they lack institutional support. When she tried to develop new bylaws for women cooperatives in Maharashtra, government, politicians and community organisations have not supported her. She touched upon tenure rights and women, she gave example of development plan of Mumbai where women spoke actively about their rights over

fish markets and community spaces including their residential, fish drying, boat parking spaces. She also gave example of NGT judgement in favour of small scale fishers. Projects like JNPT, ONGC and CIDCO captured fishers land and encroached on their access to sea then fishers with the help of collector did survey for affected villages on land use, population, cultural, fishing and social aspects, she suggested that each and every fishing village should take task like this and have documented proofs using youth in fishing villages.

Mr Narendra Patil responded to Ujwala tai's speech saying that he has worked in cooperative sector for 30 years and there are no separate laws for women cooperatives so what fisheries officers suggested that women should register as per existing bylaws and then make their separate bylaws. Process like directly changing bylaws will take years so first take benefits by registering women cooperatives. Lastly Mr Ashok Tandel of Akhil Bhartiya Mangela Parishad said that in these guidelines definition of small scale fisher is not given and it may not be given ideally but we need to define it in our context. So he said creek fishers and women fishworkers specifically be considered as SSF's. He asked for collaborative efforts of all organisations like trade unions, cooperatives , community organisations by forming small voluntary groups at village and Taluka level to take this message to as many fishers as possible.

The meeting ended with Jyoti Meher thanking ICSF and others on behalf of Thane Macchimar Samaj Sangha, Mariette Correa then gave the vote of thanks on behalf of ICSF.