

Future Reimagined

Participants from 16 European countries discussed the analytical framework for better governance of fisheries, employing imaginative tools for greater collaboration

The last of the series of IYAFE workshops was convened by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in collaboration with Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) and Mulleres Salgadas (MuS). The regional workshop for Europe was held on November 13-16, 2023, in Galicia, Spain. With its participatory and effective co-management systems, Galicia was an apt location.

The participants from 16 countries included representatives of fishworker organizations, civil society bodies and academia. There were concerted efforts to ensure the participation of women, indigenous peoples and

Compostela, the exercise lasted five hours in which the session dynamic alternated between plenary, working group sessions guided by facilitators and group presentations. Engaging and empathic stories were co-created, employing future thinking tools and storytelling; all these focused on the ways in which people relate to SSF and coastal-inland aquatic ecosystems. To transcend the limits of textual and verbal communication, Nove Noel, a local artist, developed a metaphoric and artistic outcome, capturing the core of discussions.

The second day began with a field visit to women shellfish harvesters, showing the participants their roles in fisheries; their management systems; their organizations and networks; and their vision for the future. Thereafter, a major theme of discussion was governance challenges; the workshop discussed these in relation to access to fishery resources and fishing areas, co-management systems, access to fair and sustainable food systems and participatory guarantee systems. The third day focused on strengthening of SSF organizations and collaborations in Europe. The session started with brief question-answer pitches with a few participants. Later on, an interactive exercise was facilitated to map capacity strengthening needs and avenues of new partnerships.

The lengthiest day was the fourth one of the workshop. Two important aspects of the workshop were deliberated upon: a discussion on women in SSF and the preparation of the draft workshop statement. The women in fisheries discussion was channelled through an interactive panel; the participants prepared the draft statement through a collaborative process.

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youth. The workshop aimed to discuss the desirable governance transitions, issues pertaining to women in small-scale fisheries (SSF), and pathways of strengthening capacities of SSF and support organizations. It shaped inspiring narratives for the future of SSF, emphasizing the importance of desirable and equitable futures.

The workshop opened with remarks from the organizers Maarten Bavinck of ICSF, Dolores Gomez of MuS and Marta Cavelle of LIFE, followed by an introduction to the programme by the ICSF team. After an icebreaker, it started with an interactive session to mainstream visions of preferable and desirable futures for SSF in Europe. Organized by the Equal Sea Lab team from the University of Santiago de

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The future is bright: Participants immersed in a group activity on building a new narrative for SSF in Europe. The participants from 16 countries included representatives of fishworker organizations, civil society bodies and academia

Imaginative and creative ways were used to design inspiring futuristic narratives. The working groups generated ideas from ‘seeds’, a list of 15 European initiatives offering potential solutions for an equitable future. The groups started drafting a framework of a future starting from the seeds at the centre, identifying first-order and second-order implications of positive actions. These ideas were further developed through a storyboard narrated by the group representatives.

The narratives developed by the participants waded across the themes on equity, inclusiveness, cultural heritage, representation, participation, sustainability, food security, access, conservation, restoration and innovation. Fishing was viewed as a culture embedded in food systems. The participants imagined a future in which small-scale fishers thrive under equitable and transparent policies that prioritize environmental sustainability, secure tenure, inter-generational

equity, gender equity, community vitality and inclusive governance.

The sessions focused on governance of the SSF sector, with an emphasis on promoting low-impact fisheries and nurturing attitudes instead of extractive ones. There was a strong emphasis on the need for fair access to resources and their equitable distribution, particularly for women and young people. The discussions identified over-fishing and depleted stocks, inequitable quota distribution, economic and social disparities, lack of social recognition and under-representation of small-scale fishworkers in decision making as major challenges.

The strategies identified to transform SSF governance in the light of these challenges included building new narratives with an interdisciplinary approach, proactive measures and legal actions to address unfair practices in fishing, enhanced community engagement for equitable practices, inclusion of SSF in marine

spatial planning to ensure their access to customary fishing grounds and resources, policy reformation and legal actions for SSF rights and capacity building. The new narrative has to build on the qualitative aspects of SSF, which takes into account its cultural context. While discussing the existing quota systems, fishworker representatives stated that preferential access based on the gear types can offer equity in terms to resource access. SSF's existence is important to assure the sustainability of resources; climate resilience has to be a hallmark of SSF, they added.

