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SAMUDRA REPORT

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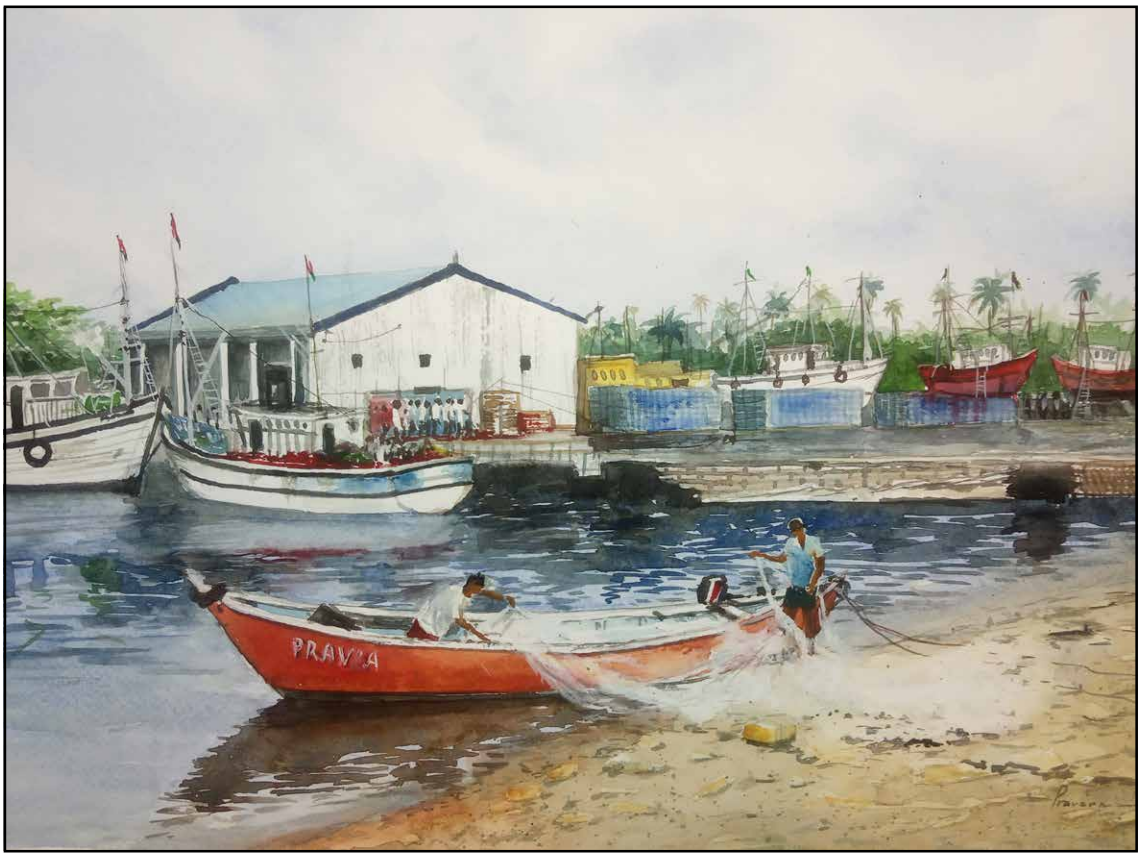

40th Anniversary of the Rome Conference

Implementation of the SSF Guidelines

Tenure Rights Systems in Fisheries

Chile's New Fishery Law

Social-protection Schemes for SSF

Legal Frameworks Governing SSF

Fisheries, Communities, Livelihoods

ICSF is an international **NGO** working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is in status with the Economic and Social Council of the **UN** and is on **ILO**'s Special List of Non-governmental International Organizations. It also has Liaison Status with **FAO**.

As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, **ICSF**'s activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and action, as well as communications. ***SAMUDRA*** *Report* invites contributions and responses. Correspondence should be addressed to Chennai, India.

The opinions and positions expressed in the articles are those of the authors concerned and do not necessarily represent the official views of **ICSF**.

All issues of ***SAMUDRA*** *Report* can be accessed at **www.icsf.net**

https://www.icsf.net/resources/2nd-small-scale-fisheries-summit-ssf-summit-2024-rome-italy/
https://ssfhub.org/ssf-summit-2024

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Fishing harbour, India
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BACK COVER

Processed fish from small-scale fisheries. Photo by Stevie Mann/ WorldFish/Flickr

Chandrika Sharma, former Executive Secretary, ICSF

Fabio Hazin, Chair, SSF Guidelines negotiations at FAO, Rome

Striving Together for Rights Forever

A wide range of actors—ranging from civil society organizations to grassroots activists and trade unionists—are rallying around a human rights-based approach to tackle issues plaguing the small-scale fisheries subsector

It was on 10 June 2014—a little over a decade ago—that the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) formally endorsed the SSF Guidelines. COFI also recognized the critical role of the "adopted SSF Guidelines" in improving the social, economic and cultural status of small-scale fisheries vulnerable to disasters and climate change, and reiterated the human rights-based approach. Also on the same day, COFI welcomed the global assistance programme launched by FAO to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. COFI thus helped germinate seeds sown during the International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters in Rome in July 1984 (See the article, *Rallying for Collectivism*, page 4).

It is just incredible that COFI saw the relevance of a human rights-based approach in the context of small-scale fisheries to meet its obligations arising out of Rule XXX of FAO. Ten years down the line, there is so much water under the bridge. The SSF Guidelines have triggered many processes, worldwide. There are several national plans of action for small-scale fisheries that have been developed in Africa and Asia (see the article, *Leaving No One Behind*, page 11).

Many countries are drawing elements from the SSF Guidelines to develop their own national legislation (See the article, *A Robust Platform*, page 88). The characterization matrix developed by the Illuminating Hidden Harvests report of the FAO, Duke University and WorldFish is now being used in different contexts to develop acceptable definitions of small-scale fishing. Artisanal fishers of Africa are drawing inspiration to uphold decent work and are seeking wider ratification of the C188 Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (See the article, *Tooling Up*, page 55).

Civil society mechanisms like International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), and organizations like World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (WFF), African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries (CAOPA), Platform for African Women Network of Fish Processors and Traders (AWFISHNET) and ICSF's own initiatives, among others, have been complementing those of FAO to implement the SSF Guidelines in several national and regional contexts. Academic initiatives such as Too Big to Ignore (TBTI) and Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) have led to several SSF-focused events and bringing forth useful publications.

The United Nations General Assembly Declaration of the year 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) certainly gave a fillip to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in different regional contexts. An enhanced awareness of the SSF Guidelines is leading to a serious engagement with elements like tenure rights, social development, social protection, climate change impacts and disaster preparedness. There are several articles in this issue of SAMUDRA Report dealing with these topics. The rise of "occupational pluralism" to deal with climate change impacts (See the article, *A Portrait of Risk and Resilience*, page 65) and the emergence of parametric insurance to cover disaster risks (See articles, *A Formidable Arsenal,* page 73 and *Parametric Insurance*, page 91) are significant developments for small-scale fishers.

The forthcoming SSF Summit must bring greater coherence across these civil society, NGO, academic intergovernmental and national efforts to fully realize the potential of sustainable small-scale fisheries for food security and poverty eradication in a logical manner, and to uphold the culture of traditional fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples.

The summit must become a forum for exchanging ideas, to direct different concerns and interests to relevant and competent processes and agencies, within and beyond fisheries, to realize the full potential of a human rights-based approach, towards securing lives and livelihoods of small-scale fishers and fishworkers, as well as Indigenous Peoples, caught between the negative impacts of the blue economy and climate change.

Rallying For Collectivism

On the 40th anniversary of the International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (ICFWS), an account of how a group of collaborators pulled off what was then a miracle

In July 1983, amidst my job tenure in bustling Hong Kong, I received a pivotal letter from a dear friend. It planted the seed for what went on to become the ambitious vision of convening an international assembly of fishers from across the globe. Exactly one year later, in July 1984, the first International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters, better known among fishers and fishery activists as the Rome Conference, culminated triumphantly.

Many have wondered at how such an endeavour was accomplished in an era predating personal computers, let alone the internet or mobile smartphones! The brief answer: the catalyst was a cohort of dedicated individuals worldwide, unified by their enthusiasm for the concept and their unwavering belief in its feasibility.

The orchestration of the conference rested on a foundation of meticulous planning, adept delegation of responsibilities, consistent communication, broad participation of fishers and their allies in preparatory activities globally, diverse funding streams, securing commitments from esteemed speakers, and seamless collaboration with local authorities and well wishers in Rome.

First, a glimpse into the chronology: In August 1983, after getting that pivotal letter, I dispatched personal letters to approximately 70 individuals worldwide with ties to the fisheries sector, proposing the idea of an international fishers' gathering; I solicited candid feedback. The rapid and overwhelmingly positive response took me aback. Encouraged by this groundswell of support, a comprehensive concept note was crafted and deliberated upon with select confidants. It became evident that a more inclusive and thorough validation of the idea was imperative to ensure its potential benefit to fishers worldwide.

So, in January 1984, a preliminary meeting was convened in Hong Kong to solidify the consensus through deliberation. Subsequently, an International Steering Committee was convened from among those present, with specific roles assigned to members. Three pivotal decisions were made. One, adopting the term 'fishworker' to encompass all individuals labouring for livelihood within the fisheries sector. Two, the key message of our conference would be to highlight the centrality of the fishworkers in any discourse on fisheries development and management. And, three, setting the conference dates for July 4-8, 1984, strategically overlapping with the FAO/UN World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development in Rome from June 27 to July 6, 1984, thus leveraging the presence of the world press at the FAO/UN meeting to obtain maximum exposure.

Little time, much to do

With a mere six months to transform this vision into reality, meticulous coordination was imperative. Three secretariats were devised. The first was set up in Hong Kong to manage funding, travel logistics, and visa arrangements, particularly for fishers, while overseeing documentation and conference materials. A second was set up in Rome to handle local arrangements, liaise with authorities, and oversee venue logistics. A third secretariat was created in Thiruvananthapuram, India to oversee overall coordination, formal communications, and planning of pre-conference regional meetings to select the participants. Mobilizing funds emerged as a pivotal task. Soliciting financial support for an international gathering of fishers posed a unique challenge. Development funding agencies were not accustomed to such requests. Many raised valid concerns about the purposefulness of allocating resources to such an event. To counter this reluctance, a strategic approach was devised: breaking down the total estimated budget on a per capita basis, setting it at US $2,000 per participant, and seeking funds from diverse sources.

*This article is by **John Kurien** (kurien.john@gmail.com), Former Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, India and Founder Member, ICSF*

RALLYING TO ROME

SPECIAL PEOPLE. COLLECTIVE PROCESSES. A UNIQUE EVENT.

A personal account of what went into organising the first International Conference of Fish Workers and their Supporters (ICFWS), held in Rome in July 1984

https://www.icsf.net/resources/rallying-to-rome-1984-icsf/

John Kurien

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

This method considerably eased the process of fund-raising, allowing outreach to individuals, trade unions, NGOs, and development agencies. Ultimately, funding was secured from 26 sources.

Significant regional meetings were convened in Latin America and West Africa to address pertinent issues among fishers from the attending countries and democratically select representatives for the Rome gathering. Additionally, national meetings were held in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Philippines. By the end of April 1984, the list of attending fishworkers had been finalized. This was a critical milestone, considering the challenges associated with obtaining visas, particularly for individuals lacking formal higher education, as was the case with many fishworkers. The secretariats in Hong Kong and Rome collaborated closely on visa procurement, navigating a complex and often arduous process that occasionally required exerting external pressure on Italian consulates in respective countries.

A different age, different means

This entire process of coordination was facilitated using snail mail, telex messaging, telegrams, and the occasional expensive international telephone calls. All the pre-conference newsletters and the background dossiers for the conference were printed in hard copies after being translated by a group of volunteers in English, French and Spanish.

To overcome the intractable language barriers, and to ensure a memorable experience for participating fishworkers, many of whom were venturing abroad for the first time, a decision was made to organize a comprehensive exhibition showcasing posters and models of fishing artefacts at the conference venue. This was to also attract the world press at the concurrent FAO/UN meeting. Preparation for the exhibition fostered collective pre-conference engagement among participants, prompting discussions on thematic highlights for charts and the selection of fishing artefacts and models to transport to Rome.

As a way of thanking the citizens of Rome, whose municipality had welcomed the fishworkers to their great city, preparations were also made by each delegation for a short 'fishworkers walk' and a cultural evening of song and dance at the famous Piazza Novona.

Given that translation services would only be available in English, French, Spanish, and Italian, special consideration was given to fishworkers from countries where these languages were not spoken. Careful selection of accompanying supporters was paramount, as they would assume the additional responsibility of acting as 'whispering translators' to ensure that non-fluent attendees were not disadvantaged.

The proof of the pudding

The actual event was held at a conference facility in the centre of Rome that provided spartan but adequate facilities for accommodation, meeting halls, venues for discussion groups. It also had a large semi-covered theatre for holding the exhibition and lush outdoor tree-filled spaces to relax.

Members of a local fisher's cooperative, who would also participate at the conference, invited the international gathering to visit their fishing port and have the occasion to share a fellowship dinner with the community while learning about their professional and socio-cultural life.

By a curious set of coincidences, it also became possible for the fishworkers to be invited for an audience with the Pope—but after the completion of the conference.

The actual event itself turned out to be a very lively, educational, and inspiring gathering. Language was no major barrier for the fishworkers. The recognition that the oceans united them; that they confronted very similar sets of problems, irrespective of nationality; and that the need of the times was for greater collective action starting from the local level to the global level became the unifying theme to initiate action on getting back home.

For those who participated as supporters it was also an occasion to establish new bonds of friendship, having now physically met and interacted. This would become the basis for the formation of the new network called the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers in 1986.

The final report of the Conference was indeed handwritten in three languages, printed, and widely distributed as it was the only means at that time.

For more

Rallying to Rome: Special People. Collective Processes. A Unique Event by John Kurien, 2024
https://www.icsf.net/resources/rallying-to-rome-special-people-collective-processes-a-unique-event-by-john-kurien-2024/

Report of the International Conference of Fishworkers, and their Supporters, Rome, July 4–8, 1984
https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-of-the-international-conference-of-fishworkers-and-their-supporters-rome-july-4-8-1984-2/

Report of the Trivandrum Workshop Towards an International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, November 20-25, 1986
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/1986/11/930.ICSF083.pdf

ICSF
https://www.icsf.net/

The Right to Food

Small-scale fisheries play an indispensable role in combating poverty, enhancing food security and promoting the sustainable use of marine and inland waters the world over

This year is the tenth anniversary of a monumental achievement for small-scale fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples. A decade ago, fisherfolk and civil society organizations united to secure the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The dedication of these organizations during the consultations was instrumental in shaping the SSF Guidelines, the only international document devoted to the rights of small-scale fishing communities, including Indigenous Peoples.

Currently, the decline in water and fisheries resources threatens 492 million people at least partially dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods. These communities face resource depletion and industrial encroachment that violate their basic rights. Activities such as mining, overfishing and industrial development exacerbate environmental degradation. Protecting the rights of small-scale fishers is crucial for ensuring food security and alleviating poverty.

Despite the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines by many governments a decade ago, implementation remains fragmented, and small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples continue to face significant challenges and violations of their human rights. In this context, and considering the unique moment of this anniversary, it is more critical than ever to reclaim the rightful place of small-scale fisheries (SSF) and refocus attention on protecting the human rights of small-scale and artisanal fishers.

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) strongly affirms the indispensable role of small-scale fisheries in combating poverty, enhancing food security and promoting the sustainable use of marine and inland waters. This year, IPC aims not only to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the SSF Guidelines by providing an overview of global developments through a two-year participatory process that gathered qualitative information on the status of small-scale fishers but also to emphasize the importance of their participation in decision-making processes, particularly within COFI.

Political dialogues must prioritize the needs of small-scale fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples, who are among the most marginalized and whose rights to food and nutrition are under threat

Alarmingly, this year, small-scale fisheries have been entirely excluded from the COFI agenda and relegated to the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management. IPC believes that addressing SSF solely as a management issue is insufficient for tackling the wide range of issues related to small-scale fishers, including human rights, access to resources, biodiversity protection and social development, as highlighted by the SSF Guidelines.

*This article is by **Velia Lucidi** (v.lucidi@croceviaterra.it), Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Italy*

IPC

The IPC Delegation at COFI35 (2022). IPC believes that addressing SSF solely as a management issue is insufficient for tackling the wide range of issues related to small-scale fishers, including human rights, access to resources, biodiversity protection and social development, as highlighted by the SSF Guidelines

Political dialogues must prioritize the needs of small-scale fishing communities and Indigenous Peoples, who are among the most marginalized and whose rights to food and nutrition are under threat.

We urge all governments to thoroughly review the latest report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, and incorporate its insights into their policies and regulations addressing social development, food security, climate change and biodiversity protection. The report clearly demonstrates the impacts on small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, infringements upon their rights to food, decent work, gender equity and a healthy environment, as well as their crucial contributions to safeguarding these rights.

Indigenous Peoples and small-scale fishers are indispensable custodians of natural resources and cultural wisdom, possessing invaluable traditional knowledge crucial in the fight against hunger and food insecurity. Food sovereignty is the true and only solution to transforming food systems in a way that ensures human well-being and healthy food systems.

