

Securing Small-scale Fisheries

The following document, adopted at a recent FAO workshop in San José, Costa Rica, proposed strategies for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

At the FAO workshop on “Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development” (4SSF) in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2008, there was a call, *inter alia*, for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries, and for a dedicated global programme on small-scale fisheries under the purview of FAO which would be guided by COFI. These calls were reiterated by the 28th Session of the FAO’s Committee on Fisheries, held in Rome, Italy in March 2009.

- the participation by small-scale fishing communities in decisionmaking is progressing in several countries but continues to be hampered in many instances by inadequate organizational development and institutional structures;
- the impacts of climate change, including the growing intensity and frequency of natural disasters, is exacerbating the vulnerability of small-scale fisheries; and
- there is a need to promote small-scale fisheries and secure their access to the resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods. The workshop also recognized the important work already done at the local, national and regional levels to empower fishing communities and fishworkers’ organizations to develop and implement improved policies and practices that strengthen the social, economic, cultural and political rights of small-scale fishing communities.

The LAC workshop recommended that a small-scale fisheries international instrument and assistance programme should be informed by human-rights principles.

In this context, the Regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), held in San José, Costa Rica from 20 to 22 October 2010 recognized that:

- the importance of inland and marine small-scale fisheries as a provider of livelihoods, food, employment and income is not yet sufficiently known and appreciated by policymakers and the public at large;
- small-scale fisheries face serious threats due to growing overexploitation of fishery resources, conflicts from other sectors competing over land and water and other natural resources, and often do not benefit from public amenities and social protection measures;

The LAC workshop recommended that a small-scale fisheries international instrument and assistance programme should:

- be informed by human-rights principles and existing international and regional instruments relevant to good governance and sustainable development;
- draw upon the available experiences with good governance practices in small-scale fisheries at national, regional and global levels;
- strengthen mechanisms for information sharing and communication including by regional and subregional

These conclusions and recommendations were arrived at by participants of the workshop in San José, Costa Rica, held during 20-22 October 2010

organizations such as OSPESCA, CRFM, CDEMA and OLDEPESCA and by associations and networks of fishworkers organizations, both of men and women, and civil society organizations such as CONFEPESCA and ASCR, ICSF, CONAPACH, CIAPA, FENISCPESC, FENAPESCAH, FACOPADES, FENHPESCH, WFF and WFFP;

- foster co-operation among countries and regional bodies in relation to sustainable small-scale fisheries development;
- encompass a broad characterization of small-scale fisheries and the requirement, if not yet done so, to develop national definitions in consultation with the concerned communities, fishworkers' organizations and the private sector;
- assess how various fishing rights systems in the region are performing and their impacts on the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and communities;
- include the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) as a guiding principle for resource management and development; and
- incorporate disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) as an integral part of any assistance programme, considering that DRM is a process that exists before, during and after a disaster.

Three concurrent working groups discussed these three topics—governance, EAF and DRM/CCA—and arrived at a number of conclusions and recommendations for the rights, principles and thematic areas that the instrument and assistance programme should refer to;

Recognition of the rights of small-scale fishing communities relating, in particular, to the following:

- human rights and rights as workers;
- permanence of their communities in coastal and riverine areas;
- just and equitable access to fishery resources;
- exclusive inshore zones for small-scale fisheries;
- safe working and secure living conditions;



The FAO workshop at San José called for an international instrument and a global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries

- guaranteed access to information concerning the sustainable and integrated development of their communities;
- social security and protection of persons and goods; and
- capacity and resilience to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.

