

# A Vision for Southeast Asia

**Participants at a recent workshop in Bali sought to develop a draft Southeast Asian Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the region**

**T**he Southeast Asia Regional Consultation Workshop on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the workshop) was held in Bali, Indonesia, on 24–27 August 2015. It was co-organized by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) of the Republic of Indonesia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) and the FAO Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project. The workshop was attended by 116 participants including representatives of governments, regional and international organizations, fisherfolk organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and other relevant actors.

The objectives of the workshop were to raise awareness and develop a draft Southeast Asian Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) to support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in the region. Over three and a half days, participants examined the current status of small-scale fisheries in the region, shared experiences through country and topical presentations, and discussed elements of a regional plan of action to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Across the region, small-scale fisheries contribute to livelihoods, food security, and local and regional economies. In most countries, the

majority of fishers and fishworkers are employed in the small-scale fishery subsector.

There is significant diversity amongst the small-scale fisheries of the region in terms of activity and context, but there are also some common characteristics. Small-scale fisheries are typically characterized by open access, low levels of empowerment and a general lack of organizational structures and formal representation in decision-making processes. Small-scale fisheries also typically involve rather complex livelihood strategies combining fishing and other activities.

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Threats to small-scale fisheries include declining resources, habitat degradation, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, post-harvest quality issues, increasing competition for access to resources and fishing areas between small-scale fisheries and commercial fisheries and other sectors, high levels of poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change and low levels of formal representation.

## **A vision for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines**

Based on the focus of the workshop and its discussions, a vision for the future was proposed:

- Resource management, rights, and social and economic constraints are addressed through

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the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, leading to increased empowerment, improved livelihood and food security, and increased resilience of small-scale fisheries and those people who depend upon them.

#### **Ensuring that the implementation of the SSF Guidelines receives adequate political and policy support**

Promotion of a Southeast Asian RPOA for implementation of the SSF Guidelines, to be led by Indonesia and coordinated by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC):

- The workshop appreciated the Government of Indonesia's initiative to develop its National Plan of Action (NPOA) for small-scale fisheries, and for taking a leading role in the region in promoting implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- The workshop further welcomed the commitment by SEAFDEC to support the development and implementation of a Southeast Asian RPOA for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication, for subsequent introduction to the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for consideration

#### **The workshop identified the need for additional activities:**

- Further consultations addressing specific issues, to inform and guide national and regional implementation planning.
- National programmes for awareness raising and mainstreaming of the SSF Guidelines into policies and actions at all levels (following the example set by Indonesia).
- Proactive partnership and cooperation with relevant non-fisheries institutions and organizations, including National Commissions for Human Rights, to resolve small-scale fisheries issues relating to labour, social development, rights and tenure, which may not lie within the direct area of competence of fisheries agencies or agriculture Ministries.

- Soliciting support for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by national and regional partners and projects. Encourage recognition and incorporation of the SSF Guidelines implementation priorities in the future and, to the extent possible, current regional projects and initiatives (as exemplified by the BOBLME Strategic Action Programme—SAP).

#### **Overarching objectives of an RPOA**

- Regional and national government policy commitment to promote an NPOA for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- Sustainable and equitable management of small-scale fisheries and access of their products to markets.
- Small-scale fishers and their communities are empowered to participate in, and benefit from, sustainable development associated with the fisheries and resources upon which they depend.
- Improved livelihoods and working conditions of small-scale fishing communities.
- Gender considerations are mainstreamed as an integral part of small-scale fisheries development strategies.
- Reduced vulnerability to natural hazards, climate variability and climate change, and increased climate resilience.

#### **Approach and guiding principles of an RPOA**

The workshop acknowledged the importance of all principles of the SSF Guidelines for the region and that these must guide implementation.

The workshop acknowledged that the comprehensive nature of the SSF Guidelines requires a holistic and human rights-based approach to small-scale fisheries governance and development. It was further recognized that actions must take regional, national and local characteristics into consideration and be inclusive of all stakeholders. This includes the mainstreaming of gender considerations in implementation.

The workshop recognized that the implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be anchored at the local and national levels, but that regional attention and support would also be required to address shared concerns and transboundary issues.

The workshop emphasized the role of governments in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines as well as regional and local fisheries organizations, communities and the private sector, to ensure ownership of the SSF Guidelines. The workshop called upon these stakeholders to be proactive in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. This implementation should take place in the same inclusive and consultative spirit which characterized the SSF Guidelines development process.

The workshop recommended that implementation of the SSF Guidelines would require the initiation of new actions, but would also build on the existing experiences, good practices and processes supporting small-scale fisheries in the region, some of which have been identified during the workshop.

