**009 PHI REPORT**

**Strategies for Advocacy and implementation of SSFG at the National Level**

Strategies that were identified for advocacy and implementation of the VGSSF were:

* Continuing dialogues on the Adoption of CBCRM as framework by all agencies specifically VGSSF as framework for policy and programs, this is voluntary but it will improve the Philippines’ reputation while actually helping SSFs
* Continuing lobby for policy coherence and collaboration between government agencies and within each agency from national to local levels. For example the newly approved IRR for the Sagip Saka Act is an opportunity to help government implement this down to local level to truly benefit SSFs initiatives on enterprise development
* Both stakeholders and government agencies agreed that VGSSF is recognized and supported by existing laws policies and programs but such are either not fully enforced, are inconsistent and not uniformly implemented. This is also a continuing process that requires regular and consistent monitoring.
* Tambuyog applies the VGSSF in its project sites thru its continuing support to partner fisherfolk organisations in their engagement with government agencies, in the work they do to protect and conserve natural resources, in ensuring the women’s roles are recognized and represented.
* Continuing IEC on VGSSF for stakeholders and implementers to widen the net of implementers.

There are priority issues that have been identified during the cluster consultations. The following are the main advocacy strategies on specific issues that can be pursued in order to enhance the implementation of SSFG in the country.

**Evaluation of FARMCs and further refining if its roles for effective co-management**

One of the major recommendations from the VGSSF related consultations is focused on developing the capacities and accountability of relevant governing bodies at different levels. Part of these governing bodies is the local government Units which include Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMCs). At the national level, we have the NFARMC as one of the governing bodies, the Integrated FARMCs in common fishing grounds, and Municipal FARMC in coastal municipalities. The suggested evaluation is aimed at identifying systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of their functions, determining the capacity needs of the council members and and identify the needed support. The representation of women in co-management bodies such as the FARMC is also being pursued by the stakeholders.

**Support Program for CFLC**

The Community Fish Landing Centers (CFLCs) was envisioned to reduce post-harvest losses as well as venues for skills trainings on disaster-resilient fisheries-based livelihoods and actual conduct of post- harvest activities and resource management such as monitoring fish catch and stock assessment. They are to be eventually managed by fisherfolk groups. Ensuring operations of these centers indeed benefit the fisherfolks and will help improve the social an economic situation of the small scale fishers. The FARMCs can be a platform for monitoring the CFLCs and NGOs can assist in capacity building on coastal resource management and social enterprise development.

Municipal fishers should be given full recognition of their roles at all levels of CFLC implementation. The Memorandum of Agreement should specify roles of beneficiaries in the implementation and operation of CFLCs.

**Provision of Social Insurance for municipal fishers**

Despite the presence of social protection programs provided by the government, not all of these are accessible to the small-scale fishing households as well as adequate or appropriate to their particular needs. They are left with no other means but to access market-based social protection mechanisms, particularly getting loans for all their insurance and security needs. However, the terms and procedures of market-based social protection sources like micro-finance institutions are not only onerous but also disempowering to fishers. The small amount of livelihood loans they got never hold much promise of transforming them into entrepreneurs but rather pushed them into credit-dependency in order to survive. On the other hand, the capacity of the households, through women’s efforts, to set aside money for loan repayments is a good indicator that the fishing households, if guaranteed a sustainable livelihood and stable income have the capacity for savings.

Thus, development of programs about social protection should go beyond addressing short-term needs. And to make it transformative, it has to address first the survival needs of the fishing households by enabling them to have sustainable livelihoods and steady incomes. As such, having sustainable livelihoods and incomes necessitate the access and control over of productive resources by the small-scale fishers as well as their control in the management of the natural coastal resources in which fishing depends on. Many coastal municipalities are practicing Community –based Management of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Community- based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM). Focusing this pre-requisites would eventually contribute in reducing their poverty condition in the long-term and pave the way in addressing social inequality.

**Implementing Guidelines on Fisherfolk Settlement Area**

Most, if not all, of the fisherfolk families residing in the foreshore and the salvage/ easement zones just settled into the land they are now occupying, given the open access nature of public domain, with minimal or no document securing their residence. However, they are not the only ones facing the threat of displacement and relocation. Even those who are settling in coastal lands beyond the salvage/ easement zones are also facing these threats. Many of them had been residing in their communities for years, others for decades, some for generations, without any threat to the security of tenure. Some are even paying taxes for their land. But there had been many cases of private claimants able to secure title over coastal lands where fishers had been occupying for years and decades.

**Adopt Archipelagic Principle in the Delineation of Municipal Waters with offshore islands**

The delineation/delimitation of municipal waters for municipalities and cities with offshore island is long overdue. For consistency and congruence to national and international legal frameworks, it is but logical that the archipelagic principle be used in defining the municipal waters, particularly those municipalities with offshore islands.

The archipelagic principle is not without legal and technical bases. It is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), wherein its underlying basis is the unity of land, water and people into a single entity. It is for the purpose of achieving, maintaining, and preserving this unity that an archipelagic state is conceived as one whose component islands and other natural features form an intrinsic geographical, economic and political entity, and historically have or may have been regarded as such. Thus, as a matter of policy, it is best to apply the archipelagic principle in the delineation of internal waters of the state. The indiscriminate application of the mainland principle to municipalities and cities with offshore islands would result in a situation where such island or islets would be found outside of the 15 km. range, thereby, dismembering a municipality of its own island and islets. This will deprive many LGUs with offshore islands in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao regions of the portion of their municipal waters and territorial jurisdiction,

The technical determination, delineation and delimitation of municipal water is within the expertise of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA). Under the Fisheries Code as amended by Republic Act 10654, NAMRIA is authorized to designate and chart navigational lanes in fisheries areas and delineation of municipal waters. Following its mandate, NAMRIA has recommended the application of municipal archipelagic baselines in issuing the guidelines on delineating/delimiting of the municipalities and cities with offshore islands.

**Promote Coastal Resiliency Program**

Coastal areas, fishers’ communities and the fisheries sector are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Rise in sea level and warming of sea surface temperature will result in damage to coastal ecosystems and displacement of fishing communities. Coastal inundation will threaten the stability of wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs and negatively affect the viability of the aquaculture industry. Sufficient information for coastal managers to address the risks brought about by climate change and disasters is needed as well as identification of policy options and possible response strategies, and initiation of stakeholder dialogues with focus on gender-differentiated impacts.

The Philippine fisheries sector has yet to fully realize the effective management of the country’s coastal and marine resources but it is slowly getting there. Stakeholders are constantly engaging in activities to promote judicious and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. Systems to address socio-economic and environmental risks in fisheries production are being developed and installed. However, climate change and natural disasters pose serious threats that would undermine such efforts.

Responding thus to these challenges mean that the impacts of climate change and disasters on coastal and near-shore fishery resources are taken into account in coastal resource management to ensure the maintenance of coastal or marine biodiversity.

On the other hand, it also requires recognizing the importance of coastal areas since a large population of Filipinos live in coastal communities, depending on the coastal resources for their food and livelihood. So far, an assessment of the risks to the impacts of climate change and disasters *specific to coastal areas and communities*, together with the appropriate mitigating and adaptive measures, has yet to be taken into account in government’s policies and programs.

Moreover, there is the need to mainstream fishery and coastal resource management as a vital component of a holistic approach to managing the impacts of climate change. This is because in a situation where climate change is likely to continue in the long term, maintaining biodiversity and healthy ecosystems—not least in the coastal zone—provide the means for adapting to climate change.