Adherence to the following principles and practices:

- transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and participation; empowerment; gender equality; holistic, integrated and adaptive management and development approaches; and social responsibility, protection and solidarity;
- free, prior and informed consent by affected small-scale fishing communities before adopting and implementing projects, programmes or legislative and administrative measures which may affect them;
- participatory decisionmaking to take place at the lowest possible decentralized level of government that is as close as possible to the people who are affected by them (the principle of subsidiarity);
- recognition and respect of their cultures, forms of organization, traditions, customary norms

and practices, and traditional knowledge;

- recognition of customary, traditional or otherwise preferential access to fishery resources, land and territories, by small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant people;
- combating poverty and ensuring food security and sustainable resource uses;
- avoidance of adverse development impacts;
- fostering an environment to promote advocacy and conflict resolution mechanisms among stakeholders using common geographic space and/or shared space;
- capacity development in all areas;
- facilitation of access to markets and credit;
- promotion of co-management and community-based management, including for marine reserves and protection areas that are informed by the precautionary approach;
- ensuring that DRM and CCA policies and interventions respond to the specific needs of small-scale fisheries;
- giving special considerations to fishing communities who live in small islands that are vulnerable to disasters and climate change; and
- ensuring policies and political commitment by governments to reduce green house gases according to their common and differentiated responsibilities.

An international instrument would include the following thematic elements.

I) GOVERNANCE OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

Preface: The instrument should be informed by existing relevant instruments such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the international voluntary guidelines that are being developed under the auspices of FAO on land tenure and natural resources. There is a continuing need to promote the Code in small-scale fisheries.

The proposed instrument should focus on:

Fisheries management, including aspects relating to access regimes; co-management and community-based management; management institutions such as management councils; habitat protection; protection of juveniles and spawning stocks; promotion of environmentally friendly fishing gear; MPAs that guarantee the participation of small-scale fisheries; management of shared fishery resources and water bodies, including combating transboundary water pollution; combating of IUU fishing by promoting integrated enforcement between governments, fishing industry and small-scale fisheries.

Building the resilience and adaptive capacity of fishing communities (including in relation to DRM and CCA).

Promotion of trade of products from small-scale fisheries, ensuring greater benefits to them

Capacity building by strengthening and empowering fishers' organizations and associations through free, continuing training

Conflict resolution in fishing communities

Generation of complementary and alternative livelihoods for small-scale fishers such as community tourism, agriculture, aquaculture and other small business opportunities

Promotion of gender equality in small-scale fisheries

Social benefits such as social security, retirement benefits, maternity benefits and unemployment insurance during closed seasons

Integration of science with traditional knowledge, including ecological knowledge

Government responsibility to clean inland waters from pollution, and regulation of the use of pesticides in agriculture to combat water pollution

Combating crimes against fishers, including piracy and theft

Eliminating subsidies for unsustainable fisheries and other unsustainable activities

Promoting and supporting networks of communities and organizations that promote sustainable small-scale fisheries.

2) ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

Priority Action 1

Generation of ecological, socioeconomic and institutional baselines within the region, for the development of EAF.

Priority Action 2

Identify and start dialogue with other sectors that are concomitant users of ecological services and natural resources of ecosystems where small-scale fisheries thrive, for a multi-sector approach to EAF.

Priority Action 3

Develop a comparative analysis of EAF-based SSF management models both within the region and outside the region, whose success examples can be replicated in other countries.

Priority Action 4

Incorporate local traditional uses and knowledge into national management policies for SSF.

Priority Action 5

Incorporate scientifically based policy instruments to eradicate the use of harmful fishing gear and methods that affect fish resources in small-scale fisheries.

3) DRM AND CCA

Priority Action 1

Ensure that DRM and CCA policies and institutional frameworks are in place for small-scale fisheries.

Priority Action 2

Identify, assess and monitor disaster and climate change risks affecting small-scale fisheries and enhance early warning systems.

Priority Action 3

Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience within artisanal fishing communities as well as at local and national levels.

Priority Action 4

Reduce underlying risk factors related to small-scale fisheries

Priority Action 5

Strengthen DRM and CCA for effective response within the small-scale fisheries sector

4) GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

The **Global Programme on Small-scale Fisheries** that many members of COFI recommended FAO to develop **should be informed by the principles and elements recommended by this and the other regional workshops.** Other assistance programmes in support of small-scale fisheries at national, regional and international levels should equally take account of these conclusions and recommendations. **3**

For more



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FAO Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries

www.fao.org/fishery/about/cofi/en
Committee on Fisheries (COFI)