#### Principal areas for action identified by the working groups

The working groups identified objectives and actions. Potential priority areas for actions to be considered further in national and regional implementation planning processes proposed by the workshop are based on the following three thematic areas, which follow Part 2 of the SSF Guidelines.

#### Governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resources management (Chapter 5 of the SSF Guidelines)

The workshop identified six possible priority areas for SSF Guidelines implementation:

- **Review existing tenure rights systems (for fisheries and land) to protect small-scale fisheries** including legalizing or recognizing customary tenure systems of indigenous peoples, to ensure access to resources, including to coastal/waterfront areas as well as inland waters.
- **Follow an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and apply a human rights-based approach (HRBA)** to achieve sustainable, productive use, healthy ecosystems and improved well-being of fishing communities. A change in attitude will be needed from seeing small-scale fisheries as recipients to rights holders, and processes should include consultations, capacity development and empowerment at regional and national levels.
- **Ensure equitable participation of small-scale fisheries in co-management and other initiatives and frameworks** (such as integrated coastal zone management, and blue economy and marine protected area [MPA] development). Fisheries advisory bodies need to be established that include small-scale fisheries representation.
- **Ensure that appropriate fora, including regional human rights and legal mechanisms, exist to address transboundary issues, including in relation to transboundary resources and migrants, and migratory fishers and fishworkers.**



The Bali workshop recommended that implementation of the SSF Guidelines would require the initiation of new actions, good practices and processes

- Include small-scale fisheries—and not only fisheries in general—in national and regional **climate-change adaptation and disaster risk management** legislation, strategies and plans. Early-warning systems, vulnerability assessments, disaster-related social security and insurance systems and other arrangements should be adapted to cater for small-scale fisheries.

#### **Social development, employment and decent work and gender equality (Chapters 6 and 8 of the SSF Guidelines)**

The workshop identified six possible priority areas for action in relation to this theme, which also considered the issue of climate change and disaster risk and gender:

- **Empower small-scale fishing communities through an integrated ecosystem/holistic approach for small-scale fisheries development.** The establishment of national platforms representing all related stakeholders to support the SSF Guidelines implementation in a participatory manner (as indicated in particular in paras. 13.4, 13.5 and 10.1 of the SSF Guidelines) and the promotion of interdepartmental collaboration within each country outside the Fishery Departments are key in this context. This includes the incorporation of the SSF Guidelines into the agenda of the ASEAN Ministerial-level on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF). This process could be supported by thematic research on small-scale fisheries by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, a mapping of ongoing related initiatives, and sharing about current empowerment conditions in the region.
- **Address tensions generated by transboundary and transborder issues to support an environment for small-scale fisheries communities that have decent work and living conditions.** This would require, in particular, collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Fisheries Department as well as a better understanding of issues in relation to transborder/boundary issues at local level (for example, on the risks of IUU fishing, and migration for labour) and efforts to seek humanitarian and responsible solutions.
- **Enable access to education for all to achieve informed and educated coastal communities.** Study visits at the regional level, the participatory development of curricula and the exploration of new technology for education could be supportive in this context.
- **Improve living and working conditions and social protection in SSF to contribute to ensuring decent work in the region.** This should be based on International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidance and good practices, in particular in relation to migrant labour and work in fishing. The sharing of experiences in relation to national social protection schemes in this context could support change in the region.
- **Actively promote and realize gender equality and equity in small-scale fisheries through the development and implementation of gender-sensitive legal, regulatory and policy frameworks.** This could be supported, *inter alia*, through targeted programmes and the gathering and sharing of best practices on the empowerment of women, also through social media and cultural campaigns.
- **Ensure effective climate-change adaptation, emergency response and disaster risk management in small-scale fisheries by including fisheries and fishing communities, including indigenous people, in related national policies and plans at all levels.** At the regional level, the ASEAN Declaration on Climate Change and Resilience should be taken into account in this context and pilot projects should be initiated at the national level to learn and inform a regional programme.

