

**International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)**  
**IYAFA 2022: Asia Workshop -Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries**

**PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE**

The following questions aim to identify key issues for small-scale fishers and fishworkers in Asia in line with the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines and the objectives of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022. The questions cover the environmental, economic, and social aspects of small-scale fisheries, with particular emphasis on strengthening governance and organizations. The thematic areas identified by participants will guide the development of the workshop agenda.

**Response by:** Azrilnizam Omar, Persatuan Pendidikan dan Kebajikan Jaringan Nelayan Pantai Malaysia (JARING), Malaysia

**Personal Experience**

- 1) How are you linked to small-scale fisheries in your country? Can you describe the major characteristics of the sector?**

I am co-founder and Secretary of Persatuan Pendidikan dan Kebajikan Jaringan Nelayan Malaysia (Malaysian Inshore Fishermen Association for Education and Welfare)—also known as JARING. JARING is the only national-level NGO that specifically works and focuses on small-scale fisheries and the fisheries sector in Malaysia.

- 2) What makes you proud to be involved with small-scale fisheries?**

Small-scale fisheries provide a safe, fresh, sustainable, and reasonable price of protein resources to the community.

**Environmental sustainability**

- 1) Is there any harmful practices that fisherman in small-scale fisheries do that harms the resources and environment?**

Yes, there are some. Most are related to the usage of illegal and destructive fishing gear such as push nets, dragon traps, and fish bombs (especially in East Malaysia, Borneo).

- 2) Can you explain your participation in conserving or managing (marine or inland) fisheries resources?**

One of our goals, when we set up JARING, was to fight and protect fisheries' resources, especially from overfishing by trawlers. Since then, we have also campaigned to stop the operation of trawlers in Malaysian waters.

To conserve the fishery's resources JARING had organized a mangrove conservation project through mangrove planting activities and led an awareness campaign on the issue.

### **Economic sustainability**

#### **1) What challenges do small-scale fishers face in getting boats, gear, and engines in your country? How do they deal with these challenges?**

Accessing finance is the main issue for small-scale fishers that don't have licenses. Those with a license can get loans with zero interest rate from Agro Bank—which is partly owned by the —to buy all their fishing need. However, Malaysia had put a moratorium on issuing small-scale fishers licenses in 1982. It was done to control the number of fishers and protect fisheries resources. Many small-scale fishers operate without a license today. Those without a license usually take loans from middlemen to buy boats, fishing gear, engines, etc. In addition they are also forced to sell their catch to the middlemen.

#### **2) What challenges do small-scale fishers and fish workers face in accessing markets? Do they receive any support to facilitate access to these markets?**

Small-scale fishers have a choice to sell their catch to middlemen or government agencies through fishermen's associations.

The government provides fish landing jetties and other facilities to help fishers sell their fish. Government agencies also help small-scale fishers interested selling their catch directly by creating a fishermen market near the fishers' jetty or community.

If there is a surplus of fish in the market, and the price drops, government agencies also buy the catch from fishers at a controlled price.

#### **3) Is the income generated from small-scale fisheries adequate to meet small-scale fishers' and fishworkers' basic needs?**

In certain areas, based on the catch landed by small-scale fishers, the income generated is not enough for their basic needs. The impact of overfishing, climate change, reclamation, coastal development, etc. has led to a depletion of fishery resources.

## Governance

### **1) Can you detail the main government programmes available in your country for addressing poverty and improving the standard of living of fishing communities?**

The Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia and the Department of Fisheries area has programmes and initiatives to address poverty and improve standard of living in fishing communities. These include:

- \* Fishermen housing project
- \* Monthly financial aid
- \* Financial loan with zero or minimum interest rate to buy a boat, engine, fishing gear, etc.
- \* Vessel Modernization and Capture Mechanization Programme
- \* Special Deep Sea Fisheries Vessel Crew Development Programme
- \* Deep-Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Programme.

### **2) What are the barriers to accessing such government programmes?**

Only registered fishermen (with licenses) can access these programmes. Many small-scale fishers still don't have licenses.

### **3) Are the government legislations and policies for SSF developed in consultation with fishing communities? Is there an official definition of small-scale fisheries?**

Normally leaders of the fishermen association at the national, state, or district level are consulted. The consultation process does not reach the grass-root or fishers community level.

### **4) In what way can the SSF Guidelines improve your well-being?**

The guidelines can improve participation of small-scale fisher's communities in legislative and policy based decision-making processes. The guidelines also can play a huge role in fisherwomen participation and access in the fisheries sector.

## Social Sustainability

- 1) What are the most common fisher and fishworker organizations in your country? How do these organizations help fishers and fishworkers improve their lives and livelihoods?**

National Fishermen's Association of Malaysia (NEKMAT) is the main, national level fishermen association in Malaysia. Every state and district in Malaysia has its own fishermen association. Fishermen associations in Malaysia are partly managed by government agencies known as the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM).

- 2) Do fishers and fishworkers in your country have rights to fishing grounds granted by the government? Do they have traditional rights?**

Yes, Malaysia implemented a zoning system that has catch areas based on the distance from the shore. It also creates different permissions for certain groups of fishermen based on the size and capacity of the boat engine. It's not a traditional right but is protected by Fisheries Act.

- 3) What are the major challenges faced by women in fisheries in terms of access to resources, markets, and participation in fisher and fishworker organizations in your country?**

The number of women involved in fisheries has decreased consistently. Malaysia stopped issuing new licenses over four decades ago, and the chances of women getting a license are very small. Without a license participation in the fisheries sector is very limited—unless as a business enterprise.

- 4) Are there laws or policies that benefit or protect the rights of women in fisheries? What are the major programmes, policies, initiatives or organizations that help to improve the visibility and participation of women in the fisheries sector?**

There is, per say, no restrictions for women in the fisheries sector. Many women are involved in the fisheries sector as businesswomen. Financial support is available for women involved in a business in the fisheries sector.

- 5) Has your government acknowledged food security and nutrition as a human right in your country (e.g. right to food act, nutritional guidelines)?**

Food security and nutrition is on our government's agenda. There is no clear statement of acknowledgement on whether it is a human right or not.

## Resilience

- 1) **What kind of changes did the COVID-19 pandemic cause in small-scale fisheries in your country? How did fishers and fishworkers respond to these changes? Did they receive any support from the government or other organizations during the pandemic?**

The big change was to do with marketing. The implementation of the movement control order (lockdown) caused markets to close down. Even though fishers were allowed to fish they couldn't sell their catch. Many fishers marketed their catch through social media. In addition the government bought and sold fishers' catch via fishermen associations. The community had received support from the government and also other organizations in the form of financial and food aid.

- 2) **What are the major natural and man-made threats fishers and fishworkers face and what are their impacts?**

Natural threats such as raining season between October to March cause the fishing community to lose their source of income.

Man-made threats like coastal reclamation is very serious for a few states in Malaysia. It has caused a depletion of fisheries resources and the fishers community has lost their source of income.

- 3) **How are fishers and fish workers responding to the above threats?**

For the rainy season fishers try to get other jobs to make sure they did not source of income.

The fishers' community brought up the issue of coastal reclamation to the state leader. The company agreed to pay compensation but the amount was far from what fishers had lost.

**Are there any other national, regional, or international issues relevant to small-scale fisheries that the workshop should address?**

IUU fishing—encroachment by Vietnamese fishermen in Malaysian waters affected local fishermen's livelihood. It also impacted small-scale fishers' catch in East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.