

Seize the Opportunity

The newly elected president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, enjoys an unprecedented opportunity to tackle the issues facing the country's fishing villages

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The year 2014 was particularly meaningful for all Indonesians, including the 13.8 mn families who depend on the fisheries sector for a livelihood. There are two principal reasons for this. First, like most Indonesian citizens, fisherfolk welcomed the 2014 presidential elections in anticipation of an unprecedented betterment of their lives. Despite the problems in inaugurating into office the elected president Joko Widodo ("Jokowi", as he is universally known in the country), pending the final decision

of fishers' welfare in their campaign. The aim was to eradicate illegal fishing, support boat repairs, develop ports and provide special banks for fishers. These measures implied a larger presence for the state in Indonesia's fishing villages.

Of the country's population, 13.8 mn rely on fishery activities for their livelihoods, in capture fisheries, aquaculture, and fish processing or marketing. Most of the 2.8 mn capture and small-scale fishers could catch, on average, only 2 kg of fish daily. If all the fish they caught were sold directly in the markets, the average daily income of an Indonesian fisher would be only Rp20,000–30,000 (US\$1.67–2.5). The low income cannot be attributed to a paucity of fish; rather, the low capture was due to ineffective intervention by the state.

There are several inequalities in Indonesia's fisheries. First, there is a marked inequality in the management of fisheries resources. The state allows large ships to freely fish in the waters of the archipelago or operate at less than 12 nautical miles from the coastline.

In fact, 99.5 per cent of the Indonesian fishing fleet, including ships weighing 30-100 gross tonnage (GT), fish in the waters of the archipelago. This has led to great competition between the small-scale boats and large fishing vessels, and also among the large vessels themselves.

Fishing fleet

The fact that only a small number of the national fishing fleet operates in the Indonesian exclusive economic zone (12-200 nautical miles) has given huge opportunities to foreign

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of the Constitutional Court, the enthusiasm of fisher families remained high. This was mainly because this was the first election in the history of the republic that focused on maritime and fisheries issues.

The second factor that contributed to the 2014 election's significance was that on 10 June, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adopted the first international instrument dedicated to protect and promote the important role of small-scale fishers—the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

Jokowi and his running mate, Jusuf Kalla, currently the Vice President, had included the agenda

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vessels to plunder the wealth of the Indonesian sea.

Second, there is also a noticeable inequality in the development of fisheries infrastructure. There are about 1,300 fishing ports in Indonesia, comprising sea ports, archipelago ports, beach ports, fish landing centres, and private ports. Over 68 per cent of them are located in western Indonesia. Not only is the geographical spread unbalanced between the east and the west, but the infrastructure facilities also generally do not meet the minimum requirements for fishing ports, as revealed by the lack of data and integrated information on fisheries, poor training facilities, and the unavailability of safety tools for fishermen. Consequently, to date there are unresolved problems related to the accuracy of subsidized fuel distribution, efficiency of production, the setting of selling prices, and the safety at sea of fishers.

Third, there is inequality in the chains of fisheries management. This stems from the definition of fisher, which is limited to those who capture fish in the sea. In other words, all activities other than fish capture, such as fish processing and marketing, are defined as irrelevant (to fishermen). Accordingly, the economy of fishers is very dependent on sales of non-processed fish, which has no added value. This has led to a proportional decline in the performance of fish-processing businesses in Indonesia. In 2013, of the 19.5 mn tonnes production of capture and aquaculture fisheries, only less than 20 per cent ended up as processed products. The number of workers in the fish-processing sub-sector is limited to under 1.4 mn or about 10 per cent of the total fishworker population.

These conditions of inequality that illustrate the problems associated with poverty and environmental degradation in the fishing villages are not separate

issues. They are inter-related and offer an opportunity for President Jokowi.

To start with, a focus on the SSF Guidelines would be appropriate. The SSF Guidelines positions the world's small-scale fishers as part of the solution to overcome global hunger and poverty. The Guidelines may help the Government of Indonesia to continue to maintain and increase subsidies for fishermen and small-scale fish farmers. This is especially relevant in the context of questions raised by industrialized countries on the subsidies granted to the fisheries sector, as in the lawsuit filed against the Indonesian government in 2012.

At the time, the Government of the United States (US) questioned the policy of the Indonesian Ministry of Maritime and Fisheries, which gave various forms of incentives to fishers and shrimp farmers in some integrated fisheries areas (called Minapolitan cities or areas). The US lawsuit argued that subsidies for fishermen and small farmers in Indonesia were part of the national export subsidy that disrupted shrimp prices in the world market.

In the context of the 1945 Constitution, the Fisheries Law and the ground realities in Indonesia's fishing villages, it is impossible for an Indonesian small-scale fisher to



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produce highly competitive products without the support and facilitation of the government. The SSF Guidelines also opens up access to international financing for the implementation and monitoring of the instruments needed to protect small-scale fishing in Indonesia.

On the national scale, the SSF Guidelines may help future governments in two ways—first, by measuring the effectiveness of national policies in protecting small-scale fishers; and second, by accelerating the formulation of policy to protect fishers in more comprehensive ways, and ensuring that fishing boats weighing more than 30 GT do not operate in the archipelago waters. At the village level, the SSF Guidelines instrument may strengthen the recognition of the strategic role of Indonesian small-scale fishing and the traditional knowledge of communities in managing coastal and marine resources.

The SSF Guidelines also encourage access to education and training

to improve the competitiveness of Indonesian small-scale fishermen in local, national and international markets, as well as increasing their resilience in facing climate change. All these are opportunities for President Jokowi to take the expectations for change from behind the negotiation table and transplant them into prospects for prosperity in the fishing villages of Indonesia. 3

For more

www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/03/17/jokowi-wants-kpk-focus-fisheries-forestry.html

Jokowi Wants KPK to Focus on Fisheries, Forestry

www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/20165774/indonesia-leads-explosive-new-wave-of-fisheries-protection

Indonesia Leads Explosive New Wave of Fisheries Protection