For more

International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)
https://www.foodsovereignty.org/working-group/fisheries/

SSF People centred methodology to assess the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication by IPC
https://www.icsf.net/resources/ssf-people-centred-methodology-ssf-guidelines-report-ipc/

Celebrate the 10 years of the SSF Guidelines!
https://www.fao.org/publications/home/news-archive/detail/celebrate-the-10-years-of-the-ssf-guidelines!/en

Broadcast Reform

A network of trainers and community radio broadcasters has been working hard to disseminate SSF Guidelines in West Africa, relying on local media and grassroots initiatives

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) is an international framework adopted by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2014. These Guidelines aim to support the sustainability of small-scale fisheries (SSF) by strengthening the social, economic and environmental aspects of the sector.

A decade since FAO member states endorsed the SSF Guidelines, it is well worth examining the state of their implementation in West Africa. To focus on initiatives by governments and other stakeholders, as well as the impacts observed on the ground.

In Senegal, the implementation of the SSF Guidelines was led by a technical committee involving the administration, professional organizations and civil society. This process led to the development of an action plan and a project to implement the Guidelines. To make it easier to understand and adopt, they were translated into the national language, Wolof, and also disseminated through a video.

The translation and dissemination of the SSF Guidelines has led to a better understanding of the issues and principles of sustainable SSF by local stakeholders, thereby encouraging their involvement in the implementation. Acknowledging the importance of fish for food and nutritional security in Africa, Sidya Diouf, head of the SSF division at Senegal's directorate of maritime fisheries, pointed out that "as part of the mechanisms for combating hunger and poverty in the world, FAO recommends an ecosystem approach in all fisheries, in particular small-scale fisheries, by encouraging the Guidelines."

However, he noted that all the potential has not been tapped to ensure greater availability of fish for local populations. For this reason, efforts are needed to effectively combat illegal fishing and bad fishing practices, for the professionalization of some fishing trades, for the establishment of improved landing points and small-scale processing sites to reduce post-capture losses, and for the development of inland aquaculture.

Ghana's Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, in collaboration with FAO, has also translated the SSF Guidelines into several local languages and produced dissemination videos. These initiatives aim to facilitate access to information and encourage the participation of fishing communities in decision-making processes. The translation and dissemination of the Guidelines in Ghana has thus helped to build the capacity of fishing communities and improve their participation in fisheries management processes.

The implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be seen as a gradual process

"The translation and dissemination of the SSF Guidelines into several local languages is a continuation of a long-standing collaboration between FAO, its members in sub-Saharan Africa and the African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Organizations (CAOPA), and is part of the global process to ensure the sustainability of small-scale fisheries," said Ndiaga Gueye, Fisheries and Aquaculture Representative of FAO's Regional Office for Africa.

*This article is by **Gaoussou Gueye** (gaoussoug@gmail.com), President, African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fishing Organizations, CAOPA, Mbour, Senegal*

CAOPA

Artisanal pirogues, Mbour, Senegal. The translation and dissemination of the SSF Guidelines has led to a better understanding of the issues and principles of sustainable SSF by local stakeholders, thereby encouraging their involvement in the implementation

He said that SSF play an important role in poverty reduction and food security in the African region. It is also a link in a long chain of social, cultural and economic activities that contribute to the well-being of local communities and society in general, and fishing is not only an economic activity, but also part of the culture, identity and way of life of fishing communities.

"The implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be seen as a gradual process. Its history informs the present, allowing SSF actors to access a formal space to express their views on the future governance of small-scale fisheries," said Gueye.

CAOPA has played a key role in popularizing and implementing the SSF Guidelines in West Africa. It has organized information and outreach seminars in several countries, including Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, Ivory Coast and Ghana. In addition, CAOPA organized a webinar on the various chapters of the Guidelines, and trained local actors in the Saloum islands of Senegal, in collaboration with the Coastal Fishing Initiative (CFI).

Mamadou Thiam, consultant in fisheries economics and management, representing the IPC-AO project, said that the specific aims of the training were "to support the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and better application of international instruments by capitalizing on existing experience; to increase the economic and social value produced by inshore fishing to support human well-being and livelihoods; and to pay particular attention to small-scale fishing."

CAOPA's initiatives have raised awareness of sustainability issues among small-scale fishers and strengthened their ability to implement the SSF Guidelines in their day-to-day activities. CAOPA has also produced a 12-page guide for trainers on the Guidelines, apart from training Senegal's fishing and general community radio association on the guidelines.

These activities have enabled the creation of a network of trainers and community radio broadcasters capable of widely disseminating the principles and good practices of sustainable small-scale fishing, thereby contributing to the appropriation and implementation of the SSF Guidelines by local communities. To this end, a dozen radio programmes have been produced in the Wolof language.

For more

Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale (CAOPA)
https://caopa.org/

Report of the workshop of information and awareness-raising on the voluntary Guidelines for sustainable small-scale fisheries for presenters and and journalists of Senegalese community radio, Cap Saint-Louis, 02-03-2021
https://caopa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/REPORT-Workshop-from-02-to-03-June-2021-on-VGSSF-ACPRCG-_1_-en.pdf

CAOPA: DSSF Guidelines
https://caopa.org/en/dssf-guidelines/

Leaving No One Behind

The National Plan of Action (NPOA) for Small-Scale Fisheries help implement the SSF Guidelines at the country level, factoring in varying national and regional legal and policy frameworks

No matter where in the world, small-scale fisheries (SSF) represent a critical source of food security, nutrition and livelihoods for coastal and riverine communities. In fact, almost 500 million people depend at least partially on SSF for their livelihoods, with 60 million of them employed either part- or full-time in SSF activities across the value chain, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Duke University and the 2023 WorldFish Illuminating Hidden Harvests study.

However, SSF face numerous challenges that threaten their capacity to continue providing nutritious food and livelihoods in the long run and ensuring the continuity of their activities. While there are various challenges or threats to the sustainability of the SSF sub-sector, among the most critical ones are the effects of climate change, conflicting interests with other sectors, and overfishing.

To support SSF actors overcome these challenges, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) in 2014, as the first international instrument entirely dedicated to SSF. These Guidelines were developed through an extensive participatory process with a multitude of SSF actors; they provide recommendations to the wide range of stakeholders involved in the development of the sub-sector—SSF actors, civil society organizations, governments, academia and others in areas that include sustainable resource management and tenure, social development, gender equality and climate change.

Efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines and reflect them in national legal and policy frameworks vary from region to region, and from country to country. The experience so far suggests that it is at the global and regional levels that the SSF Guidelines appear to have gained more traction, partially because of their non-binding nature. However, although great progress has been made in the last ten years, implementation at the national and local levels still lags behind. It is here that implementing the guidelines would most likely result in better gains for the sub-sector in the medium and long terms.

Since 2017, increasing demand from countries has allowed the SSF Guidelines to be brought back to where they really belong: the national and local levels. For this, FAO has developed guidance on the development and implementation of National Plans of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF). By now, countries that have successfully developed NPOA-SSF include Namibia, Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In addition, Madagascar, Indonesia and the Philippines are currently finalizing their respective NPOA-SSF. Interest has picked up in other regions, and it is expected that various countries from South America will initiate their NPOA-SSF in the near future.

Participatory mechanisms

NPOA-SSF are participatory mechanisms characterized by a good number of consultations with relevant stakeholders so that potential interventions in support of the sub-sector are informed by those whose livelihoods, food security and culture depend on it. In order to increase the participation of small-scale fishers and fishworkers in the process, whenever an NPOA-SSF is set in motion,

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MANOELA MILITÃO DE SIQUEIRA

Group picture during a High-Level Dialogue on the Malawi NPOA-SSF at Lilongwe, Malawi. NPOA-SSF are participatory mechanisms characterized by a good number of consultations with relevant stakeholders so that potential interventions in support of the sub-sector are informed by those whose livelihoods, food security and culture depend on it

it is recommended that a National Task Team (NTT) be established and tasked with leading its development and implementation. The composition and name of this team may vary from country to country but, ideally, includes representatives from SSF organizations, Indigenous Peoples, relevant government representatives, academia and other civil society organizations.

Through this inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders from the very first conversations and meetings related to the NPOA-SSF, countries help ensure that the needs and concerns of the sub-sector are properly reflected. In addition, further down the road, an NPOA-SSF includes the establishment of a National Platform, an even wider group of stakeholders, the exact tasks of which can go from overseeing the labour of the National Task Team, ensuring that the NPOA-SSF process remains true to its purpose and keeps SSF at the core of the discussion, to taking over the development process once a good foundation has been established.

In addition to having SSF representatives as key players throughout the process via their involvement in the National Task Team and the National Platform, NPOA-SSF processes place enormous efforts to reach as many SSF actors from all segments of the value chain as possible, ensuring that more feedback and inputs are collected and that these are properly included in the formulation of the NPOA-SSF. Given that the SSF sub-sector is dynamic and that its characteristics vary widely, consultation processes are tailored to the specific context of the country. For instance, in Uganda, consultations were organized around the five major lakes of the country that concentrate the majority of small-scale fishers and fishworkers. In the Philippines, it was deemed that the best way to approach consultations was to arrange them per Fisheries Management Areas, which are areas designated based on fish stock distribution and related management arrangements.

Challenges differ

As stated, challenges in implementing the SSF Guidelines differ depending on the country in question. Similarly,

the conditions under which an NPOA-SSF can be successfully initiated and the requirements for its effective development and implementation may vary. However, experience has shown that some key elements are always needed, otherwise the process may be flawed. For instance, an initial profiling of the SSF sub-sector to properly identify who should be part of the National Task Team is crucial, since it will help ensure that SSF are truly represented.

Given that governments have the prerogative of law—any required amendment of existing laws and policies will fall under their responsibility and that several ministries may be in charge of certain areas that either directly or indirectly affect the sustainability of the sub-sector—inter-ministerial co-ordination and collaboration is required to maximize the contribution of a given government to the NPOA-SSF process. As part of this collaboration and co-ordination, ministries can institutionalize the NPOA-SSF by formally endorsing an NPOA-SSF and aligning their policy process to it.

NPOA-SSF also have the distinctive feature of enabling and promoting enhanced collaboration among SSF actors. In countries where an NPOA-SSF has been developed, or is currently being developed, supporting already existing SSF organizations, or formally establishing new ones in cases where groups are organized informally, becomes a priority. Not only that, NPOA-SSF also contribute to improving networking among groups, allowing for the establishment of national-level groups and, in some cases, also connecting them to the regional level.

The development and implementation of an NPOA-SSF is, per definition, a national process. It is up to national stakeholders to make it a reality from its very inception. However, due to the often-complicated nature of this process, FAO provides support to countries willing to embark on this process through a variety of means. First and foremost, FAO provides technical support to guide National Task Teams during consultations, drafting of the actual NPOA-SSF and any other activities as needed.

In addition to this, FAO has developed a set of publicly available materials that interested stakeholders can use to learn about NPOA-SSF and how their development and implementation should look like. Available materials include open-access online training, tools and materials to support stakeholders in all steps required to initiate, develop, and implement an NPOA-SSF, manuals on the use of these materials, and the SSF-LEX database, which can help in diagnosing the degree of alignment of legal and policy frameworks with the recommendations of the SSF Guidelines.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the SSF Guidelines. Let us use this opportunity to raise awareness on the many and major contributions of SSF to sustainable development and to serve as inspiration to continue working towards a more resilient sub-sector by increasing the number of NPOA-SSF that are developed and implemented around the world. More experiences are needed to fine-tune the process, ensuring that with every new one that is set in motion, the SSF sub-sector enjoys more benefits, and its long-term sustainability becomes a reality. With every new NPOA-SSF, we are closer to leaving no one behind.

The Philippines

In the Philippines, for instance, the initiators of the NPOA-SSF process agreed to formally establish a group under the name of the National Technical Working Group. This group, although chaired by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), is characterized by a great representation of SSF through the membership of fisheries organizations and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (FARMCs). These, in turn, comprise fisherfolk organizations, co-operatives and non-governmental organizations involved in the development of the sub-sector.

Africa

AWFISHNET is an African network of women small-scale fish processors and traders that serves as a platform for collaboration and co-ordination, as well as learning and collective action. NPOA-SSF have contributed to the establishment of several AWFISHNET national chapters. By first linking local women's SSF organizations to a national organization and then with a regional platform, these are able to gain representation in relevant fora, acquire important soft and hard skills and be better connected. This contributes to their resilience. Examples of these national chapters are NAMFISHNET in Namibia and Malawi.

For more

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A Living Proof of the 'Life Above Water'

The Japanese tenure rights system is primarily responsible for the sustainability of small-scale fisheries

The TBTI Global Book Series, Life Above Water (Jentoft 2019), has resonated with the public and received a great response in Japan. In a remarkable display of collaboration, dozens of researchers, government officials, and fishers have worked together to publish its translation. That may be because the country is currently "in the midst of a debate on whether voluntary/community-based management or quota-based management, small-scale/family operation or large-scale/corporate operation, fairness or efficiency, cooperation principle or competition principle, under the new Fisheries Act (2020), which has transformed the former coordination-oriented law into the resource management-oriented law after its first major revision in 70 years." This book emphatically argues that protecting life above water, that is, fishing people and communities engaged in small-scale fisheries (SSF) to protect life below water (SDG14), is essential; it provides an important perspective and stimulus for the path Japanese fisheries ought to take today. It is no exaggeration to say that the Japanese fishery, till today, has been the living proof of what is being argued in Life Above Water; this must be reaffirmed in the changing era.

The fishery rights system also plays a vital role in maintaining fisheries resources, contributing significantly to the sustainable production of coastal and small-scale fisheries

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Old values, Difference Principle

'Iso-Wa-Ji-Tsuki, Oki-Wa-Iri-Ai (the local fishing community manages the inshore area, while the offshore area is open to everyone),' This old saying encapsulates the local fishing community's management of the inshore area, while the offshore area remains open to everyone. This saying also gives a window into the historical background of Japan's tenure rights system for small-scale fisheries, a system deeply rooted in the Edo period (1603–1867).

This was a time when conventional relations concerning coastal use were established based on each territory of the domain head. As a general principle, coastal communities were granted the rights to have exclusive access to their bordering waters, while the outer offing of rocky shores was open to fishers in nearby communities.

In 1875, a new system was introduced, requiring fishers to apply and pay fees for using a marine area. These sudden institutional changes led to chaos, prompting a legislative revision to revert to the previous customs. Since then, the existing structure of fishery rights has remained unchanged, upheld by the first Fisheries Act of 1901, its subsequent revisions, and the Fisheries Act of 1949.

As such, the small-scale fishers and fisheries cooperatives in Japan have been entitled to fishery rights comparable to real rights, recognizing their subjective rights and rights to life in a vulnerable position compared to industries with huge capital. This could be considered under John Rawls's Difference Principle that claims that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that

YINJI LI

Loading of the ice for Shirasu fishing, Mochimune community, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. The Japanese tenure rights system is primarily responsible for the sustainability of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities and maintaining their traditions and cultures

they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged; this principle that is enshrined in the FAO's SSF Guidelines.

Meaning of the tenure rights

The Japanese tenure rights system is primarily responsible for the sustainability of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities and maintaining their traditions and cultures. The first role of the fishery rights system is to maintain the fishery order and stabilize the fishing communities based on it. The Fishery Act, which prescribes the rights to fisheries, is primarily a regulatory law governing fishing activities and the use of fishing grounds. In that sense, this is also the primary role of the fishery rights system.

Today, the use of fishing grounds is mostly disciplined, except for pending disputes in some areas. Also, the fishery rights system protects fishers' lives. That is, the system ensures the fundamental viability of fishers' livelihoods by granting them the exclusive right to use fishing grounds. It secures social justice by providing eligibility and priority for obtaining the right to fish. Therefore, fishery rights are established only through the governors of prefectures and are not obtainable through prescription, preemption, or custom. In particular, the common fishery rights have a general character that everyone in the community can use together. In choosing whether to pursue the efficiency of fishery production or the impartiality of the local community, Japan's fishery rights system, especially the co-operative-managed fishery rights system, clearly pursues the latter.

The fishery rights system also plays a vital role in maintaining fisheries resources, contributing significantly to

the sustainable production of coastal and small-scale fisheries (see Figure 1). Trends in data have shown that the coastal fishery's production levels have remained relatively stable, while those of the offshore and distant water fisheries have shrunk. Specifically, the fishery rights system has severely restricted the entry of external capital and individuals into coastal fisheries. Historically, private investment in fisheries was policy-guided towards the offshore and distant water fisheries sector.

The other point is that fishery rights facilitate the functioning of voluntary fisheries management by fishers. As is well known, the 'shigen-kanri-gata-gyogyo' (resource management-oriented fisheries) principle has been promoted in Japanese policies since the mid-1980s. The experience has been attracting attention from the world as a form of community-based management. The fisheries rights system provides institutional conditions that facilitate the organizational functioning of the fisheries resource management bodies that take such approaches.

It is doubtful whether these fishers and fishing organizations can continue the tradition of self-governance, given that the new Fisheries Act partially ended the priorities when granting fishery rights (see Table 1). The fishery rights are classified into three types: set-net fishery rights, demarcated fishery rights, and common fishery rights. Among the types of fishery rights, the common fishery rights fisheries are mainly aimed at shellfish and algae. The eligibility for the rights is granted only to fisheries co-operatives, where a vast majority of local fishers are members.

Such fisheries are generally run by individual fishers and require co-ordination among fishers regarding fishing grounds. Small-scale aquaculture by specific demarcated fishery rights (for example in oysters and seaweed) are operated similarly. Because of the ease of entry in terms of technology and necessary capital, the co-ordination between fishers becomes very important; therefore, the fishery co-operative is first in line.

The rights can be granted to individuals, comparatively speaking, for demarcated fishery rights and set-net fishery rights, because there is a need for high technology and significant capital. For the former, those with experience in fisheries, including local fishers, have priority; for the latter, fisheries co-operatives and juridical persons with more local fishers are given priority.