Incorporating fishery resources within the discourse of food systems, the participants raised their concerns on the unfair third-party certification procedures, making the resources inaccessible to the SSF. Within this framework, participants called for digital tools and technology to be developed and used by the SSF to access markets, marine spatial planning and sustainable management of resources. Participants discussed the idea of building an alternative food system that works for the SSF, prioritizing wet marketing and labelling.

With regard to the current co-management practices, the participants noted that the major challenge hindering SSF participation is the power dynamics between SSF organizations and government bodies. The participants called for policies to be based on community-centric initiatives and adaptive co-management at the local, national and regional levels. In addition to this is the emerging concern over private entities getting interested in marine spaces. They stated the importance of taking the responsibility of conservation beyond fishing communities to include general public and multiple stakeholders in the process.

Collectivism, the key

On the third day, the participants discussed the need to strengthen SSF organizations. It was felt that collectivization could build strength and engagement with policy makers. They explored the spaces of interdisciplinary collaboration—between civil society groups, fishworker

organizations, academia and policy makers. While building collaborations, it is important to engage young people and develop a network of youth in fisheries. In addition to collaborating with common connections, it is also important to identify and build new coalitions to strengthen a common vision.

They felt the need to develop a structure to building coalition, which can be furthered by a working group through an identification of policy needs, skills, market and communication needs. Participants also shared a vision of having a unified platform (potentially LIFE), to which all other existing organizations are linked. This central point can be used to access information, share experience, identify policy spaces and plan engagements.

However, there is a huge knowledge gap that can be filled through targeted capacity building of fisheries organizations in fund raising, lobbying, management, engaging in policy making, social media, leadership and women's rights. This is also needed to develop a collective narrative drawing attention to the SSF sector that is otherwise diminishing. In order to strengthen the collaborations, the participants listed out activities on knowledge generation, capacity building, knowledge exchange and networking.

A systemic lack of trust between fishers and other organizations has limited the scope of alliances. Moreover, the sector is fragmented, both internally and externally; there is manipulation of information and diversification of interest. While recognizing the diversities within SSF, it is important to identify a common goal to work on. This will require long-term engagement and trust building. While working on building alliances, it is also important not to lose thrust and focus on gender issues in SSF.

Gender in fisheries

The panel on women in fisheries discussed major challenges female fishers and fishworkers experience at various stages of their work. The major challenge was participation in leadership roles and representation



The healthy harvest : The mollusc gatherers detailing their sustainable harvest practices to the IYFA Europe workshop participants during the field visit. The second day began with a field visit to women shellfish harvesters, showing the participants their roles in fisheries; their management systems; their organizations and networks; and their vision for the future

in the decision making. Though the outright discrimination has trimmed down at the workspace, women's agency as decision makers and knowledge holders is still questioned and, at times, mocked. The participants shared their concerns on the invisibility and devaluation of their labour, even when they experienced a triple burden of household labour, occupation and organizational labour. The participants called for extensive research on matters regarding gender, recognition of occupational illness and provision of social security, including maternity and paternity benefits. They drafted an action plan for gender.

The field visit to the shellfish harvesters on the Galician coast exemplified the role of local communities in sustainably managing resources while protecting their livelihood and ensuring decent work

practices. The local fishers showed how they harvest shellfish and sort them based on size; they detailed the allowable catch limit based on the specificity of the species. They explained the role of technology in streamlining these processes and the entire value chain. The participants explored the intertwining of science, technology, community knowledge and engagement in sustainable management of resources.

The workshop concluded with a commitment to build alliances to strive towards transforming SSF governance, taking into account concerns of gender equity and justice and upholding a human rights-based approach. ♣

For more



IYFA Regional workshop: Getting the story straight and envisioning a fair future for small-scale fisheries in Europe, 13-16 November 2023, Galicia, Spain

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/europe-workshop-iyafa-2023/>