

Promoting gender equity

The draft synthesis document summarizes CSO proposals, including those for promoting gender equity

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The decision by the 29th Session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2011 to develop an international instrument on small-scale fisheries, to complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, was widely welcomed by civil society organizations (CSOs).

CSOs, representing fishworker and support groups, set up a co-ordination committee to engage with the process of developing the Guidelines. The committee comprises representatives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International NGO CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Between September 2011 and April 2012, a period of just eight months, CSOs conducted 14 national consultations as well as one regional consultation in Africa that brought together representatives from 16 countries. Thailand hosted a workshop specifically for women fishers. More than 1,600 people participated in these consultations. Reports and statements from all these workshops have been made available on the civil society website <https://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/>. A draft 'synthesis document' (also available on the website) has been prepared based on reports and statements from national and regional consultations.

In several countries, particularly in Brazil, El Salvador, India, South Africa and Indonesia, participants elaborated proposals to promote gender equity. Such proposals are captured in the draft synthesis document. These include, for example, the need to change unequal power relations between men and women, as well as the 'double load' that women carry, by means of an equal division of domestic work between men and women and access to public services, such as nurseries, community restaurants, laundries and educational services outside school hours, that relieve the domestic workload. The importance of guaranteeing women full access to social security systems,

and rights related to maternal health, social security and retirement, is similarly stressed. The need to establish mechanisms and adopt special measures that recognize and promote women's rights to participate in the all aspects of resource management as well as in the social, economic, political, cultural and organizational life of artisanal and small-scale fishing communities, is highlighted. Also underlined is the need to ensure collection of gender disaggregated statistics and to enumerate women's work in both inland and marine fisheries in all aspects of the fisheries chain.

The draft synthesis document brings together principles considered key by CSOs. These include: recognition of human rights; commitment to the right to equality and freedom from discrimination; recognition of the right of women and men to full and effective participation in all aspects of governance and management of fisheries resources; recognition of the right to free, informed and prior consent; promoting and securing good governance and creating the conditions necessary for such governance; and the 'do-no-harm' principle to assess the costs of conservation and development.

It contains proposals from CSOs on interventions needed in 11 key areas: the governance and management of marine and inland fisheries resources; securing social and economic development rights; protection of the environment and sustainable use; support across the value chain; improved labour and social-security rights and conditions; gender equality and equity; promotion of food security and sovereignty; safety at sea; climate change and disaster preparedness; awareness raising, capacity development, training and education; and research and information needs.

The draft synthesis report will be updated based on reports and statements from the next round of national and regional consultations to be held between August and December 2012, as well as other comments received. The report thus finalized will form the basis for CSOs to comment on FAO's zero draft of the Guidelines that is available for comments, till end-January 2013, on the FAO website. ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF_guidelines/ZeroDraftSSFGuidelines_MAY2012.pdf 