The new Fishery Act abolished such an order of priority (see Table 1) and enabled private companies to enter aquaculture and set-net fisheries. The government will evaluate whether the fishing waters are being used 'appropriately and effectively'. Although the guidelines regarding criteria for such evaluations are forthcoming, the self governance applied at the community level based on conventional fishery rights is believed to require revision to a greater or lesser extent due to the impact of the new Fishery Act.

Terms like 'deterioration of resources', 'decline of industry', 'the disappearance of fish from the table', and 'the end of Japan as a fishery nation' have all led to the formation of a dark image of Japanese fisheries. Such gloom fosters a sense of crisis and raises questions about the governance system. Under such circumstances, there has been a strong appeal for the need to grow the industry further and to manage resources more scientifically,

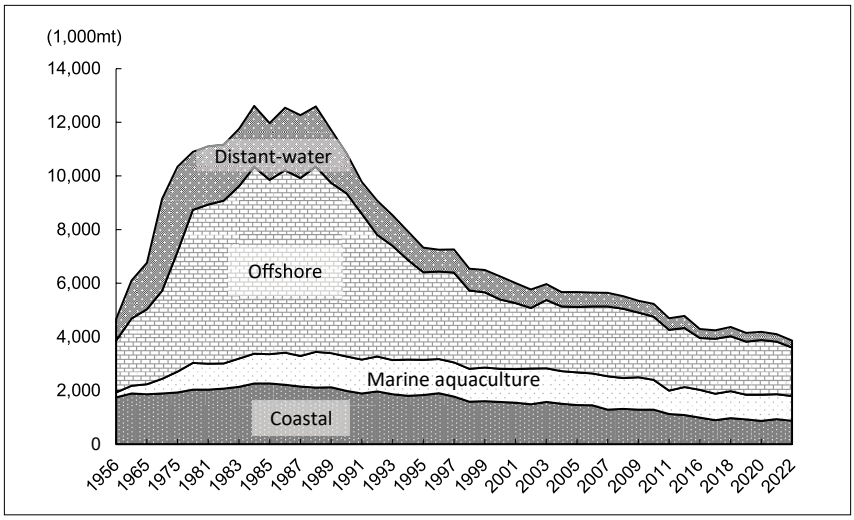

Figure 1 Fisheries production trends
Source: Annual Statistics of Fishery and Fish Culture (Fisheries Agency website)

	Demarcated fishery rights	Specific demarcated fishery rights	Set-net fishery rights	Common fishery rights
Example	Pearl aquaculture	Oyster, seaweed aquaculture	Mackerel, horse mackerel by set-net fishery	Abalone, sea urchin by skin diving
Granting Period	10	5	5	10
First	Existing fishers and others. (priority given to local and experienced ones) *Removed	Fisheries cooperatives (exercised by cooperative members) *Removed	Juridical person including more than 70% of the local fishery households. *Removed	Fisheries cooperatives (exercised by cooperative members)
Second	Others (Newcomer) *Removed	Juridical person including more than 70% of the local fishery households. *Removed	Juridical person consists of more than 7 local fishers. *Removed	
Third		Juridical person consists of more than 7 local fishers. *Removed	Existing fishers and others (including juridical person) *Removed	
Fourth		Existing fishers and others(including juridical person) *Removed	Others *Removed	
Fifth		Others *Removed		

Table 1. Priority orders regarding fishery rights

which has led to the recent revision of the Fisheries Act of 2020.

As a countermeasure for the former, 'seicho-sangyoka' (economic growth-centred industrialization) centred on the promotion of aquaculture and the 'opening' of fishery rights to private companies for that purpose has been introduced. For the latter, scientific resource management centred on the expansion of the quota system has been introduced and implemented; however, various confusions are occurring. Small-scale fisheries and fishing communities are scattered throughout Japan. Concurrently, small-scale fisheries and communities form the landscape and identity of the Japanese coast.

Can seicho-sangyoka-oriented policies ensure sustainable fisheries? What should be a real growth industry? The seicho-sangyoka or the Blue Economy or Blue Growth and other such initiatives are not necessarily negative to small-scale fisheries. It is also expected that new opportunities for small-scale fisheries will be created, which would not have been possible before.

Success, however, will only be realized when the 'Difference Principle' is respected. When the SSF Guidelines are fully recognized and implemented with a conscious effort. Echoing the need to secure a just space for small-scale fisheries in the Blue Economy, a just space for small-scale fisheries in seicho-sangyoka must be secured in Japan. Securing the tenure rights system is the way.

For more

This article is an adaptation of articles published in Li, Y & Namikawa, T. (2020) In the Era of Big Change: Essays about Japanese Small-Scale Fisheries. TBTI Global Publication Series, St. John's, NL, Canada. (Chapter 1, Chapter 32, Chapter 47)

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From Fair to Good

Millions have found livelihoods due to co-management practices that protect aquatic resources, contributing to the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries in Vietnam

Vietnam's 3,260-km coastline spans 28 provinces and cities, supporting thousands of fishing villages and millions of families. About five million people work in the fisheries sector, directly or indirectly, according to the Vietnam Institute of Fisheries Economics and Planning (VIFEP). In addition to its coastline, Vietnam has 2,372 rivers, 112 estuaries, 11 coastal lagoons, and nearly 3,000 large lakes. The Red River and Mekong River deltas create over two million hectares of brackish and freshwater areas. This diverse range of water bodies and abundant aquatic resources support widespread aquaculture and fisheries, providing livelihoods for millions across the country.

The Law on Fisheries of 2017 serves as the primary legal document governing co-management implementation for the protection of aquatic resources in Vietnam

Coastal and inland fishing villages have sustained communities for thousands of years. These communities deeply understand aquatic resources and depend on them, recognizing the importance of their protection and development. With a large labour force and numerous boats, they are crucial for managing aquatic resources. Authorities should hence share rights, responsibilities and benefits with these communities to promote effective resource management. Given the natural, economic and social conditions of Vietnam's coastal and inland fisheries, the implementation of co-management in aquatic resources protection is imperative.

From a legislative point of view, at the central level, the Law on Fisheries of 2017 serves as the primary legal document governing co-management implementation for the protection of aquatic resources in Vietnam. This law includes Article 10 that is dedicated to co-management; it outlines the obligations and interests of the community involved. Furthermore, in Decree No. 26/2019/NĐ-CP, issued on 8 March 2019, the government elaborated on various articles and measures for implementing the Law on Fisheries. This decree provides guidance on co-management in aquatic resources protection, detailing procedures for recognizing and assigning management rights to community groups, and reporting requirements for these groups.

Additionally, other legal documents highlight the importance of developing co-management in aquatic resource protection. These include Prime Ministerial Decision No. 339/QĐ-TTg, dated 11 March 2021, which approves the Vietnam Fisheries Development Strategy to 2030, with a vision to 2045. There's also the Decision No. 76/QĐ-TTg, dated 18 January 2024, that approves the National Programme on Protection and Development of Aquatic Resources to 2030.

The implications of co-management approaches in Vietnam, aligned with the spirit of the 2017 law, are evident in several ways, spelled out hereunder:

Community-centred: Legal documents emphasize the pivotal role of communities in co-management. The Guidelines for Co-Management Implementation in Aquatic Resources Protection prioritize "needs identification" as the initial step, highlighting the significance of understanding the community's needs.

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Ecosystem-based management: A key criterion for selecting co-management areas is identifying regions with high biodiversity or unique ecosystems, such as coral reefs, seagrasses, mangrove forests and hidden rocks. Currently, many co-management initiatives in Vietnam focus on areas with these characteristic marine and coastal ecosystems. By enabling community-led management and sustainable resource use, these initiatives foster stronger bonds between communities and their ecosystems, promoting harmonious and responsible coexistence with nature.

Rights and responsibilities sharing: Co-management involves the mutual sharing of interests and responsibilities between community groups and authorities in protecting aquatic resources. The mechanism outlined in law empowers community groups to engage in co-management, representing a progressive advancement, compared to previous legislation. This empowerment fosters community involvement in resource protection, and encourages monitoring of destructive and excessive exploitation activities.

Resource management linked with livelihood development: Across all co-management sites for aquatic resource protection in Vietnam, livelihood concerns, particularly those of community group members, are paramount. Addressing livelihoods within community groups is integral to co-management implementation and is explicitly addressed in the guidelines for aquatic resource protection co-management.

On 11 July 2023 the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development signed the Decision No. 2781/QĐ-BNN-KN about approving the implementation guideline of co-management in aquatic resources protection. According to the decision, there are five steps of co-management implementation in aquatic resources protection; they are:

- identify implementation needs of co-management;
- select co-management implementation areas;
- establish community groups;
- request the recognition and assignment of the right for co-implementation; and
- implement co-management.

In line with best practices

The approach to co-management in protecting aquatic resources in Vietnam aligns well with the requirements outlined in the SSF Guidelines, as evidenced by the following points:

One, small-scale fishing communities have been duly acknowledged and empowered in the management and protection of aquatic resources. The law recognizes community groups and assigns management rights in aquatic resource protection upon meeting specific criteria, including: being individuals who directly benefit from the aquatic resources in the designated area; being registered participants in co-management within a specified area; having a formulated plan for the protection and utilization of aquatic resources; and having operational regulations for the community group.

Two, members of community groups are permitted to utilize aquatic resources within the co-management area in compliance with the Community Groups Regulations. These are self-imposed by the community group and are designed to govern and mitigate destructive exploitation and over-exploitation practices.

Three, through controlled exploitation and appropriate monitoring mechanisms, destructive activities will be reduced and brought to a complete end. In fact, now in areas where co-management is implemented, over-exploitation and destruction has almost ceased to occur, while ecosystems have not been further degraded; some show signs of recovery.

Four, through the co-management implementation in aquatic resources protection, community groups have more livelihoods opportunities. For example, in developing ecotourism and aquaculture activities that are environmentally friendly, thereby improving the lives of their members.

Five, the co-management implementation increases the cohesion between authorities and the fishing

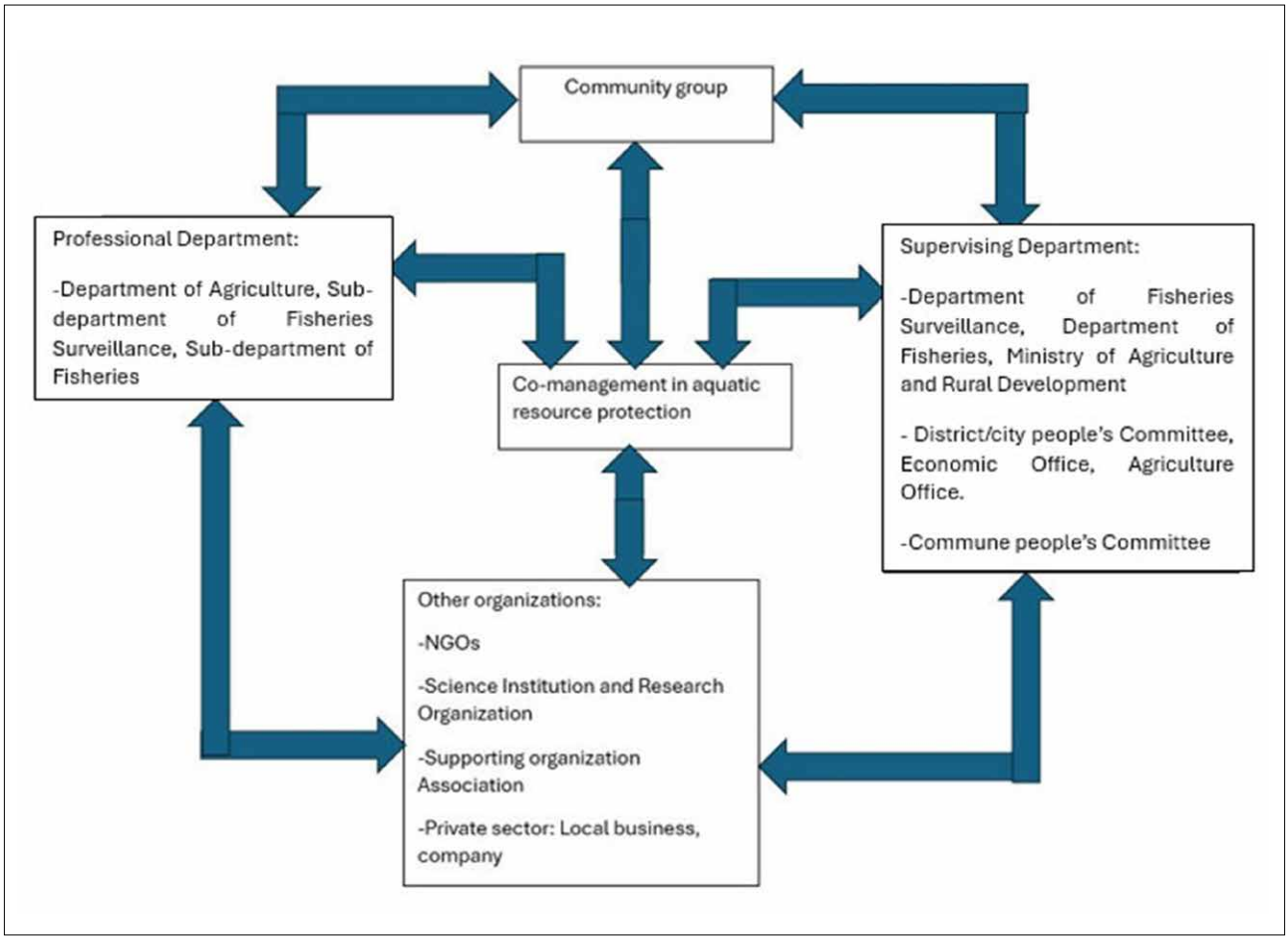

Diagram of stakeholders participating in co-management in aquatic resources protection

community, thereby strengthening the capacity of the parties, and improving the effectiveness in the protection of aquatic resources.

Coral reefs in the south-central coastal region—it comprises eight coastal provinces and cities, namely, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan—face severe degradation due to natural factors such as coral bleaching as well as human activities like excessive marine exploitation. "Coral reefs in Vietnam have degraded from medium to poor levels. Given this, the conservation, protection and sustainable exploitation of aquatic resources, particularly in the coastal coral reef ecosystem in the south-central region, are top priorities for the government," said the *Report on the current state of the national marine and island environment in the period of 2016 – 2020*.

The Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) has a project titled 'Supporting Vietnamese fisheries reform under the Fisheries Law 2017 from national to local action'; it is funded by Ocean 5 through the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPAs) from 2021 to 2023. Focused on scaling up co-management practices in aquatic resource protection, the project operates in three provinces: Binh Dinh, Quang Nam and Khanh Hoa. It offers valuable lessons and capacity building for participating partners. Support and co-ordination for the project come from the Directorate of Fisheries (now the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Fisheries Surveillance), as well as the fisheries sub-departments of the provinces of Binh Dinh, Quang Nam and Khanh Hoa.

Since 2019, the Nhon Ly commune in Binh Dinh has been proactively running a community group for aquatic resource protection, comprising 60 members. This group manages an area of 8.2 hectares in Bai Dua. With

the enactment of the 2017 law, these community groups were officially recognized and granted specific management responsibilities. In Binh Dinh, two additional community groups were established in the Nhon Hai commune and in the Ghenh Rang ward. Drawing from the lessons of co-management and resource protection in Binh Dinh, similar groups were formed in Quang Nam and Khanh Hoa provinces. Notably, these co-management areas are monitored and managed by community group members. Currently, the co-management group in the Tam Tien commune in Quang Nam comprises 42 members managing 64 hectares in Ba Dau Reef. In the Van Hung commune of Khanh Hoa, 54 members oversee 89 hectares in the Ran Trao Ecosystem Protection Area.

From April 2018 to March 2021 the Fisheries Sub-Department in partnership with and Fisheries Association of Binh Thuan province run the project titled 'Promoting Community Empowerment and Capacity Building for Coastal Fishery Resources in Ham Thuan Nam District, Binh Thuan Province' with financial support from the Global Environment Fund's Small Grant Programme (GEF SGP). Its goal was to manage, protect, develop and sustainably exploit coastal aquatic resources, and foster socio-economic development for communities in local coastal communes. The project established three community groups in Thuan Quy, Tan Thanh and Tan Thuan communes, covering over 43 sq km, and supported their management responsibilities in aquatic resource protection.

Results that shine

Positive changes have occurred in sea-based aquatic resources after two years of project implementation, according to the 2021 report from the Binh Thuan Fisheries Association. Soft corals and seagrasses have thrived on reefs like Hon Lan, Mui Ngua and the Suoi Nhum mouth. There has been an increase in the abundance of various aquatic species, resulting in higher catches. Fishing communities have experienced a more than 20 per cent rise in income levels, with sustainable livelihoods maintained. Three community credit funds totaling VND 440 million have been established, facilitating 128 instances of borrowing by fishing households.

Additionally, a regulation instrument on co-management co-ordination was signed in May 2019, involving various stakeholders to ensure synchronized implementation of the co-management approach, addressing previous weaknesses.

MCD facilitated the co-management mechanism, empowering communities in planning, resource management, and leadership. It did this by establishing five community organizations, totaling 278 members, provided with project support, implementing co-management plans for marine resource protection across Khanh Hoa, Binh Dinh and Quang Nam provinces. Additionally, 375 individuals received direct capacity strengthening through technical expert guidance, aligned with national guidelines. From 2021 to 2023, MCD and partners conducted over 20 local training sessions and provided national management guidance, enhancing community groups' proficiency in coral reef and aquatic resource planning, sea patrolling, information technology, communications and livelihood strategies.

