

The Spirit of Diversity

A review of *The Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines: Global Implementation.*
Jentoft, S., Chuenpagdee, R., Barragán-Paladines, M.J., Franz, N. (Eds.)

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People, not profits, or even fish, are the fundamental feature of artisanal and small-scale fisheries throughout the world. This self-evident truth has for too long been absent in many policies dealing with fisheries or coastal management and development plans, to the detriment of not only people, but also ecosystems and the economic viability of what are critical industries at local and global scales. A shift towards a human-

small-scale fisheries and the wellbeing of associated fishing communities. In particular, the discussions highlight the links between intergovernmental agreements and policy documents, and the contexts and realities of artisanal fishing communities with unique goals and aspirations.

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and consolidation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (2003) injected and cemented important principles—respectively, fundamental guidelines for sustainability across governance contexts, and the integration of ecological rather than single-species considerations—within global fisheries management. The endorsement of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) could similarly prove to be a game changer in creating solutions for the millions of women and men that make up the vast majority of fishery-dependent people worldwide. However, true benefits from the SSF Guidelines will depend on the adequate implementation of the principles agreed within, and this is the vital issue addressed within this publication's chapters.

Community focus

Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is its focus on communities and case studies with unique social, cultural, environmental and economic contexts from around the world, even as general themes are expanded on in integrated discussions. This admirably

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rights-based approach is thus required to adequately address small-scale fisheries, where states and other actors involved in fisheries do not only have the responsibility to regulate activities, but to ensure that fundamental human rights to freedom, adequate food, health and education are prioritized within economic and environmental management plans.

These central themes are echoed throughout the book, *The Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines: Global Implementation*, an edited volume showcasing case studies of small-scale fisheries from around the world. Edited by Svein Jentoft, Ratana Chuenpagdee, María José Barragán-Paladines and Nicole Franz, and including work from almost 100 authors, this book is an essential read for any academic, manager, or policymaker concerned with improving the performance of

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reflects the spirit of diversity contained within the SSF Guidelines, and small-scale fisheries. Chapters include cases that truly span the globe from South Africa to Greenland, Japan to Mexico to Europe, and islands in the Pacific to the Indian Ocean and to the Caribbean Sea – all with deeply nuanced discussions captured by authors from similarly diverse backgrounds.

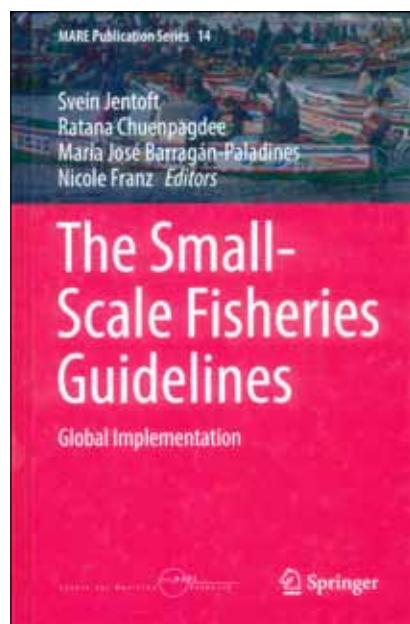
Still, it is clear that there are overarching issues in small-scale fisheries, regardless of specific contexts. Perhaps the most important challenge for small-scale fishers, from which many others stem, is their relative lack of power to participation in the policy-making processes that directly affect them. From seemingly secure fishers in developed countries such as Canada, Japan, Norway and Sweden, to those facing poverty in Latin America, Asia and Africa, there is a pervasive sense of marginalization from the more ‘formal’ systems of more industrialized fisheries and corresponding regulatory frameworks. In this sense, the SSF Guidelines provide an essential road map for eliminating this disparity and for collaboratively developing policies that are appropriate to the needs of the small-scale fishing sector, which are more likely to be effectively implemented. Importantly, as highlighted in multiple contexts throughout the book, this relationship change can be effected jointly by various stakeholders, or spearheaded by fisher groups themselves when states lack the capacity or initial interest to do so. Civil society organizations have become key facilitators of this process, particularly when, in cases like Mexico, the Caribbean and Brazil, they expand their focus from conservation advocacy to sustainable livelihoods by improving governance, co-operation, and management capacity at multiple levels.

A very interesting progression in shared benefits from implementing the SSF Guidelines can be seen running through the chapters from different countries. For example, an initial positive step in Senegal, Sri Lanka and Caribbean nations is the recognition that the perspectives and knowledge of fishing communities are valid and important. This can then be extended

to co-management efforts that actively strengthen community resource access and tenure in specific programmes (for example, in marine protected areas in Spain, Costa Rica and the Bahamas), or to help guide culturally appropriate policies to address specific issues [for example, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) in Lake Victoria and Iran]. Governments whose existing legal systems already align with these principles are better able to further implement them to the benefit of community fisheries. Yet, even here the crucial step is to create policies that are coherent with the small-scale fishery contexts.

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Throughout this push for implementation of equitable policies, it is important to not consider the SSF Guidelines in isolation, but rather to connect them with existing national and international fisheries legislation and agreements that closely support, but may transcend, their scope. For indigenous fisheries, for example, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples already provides an in-depth view of the issues faced by these particular communities, and solutions necessary to ensure their rights. Similarly, the push for gender equality in fisheries is paramount, but its consideration is certainly not specific to fisheries agreements or regulations. More broadly, issues of food security, state of the environment, human rights, equity, and others, are comprised within the 2015 UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/70/1) that includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which also refer to marine resources for sustainable development that specifically mention increased benefits to developing nations and small-scale artisanal fishers. These, and many other operational and aspirational instruments, must be used in concert to hold responsible



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parties accountable and to further the rights of small-scale fishers throughout the world, no matter their political, environmental or economic context.

An issue that perhaps requires more discussion is the power of language in shifting perceptions about fishing communities within policy debates. For example, the now well-established term 'small-scale fishery' can sometimes work against arguments to increase their visibility among policymakers and their recognition within relevant policies and regulations, particularly when policymakers are new to fisheries discussions and specific terms. 'Small-scale' can imply that the sector is less important, provides less economic benefits, or employs fewer people – all three of which are clearly false assumptions. It may be time to begin reassessing our own use of language, perhaps by using (when appropriate) terms such as 'artisanal', 'subsistence' or 'indigenous', instead of 'small-scale', which convey the distinction from industrialized fisheries and to the need for a different management approach, while not implying a comparison of scale or importance.

States by themselves may not be able to adequately address all issues embedded within small-scale fisheries, but they need not have to. There is a large and growing number of non-state actors, including civil society, industry groups, and intergovernmental institutions such as the FAO, the United Nations Development Programme or UNDP (including through its Equator Initiative highlighting sustainable community efforts), and others engaged in achieving sustainable and equitable fisheries policies that integrate human rights and strengthen co-operation between various stakeholders. This support network extends to academic efforts throughout the world, including the Too Big To Ignore Project (TBTI), which works to raise the profile of small-scale fisheries, including through the publication of this essential book under review.

Small-scale and artisanal fishers and workers across the world need not apologize for seeking to continue their traditional ways of life and livelihood. Their practices are intertwined with

cultures that emerged within unique landscapes and seascapes, from Arctic fjords to tropical lakes and lagoons, and enrich our understanding of social-ecological systems and our own place within the world. The SSF Guidelines may prove, as extensively showcased throughout the chapters of this book, to be the catalyst for a global attitude and policy shift to finally recognize the rights of fisherfolk throughout the world, and ensure that their work and ways of life are not only tolerated, but cherished.

For more

<https://www.springer.com/in/book/9783319550732>

The Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines: Global Implementation

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en>

International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)

[http://toobigtoignore.net/Too Big To Ignore \(TBTI\)](http://toobigtoignore.net/Too%20Big%20To%20Ignore%20(TBTI).pdf)

[https://sites.google.com/site/ssfguidelines/Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(SSF Guidelines\)](https://sites.google.com/site/ssfguidelines/Implementation%20of%20the%20Voluntary%20Guidelines%20for%20Securing%20Sustainable%20Small-scale%20Fisheries%20in%20the%20context%20of%20Food%20Security%20and%20Poverty%20Eradication%20(SSF%20Guidelines).pdf)

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