

# Recovering Connections

**Improving the lot of small-scale and artisanal fisheries in Costa Rica will lead to the betterment of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and other vulnerable groups**

**L**ocated in Central America, Costa Rica is a country where only one-tenth of its territory is made up of land. Official data shows the territorial extension of Costa Rica to be 51,079 sq km continental and 530,903 sq km in the Pacific Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). For its part, the Caribbean EEZ has not yet been defined, since it is still necessary to negotiate and precisely define the border with Panama.

As a result, fishing is very important for Costa Rica at several levels – tuna fishing for the national processing industry and for a productive economic sector, and for local economies and food security for communities. Although the country recognizes (through INCOPESCA, the government institution in Costa Rica that manages, regulates and promotes the development of the fishing and aquaculture sector with an ecosystem approach, under the principles of sustainability, social responsibility and competitiveness) that there are nearly 2,000 formal artisanal fishers, international studies indicate that more than 15,000 people are involved in artisanal fishing. This is because artisanal fishing is mostly in the informal sector. This has important socioeconomic consequences, since the vast majority of people engaged in this type of fishing do so in vulnerable conditions, many living below the poverty line.

This situation persists despite Costa Rica having a solid set of regulations for fishing, with public policies that recognize the importance of the fair and equitable distribution of the wealth produced by fishing activity. There exists an important institutional framework that provides support to artisanal fishers to operate according to the law. In this regard, the country's main challenge is to recognize and

incorporate into the framework small-scale artisanal fishers who operate informally in these spaces, in order to protect their fundamental rights and ensure a good quality of life for the fishing population.

This article is based on a study conducted in 2020. A legal analysis allowed the construction of matrices that correlated international commitments, analyzed the regulations developed and the institutions created, and their contribution to the social development of the small-scale artisanal fishing sector in the country.

The study draws on interviews with the authorities of public institutions created for promoting social development; academic centres; national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

**Despite Costa Rica's Indigenous Law, there are no regulations that encourage indigenous populations to recover their connections with the seas and rivers.**

working on social development and human-rights issues in light of their impact on small-scale artisanal fisheries. Also analysed were interviews and focal group discussions directed at the main leaders—men, women and youth—who represent the small-scale fishing sector in the country.

The small-scale and artisanal fisheries sector in Costa Rica finds itself in a complex historical situation. The Costa Rican government does not have a fishing census that can accurately determine the number of people dependent on small-scale and artisanal fishing. It is thus difficult to propose comprehensive solutions for this population group.

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Cabo Blanco marine management area, Costa Rica. Decisions and budgets aimed at supporting economic and psychosocial reactivation must consider the vulnerabilities of coastal communities

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The social-development vision of public institutions and NGOs in this sector is not homogeneous. One view is focused on productive development linked to the generation of employment; this is often unrelated to fishing knowledge and culture. The other perspective is closer to a social-development vision, articulated with a human-rights approach, with a comprehensive view of the full and dignified development of the sector, including aspects of education, healthcare, decent work and culture.

Rural development efforts are often directed at the agricultural sector, leaving the small-scale artisanal sector invisible—women fishers even more so, as they are often not considered active participants in fishing. This significantly impacts their development, limiting their opportunities to attain benefits at the economic, social and cultural levels.

Interviews with women, men and young fishing leaders reveal that the social-development vision responds better to the needs of coastal marine communities. It was evident in all the consultations carried out that this

vision of development is based on the opportunities that the context provides for nutrition, healthcare, education and organization. The respondents, from their position of leadership in fishing communities, identified the importance of their own actions in changing their living conditions. They consider organizational spaces a fundamental forum for influencing public policies linked to small-scale and artisanal fishing.

Young people display a positive feeling and attitude towards fishing despite weak public policy efforts. Attention is required through affirmative action to enhance the capacities of the young population in artisanal fishing to face the new technological and educational challenges of the changing times. Regarding the NGO sector, even when initiatives for financial support and human resources development do reach the community, they have often proven unsuitable. It has been difficult to promote the integrated development of these communities and measure the impact of social actions on the quality of life of the people.

## Cultural adaptability

There is a need for greater inter-institutional articulation and more favourable visions of human rights and cultural adaptability in coastal marine areas. Costa Rica has made a commitment to cross-institutional co-ordination in order to provide a better response to the interests of communities in terms of well-being, work, violence prevention, and attention to diverse populations—Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees. Yet the country has not yet succeeded in implementing such policies from a truly intersectional approach that might result in clear actions to advance along these lines. The efforts articulated among public institutions and NGOs are very scarce; they require analysis so that they can be disseminated and multiplied in other areas.

This study reveals that artisanal fishing is not attuned to the cultural, environmental and social reference points required. The projects that reach the communities, especially for women and young people, are not linked with traditional knowledge, with participatory research, with the strengthening of governance to promote artisanal fishing as an activity linked to food security, or with the cultural and historical role of this work in the country. Land tenure continues to remain an unresolved problem. This directly hits the social development of coastal towns. The institutional framework has tried to generate jobs and enterprises that fail to respond to the cultural realities of women, youth and fishers in fishing communities.

The fisheries sector is very vulnerable to the effects of climate change. None of the measures communicated to the territories is sustainable or supportive of the communities facing climatic uncertainties. Decisions and budgets aimed at supporting economic and psychosocial reactivation must consider their vulnerabilities.

Despite Costa Rica's Indigenous Law, the ratification of the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 and consultation mechanisms, there are no regulations that encourage indigenous populations to recover their connections with the seas and rivers. There is nothing to nurture the knowledge and resources linked to

terrestrial and marine biodiversity, and to enhance and protect them in the interest of sustainability. At the national level, there is an immediate need for public policies with an integral strategy oriented towards the small-scale and artisanal fishing sector.

The Ombudsmen Office must be urged to ensure progress on the recognition and formalization of the small-scale artisanal fishing sector, as an entity committed to the observance of compliance with human rights in this sector. An urgent call should be made


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to the country's National Emergency Commission (CNE) to consider a differentiated and specific budget for the coastal marine communities most affected by climate variability.

It is essential that the country promotes discussions and forums with respect to the social and environmental scopes and impacts of the Blue Economy in the lives of artisanal fishers, relying on the recognition of new visions based on social development, linked to the effective fulfillment of human rights and responding to the Voluntary Guidelines towards the Sustainability of Small-scale Fishing in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Reduction (SSF Guidelines).

A focus on intersectionality is still lacking. Women fishers, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant populations need greater visibility. These concerns are currently not being addressed with the urgency required from a human-rights-based approach.

## Active participation

Joint efforts of a public-private nature are recommended for effective compliance with these measures, including those designed to handle the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting the active participation of the artisanal fishing sector in economic and social reactivation within a framework of human rights, equality and equity. 

## For more



### Eight Shells

[https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_80/4375\\_art\\_Sam\\_80\\_WIF\\_Vivienne\\_Solis\\_Rivera.pdf](https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue_80/4375_art_Sam_80_WIF_Vivienne_Solis_Rivera.pdf)

### Our Oceans, Our Seas, Our Future

[https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_76/4296\\_art\\_Sam76\\_e\\_art09.pdf](https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue_76/4296_art_Sam76_e_art09.pdf)

### Sailing from a Good Port

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# Eight Shells

The voices of the women of the sea were heard loud and clear at a learning exchange aimed at strengthening the capacities of fisherwomen in the backdrop of the SSF Guidelines

Women from marine fishing communities of Barbados, St Kitts, Grenada, and Belize visited Tárcoles and Chomes in Puntarenas and the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica as part of a women's learning exchange aimed at strengthening the capacities of fisherwomen in the backdrop of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). Supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the programme had significant learning elements from the social, economic, cultural and organizational aspects present in artisanal fishing as well as about personal, economic and political/organizational empowerment.

The exchange programme had multiple objectives. The first was

on gender and equity. The exchange also hoped to generate a process of application of learning so that innovative ideas that emerged could be put into practice in their respective countries. An important objective was to develop creative visual materials on gender and governance that could contribute to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The last objective was to demonstrate the benefits of a properly planned learning exchange.

## Experience One: CoopeTárcoles R.L (Fishers Cooperative of Tárcoles) and Consorcio Por La Mar R.L.

In the first experience, the visitors learned about the management of CoopeTárcoles R.L, its collection centre, the experience of traceability and the sale of fish. The methodology included interactions with key people in the organization, guided tours and rural community tourism. After the analysis of the experience, a space was opened to deepen empowerment of women. This is one of the first steps to strengthen self-esteem, break out of invisibility and assert rights in everyday life and at work as fisherwomen.

Leadership, respect, and perseverance are three words constituting the heart of empowerment. Traditional knowledge is linked to the empowerment and identity of fisherwomen, their rights, and necessity for alliances to strengthen the sector. The unity of the group is important. Associated words are consciousness, power, unity, respect, recognition of strengths, and greatness. Other related words are thought, knowledge, rights, model of inspiration, process and support.

Three kinds of empowerment could be recognized. While personal

**Traditional knowledge is linked to the empowerment and identity of fisherwomen...**

to acquire an understanding of the experiences of three coastal marine communities in the Pacific and Caribbean regions of Costa Rica. This was by showing good practices of integrated management of fishery resources to provide women in the Caribbean with opportunities to incorporate ideas and innovations into their projects and contexts.

The second was to promote a process of reflection-action to generate lessons learned that contribute to the programmes, projects and policies of small-scale fisheries, with a focus

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empowerment is linked to the recognition of work, opportunities, belief in themselves and self-esteem, organizational empowerment was about taking into account what each woman wants. Thus, listening to each other to make decisions, horizontal leadership and sorority were important constituents. Economic empowerment was about having fair and equitable access to economic resources. In the case of Tárcoles, income is divided into three parts: boat owner, captain, and the person fishing. "Lujadoras" are part of the guided tours and have an economic payment. They depend on the use of fishing gears.

### **Experience Two: CoopeMolusChomes R.L (Mollusc Fisherwomen Co-operative of Chomes)**

This co-operative has achieved a major milestone in obtaining approval of a Mollusc Sustainable Management Plan, achieved through a participatory organizational effort. On arrival at Chomes, the participants were received with a folk dance that conveyed the culture, knowledge, joy and history of the place, with dancers wearing costumes used for working in mangroves many years ago. Many dancers in the group and the director are sons and daughters of the women of the mangroves, who are members of the CoopeMolusChomes R.L.

The next day was a guided tour of the mangrove swamps. The Chomes women explained their work in four stations.

In the first station, they described the process of mollusc extraction in the mangroves, including the mangrove species and the molluscs they harvest as well the dangers they face in their tasks. They also explained in detail the participatory research that has given rise to the Mollusc Sustainable Management Plan and the negotiation process with different actors.

In the second station, they shared the obstacles they faced in order to carry out their activities. A major problem was the presence of an aquaculture shrimp company that does not comply with stipulations and regulations. This affects the women and the health of the mangroves.

The process of mangrove reforestation and the traditional knowledge of women were discussed in the third stage. Each participant of the learning exchange planted a mangrove seedling. In the last stage, an entrepreneurship initiative and the value it added were visited.

Discussions included various obstacles faced by the local women, including obtaining electricity connections to run their small businesses. As a mark of solidarity, the visiting women decided to write a letter of support for the women of the Chomes co-operative to be presented to the national authorities.

### **Experience Three: Co-management in Cahuita National Park**

In the third experience, the visitors learned about the experiences and history in the co-management of the resources of a National Park where its inhabitants were always present despite the obstacles they faced.

Edwin Cyrus, Director of the Conservation Area ACLAC, said the government had to listen to the inhabitants and learn from them, their traditional knowledge, their culture and their ways to co-manage the park. "This area was declared a National Park, without the consultation of the inhabitants and without taking into account their interests. These people make decisions without consultation, such as charging for entry, and the community was very upset. Most of the park is in the sea. Leaders said that tourists should not pay to enter. Subsequently, they moved into a shared management. The government realized that the inhabitants were organized and now they ask tourists to make a voluntary contribution. The idea is that there are benefits for women as well."

It took many years of dialogue and effort to move towards community leadership and participation. Women benefit from economic initiatives generated around tourism. There are women in power and decision-making positions in the Association of Fishers of Cahuita. There must be greater recognition and motivation for women, especially young women, to integrate



into the value chain. There is still a need to redouble efforts to fight against climate change, and the search for adaptation measures to erosion that the territory is suffering, as well as the warming in seawaters that affects the coral reefs. Women seemed more affected because they have the responsibility for the food security of their children.

As for the Ambassadors of the Sea, they recognized the experience of young people who are entering diving practices and learning opportunities offered by the Diving School, in addition to other activities such as cleaning the seabed and recognition of the sea's riches.

### **Perceptions, feelings and keywords of women in the learning exchange**

Women said that this experience was marked by, Unity: The importance of family unity for conservation, as well as cultural identity because people come from different cultures, countries, nationalities; Co-operation: All people working together; Orientation: There is a vision and line of work from historical figures, which have rescued community values and traditions from

young people and said they required opportunities for development.

Women had a lot to say about governance. They said that dialogue between government and civil society is important and advantage must be taken of positive leadership such as the Director of the Area, but with the support of the citizens. Local efforts can transform national policies and so lessons learned should be taken to the level of state powers: legislative, executive, judicial and comptroller's office. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that facilitate processes must build bridges between civil society and institutions to produce changes. It was also important to know about international treaties and agreements, among others.

They understood the SSF Guidelines as a commitment to resume issues of governance, gender, and organization of the groups of fishers. In Costa Rica, there is an executive decree that has transformed the Guidelines from being voluntary to becoming obligatory, with the participation of different institutions. They then worked on a law, where civil society would give them the elements to advance towards their interests and needs. The process worked because they worked hand-in-hand with the fishers. While there are many challenges with respect to gender in fisheries, they would like the Caribbean to be an example from a holistic perspective.

Although there are differences between the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, the SSF Guidelines constitute a meeting point for both. The common challenges are women's empowerment, support from strategic alliances, changes in power relations between men and women, marine responsible fishing areas and economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants.

### **Lessons learned**

People learn from practice and experience. Learning is a dynamic and reciprocal process, where meaning is given to experiences and these findings are added to our knowledge repository. Therefore, a lesson learned is evidence

**There is still a need to redouble efforts to fight against climate change...**

the point of view of social, cultural and natural resource management; Pride: The pride in what they have and what is important. The pride in being black; Joy: In every place where they went, there was joy; and Music: Music is part of the culture. Music means more than just dancing. It is learning from people and traditions.