The positive impact of promoting co-management rights in protecting aquatic resources is evident in the recovery of critical ecosystems like coral reefs. Monitoring in 2023 shows significant progress: coral cover at sites in the Binh Dinh province reached 'fair' and 'good' levels, with percentages of 79.38, 44.38 and 30.63, respectively. Additionally, coral reefs in Khanh Hoa and Quang Nam provinces have seen increased coverage due to protection activities led by community organizations. In Tam Tien, live coral coverage rose from 26.69 per cent to 30.68 per cent between May 2022 and May 2023. At Trao Reef, live coral coverage increased to 23.6 per cent in 2023, up from 10.95 per cent in 2022, showcasing the positive impact of co-management efforts on coral reef health and recovery.

Effective co-ordination among authorities at all levels, community

groups and stakeholders forms the essence of co-management in protecting aquatic resources. However, collaboration in enhancing supervision and enforcement of legal regulations—between communities and authorities—requires further enhancement. Governance mechanisms, such as fisheries zoning, within co-management areas should be established to ensure mutual benefits and shared responsibilities between community groups and government agencies.

Securing financial resources through suitable financial and credit mechanisms and policies is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of co-management implementation. During the initial stages, numerous activities in co-management necessitate funding; yet these activities do not yet yield incomes for the community. Therefore, establishing a reasonable financial mechanism to support the community during this period is essential.

Capacity gaps exist in community group governance, encompassing human, financial and social aspects. Leveraging traditional practices and indigenous knowledge in aquatic resource protection and development is a key strategy for ensuring successful co-management. The community's traditional practices and indigenous wisdom are valuable resources that contribute to co-management success. Utilizing these resources, community-based initiatives can devise suitable exploitation and sustainable livelihood plans. Additionally, the community's customs and traditions provide a basis for fostering community-based ecotourism, a vital livelihood that supports co-management efforts.

The fisheries law and related legal documents need to be amended in the direction of specifying the rights and obligations of community groups and authorities when implementing co-management in aquatic resources protection. Regulations need to be developed on co-ordination among authorities at all levels, community groups and stakeholders in the co-management implementation in aquatic resources protection in localities.

The other steps that need to be taken include:

- Establishing a mechanism for inspection, supervision and evaluation of results of co-management activities;
- introducing regulations on handling, and sanctioning violations of, fisheries laws in water areas assigned to community group management;
- continuing to support and train community groups to improve their capacity in developing and organizing the implementation of plans on protection and exploitation of aquatic resources;
- imparting communication and training skills, and improving the capacity for people to participate in, and implement, co-management activities effectively;
- reviewing the legal provisions to guide community groups to establish 'community funds' in accordance with regulations; and
- developing mechanisms to support community groups to maintain and develop livelihood opportunities.

Climate change impacts and environmental issues reduce resources and create difficulties for the development of small-scale fisheries and community livelihoods. In this context, it is recommended that research be done on applying 'Green Finance' tools that can support sustainable livelihoods in empowered areas through co-benefit mechanisms to protect and exploit sustainable resources. Business models/initiatives also need to be developed by applying information technology, enhancing the role and participation of women, linking chains and enhancing product value, so as to ensure benefits and conservation values for community groups adapting to climate change.

For more

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Unrecognized Tenure

The absence of tenure security threatens the traditional livelihoods of the fixed bag-net fishworkers in India's eastern state of West Bengal

Conflicts over use of natural resources are common in coastal areas globally. Fluid environmental frontiers, historical marginalization of fisher communities, and overlapping tenure systems coded in formal law or customary institutions make governance of coastal and marine resources complex. In the midst of such conflicts, fishworkers in small-scale fisheries (SSF) find themselves situated at the bottom of the ladder of development in terms of priorities, despite their useful contribution towards securing livelihoods of coastal communities and ensuring nutritional security of the global population at large.

In India, on the one hand, the absence of formally recognized tenure rights of small-scale fishworkers alienates them from the resources that form the basis of their social and cultural well-being. On the other hand, weak governance structures threaten the ecological sustainability of the resources which are claimed and contested by various user groups, including government institutions, civil society, private enterprises, marine fishing communities and the general public at large. In this article, we assess the implications of marine tenure systems on small-scale fishworkers practising fixed bag-net fishing (*behundi jal*) in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal.

Tenure in the international context

Concerns around the sustainability of marine fisheries have led to an increasing focus on the rights to use, access, manage and alienate marine resources. Broadly bundled together as 'tenure rights', these rights raise important questions around the social ties and institutions that govern such resources. Understanding tenure systems requires an assessment of four broad aspects: the resource itself; those who possess rights to the resources; the rules and norms; and the authorities governing and managing the resources. A tenure system thus determines who can use which resources, and the duration and conditions governing such use.

SSF communities are widely acknowledged to be critical actors for ensuring sustainable and equitable utilization of coastal and marine resources. The environmental stewardship of SSF has found cognizance in international instruments such as the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty (the SSF Guidelines). They prescribe that "small-scale fishing communities should have secure, equitable and socio-culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources, fishing areas and adjacent land and forests" for their social and cultural well-being.

In India, on the one hand, the absence of formally recognized tenure rights of small-scale fishworkers alienates them from the resources that form the basis of their social and cultural well-being

Within the broader rubric of tenure rights, customary tenure has been highlighted as a key component of tenure security for SSF. Defined as the norms regulating rights to resources that are enforced and managed by community institutions and non-State authorities, customary tenure is distinguished by its flexibility,

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dynamism and sensitivity to place and local moral economies. Critically, given colonial legacies and State interventions in fisheries, customary tenure interacts, and overlaps, with the formal legal system, and rarely functions entirely independently of the latter. In the fisheries context, this means that customary tenure relies on, and is impacted by, the formal legal system. In the next section we examine the formal legal system impacting customary tenure in coastal and marine contexts in India.

The legal setting

Coastal and marine fisheries in India are governed by a patchwork quilt of laws, rules and policies. At the constitutional level, in addition to the general environmental provisions, responsibility for coastal and marine fisheries is shared between the state and central governments. The former has the responsibility for tenure and fisheries within territorial waters and the latter beyond territorial waters. At the national level, the Government of India has issued the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019, under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. First issued in 1991, and then in 2011 and 2019, the CRZ notification has the stated mandate of conserving and protecting coastal and marine areas in addition to ensuring the livelihood security of fishers and other coastal communities.

Fishing practices in each *khoti* are pursued following a set of rules and norms that uphold the principles of equity and collective action

The CRZ notifications have been extensively critiqued for their managerial approach towards the coast and a lack of focus on ensuring the rights and security of marine fishers. However, it is significant that while the notifications do not confer rights, they do recognize traditional rights of SSF. The notification makes several references to traditional rights and customary uses of fishing communities in relation to dwelling houses, boat-building and fishing activities. Equally significantly, the CRZ notification requires the creation of Coastal Zone Management Plans and local-level Coastal Zone Management Maps that must recognize and demarcate the fishing villages and common properties of the fisher communities as well as their fishing zones in the water bodies.

Taken together, it is arguable that the CRZ recognizes the presence of fishing communities and their traditional usage of coastal and marine resources. It is undeniable, however, that the CRZ grants no explicit protection to systems of customary tenure of SSF in India. When combined with increasing pressures on coastal land and marine space, efforts by governmental and private actors to enclose coastal areas for tourism and other activities, and poor governance overall, it is clear that tenure security for SSF faces grave threats.

In addition to the CRZ Notification 2019, the West Bengal Marine Fishing Regulation Act (WBMFRA), 1993, is the overarching state enactment for marine fisheries. While the WBMFRA does not explicitly reference customary tenure, it does, however, contain special protections for SSF. These include a heightened governmental responsibility for protecting SSF and creating special fishing zones for fishers using non-mechanized boats.

Customary tenure and *behundi jal*

Customary marine tenure systems can be observed among the marine fishing communities of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal, where production of dried fish follows an elaborate array of institutional arrangements from pre-harvest to post-harvest activities. Every year from the month of September until March, the marine fishing community from native and neighbouring villages of the two coastal districts come together to constitute social organizations known as *khoti*.

Fishing practices in each *khoti* are pursued following a set of rules and norms that uphold the principles of equity and collective action. That is to say, access to fishing grounds, and

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With depleting fish catch and dramatic environmental change, a traditional way of life is under threat. Fishing practices in each khoti are pursued following a set of rules and norms that uphold the principles of equity and collective action

space on land for building living spaces and fish drying is distributed equitably among the fishing households in the *khoti* before the start of a fishing season. *Khoti*s are usually responsible for determining who is permitted to join the community institution and for resolving disputes among their members.

The *khoti* is a gendered space. Fish work in the *khoti* is undertaken by family units where division of labour is based on gender roles. The men usually go fishing in groups of two or three on wooden motorized boats within the territorial zone until the limits of the fishing grounds of the *khoti*. After the fish is landed from the boats, the work of the women fish driers and sorters commences. They spread out the fish on the beach on top of nets which are laid out in front of the encampment of the *khoti*.

Once the fish is dried under the sun, the women carefully sort the fish, based on species and quality. The finer quality of the fish goes for human consumption whereas the second-grade quality goes for the fishmeal and fish oil (FMFO) industry, both bought and transported by the merchant or *dadondar*. The women work either under the family units or, in some cases, as wage labourers in the *khoti* for a daily wage of INR 200-300, depending on the availability of work.

The fishing grounds are mapped and demarcated at the start of the season, where every fishing household is eligible for a stretch of the sea to stake their bag nets or *behundi jal* on bamboo poles. Fishing is based on lunar cycles. The fixed *behundi* nets, staked on poles, are lifted during the low tide to harvest the fish catch and automatically floats back on the water during the high tide. The technology of operating *behundi* nets, with their mesh size ranging between 10 mm to 24 mm, targets fish species such as small brown shrimp (*Metapenaeus monoceros*), ribbon fish (*Trachipteridae*), barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*), Indian anchovy (*Stolephorus indicus*), Bombay duck (*Harpadon nehereus*), golden spotted anchovies (*Coilia dussumieri*), hair-fin anchovy (*Setipina taty*), Indian white-prawn (*Penaeus indicus*), kuruma prawn (*P. japonicus*) and paste shrimp (*Acetes indicus*). However, over the years, the mesh size of the bag-nets has become smaller due to high demand from the

FMFO industry. This reduces scrap value from fishing effort, albeit at the cost of long-term sustainability of the marine ecosystem and available fish resources.

Threats to marine tenure

The tenure needs of the fishworkers in a *khoti* spans from the water to the land. However, in the absence of formal recognition of their tenure rights, the viability of their social organization and traditional practice is subject to multiple threats.

Recognizing and supporting systems of customary tenure is critical to ensure the resilience of marine fisheries

Small-scale fishers lack formal land rights in coastal areas and, as a result, they have faced consistent threats of displacement from infrastructural projects for promotion of coastal tourism, national defence, trade and commerce and other developmental initiatives. For example, the unlawful development of hotels in violation of CRZ rules along the Mandarmani coast has displaced fishing communities.

The proposed development of a marine drive road, the Tajpur deep-sea port in Ramnagar, and a missile launching platform in Junput have been promoted on the grounds of enhanced connectivity, increased economic activity and national security, respectively. However, the cost of such developments is almost always borne by the small-scale fishers who find themselves increasingly erased from the Bengal coast.

Conclusion

Small-scale fishers rely on both land and sea for their customary rights and livelihoods. By practising ecologically sensitive and sustainable modes of fishing, they are custodians of the fragile coastal and marine resources that are critical to both the environmental health and food security of the entire nation. In order to ensure that they are allowed to thrive in coastal spaces, it is imperative that our legal and governance systems recognize the customary tenure systems practised by small-scale fishers. These systems are unwritten but they have widespread acceptance from the community members.

Recognition of customary tenure systems would imply that the State recognizes that small-scale fishers have a preferential right to access, use, manage and conserve coastal resources. It would grant them protection from State and non-State actors seeking to displace them, and would ensure that their traditional fishing practices and ways of life can be sustained and passed on to future generations.

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that customary tenure systems usually have a strong interest in preserving and stewarding the resources upon which livelihoods depend. Recognizing and supporting systems of customary tenure, which already have robust rules in place for maintaining healthy ecosystems, is critical to ensure the resilience of marine fisheries. Insecure tenure for small-scale fishworkers, who have traditionally protected the coasts and marine resources for their subsistence and livelihood, not only threatens their well-being but also brings forth newer challenges in an uncertain era of global environmental change.

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Fishing in a Fuzzy Era

The past 75 years in Sri Lanka have seen a shift in tenure rights in small-scale fisheries, heralding a new era

Tenure rights have a strong influence on access, use, management and conservation of aquatic resources. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines tenure rights in fishing as "how marine and inland capture fisheries are accessed, used, and managed using various types of rights-based approaches." Under the Village Communities Ordinance, passed in 1889 by the colonial government, management decisions were made at the local level, respecting the traditional norm of equal access to resources and equal income earning opportunities to all. Artisanal and small-scale fishers, both marine and inland, continued to enjoy their customary rights to fish resources and the beach; the violation of such rights were rare. In a context of low population pressure and relatively 'abundant' resources, there was no need either for access rules or conservation rules.

The most popular fishing technique in the period before and after the world wars was beach-seining; it contributed 90 per cent to the total production of 25,000 tonnes in 1950. Nets were laid in smooth-bottomed near-shore waters called *padu*. Fisheries were managed by the involvement of Patabandiarachchi, which was usually a person from a respectable family in the village with a knowledge of fisheries. People also had free access to inland fisheries resources, such as perennial and seasonal tanks, reservoirs, lakes and rivers. However, inland fishers did not clearly enjoy any right of access to land adjoining the shoreline, such as *waw-thavalla* and *gasgommana* or *ihaththawa* (area beyond the tank bund and tree girdles around a tank), but they have been using these lands quite freely.

After the country's independence in 1948, and especially from the 1950s to the 1970s, emerged a new era in fisheries. It began with the expansion and development of fish marketing, first by the Fish Sales Unions and then by the establishment of the Department of Fisheries in 1948. Since then a number of changes have taken place in fishers' right of access to coastal and inland waters and to the beach and adjoining land.

New economic opportunities emerged outside the sphere of fisheries in the country, along with population growth, market expansion, national integration, technological change and government intervention. People no longer believed that their futures were tied to the natural resources around their villages. As customary rights and obligations were not fungible in a perfect market, people were compelled to neglect or overexploit the resources. Traditional community norms and laws could no longer successfully address the newly emerging fishing problems. The government had to intervene to protect the common property fisheries from further degradation. Fisheries inspectors (FIs) were stationed at marine landing centres. Although tenure rights are not specifically tackled in the law called the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act (FARA) No. 2 of 1996 and its subsequent amendments, the rights of access to fish resources and the beach are implicit in certain provisions of the

Traditional community norms and laws could no longer successfully address the newly emerging fishing problems

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1996 law. With the establishment of the National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) in 1997, all inland fisheries and aquaculture came under its purview.

Technological developments during the early 1960s were characterized by the introduction of nylon nets, outboard motors (OBMs), offshore craft with inboard engine, and new fishing techniques such as nylon gill-netting. This was the onset of Sri Lanka's 'Blue Revolution'. The new technology did not have serious impacts on the customary rights of small-scale fishers. There was a clear spatial separation of fishing technology: artisanal craft operated up to about five km from the coast; small mechanized craft plied up to the edge of the contiguous zone of 24 nautical miles; and the offshore craft with inboard engine (and, after 1990, the multi-day boats) fished beyond the continental shelf (away from the contiguous zone) up to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and further away in international waters. No conflicts among different technological categories emerged and fishers continued to enjoy their customary rights to the sea and fish resources.

The need to regulate

A new regulation, prohibiting the operation of purse-seines within seven km from the shoreline, was brought in, leading finally to the demarcation of an arbitrary 'artisanal fishing zone'. Small-scale fishers on motorized boats with OBMs operated beyond this point, up to the edge of the contiguous zone. Licences for fishing operations were issued by the Department of Fisheries, which curbed unwarranted expansion of fishing effort, while contributing significantly towards sustainable management of fisheries resources.

A recent development in respect of lagoon fisheries is the establishment of Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs), 18 in number, and Fisheries Committees (FCs, one or more per FMA), under FARA's provisions in sections 31 and 32. This has provided the FCs with power to control access and to adopt measures to sustainably manage lagoon resources, undertaking even resource stewardship responsibilities.

Generally, the coast comes under the Department of Coast Conservation and Coastal Resources Management (DCCCRM). While the coastal zone was defined during the pre-tsunami era as a distance of two km to the sea and 300 metres landward (except in the case of water courses, where it extends to two km), the landward limit was extended to two km after the tsunami of December 2004. No construction within this zone was allowed without permission from the DCCCRM, which prevented tourism stakeholders from building structures illegally along the coast, thereby protecting, to a fair extent, fishers' right to the beach. Another development was the enforcement of Madel Fishing (Beach-Seine) Regulations, No. 6 of 1984. This led to the demarcation of beach-seine *padu*, giving the seine fishers the legal rights to use *padu* for seine fishing.

A major change in inland fisheries was the enactment of the Agrarian Services Act No. 46 of 2000. Section 81 (1) of this Act stated that "every tank, dam, canal, water course, embankment reservation or other irrigation work, within the area of authority of any Farmers' Organization, shall be subject to the supervision of that Farmers' Organization." The fisher organizations are required to obtain permission from the relevant farmer organization to engage in any activity related to fishing. While this was the case for minor irrigation systems, fishers were invited to irrigation committee meetings by the Department of Irrigation in respect of major irrigation systems with an extent exceeding 800 hectares). This facilitated joint decision-making concerning water management. Recent amendments in the Agrarian Services Act introduced provisions to consider fisheries organizations as sub-committees of farm organizations, and required that membership in such organizations remain constant, preventing further entry.

