

**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:** Ronald Rodriguez, Tambuyog Development Center, The Philippines

**Personal Experience**

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

Our organization, Tambuyog Development Center, Inc., is directly working with coastal communities. I mainly work with our partner fisherfolk organizations (municipal/small-scale fishers) by assisting them in developing their community-based social enterprises and organizational development initiatives. We engage with marine capture fishers who are operating within what are country designated as municipal waters (0-15km from the shore) with boats not exceeding 3 gross tons and uses multi-gears (mainly for pelagic fish species).

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

The small-scale fisheries in my country contributes close to half of our fisheries production and is a very diverse subsector. Each community offers different learning experience.

**Environmental Sustainability**

- 1) Do you think that some of your fishing practices are sometimes detrimental to fisheries resources and the environment (e.g. aquatic species, flood plains, mangroves)? If yes, how?**

No. We make sure our engagements are neutral in impact if not positive. Whenever possible, we promote only sustainable fishing practices and enterprise development.

- 2) Have you been involved in conserving or managing (marine or inland) fisheries resources? Are there any lessons that you would like to share?**

We engaged communities directly managing marine protected areas and management/conservation of select fish species including rabbit fish, blue swimming crab and

yellowfin tuna. From our experience working with our communities, co-management with government is critical in ensuring that they have the legal support and protection. However, it is very crucial to facilitate their access to financial support to reduce their burden. Most fishers and their families depend on daily income from fishing. A clear and concrete means to capture the economic benefits from conservation or management initiatives is also critical to sustaining the initiatives.

### **Economic Viability**

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

Our small-scale fishers belong to a sector of our population with the highest poverty incidence. As such, they often do not have the financial means to avail of high-quality boats and engines and gears. Some communities do receive gears and/or boats from government projects but mostly after disasters (e.g. typhoons that wipes out their fishing livelihood implements). Our organization also assists them in applying for support from the government and our partner organizations or funders.

- 2) What challenges do small-scale fishers and fishworkers face in accessing local/regional/international markets (e.g. competition from sellers, infrastructural issues, poor access to loans)? Do they receive any support (e.g. from the government) to facilitate access to these markets?**

Logistics (transportation, cold storage, ice) is a key barrier that fishers face in accessing markets. The high cost of transportation and the impact of uncertainty not only increases their costs but also reduces the quality or freshness of their seafood products. With very limited options, they are often forced to sell their produce at lower prices even though there may be better buyers in their adjacent town. A great majority of government support is still focused on provision of gears and post-harvest supports (facilities for value-adding).

- 3) Do you think the income generated from small-scale fisheries is adequate to meet small-scale fishers and fishworkers' basic needs?**

A great majority of our small-scale fishers still fall within households that access informal loans to supplement their income from fishing.

### **Social Sustainability**

- 1) What are the main government programmes available in your country for addressing poverty and improving the standard of living of fishing communities (e.g. education, health insurance, pension scheme, housing, sanitation)? What are the barriers to accessing such programmes?**

Our government has universal healthcare insurance, PhilHealth, which are offered to the poorest of the poor and senior citizens at no premium payment. Housing is a big challenge for fishers who are mainly located in coastal zones. Housing programs are still focused on resettlement which are often too distant from their livelihood at sea. Social protection programs are also coursed through the local government units (LGUs). As such, the accessibility depends on having an effective and efficient LGUs. Often, this is being politicized especially during election periods (with local elections happening every three years). Some programs are also dependent on the LGU's budget. With the majority of coastal communities located in LGUs with low-income class, provision of services is often limited. National programs are harder to access given the need to visit offices that are not often within the locality where the fishers reside.

**2) What are the most common fisher and fishworker organizations in your country (e.g. trade unions, cooperatives, community-based organizations)?**

Community-based organizations in the form of associations (focused more on advocacy) is still preferred over cooperatives (focus on economic activities in addition to advocacy).

**3) Are many fishers and fishworkers members of these organizations? Are women active in these organizations? How do these organizations help fishers and fishworkers improve their lives and livelihoods?**

The number of fishers with no affiliation to an fisherfolk association or cooperative outnumber those who are member of these organizations. Similarly, most organizations are still dominated by men and with women members often recognized only as proxy members. Some organizations have livelihood programs in partnership with either NGOs or government agencies.

**Governance**

**1) Do fishers and fishworkers in your country have rights to fishing grounds granted by the government? Do they have traditional rights? Are their human rights protected?**

Municipal fishers have been granted the preferential rights over the municipal waters (up to 15 km from the shore) and with exclusive use over the municipal waters 10 km from the shore. However, encroachment from larger commercial fishing fleets is still prevalent across the country. This is often exacerbated by lack of political will among local government officials and some political leaders who are themselves patrons or directly engaged in illegal fishing activities.

- 2) **What government legislation and policies are relevant to small-scale fisheries in your country (e.g. both inland and marine)? Are they developed in consultation with fishing communities? Is there an official definition of small-scale fisheries?**

The Republic Act (RA) 10654 is the country's policy guiding all its fisheries. The policy provides for the exclusive use over the 0-10 km and preferential use over 10.1-15k of the municipal waters for small-scale fishers. Fisheries Administrative Order 196 on the creation of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (FARMCs) is a key ancillary legislation that allows for the representation of small-scale fishers. The structure of the council allows for representation from national to the barangay level (smallest unit of governance in the country). The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 (amended by RA 10654) only provides definition for 'municipal fishing' which "refers to fishing within municipal waters using fishing vessels of three (3) gross tons or less, or fishing not requiring the use of fishing vessels" and coincides with the description of small-scale fisheries. It is however differentiated from small-scale commercial fishery which are defined as more fishing with boats more than 3 gross tons.