Women expressed their concern about climate change. As heads of households, they were concerned about sedimentation, which is part of climate-change impacts, and pollution and its impact on food security. They saw the need to be more aware of what was used and consumed. They saw youth being models to other



Learning visit to the Cahuita Co-managed National Park in Costa Rica. Women from marine fishing communities of Barbados, St Kitts, Grenada, and Belize visited Tárcoles and Chomes in Puntarenas and the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica as part of a women's learning exchange

that allows us to generate trends from a model of social, economic, political and environmental development, with the idea of multiplying and generating changes, in this case in favour of women and equality.

A number of important lessons were learnt from this exchange programme. The role of women is essential in artisanal fisheries and hence it is necessary to generate support policies. The identity of Caribbean women as women of strength, empowerment and leadership needs to be strengthened with the motto "Change starts with me and we continue to work together." It is important to activate personal and collective will.

Perseverance, personal and collective will, and teamwork are essential to achieve goals. Communities, civil society and government need to work together to achieve goals. Perseverance is important to enhance change and it is through education that you can reach young people. It is determining the teamwork and the construction and reproduction of a development model that identifies women in fisheries. As

empowered leaders, that knowledge and attitudes must be multiplied with other women in fishing communities and along the value chain. "Sorority" is a keyword that people must put into practice in all women's empowerment processes – sorority, because it can be seen how the voices of the eight women joined to become one.

Empowering other women to walk together by opening spaces to advance the implementation of our human rights and empowering women to make decisions on different issues is fundamental. Alliances with other women's organizations and governments need to be made and optimal environments have to be created for enabling implementation of women's ideas. Non-interventionist accompaniment in organizations is important.

Another lesson is about a holistic approach to the issue of climate change; from prevention to adaptation (MEANING?). Co-management is a shared decision-making possibility that helps to set up opportunities for social, environmental and economic improvement in the lives of fishermen

## Caribbean Small-Scale Fisherwoman Learning Exchange in Costa Rica: Women's Voices

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### INTRODUCTION

The Small-Scale Fisherwoman Learning Exchange, strengthened the capacities of fisherwomen from several Caribbean countries as well as their Costa Rican hosts and counterparts. The Caribbean women, selected by the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO) learned from experiences in Costa Rica, while contributing their knowledge on Caribbean artisanal fishery value chains. The women were from the fishery sectors in Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and Belize. They shared experiences with the women from Tarcoles Fishing Cooperative and Chomes mollusks Cooperative. They visited Consorcio Por La Mar, and had a close look at the co-management process of Cahuita National Park and the South Caribbean Diving Centre: Embajadores del Mar.

This knowledge exchange sought to build links and shared experiences among women from fishing communities from personal, economic and political/organizational empowerment perspectives, strengthening bridges among islands of the Caribbean and Costa Rica.

### EXPECTATIONS

*"Coming and sharing my knowledge and experience and to learn about the different islands and the culture and tradition of Costa Rica as related to their fishery and fisher women. Their daily activities and fishery history passed on from generation to generation"*

*"Came expecting to share our experiences, especially when they ask us to create an innovation plan prior to coming here. I especially liked that they gave us homework before arriving so they got us to start to think even before coming here. Writing my plan at home felt easy but here I saw and felt the struggle the hard work it takes to achieve the goal."*

*"Came expecting to share what we do and hear what they do. Also expected some practical experience"*

*"Came expecting to learn a lot from the other women. This is the first time I came out and I had a great experience about it. I now learning"*

*"Hope that the Triangular South - South Cooperation, between Costa Rica, the Caribbean and FAO, will be effective, so that they can contribute and learn from these experiences in order to encourage more women to participate in fishing organizations that promote this important work."*

### WERE EXPECTATIONS MET?

*"The whole fisherwoman exchange was efficient, effective, and informative. It was met."*

*"Expectation was met up to a point, as I was expecting more practical experience"*

*"It was fulfilling and went beyond all initial expectation"*

### APPROACH

The exchange was designed using a participatory approach privileging a horizontal transmission of knowledge. There were significant learning elements from the social, economic, cultural and organizational aspects present in artisanal fishing in Costa Rica, with special emphasis on women. In turn, they received the perceptions, recommendations and learnings from the Caribbean women who visited them. All this fed into their Innovation Plan.

The discussions and learnings was captured on canvas by a Costa Rican artist who was part of the exchange.

### WOMEN REFLECT ON THE APPROACH

- The arrangements for learning throughout the exchange was good & effective. Methods used cater to different persons style. Learn more.
- Appreciate the reflection times to discuss what was learned.
- The environment for each particular visit were well suited.
- The shared information and pictures of sites to be visit permitted them to be familiarized with the area prior to arrival.
- Being among the community, feeling the women struggle and even their emotion is a completely different learning and appreciation process.
- All the women brought something to the table and were open to share knowledge and experiences.
- Sites visit helped to learn a lot, "I saw different things from my own country and it was a sight to behold."
  - The agenda for the last day was too packed; it was challenging to keep up.
  - Some of the visits could have been more interactive, as opposed to just be listeners.

### NEXT STEPS

*"Put information together in a report and present it to the association and to the fishermen coop. Organize the women community group, have a meeting with them and through meetings pass on the experiences and the knowledge I gain here."*

*"Report back to the GIFT team and to the CNFO and also help create a women in fisheries network"*

*"Increase CNFO work on gender to increase the presence of women representation and women leaders within their country and organization's activities"*

*"Participate more and more actively in activities that address fisherwomen issues"*

*"Used what I have learned for personal growth and to assist the fisherman and women in the community as it relates to SSF"*

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Role of women in artisanal fisheries is essential throughout the SSF guideline implementation process. It's necessary to generate support policies.
- It is necessary to strengthen the identity of Caribbean women as women of strength, empowerment and leadership.
- To achieve goals it is important to have perseverance, and personal and collective will. To this, we add teamwork, where we all work towards the same direction: communities, civil society and government.
- Ensure that traditional knowledge of fishers is recognized.
- Rescue cultural traditions in fishing to help strengthen the identity and roots of our people, as well as their commitment to the restoration of a country and an activity such as responsible fishing, including the contributions of women and young people.
- Change is a beginning of work among women working together. Start working towards a better relationship between fisherwomen. The change begins with me.
- Do not let yourself be defeated ... use all you can to grow as a woman. Take the strengths of other women, make them yours and share

Learning exchange captured on canvas

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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- INCOPESCA
- CoopeTarcoles
- CoopeMolusChomes
- Cahuita National Park
- South Caribbean Diving Center: Ambassadors of the Sea

relationship between fisherwomen, with the change beginning with oneself.

Women in fisheries can support one another through networking and empowering one another. One may stop, scream and cry but rather than allow defeat to take over, one must use all one can, including strengths of other women, to grow. Empowerment and leadership training spaces with, and for, women must be provided on the coast.

and fisherwomen and from the value chain. Co-management works if given a chance to succeed.

### Traditional knowledge

Recognition of traditional knowledge of fishers must be ensured. There is a need to rescue cultural traditions in fishing to help strengthen the identity and roots of the fishing communities, as well as their commitment to the restoration of a country and an activity such as responsible fishing, including the contributions of women and young people.

There is hope and motivation that change will come soon, especially when women start working together. There is a need to start working towards a better

### For more

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EK1B\\_dE4eHE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EK1B_dE4eHE)

**Film: Fortalecimiento de peladoras de camarón, Costa Rica**

<https://coopesolidar.org/>  
**CoopeSoliDar**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/detail/EN/3618.html>

**The Sea Gives Us Everything**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/detail/EN/3745.html>

**Giving Back to the Sea**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/detail/EN/4194.html>

**Costa Rica / SSF Guidelines: Sailing from a Good Port**



# Our Oceans, Our Seas, Our Future

The challenge now is to make the global targets and objectives of the SDGs respond to the reality of thousands of people who live from the sea and its resources

The United Nations and the governments that are part of it surprised us positively with a new initiative named the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These Goals, observed in a comprehensive way, responds to what civil society also believes integrates the environmental, social and economic elements that allow us, as a planet, to move towards sustainability.

However, when we analyze these goals and how countries should develop an implementation strategy to comply with them, all the historical doubts from the civil society re-emerge. That is to say, we feel that unless these SDGs are implemented

The Objective 14—hereinafter referred to as Life Below Water—concerns the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Life Below Water objective presents 10 targets that, if well implemented, should demonstrate significant progress in achieving the sustainability of these valuable marine ecosystems.

A quick view of the targets and indicators of this objective, however, reveals that some critical issues are only referred to on the surface or are absent from this goal—for example, small-scale fisheries (with the exception of its mention once in terms of market and resources access for the subsector), marine governance, land tenure, the integration of traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge, among others.

The targets of this objective (see Box 1) seem to focus on issues of global importance, such as pollution, the effects of acidification of the oceans, fisheries exploitation, and illegal fishing, among others.

All of the above, no doubt, represent topics for urgent attention but they are far from being fully representative of the issues needed to be discussed at the local level and that affect more than 300 mn people in the world who live from the resources of the sea and are mainly small-scale fishers who ensure food security along the whole fish value chains at the country level.

## Work by CSOs

It is the Goal 14b—the one that responds to the work done by civil society organizations of small-scale fisheries and governments oriented to serve a population highly

**The SDG objectives have left out neither our oceans nor our seas, which is clearly a positive sign.**

in an integrated way, very little will be achieved towards the necessary change that must emerge from a planet in crisis, and of a development model that is clearly inequitable.

Perhaps the point of this observation is that so far, and in spite of the integrality that is being sought by the SDGs, it is not clear what are the concrete actions that will guarantee the implementation of this necessary holistic view.

The SDG objectives have left out neither our oceans nor our seas, which is clearly a positive sign. As a result, the initiative now has developed a global effort to raise attention towards the conservation of these ecosystems.

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marginalized and little attended—that is dedicated to small-scale fisheries. Small-scale fisheries is mentioned as follows in one of the targets: “to facilitate the access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets”.

This target is the only one that opens up a space to incorporate social issues in the implementation of Objective 14; it leaves at least a space to reflect on the need to learn more on this topic, and especially pick on years of experience in working with the coastal marine populations and their needs.

We might think that Goal 14b allows us to incorporate the need to implement, at all levels, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, endorsed by the meeting of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome in June 2014. These Guidelines speak clearly and firmly about the need for a marine conservation based on the human rights of the poorest sections of our coasts: indigenous peoples, women not involved in the value chain of small-scale fisheries, fishermen and non-formal youth and migrants, and Afro-descendants, among others.

It is evident that Goal 14 cannot be achieved without being integrated into other goals, namely, 5, 8, 12 and 17, among others. In order to move towards the integrated approach proposed necessarily means the integration of the efforts of civil society and governments.

The oceans cover three-quarters of the surface of our planet, contain 97 per cent of the earth's water and represent 99 per cent of the space of life on the planet in volume. The oceans are also the largest source of protein in the world, with more than 3 bn people depending on them as their primary source of life (UNDP, Costa Rica, 2017).

During this year, and as a result of the priority that the UN has given to the implementation of the SDGs, the whole world will be participating

#### BOX 1:

### SDG 14: Life Below Water

14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans

14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific co-operation at all levels

14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices, and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics

14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information

14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation

14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing states and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism

14.A Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing states and least developed countries

14.B Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

14.C Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want

at the high-level conference for the implementation of Objective 14 in New York (5 to 9 June 2017). Certainly, this gathering will be a tremendous opportunity to promote and strengthen the initiatives that countries are developing to comply with this objective and the ones related to it. It will also be a good opportunity to reflect on the issues of high importance that have not yet been included in the most recent version of the final agreement of the conference (see Box 2).

## BOX 2:

**OUR OCEAN, OUR FUTURE: CALL FOR ACTION (Revised Draft 7th of April, 2017)**

1. We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, meeting at the first United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda, with the full participation of civil society and other relevant stakeholders, affirm our strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
2. We are mobilised by a strong conviction that our ocean is critical to our shared future and common humanity in all its diversity. As responsible stakeholders, we are determined to act decisively and urgently, convinced that our collective action will make a meaningful difference to our people, to our planet, and to our prosperity.
3. We recognise that our ocean covers three-quarters of our planet, connects our populations and markets, and forms an important part of our heritage and culture. It supplies half the oxygen we breathe, absorbs a third of the carbon dioxide we produce, and plays a vital role in the water cycle. It contributes to sustainable development and sustainable ocean-based economies, as well as to poverty eradication, food security and nutrition, and livelihoods.
4. We are particularly alarmed by the adverse impacts of climate change on the ocean, including the rise in ocean temperatures, ocean acidification, deoxygenation, and sea-level rise. We acknowledge the need to address the adverse impacts that impair the crucial role of the ocean as climate regulator, carbon sink, source of marine biodiversity, and as key provider of food and nutrition, ecosystem services, maritime trade and transportation, and as an engine for sustainable economic development and growth.
5. We are committed to halting and reversing the decline in the health and productivity of our ocean and to protecting and restoring its resilience. We recognise that the well-being of present and future generations is inextricably linked to the health and productivity of our ocean.
6. We reaffirm our commitment to achieve the targets of Goal 14 within the timelines. We also affirm our commitment to continue to take action beyond those dates, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.
7. We underline the integrated and indivisible character of all Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda, as well as the interlinkages and synergies between them.
8. We stress the need for an integrated, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach as well as enhanced cooperation, coordination, and policy coherence, at all levels. We emphasise the critical importance of effective partnerships enabling collective action, to reverse the decline in the health of our ocean and its ecosystems, and to protect and restore their resilience and productivity. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of Goal 14 with the full participation of all relevant stakeholders.
9. We underline the need to integrate Goal 14 into national development plans and strategies, and to promote national ownership and leadership and success in the implementation of Goal 14 by involving all stakeholders, including local authorities and communities, indigenous peoples, women and youth, as well as business and industry.
10. We recognise the crucial role of women in the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
11. We stress the importance of enhancing understanding of the health and role of our ocean, including through assessments on the state of the ocean, science and traditional knowledge, as well as the need to further increase marine scientific research to inform and support decision-making, and to promote knowledge hubs and networks to enhance the sharing of scientific data, and best practices.
12. We emphasise that our actions to implement Goal 14 should be in accordance with, reinforce and not duplicate or undermine, existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms, or entities. We affirm the need to be consistent with international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides the legal framework for all the activities in the oceans and seas.
13. We recognise that the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources require the necessary means of implementation in line with the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other relevant outcomes, including the enhanced capacitybuilding and the transfer of knowledge and environmentally-sound marine technology to developing countries on mutually agreed terms.
14. We call on all stakeholders to work in concert to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development by taking, *inter alia*, the following actions on an urgent basis, including by building on existing institutions and partnerships:
  - (a) Approach the implementation of Goal 14 in an integrated and coordinated way and promote policies and actions that take into account the critical interlinkages among the targets of Goal 14, the potential synergies between Goal 14 and the other goals, particularly those with ocean-related targets, as well as other processes that support the implementation of Goal 14.
  - (b) Strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and coordination amongst institutions at all levels, including between and amongst international organisations, regional organisations, arrangements and programmes, as well as national and local authorities.
  - (c) Promote effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, by enhancing engagement of governments with global and regional bodies and programmes, the scientific community, the private sector, donor community, non-governmental organisations, community groups, academic institutions, and other relevant actors.