Increasing coastal pollution meant that access to coastal waters did not guarantee the small-scale fishers access to good fishing incomes. Many emerging industries were located close to the coast for ease of releasing effluent into the sea, which has led to

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Figure 1. Spatial Separation of Technological Categories (under Blue Revolution). No conflicts among different technological categories emerged and fishers continued to enjoy their customary rights to the sea and fish resources

depletion of fish resources due to water pollution. Some fishers must have left the fisheries because their access rights to murky waters did not guarantee them even their subsistence.

Competing interests with power

Of immense significance is the adverse impacts on fishers from the expanding tourism sector, which accounts for 12 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In recent years, the Blue Economy has received top priority; coastal tourism is one sub-sector that is rapidly growing now. Due to this dominance and the power wielded by hoteliers and other service providers near the coast, some small-scale fishers have been displaced, dispossessed and marginalized due to land grab. Although this 'grievance' argument is being strongly voiced today, the other side of the coin is that children of those aggrieved fishers have now joined hands with the new coastal stakeholders like hoteliers to chase away their 'own' ilk, in search of a better life. The small-scale fishing communities complain that their customary rights to the beach have been violated, when those from the same communities are involved in chasing them out. In effect, they "run with the hare, and hunt with the hounds."

The customary practice of fish processing by women has been gradually taken over by small business ventures. Women fish processors have thus been pushed to the margins, and they now work as labourers in dry-fish enterprises. Women also complain that they are paid less than men for the

same tasks. There are no significant changes in fish marketing, where men and women continue to sell their fish through traditional channels, which are in the hands of middlemen.

Due to low fishing incomes and poverty, there is a tendency for fishers to rent out their access rights to tourism stakeholders or other actors so as to generate higher income. Stilt fishers along the southern coast hire out their stilts to tourists while fishers in Negombo hire their sail boats to tourists rather than engage in shrimp trawling themselves. These examples show that rights of access should go hand-in-hand with sustainable resource management. When income is not sufficient to meet family subsistence needs, people sell or lease their rights to enjoy a decent living elsewhere, which fishing cannot guarantee.

Generally, climate change impacts are strongly felt in coastal areas. The major threats to tenure rights and, subsequently, on the livelihoods of fishers, has been the large-scale erosion of the coastal areas, many of which have been narrowed down to thin strips of beaches. Fishers complain that they have lost their craft landing sites, beach-seine *padu*, and fish drying sites, among other losses.

To cope with heavy coastal erosion, the DCCCRM had erected stone barriers to protect coastal structures, roads, houses and schools. These barriers are commonly found in the southern, western and northwestern coastal belt. Such protective structures have adverse consequences on beach-craft and seine operations, and many *padu* have disappeared. For example, beach erosion in Mannar in the Northwestern Province has caused a drastic reduction in beach-seines—from about 100 seines operating a few decades ago to a mere 20 today.

Both marine and inland fishers in Sri Lanka still enjoy customary rights to access coastal and inland waters. However, Malthusian pressures, market expansion, tourism development and climate change have strongly affected fishers' rights to the beach and adjoining land. State law has protected fishers' access rights to the resources, which is especially true with artisanal and small-scale fishers. Even in inland fisheries, regulations permitting fisher organizations to be part of a sub-committee of farm organizations also provide for more effective participation of fishers in water management.

Since access rights to fish resources does not yield benefits if there are no fish to catch, it is evident that access rights need to go hand-in-hand with human rights, such as Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living. It is also necessary to estimate the total allowable catch (TAC) in coastal fisheries, based on which the number of coastal fishing vessels to be permitted and the number of operating licences to be issued can be determined, protecting the resources from further degradation.

To bring open-access fisheries under some form of management, sections 31 and 32 of FARA could be utilized to declare coastal fisheries as FMAs by extending coastal boundaries to the edge of the contiguous zone. Fisheries Committees established in FMAs will need to ensure the fishers' right of access to coastal fish resources, while taking up management responsibilities. The DCCCRM also needs to consider establishing co-management platforms in the coastal zone, which need to be well-integrated, inclusive, participatory and holistic, ensuring economically, ecologically and socially sound resource use, while promoting marine and coastal spatial planning and the demarcation of coastal areas for different users.

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At a Loss

As small-scale fishers in China increasingly lose the sea areas that have supported their livelihoods, it is necessary to protect fishery tenure rights

The Blue Economy has contributed to the economic development in China in the past decades. This has also resulted in over-exploitation of marine resources and damage to the marine environment. Rural small-scale fishers in some regions have also paid the cost, losing the sea areas that have supported their life. Although there might be social relief measures for the fishers, the disadvantageous situation of this new vulnerable group cannot be easily redressed. One important reason is the weak protection of small-scale fishers' tenure rights in Chinese laws and the difficulty in obtaining remedies when their interests are at odds with others interests.

In China, the State owns its territorial sea; the local governments have the power to decide on, or change the use of, the sea on behalf of the State. In contrast, rural fishers almost have no opportunities to express their opinions, even though they are a significant group engaged in fishing activities on the sea. Due to weak protection of rural fishers' rights to use aquatic resources, violations of their interests occur very often.

In some places, water areas were transferred or auctioned by the local government against the will of rural fishers. In other places, rural fishers were forced to surrender the water areas where they had practised aquaculture for long. Some water areas, including those with favourable conditions for aquaculture or for the breeding of important species, were occupied by commercial projects with no compensation or only nominal compensation to rural fishers. In all those cases, the losses rural fishers suffered were attributable to local governments' defiance of their tenure rights.

Water areas are essential for rural fishers for the life security they offer. However, the ambiguous tenure legislation in China has not provided a solid foundation for protecting rural fishers' right to use fisheries. The fisheries law stipulates ways to use water areas for aquaculture and capture fisheries, but these rights are subject to the government's authorization. According to this law, the State makes uniform plans on the use of water areas, and any unit or individual that wishes to use them for aquaculture and capture shall get relevant certificates or licences from the government before they can conduct these activities. A significant part of the fisheries law is about administrative control in the fisheries industry, with nearly no specific mention of the protection of fisheries operators' rights. Also, no provision regarding the effective duration of aquaculture licences and capture licences is contained in this law.

The fisheries law stipulates ways to use water areas for aquaculture and capture fisheries, but these rights are subject to the government's authorization

The Law on the Administration of the Use stipulates overlapping requirements on application for authorization if aquaculture and fisheries in ocean areas are involved. Meanwhile, this law also specifies that the right to use sea areas may be revoked to meet the needs of public interests or state security.

The Civil Code is somewhat advanced in the sense that it contains articles on fisheries rights in a chapter

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titled 'Usufructs'. These articles say the right to use sea areas and the right to use waters areas for aquaculture or capture fisheries, obtained in accordance with the law, are to be protected by law. It is widely noted that this law has acknowledged fisheries tenure rights as non-owners' civil property rights. However, the articles under 'Usufructs' provide no substantial protection for Chinese traditional fishers' property benefits.

The fisheries tenure rights have long been regarded as derivatives of state ownership of water areas, and, therefore, the exercise of these rights must be subject to the running of state ownership

The fisheries tenure rights provided by the Chinese laws are not well-delineated. They can fall into an unstable position facing the government's administration power in fisheries operation and resource conservation. The fisheries tenure rights have long been regarded as derivatives of state ownership of water areas, and, therefore, the exercise of these rights must be subject to the running of state ownership. This kind of understanding and the resulting legislation have some downsides.

One, it can easily create excuses for public authorities to infringe on the tenure rights of rural fishers. As a result, government departments can abuse administrative power without properly considering rural fishers' rights to use water areas.

Two, it leads to the administration of water areas by multiple government departments in China. In practice, when a fisher plans to practice aquaculture in a seawater area, he usually has to first get at least three certificates from three government departments. They are: Aquaculture License Certificate, Water Surface Use Certificate, and Ship Registration Certificate.

Three, it makes fisheries tenure rights as quasi-property rights subject to administrative authorization, which cannot have independent status held by other civil rights. Even in the event that the authorities do not take back tenure rights legally, usually rural fishers can only obey such decisions with few chances of overturning them.

To protect China's rural fishers from 'sea-loss', the key is to reform the legislative understanding of fisheries tenure rights. This kind of rights should be regarded as rural fishers' inherent and superior rights for survival. It, therefore, cannot be reliant on sources for their existence and effectiveness. On the one hand, as the Civil Code is the fundamental law in civil areas, 'Usufructs' should state more unequivocally the protection of traditional fishers' tenure rights. Relevant articles in this chapter should state more specifically that customary tenure rights of rural fishers should be prioritized, even when they run at odds with other rights.

By doing so, the courts will not judge fisheries tenure rights only upon whether an administrative licence has been issued. On the other hand, confirming the irrevocability of tenure rights during the term of tenure contracts will also contribute to the protection of traditional fishers' right to subsistence. As for rural lands, the relevant law in China states that during the term of contract, the party giving out the contract may not take back the contracted land. Likewise, later legislation in China should also confirm the irrevocability of aquaculture rights during the term of contract.

From the perspective of social development, rural fishers' loss of fisheries sea areas is not completely evitable, but the arbitrariness of such loss and the lack of relief are mainly due to the disregard for tenure rights. When the material life basis of rural fishers—the rights to the ocean—can be arbitrarily taken away by administration at any time, rural fishers will become a new vulnerable group. It is necessary to attach importance to the protection of fishery tenure rights in China.

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Course Correction Overdue

Chile's new fishery law governs the rights of access to, and use of, resources by small-scale fishing communities

If we want everything to remain as it is, everything needs to change.

– Il Gattopardo.Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa,1957

Chile is located in the Southeast Pacific Ocean. It is one of the five most productive and bio-diverse marine areas on the planet. Fishing and aquaculture constitute the second largest sector of the Chilean export economy, with an annual production of 3.4 million tonnes, valued at US $8.5 billion.

This Latin American country is the third largest global exporter of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and marine invertebrates, after Norway and China. It is also the world's second largest producer of fishmeal, the fifth largest exporter of seaweed for human consumption, the leading exporter of *mithilids* (bivalve molluscs), the second largest producer of industrially farmed Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and the leading producer of Coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*). Both species of carnivorous fish were introduced into Chilean waters from the Northern hemisphere.

After 50 years of operating under an orthodox neo-liberal economic model, the traditional artisanal fishing sector has experienced cultural, technological and social transformations. Profound changes have resulted from the imposition of an extractivist and export-oriented model by the military dictatorship from 1973 to 1990. Subsequent civil governments strengthened this after the controversial parliamentary negotiation that privatized Chilean fisheries through the enactment of Law 20,657 in January 2013.

A law for the rich and powerful

This fishing and aquaculture law eliminates the state as the assigner of property rights, access and use of the country's fisheries. It transfers this capacity to the market through the creation of a system of fishing licences of indefinite duration—20 years and automatically renewable—and individual transferable fishing quotas (ITQs), bankable and tradable in any legal context. This has affected the conservation of aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity. Today, 53 per cent of Chilean fisheries are over-exploited and collapsed, impacting on the food security and rights of small-scale fishers, coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples.

Recognize that fisheries and coastal territories constitute a common patrimony that cannot be handed over as private property of an undefined nature and made tradable in any legal context

Law 20,657 only allows the owners of legally registered industrial vessels and semi-industrial boats called *armadores* to have access to fishing licences and annual fishing quotas. These 'artisanal' boat owners represent 13 per cent of the approximately 97,000 small-scale fishers officially registered, while the so-called 'fishermen' themselves sell their labour to the *armadores*.

Ten per cent of the total fishing licences were given to 12,901 artisanal boat owners. This fleet, classified as artisanal, includes the so-called *lanchas* that are 12-18 metres in length and have a hold capacity of up to 80 cubic metres. These semi-industrial boats represent 72 per cent of 'artisanal' fishing landings.

Similar exclusion of rights to fishing licences and quotas was

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applied to the Indigenous Peoples who inhabit the coastal territories; they include the Changos, Mapuches, Lafkenches, Williches, Kawesqar and Rapa Nui. This has allowed business and trans-national groups to buy, sell, rent, mortgage and even inherit these rights, facilitating corporate mergers, trans-nationalization and economic concentration.

The authoritarian productive and social restructuring of the Chilean fishing sector allowed every neo-liberal civilian government of the last decade to be able to implement technological and modernization agendas. By opening up extensive coastal territories and their valuable biodiversity to investment flows, supported by the implementation of 33 free trade agreements, and by providing access under preferential conditions to 65 per cent of the world's population, Chile has consolidated its role as one of the main exporters of marine products to global markets.

A society's spine

Along the 4,200 km of coastline and 30,000 km of protected coastline, there are 101,245 artisanal fishermen whose production is equivalent to 32.7 per cent of Chile's fishery and aquaculture landings. The deep legal, economic and social changes that have occurred over the last decades in the fishing sector have affected the tenure rights for small-scale fishing communities—socially equitable and culturally appropriate—to marine fishery resources and coastal areas, as well as their autonomy to process and sell their products.

In terms of production, Chilean artisanal fishing has been reorienting the destination of part of its catches, becoming a growing supplier of raw materials for industrial fishing companies and processing plants for fishmeal and/or export, while coastal communities are turning to small-scale marine farming, services or tourism.

In this scenario, the increase in women's participation has given great dynamism and adaptability to the small-scale fishing communities. Currently 22,063 women are owners of boats, fishers, divers, seaweed and mollusc gatherers and fish smokers; they bait fishing hooks; they work in the marine farming, services and tourism sectors. In addition, there is a growing development of small-scale aquaculture activities linked to the production of macro-algae, molluscs and bivalves in 800 cultivation centres. Their production is destined for local markets or intermediaries.

Relief, finally, or...

In September 2022 the Maritime Interests and Aquaculture Commission of the Chamber of Deputies declared the Law 20,657 on fishing and aquaculture "undeniably null and void". This decision was a response to a decade of sustained struggle by citizen organizations and coastal communities, which had previously led to the conviction of parliamentarians for bribery.

The parliamentary discussion for a new fishing law will begin in June 2024. Given the non-transparent negotiations between the current government and the actual fishing-aquaculture business community, it is anticipated that there will be no fundamental changes. Only secondary aspects are expected to be changed, consolidating a growing integration of the small-scale fishing sector with the industrial sector and export models, consolidating the greatest plundering of rights and public goods that has occurred since the end of the civil-military dictatorship.

In this challenging scenario, the following are some of the demands made by citizens and coastal communities to recover the rights taken away from them by Law 20,657:

- Consider aquatic ecosystems as legal subjects of constitutional law, ensuring the protection of their genetic heritage, and the integrity of their structures, components and functions that are the basis of existing life cycles, as well as the restoration of their degraded biodiversity.
- Restitute to the State the absolute, exclusive and imprescriptible dominion over the Chilean fishing patrimony, restoring its capacity to assign property rights, access and use of the country's marine resources and coastal areas.
- Eliminate the undefined duration of fishing licences and ITQ systems,

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Valparaiso artisanal fish landing centre. Along the 4,200 km of coastline and 30,000 km of protected coastline, there are 101,245 artisanal fishermen whose production is equivalent to 32.7 per cent of Chile's fishery and aquaculture landings

oriented towards a fishing quota market and share transactions on the stock exchange in which fisheries are only perceived as negotiable goods, the exclusive property of investors and owners of licences and fishing quotas or aquaculture concessions.

- Recognize that fisheries and coastal territories constitute a common patrimony that cannot be handed over as private property of an undefined nature and made tradable in any legal context.
- Categorize semi-industrial boats as artisanal, which will allow them to sell their fishing quotas or transfer their catches within the protected first fishing mile to industrial companies and their processing plants.
- Restitute the rights of access to, and use of, fisheries and hydro-biological resources of the artisanal fishers themselves (non-owners of boats), and the Indigenous communities that have been expropriated by the privatization of Chilean fisheries.
- Defend and ensure implementation of the Coastal Spaces of Native Peoples (EMCPOs in Spanish) initiative, through the collective community participation of Indigenous Peoples to use ancestral territories and aquatic resources of common property, to protect the environment, respect biological diversity, and provide governance to the coastal zone.
- Ensure mandatory funded management plans for all fisheries with closed access. These plans must be binding with management decisions, and be subject to periodic evaluations in the Fisheries Councils and the Fisheries Management Committees. This will ensure transparency and full participation of coastal communities. After decades of intense commercial exploitation, there are still 17 commercial fisheries for which the Chilean State lacks information about those who are responsible for management.
- Strategically value small-scale fisheries, aquaculture, algae collectors and shellfish gatherers as key components in the implementation of policies for food security, public health, poverty alleviation and regional coastal development.
- Secure the first five coastal miles as an exclusive reserve area for artisanal fishing. Ensure that individual quotas are not granted in benthic fisheries and also recognize the basic unit of the small-scale boat owner, assistant diver and the

SUBPESCA

Pelluhue, Bio-Bio Region, Chile. The deep legal, economic and social changes that have occurred over the last decades in the fishing sector have affected the tenure rights for small-scale fishing communities—socially equitable and culturally appropriate—to marine fishery resources

shellfish diver. The state must also incorporate the gender perspective in policies for strengthening artisanal fishing and small-scale aquaculture communities, and implement a ban on trawling in eight key fisheries, several of which have collapsed (like hoki and Southern blue whitting) or are over-exploited (common hake, Southern hake and golden conger).

