

An Enabling Environment

Recent meetings in Thailand and Myanmar brought together a wide range of experts and stakeholders to discuss fisheries laws and how the SSF Guidelines can be implemented

Workshops, consultations and seminars are being organized in different parts of the world to disseminate and discuss the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries, in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in June 2014. Contextualising the SSF Guidelines in each country and region is a challenge, and depends on the state of small-scale fisheries, legal and policy frameworks, governance systems and the competencies of community-based organizations, among other factors.

The seminar 'Ensuring Rights of Fisherfolk to Sustainable Fisheries, and Marine and Coastal Resource Management in the Context of Mainstream Development and Climate Change', held at the Conference Hall, Burapha University, Chantaburi Campus, Thailand, during 27-28 January 2015 was organized by the Sustainable Development Foundation, in collaboration with the Thailand Federation of Small-scale Fisherfolk Association. It was supported by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)/Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project; the European Union (under the project 'Empowerment of Coastal Communities in the Context of Climate Change'), and the Marine Technological Faculty, Burapha University.

The 84 participants at the seminar (56 men and 28 women) included representatives from the concerned state agencies, namely, the Department of Fisheries, Marine and Coastal Resources Department, Environmental

Quality Promotion Department, the local administration, academicians and researchers, civil society representatives, and fishworkers from local, provincial and national forums.

The seminar was intended to provide an opportunity for participants to be informed about, and share their views on, the two recent draft laws in the process of being adopted in Thailand, and to strategise how the SSF Guidelines can influence their implementation. One is the (draft) Fishery Law, to replace the existing one which dates

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from 1940. The other is the Marine and Coastal Resource Management Act, the first of its kind in Thailand. The seminar aimed to help participants recognize the rights of small-scale fisherfolk in the context of the new draft laws and the SSF Guidelines, and to discuss directions and strategies on how fisherfolk can exercise their rights in the context of the new laws in a period of globalization and climate change.

Consultations

Several participants and resource persons had been active in the two previous consultations in February 2012. These consultations, attended by 144 coastal small-scale fisherfolk from a large number of provinces in both the Eastern Region and Southern Region, had contributed to the SSF

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Guidelines and to the process of getting these new laws formulated.

The small-scale fisherfolk movement has been paying close attention to the two new draft laws which are in the process of being passed through the National Legislative Assembly. It is uncertain to what extent the final bills would be in line with people's advocacy. In this scenario, a decision was made to have a consultation between small-scale fisherfolk and representatives from government departments on issues that are covered in the SSF Guidelines and in the new laws, in order that these two very important legal instruments can be analyzed, priority areas identified, and the way ahead deliberated upon.

The panel discussions had a mix of government representatives, researchers and representatives from small-scale fishworkers' federations or groups. The first panel looked at the opportunity and risk for small-scale fishers in the context of globalization, climate change and the draft National Act. The first presentation focussed on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, emphasizing the importance of people-centred development and an 'environmental pillar' to provide a framework for

of sustaining their networks if favourable laws and policies are to be successfully implemented.

There was also a detailed presentation on the SSF Guidelines, with their history, objectives, principles, components and implementation mechanisms being elaborated. Another panel discussion centred on the topic 'How we can make use of the SSF Guidelines and the new Fishery and Marine and Coastal Resource Acts to ensure, protect and promote the rights of small-scale fishers: Issues, actions and recommendations'.

The key concerns that were addressed through group discussions were on how to enhance the knowledge of small-scale fisherfolk and keep them updated with information and news about changes in fishery laws and policies; how to establish strong small-scale fisherfolk groups that have clear directions and objectives and are able to represent small-scale fisherfolk in political and legislative mechanisms; issues of registration of different types of fishing vessels/gear and how to manage potential problems and obstacles; how to strengthen networks of small-scale fisherfolk; and how to play a supporting role to the Federation of Small-scale Fisherfolk in advocating various fishery management issues.

The seminar brought together a wide range of experts and stakeholders with different backgrounds. It provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the new laws and how the SSF Guidelines can be applied in Thailand. Participants felt that they still need more information and opportunities to clarify and discuss some issues with the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources about the new laws.

Seminar

The following week, on February 3, a seminar on the SSF Guidelines was held in the Myanmar capital, Nay Pyi Taw, with 100 participants (71 men and 29 women), the majority being mid- to senior-level officers from the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development (MLFRD). The seminar was jointly organized

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sustainability of people's quality of life and environment in the region.

The second presentation looked at the impact of climate change on coastal communities. The third panelist spoke about the rights of small-scale fisherfolk and the space for their representation in the draft Fishery Act. The fourth speaker discussed the key elements of the Marine and Coastal Management Act. The next presentation, by a panelist representing small-scale fishworkers, focused on their struggles over the years, culminating in a draft Fishery Law. This underlines the importance



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by the Network Activities Group (NAG) and MLFRD, with support from ICSF/BOBLME and Pyoe Pin. Representatives of these organizations were also present at the seminar.

The main thrust of the seminar was to raise awareness among the participants about the SSF Guidelines. The seminar was designed to address the key issues in relation to small-scale fisheries in Myanmar, with the objective of improving the fisheries policies, rules and regulations. All the sessions, conducted primarily by representatives from the non-government sector, focused on the history of the SSF Guidelines, its contents and the implementation strategies and mechanisms.

The BOBLME representative pointed out the important role that regional projects such as BOBLME can play in creating an enabling environment and supporting implementation. Seven groups were formed, with each one discussing how to take a specific component of the Guidelines ahead. The groups discussed what they thought needed to be done, how it could be done, who would be responsible, what resources and capacity they would need to do it, and whom they could ask for help.

There was a consensus that information was needed on the small-scale fisheries sector, including the socioeconomic situation, as a prerequisite to relating the SSF Guidelines to the Myanmar context. Towards this, it was recognized that technical training and orientation

need to be given to government functionaries. Group members felt that tenure rights of small-scale fisherfolk need to be ensured and that they need to be part of decision-making processes and to secure representation in fisheries-management systems and policy development. They stressed that fisherfolk organizations and associations need to be strengthened and capacities built for enterprise development, value addition and processing technologies, leadership, financial management, and livelihood options. Efforts need to be made to ensure the active involvement of women and vulnerable and marginalized groups at all levels of implementation.

It was the first time that participants were exposed to small-scale fisheries as a sector, the primary responsibility of the Ministry so far having been revenue generation through granting of tenders for commercial fisheries. The Deputy Minister of Fisheries inaugurated the seminar and spoke about its importance for the livelihoods of small-scale fisherfolk and for sustainable resource management. Though the Minister for Fisheries could not be present for the opening address, he had a brief interaction with the participants later in the day and, at the request of NAG, assured the gathering that a working group from among the participants would be formed to develop a plan of action and take the SSF Guidelines forward. 3

For more



www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en
Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

igssf.icsf.net/en/page/1064-Publication.html#

ICSF - SSF Guidelines Website