

# Beyond Bangkok

**A recent civil society workshop in Costa Rica brought to the fore issues confronting small-scale fishers in Latin America**

The Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF), organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2008 launched what has become known in civil society circles as the ‘Bangkok process’. Prior to this, a preparatory workshop organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in May 2007, highlighted that “responsible fisheries can be assured only if human rights of fishing communities, including the right to decent work and labour standards and human development, are secure” (see “Asserting Rights, Defining Responsibilities”, *SAMUDRA Report* No. 47, July 2007). That assertion placed the human rights of fishing communities centre stage in the debate on rights-based approaches to fisheries and the responsible and sustainable development of fisheries and fishing communities. The Bangkok process is all about placing human rights centre stage in the campaign to secure sustainable and responsible small-scale fisheries.

Subsequently, when the 28th session of FAO’s Committee on Fisheries (COFI) discussed the outcome of the 4SSF conference, several FAO Members expressed the need for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries that would guide national and international efforts to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries and create a framework for monitoring and reporting. They also supported the need for FAO to establish a specific global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries.

In response, the FAO Secretariat convened three regional workshops—for Africa (in Maputo, Mozambique), Asia-Pacific (in Bangkok, Thailand) and Latin America and the Caribbean (in San José, Costa Rica) in October 2010, with the objectives, *inter alia*, of receiving guidance from national and regional stakeholders on the scope and contents of a possible international instrument on sustainable small-scale fisheries development, as well as on priorities and implementation modalities

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of a global assistance programme. Recommendations from these regional consultations will be presented to 29<sup>th</sup> session of COFI in Rome in early 2011.

Thanks to assistance from FAO, channeled through the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), 20 representatives of organizations of artisanal fishers and their supporters, as well as men and women workers from the artisanal fisheries sector from Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Peru and Chile were able to meet prior to the regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **Preparatory meeting**

The preparatory meeting, facilitated by CoopeSoliDar R.L., with the support

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## CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

### Regional Latin American 4SSF Preparatory Meeting: Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development. 19 October 2010 Tárcoles, Costa Rica

#### *Preamble*

We, artisanal fishers, indigenous people, people of African descent, fishery workers, men and women from Latin America, both as individuals and representing regional and international organizations working with artisanal fishers, met in the community of Tárcoles.

We re-state that coastal-marine communities and artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, as well as fishers from inland waters not only contribute significantly to the global production of food, but constitute communities with claims to a particular territory and cultural identity that must be recognized and strengthened.

We affirm that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and for responsible and sustainable fisheries to be achieved, it is crucial for the political, civil, social and cultural rights of fishing communities to be guaranteed.

We call on States to recognize these principles so that the full and effective participation of fishing communities can be assured in sustainable fishing, and we demand that our access rights to our territories, to land and water are respected.

We recognize and denounce the fact that proposals previously put forward by civil society have not been heeded by our governments when formulating their policies, strategies and actions.

We are here to apply our ideas to this process, through the strategic axes defined for the Latin American workshop organized by the FAO entitled "Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development".

#### **SUSTAINABILITY**

To achieve sustainable production for optimal societal benefits through an ecosystem approach, it requires that

- industrial fishing is eradicated in the coastal zone within five nautical miles, measured from the low-tide mark, while the fishing grounds and natural banks beyond the five-mile zone where artisanal fishing activities take place are respected;
- mangroves, river mouths, estuaries, fishing banks and other important fishery ecosystems are protected;
- fishing gears are regulated and fishing methods that are damaging to the resources and do not protect juvenile fish are eliminated;

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of CoopeTárcoles R.L., was held in the artisanal fishing community of Tárcoles on the central Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Most of the participants had already engaged with the Bangkok process—in Chile at the Punta de Tralca workshop (see "Common Concerns, Lasting Bonds", *SAMUDRA Report* No. 50, August 2008), at the Bangkok 4SSF conference, and at the 28<sup>th</sup> session of COFI meet in March 2009.

The pros and cons of the Bangkok process and associated meetings were discussed at the Costa Rica workshop. Cairo Laguna, representing artisanal fishers from Nicaragua, said

that the process had been important since the issue of artisanal fisheries had been brought onto the international agenda. There was now an opportunity "to identify the problems that we face in the region and to feed these back to FAO centrally."

David Chacón, an artisanal fisher from Costa Rica, referred to the September 2008 Tárcoles Declaration, made prior to the 4SSF conference, to highlight the importance of collaboration between Central and South American countries in providing a common front.

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- closed seasons are implemented during periods of reproduction for fishery resources that are overexploited and in danger of extinction; and
- management plans are jointly developed and implemented with artisanal fishers.

#### **VULNERABILITY**

The vulnerability of communities to natural disasters and climate change must be reduced by .

- eliminating corruption at all levels, and the trafficking of influence in public bodies;
- respecting artisanal fishermen's and fisherwomen's rights in all their forms;
- finding solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change on artisanal fishing communities;
- establishing and implementing public policies for the development of artisanal fishing communities; and
- recognizing the importance of women and their work within families and in the fisheries, and guaranteeing them their due rights.