- Develop a state policy to increase domestic consumption of high-quality marine proteins by the Chilean people, weakened by five decades of neo-liberal export policies. The Chilean population has an average consumption of only 12.7 kg of fish per inhabitant per year, which is below the world average of 20.4 kg, according to the FAO. This measure, under a public health approach, should be complemented with the reduction of the high volumes of pelagic species, and some demersal species, to produce fishmeal and fish oil for the trans-national animal feed industry and pet animals.
- The state should promote policies related to the production, distribution and consumption of nutritious, safe and economically accessible foods of aquatic origin, preferably produced at a local and/or regional level, corresponding with the diverse cultural identities and traditions of the country. The following should be declared as fisheries exclusive for the artisanal sector: Chilean hake (*Merluccius gayi*), Southern hake (*M.australis*), pilchard (*Strangomera bentincki*), anchovy (*Engraulis ringens*), golden kingklip (*Genypterus blacodes*) and squid (*Dosidicus gigas*).

All these demands can be met. A democratic, sustainable and equitable fishing policy can be created to ensure gender and social rights only through the mobilization of citizens and communities.

For more

Undoing a Great Wrong
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Sam_90_art-08_Report_Undoing-a-Great-Wrong.pdf

Chile will have a new Fisheries Law in 2024
https://weareaquaculture.com/politics/chile-will-have-a-new-fisheries-law-in-2024

New General Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture No. 20/657, Chilean Government
https://www.subpesca.cl/portal/617/articles-60001_recurso_1.pdf

Seeking Common Ground

Artisanal fishing communities in the Brazilian Amazon are struggling to maintain their traditional ways of life in the face of threats to tenure rights

Discussing small-scale artisanal fishing in Brazil is a major challenge, considering the immense length of the coastline and continental water systems. The activity is a combination of numerous and complex characteristics, based on regions, biomes, landscapes and their people; then there are cultural, social, political and economic aspects. Even with this enormous diversity, common conditions, transformations and challenges emerge in the contemporary context. Several groups of Brazilian artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen struggle to maintain and reproduce their traditional ways of life.

In the environmental context, the degradation and imbalance of ecosystems, chemical contamination and the impacts generated by large enterprises are widely known. In the social context, the pressures on the natural landscape and the health of fish stocks add to the conflicts over territories, which are associated with land issues, tourism, fully protected conservation units, real estate speculation and major infrastructure initiatives.

On the coast, local artisanal fishing communities are facing the impacts of tourism, shrimp farming, industrial fishing, salt pans, wind farms and recent oil spills. They also struggle to hold on to their traditionally occupied territories because large hotel developments and luxury condominiums move forward with the support and incentives of local and State governments. The situation is similar in continental water systems; traditional communities, Afro-descendents (Quilombolas), riverside communities and Indigenous Peoples face environmental impacts and the advance of large infrastructure enterprises, such as hydroelectric dams, in addition to territorial pressures. Regarding fisheries legislation, there is an urgent need to revise the regulations to modernize legal instruments and ensure that they respond more appropriately to local and regional conditions, to their specific realities.

Faced with this complex and challenging scenario, we seek to understand how small-scale fishing communities can guarantee their rights to remain in their territories, with access to fishing resources and under appropriate social and cultural conditions that allow them to care for the environment, manage resources and social development based on their understanding and autonomy. In this context, we would like to offer some observations from the Brazilian Amazon, more specifically in the State of Amazonas, where we work directly with fishing communities belonging to Indigenous Peoples and riverine and extractive communities.

Regarding fisheries legislation, there is an urgent need to revise the regulations to modernize legal instruments and ensure that they respond more appropriately to local and regional conditions, to their specific realities

Need assessment

Guaranteeing the territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and traditional populations is a *sine qua non* for the continuation of their ways of life. The historical struggle of Indigenous Peoples for the guarantee and recognition of their territories with the demarcation of indigenous lands is an example of this challenge, which began with the colonization of Brazil and the

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JOSÉ CÂNDIDO / OPAN

Deni Indigenous People fishing, Brazil. Indigenous lands are official demarcations (boundaries) of the Brazilian state for the exclusive use and enjoyment of the group(s) for which they were claimed

consequent processes of dispossession. Similarly, other social groups, such as the communities of African descent that make up the Quilombo territories and the extractivist and riverside communities, also make great efforts and risk clashes to protect what is most sacred and integral to their way of life, represented in their ancestral/traditional territories.

In Brazil, the formally planned protected areas are made up of different categories and decreed based on the analysis of various studies and perspectives that seek to consider human presence in areas of integral protection. Indigenous lands are official demarcations (boundaries) of the Brazilian state for the exclusive use and enjoyment of the group(s) for which they were claimed. Quilombos are processes of recognition and titling of the area for communities of African origin. There are also conservation units, such as Extractive Reserves and Sustainable Development Reserves in the direct-use group; another group is that of full protection, where human presence is only allowed for research and environmental education. There are cases of these units being created in territories already occupied by social groups, leading to territorial conflict.

Different mechanisms

Legal recognition of the use and ownership of these territories, and land regularization are achieved through different mechanisms: for indigenous lands, the exclusive use and enjoyment of the people(s)/ethnicity(ies) is automatically recognized. For Quilombos, there is the recognition and subsequent titling of the area passed on to a formal representation of the social collective. In conservation units, this

recognition takes place through the Concession of Real Right of Use (CRRU) instrument.

Within the framework of public policies, these areas are managed through varying arrangements, depending on their nature and category. The officially demarcated indigenous territories are under the National Policy for Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands (NPTEMIL), which was built with the participation of the indigenous movement and seeks to provide conditions for the peoples to have autonomy in the care of their territories. The management structure can take different forms, from Territorial and Environmental Management Plans (TEMPs), Life Plans, zoning and structuring of rules for use, monitoring and management plans, consolidation of partnerships, consultation protocols and other management instruments that can be drawn up and implemented in the different axes of the policy.

Along the same lines, in 2023 the mobilization efforts and work were resumed to build the National Policy for Quilombola Territorial and Environmental Management (QTEM). Conservation units fall under the National Conservation Unit System (NCUS) and, in the case of the state of Amazonas, a state system. The governance structure for the management of these units is based on a management council led by the official body. In the case of direct-use units, deliberative councils are set up, with representation from local residents, and in the case of integral protection units, advisory councils are formed. Management mechanisms are provided for in the unit's management plan, which can foresee, limit or prohibit activities based on studies and analyses of the situation.

Not enough

Despite these official structures for the management of protected areas, there are numerous challenges to the effectiveness of these mechanisms. The lack of dynamism in public processes, the shortage of professionals in official bodies, and low investment, considering the scale of the demands, make the preparation of plans and their implementation time-consuming and unable to respond in sufficient time to the dynamics of the real-life challenges facing the territories and their social groups.

There are still a number of indigenous groups whose territories have been requested to be titled and no action has been taken. As a result, the indigenous movement in the Amazon and other regions have levelled harsh criticism against the current federal government, which has committed itself to the demarcations, pending resolution, in the wake of the previous government's environmental and social agendas. The same situation surrounds Quilombos, which are stagnating in formal land titling procedures. There are also social groups that have been, for years, demanding the creation of conservation units for use that involve their territories, but no action has been taken by the competent bodies.

As for the traditional communities living outside protected areas, they commonly report intrusions, illegal logging, predatory fishing, deforestation and threats. In this sense, the need for innovations that make it possible to recognize and ensure the territorial rights of these populations is urgent.

Directly associated with fishing, one management instrument that has become well known in the Amazon is the fishing agreement. As a legal instrument, it is structured to regulate fishing in a given area, under the condition that it is used by more than one social group and, in many cases, in conflict with each other. Through this mechanism, discussions for the management of fish stocks are initiated to reach agreement built on consensus, based on the users' knowledge of the conditions of the environments and strategies that are compatible with the local reality. These fishing agreements can be formalized for different protected areas and also encompass communities from open (non-protected) areas. This tool is recognized for generating social engagement and collaboration. It still needs to be developed to more effectively support social groups in a

participatory manner and strengthen the implementation of the necessary strategies and actions.

A forum has been set up in the Amazonas to discuss and seek a resolution to historical land conflicts in the state. It is made up of civil society, grassroots organizations, the Amazonas Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Amazonas State Attorney General's Office. In 2021, the Amazonas land law made provision for the concept of Common Use Territories (CUTs) for land regularization of populations on the margins of any kind of territorial security. The regularization of these non-protected areas is usually done through individual use concessions.

However, this regularization mechanism excludes the possibility of areas of common use that are fundamental to the reproduction of traditional communities' ways of life, such as forest extraction activities, subsistence hunting and small-scale fishing. In this way, the issuing of collective CRRU is an innovation in the application of legislation, to guarantee the areas are recognized as collective by the requesting social groups, both for conservation units and for communities located outside the boundaries of protected areas.

For more

A Script for Success
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sam_89_art06_**Brazil_A-Script-for-Success.pdf**

Woes Compounded
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/4513_art_Sam_85_art08_Brazil_BeatrizMesquita.pdf

The contribution of fishing to human well-being in Brazilian coastal communities
https://pdf.sciencedirectassets.com/271824/1-s2.0-S0308597X22X00146/1-s2.0-S0308597X23000489/am.pdf

Fisheries as a way of life: Gendered livelihoods, identities and perspectives of artisanal fisheries in eastern Brazil
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283344206_Fisheries_as_a_way_of_life_Gendered_livelihoods_identities_and_perspectives_of_artisanal_fisheries_in_eastern_Brazil

Biodiversity conservation

Another innovation that has been discussed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the concept of other effective area-based conservation measures, which aim to identify, recognize and strengthen conservation and management initiatives implemented by local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments and the private sector. Although they are not yet institutionalized in Brazilian environmental policies, other effective area-based conservation measures are potentially good tools to complement the national system of protected areas and the other protected areas institutionalized at the national, state, and municipal levels.

Discussion has also been taking place in some of the countries that make up the Amazon basin, which could lead to cross-border arrangements of singular importance, especially for the conservation of large migratory catfish species, which are of fundamental significance in Amazonian fisheries and depend on large areas for the development of their life cycles, as they cross borders of local territories, states and countries.

Connectivity is a central issue in the discussion of river basin conservation and the sustainability of Amazonian fisheries. Based on studies of the biology and ecology of fish species, fisheries and ecological processes, the need to maintain connectivity in the large Amazon basin system is clear. This connectivity must be guaranteed longitudinally, from the connections between the smaller tributaries to the channels of the large tributaries, and laterally, guaranteeing the flooding dynamics of the river floodplains.

In this same context, we understand that connectivity must also be recognized, fomented and guaranteed in a social sense, by promoting the role of Indigenous Peoples, traditional communities and fishing groups living in Amazonian cities. Strengthening local governance structures and recognizing the essential role of small-scale fisheries for food security, managing fisheries resources and conserving fish species are urgent tasks for governments at various levels.

Discussions on drafting fisheries legislation and public policies should also be brought closer together to achieve greater popular participation, and resolutions should be structured to be more appropriate to local realities. Investing in infrastructure and qualification processes to modernize small-scale fishing value chains is also a basic need today to promote the Amazon's socio-biodiversity to achieve its fullest potential.

Revolving around an Axis

Nicaragua's government seeks to ensure productivity growth in the fisheries sector, all the while maintaining food security and sovereignty

The current state and trajectory of the artisanal fishing sector in Nicaragua's autonomous regions along the Caribbean coast deserve a closer look and conversation. Such an examination can draw from several sources of official information of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua. Through the fishing sector institute Nicaraguan Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INPESCA), the government presented the axes and lines of action for the year 2024. This is a part of the National Plan to Fight Poverty under the Strategy for Production, Promotion and Monitoring of Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022-2026.

These strategies and plans seek to ensure the growth of productivity, production, exports, food security and sovereignty, capacity development and technology transfer, and market diversification. These are with full and effective participation of all stakeholders.

The connection between Indigenous Peoples and their lands is multifaceted, aimed at maintaining livelihoods, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering communities to resist external pressures. Recognizing and respecting this connection is essential to promoting justice, equity and sustainable development.

Indigenous peoples see their traditional lands as more than just physical spaces. Their land holds immense spiritual and cultural significance. Their identity is closely tied to the land. The Miskitu people in Nicaragua's northeast and east explain that the mermaid Liwa Mairin has a spiritual importance. That she cares for the waters and their beings, as well as other spirits that reside in the forests and in sacred sites.

Through generations of intimate knowledge and stewardship, indigenous communities have developed a deep understanding of their waters and the intricate ecosystems of their land. They use their resources sustainably, supporting their communities and preserving their cultural heritage.

Their traditional knowledge includes practices such as rotational agriculture, sustainable hunting and respectful resource extraction. These ensure that waters and lands remain healthy and productive for future generations. In remote communities, hunting and fishing are carried out for the consumption of the family and community. Where the market is accessible, these resources are extracted in greater quantities.

Nicaragua has 27 indigenous territories duly demarcated and titled, with their own territorial governance structures protected by Law 28 on regional autonomy and Law 445 on communal lands

The struggle, the recognition

Indigenous peoples have been actively fighting for the recognition of their collective rights to own, manage and develop their traditional waters, lands and resources. They advocate for their rights, both nationally and internationally. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples emphasizes their control over lands, territories and resources. This control allows them to maintain their institutions, cultures and traditions while promoting development aligned with their aspirations and needs.

Organizations such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) recognize that ensuring Indigenous Peoples' access to resources is essential for long-

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term inclusive and sustainable development.

Nicaragua has 27 indigenous territories duly demarcated and titled, with their own territorial governance structures protected by Law 28 on regional autonomy and Law 445 on communal lands.

Indigenous lands often contain valuable resources such as timber, minerals and biodiversity. When indigenous communities have control over these resources, they can engage in economic activities that benefit their livelihoods. Examples include ecotourism, craft and sustainable forestry. Secure livelihoods are intertwined with cultural identity. When Indigenous Peoples are able to continue their traditional practices on their ancestral lands, this has a positive impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

Indigenous lands are repositories of cultural heritage. They contain sacred places, cemeteries and historical monuments. By maintaining their connection to these places, indigenous communities ensure the continuity of their cultural practices and stories. The land provides the context for transmitting oral traditions, languages and rituals. Elders share wisdom with younger generations, reinforcing cultural identity. Indigenous art, music and craft are often inspired by the natural environment. The earth serves as muse *and* canvas, allowing creativity to flourish.

Nicaragua lies between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Its enormous water basins feed two large freshwater lakes that cover 8,264 sq km (Lake Cocibolca) and 1,049 sq km (Lake Xolotlan). The autonomous regions of the Caribbean are inhabited by the Miskitus, Mayangnas, Uluas, Garifunas, Creoles and Ramas and Mestizos peoples. There is a series of coastal lagoons of great richness in marine and coastal biodiversity, such as Bluefields Bay, Pearl Lagoon, Karata, Pahra, Dakura, Krukira, and Bismuna, to name just a few.

INPESCA's strategy is based on the following guidelines:

- Promotion of fishing and aquaculture production on both coasts (Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea) and in continental waters, for the diversification of fishing and aquaculture activity for local, national consumption and for export.
- Raising awareness among the participants of the fishing and aquaculture sector of good practices for productive activity, in order to achieve the sustainability of resources, and promote clean, responsible fisheries that contribute to the economy of families on the coasts and inland waters.
- Strengthening the value chains of the fishing and aquaculture sector, with greater transformation and aggregation of value, both of resources that are currently produced, as well as others considered to have high potential.
- Promoting the capitalization of artisanal fishers and aquaculturists through tax benefits, to help increase the yield of resources under use and those with potential.
- Promoting marketing mechanisms, through fairs, to promote the consumption of fishing and aquaculture products, in order to increase the supply of quality products at fair prices.

In compliance with this strategy, Nicaragua proposes the following actions for 2024:

- Promote good practices in fishing and aquaculture. Efficient processing and marketing of fishing and aquaculture products with the adoption of new technologies and innovative transformations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- Promote the diversification of production and ensure good positioning in the national and international markets.
- Effectively manage the use of hydrobiological resources, counteracting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, applying management plans that guarantee the sustainability of resources and adopting mitigation and adaptation measures to tackle climate change.

Institutional goals

- Contribute to the production of fishing and aquaculture products for food and nutritional security.
- Support 40,000 small, medium and large fishing and aquaculture producers to produce 174 million pounds (about 79,000 tonnes) and

JAIRO CAJINA

The vast majority fish in small canoes (wooden cayucos) and fiberglass pangas of under 12 metres in length, which puts them at high risk and vulnerability to the elements during rough sea conditions

export 111 million pounds (about 50,000 tonnes) of fishing and aquaculture products, equivalent to US $284 million.
- Carry out 19,920 fishing and aquaculture inspections throughout the national territory to guarantee production.
- Facilitate the issuance of 3,550 certificates for the export of fishing and aquaculture products.
- Facilitate the processing of 650 permits, licences and concessions for the development of fishing and aquaculture.
- Train 460 key families on safety, quality, handling and maintenance of the cold chain and added value of fishing and aquaculture products.
- Accompany 940 artisanal fishing practitioners to obtain exemption from IECC and VAT to promote production.
- Promote the consumption of fishing and aquaculture products by holding 40 fairs and 20 tasting days for fishing and aquaculture products.

For the sustainable use of marine and inland resources:
- Accompany 10,000 leading families of the Caribbean coast in the production and marketing of spiny lobster, pink snail, sea cucumber, crab and a variety of fish, among others.
- Raise awareness among 680 artisanal fishermen about the development of responsible and resilient fishing on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua.
- Assist in the holding of at least 20 sports and recreational fishing tournaments in co-ordination with municipal authorities, tourism officials and other entities, with 2,000 participants.
- Train 600 artisanal fishermen on the requirements and procedures for obtaining VAT and IECC exemptions, and on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and marine safety.
- Carry out 17 resource evaluation and monitoring studies in the Nicaraguan Caribbean Sea on spiny lobster, coastal shrimp, queen conch, sea cucumber, and the impact of sargassum.
- Carry out 11 resource evaluation and monitoring studies on the Nicaraguan Pacific coast on coastal shrimp, lobster, snapper, sharks and rays.
- Promote investment initiatives and technical-scientific agreements

Source: *https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/nicaragua_pol_97.jpg*

within the framework of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China.

