

Guiding Small-scale Fisheries

A workshop organized by ICSF discussed how to take forward the implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines recently adopted by FAO

Representatives of fishing communities, fishworker organizations (FWOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) from all over the world congregated at Puducherry (formerly, Pondicherry, often abbreviated to Pondy), India, during 21 – 24 July 2014 for the workshop titled “Towards Socially Just and Sustainable Fisheries: ICSF Workshop on Implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)”.

group, while those from Europe, Latin America and Africa made up the other. In the group discussions, community representatives analyzed the implications of the Guidelines. At the feedback session that followed, participants heard from the FAO on its plans regarding the Guidelines. Participants were again divided into regional groups to discuss priorities and plans to take forward the SSF Guidelines. The Pondy Workshop concluded with a plenary session of reflection and discussion on the potential role of CSOs in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

The main thrust of the Pondy Workshop was on how to take forward the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at different levels (local, national, regional and international), the roles of fishing communities, CSOs, governments and FAO, and how these various stakeholders could work together to move towards a socially just and sustainable small-scale fisheries within a human-rights framework.

The workshop participants felt that the issues of social justice and sustainable fisheries are interdependent and inseparable. They urged stakeholders, especially the State, to recognize the intersectoral nature of the SSF Guidelines, which, as some participants observed, even FWOs often tend to ignore in their internal functioning.

Translation

Raising awareness about the SSF Guidelines, particularly through the media, was of paramount importance, workshop participants noted. The need to translate the SSF Guidelines into

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Organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the workshop, which was dedicated to Chandrika Sharma, was a first attempt at analyzing the SSF Guidelines, which were adopted at the 31st session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy, on 10 June 2014.

The introductory session of the workshop recapitulated the milestones on the road to the adoption of the SSF Guidelines. This was followed by a presentation on developing a transformative agenda to address social inequality through the SSF Guidelines. The workshop participants then split into two groups based on region and language. Participants from Asia and Brazil formed one

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local languages was stressed. CSOs ought to go back to the communities who provided invaluable inputs at the national-level consultations that were held prior to the Technical Consultations in May 2013 and February 2014, to share information on progress at the global level since then.

Participants at the Pondy Workshop also expressed concern at the growing lobby of financially strong organizations in the fisheries sector, which view the SSF Guidelines from a narrow commercial and/or environmental perspective. These organizations, some participants felt, might not share the values of human rights, equity and sustainable development that small-scale fishworkers uphold. The Latin American delegates raised the issue of how free-market forces influence the political system. In some developing countries, small-scale fishers are being boxed in by unfair conservation norms in their traditional fishing grounds, and they are also being marginalized by the demands on coastal/ocean space for industrial and tourism-related development projects.

Representatives of FWOs from the developed countries pointed out that while the SSF Guidelines focus on the South, it must be remembered that there are indigenous, marginalized and vulnerable groups in the North as well. An exclusive South focus will give industrialized countries an excuse to not implement the SSF Guidelines.

The Pondy Workshop also pointed out the need to develop a transformative agenda that recognizes that social power relations are usually skewed, especially against women. Several issues of discrimination, violence, reduced access to resources, the absence of decision-making powers, inadequate representation of women's interests and a devaluation of their contribution to fisheries, poverty alleviation and food security were highlighted. It was pointed out that while the SSF Guidelines do refer to key issues of importance to women, such as protecting and securing their rights to tenure, social development,

decent working conditions and freedom from violence, these references needed to be made more explicit through social analysis of gender relations, intersectionalities and context specificity. The need to be aware of social and gender inequality within CSOs and FWOs was highlighted, as was the need to document and share positive examples of bottom-up changes which could inspire others.

During the group discussions on the third day of the workshop, community representatives from the Netherlands, Costa Rica, Honduras, the Caribbean, West Africa, India, Brazil, Thailand and Indonesia highlighted some of their concerns, hopes and plans for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Among the important themes that emerged were the following:

Mobilization of small-scale fishers: In Brazil, fishing communities have worked towards proposing a draft law that calls on the State to recognize the rights of small-scale fishers, and to define small-scale fishers based on the community's own definition. In Indonesia, fishworker groups are working on a law for the protection of small-scale fisheries and they are now petitioning their government to adopt and implement the SSF Guidelines. In West Africa, artisanal fishers are

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The Pondy Workshop paid tribute to the memory of Chandrika Sharma, former Executive Secretary of ICSF, who went missing on the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370

demanding priority access to fishing grounds, resources and markets. National fisher organizations have also established joint working committees with neighbouring countries to resolve conflicts between fishers. In The Netherlands, the inland fishers' union has been working with the government to implement a decentralized eel management plan. The African Confederation

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of Professional Organizations for Artisanal Fishers (CAOPA) representative spoke of how the organization connects with other groups to communicate small-scale fisheries issues to the public through the media, and works with the European Union to ensure that fisheries agreements and development aid to fisheries are in line with the SSF Guidelines.

Capacity building: The Garifuna community in Honduras underscored the need to raise the capacity of fishing communities to deal with issues related to employment, livelihood opportunities and how the SSF Guidelines can protect resources. Participants from the Ivory Coast mentioned how women are active at all levels, from pre-financing of fishing trips to making sure that the fish reaches the table. Women have organized themselves into co-operatives that receive technical support from FAO on post-harvest processing. In The Netherlands, the union of inland fishers has been working with the State, researchers and NGOs to develop management and monitoring systems for the eel fisheries.