#### **POVERTY**

For increasing the contribution of small scale fisheries and aquaculture to poverty alleviation and food security, it is essential that the above proposal be complied with, noting that sustainability and eradicating vulnerability are crucial issues for our artisanal fishing communities .

We recommend:

- setting up a COFI subcommittee on artisanal fisheries that will include the participation of representatives of artisanal fishing organizations and legitimate parties;
- elaborating, approving and implementing an International Declaration on artisanal fishing that is binding on States;
- developing, approving and implementing, in consultation with artisanal fishers' organizations, representatives and legitimate parties, a programme and international plan of action in support of artisanal fishing; and
- supporting the creation of a specific chapter on artisanal fishing within the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- We demand that the programme and global plan of action for artisanal fishing:
- sets up a Steering Committee for Global Assistance that includes international and regional organizations from the artisanal fishing sector ; and
- takes into account the ethnic, cultural and gender differences, and ensures that these are reflected in the composition of the Steering Committee and in the regional offices.

Zoila Bustamante, President of Confederación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH), Chile's National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen, highlighted the need for space to be given to artisanal fishers in the discussions, and the importance of artisanal fishers as a "driving force for food production".

According to delegates from Central America, despite FAO meetings being open to civil society representatives, fishers were often at a disadvantage because they had no prior access to information. On the other hand, government

representatives were much better informed.

It was also pointed out that often the participation of government representatives is not systematic or regular since meetings are attended by different representatives. This makes it difficult for civil society organizations to ensure that official positions take their views into account.

The Costa Rica workshop also discussed the importance of strengthening organizations at the local level, and ensuring that information is provided to grass-

roots sectors in an understandable form. The four key themes of the FAO workshop were discussed in groups, following which artisanal fishers and their representatives met independently to agree on the key issues to be included in their declaration.

In conclusion, it was felt that the opportunity to work and reflect in a collective way prior to the FAO workshop strengthened the participation of leaders from Latin America's small-scale fisheries sector. The Costa Rica workshop highlighted the need to use such spaces to prepare and strengthen legitimate strategies and to share progress—or the lack of it—in fulfilling international commitments, both by international organizations and by governments.

The FAO workshop that followed in San José, from 20 to 22 October 2010, was attended by representatives from most of the countries in the region, with the exception of Venezuela, Mexico, Chile and the Dominican Republic. Civil society participants played a very important role in the workshop, and Latin American States were very open to the proposals under consideration, including for an international instrument for small-scale fisheries.

Presentations were made by officials from FAO and from the

Organization of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the Isthmus of Central America (OSPESCA) on the three thematic issues and the key cross-cutting issues, including gender in artisanal fisheries in Latin America. But the debate around this latter issue was not sufficiently in-depth, despite its importance.

On the theme of “Increasing the Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security”, civil society participants emphasized the need for a human-rights-based approach, the need for exclusive zones, the regulation of destructive gear, inclusive MPAs, fairer market access, and complementary activities like community tourism in Prainha do Canto Verde in Ceará State, Brazil.

It was felt that an ecosystem-based approach, though complex and relatively costly, should be used to manage resources in a sustainable manner. In several fisheries, it was pointed out, decisionmaking is based only on the target species and investment in modern vessels and gear. There is a need to widen and document the interrelation between scientific knowledge and local knowledge.

The group discussing climate change and its impact on small-scale fisheries saw greater participation of civil society than of government representatives. There was agreement that public policies are required to deal with the social causes of climate change and the conditions that favour natural disasters and the vulnerability of communities. Funding must be made available and instruments for spatial planning, integrated coastal area management and vulnerability assessment and monitoring must be developed. Also highlighted was the need to take account of social, economic and cultural aspects, and not just environmental ones, in the application of such instruments.

### Better understanding


ICSF Members noted that it would be particularly useful, over the coming months, to better understand

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Civil society representatives at Tárcoles workshop highlighted the need to use spaces to prepare and strengthen legitimate strategies

the characteristics, potential and difficulties (for getting approval) of the various options under discussion. They felt that the promotion of an international instrument and a global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries would be most appropriate, taking into consideration the fact that in 2009 opening up the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries had been rejected. An FAO subcommittee on small-scale fisheries runs the risk of reducing the importance of the sector, they felt.

The field trip to the fishing community of Tárcoles was greatly appreciated by the workshop participants, as it allowed them to get to know the fishers better, and to deepen ties and linkages. The Costa Rica meet resulted in a Civil Society Declaration (see box). 



Men and women workers and supporters from the artisanal fisheries sector of Latin America met at Tárcoles, Costa Rica, to reflect on issues in small-scale fisheries

#### For more

[icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_47/art01.pdf](http://icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue_47/art01.pdf)

#### **Asserting Rights, Defining Responsibilities**

[foodsovereignty-org.web34.winsvr.net/Home.aspx](http://foodsovereignty-org.web34.winsvr.net/Home.aspx)

#### **The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty**

[icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_50/art08.pdf](http://icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue_50/art08.pdf)

#### **Common Concerns, Lasting Bonds**