- Facilitate paperwork (permits, concessions and licences) through online automation so that the players in the fishing and aquaculture sector enjoy quick and quality access to procedural formalities.
- Facilitate an online platform for the artisanal fishing sector to identify VAT and IECC exemption procedures, among others.
- Promote aquaculture at the national level for large-, medium- and small-scale production.
- Carry out studies to identify potential areas for the development of large-scale aquaculture.
- Update and promote the National Strategy for the Promotion of Small-Scale Aquaculture 2024-2027.
- Promote the production of 70,000 pounds (about 32 tonnes) of tilapia and Lunarejo snapper through small-scale aquaculture.
- Strengthen the capacities of 1,080 families in matters related to aquaculture; pond construction; nutrition; cultivation of robalo, snapper and tilapia; and water quality, among others.
- Deliver 450 technological vouchers for fish production to leading families on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts.
- Inaugurate 1,027 ponds and 450 tanks for the cultivation of freshwater fish.
- Deliver 70,000 tilapia fingerlings for fish production in 50 tanks and 1,027 ponds.
- Continue developing research for the cultivation of marine and freshwater species in the 'Caribbean Pearl' laboratories of Laguna de Perlas, RACCS and 'Panchito Batata' in San Carlos, Rio San Juan for freshwater shrimp, mangrove oyster, and Pacific and Caribbean rock oyster.
- Generate and transfer technologies applied to production that increase yields and productive diversification.
- Deliver 1,000 production bonuses to families involved in the artisanal fishing sector of the Caribbean coast for the economic revitalization of their productive activities.
- Train 1,000 practitioners of the artisanal fishing sector of the Caribbean coast on the use of technologies applied to production.
- Continue monitoring the project 'Fattening of Caribbean Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus argus*)' in Cayos Miskitos in the RACCN, which is carried out by the BICU and URACCAN universities.
- Establish a computer tool for online technical assistance for the small-scale aquaculture at the national level.
- Prepare primers, educational videos and tutorials for fish farming (on, for example, construction of ponds and cages, and food preparation).

Current situation

According to an INPESCA report, Nicaragua experienced growth in the fishing and aquaculture sector from 2006 to 2023, reflecting progress in production, export and valuation of the sector. Since 2006, fishing and aquaculture production has grown 282 per cent, rising from 44 million pounds (about 19,960 tonnes) to 168 million pounds (about 76,200 tonnes) in 2023.

As for exports, these increased by 224 per cent, from 33 million pounds (about 14,968 tonnes) in 2006 to 107 million (about 48,535 tonnes) in 2023. Furthermore, the value of these exports increased by 141 per cent, from US $112 million to $270 million.

The National Strategy for the Promotion of Small-Scale Aquaculture,

implemented since 2020, achieved the construction of approximately 1,000 ponds per year, training 19,000 practitioners and delivering 60,000 fingerlings.

The processing sector registers a 140 per cent increase in fishing and aquaculture plants, going up from 15 in 2006 to 36 in 2023, distributed between the Caribbean and the Pacific coasts. Employment in the sector has grown by 42 per cent, from 30,000 jobs in 2006 to 44,000 in 2023. The fishing sector contributes 1.1 per cent to the gross domestic product, generating approximately 27,746 jobs. These are distributed as follows:

- 6,990 in aquaculture
- 4,127 in processing plants
- 2,363 in industrial fisheries
- 11,595 in artisanal fisheries
- 2,671 in services.

The per capita consumption of fishery and aquaculture products has increased by 150 per cent, from 2.3 kg in 2006 to 6.7 kg in 2023, reflecting greater availability and preference for these products. In addition, 113,000 people have been trained in areas such as value addition, safety and good diving practices.

The vast majority fish in small canoes (wooden *cayucos*) and fiberglass *pangas* of under 12 metres in length, which puts them at high risk and vulnerability to the elements during rough sea conditions. Engine failures, collisions with other vessels, overloading and capsizing of *pangas* and canoes, problems associated with decompression and air supply in diving, entanglements in fishing nets, navigation errors, negligent practices, and crew falling overboard, are the main causes of accidents in Nicaragua's artisanal fishing sector.

In the last decade, the safety of fishermen has been further reduced due to the impact of climate change. Storms and hurricanes appear more frequently and are more severe, as demonstrated by hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020.

Challenges

In Nicaragua, the main species caught in fishing and aquaculture are shrimp, tilapia, dolphin (*mahi mahi*), sailfish and barracuda. Most of the fishing production originates in the artisanal fishing sub-sector, which receives tax exemptions and benefits from the state.

Nicaragua's entry into the European market was achieved after meeting EU requirements on cold chains by the private sector. Currently, Nicaraguan fishery and aquaculture products also have entry into the markets of the US, Canada and China. For shrimp farming, Nicaragua has granted a mangrove area concession for 17,000 ha, of which only 545 are in an intensive system, almost 15,000 are in a semi-intensive system and the rest are in the artisanal sector.

The fishing sector in Nicaragua faces several challenges. The following stand out:

- International prices: The fall in international prices has affected the fishing and aquaculture sector. This is a challenge for local fishers and producers.
- Natural disasters: Nicaragua has experienced natural disasters that have impacted fishing and aquaculture. However, an investment of US $17.5 million has contributed to recovery, especially in the autonomous regions on the Caribbean coast.
- Sustainability and growth: Despite the challenges, the country has made significant progress in the production, export and valuation of the fishing and aquaculture sector from 2006 to 2023. This demonstrates the commitment to sustainability and economic development.
- Modernization and innovation of fishing methods and gear: It is important to modernize the techniques and tools used in fishing to increase efficiency and reduce environmental impacts.
- Modernization of artisanal boats: Improving the capacity of traditional boats is essential to guarantee the safety of fishers and increase productivity.
- Diversification of fishing and aquaculture production: Encouraging the breeding of different species and the adoption of sustainable practices will contribute to the resilience of the sector.
- In addition, there is the challenge of expanding Nicaragua's territorial waters in the Caribbean Sea to boost the fishing industry.

For more

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Supporting the recognition of Indigenous Peoples tenure rights
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Nicaragua: A cuatro meses de los huracanes Eta e Iota, medio millón de personas sigue sin agua
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Two coasts, two standards

For many communities on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada, commercial fishing has all but disappeared as an economic activity for the once robust and independent small-boat fleet

There are two contrasting realities in Canada on the matter of support for fishing communities and the small boat fleet that supports these communities: the reality of the Atlantic coast and its contrast on the Pacific coast. On Canada's Atlantic coast the history of corporate control of fishers and their communities by processors has had a long and miserable history.

In 2017 I wrote an article in SAMUDRA Report about the need for the Canadian government to respect the human rights of the small-boat BC fishers

It was for this reason that in the late 1970s, Romeo LeBlanc, the then Canadian minister of fisheries, adopted two major policies in the Atlantic region to complement Canada's extension of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to 200 nautical miles and the coming into force of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These two policies were: fleet separation and owner operation. Fleet separation was a policy to limit corporate fishing licences to vessels over 65 feet (20 metres) in length and prevent vertical integration of processing and fishing for what is known as the 'inshore fishery', that is, vessels of under 65 feet. Furthermore every vessel under 65 feet had to be owned and operated by an active fisher.

On the Pacific coast, LeBlanc felt that these policies were not necessary. There was already a robust independent small-boat fleet on the British Columbia (BC) coast, mainly focusing on salmon, and there was not the same level of corporate monopolization and control that had kept fishers and their communities in poverty for extended periods of time over the previous 200 years in Atlantic Canada.

While the fleet separation and owner-operator policies provided early protections for the Atlantic small-boat or inshore fleets when Canada's Atlantic groundfisheries were put under moratoria in the early 1990s, Atlantic Canada's powerful fishing corporations turned their attention to the stocks and species, like lucrative shellfish, under the control of the inshore fleets. Using a series of legal ruses over the years, they began to effectively breach the owner-operator and fleet-separation policies, and lobby aggressively for their elimination.

Things came to a head in 2011 when a neo-liberal Conservative federal government, responding to corporate lobbying, attempted to get rid of owner operation and fleet separation altogether, and align Atlantic policies with the Pacific region where a series consolidations and government buy-backs led to the loss of most of the independent fleets, and a growing level of corporate ownership and control over community fisheries. This included foreign ownership by offshore and Canadian companies, often hidden by non-disclosure agreements and dummy companies working as proxies for offshore interests.

Faced with this existential threat, the independent Atlantic inshore fleets rallied together. They created a new national lobbying organization called the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation and were able to successfully counter the attempts to eliminate the owner-operator and fleet-separation policies. With a subsequent change in government and the support of the son of Romeo LeBlanc, Dominic,

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who briefly became Canada's minister of fisheries, these policies were entrenched first into legislation and then into regulations, providing new security for the 10,000 inshore licence holders in the Atlantic inshore fishery.

The opposite happened on the Pacific coast. With no guiding policy to protect the small-boat fleet, the entire commercial fleet was diminished by government policy from a strong component of the provincial economy, employing 16,000 fishers and creating associated processing jobs in the late 1970s, to 5,000 fishers today. Small-boat fishermen on the Pacific coast have watched their incomes diminish year over year as predatory licence leasing costs eat into earnings and fishery access was removed from the commercial fleet to satisfy other interests, including a growing environmental lobby looking to protect marine mammals, a commercial sports fishing industry, and access for First Nations outside the commercial fishing access connected to licensing.

The Canadian government's initial stated policy was that reduction in the fully subscribed commercial licensing regime had to be accompanied by compensatory mechanisms but this policy was often ignored, and court challenges have now stated that the government of Canada has no obligation to compensate commercial fishers because fishing licences are a privilege extended at the discretion of the minister, with no obligation for compensation for licences that are withdrawn or not renewed.

The strong independent Pacific small-boat fleet has now been diminished to a remnant of what it was in 1979. For many communities, commercial fishing has all but disappeared as an economic driver. Attempts to develop Pacific coast policies like owner operation and fleet separation have been resisted by a government bureaucracy for the Pacific region committed to neo-liberal free-market ideology and opposed to any policy that would support small boats over corporate consolidation and vertical integration.

The war to protect the small-boat fleet is now almost over in BC, the Canadian province that borders the Pacific. The family connection that kept the industry robust for many generations is now nearly completely broken, and almost no one wants to engage or have a career in such a dangerous industry when the Canadian government has made it very clear that the protections that were put in place to safeguard their access to the resource and stabilize their license system are not worth the paper they are written on. Corporate and processor ownership of the remaining fishing enterprises continues to happen with no rules in place to stop it, and every attempt by the remaining fleets to petition government to level the playing field by incorporating owner operation and fleet separation for both coasts has been met with resistance by the managing authority, as processor ownership continues unabated.

In Atlantic Canada, the owner-operator and fleet-separation policy has helped to stabilize fishers in their coastal communities

In 2017 I wrote an article in *SAMUDRA Report* (https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/4310_art_Sam77_e_art09.pdf) about the need for the Canadian government to respect the human rights of the small-boat BC fishers. In Atlantic Canada, the owner-operator and fleet-separation policy has helped to stabilize fishers in their coastal communities. This has failed to happen on the Pacific coast and other than some policies of reconciliation with First Nations that have attempted to keep those communities connected to the nearby sea resources, the commercial fleet's connection and support within their coastal communities has now been all but lost forever.

For more

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https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40622952.pdf

Small-scale fisheries in North America: research perspectives
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Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the Pacific Region
https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/index-eng.html

By, and from, the Sea

Permit banks and collective ownership in Alaska return individual fishing rights to the collective, harking back to the early days of fishing

More than 12,000 years ago, people on Haida Gwaii, an archipelago off British Columbia about 48 km south of Alaska, were cooking salmon. They are the earliest known humans to do so.

As with all early human societies who lived by the sea and off it, the first relationship with the ocean beyond the northwest coast was one of collective tenure. There were locally-derived systems of norms, rules and practices that evolved over time and gained social legitimacy. Men caught halibut via hook-and-line from canoes; women fileted, deboned and dried the fish. The Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian peoples of present-day southeast Alaska fashioned large, v-shaped hooks out of wood to snare fish up to 500 pounds (227 kg). *Potlaches*, traditional feasts that involved dancing, fed, impressed and welcomed guests. The rights of Alaska Natives to access, steward and honour relate to, safeguard and/or share (for example) elements of their coastal territories and culture that have fluctuated over time, Tribal members have continued to work hard to keep their cultural traditions alive.

Pre-colonization, halibut was primarily used for food and even rivalled salmon in its dietary importance in some areas. But in the 1880s, after the collapse of Atlantic halibut, the US commercial longline fishery for Pacific halibut took off. Transcontinental railroads brought in new fishermen seeking new opportunity in southeast Alaska. Many of the small towns dotting the scenic islands of the Tongass National Forest started with a saltery, a cannery or a cold storage facility to process and move fish to market. A new tradition of fishing was born.

By 1916, there were signs of over-fishing in the commercial fishery: despite increasing effort, landings were decreasing. In order to conserve halibut, the US and Canada formed the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). Since 1923, the IPHC has set science-based catch limits for halibut. In Alaskan waters, however, increased participation drove a race for fish, ever shorter fishing periods and dangerous fishing conditions. To address these challenges, the National Marine Fisheries Service established an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) programme for halibut and sablefish in 1995.

The IFQ programme was a departure from the previous collective tenure regimes of traditional, subsistence fishing and early days of local commercial fishing. Instead of access, management, stewardship, exclusion and transferable rights being vested with communities, these rights came to be vested with the individual. Some fishing groups, including the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, raised concerns about corporate control of fisheries, and were successful in adding management measures to promote owner-operator requirements. The Alaska IFQ programme is, arguably, the most progressive IFQ system in the country. Twenty-nine years later, it has increased safety and product quality and decreased gear loss and resource waste. The IFQ programme has also significantly increased the cost of entry to fisheries, with quota prices escalating.

Access rights

Even with controls, any IFQ system commodifies fishing rights. What was once an informal, collective access right now is formal and individual. Rather than access passing down through generations, or by the consensus of a group, access is purchased—a process that works much faster and is much

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CAPE COD COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN'S ALLIANCE

A fisherman in Cape Cod. Alaska represents a dire situation of fisheries loss in the US; at stake are traditional marine tenure and Indigenous Peoples, cultures and livelihoods

harder to govern with collective, long-term values. With little access to capital or alternative sources of employment, rural and native communities in southeast Alaska have lost much of their access to the resource. Places such as Klawock, Kake and Angoon have lost 100 per cent of sablefish IFQ, and Klawock and Hydaburg have lost more than 95 per cent of halibut quota. Without access to the quota, the economies of these communities built on fishing are collapsing, threatening both the historic and more recent marine tenure regimes in Alaska.

Alaska represents a dire situation of fisheries loss in the US; at stake are traditional marine tenure and Indigenous Peoples, cultures and livelihoods. Yet, similar community-access issues have emerged in more recent fishing communities across the US as a result of IFQ programmes. Cape Cod, Massachusetts, earned its name in 1602 as a result of its prominent role in the New England cod industry. Yet today, local small-scale fishers struggle to purchase groundfish permits, let alone live in the wealthy towns dotting the Cape. In February, fishers in Maine reported that the state had likely lost 60 per cent of its working waterfront due to mid-January storms.

Collectivism answers

How do you counteract the negative impacts of individual, transferable fishing rights? Fishermen around the country have innovated a solution that pays homage to the early days of fishing: through collective power.

In 2008, recognizing the loss of access in their community, the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance created the Cape Cod Fisheries Trust, one of the first community permit banks in the US. With the use of charitable funds, the trust purchases Atlantic scallop IFQ and Northeast groundfish multispecies permits; it then leases them out to members. In 2009, the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association established the Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust with a

similar goal of anchoring access in coastal fishing communities. Lease fees enrich a fish house (like for many lessees in the Gulf of Mexico) or an outsider (for those leasing quota from retired fishermen who moved away), or an individual. But, in the permit bank model, the lease fees enable a community-based fishing organization to fulfil its mission. It can do this, for example, by bringing small-scale fishers to policy meetings, advocating for no-trawl zones, suing an unaccountable recreational sector, or piloting new technology. In other words, lease fees benefit fishers.

Despite these efforts, IFQ programmes continue to favour the wealth of the individual over the health of a fishing community. Consider it from the perspective of a fisherman: you get access to quota (either for free or by purchasing it), you work hard for years, grow your business, survive economic downfalls, natural disasters and shifting markets. Eventually, you are ready to retire. When it's time to sell, you try to guess the market peak. After all your hard work, you deserve the incentive of a good pay-out. But IFQ markets are increasingly volatile due to climate change. Maybe your quota is even worth less than what it was when you purchased it. Maybe you have no line of sight on more favourable market conditions. How do you retire off that?

The Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association and the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance are partnering with Catch Together, a network of community permit banks and a fisheries impact investor, to innovate what we believe to be the second iteration of permit banks: community-owned fishing co-operatives. These give fishermen more control over quota. In addition to access, co-operative members have the right to decide how allocation within the shared business works, the right to decide who is in or out of the co-operative, and who has access to quota next (for example, the next generation of fishermen in their community). Lease fees continue to, in part, fund non-profit community fishing organizations, but they also go into a pool for co-operative members to decide how to spend. For example, a particularly forward-looking investment would be to purchase additional quota to generate more revenue for the collective business, creating a rising tide that creates more jobs, and lifts all boats.