- (d) Develop comprehensive strategies to raise awareness of the natural and cultural significance of the ocean, as well as of its state and role, and of the need to further improve the knowledge of the ocean, including its importance for sustainable development and how it is impacted by anthropogenic activities.
- (e) Support plans to foster ocean-related education, for example as part of education curricula, to promote ocean literacy and a culture of conservation, restoration and sustainable use of our ocean.
- (f) Dedicate greater resources to marine scientific research, as well as the collection and sharing of data and knowledge, including traditional knowledge, in order to increase knowledge of the ocean, including to better understand the relationship between climate and the health and productivity of the ocean, and to promote decision-making based on the best available science, to encourage scientific and technological innovation, as well as to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries in particular small island developing States and least developed countries.
- (g) Accelerate actions to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, including marine debris, nutrient pollution, untreated wastewater, solid waste discharges, hazardous substances, pollution from ships, abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, and plastics and microplastics.
- (h) Develop sustainable consumption and production patterns, adopt the 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—including through incentivising market-based solutions to reduce waste and its generation, improving mechanisms for environmentally-sound waste management, disposal and recycling, and developing alternatives such as reusable or recyclable products, or products biodegradable under natural conditions.
- (i) Implement long-term strategies to reduce the use of plastics, particularly plastic bags, single-use plastics and the use of primary microplastic particles in products, including by partnering with stakeholders at relevant levels to address their production and use.
- (j) Strengthen the use of effective area-based management tools, including marine protected areas and other integrated, cross-sectoral approaches, consistent with international law and in accordance with national legislation, including marine spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management, based on best available science and the precautionary and ecosystem approaches, to enhance ocean resilience and better conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity.

The implementation of Objective 14, at least from the point of view of the central American region, could be better achieved through the application of the SSF Guidelines, and ensuring that UN Members mention the importance of transforming the SSF Guidelines into binding instruments to address the priority issues that we know beset the people of the sea and its coasts.

There is an urgent need to ensure that the zero draft, later to become the end agreement, will be clear and strong in mentioning the need to support communities of small-scale fisheries to participate in, and take responsibility towards, the integrated management of fisheries and coastal areas, and that all these efforts will be recognized and that the access rights of these communities will be protected, alongside other human rights.

It is necessary to strengthen the language and the proposals for the implementation of Objective 14 towards a human-rights-based approach to the conservation of the seas and oceans. Issues such as land tenure in the coastal areas, gender

considerations and indigenous cosmo-vision, the generation of knowledge that integrates the scientific with the traditional, and also the need to strengthen the institutional framework to generate capabilities that allow an integrated and transdisciplinary vision of how to address the issues of the oceans, will have to be necessarily addressed.

It is clear that the preservation of the sea and the sustainable use of its resources will not be possible without a strengthening the community governance models of marine conservation, based on the respect and recognition of the rights of fishing communities, and their knowledge and cultural identity.

The challenge now is, firstly, to include the appropriate language, to listen to the lessons learned so far from the work that manages to “leave no one behind”, also in the conservation of the sea, and, secondly, implement a vision that considers not only the marine environment but also respect for the human rights and well-being of the people of the sea.

#### For more



[oceanconference.un.org/about](https://oceanconference.un.org/about)

**Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

[sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14666sideeventsOceans.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14666sideeventsOceans.pdf)

**Joining forces for sustainable small-scale fisheries through a human rights-based approach to ocean conservation**

[sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14)

**Triptico informativo sobre los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible. Costa Rica**



# Achieving a Balance

**Traditional knowledge has proved to be relevant for the management of shrimp fisheries on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Costa Rica**

**T**he Discussion Table for the sustainable use of shrimp in Costa Rica, organized by the Research Group, which is part of the National Dialogue Round Table geared towards sustainable shrimp exploitation, was a space for dialogue and consensus proposals that took into consideration both scientific and traditional knowledge. These inputs were reflected in the process of participatory mapping. The mapping was developed with the idea of generating a marine spatial planning process that can reconcile conservation and utilization of coastal and marine resources in a more equitable manner.

In this research experience, traditional knowledge has played a prominent role not only because of the scarcity of scientific information, but by opening a space for the considered discussions of all the participants. The process has incorporated the immeasurable contributions generated from the practical experience of fishers (these have had a high level of agreement with regard to scientific knowledge).

In this case study, other aspects were also considered related to the subject, for example, promoting the use of traditional knowledge in decisionmaking, the role of participatory mapping in the application of different types of knowledge, and assessment of the interaction between scientists and fishers, among others.

Among the main results that have been generated is the formulation of a first sampling on ecosystems and coastal resources in the Pacific and Caribbean (Barra del Colorado) coasts of Costa Rica. Furthermore, it was important to build trust and

respect among the participants of the research group towards the sustainable harvest of shrimp.

Historically, the development in Costa Rica has disregarded the sea and its people. This has meant that fisheries have not been given proper consideration. As a result, the following consequences have arisen: weak institutional structures for regulating sea-based activities; poor political support for comprehensive development; ecosystem degradation and declining resources due to overfishing as well as other human-induced and natural causes.

**Historically, the development in Costa Rica has disregarded the sea and its people.**

Conflicts arise specifically because there are no arrangements to demarcate zones for the activities of different fleets, and with the increase in fishing effort (number of boats and hours of work), there is a reduction in fishery resources. This generates interactions between the small-scale artisanal sector and the semi-industrial trawl fleet, giving rise to conflicts characterized by competition for resources and/or the destruction of artisanal fishing gears (this situation has been going on for some 20 years or more).

## Co-operation

Apart from the tensions that exist between the sectors, there are also forms of co-operation both on land and at sea. Unfortunately, these latter relationships are not visible, which widens the gap between fishermen.

*The article is a synthesis of the case study undertaken as part of a regional research project organized by ICSF and CoopeSoliDar R.L., on traditional knowledge and the fisheries of the Central American region. It was written by Carlos Andrés Brenes Tencio (carlitos\_brenes86@hotmail.com), social anthropologist and researcher associated with CoopeSoliDar R.L., Costa Rica*

Due to the lack of regulatory capacity and incapacity of the different users (direct and indirect) to remedy the situation, the dispute was partially resolved by the Constitutional Assembly (the nation's highest legal body), through Bill No. 201310540 in 2013. The Assembly made the renewal and issuing of new fishing licences for trawlers conditional on legal and scientific

### **The Assembly made the renewal and issuing of new fishing licences for trawlers conditional on legal and scientific reform...**

reform so as to reduce the environmental and social impacts of this fishery activity (both semi-industrial and artisanal).

At the start of 2015, the Government of the Republic of Costa Rica issued the "Directive for generating a national policy for the sustainable exploitation of shrimp, to generate employment, and to combat poverty", thanks to the outcomes of the first stage in the dialogue process towards managing the shrimp trawl fishery (artisanal and semi-industrial). The Directive envisaged the creation of a body where the technical and scientific options for mitigating significantly the impacts of trawling could be discussed, as ordered by the Constitutional Assembly.

It was in this way that the Research Group for the sustainable exploitation of shrimp was initiated, with representatives of the University of Costa Rica (through the CIMAR), the Costa Rica Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPECA) and other participant institutions being incorporated into it, along with representatives from the fisheries sector on the Pacific and Caribbean (from the Barra del Colorado area) coasts.

Without the contribution of traditional knowledge, it would not have been possible to undertake such a detailed analysis of the different areas and of the fishery resources of the Costa Rican Pacific and Caribbean (Barra del Colorado area) coasts. This

knowledge was not only applied to fill the gaps where scientific data was lacking, but also, from the outset, it was taken into account in the work of the Research Group with the same weighting as scientific knowledge. In this sense, the willingness of the participants to engage in a dialogue facilitated both kinds of knowledge to be incorporated.

The methodological tool that enabled traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge to be incorporated (and actually proved to be the main source of information) was participative mapping. This tool was successful because it provides visual representation (therefore accessible to anyone who cannot read or write). Also, participants were quite familiar with it, which enabled everyone to apply their knowledge directly.

Thanks to participative mapping, the following aspects could be identified: areas of interaction between fleets (areas where shrimp is exploited by each fleet and of latent conflicts); climatic conditions (that give rise to natural fishery closures); determination of the species that live in these areas (commercial and non-commercial), species and critical habitats in need of conserving and/or further research (information provided by academia); types of seabed; varieties of shrimp, their depth zones, and the environmental implications of their capture.

### **Power balance**

What is more, the use of traditional knowledge has brought about—albeit not in a premeditated way—a balancing of the power relations between scientists and fishers. Generally, it is considered that scientists are the only ones possessing knowledge and thus—wilfully or unwittingly—the debate is biased by the information or vision that they have; but thanks to the contribution made by the people of the sea, we have been able to equalize the power balance between the protagonists. In addition, both scientists and fishers have taken one another's views into account—

conservation and exploitation, respectively—to achieve a balance.

Since it has not been the practice to take fishers' knowledge into consideration when binding decisions are made at the national level (according to those interviewed), the fishers' representatives were asked how they felt about sharing their traditional knowledge with the Research Group. The reply was unanimous, mainly for two reasons: (a) because historically no one had taken their views into account in making the decisions that had affected them directly, but now this was happening; and (b) because a space had been opened up for scientists to listen to them.

However, it is necessary that traditional knowledge is transmitted verbally and it can vary according to the expertise of each person; above all, it must be systematized and verified. During the sessions of the Research Group, it was possible to cross-check the contributions made by the artisanal and semi-industrial trawler sectors. "Because each sector was implicated in the contributions presented, it is possible to confirm the validity of the information provided by each sector" said Molina.

Regarding the degree of consistency between traditional and scientific knowledge, both types of knowledge have a wide margin of coincidence (although not total), judging by what representatives of both the sectors implicated and the team facilitator told us. This confirms the validity and relevance of the knowledge of the people of the sea.

Scientific knowledge was provided thanks to the participation of academia, represented by two officials from the Centre for Marine and Limnology Research (CIMAR) of Costa Rica University. Academia played a double role in this context: (a) as participants, because they complemented the information provided by the fishers, and for the inputs that they brought into the discussion (regarding shrimp and other species that inhabit the zones exploited by the two fleets), which significantly enriched the discussion;

and (b) as a kind of "arbiter" through its impartiality, such as when the artisanal and semi-industrial trawling sectors could not reach agreement on how the zoning of their activities could be established, they requested the academics to provide criteria and they came up with an option that benefited exploitation as well as resource conservation. (It must be underscored that academic participation in this process of fisheries management does not imply that this endorses the process that is being undertaken. Its function is to incorporate the best scientific information to achieve the best decisionmaking possible).

Below, we provide a proposal on zoning presented to a representative of academia, with the objective of defining an isobath (depth gradient on the map) to protect gravid female sharks. "Only artisanal fisheries can fish from 0-40 m depth and up to the Eastern end of Caño Island, and this should be a priority research area (to define which kind of fleets and fisheries can be undertaken)", said Borrás

In addition, the role of the Research Group is not only relevant because it facilitated the incorporation of traditional and scientific knowledge, but also because it facilitated the interaction of scientists and fishers. Both scientists and fishing-sector representatives felt that there was a good interaction, a positive assessment that was due to a complex and wide process of work undertaken in its entirety by the all



LORNA MARCHENA / INCOPESCA

Without the contribution of traditional knowledge, it would not have been possible to undertake such a detailed analysis of the different areas and of the fishery resources

the parties. And despite the differences between, and within, the sectors, the participants were open to dialogue and to achieving consensus in order to generate sustainable exploitation of shrimp resources.

The incorporation of traditional knowledge also responds to a “democratic ideal” on knowledge and the management of natural resources, as it incorporates different uses and perspectives on a public resource. Historically, the fisheries sector has been marginalized at the political level and in the taking of decisions. But through the application of their knowledge in the Research Group, fishery-sector representatives were empowered in a context where the contributions provided by them were taken into account in decisionmaking at the national level.


Without the contributions provided by traditional knowledge, it would not have been possible to achieve the level of detail about marine resources in the different zones mapped. Neither would it have been possible to achieve consensus on the criteria applied for using the resources of each area.

Participative mapping was a tool that facilitated exchange of knowledge; however, there are other kinds of technical methodologies that could be used to achieve this. But more important than the technique is what is conveyed by it; those interviewed in this investigation highlighted the following points with regards to the development of a methodological proposal for this: “definition of a clear goal and a methodology to break down this fear (between scientists and fishers)”, said Wehrtmann; “should be visual, in a form that allows the contributions to be understood immediately, and to allow those who don’t know how to read and/or write to understand what is going on” said Solis Aguilar and Muñoz; “should be interactive in three ways: (a) not to listen for four hours to the same person talking, while we are seated listening”, said Chacón (b) the tool should enable participants to move about, to make these lengthy sessions more

productive (especially for fishers who are not used to sitting for long in only one place); and (c) should enable participants to develop in-depth discussions, and not just reply to a particular interviewer.

The work of the Research Group marks a milestone in the way fisheries resources are managed in Costa Rica. However, it involved a lengthy process of agreeing and disagreeing (with a high level of conflict), where trust and dialogue became necessary vehicles “to manage the human activities that depend on these resources, because the resources manage themselves alone.” (Molina, personal communication, 2016).

Through the management process, relationships have improved between some representatives of the artisanal sector and some representatives of the semi-industrial trawl sector (which has a long history of disputes over the use of different resources). Both sides recognize that they both must eat (through their fishery activities), but they must also carry out their activities in an environmentally sustainable way. During the process of participative mapping, both sectors were able to define their criteria with respect to the different zones where shrimp and the other species found are exploited within a particular area (there exists a great deal of similarity between the knowledge contributed by the representatives of the artisanal and semi-industrial sectors, according to their respective areas of expertise). This contributed to the resolution of conflicts between the parties.

In order for traditional knowledge to be incorporated into decision-making processes at the policy level, it must first of all be systematized and verified. In this sense, the work of the Research Group, which is part of the National Dialogue Round Table geared towards sustainable shrimp exploitation, has been successful. 

**For more**

[coopesolidar.org/](http://coopesolidar.org/)

**CoopeSoliDar**



# Sailing from a Good Port

A Central American regional workshop on the SSF Guidelines, held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, in December 2015 sought commitment to take forward the Guidelines in a binding manner

The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication has been of great importance for small-scale fishers worldwide. Fishers in Central America as a region, with the support of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the Cooperative for Social Solidarity (CoopeSoliDar R.L.) started a discussion on how to move towards the implementation of this important instrument at a regional workshop in Puntarenas, the central port on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, on 1–3 December 2015.

The Workshop was attended by about 30 participants from the Central American region. Fishers and fishers' organizations from Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panamá were present. There was also participation from the FAO, represented by John Jorgensen, Fisheries and Aquaculture Officer, FAO Sub-regional Office for Mesoamerica, Panama and Octavio Ramirez, FAO Representative in Costa Rica.

The implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the regional level would require creative and innovative action where dialogue, strategic alliances, negotiation, consensus and commitment would be needed to make it a reality. So the Workshop was an important milestone in this context.

Gustavo Meneses, Executive President, Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPESCA), Costa Rica, mentioned at the regional workshop's opening: "If you are here now, it is due to the fact that you had great struggles in the past—struggles for

assuring a better life, struggles for wanting to see a healthier sea and struggles for wanting to improve the livelihood of your fishing communities. To be here today means to recognize that there are still a lot of people along our coasts who are struggling for food, medicines and other needs". He highlighted how small-scale fishers together with the indigenous peoples have succeeded in placing the SSF Guidelines within the framework of the Costa Rican government policy for implementation.

The general objective of the Central American workshop was to

**"If you are here now, it is due to the fact that you had great struggles in the past..."**

move towards a plan of action for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the Central American region. The following specific objectives formed the basis for the discussions during the workshop:

- Integrate the efforts of civil society organizations of small-scale fisheries, indigenous peoples and fishers, and the Confederation of Artisanal Fishers of Central America (CONFEPESCA) for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- Define priorities at the regional level for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- Define a roadmap to ensure progress toward the main strategies defined for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

*This report is by **Vivienne Solis Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org) of CoopeSoliDar R.L. and Member, ICSF*

- Support organizations of civil society and artisanal fishers in capacity building and policy making geared to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

The workshop began by recalling that prior to the adoption of the SSF Guidelines, meetings were held in the Central American region, namely, in Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and El Salvador with the support of the ICSF. A regional meeting was also held in Tárcoles, Costa Rica.

There was general agreement among the participants that the SSF Guidelines marked a path for the development of a process that would help eradicate poverty and reduce marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors in the small-scale fisheries of Central America.

The proposals prepared by the artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen and other representatives at the regional workshop were important inputs for negotiations at the meeting of the Organization of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of Central America (OSPESCA) that took place in El Salvador during 15–16 December 2015, where agreements for regional implementation of the SSF Guidelines were developed.

The priorities for the regions were: governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resource management, social development and employment, gender equity, addressing risks from natural disasters and climate change, capacity development, and monitoring and control.

For each priority, fishers suggested clearly-defined actions and discussed the possible limitations in implementation efforts. The priority actions defined for each subject are discussed below:

#### **Governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resource management**

Priority actions:

- Create the ideal mechanism to implement the SSF Guidelines and develop a strategic plan led by OSPESCA and supervised by CONFEPESCA.

- Seek information on resources that form the basis of the SSF Guidelines.
- Respect the views and knowledge of local communities and organizations of fishers, and take them into account, prior to the adoption or establishment of marine protected areas and continental reserves.
- Encourage the authorities to adopt in principle the concept of the ecosystem approach to fisheries, within the legal framework.

#### **Social development and employment**

Priority actions:

- Recognize the importance of the small-scale fisheries sector for the region's economy and food security.
- Create a mechanism for social and financial support to fishing communities.
- Bring fishers within the ambit of medical insurance, pension, old-age benefit and financial credit.
- Create a legal framework for the social and economic development of fishing communities in their territories through replicable pilot models. This legal framework should factor in the implementation of all aspects of the SSF Guidelines.

#### **Gender equality**

Priority actions:

- Identify communities where the role of women in the fishing sector is relevant for the fishing culture and value chain (for example, New Armenia and La Ceiba, Honduras).
- Conduct a regional meeting to define strategies for action.
- Review and follow up the meeting on women in fisheries conducted in El Salvador.

#### **Addressing risks from natural disasters and climate change**

Priority actions:

- Demonstrate that the small-scale fisheries sector is the most vulnerable to climate change.
- Prepare a regional project on small-scale fisheries and climate

change, prioritizing coastal areas and islands and continental water bodies.

- iii. Disseminate to the communities the reasons for, and the effects of, climate change.
- iv. Prepare a programme for the adaptation to climate change.
- v. Identify communities that have been, or will be, directly affected by climate change to generate grants to support them.

### **Capacity development for fishers and their organizations**

Priority actions:

- i. Impart training for young fishermen in education, politics, biology and technology.
- ii. Establish a training centre for artisanal fishing.
- iii. Help fishermen strengthen their identity.
- iv. Encourage fisherwomen to fight for gender equality.
- v. Train fishermen in leadership skills, in acquiring knowledge of national and international legal frameworks, including the SSF Guidelines, and also prepare literacy programmes adjusted to the schedules of the fishermen, and impart knowledge of computing, administration and accounting.
- vi. Produce radio programmes to train fishermen in the above mentioned issues.

### **Monitoring and control**

Priority actions:

- i. Create programmes that discuss the legal framework in each fishing country, perhaps via the radio.
- ii. Publicize the SSF Guidelines at all levels (in communities and with all the relevant authorities and institutions).
- iii. Teach federations of fishermen to manage economic resources.
- iv. In the context of implementation of these priority actions, the fishers discussed several important limitations: lack of vision towards sustainable use of marine resources, mega development projects that affect fishermen and their communities, lack of will

on the part of governments, lack of economic resources, lack of organization at the community level, and finally, the lack of qualified personnel (fishermen who are prepared to discuss and create the necessary legal framework). The fishers also said that change in authority makes it difficult to implement the proposed actions, and there are also difficulties in training on the ecosystem approach to fisheries.

In the context of social development and employment, they rued the lack of political and moral will on the part of the authorities, which makes it difficult to implement actions at a regional level.

They also considered gender-oriented actions difficult in the follow-up and dissemination of the priority actions. For instance, OSPESCA held a meeting on gender and small-scale fisheries, which did not have any follow-up and very little has been done to date.

The fishers were also concerned about the absence of resources for programmes of adaptation to climate change, specifically for fishing communities, and the unwillingness of the governments to prioritize the sector. In this sense, they felt, the SSF Guidelines provide a good effort to turn the focus of attention of the authorities to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Perhaps the most important agreement of the regional workshop was to request the Central American States to make a commitment to take the SSF Guidelines forward in a binding manner by adopting a regional plan of implementation. OSPESCA representatives and the governmental authorities who participated in the regional workshop left with a clear mandate of informing the El Salvador OSPESCA meeting of the discussions and recommendations from this important fishers' regional workshop.

#### **For more**

[www.coopesolidar.org/](http://www.coopesolidar.org/)

**CoopeSoliDar**

[www.sica.int/ospesca/](http://www.sica.int/ospesca/)

**Ospesca**

# A Future Commitment

Costa Rica is working towards a national policy for implementing the SSF Guidelines recently adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

14

The Preface to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) notes: “Small-scale and artisanal fisheries, encompassing all activities along the value chain—pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest—undertaken by men and women, play an important role in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization. Small-scale fisheries provide nutritious food for local, national and international

its fishery resources with a long-term perspective, and with respect for the human rights and aspirations of the thousands of families that depend on the sea for their well-being. This is all very well in theory, but it is difficult to achieve in the context of fisheries conflicts, the interests and bad reputation of public institutions that have served political and economically powerful interests in the past, and which was the situation that I found when I sat down for the first time in the chair of the Chief Executive of our fisheries authority.

This year INCOPESCA will celebrate 20 years of existence. There has been little interest shown by previous administrations for serving the most vulnerable, poorest and most needy sectors. From now on, it is fundamental that, at this historic juncture, public policy promotes the development of decent living conditions and the human well-being of the coastal and seafaring communities.

When I arrived in INCOPESCA, an important international tool of enormous value, promoted by the FAO, was at my disposal; a tool which could lend a hand with developing a vision for supporting and working with the small-scale fisheries sector in Costa Rica.

## International support

The SSF Guidelines is an instrument that is close to the small-scale fishers. They have been party to its development and, thanks to the support of international, regional and national organizations, they have engaged in a participative process of discussing the issues that are of most concern to the sector. Just one month after 8 May (the date that the

The SSF Guidelines is an instrument that is close to the small-scale fishers.

markets and generate income to support local and national economies.”

I have learned about fishing communities from the inside. My pastoral work as a Catholic priest was undertaken in the heart of artisanal fishing communities along the Pacific coast of my country.

When the President of the Republic of Costa Rica asked me to work for the government and to take up the leadership post of Chief Executive of the national institute that administers fisheries in my country (INCOPESCA), I reflected on that experience and about the opportunity to bring some justice and equity to the fisheries of this small Central American country.

A country like Costa Rica, with two coasts and more than 500,000 sq km of sea, should be able to administer

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new government was installed), I participated with other governments from around the world that are FAO members in approving these SSF Guidelines.

My experience tells me that this instrument meets four important requirements that give it enormous value for the management of just and equitable fisheries in Latin America,

The SSF Guidelines were produced through a process of construction rather than from a desk. In the case of Central America, four national workshops were undertaken (in Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador) and a regional workshop where all the countries from the isthmus participated. In these workshops, the instrument was discussed and thanks to these workshops, the SSF Guidelines include the vision and particular needs of this sector in this part of the world.

Specific recognition has been accorded to an impoverished sector that has been overlooked and where poverty is concentrated. The SSF Guidelines recognize the need to address the historic debt that we owe this sector. In the case of Costa Rica, it is clear that there is a concentration of poverty in the coastal areas, to a large

extent caused by the lack of zoning and management policies but also due to overlaps of institutional competences that generate disorder and chaos.

The SSF Guidelines incorporate a vision of the future in which women and youth are included, where they obtain improved quality of life and well-being. In Central America, it must be recognized that small-scale fisheries generate a value chain that gives rise to pre- and post-harvest activities in which women and men of all ages participate. In many of our coastal zones, fisheries provide the only source of available work for this important section of the population.

Implementation is urgently needed to ensure a more sustainable productive activity. During the development process a strategy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines was discussed, so as to put good intentions into practice. In the case of Costa Rica, an analysis was undertaken that has allowed us to define some catalysing factors for sustainable small-scale fisheries and which provide more than just economic well-being by providing human beings with an identity, a culture, food security and options for decent work and well-being.

INCOPECSA



One of four national workshops undertaken in Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador. At these workshops, a strategy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines was discussed

## Statement from OSPESCA on the Approval of the SSF Guidelines

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Costa Rica, a member of the Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA), provided the venue for the consultation on the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines, which FAO promoted, with countries from Central and South America and the Caribbean, so we are faithful believers in the social and economic benefits of small-scale fisheries. Given this and the fact that fisheries in Central America are basically small-scale, we have an interest in affording it special attention.

And our national-level fishermen's organizations and the Central American Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen have been highly active in the various steps to generate the SSF Guidelines.

Another positive step taken by Central America is to arrive at this moment with a unique inter-sectoral position, which is to say that both the civil society representatives of artisanal fisheries and the governments support the content and hope that this meeting of the Committee on Fisheries will approve the SSF Guidelines, overcoming those few issues that need to be resolved.

This being so, the fisheries authorities have the desire, at the Central American level, to consider the governance framework of the SSF Guidelines as providing a binding agreement, which, it is hoped, could become concretized in the current year. Thus the SSF Guidelines will become binding in OSPESCA countries.

We understand the importance for fishermen and States to have guidelines that provide us with a framework for the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries, and let me urge all the delegations to make every effort to overcome our differences so that on this day the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication will be approved.

—This Statement was made by Gustavo Meneses Castro, Executive President of the Costa Rican Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture, at COFI 31 on 10 June 2014

Whilst I am providing leadership in the fisheries sector, Costa Rica will take up the challenge of elaborating a national policy for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. At a minimum, this process must include the following characteristics:

1. An approach that goes beyond INCOPESCA and which requires a joint institutionality established at the level of the highest political authority. We have initiated a process from INCOPESCA in which the office of the President of the Republic has accompanied us, towards positioning fisheries as an important sector that contributes to the national economy. We are now working closely with such important ministries as Human Development and Social Well-being, Public Works and Transport, and Health and Agriculture, to name a few.
2. A national dialogue that includes all the actors and sectors interested in achieving the sustainability of our seas, should be organized. We have initiated a management-oriented process that touches on the most human elements of the fisheries sectors in seeking positions of consensus, values and principles to achieve a management that benefits the country and which allows it to be applied in the future with environmental responsibility and social well-being.
3. Support from the government that, recognizing the relevance of the small-scale sector, is disposed to promote a policy of public aid to strengthen the organization and capabilities of the small-scale sector. I have committed myself to ensuring that the SSF Guidelines are included as part of the National Development Plan for 2015 – 2018.

4. A commitment of coastal communities to the environment and to social resilience to ensure development of the coasts and seas that is locally based and harmonious. Without the commitment of civil society, the State could not succeed in moving forward on many of the issues that secure the perspective of well-being in the fishing communities.

This government has established three very clear lines of work, which are absolutely and completely consistent with the philosophy of the SSF Guidelines:

- Fight corruption and strengthen transparency and efficiency of the State.
- Boost economic growth of the country and generate more and better jobs.
- Reduce inequality and eliminate extreme poverty.

I have instructed INCOPECA to ensure that the SSF Guidelines provide one of the main policy planks of this government in the realm of fisheries. This message has been heard and supported by the office of the President of the Republic. What is proposed demands a major effort, because it must form part of the management of fishery activity in our seas.

We hope that the National Development Plan, which is already in place, will, at the start of 2015, send a clear message about the priority that INCOPECA and this Administration will give to recognizing the contribution and productive value of the sector in contrast to the omissions of the past and as regards the future challenges it faces.

Four years is not long to achieve necessary change. It is urgent, knowing as we do that the future will bring major changes in climate, temperatures and sea levels that will directly affect coastal populations. From this perspective, the implementation of the SSF Guidelines provides an important way to address the need to adapt to climate change and for maintaining sources of food security which the sea and its culture provide.



Source : [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/costa\\_pol87.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/costa_pol87.jpg)

We hope that the example of Costa Rica motivates other countries in our region to take up the challenge of implementing the SSF Guidelines in a responsible manner, given their importance.

#### For more

[www.incopasca.go.cr](http://www.incopasca.go.cr)

**Costa Rican Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture, INCOPECA**

[www.fao.org/fishery/facp/CRI/es](http://www.fao.org/fishery/facp/CRI/es)

**Fisheries Country Profile—Costa Rica**



# We Don't Need No Marinas

**A project for the development of a marina in San Juanillo, in the north Pacific region of Costa Rica, has attracted strong opposition**

**S**an Juanillo, in the north Pacific region of Costa Rica, is a community of approximately 90 houses and 270 inhabitants, whose principal activity is fishing and work related to the construction and hospitality industries. There are 14 small-scale artisanal fishing boats in this coastal town, which depend on trammel nets and bottom-set lines as fishing gear, targeting mainly the spotted rose snapper (*Lutjanus guttatus*), locally known as *pargo mancha*. There are also two lobster diving vessels and a few others engaged in tourism.

The San Juanillo Fishers' Association (ASOPESJU), established in 1998, has a Board of Directors of eight members and 32 associates—nine women and 23 men. It strives to improve sanitary conditions at the fish collection centre; fetch better market prices by doing away with middlemen; and maintain access to the San Juanillo Bay.

Today, a tourism-related issue is confronting the community of San Juanillo. In July 2007, a tour operator proposed the development of a marina in the bay. The proposal was never discussed or debated publicly and only a small group of locals were in the know. Language problems confounded the issue and added to the doubts about the project.

The representatives of the investors of the marina project claimed to have had a very close relationship with the community, which contrasted with the accounts of various inhabitants we interviewed.

At one meeting we were invited to, a clear interest was expressed in developing the project as quickly as

possible. The investors had already prepared plans for a potential investment of US\$35 mn for the project, which, in addition to the marina, entailed infrastructure development in the adjoining coastal zone in the form of apartments, shops and restaurants.

However, some of the proposals put forward by the project's representatives were not well received by the community. One was for the relocation of the town's church to a more distant site so as not to interfere with the development of the marina. Verbal assurances were given to community members

**...the San Juanillo Fishers Association and the San Juanillo Development Association organized an information-sharing workshop to discuss the marina project.**

that they would be taken to the United States (US) to learn English and be trained to work for the marina project.

## Workshop

In the light of these developments, the San Juanillo Fishers Association and the San Juanillo Development Association organized an information-sharing workshop to discuss the marina project. Several experts were invited, including those specializing in social, environmental and oceanographic subjects, who debated the positive and negative effects of the project, based on technical and scientific criteria and on real-life experiences. Interestingly enough, among the participants

*This article, by **Henry García Zamora** and **Wagner Quirós Pereira** (wagner@biocenosismarina.org), has been translated by Vivienne Solis Rivera (vsolis@coopesolidar.org)*



were those who supported the marina project, including a lawyer and local investors.

At the end of the workshop, all the members of the Board of Directors of the San Juanillo Fishers Association and the Development Association, as well as another 92 members of the community who participated in the workshop, signed a statement, addressed to several national institutions, which expressed their opposition to the project. While they were not against development per se, the community representatives questioned the manner in which the project was being developed, and the lack of transparency and clarity in matters related to the environmental, social, cultural and institutional sustainability of the project.

A new draft bill that modifies several articles of Law No. 7744, "Concession and Operation of the Tourist Marinas", states that "parts of

a marina are considered to include: the buildings, the installations, the access roads to different areas, and other private property designed, by their owners, to provide services for the tourist marina and included as part of the concession." This has generated doubts in the community about free access to the San Juanillo Bay, which has only one access road which could be closed off due to the marina construction. During a visit to the most important marinas of the central Pacific zone of Costa Rica, San Juanillo community members saw first-hand the harsh reality of access—most marinas had only one entrance with 24-hour security and other restrictions.

While the San Juanillo community is certainly not opposed to development as such, they want it to be responsible, be respectful of their rights, and be inclusive and transparent. In a statement to several national institutions, including the Santa Cruz Municipality, the National Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPECA), the Ministry of the Environment (MINAE), the Ostional National Wildlife Refuge, the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Fora of Small-scale Fishers, the community members declared:

"The undersigned persons from the communities of San Juanillo, Cuajiniquil and Guanacaste send their greetings and, at the same time, express their opposition to the intended marina development involving around 200 yachts and associated infrastructure in the fragile and enclosed bay of San Juanillo.

### Collective action

Having informed ourselves about the different aspects related to the development of the marina in our community, we have collectively pondered over



**THE SAN JUANILLO BAY YACHT & BEACH CLUB**

the substantial negative effects of the proposal. We believe this project will jeopardize our culture as a community of artisanal fishers, and endanger the bay and its natural resources on which, for around 30 years, we have depended for our daily livelihoods. In the medium to longer term, this type of development will increase our cost of living, threaten the security and tranquillity of our community, and put at risk the tradition we wish to pass on to future generations. Through this statement, we also assert our rights to a healthy and stable environment, as established in Article 50 of the country's Constitution.

Our town has existed for more than 70 years and we know that we live in a very beautiful place with unique characteristics that attract a lot of interest. We wish to keep it as it is, and promote sustainable development projects like rural community tourism. The marina project is not consistent with the initiatives that we, as a community, have been proposing for many years. We call on the representatives of the Costa Rican State institutions primarily, the Santa Cruz Municipality, MINAE, INCOPECA and the Office of the Ombudsman—as well as national and international organizations, to support our cause and not permit the development of a marina in our bay. This project has been rejected by our community and we confirm that this is the position of not just the signatories to this petition but also organizations at the local level. We call on you to support us and follow up our campaign to deter the unwanted efforts being made by parties interested in the marina project”.

The anti-marina campaign by the San Juanillo community involved a great degree of communication and exchange of information with other coastal communities in Costa Rica, like Tarcoles on the Pacific coast, who had experienced similar development projects near their homes, which affected their traditional fishing grounds. Field visits and sharing of real-life experiences revealed the realities behind this kind of investment in 'development', which offers few



A fisherman in San Juanillo Bay getting ready to set out on a fishing trip.  
The San Juanillo community is fighting against the construction of a marina in the area

direct benefits for the communities in the immediate project area.

Looking ahead, the area's residents hope to bank on the natural beauty and strategic locational characteristics of San Juanillo Bay to promote projects that have no detrimental impacts and that are characterized by openness and transparency, and a commitment to the larger environmental and social well-being of the community. 3

#### For more



[www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/leyes/pdf/Law\\_on\\_Concession\\_and\\_Operation\\_of\\_Tourist\\_Marinas.pdf](http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/leyes/pdf/Law_on_Concession_and_Operation_of_Tourist_Marinas.pdf)

#### **The Marinas Concession and Operation Law**

[www.biocenosismarina.org/index.php/en/fisheries](http://www.biocenosismarina.org/index.php/en/fisheries)

#### **Biocenosis Marina**

# Unconstitutionally Geared

A recent ruling by Costa Rica's highest judicial body that shrimp trawling is unconstitutional raises several questions

In August 2013 Costa Rica joined a select group of countries in Latin America that have instituted trawl bans. This was in response to a lawsuit filed by six environmental organizations—Asociación Programa Restauración de Tortugas Marinas (PRETOMA), Federación Costarricense de Pesca Turística (FECOPT), Fundación Marviva, Fundación Promar, Internacional Students Volunteers Inc. (ISV) and The Leatherback Trust (TLT)—against several articles of Costa Rica's 2005 Fisheries and Aquaculture Law. The environmental NGOs were also backed by a number of artisanal

due to its damaging effects on the marine ecosystem. They ruled that the issue of new trawler licences for shrimp fishing and the renewal of existing ones be prohibited.

This article explores the background to, and details of, this ban, examining how and why it came about. It also draws out some key lessons learned and issues that need to be followed up on in order ensure the achievement of a wider set of environmental, social and economic objectives for the country.

Six countries share the territorial space of the Central American region: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. They form what is known as the Central American isthmus, the largest in the world, with the most complex biophysical characteristics. All the countries, except El Salvador and Belize, have coasts facing two oceans. Their combined coastline stretches for 3,800 km on the Atlantic/Caribbean side and for 2,800 km on the Pacific side. The combined area of their exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is one mn sq km on the Pacific and 600,000 sq km on the Atlantic side.

Of the 44 mn people currently living in the Central American region, an estimated 35 per cent live in poverty. Several regional studies carried out by the State of the Region programme highlight that significant inequalities persist amongst the people living in Central America according to their gender, age, ethnicity and place of residence.

## Important species

In Central America, deepwater shrimp aside, the most abundant and commercially important species that

Of the 44 mn people currently living in the Central American region, an estimated 35 per cent live in poverty.

fishing bodies. In doing so, Costa Rica became the third country in Latin America to impose a ban on this gear, following Venezuela and Ecuador.

According to Randall Arauz, President of the Marine Turtle Restoration Project (PRETOMA), one of the NGOs heading the anti-trawl campaign, shrimp trawling licences have few restrictions, allowing boats to target other species as long as they declare them as bycatch. "In Costa Rica, a licence to trawl is a licence to kill," he said. "Industrial shrimp trawlers can target snappers, call them bycatch and not leave anything for local fishermen."

The Constitutional Chamber (Sala IV) of the Supreme Court of Justice, Costa Rica's highest judicial body, declared trawling unconstitutional

*This article has been written by **Marvin Fonseca Borrás** (mfonseca@coopesolidar.org) and **Vivienne Solís Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org), Members of CoopeSoliDar R.L., Costa Rica*



appear in the landings are generally referred to by colour, like white, pink and coffee. In the Caribbean the following varieties are caught: *Litopenaeus schmitti* (white), *Farfantepenaeus aztecus* (coffee), *F. brasiliensis* (pink), *F. notialis* (pink), *F. duorarum* (pink) and *Xiphopenaeus kroyeri* (shrimplet/ camaroncillo). In the Pacific the following varieties are caught: *L. vannamei* (white), *L. stylirostris* (white), *L. occidentalis* (white), *F. brevisrostris* (red), *F. californiensis* (coffee), *X. riveti* (tamarin/tití), *Trachypenaeus byrdi* (tiger) and *Protrachypene precipua* (yellow).

Reports indicate that shrimp trawling activities began in the 1950s. In the 1970s, the first signs of overfishing became apparent from excess fleet size. Some preliminary evaluations were carried out using production models, and reductions in the number of vessels were recommended. However, the proposals were not accepted by the companies. In the 1990s, due to increasing fuel prices, the fleet reduced in size, and some countries in the region managed to stabilize yields. From 1996 to 2005 annual recorded landings showed declining trends for the region (see figure).

Costa Rica's coastal zone extends 1,160 km into the Pacific and 200 miles into the Caribbean. Its marine territory of 589,000 sq km is ten times larger than its land area (see map).

According to various sources, official records of shrimp landings date from 1952, following the introduction of shrimp trawling into the country, and show a total catch of 43.2 tonnes in that year.

The Costa Rican fleet of deep-water and coastal shrimp trawlers has an estimated 73 licensed vessels, of which 63 licences are for fishing coastal shrimp, 44 are active, three have expired and not been renewed, eight are in default and suspended, and eight others are inactive at the request of the concessioners. Of the 10 licences allocated for deep-water shrimp, two are active and eight inactive.

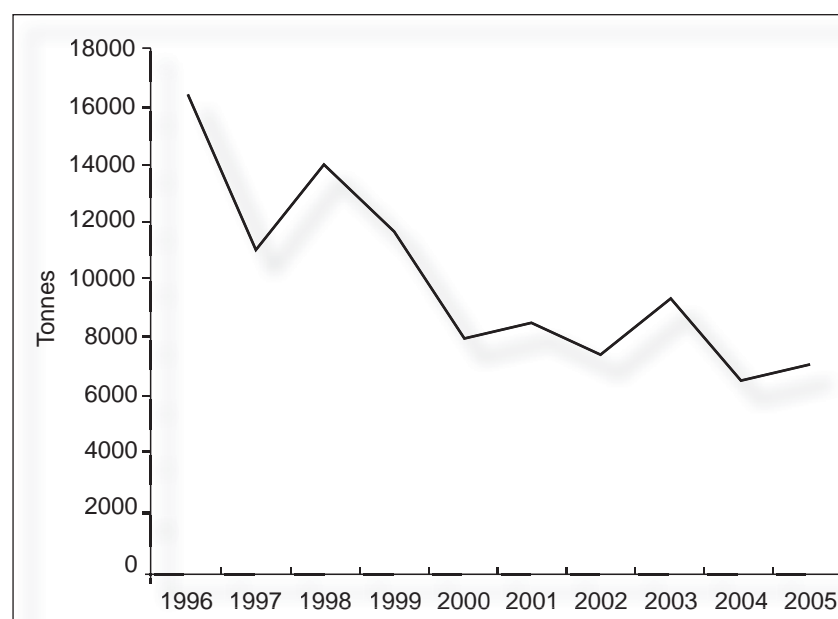
In recent years, a policy debate on marine conservation has developed in the country, linked to the relevance of maintaining semi-industrial fleets for catching shrimp.

In terms of conservation, since 2004, through Executive Decree 32731-MINAE, the country has set itself the objective of analyzing the feasibility of dedicating up to 25 per cent of the EEZ for conservation, restoration, management and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources.

One of the results of this is that NGOs interested in marine conservation have been encouraged to promote and engage in judicial actions aimed at eradicating this kind of fishing.

Numerous studies have been carried out in the region and globally on the negative impacts of fishery activities using trawls and industrial fishing gears. In some parts of the Pacific, artisanal trawling is also carried out.

In policy terms, the Costa Rican State has a track record of subsidizing the fishery sector (including artisanal, semi-industrial and recreational fishing). Data published by the Mar Viva Foundation in 2010 estimate that in 2008 the fuel tax exoneration given to the shrimp trawl sector amounted to US\$1.74 mn, benefitting 47 vessels that continue to operate. On average, each vessel was exempted



Shrimp landings in the Central American Region over the period 1996–2005

Source: FIINPESCA, 2007



from payment of \$37,000, equivalent to a subsidy of \$2.52 per kg of shrimp.

It is worth mentioning that other sectors have also received exemptions from the Costa Rican State, although no criteria have been used to ensure a fair distribution of these benefits, which would allow the more vulnerable sectors, like the artisanal fishery sector, to be strengthened.

**...there are historic ties between the fishermen who work in the industrial fleets and those from artisanal fishing communities.**

In social terms, analyzing how to regulate the environmental impacts of the shrimp trawling sector is more complex. On the one hand, the destruction of shallow-water coastal ecosystems directly affects small-scale fisheries in both economic and ecological terms. On the other hand, there are historic ties between the fishermen who work in the industrial fleets and those from artisanal fishing communities. For example, part of the catch may be shared, and used for bait by the artisanal fleet. In several small-scale communities the trawler bycatch is shared, and members may barter other consumable goods for fish for home consumption.

In terms of employment generation, it is estimated that 250 to 300 crew and around 600 women would lose their jobs if this fleet halts productive activities.

The Sala IV ruling declared shrimp trawling unconstitutional through Resolution No.2013010540. Exp: 12-010016-0007-CO, according to which:

“As a result of the action, the mention ‘of shrimp with trawl nets’ in sub-paragraph (d) Clause 27 of Article 2 and sub-paragraph (d) of Article 43, as well as in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of Clause 47 of the Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Law 8436 of 1 March 2005 is declared unconstitutional. In accordance with Article 91 of the Constitutional Jurisdiction Act, this ruling is declarative and retroactive from the date the aforementioned

norms came into effect, without prejudice to those who acquired rights in good faith. In consequence, following the notification of this judgement, INCOPESCA (the Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture) should not provide any new permits, authorizations or licences for shrimp trawling, renew existing ones or re-activate inactive ones.” (Extract of the vote on Res. 2013010540. Exp 12-010016-0007-CO).

The ruling is supported by technical studies that demonstrate and confirm the negative impacts on the marine environment caused by trawl fishing. One interpretation is that a contradiction exists in Article 50, amongst others, of the Political Constitution of Costa Rica, reformed by Law No. 7412 of 3 June 1994 that states:

“The State shall endeavour to ensure the maximum well-being of all the inhabitants of the country, organizing and stimulating production and the most equitable distribution of wealth. Everyone has the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. It is, therefore, legitimate to denounce acts that infringe that right and to claim reparation of the damage caused. The State will guarantee, defend and preserve that right. The law will determine who is responsible and the corresponding sanctions.”

Following the notification of this ruling, INCOPESCA will not be able to (a) provide any new permit or licence to fish for shrimp with bottom trawls; (b) renew existing permits; and (c) re-activate inactive ones. Existing permits, authorizations and licences will remain valid until they expire. Once a licence has expired, it cannot be extended.

### Active vessels

Based on 2010 information from the Mar Viva Foundation, the first licences were set to expire in March 2013, with the permits of 40 active vessels ending in 2018. The status of the expired licences has not been followed up on. But the ruling also provides a way out for trawler owners. It specifies that, under the supervision

of INCOPECA, the vessel owners may carry out trawling and new permits may be issued in strict accordance with the legal system. This is subject to adopting, where scientifically feasible, those technologies that are as environmentally friendly as possible, that have demonstrated “a significant reduction of such bycatch that is compatible with sustainable democratic development”.

The ruling polarized national opinion. On the one hand, non-governmental marine conservation organizations saw the ruling as a major victory. On the other, the State sector immediately began legal processes to seek an alternative solution that allowed the industrial fleet to continue its activities. A new bill has already been drafted that, if passed, could make shrimp trawling legal again. This political response is possibly motivated by the political and economic power wielded by the owners of the shrimp fleet. A week after the ruling, shrimp trawler owners and workers clogged the main route from Caldera to Puntarenas, both on the central Pacific coast, blocking traffic for hours.

The situation is highly complex. In Costa Rica, NGOs that traditionally were involved in marine conservation issues show few signs of any commitment to address, in a serious way and in the long term, the social issues arising from conservation. Neither they nor the Costa Rican State acknowledge the relevance of fisheries (above all, the artisanal sector) as providing the basis for productive activities that are of enormous importance for the food security and the well-being of coastal marine communities. Clearly, the only interest of the NGOs is in conservation, with an increasingly neoliberal tendency. Meanwhile, for its part, the State is only interested in promoting activities that provide benefits of an exclusively economic nature.

The question that lies behind the trawl ruling is whether or not these organizations, both governmental and non governmental, have taken advantage of artisanal fishery organizations to achieve

their objectives without having any genuine interest in supporting small-scale artisanal fishing in Costa Rica as a dignified productive activity of importance for the development of the country. There are various cases in the country where organizations and small-scale fishworkers feel that they have been deceived and used by similar movements. The ultimate objective has been conservation, and sadly linked to it, disrespect for the land-tenure rights and rights to marine territories used for the development of artisanal fisheries.

The State's position is clear. The current Costa Rican government has a blinkered economic perspective that does not see the valuable contribution the sea and its resources can make to the well-being of the people and to improving the plight of the most vulnerable groups. Suffice it to say that the main opponents to the Sala IV ruling is INCOPECA itself, the national institution responsible for fisheries and

COURTESY OF THE GENERAL LIBRARIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



Costa Rica is part of the Central American isthmus, the largest in the world, with the most complex biophysical characteristics

COOPESOLIDAR R.L.



Small-scale fishers from the Tárcoles community in Costa Rica. With over seven years of experience, these fishers have been able to manage their resources well

collective environmental right. If the former threatens the conservation or sustainability of the latter, the political constitution protects the environmental right, because of irreparable damage done to the environment.

It is worth clarifying that the decision from Sala IV (Constitutional Chamber) came about through a dissenting vote. If there had been a unanimous vote, all the shrimp vessels would have had to cease their activities immediately. This situation has opened a possibility for the trawler sector to find a solution.

Outside Costa Rica, even when the aforementioned vote generated the expectation that the measure would be applied immediately and irreversibly, it is clear that a possibility exists, through the corresponding legal reform, that in the future the categories that have been removed could be reinstated, on the condition that specific reference is made to the obligatory use of measures to reduce by catch (through bycatch reduction devices), so long as there is a prior modification of the law. With corresponding scientific and technological backing, a significant reduction in bycatch can be demonstrated.

Without downplaying the importance of the unconstitutionality vote, it is important to recognize that, from an ecosystem perspective, other activities exist that destroy the ecosystems on which the well-being of Costa Rican coastal communities depend.

### Ecosystem degradation

These include the degradation of coastal ecosystems through the transformation of land use; the deteriorating quality of coastal waters through pollution from land-based sources; increasing coastal erosion, flooding and instability of the shore; increasing populations and urbanization, which affect marine coastal areas; climate-change factors as well as the expulsion of artisanal fishing communities throughout the Costa Rican maritime zone and the consequent loss of their identity.

aquaculture which initiated the drafting of a bill to contest the immediate impacts of the ruling made by the Constitutional Chamber on the trawler sector.

According to statements made by the Executive President of INCOPECA through the media, the legal aspects of this ruling are more important than the technical aspects. It is also considered that the impacts of the ruling will provoke an increase in unemployment in the coastal province of Puntarenas, which could be seriously affected by the cessation of trawler activities.

From a legal perspective, says jurist Marion Peña Chacon, the constitutional ruling opens up the possibility for a new interpretation in accordance with the principles of environmental law in Costa Rica. This concerns how the impacts of the rulings on unconstitutionality are analyzed and measured, where there exists a conflict between the rights acquired in good faith and the collective rights of an environmental nature.


The pertinent details expressed by the vote is that acquired rights cannot be violated when they come up against environmental rights and, specifically, when a right allegedly acquired challenges a

Adding to this, artisanal fishing communities continue to be socially disadvantaged as regards levels of health and education, compared to other segments of the population. All the above have a direct impact on coastal marine ecosystems, which are the basis for the survival of local small-scale fishing communities.

Several lessons can be learned from this experience that justify longer-term monitoring and analysis:

1. National and international policy instruments exist that can be used to eliminate the most destructive fleets on the seas and orient such initiatives towards achieving the well-being of the least harmful fleets which are of great social importance, like the artisanal fleets. However, up to now, the marine conservation paradigm in Costa Rica has not brought any benefits to the artisanal fishers, but rather marine conservation practices have caused the country's artisanal fishery sector to be displaced and undermined, with a paradigm that is totally neoliberal and which adopts an approach that takes no account of social issues.
2. Over and above environmental protection interests, there are economic and political interests that affect the most vulnerable fishery sectors (like the artisanal fleet). This tends to polarize national-level positions around whether the best option is to protect the trawling industry or to eliminate it. At the time the ruling was announced, there was no perspective in Costa Rica that placed importance on the issue of marine conservation linked to well-being and which focused attention on artisanal fisheries as being of social, economic and environmental interest for the country, compared to other sectors that have a greater impact on the resources.
3. The 2011 State of the Nation report clearly mentions that the Costa Rican State does not have the capacity either to implement

necessary actions to ensure that marine conservation initiatives deliver well-being for coastal communities, or to ensure that conservation of the resource base sustains their identity and culture.

4. International processes that had a bearing on this constitutional ruling as regards the shrimp trawlers and the regularization of the industrial fleets have not had any positive practical impact, given that most of the fleet has valid licences. For the moment, only those experiences that have succeeded in defining community governance of the sea with active participation of artisanal fishermen have managed to progress towards a balanced marine conservation that also seeks to improve well-being and quality of life.
5. The impacts of industrial trawling on marine conservation are as negative as the social impacts caused by conservation policies that exclude people. The country should redefine its social, economic and environmental objectives for marine conservation in order to move forward on a wider front that genuinely promotes a more equitable distribution of marine resource use. The importance and need for attention of a vulnerable artisanal fisheries sector should be recognized, considering the threats of extinction from an exclusive and neoliberal development model.
6. Monitoring is needed at national and international levels, so that the effects of marine conservation and the quality-of-life improvements for human populations living in coastal marine zones can be measured, both as real and positive indicators of sustainable development. 

#### For more



[www.ticotimes.net/More-news/News-Briefs/Costa-Rica-bans-shrimp-trawling\\_Thursday-August-08-2013](http://www.ticotimes.net/More-news/News-Briefs/Costa-Rica-bans-shrimp-trawling_Thursday-August-08-2013)

#### **Costa Rica Bans Shrimp Trawling**

[www.incopescas.go.cr](http://www.incopescas.go.cr)

**Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture**



# Giving Back to the Sea

**Victor Rocha, President of the Golfo Dulce Fishermen Federation (FENOPEA) in Costa Rica talks of the challenges facing the region's fishers**

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## On the challenges facing FENOPEA:

For the small-scale fishermen from the South Pacific coast of the Central American country of Costa Rica, the challenge of promoting a fishermen's organization in this part of the country has to do necessarily with ensuring the economic stability and sustainability of the fishermen and their families. We also need to keep in mind responsible fishing. We don't want to fish out and finish the marine resources; we need to take care of the resources.

Our coastal societies have existed for generations, but because of weak organizations and wrong agreements with the government and local agencies, our communities have been disappearing. Our present effort is aimed at maintaining our culture and valuing our way of living. We need to rescue our way of life, which is akin to that of a peasant, only that we rely on the sea. We believe that a small group of small-scale fishers with the will to achieve the objective of responsible fishing can rescue our culture and way of life.

**To tell a fisherman that he has to keep away from the sea is to kill his spirit.**

This is the challenge before our federation, which is working with different small-scale fisher associations in the Golfo Dulce region, with a common vision of responsible fishing that it hopes to spread to others.

## On marine conservation:

What is wrong is how the resource is being exploited right now, even by the small-scale fishers. In our case, we were using environmentally damaging fishing gears. But having realized the harm, we have made a collective effort through a small group of fishermen who have embraced the objective of conservation and promotion of responsible fishing. Our motto is: "Fishing to conserve and conserving to fish; just as the sea gives to me, I give back to the sea".

## On the difficulties in organizing the small-scale fishing sector:

The hardest part about organizing small-scale fishers is to get them to believe in their value as fishermen and also to get them to realize that other sectors can value their work too. We need to realize that others depend on our work, and we must ensure that other sectors do not harm us, as some have done in the past. In this way, the small-scale fishermen will not only value themselves but also the products that they bring from the sea.

## On the future vision of FENOPEA:

I think that we are bringing to life a creature that, in time, will motivate the fishermen at the national level. Since FENOPEA is an organization that was born to fight for the rights of small-scale fishermen and to bridge the needs of these fishermen, it not only manages their social and economic affairs but also looks after the fishermen's families. To tell a fisherman that he has to keep away from the sea is to kill his spirit. FENOPEA is an institution that will fight for the inalienable rights of fishermen.

*This interview was conducted with the support of **Coopesolidar R.L.**, and its associates, **Daniela Barguil** (dbarguil@coopesolidar.org) and **Vivienne Solís** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org), who helped in transcription and translation*



Researchers discussing the outcome of a study with a fishing community in Costa Rica, which is working to sustain livelihoods and promote conservation of resources

### On adaptation to climate change:

The best we can do is not to use damaging fishing gears that will affect our resources in an irreversible manner. We also need to obtain training in climate-change adaptation so that we can all work together towards the common aim of sustaining our livelihoods and promoting conservation.

#### For more



[www.coopesolidar.org/](http://www.coopesolidar.org/)  
**CoopeSolidar. R.L.**

[www.marviva.net/index.php/es/por-una-pesca-artesanal-responsable-en-el-golfo-dulce](http://www.marviva.net/index.php/es/por-una-pesca-artesanal-responsable-en-el-golfo-dulce)

**Marviva: Responsible Artisanal Fishing in Golfo Dulce**

# The Sea Gives Us Everything

Several lessons can be learned about the conceptual and practical linkages between artisanal fishing communities and marine protected areas in Costa Rica

*The sea gave me everything...my livelihood, sustenance, my children's education and daily food.*

—Teofilo Naranjo, artisanal fisherman from Tárcoles

**T**eofilo Naranjo is an artisanal fisherman from the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. He has lived close to the sea for more than 70 years, and has three children—Jeannette, Rolando and Gilberto—who all live and work in Tárcoles, making a living from artisanal fishing, which has great significance for communities and livelihoods in Costa Rica, as in other parts of Central America.

Costa Rica is a country with an extensive marine territory of 598,682 sq km, (eleven times the country's land territory) and two coasts, the Pacific and the Caribbean, each with particular marine ecosystems and distinct cultural characteristics. The coastal and marine geography of both coasts has shaped the culture and way of life of many coastal communities in Costa Rica who depend on the ocean and its resources for their livelihoods and development.