Development: Costa Rican participants talked of the growth in tourism projects and the difficulties of balancing the development needs of the country with the livelihood needs of the community. Questions were

raised on whether such developments are an opportunity or a threat, and how the community's interests can be protected.

Climate change: Participants from the Caribbean region focused on climate change and the importance of an ecosystem approach to fisheries. In West Africa, it was pointed out, FAO is financing a project to assist fishing communities adapt to climate change. CAOPA, which consists of 14 national organizations from 14 African countries, is Chair of the steering committee of this project that covers Senegal, Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Women: Participants from West Africa spoke of the range and importance of women's work and their role in education, health and well-being. They pointed out how women are organized into co-operatives or associations that operate at all levels of the value chain.

Science and communities: The presentations from Thailand highlighted the role of scientists in development projects. It was noted that environment impact assessments are often biased and pro-industry. Communities in Thailand have begun to counter these assessments through community-led impact assessments that highlight marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystem services that are important for local communities.

Access to fish: The presentations by the Indian and African delegates noted that fishermen prefer to sell their catch to those merchants with greater financial resources rather than to women fish vendors from local fishing communities. Women fish vendors of Mumbai, India, said they are denied the right of first offer of fish catch.

Responsibilities: Several presentations pointed out fishers' concerns about their responsibilities to resources. In Thailand and Indonesia, for instance, communities have taken up the regeneration of mangrove forests that were being destroyed by commercial interests.

Identity: Many presentations sought to deal with the issue of the

identity of a fisher. Brazilian fishers have proposed a draft law which calls on the State to accept the community's definition of a fisher. In The Netherlands, a recent law has defined small-scale fishers in such a manner that many inland fishers are denied official recognition.

The presentation by the FAO representative focused on how the FAO sees its role in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. It noted the need to maintain the inclusive spirit that has thus far characterized the SSF Guidelines' development process and to mainstream them into policies and strategies across sectors and levels. The aim is to anchor the small-scale fisheries agenda to other international issues that FAO is involved in such as food security, ocean management and governance.

There were other topics that came up for discussion at the workshop, including the difficulties of defining vulnerable and marginalized groups, which vary from region to region and tend to be context-specific. One participant felt that 'marginalized' and 'vulnerable' are negative terms that stigmatize people and make them feel inferior.

On the last day of the workshop, participants met in groups split into the regions of Latin America, Europe, Canada and the Caribbean, Anglophone Africa, Francophone Africa and Asia. They discussed the road map in implementing the SSF Guidelines, guided by broad-based questions on implementation strategies and priorities, the role of CSOs in capacity building, how States can be motivated to implement the SSF Guidelines, and how vulnerable and marginal groups can be accommodated in the process.

At the concluding plenary session, the various groups summarized their discussions, from which the following common themes emerged:

- There is a need to recognize vulnerable and marginalized groups and indigenous peoples' rights, which might be in conflict with those of more mainstream small-scale fishers.

- The SSF Guidelines should be integrated in discussions at other international forums (like side events at international conferences) in order to promote them.
- The SSF Guidelines implementation process must be made inclusive and should be centered around fishing communities.
- Fisheries governance, land access and tenure arrangements must give priority to the interests of small-scale fisheries, in a participatory manner.
- Information on the SSF Guidelines must be shared at all levels, across different stakeholders. CSOs must go back to the local communities who were involved in the earlier consultations. This will help gain an understanding of how the SSF Guidelines can be implemented in the local context and will create bottom-up pressure on the State to implement them. Such information-sharing will also improve relations between communities and CSOs.
- Policies and legislation must be reviewed to ensure that the SSF Guidelines can be mainstreamed into official governance mechanisms.
- In order to aid capacity building, information must be made available to all groups. Training should

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be given to government officials and local communities on the SSF Guidelines. Examples of current practical challenges in the daily lives of artisanal fishers should be used to demonstrate how the provisions in the SSF Guidelines can be used to address these issues, which can then be used to lobby governments.

- The larger public must be informed of the SSF Guidelines so that the importance and need for proper

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The main thrust of the ICSF Pondy Workshop was on how to take forward the implementation of the SSF Guidelines adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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implementation is understood, and there is public scrutiny and pressure on the State to ensure implementation. The SSF Guidelines should not be considered as a solely fisheries-department issue but should be integrated across sectors and departments, including those that deal with women's affairs, social welfare, rural development, labour, health, education and trade.

- The role of women in artisanal fisheries should be recognized, and they should be encouraged to participate in FWOs.
- While several of the issues raised by the SSF Guidelines already exist in the national legislation of many countries, the challenge lies in implementation.
- FAO was requested to bring out the final text of the SSF Guidelines as soon as possible so that they can be disseminated to the communities.
- A monitoring system, with key indicators, needs to be developed to map the progress in implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Such a system should be participatory and subject to adaptation and modification.

- Child labour, safety at sea, women's working and living conditions, gender equality, access to infrastructure and resources, and legitimate community governance institutions and organizations were the issues that were seen as important in the next stage of implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

While mapping out the long road to the adoption of the SSF Guidelines, the Pondy Workshop also highlighted the power of CSOs coming together as a united front for a common cause. Much remains to be done to ensure the SSF Guidelines are implemented effectively. 3

For more

igssf.icsf.net/

ICSF's Website on Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines

sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/

CSO Website on Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines