

1.1. Odisha State-Level Training Workshop on the SSF Guidelines

Bhubaneswar, Odisha

29 November 2022

Organizers and Resource Persons

- Babula Prasad, Prasad Foundation
- K. Alleya, Odisha Traditional Fishworkers' Union (OTFWU)
- Abhijit Dutta, Dakshin Foundation
- Sudhansu Kumar Malik, Additional District Fisheries Officer (Marine), Puri
- Biswa Bhusan Jena, Assistant Fisheries Officer (Marine), Ganjam
- N. Venugopalan, ICSF

Introduction

The Odisha state-level training workshop on the SSF Guidelines was held in Bhubaneswar on 29 November 2022. Nearly 40 participants from four coastal districts of Odisha attended this event, representing a diverse mix of people from small-scale fishing communities, grassroots NGOs and the Fisheries Department of the Government of Odisha. About one-third of the attendees were women, who voiced their specific concerns.

Welcome Address and Introduction

Alleya, in his introductory speech, underlined the purpose of the workshop. In his welcome address, Prasad stated the importance of small-scale fisheries and the necessity to conserve this resource in order to safeguard the livelihood and food and nutritional security of the SSF communities. Today, small-scale fisheries are getting recognition in the global stage. Venugopalan drew the attention of the participants towards the current scenario of marine fisheries in Odisha and presented a few facts to showcase the status of the state in terms of fish exports, achievement of SDG targets, disaster management and so on. He also expressed his expectations and hope that the state government would act effectively to tackle issues such as extraction of sand dunes and groundwater.

SSF Guidelines: Objectives, Scope and Guiding Principles

Resource People: Abhijit Dutta and Biswa Bhusen Jena

The significance of the SSF Guidelines was highlighted by Dutta and Jena. They stated that the primary objective of the Guidelines was to enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to global food security and nutrition. They also said that gender equality, safeguarding the human rights of SSF communities, and providing a decent working environment to migrant fishers and ensuring their social security are also pivotal factors to be taken into consideration while implementing the Guidelines.

They underlined the following threats to SSF communities: (i) environmental degradation, (ii) severe climate change impacts and (iii) natural and human-induced disaster risks

Introduction to Secure Fishing App, Weather Warning and Government Schemes for Marine Fishers

Resource Person: Sudhanshu Kumar Malik

As a government representative, Malik talked about the various provisions under the Odisha Marine Fishing Regulation Act and discussed the following points to deal with overfishing in the sea:

- Strict imposition of bans on trawlers, who are supposed to be fishing in deep sea, beyond 10 kilometres from the coast, while for motorized craft it is 2 kilometres from the coast.
- Stop using zero mesh size fishing nets and follow the complete ban on ring seine nets that indiscriminately destroy the marine habitat and harm the marine ecosystem.
- Avoid juvenile catch to get instant short-term monetary benefits and follow eco-sensitive sustainable fishing practices to allow the fish stocks to recover naturally.
- In the four coastal zones of the six coastal districts, only limited number of trawlers are allowed to register in each zone (e.g., 98 trawlers are registered for the Puri zone) to stop overfishing.

He also mentioned that in order to aid fishers in deep sea fishing, the state government has plans to provide four specialized deep sea fishing vessels to fishers at subsidized rates to catch tuna. He discussed the following initiatives taken by the state government:

- Fifty artificial reefs will be constructed to enhance the marine resources and biodiversity.
- Infrastructural developments such as construction of fish landing centres, one model hygienic fish market at Talabania, Puri, and installation of solar dryers for drying fish will be undertaken.

He presented a live demonstration of the Secure Fishing App, which can be used by fishers to identify potential fishing zones with accurate GPS locations, real-time market status, weather advisories, and access to central and state government schemes. Currently, it is only in English, but it will soon come up in Odia and Telugu. Sagar Mitra are assisting the fishers in using this app. He also talked about the Fisher Friend Mobile App, which is aimed at alerting fishers regarding the No Fishing Zones declared for olive ridley turtles conservation.

Description of Schemes and Subsidies in the context of Odisha

Resource Persons: Biswa Bhusan Jena

- Registration in the Government of Odisha—Single Window Unified Gateway for Agrarian Management (GO-SUGAM) Portal to avail all the central and state government schemes.
- Support to marine fishing communities for obtaining new craft, fishing net and engine.
- Motorization of traditional craft (1,105 fishing crafts are to be motorized this year) and replacement of craft and nets for traditional fisherfolk, who can avail subsidies on this.

