

Kickoff Time

Fishers from the Amazon region gathered to exchange ideas about common challenges and opportunities to sustain and develop indigenous fisheries in the light of the SSF Guidelines

Indigenous peoples of several Amazon regions came together in Manaus in Brazil on March 27-28, 2019, to learn about national and international small-scale fisheries policies at a seminar titled 'Indigenous Fisheries in Amazon State and the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)'. The meeting also helped create bridges between indigenous and coastal-marine artisanal fishers' organizations that have already been consistently discussing the SSF Guidelines for years. Indigenous communities of Amazon had not been involved in previous co-ordinated discussions, even though the fishing activity is considered fundamental to hundreds of ethnic groups in the region.

Fish is a very important source of protein-rich food in interior watercourses. It is a core element of the cosmologies of various indigenous groups. For some, fishing commences with the careful manufacturing of traps. For others, fish are central to rituals of social exchange and for nurturing the spirit. However, several conflicts involving indigenous territories and associated fishing resources have been increasingly reported in relation to non-indigenous production sectors. Various sustainable fisheries initiatives are already under way, guided by a human rights approach, as recommended by the SSF Guidelines.

The Manaus seminar was co-organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the NGO, Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN), with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the NGO Social Environmental Institute (Instituto Socioambiental or ISA), in partnership with the National Indigenous Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio or FUNAI) and the

Sea Memories Collective network (Coletivo Memórias do Mar or CMM). The objective was to share the contents of the SSF Guidelines and to discuss fishing rights, including those derived from indigenous policies and beyond. The seminar also aimed at recording the reality of indigenous fisheries in the Amazon state, through oral reports of 25 participants from 16 ethnic groups. They included the Apurinã, Baniwa, Baré, Deni, Desano, Kambeba, Kanamari, Kokama, Kulina, Munduruku, Mura, Paumari, Piratapuia, Tenharim, Tikuna and Tukano.

Amongst other topics, the participants shared knowledge and experiences about their fishing and fisheries management practices in rivers and lakes for species such as the huge fish 'Pirarucu' (*Arapaima gigas*) and

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'Tambaqui' (*Colossoma macropomum*), and about fishing tourism. They also discussed and reported extensively on the array of threats to their traditional territories and livelihoods.

True partners

Representatives of various governmental and non-governmental social movements and indigenists' organizations were also present, and, as true partners of the seminar, contributed with their rich understanding of challenges and opportunities facing indigenous fisheries. Among them were FUNAI, the Secretariat of Aquaculture and Fisheries (Secretaria de Aquicultura

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Indigenous peoples of several Amazon regions came together in Manaus in Brazil during 27 to 28 March 2019 to learn about small-scale fisheries policies at a seminar on 'Indigenous Fishers in Amazon State and the SSF Guidelines'

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e Pesca) from the federal and state government, ISA, Centre of Indigenist Work (Centro de Trabalho Indigenista or CTI) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

The seminar began with a presentation of the SSF Guidelines in the morning by ICSF Members and by the representatives of the small fishworkers' movement in Brazil (CONFREM and MPP). In the afternoon, four groups were formed with representatives of several Amazon

based tourism and aquaculture. All the participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn about the SSF Guidelines and acknowledged the need for additional seminars to advance their knowledge and actions on such matters.

On several occasions, one participant, Kora Kanamari, appealed for support to Javari's Valley (Vale do Javari), which is the largest indigenous land in Brazil where many indigenous peoples live, including recently-contacted and isolated groups in the frontier between Brazil, Peru and Colombia. This is one of the most critical hotspots of overwhelming violations, promoted by illegal fishing and other resources extractions and violent conflicts brought on by illegal timber felling, mining, oil drilling, and drug trafficking activities. "What makes us sad is that the government has everything in terms of budget, resources, but so many people in Javari's Valley are suffering", said Kanamari. One of the suggestions of indigenous participants was the organization of a seminar at Javari's Valley. At the end of Day One, Kanamari invited the seminar's organizing team to present the SSF Guidelines to his village.

Several demands were brought to the table, including the need to enable more opportunities for indigenous communities to participate in fisheries management, community-based tourism and aquaculture.

watershed basins present at the seminar. Supported by voluntary facilitators of participant organizations, every group discussed the problems, opportunities and demands of indigenous peoples in relation to fisheries. Several demands were brought to the table, including the need to enable more opportunities for indigenous communities to participate in fisheries management, community-

On the second day, participants worked in thematic groups around the most recurrently discussed issues of the first day, including fisheries management and commercialization; sport fishing; tourism; and aquaculture. A vibrant exchange of experiences and ideas followed throughout the day. The management of the 'Pirarucu' fisheries was one of the most highlighted issues during the seminar. Most participants chose to enrol in the fisheries management and commercialization working group, to exchange experiences and benefits, hearing and learning with their parents.