Artisanal fishing is of great relevance in Costa Rica, as in other parts of Central America and elsewhere, from a social, environmental, economic and cultural perspective. Artisanal fishing is the source of work, income and food security for many fishers and coastal communities. Fishing in the coasts of Central America is not only an economic activity but is also a way of life that permeates and shapes individual and collective identities. Cultural and social values associated with artisanal fishing are a constant in

the ways of life of coastal communities and in their everyday living, expressed in language, traditional knowledge, navigation and fishing techniques, traditional cooking recipes, and other particular sociocultural values that characterize fishing communities along the coasts.

It is a fact that artisanal fishing contributes to the social and human well-being of many coastal communities in the country and region. However, the artisanal fishing sector and fishing coastal communities in

**...some coastal communities have been displaced by exclusionary conservation approaches that have denied or restricted their rights of access to resources...**

the country face numerous serious problems that are putting their livelihoods at risk. Among them are fish stock depletion and marine and coastal resource degradation; pollution; restricted or denied access to resources; minimal access to public services (like education and healthcare); unequal resource competition with the industrial fishing sector; exclusion from mass coastal tourism development; poverty; and marginalization from the country's development policies.

## Communities displaced

Furthermore, some coastal communities have been displaced by exclusionary conservation approaches that have denied or restricted their rights of access to resources, and that have not recognized their rights

*This article, by **Vivienne Solís** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org) and **Daniela Barguil**, (dbarguil@coopesolidar.org), associates of CoopeSoliDar R.L., is based on the collective knowledge of the organization. It also draws on discussions with coastal artisanal fishing communities in Costa Rica and other parts of central America*

of participation in decisionmaking and their roles as relevant actors of conservation and responsible use of natural resource management.

In Costa Rica, the National System of Protected Areas (SINAC), of the Ministry of Environment, has not been able to conjugate successfully conservation efforts and policies with the well-being of the local communities that live in designated protected areas or in adjacent areas, even though the mission of this State institution clearly notes the need to promote participation of local communities and respect their efforts towards conservation. It is not until very recent (2009), that two new categories of marine protected areas (MPAs) have been recognized by this institution; *Reservas Marinas* and *Areas Marinas de Manejo*, categories that in theory, should promote the benefit sharing for the satisfaction of the local communities' needs and quality of life, and the sustainable use of resources, respectively.

However, it has been very difficult to implement, at the level of the

and without decisionmaking power over their territories and resources. The case of the Ballena Marine National Park in the south Pacific coast of the country exemplifies this.

The Ballena Marine National Park was established in 1989 and its limits re-defined in 1992. As in the case of many other protected areas, the creation of the Ballena Marine National Park was done with an exclusionary approach and limited consultation with the local communities, which had to suffer the consequent social and cultural disruptions. Three fishing communities in Bahia, Uvita and Ballena were displaced and then disappeared. That caused serious conflicts between resource users and the management authorities of the park.

The local communities demanded legitimate and representative structures for collaborative management. However, this co-management initiative failed due to the lack of legal instruments that allow the State to support a different kind of governance in protected areas. The collapse of the co-management structure generated frustration, and deteriorated the dialogue among the stakeholders, augmenting the situation of conflict that persists to date, and furthers irreversible human impacts.

The exclusion of social considerations and the unequal distribution of power in protected area management calls for a change and efforts to find, and implement, new ways that bridge the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems with the development of the local communities.

### Resource management

An innovative approach that allows the dignified and respectful inclusion of fishers and fishworkers in the processes of conservation and resource management is urgently needed, along with an approach that strengthens community development and re-centres local populations as actors of responsible use of resources and as agents of conservation efforts.

**An innovative approach that allows the dignified and respectful inclusion of fishers and fishworkers in conservation and resource management is urgently needed...**

national Ministry of Environment, the recognition of new models of governance of MPAs, which allow the local communities and indigenous people to take part in the conservation and development decisions of their territories.

Thus, conservation through protected areas and national parks in Costa Rica have often resulted in the displacement of local communities from their territories and from their traditional livelihood activities, and, as a consequence, has denied local communities' their basic rights. As a result, local populations and, in particular, fishing communities along the coasts are left without any alternatives for their development



It is only very recently that INCOPESCA, the National Institute of Fishing and Aquaculture, recognized the interest and efforts of local communities towards marine conservation, fisheries management and development. This was done through the approval of a decree that recognizes what has been called, "Marine Areas of Responsible Fishing".

In response, there has been a new wave of positive examples where the artisanal fishing sector is carrying out its own community-based initiatives of responsible use and management of fisheries, and marine and coastal conservation.

The Association of Fishers of Palito (ASOPESPA) in Chira Island, one of the islands located in the inner area of the Nicoya peninsula, has created and implemented a voluntary initiative for the protection of a reef zone, a site of great importance for the reproduction and growth of different species of fish. This area was delimited and is regulated according to the fishers' own management decisions. Regulations, such as the ban of destructive fishing practices for this zone, have had a positive effect on the local fishery and ecosystem, and, as a consequence, on the fishers and fishworkers of the locality.

The sustainable fisheries management policies and the regulations for responsible fishing put in place in Palito have been successful thanks to the efforts and initiative of the artisanal fishers to conserve the area's resources. This zone has now been recognized as a "responsible fishing area" by INCOPESCA. However, there is still a long way for the country to move forward, towards more community-based models of governance. ASOPESPA has made a good start, and local communities are beginning to see the benefits of conservation and are moving towards a more commanding position of recognition for their conservation efforts.

San Francisco of Coyote is a community located between two protected areas: the National Wildlife Refugees of Caletas-Ario



An artisanal fisher in CoopeTárcoles R.L., the local artisanal fishing organization of the community of Tárcoles

and Camaronal in the north Pacific. The Association of Artisanal Fishers of Coyote (ASPECOY), created in 2003, is the organization that brings together fishers from three different communities of San Gerardo, San Jorge and Barrio Caliente.

These artisanal fishers face serious conflicts that affect their activities. These problems are related to land rights, organizational issues, and conflicts with industrial fishers and other artisanal fishers who use destructive fishing gear. Furthermore, the artisanal fishers have serious limitations in commercializing their products and are already facing the decline of the fishery's resources as are many other communities along the coast.

### Turtle nesting sites

The neighboring protected area of Caletas-Ario and Camaronal are important sites for marine turtle nesting, and so it is important to protect them from industrial fishing and destructive fishing practices. It is necessary to create mechanisms that incorporate conservation principles in the management of fisheries. A first step towards this objective was done with the formation of ASPECOY. A participatory mapping of the fishing area was done as an effort

for the management of the local fishery. Five fishing zones and their capture species were identified.

This first initiative goes in line with the necessity of incorporating the social element—specifically, artisanal fishers and their knowledge—in marine/coastal conservation. The creation of alliances with civil society and local government bodies, which strengthen local empowerment for the management and conservation of marine resources, is imperative to build solutions for the problems facing our oceans, coasts and our people.

The Community-based Marine Area of Responsible Artisanal Fishing of Tárcoles in the central Pacific is part of the community-based initiatives that have been put forward for responsible use and marine conservation in Costa Rica.

CoopeTárcoles R.L., the local artisanal fishing organization of the community of Tárcoles, and CoopeSoliDar R.L., have made a great effort in bringing back fishers' knowledge and decisionmaking into fisheries management and marine conservation. The Community-based Marine Area of Responsible Artisanal Fishing of Tárcoles has been recognized as a model of governance that not only sets regulations for sustainable fishing but that also secures the artisanal fishers' rights of access to resources and their right

to participate in decisionmaking in fisheries management and conservation. This initiative is based on the values of equity and social inclusion in marine conservation.

The fishers and fishworkers, as daily users of the resources and the ecosystem, have been the key stakeholders in this process and they have been the central actors in building this initiative. A locally adapted Code of Responsible Fishing, a locally managed data-base, and a participatory mapping of the fishing areas, have all been key processes that have enabled the recognition of this community-based marine area. Furthermore, the locally managed database and the participatory zoning repositions the importance of local knowledge in the management of fisheries, and has given a better position and greater authority to the artisanal fishers as decision-makers and resource managers.

It is important to promote and strengthen strategies that advance the sustainability and protection of the livelihoods and well-being of local artisanal fishing communities who depend on the ocean and need to have their rights defended. These efforts can be strengthened by working with the traditional national park services. Costa Rica can also use other channels like the national fishing institutes, which are mandated to promote responsible fishing efforts.

### Lessons learned

The following lessons can be learned from the experience of this small Central American country:

1. The artisanal fishing sector recognizes the need for sustainable use of marine diversity. The coastal communities' interest in responsible use and conservation has been confirmed by their efforts to develop fishing based on their livelihood needs and survival strategies.
2. Artisanal fishing as a culture should be safeguarded and defended by government bodies and non-governmental organizations. Artisanal fishing is not only a productive activity for

COOPESOLIDAR R.L.



Artisanal fishers prepare their lines to go fishing in Coyote. The Association of Artisanal Fishers of Coyote (ASPECOY) was created in 2003

these communities but also a way of life and culture that includes local knowledge about marine resources. Artisanal fishing communities want to keep fishing as a way of life, and that desire should be respected by the conservation sector.

3. The fishing sector is very heterogeneous (artisanal, small-scale, semi-industrial and industrial are all different segments of the same sector) and this aspect needs to be acknowledged. There are big asymmetries in the way the law is implemented. The artisanal fishing sector has large needs but is being socially and economically excluded. Organizations need to be reinforced at the local level and alliances strengthened to work with other sectors.
4. There are no examples in the context of the National System of Protected Areas (SINAC) of active participation of the artisanal fishing sector in the decision-making processes for conservation and fisheries management schemes. It is of great importance to promote other models of MPA governance where communities and local fishers are integrated and constitute part of the initiatives.
5. The establishment of relationships by the conservation sector with the artisanal fishing communities creates an opportunity not only to understand their culture, thinking and knowledge, but also to enrich the focus of marine and coastal conservation with a livelihoods- and sustainable-living perspective.
6. Equity and access rights should be central in the creation of MPAs and in marine conservation.
7. Understanding the social, cultural and economic dynamics that characterize artisanal fishing communities is key for processes that intend to bridge conservation with human development, and that seek to achieve the recognition of the artisanal fishers and fishworkers as actors of responsible resource use and marine conservation.

8. Community strategies for conservation and resource management are equally important tools for the safeguard of cultural identity.

There is still a long way to advance towards inclusion and equity in the management of the world's seas. The Costa Rican experience adds to other regional and global initiatives' fight for community-based governance models of protected areas in the

**The artisanal fishing sector has large needs but is being socially and economically excluded.**

context of sustainable living and human-rights approaches. 

#### For more



[www.coopesolidar.org](http://www.coopesolidar.org)

**CoopeSoliDar R.L.**

[www.coopetarcoles.org](http://www.coopetarcoles.org)

**CoopeTárcoles R.L.**

[www.consorcioporlamar.com](http://www.consorcioporlamar.com)

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# Beyond Bangkok

**A recent civil society workshop in Costa Rica brought to the fore issues confronting small-scale fishers in Latin America**

The Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF), organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2008 launched what has become known in civil society circles as the ‘Bangkok process’. Prior to this, a preparatory workshop organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in May 2007, highlighted that “responsible fisheries can be assured only if human rights of fishing communities, including the right to decent work and labour standards and human development, are secure” (see “Asserting Rights, Defining Responsibilities”, *SAMUDRA Report* No. 47, July 2007). That assertion placed the human rights of fishing communities centre stage in the debate on rights-based approaches to fisheries and the responsible and sustainable development of fisheries and fishing communities. The Bangkok process is all about placing human rights centre stage in the campaign to secure sustainable and responsible small-scale fisheries.

Subsequently, when the 28th session of FAO’s Committee on Fisheries (COFI) discussed the outcome of the 4SSF conference, several FAO Members expressed the need for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries that would guide national and international efforts to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries and create a framework for monitoring and reporting. They also supported the need for FAO to establish a specific global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries.

In response, the FAO Secretariat convened three regional workshops—for Africa (in Maputo, Mozambique), Asia-Pacific (in Bangkok, Thailand) and Latin America and the Caribbean (in San José, Costa Rica) in October 2010, with the objectives, *inter alia*, of receiving guidance from national and regional stakeholders on the scope and contents of a possible international instrument on sustainable small-scale fisheries development, as well as on priorities and implementation modalities

**The Bangkok process is all about placing human rights centre stage in the campaign to secure sustainable and responsible small-scale fisheries.**

of a global assistance programme. Recommendations from these regional consultations will be presented to 29<sup>th</sup> session of COFI in Rome in early 2011.

Thanks to assistance from FAO, channeled through the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), 20 representatives of organizations of artisanal fishers and their supporters, as well as men and women workers from the artisanal fisheries sector from Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Peru and Chile were able to meet prior to the regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **Preparatory meeting**

The preparatory meeting, facilitated by CoopeSoliDar R.L., with the support

*This report is based on inputs from **Vivienne Solís Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org), **Patricia Madrigal Cordero**, **Marvin Fonseca** and **Annete Fishchel** of CoopeSoliDar R.L., and from notes provided by ICSF Members **Naína Pierri**, **René Schärer** and **Juan Carlos Sueiro***



## CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

**Regional Latin American 4SSF Preparatory Meeting:  
Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries:  
Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development.  
19 October 2010  
Tárcoles, Costa Rica**

### *Preamble*

We, artisanal fishers, indigenous people, people of African descent, fishery workers, men and women from Latin America, both as individuals and representing regional and international organizations working with artisanal fishers, met in the community of Tárcoles.

We re-state that coastal-marine communities and artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, as well as fishers from inland waters not only contribute significantly to the global production of food, but constitute communities with claims to a particular territory and cultural identity that must be recognized and strengthened.

We affirm that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and for responsible and sustainable fisheries to be achieved, it is crucial for the political, civil, social and cultural rights of fishing communities to be guaranteed.

We call on States to recognize these principles so that the full and effective participation of fishing communities can be assured in sustainable fishing, and we demand that our access rights to our territories, to land and water are respected.

We recognize and denounce the fact that proposals previously put forward by civil society have not been heeded by our governments when formulating their policies, strategies and actions.

We are here to apply our ideas to this process, through the strategic axes defined for the Latin American workshop organized by the FAO entitled "Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development".

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

To achieve sustainable production for optimal societal benefits through an ecosystem approach, it requires that

- industrial fishing is eradicated in the coastal zone within five nautical miles, measured from the low-tide mark, while the fishing grounds and natural banks beyond the five-mile zone where artisanal fishing activities take place are respected;
- mangroves, river mouths, estuaries, fishing banks and other important fishery ecosystems are protected;
- fishing gears are regulated and fishing methods that are damaging to the resources and do not protect juvenile fish are eliminated;

*contd...*

of CoopeTárcoles R.L., was held in the artisanal fishing community of Tárcoles on the central Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Most of the participants had already engaged with the Bangkok process—in Chile at the Punta de Tralca workshop (see "Common Concerns, Lasting Bonds", *SAMUDRA Report* No. 50, August 2008), at the Bangkok 4SSF conference, and at the 28<sup>th</sup> session of COFI meet in March 2009.

