

Bangkok Workshop – Session 4: Sunday 8 May 2022

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework

What is the MEL Framework?

The [*Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*](#) (SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014. Promoting a human rights-based approach, they were developed through a participatory process in which civil society organizations, including ICSF, played a major role.

There has been a long-standing and widespread interest from those working to promote the SSF Guidelines to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework that supports their implementation. The SSF Guidelines themselves call for a monitoring system that allows for assessing progress towards implementing their objectives and recommendations (paragraph 13.4), and the involvement of the small-scale fisheries communities in these monitoring efforts (13.5). In addition to tracking implementation, a MEL Framework can be used to identify gaps and challenges in meeting the principles and practices in the SSF Guidelines, and understanding the impacts of their successful and widespread implementation.

Between 2020 and 2021, a draft MEL Framework was developed by FAO and WorldFish, based on a close examination of the SSF Guidelines and the main thematic areas (Chapters 5-9). This draft also draws from other relevant monitoring frameworks, such as the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). The draft MEL Framework consists of proposed impact pathways for the SSF Guidelines thematic areas, and related indicators to monitor these impacts. In 2021, several expert consultations were held to review and improve the draft.

Since March 2022, ICSF has taken up the task of further refining and finalising the MEL Framework, and drafting a handbook that provides guidance on how to use the Framework. In the spirit of the SSF Guidelines, this process will be conducted in a participatory way which facilitates contributions from small-scale fisheries actors. Once finalised, the intended users of the MEL Framework are governments or organisations that want to review the progress of national level SSF Guidelines implementation in a participatory way. The main purpose of the MEL Framework is to support and promote further implementation of the SSF Guidelines, highlighting where progress has been made, and where there are still weaknesses to be addressed.

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- 1) Is your government actively implementing the SSF Guidelines? How would you like your government to use the MEL Framework?
- 2) What questions do you have about SSF Guidelines implementation in your country?
- 3) What questions should be included in the Handbook, which guides actors in using the MEL Framework?
- 4) How do you imagine the MEL Framework complementing bottom-up SSF Guidelines monitoring processes (for example: People's Tribunals)?