Fisheries management started to gain force in Amazon in the region of Tefé in 1999, in the middle of the Solimões river among riparian communities which gained technical advice from the Mamirauá Institute of Sustainable Development. Ana Claudia Torres, the Fisheries Management Programme Co-ordinator for the Mamirauá Institute, was present at the seminar. She explained that now other indigenous villages and communities are also developing fisheries management programmes in their lakes, with the support of OPAN and FUNAI. Fisheries management refers here to self-organized control of certain species in particular territories, including the observation of rules to achieve sustainable fisheries. Communities that opt for the management have to undertake the counting of Pirarucu populations, and to promote community vigilance of their territories to inhibit invasions that public authorities are not able to control. Other measures are also taken such as rules for minimum capture sizes and quotas that are assigned by the governmental agency for federal nature conservation and protected areas (Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade or ICMBio).

Indigenous groups that had not yet enrolled in fisheries management schemes also took part in the working group, given their manifest interest to kick-off management processes in their own territories. "To us who are initiating Pirarucu fisheries management, the seminar, principally, was an opportunity to acquire more knowledge", said Rogério Fleuri Dutra Caldas, who lives in the Indigenous Land of Itixi-Mitari and is the regional co-ordinator of the Federation of

Organizations and Communities of Indigenous Peoples of Mid Purus River (Federação das Organizações e Comunidades dos Povos Indígenas do Medio Purus or FOCIMP). He highlighted the potential brought by the SSF Guidelines to support indigenous fisheries: "We believe that these (SSF Guidelines) can strengthen our reserves, through dialogue with prefectures, other governmental organisations, and also with NGOs."

OPAN's indigenist, Felipe Rossoni, a specialist researcher in participatory fisheries management, highlighted the existence of a direct link between Pirarucu management and the SSF Guidelines: "Food security needs to be put in first place—security in the sense of safeguarding access to food and securing food sovereignty so that you have the right to choose what to eat, involving cultural and ethnic issues," observed Felipe. He also mentioned other points of affinity between Pirarucu management and the SSF Guidelines, such as territorial rights, the value of traditional knowledge, self-esteem, conditions for gender equity and greater marketing autonomy. "Management is an example of citizenship," stressed Ana Claudia Torres of the Mamirauá Institute. She acknowledged the power of Pirarucu

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fisheries management to activate collective action around cross-cutting issues affecting the livelihoods of local fisheries communities, such as the key role of women in organizing activities.

Pioneering regulation

The working group discussing sport fishing tourism activities in indigenous villages delved into the experience of the Baré people in the mid-Rio Negro region, downstream of the São Gabriel da Cachoeira settlement. They have initiated pioneering regulation of formerly illegal and destructive Tucunaré (*Cichla spp.*) sport fishing activities conducted by tourism boats in indigenous rivers.

Ever since 2014, an initiative facilitated by FOIRN, ISA and FUNAI have established contracts with interested companies, in order to generate income to local communities while respecting and abiding by social and ecological rules and norms. This process flourished to successfully inspire communities in other subsidiary rivers of Purus. During the working group discussions at the seminar, the indigenous Tenharim of the South Amazon state (Humaitá city) became interested in learning details of such regulations, given that they had already initiated some fishing accords in their territories.