The pros and cons of the Bangkok process and associated meetings were discussed at the Costa Rica workshop. Cairo Laguna, representing artisanal fishers from Nicaragua, said

that the process had been important since the issue of artisanal fisheries had been brought onto the international agenda. There was now an opportunity "to identify the problems that we face in the region and to feed these back to FAO centrally."

David Chacón, an artisanal fisher from Costa Rica, referred to the September 2008 Tárcoles Declaration, made prior to the 4SSF conference, to highlight the importance of collaboration between Central and South American countries in providing a common front.

...contd

- closed seasons are implemented during periods of reproduction for fishery resources that are overexploited and in danger of extinction; and
- management plans are jointly developed and implemented with artisanal fishers.

### VULNERABILITY

The vulnerability of communities to natural disasters and climate change must be reduced by .

- eliminating corruption at all levels, and the trafficking of influence in public bodies;
- respecting artisanal fishermen's and fisherwomen's rights in all their forms;
- finding solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change on artisanal fishing communities;
- establishing and implementing public policies for the development of artisanal fishing communities; and
- recognizing the importance of women and their work within families and in the fisheries, and guaranteeing them their due rights.

### POVERTY

For increasing the contribution of small scale fisheries and aquaculture to poverty alleviation and food security, it is essential that the above proposal be complied with, noting that sustainability and eradicating vulnerability are crucial issues for our artisanal fishing communities .

We recommend:

- setting up a COFI subcommittee on artisanal fisheries that will include the participation of representatives of artisanal fishing organizations and legitimate parties;
- elaborating, approving and implementing an International Declaration on artisanal fishing that is binding on States;
- developing, approving and implementing, in consultation with artisanal fishers' organizations, representatives and legitimate parties, a programme and international plan of action in support of artisanal fishing; and
- supporting the creation of a specific chapter on artisanal fishing within the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- We demand that the programme and global plan of action for artisanal fishing:
- sets up a Steering Committee for Global Assistance that includes international and regional organizations from the artisanal fishing sector ; and
- takes into account the ethnic, cultural and gender differences, and ensures that these are reflected in the composition of the Steering Committee and in the regional offices.

Zoila Bustamante, President of Confederación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH), Chile's National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen, highlighted the need for space to be given to artisanal fishers in the discussions, and the importance of artisanal fishers as a "driving force for food production".

According to delegates from Central America, despite FAO meetings being open to civil society representatives, fishers were often at a disadvantage because they had no prior access to information. On the other hand, government

representatives were much better informed.

It was also pointed out that often the participation of government representatives is not systematic or regular since meetings are attended by different representatives. This makes it difficult for civil society organizations to ensure that official positions take their views into account.

The Costa Rica workshop also discussed the importance of strengthening organizations at the local level, and ensuring that information is provided to grass-

roots sectors in an understandable form. The four key themes of the FAO workshop were discussed in groups, following which artisanal fishers and their representatives met independently to agree on the key issues to be included in their declaration.

In conclusion, it was felt that the opportunity to work and reflect in a collective way prior to the FAO workshop strengthened the participation of leaders from Latin America's small-scale fisheries sector. The Costa Rica workshop highlighted the need to use such spaces to prepare and strengthen legitimate strategies and to share progress—or the lack of it—in fulfilling international commitments, both by international organizations and by governments.

The FAO workshop that followed in San José, from 20 to 22 October 2010, was attended by representatives from most of the countries in the region, with the exception of Venezuela, Mexico, Chile and the Dominican Republic. Civil society participants played a very important role in the workshop, and Latin American States were very open to the proposals under consideration, including for an international instrument for small-scale fisheries.

Presentations were made by officials from FAO and from the

Organization of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the Isthmus of Central America (OSPESCA) on the three thematic issues and the key cross-cutting issues, including gender in artisanal fisheries in Latin America. But the debate around this latter issue was not sufficiently in-depth, despite its importance.

On the theme of “Increasing the Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security”, civil society participants emphasized the need for a human-rights-based approach, the need for exclusive zones, the regulation of destructive gear, inclusive MPAs, fairer market access, and complementary activities like community tourism in Prainha do Canto Verde in Ceará State, Brazil.

It was felt that an ecosystem-based approach, though complex and relatively costly, should be used to manage resources in a sustainable manner. In several fisheries, it was pointed out, decisionmaking is based only on the target species and investment in modern vessels and gear. There is a need to widen and document the interrelation between scientific knowledge and local knowledge.

The group discussing climate change and its impact on small-scale fisheries saw greater participation of civil society than of government representatives. There was agreement that public policies are required to deal with the social causes of climate change and the conditions that favour natural disasters and the vulnerability of communities. Funding must be made available and instruments for spatial planning, integrated coastal area management and vulnerability assessment and monitoring must be developed. Also highlighted was the need to take account of social, economic and cultural aspects, and not just environmental ones, in the application of such instruments.

### Better understanding

ICSF Members noted that it would be particularly useful, over the coming months, to better understand

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Civil society representatives at Tárcoles workshop highlighted the need to use spaces to prepare and strengthen legitimate strategies

VIVIENNE SOLÍS RIVERA

the characteristics, potential and difficulties (for getting approval) of the various options under discussion. They felt that the promotion of an international instrument and a global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries would be most appropriate, taking into consideration the fact that in 2009 opening up the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries had been rejected. An FAO subcommittee on small-scale fisheries runs the risk of reducing the importance of the sector, they felt.

The field trip to the fishing community of Tárcoles was greatly appreciated by the workshop participants, as it allowed them to get to know the fishers better, and to deepen ties and linkages. The Costa Rica meet resulted in a Civil Society Declaration (see box).



Men and women workers and supporters from the artisanal fisheries sector of Latin America met at Tárcoles, Costa Rica, to reflect on issues in small-scale fisheries

#### For more



[icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_47/art01.pdf](http://icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue_47/art01.pdf)

#### **Asserting Rights, Defining Responsibilities**

[foodsovereignty-org.web34.winsvr.net/Home.aspx](http://foodsovereignty-org.web34.winsvr.net/Home.aspx)

#### **The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty**

[icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_50/art08.pdf](http://icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/samudra/pdf/english/issue_50/art08.pdf)

#### **Common Concerns, Lasting Bonds**



# Securing Small-scale Fisheries

The following document, adopted at a recent FAO workshop in San José, Costa Rica, proposed strategies for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

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At the FAO workshop on “Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development” (4SSF) in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2008, there was a call, *inter alia*, for an international instrument on small-scale fisheries, and for a dedicated global programme on small-scale fisheries under the purview of FAO which would be guided by COFI. These calls were reiterated by the 28th Session of the FAO’s Committee on Fisheries, held in Rome, Italy in March 2009.

**The LAC workshop recommended that a small-scale fisheries international instrument and assistance programme should be informed by human-rights principles.**

In this context, the Regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), held in San José, Costa Rica from 20 to 22 October 2010 recognized that:

- the importance of inland and marine small-scale fisheries as a provider of livelihoods, food, employment and income is not yet sufficiently known and appreciated by policymakers and the public at large;
- small-scale fisheries face serious threats due to growing overexploitation of fishery resources, conflicts from other sectors competing over land and water and other natural resources, and often do not benefit from public amenities and social protection measures;

- the participation by small-scale fishing communities in decisionmaking is progressing in several countries but continues to be hampered in many instances by inadequate organizational development and institutional structures;
- the impacts of climate change, including the growing intensity and frequency of natural disasters, is exacerbating the vulnerability of small-scale fisheries; and
- there is a need to promote small-scale fisheries and secure their access to the resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods. The workshop also recognized the important work already done at the local, national and regional levels to empower fishing communities and fishworkers’ organizations to develop and implement improved policies and practices that strengthen the social, economic, cultural and political rights of small-scale fishing communities.

The LAC workshop recommended that a small-scale fisheries international instrument and assistance programme should:

- be informed by human-rights principles and existing international and regional instruments relevant to good governance and sustainable development;
- draw upon the available experiences with good governance practices in small-scale fisheries at national, regional and global levels;
- strengthen mechanisms for information sharing and communication including by regional and subregional

*These conclusions and recommendations were arrived at by participants of the workshop in San José, Costa Rica, held during 20-22 October 2010*

organizations such as OSPESCA, CRFM, CDEMA and OLDEPESCA and by associations and networks of fishworkers organizations, both of men and women, and civil society organizations such as CONFEPESCA and ASCR, ICSF, CONAPACH, CIAPA, FENISCPESC, FENAPESCAH, FACOPADES, FENHPESCH, WFF and WFFP;

- foster co-operation among countries and regional bodies in relation to sustainable small-scale fisheries development;
- encompass a broad characterization of small-scale fisheries and the requirement, if not yet done so, to develop national definitions in consultation with the concerned communities, fishworkers' organizations and the private sector;
- assess how various fishing rights systems in the region are performing and their impacts on the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and communities;
- include the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) as a guiding principle for resource management and development; and
- incorporate disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) as an integral part of any assistance programme, considering that DRM is a process that exists before, during and after a disaster.

Three concurrent working groups discussed these three topics—governance, EAF and DRM/CCA—and arrived at a number of conclusions and recommendations for the rights, principles and thematic areas that the instrument and assistance programme should refer to;

Recognition of the rights of small-scale fishing communities relating, in particular, to the following:

- human rights and rights as workers;
- permanence of their communities in coastal and riverine areas;
- just and equitable access to fishery resources;
- exclusive inshore zones for small-scale fisheries;
- safe working and secure living conditions;



The FAO workshop at San José called for an international instrument and a global programme dedicated to small-scale fisheries

- guaranteed access to information concerning the sustainable and integrated development of their communities;
- social security and protection of persons and goods; and
- capacity and resilience to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.

Adherence to the following principles and practices:

- transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and participation; empowerment; gender equality; holistic, integrated and adaptive management and development approaches; and social responsibility, protection and solidarity;
- free, prior and informed consent by affected small-scale fishing communities before adopting and implementing projects, programmes or legislative and administrative measures which may affect them;
- participatory decisionmaking to take place at the lowest possible decentralized level of government that is as close as possible to the people who are affected by them (the principle of subsidiarity);
- recognition and respect of their cultures, forms of organization, traditions, customary norms

and practices, and traditional knowledge;

- recognition of customary, traditional or otherwise preferential access to fishery resources, land and territories, by small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant people;
- combating poverty and ensuring food security and sustainable resource uses;
- avoidance of adverse development impacts;
- fostering an environment to promote advocacy and conflict resolution mechanisms among stakeholders using common geographic space and/or shared space;
- capacity development in all areas;
- facilitation of access to markets and credit;
- promotion of co-management and community-based management, including for marine reserves and protection areas that are informed by the precautionary approach;
- ensuring that DRM and CCA policies and interventions respond to the specific needs of small-scale fisheries;
- giving special considerations to fishing communities who live in small islands that are vulnerable to disasters and climate change; and
- ensuring policies and political commitment by governments to reduce green house gases according to their common and differentiated responsibilities.

An international instrument would include the following thematic elements.

#### I) GOVERNANCE OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

**Preface:** The instrument should be informed by existing relevant instruments such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the international voluntary guidelines that are being developed under the auspices of FAO on land tenure and natural resources. There is a continuing need to promote the Code in small-scale fisheries.

The proposed instrument should focus on:

**Fisheries management**, including aspects relating to access regimes; co-management and community-based management; management institutions such as management councils; habitat protection; protection of juveniles and spawning stocks; promotion of environmentally friendly fishing gear; MPAs that guarantee the participation of small-scale fisheries; management of shared fishery resources and water bodies, including combating transboundary water pollution; combating of IUU fishing by promoting integrated enforcement between governments, fishing industry and small-scale fisheries.

**Building the resilience and adaptive capacity** of fishing communities (including in relation to DRM and CCA).

**Promotion of trade** of products from small-scale fisheries, ensuring greater benefits to them

**Capacity building** by strengthening and empowering fishers' organizations and associations through free, continuing training

**Conflict resolution** in fishing communities

**Generation of complementary and alternative livelihoods** for small-scale fishers such as community tourism, agriculture, aquaculture and other small business opportunities

**Promotion of gender equality** in small-scale fisheries

**Social benefits** such as social security, retirement benefits, maternity benefits and unemployment insurance during closed seasons

**Integration of science with traditional knowledge**, including ecological knowledge

**Government responsibility** to clean inland waters from pollution, and regulation of the use of pesticides in agriculture to combat water pollution

**Combating crimes against fishers**, including piracy and theft

**Eliminating subsidies for unsustainable fisheries** and other unsustainable activities

**Promoting and supporting networks of communities and organizations** that promote sustainable small-scale fisheries.

## 2) ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

### Priority Action 1

Generation of ecological, socioeconomic and institutional baselines within the region, for the development of EAF.

### Priority Action 2

Identify and start dialogue with other sectors that are concomitant users of ecological services and natural resources of ecosystems where small-scale fisheries thrive, for a multi-sector approach to EAF.

### Priority Action 3

Develop a comparative analysis of EAF-based SSF management models both within the region and outside the region, whose success examples can be replicated in other countries.

### Priority Action 4

Incorporate local traditional uses and knowledge into national management policies for SSF.

### Priority Action 5

Incorporate scientifically based policy instruments to eradicate the use of harmful fishing gear and methods that affect fish resources in small-scale fisheries.

## 3) DRM AND CCA

### Priority Action 1

Ensure that DRM and CCA policies and institutional frameworks are in place for small-scale fisheries.

### Priority Action 2

Identify, assess and monitor disaster and climate change risks affecting small-scale fisheries and enhance early warning systems.

### Priority Action 3

Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience within artisanal fishing communities as well as at local and national levels.

### Priority Action 4

Reduce underlying risk factors related to small-scale fisheries

### Priority Action 5

Strengthen DRM and CCA for effective response within the small-scale fisheries sector

## 4) GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

The **Global Programme on Small-scale Fisheries** that many members of COFI recommended FAO to develop **should be informed by the principles and elements recommended by this and the other regional workshops.** Other assistance programmes in support of small-scale fisheries at national, regional and international levels should equally take account of these conclusions and recommendations. 3

#### For more



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**FAO Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries**

[www.fao.org/fishery/about/cofi/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/about/cofi/en)  
**Committee on Fisheries (COFI)**