### Value chains, post-harvest and trade (Chapter 7 of the SSF Guidelines)

The workshop identified the following five priorities under this theme

- **Small-scale fisheries meeting local food-security and human-development needs, participate as partners in domestic, regional and global value chains, and receive a fair share of the benefits:** Proposed actions include conducting small-scale fisheries value-chain assessments and risk analysis, market analysis, improvement of traditional value-added products and promotion of small-scale fisheries products and inclusion in traceability systems.
- **Reduction of fish losses and ensuring quality of the product to increase fishers' income and support sustainable fisheries management:** Proposed actions include regional assessment on sustainable fish catch and processing capacity and most critical fisheries, potential causes of fish losses, promoting best practices for handling and distribution and establishment of a regional platform to promote exchange of experiences among small-scale fisheries.
- **Develop a conducive policy and business environment to encourage investment in infrastructure appropriate to small-scale fisheries:** Proposed actions include identifying best policies for facilitating investment in infrastructure, establishment of regional and national organizations for fishing port managers, capacity development for the maintenance and management of landing sites/fishing ports and small-scale fisheries business skills, and encouraging innovation in the appropriate technology on infrastructure for small-scale fisheries.
- **Establish transparent market information systems for local and international markets and trade, facilitate networking between small-scale fisheries and end users, and promote better access**

### to information through suitable information and communications technology (ICT):

Proposed actions include identification of the information needs of all players in the supply chain, ensuring regional scalability and compatibility of ICT, providing up-to-date and transparent market price information system, and establishment of fishers' markets.

- **Organize small-scale fisheries associations, facilitate their evolution and strengthen them to encourage a fair and inclusive environment, improve their bargaining positions through an inclusive legal framework, and promote community-based resource management combining local wisdom and scientific knowledge:** Proposed actions include creating and strengthening fishers associations and empowering them to get involved in resources management and capacity building, empowering regional EAF management working groups to support small-scale fisheries, and conducting regional reviews on how traditional systems have evolved and adapted.

### Immediate next steps as follow-up to the regional workshop

The follow-up actions identified by the workshop to progress the RPOA and further promote implementation of the SSF Guidelines have been clustered thematically according to the structure of Part 3 of the SSF Guidelines.

### Policy coherence, institutional collaboration and coordination

- Identify key partners at national and regional levels (NGOs, private sector, other government departments), including indigenous peoples and NHRCs.
- Map regional projects/initiatives to explore synergies and opportunities for implementation of the SSF Guidelines (for example, BOBLME, Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Programme and the Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem,

which already include references to the SSF Guidelines).

#### **Information, research and communication**

- Each participant should bring back the learning from this workshop to colleagues.
- Support lobbying at national level with the government to implement the SSF Guidelines.
- The SSF Guidelines should be translated into national languages (simple version).
- Develop mechanisms for alternative reporting (by CSOs/NGOs) on how the SSF Guidelines can support the improvement of small-scale fisheries.
- Select one to two major market and trade activities at the regional level (for example, assessment of the value chain of small-scale fisheries or organization of a regional event to promote small-scale fisheries products).
- National- and local-level workshops organized to raise awareness on the SSF Guidelines (including fishers, local and national governments, partners, e.g. International Collective in Support of Fishworkers).
- Raise awareness on the SSF Guidelines by Mangroves for the Future through steering committee and national coordinating bodies.

#### **Capacity development**

- Understand needs and support capacity building at the national level, targeting public institutions.
- Provide support to CSOs/fisheries organizations that supported development of the SSF Guidelines and/or are following up on their implementation on the ground, including sharing of best practices among small-scale fisheries groups.
- Strengthen small-scale fishers' organizations.
- FAO to support development of guidance on implementation of the SSF Guidelines (in partnership with thematic experts/countries), and specific thematic small-scale fisheries issues.

#### **Implementation support and monitoring**

- Prepare the zero draft of the Regional Action Plan and organize a SEAFDEC regional technical consultation to discuss the zero draft (for subsequent introduction into the ASEAN mechanism).
- Initiate national processes to develop an NPOA for small-scale fisheries for each country (e.g. example from Indonesia) by sharing the results of the regional workshop with all relevant stakeholders (e.g. in Thailand).
- Identify small-scale fisheries "hotspots" (most numerous, most dependent, most vulnerable, most poor, women, indigenous people, etc.) and develop pilot activities at the subnational level to demonstrate change through the application of the SSF Guidelines (requires criteria on identifying hotspots and financial support for piloting).
- Organize virtual working groups to work on specific topics and define outcome.
- Create channels to report on progress on implementation to relevant regional institutions.
- Report progress on SSF Guidelines implementation to the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2016.
- Aim for a comprehensive review of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in five years' time.
- BOBLME, subject to a second phase, should support the further development of an RPOA for implementation of SSF Guidelines.

The workshop extended its gratitude to the MMAF of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for hosting the workshop. 3

#### **For more**

[www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/01970d80-9a4c-46cf-b202-e1a9d2216a54/](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/01970d80-9a4c-46cf-b202-e1a9d2216a54/)

**Towards the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the Southeast Asia Region**