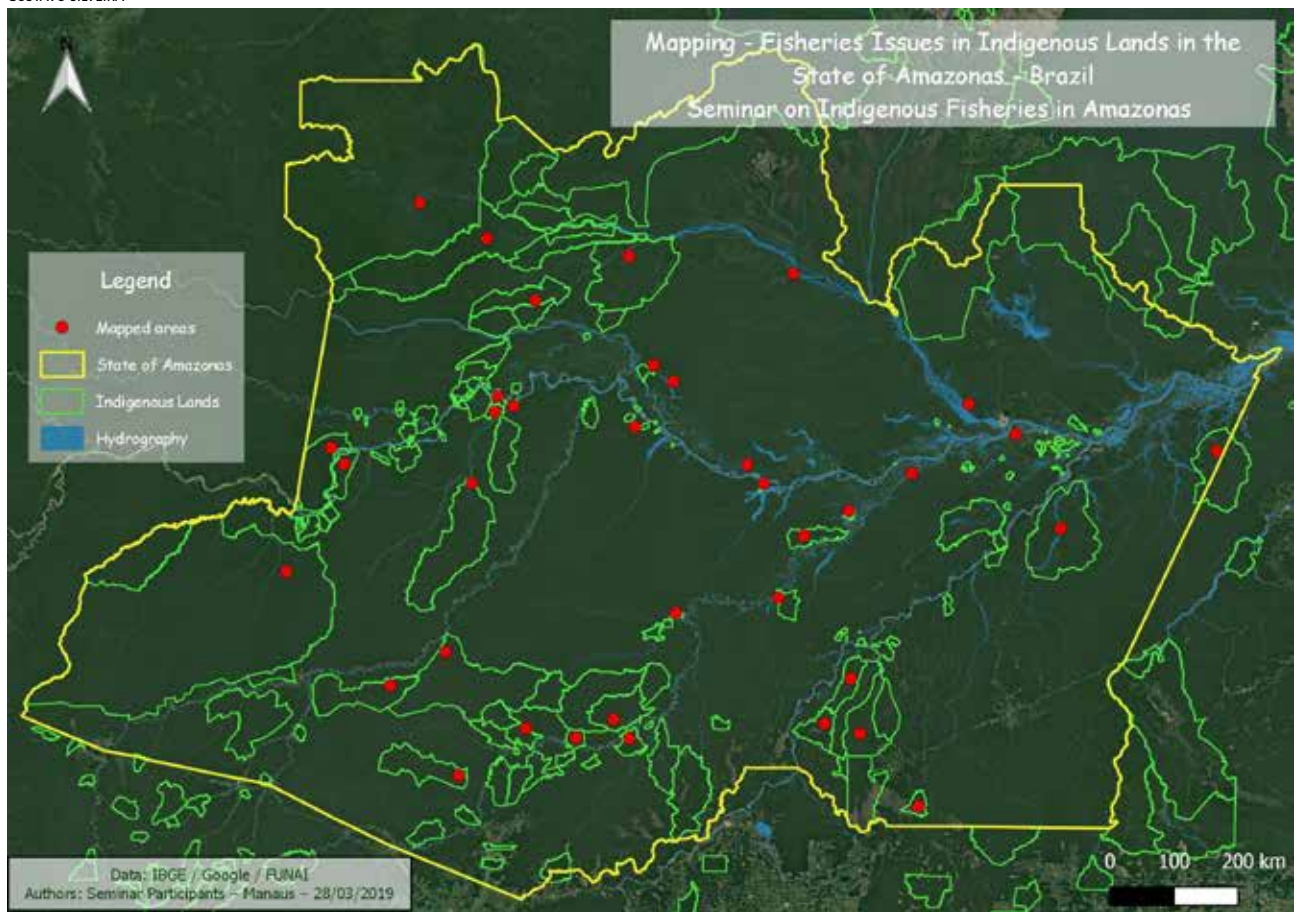
The aquaculture working group, in turn, started with criticisms of conventional commercial aquaculture, which is not friendly to indigenous communities' realities and demand a high dependency of external subsidies from non-indigenous institutions. Paulo Adelino de Medeiros, a researcher based at the Amazonian Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology (Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Amazonas or IFAM) in

the city of Maués, shared his research findings on the viability of family-based aquaculture, which aims to support the demands of local and traditional communities. Paulo has been working with the Sataré-Mawé to develop a family approach to aquaculture that promotes low-cost production practices and minimum fish-food usage, with simple measures that can give communities higher autonomy from continuous technical advice. Participants of this working group were very enthusiastic in following up with discussions about the development of family aquaculture in other rivers, and agreed to build a participative project to take this opportunity forward.

Indigenous participants

At the end of the day, participants gathered in a final plenary to decide about future steps. At this stage, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Secretary of Amazon state showed up and talked about their interest to deal with the demands brought up by the indigenous participants at the seminar. A representative from the federal-level

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Map showing the territorial range of qualitative data recorded during the seminar



Presentation of the results of the working group of Purus River and Juruá River who believe that these (SSF Guidelines) can strengthen their reserves, through dialogue with prefectures, other governmental organizations, and also with NGOs

counterpart Secretary of Aquaculture and Fisheries said she would take the results of the seminar back to Brasilia where it would be discussed with her superiors in the context of fisheries policies for North Brazil. Participants expressed their desire for the conduct of other seminars to disseminate the SSF Guidelines. They also delineated a list of villages interested in fisheries management and family aquaculture. They highlighted the need for greater participation of women in events and issues related to fisheries in the region. They also expressed their desire to connect with international indigenous movements to discuss the SSF Guidelines.

As a first experience in bridging the world of Amazonian indigenous fishers with the principles and vision of the SSF Guidelines, the seminar revealed that while most participants had no background information about the Guidelines, places exist where sustainability measures are being taken up along the lines of the SSF Guidelines.

The leader of the National Fisherwomen Articulation, Josana Pinto da Costa, emphasized: “Indigenous and traditional communities already promote the Guidelines, but with

another name.” Indigenous fishers also realized how their practices, such as Pirarucu management, already anticipate several of the objectives and principles of the SSF Guidelines. Nevertheless, considering that various peoples and regions live under unfavourable conditions, there is a great interest among indigenous fishers to know more about their rights. There is also a huge demand for expanding participatory fisheries management in regions with a lot of potential, but where access to information has been scant and/or collective action has not already been initiated.

Important instrument

Governmental and non-governmental organizations also did not know much about the SSF Guidelines, and they expressed their interest in taking information back to their own circles. Evidently, the SSF Guidelines can become an important instrument to strengthen the organization of fishers and empower indigenous movements to fully become sovereign agents in the promotion of fisheries resources sustainability and food security, and hence realize and reaffirm the very nature of their territorial rights. ♣

For more



<https://sites.google.com/site/ssfguidelines/brazil>

Brazil National Seminars - June 2016

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/article/EN/80-4378-Roundup.html>

Organizational Profile: Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN)

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/article/EN/77-4305-A-Backbreaking-.html>

A Backbreaking Struggle

<https://amazonianativa.org.br/>

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