- Assistance for fish transport infrastructure, such as insulated vehicles, auto-rickshaws with ice boxes and motorcycles with ice boxes are provided to facilitate market linkage.
- Installation of bio toilets in mechanized fishing vessels (trawlers) to promote the Swachh Sagar programme, but this year only eight applications have been submitted in Odisha.
- Saving-cum-relief under the Blue Revolution scheme aims to provide livelihood and nutritional support to socio-economically backward 'active traditional fisher' families.
- Livelihood support to marine fisherfolk during the seven months of the fishing ban period (1 November to 31 May) for the conservation of olive ridley turtles is to be increased.
- Group Accident Insurance Scheme for the fishers between the ages of 18 and 70. NFDB has been designated as the nodal agency to implement this scheme via cooperatives.
- A modern fishing harbour is coming up in Ganjam, which is the first of its kind in India.
- A total of 327 Sagar Mitra (who are science graduates) have been recruited thus far in six coastal districts.
- Under the One District, One Product (ODOP) scheme, SHGs can make and sell dried fish.
- Value addition of fish products is encouraged to get better price and hence, processed foods, such as fish fillets, chips, pickles, etc. can be produced and sold abroad.
- Promotion of intensive aquaculture through biofloc fish farming technology, which can act as an alternative income generating livelihood for fisherfolk.
- Development of brackish water fisheries through construction of new ponds for the production of fingerlings and shrimp farming within two kilometres from the coastline.

He also discussed the following challenges faced by all the concerned stakeholders:

- Banks are sometimes not willing to provide credit to the women SHGs due to lack of trust.
- Failure to establish the right kind of marketing channels for dried fish, though they had tried to collaborate with the retail giant Amazon.
- Lack of better packaging and branding for dried fish is fetching the SHGs poor price.
- Lack of collective bargaining power due to weakening unity in the cooperatives.

Presentation on Coastal Rights and Land Rights for Fishers: Brief Explanation about Coastal Commons

Resource Persons: Abhijit Dutta and Biswa Bhusen Jena

Dutta and Jena kept the session interactive by asking questions to the participants and gave practical examples for better understanding. The key points of discussion are as follows:

- Legal recognition and status of coastal commons and benefits to fishing communities.

- Types of coastal commons, which are traditionally accessed and used by all members of the marine fishing village, such as estuary, mangroves and sand dunes.
- Various purposes of coastal commons, such as for drying fishes, making of fishing nets, used as a gathering place and marketplace and other community activities.
- Significance of coastal commons (socio-cultural, economic and ecological).
- Threats to coastal commons, e.g., encroachment, sea erosion, land degradation, etc.

They also shed light on the significance of the CRZ Notification, 2019 and discussed the case study of Purnabandha village in Ganjam district. They stated that the CRZ Notification is primarily protecting the vulnerable areas from encroachment near the coastlines and, hence, acts as a safeguard measure for the fishing communities.

Common Experience of Purnabandha Village

Resource Persons: Surendra and Gouri (Fishing Community Representatives from Ganjam)

Surendra highlighted the need for the identification of commons land and the ways to fight back against encroachment of this land. He said that the villagers realized the importance of the commons and decided to include an initiative for the preservation and sustainable use of this land in their Village Development Plan. He also added that Dakshin Foundation had helped them in this exercise of identification of commons by using GPS and GIS Software as well as in the preparation and presentation of the coastal commons map (see figure).

He spoke of how fishing communities are facing difficulty in 25 villages, spanning 57 kilometres in Ganjam district, as they are being forced to keep their fishing craft and nets in others' lands. He cited three reasons for this: climate change, instability of estuary and stone sea walls constructed near the Gopalpur Port.

- Women are not included in the saving-cum-relief scheme.
- Not even a single fisher has received the KCC in Odisha.
- Eligible beneficiaries are deprived of getting compensatory allowance under the turtle conservation programme.
- Scholarship is not being provided on time to meritorious students of fishing communities.
- Insulated vehicles are not made available to the actual beneficiaries (active fishers).
- Availing loans from banks is not easy for the women SHGs; hence they are being left out.
- Dried fish business by women is getting hindered due to the tough procedure of detailed project report preparation and lack of official support from the Fisheries Department.
- The government does not provide any financial assistance or resources support (e.g., land) to the cooperatives for their development.
- The amount of revolving funds to the cooperatives is insufficient; hence the government should extend greater support towards them.

Concluding Remarks

In his closing remarks, Prasad expressed hope that the takeaways from the sessions would be translated into action in the grassroots level and create positive impacts in fishing communities.

Feedback

- a. They found the SSF Guidelines to be useful and to cater to the demands of small-scale fishers, based on which, they urged, the Fisheries Department should frame its policies.
- b. They also found the information on schemes and subsidies with context to Odisha useful and appreciated the department officials for giving them important information on various e-portals and apps on which they could find relevant information.
- c. They discussed issues of coastal encroachment in the context of development and threats from non-fishing communities. Some of the issues also highlighted industrialization, projects for coastal highways, etc.
- d. Based on the group activity, they were able to represent their issues in terms of what kinds of schemes and subsidies of the department could be improved.
- e. Going forward they also wished that similar programmes would cover SHG groups, their roadblocks and ways to improve their functioning.