- 3) **Have you heard of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)*? If yes, how can the SSF Guidelines improve your well-being?**

Yes. The voluntary guidelines will provide the focus and guide initiatives in securing the welfare of small-scale fishers and contribute in sustainable production.

#### **Gender Equality and Equity**

- 1) **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?**

Membership in organizations allows fishers to access resources and support programs more easily from governments. Individual accessing requires more documents and can significantly hinder or cause delay and add more costs to them as they try to comply with the requirements. Majority of fisher's organizations still male dominated and women members often treated only as proxy members. Government programs are also more geared towards addressing the needs of men fishers. Gender and development orientation across coastal fishing household is still at its very early stage in the country. This was also observed during our national fisherfolk registration wherein many women were not approached because of the still prevalent assumption that fishers are men by default or that they are considered represented if their partners are already registered.

- 2) **Are there laws or policies that benefit or protect the rights of women in fisheries?**

The Philippines legislated the Magna Carta of Women which apply not only to those in fisheries. There are also local mechanisms such as Violence Against Women (VAW) Desk. However, there is no provision for official representation within the FARMC structures. This often depends on the LGUs and as such there are only very few FARMCs with women representation.

**3) What are the major programmes, policies, initiatives or organizations that help to improve the visibility and participation of women in the fisheries sector?**

Establishment of VAW Desk provided additional protection for women at the local level. The National Anti-Poverty Commission's Women Basic Sector Representative Council provide support to women organizations and proposes policies to concerned agencies. There is also budget allocation to support women initiatives through the LGUs' Gender and Development (GAD) budget. However, this is not often maximized for utilization to support women in fisheries. Support that are available to women in fisheries often come in the form of post-harvest or food processing training and support. Although these are not targeted programs or projects, women are often the ones accessing these programs.

**Food Security and Nutrition**

**1) Is there any legislation or policy recognizing food security and nutrition as a human right in your country (e.g. right to food act, nutritional guidelines)?**

As party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and as an adoptor of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, the Philippines recognizes the right of our people to have adequate food. The country passed the Republic Act 10611 or Food Safety Act of 2013 in compliance with Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which "declares that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness" and "maintain a farm to fork food safety regulatory system that ensures a high level of food safety, promotes fair trade and advances the global competitiveness of Philippine foods and food products".

**2) How do small-scale fisheries contribute to local food security and nutrition?**

The small-scale fisheries in the Philippines contributes close to half of the total seafood production each year. Protein from seafood accounts for about 12% of the country's food consumption. This is even higher for communities in coastal areas.

**3) Are there similarities between fishing and farming communities in your country (e.g. in terms of challenges, opportunities, culture, social organization)?**

Our fishers and farmers have the highest poverty incidence among our basic sectors. There is also an overlap between fishers and farmers. There are many fishers who are also engaged in farming especially during lean fishing seasons. However, in terms of organizations farmers have higher number of organizations and most farmers tend to belong to a farmer's associations. While both have fragmented production systems, fishers exhibit the most fragmentation as their operations are limited by the size of their boats (limited to 3 gross tons). Only fishers who are members of cooperatives and have access to larger fishing vessels are able to consolidate production. Both sectors also suffer from indebtedness, limitation in access to logistical support, pressure from buyers or consolidators to lower their prices and lack of community-owned post-harvest for value adding. They are often at the mercy of their buyers and are highly affected by fluctuation in price of inputs (e.g. fuel).

### 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 pandemic introduced additional costs to our fishers in terms of ensuring that they comply with health standards (face masks, face shields, additional transportation costs due to reduction in capacity of public transport, internet connection for their children's education due to shift from on-site to home-based schooling). Small-scale fishers with group livelihoods that depend on exported seafood products were forced to halt operation or shift to other commodities that they can sell locally. Other organizations engaged in non-fishery trade (selling of pork meat, agricultural products, and other work). Some organizations with community-led savings programs were able to borrow to supplement their budget while others seek help from informal micro-financing institutions/individuals. The government initially provided food support during the first month of lockdown but was soon terminated with the easing of the restrictions.

- 2) What are the major threats fishers and fishworkers face and what are their impacts? These may include environmental threats (e.g. cyclones, typhoons, coastal erosion and degradation) and other threats (e.g. eviction, aquaculture development, sand mining, river diversion, land reclamation, infrastructure development, industrial activities, pollution).**

Fishers are under constant threat of natural disasters (typhoons), degradation of their fishing ground stocks, encroachment from commercial fishing operations. As with most fishing communities, many are under threat of eviction from their residence. This is especially true for coastal areas with reclamation projects and rapid unregulated development of resorts. These threaten the predictability of their catch and the continuity of their livelihoods and security of tenure. Fisherworkers do not have contracts and have uncertain income. Their salary or income depends on whether the fishing vessel they are assigned to have continued operation.

**3) How are fishers and fishworkers adapting to or responding to the above threats (e.g. through advocacy, impact assessments, early warning systems, life-saving equipment, insurance schemes)?**

Fishers have the best chance when they are organized. Many fisherfolk organization were able to link with non-government organizations, e.g., Tambuyog, assisting them in their advocacy and lobbying. Some fisher organizations also partner with national government agencies to access livelihood supports. However, for fishworkers, the work on organizing is still relatively new but partnership with non-government organizations and conscientious private companies allows them to voice their concerns to concerned agencies and authorities.

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

Reliable and affordable fisheries management technology that can be adopted by small-scale fisheries (e.g., technology on monitoring and early warning system for climate change adaptation, small-scale technology for vessel tracking)