In the co-operative model, members typically engage in profit sharing, that is, they can earn annual dividends based on use. In a quota-holding co-operative, this could allow fishermen to benefit financially from quota while they fish it, rather than betting on the market to be healthy when they are ready to sell out. Since there is less need to buy and sell quota on the outside market, members are effectively shielded (at least partially) from market volatility. Just look at the members of the Seafood Producers Co-operative, a processing co-operative in Sitka, for example: during market highs, the members may look like any other fishermen selling to a traditional processor. Last fall, however, when the market fell and most processors stopped buying, the co-operative members were the only ones who were able to sell their fish.

Stable future

This spring, the Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust began community outreach to assess the loss of access to fisheries in southeast communities and generate ideas about potential co-operative solutions. In Alaska, the model is simple: when rural communities and Alaska Natives have control over their local fisheries, they promote a sustainable, food-secure, and economically stable future that honours the customary tenure of fishermen past.

For more

Southeast Sustainable Partnership
https://sustainablesoutheast.net/

Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association
https://www.alfafish.org/

Learn more about permit banking in the U.S.
https://capecodfishermen.org/fisheries-trust/

Learn more about individually-allocated fishing rights
https://fisherysolutionscenter.edf.org/build-knowledge/sustainable-fisheries/individually-allocated-fishing-rights

Fishing is Life
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/4294_art_Sam76_e_art07.pdf

Alaska's empty nets, ageing fleets
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A New Vision of the Sea

Local and regional 'parliaments of the sea' can ensure the participation of society in the management of marine areas while respecting the rights of fishers. An example from France

"Numerous ethnographic studies show that the sea and its resources are not an open-access resource, but a common good, collectively controlled by artisanal fishing communities through traditional institutions, and that privatisation or coercive measures by public administrations risk leading to the decline or even disappearance of these communities."

– Marie-Christine Cormier-Salem in *Small-scale Fisheries and the Globalisation of the Seas* (2017)

Among the principles set out in the Voluntary *Guidelines* for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF *Guidelines*), one of the first specifies: "Consultation and participation: ensure the active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of artisanal fishing communities, including Indigenous Peoples, taking into account the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples throughout the decision-making process related to fishery resources and areas where 'small-scale fisheries operate, as well as adjacent land areas, and taking existing power imbalances between different parties into consideration. This should include feedback and support from those who could be affected by decisions prior to these being taken, and responding to their contributions."

The management of coastal fishing in France is largely based on these principles. There have always been unwritten historical agreements enabling fishing communities to share the spaces of working and living. Although these arrangements have survived and continue to exist, they have had to be translated into enforceable legislation in response to the increasing use of the territorial sea, the decline in certain coastal resources and the need to assert the fishers' determination to manage the area sustainably. In the Mediterranean, management by the *prud'homie*s is still a reality in several ports despite the decline in the number of fishers.

Today, professional maritime fishing is managed by a complex legal system comprising, firstly, the Common Fisheries Policy, one of the EU's most integrated common policies. Secondly, national regulations put in place by the Comite National des Peches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins (National Committee for Maritime Fisheries and Fish Farming) or by the state. And, thirdly, regional rules laid down by the Comites Regionaux des Peches Maritimes (CRPMEM, the Regional Maritime Fisheries Committees).

This management system is implemented within nautical 12 miles of the territorial sea, through the introduction of licences differentiated by métier with a quota on the number of vessels

The CRPMEMs are professional organizations now covered by the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 27 July 2010, which accords them the status of legal entities under private law and gives them the prerogatives of public authority, namely, compulsory membership; levy of a mandatory professional contribution; the authority to establish rules for managing resources that are enforceable in law; and the ability to appoint guards.

Marked advantage

Thus fishers have the marked advantage of being able to manage

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their own activities in the territorial waters of their region. For example, the CRPMEM in Brittany, supported by its four departmental committees, has made extensive use of this ability for 30 years to set up a coherent system for managing fisheries and the maritime space, remaining as close as possible to the realities on the ground and the resources available.

This management system is implemented within 12 nautical miles of the territorial sea, through the introduction of licences differentiated by *métier* with a quota on the number of vessels. It is accompanied by technical measures concerning the length of vessels, fishing gear, the setting of fishing calendars and zones, limits on fishing effort, and market size, among other things, tends to allocate individual rights of access, as long as the procedure to create them is approved by the authority in charge of the area, namely, the Regional Prefect. Licences issued by the Comite des Peches are allocated to the owner/vessel and are neither negotiable nor transferable. The criteria imposed for allocation of priority include track record, market trends and socio-economic balance.

Any entity, a fisher or an organization interested in contesting the criteria, can submit an appeal for misuse of power before the administrative judge. The aim is to maintain social and economic equilibrium through collective management of resource sharing and a balanced resolution of cohabitation disputes, with a view to regional development. This system, based on proposals from the local level, has enabled a bottom-up approach that meets the requirements of regional management.

The backdrop

The list of initiatives implemented over the last 30 years is a long one. It starts with the historic example of the management of scallops in the Bay of Saint-Brieuc, which served as a model, for the introduction of a comprehensive coastal zone management system that has generated almost 4,000 fishing authorizations a year, covering all *métier*s from boat fishing, including for laminaria seaweed, to professional on-foot fishing and shore-based seaweed harvesters.

Despite its complexity, this system remains flexible and evolving. In a statement on 14 May 2024, Brittany's CRPMEM said: "We have made the very clear choice of prioritizing access to fishing rights for new ship owners and owner-operators in order to avoid a monopoly of fishing rights, promote a small-scale fishing model, and encourage those who want to set up in fishing."

The fisheries committees face a number of problems. While they have complete freedom to manage coastal species not covered by quotas, those covered by quotas are managed by producers' organizations, where the major fishing groups have more influence. European rules are not always compatible with the rules put in place by the committees. In Normandy, for example, scallop fishermen cannot apply their regulations to English fishermen who fish beyond the 12-mile limit. This requires difficult negotiations, especially in the context of Brexit.

The 2010 reform abolished the local committees in favour of departmental committees, which in some large departments have physically displaced the committees from the ports. As a result, participation in elections has fallen and divisions have become more acute.

Powerful new players—a coalition of environmental NGOs in France and elsewhere in Europe—are now involved in the fisheries debate and are questioning the legitimacy of the fisheries committees, believing that they have the legitimacy to impose their vision of fisheries because they represent civil society. They are calling for restrictions on gear, areas and fishing seasons, without any consideration for the consequences or local realities. In all, 450 boats have been banned for a month and the restriction will be in place for another two years. The aim is to protect dolphins, a measure that goes counter to the fishers' own efforts to limit their catches of dolphins.

The creation of reserves and marine protected areas (MPAs) in the name of preserving biodiversity, without the participation of fishers, challenges their management responsibilities. In Brittany, a reserve for the protection of birds was greatly extended by excluding fishers from the management of the area, which was entrusted to an association for the protection of birds. Geographer Marie-Christine Cormier

ALAIN LE SANN

Lorient fishing port, France. In Europe, fishermen are accused of being the main destroyers of the oceans, even though marine resources have improved overall

Salem said: "The creation of protected areas, by changing the regimes of ownership and access to the sea and its resources and by dispossessing artisanal fishermen of their fishing grounds and territories, are among the main mechanisms for enclosing maritime communal areas."

Contesting stereotyping

Generally speaking, in Europe, fishermen are accused of being the main destroyers of the oceans, even though marine resources have improved overall. The main problems today are climate change and pollution from land-based sources, leading to green tides and blooms of toxic plankton. On these issues, environmental associations can be allies to fishers and shellfish farmers. This is what is happening in the Parc National Marin D'Iroise off the coast of Brittany. For 20 years, with the support of fishers, this park has enabled consultation among fishers, scientists, elected representatives and associations, with fishers retaining responsibility for managing their resources. It provides them with the means to manage and better protect their resources. There have been many positive results, without the imposition of any ban on fishing, except in limited areas. But the coalition of NGOs does not want this model and is calling for an end to the marine park and the establishment, instead, of reserves.

For the NGO coalition, the campaign on reserves and MPAs also serves as a lever for a radical rethink of towed gear, which is blamed for being non-selective, for destroying the seabed and for consuming fossil fuels. While it is true that these gears have been the subject of fierce debate for centuries, if they have survived, it is because they have found their place and have come to be accepted by most fishers where they have been deployed. Their use can, and must, be improved; some innovative fishermen are well aware of this, as are scientists.

A look back at history is enlightening, because every time there were attempts to ban dredges and trawls, in the 18th and 19th centuries, a few years later they were once again authorized, with regulatory measures. The bans had not led to an improvement in resources but had caused supply crises. More recently, in-depth studies on the impact of scallop dredges on the seabed of the Gulf of Maine in the US have provided new evidence: "... our seabed monitoring has revealed a scallop population unchanged after about two decades, and has described a high degree of similarity between an obviously resilient fished benthic community and its unfished analogues in the central Gulf of Maine. We must, therefore, consider the possibility that commercial scallop fishing is not detrimental to the benthic community as a whole in this high-energy environment, and that the central Gulf of Maine is capable of maintaining a healthy macro-benthic community over decadal time scales." Indeed, the evolution of the seabed does not depend solely on the impact of fishing, but more broadly on the impact of the swell, currents, storms and temperatures. The use of towed gear, which is controlled, regulated, limited and, above all, seasonal, is, therefore, not always as destructive as environmental NGOs claim.

The measures are taken only after debate, which is time-consuming but guarantees acceptance of the measures adopted

Marine ecology: an inclusive view

The challenge concerns the implementation of measures to manage fisheries and conserve and enhance marine biodiversity, and, therefore, the effectiveness of co-management and the participation of people of the sea in the governance of their territory. Environmental associations have their place and their say in alerting people on issues, proposing measures and monitoring changes in biodiversity, but they should not put fishers under their tutelage.

This is what happened during the one-month fishing ban for 450 boats in the Bay of Biscay to protect dolphins, in disregard of the actions taken by researchers and fishermen to limit by-catches. The same is true in the case of the creation of reserves or a general ban on dredgers and trawlers through the imposition of a definition of small-scale fishing that excludes boats over 12 metres and those using towed gear. In contrast, the Iroise Marine Park and the Natura 2000 area in southern Brittany, where fishermen maintain their rights and responsibilities within the context of consultation with associations, scientists and elected representatives, operate on a democratic basis and have demonstrated their effectiveness.

The measures are taken only after debate, which is time-consuming but guarantees acceptance of the measures adopted. Said Marie-Christine Cormier-Salem: "The status of spatial units, as defined by fishing activity, the way in which they are exploited, developed, perceived and shared, in other words, the way in which they are managed and governed, is the central issue in fisheries. The areas structured by fishing practices, are liquid and shifting, with porous boundaries, are not res nullius, but res communes or communal, under the control of a community that identifies with them, claims them as its territory and ensures their defence and conservation."

It is on this basis that we are calling for the setting up of local and regional parliaments of the sea, to ensure the participation of society in the management of marine areas while respecting the rights of fishers, who are not the only users of the sea. But if we put all the stakeholders on the same level, the rights of fishers cannot be recognized, all the more so as their numbers are decreasing and society's knowledge of the specific nature of their activity and their culture is fading away in favour of a vision of the sea reduced to the simple function of recreation and a reservoir of biodiversity.

Yet fishers are the men and women of the future; unlike all others, they have always had to confront nature, its limits and the vital need to adapt to it. The lessons they are now being taught by "people from the land" sometimes amount to what one geographer describes as "urban indecency".

For more

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https://fishingnews.co.uk/features/fisheries-science/french-fisheries-scientist-alain-le-sann-we-urgently-need-to-recognise-the-collective-rights-of-fishermen/

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Tooling Up

International frameworks like ILO's Convention 188 and the SSF Guidelines offer valuable tools for protecting the rights of Africa's small-scale fishers

The small-scale fisheries (SSF) sub-sector provides employment and food security to over 10 million people in Africa's coastal communities. The COVID-19 pandemic raised new challenges, exacerbating precarious working conditions. It is crucial to guarantee decent working conditions for all players in the sector, including small-scale fishers in the informal sector.

In several African countries, SSF is characterized by a large informal sector, wherein workers are often subjected to difficult working and living conditions. International frameworks for improving working conditions and protecting the rights of small-scale fishers—even in the informal sector—draw from several legal instruments. They include: the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 188 (C188) on Work in Fishing; the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines); the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

The C188 provides for progressive implementation, allowing countries to take account of the specific characteristics of the informal sector and adapt measures accordingly. SSF Guidelines encourage countries to promote the protection of workers in the SSF sub-sector, paying particular attention to guaranteeing women's access to essential services and improving working conditions throughout the value chain.

Forced labour and debt bondage are persistent issues in SSF, affecting women, men and children, both resident and migrant. The C188 and the SSF Guidelines call on countries to take measures to eradicate these practices and ensure decent working conditions for all fishworkers.

Efforts must be made to strengthen controls and inspections, raise awareness among those involved in the sector and promote transparent and fair recruitment mechanisms. It is also crucial to ensure that victims of these practices have access to legal remedies and appropriate assistance.

Migrant fishers play an important role in SSF, but they often face specific challenges in terms of rights and working conditions

Small-scale fishing communities often confront crime, violence, piracy, sexual abuse and corruption. The SSF Guidelines encourage all parties to create conditions conducive to fishing and fishing-related activities in a safe and crime-free environment. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen co-operation among stakeholders in the sector, civil society organizations and the relevant authorities. Only then can we combat these scourges and protect the rights of small-scale fishers. Measures must also be put in place to prevent, protect and care for victims.

Migrant fishers play an important role in SSF, but they often face specific challenges in terms of rights and working conditions. The SSF Guidelines encourage national governments to coordinate migration of fishers and fishworkers in small-scale fisheries across national borders.

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CAOPA

Fisherwomen works in difficult conditions in Bénin. SSF Guidelines encourage countries to promote the protection of workers in the SSF sector, paying particular attention to guaranteeing women's access to essential services and improving working conditions throughout the value chain

For more

Fighting for space
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/56_art10.pdf

A Health Check
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/3186_art02.pdf

C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)
https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C188

Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security
https://www.fao.org/4/i2801e/i2801e.pdf

Promotion of fair and equitable integration of migrant fishers and fishworkers into sustainable fisheries is crucial to ensure that they benefit from the same rights and protections as resident fishers and fishworkers.

Victims of violence and abuse in SSF must have effective and rapid access to justice. States are called upon to put in place accessible and appropriate complaint and redressal mechanisms, and to strengthen the capacities of those involved in the sector and of the relevant authorities to combat these practices and protect the rights of victims.

Protecting the rights of small-scale fishers in the African SSF sector is a major challenge. International frameworks such as C188 and the SSF Guidelines offer valuable tools for improving working conditions and guaranteeing fundamental rights for all those involved in the sector. It is crucial that African countries ratify and implement these instruments, in collaboration with SSF professional organizations and other stakeholders, to build a sector that is more sustainable, equitable and respectful of human rights.

Facing the Tides

Only when the small-scale fishers of Sri Lanka willingly adopt social security mechanisms can their sector be protected and assured of a sustainable future

Fisheries play a pivotal role in Sri Lanka's socio-economic development, providing 50 per cent of the animal protein for the population, contributing to 2.6 per cent of the exports, and securing livelihood opportunities for 6.5 per cent of the country's employed population. Sri Lankan fisheries can be categorized into marine and inland (freshwater) fisheries. The marine sector can be divided into three sub-categories: offshore, operated by multi-day boats beyond the continental shelf; coastal waters on the relatively narrow, continental shelf in which traditional craft and boats with outboard and inboard engines operate; and lagoon and brackish water fisheries.

Despite the limited number of multi-day vessels, the majority of the Sri Lankan fishing fleet comprises small-scale operators accounting for about 90 per cent of the total fishing fleet of the country and 64 per cent of the total fish production (both marine and inland). The small-scale fishing fleet mainly contains inboard single-day boats (IDAYs), outboard engine fibreglass reinforced boats (OFRPs), motorized traditional boats (MTRBs), non-motorized traditional boats (NTRBs), beach-seine craft and inland fishing craft. The small-scale fishers utilize low technology and little capital, target local markets, remain segregated from other communities, and most often are organized according to caste and ethnicity.

Previous studies conducted on the small-scale fisheries (SSF) in the country reveal that the sub-sector is associated with complex contexts and socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities, including declining incomes, rising cost of inputs, poor market linkages, climate change and exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, fisheries statistics illustrate that the total small-scale marine fish production and the total small-scale fishing fleet have been declining over the past few years.

Compounding the existing vulnerabilities in the sector, the COVID-19 pandemic, the *X Press Pearl* container ship disaster, and the economic downturn have made life extremely difficult for Sri Lanka's small-scale fishers over the last three to four years. COVID-19 had a severe impact on the industry, causing marketing chains to collapse as a result of lockdown regulations. Fisheries livelihoods were further impacted by the ongoing economic crisis—the worst economic downturn after independence—hyper-inflation, a foreign exchange crisis, and high levels of government debt, causing scarcity of fuel and other essential items, frequent power cuts and many other socio-economic repercussions. All commodities, including kerosene and fishing gear, were affected by the skyrocketing inflation of 2022, and small-scale fishing operations were hindered by the lack of kerosene.

Sri Lanka has no social security scheme for fishers across all sectors, including both marine and inland

Many small-scale fishers are still struggling to recover. They do not have substantial reserves from prior profits; they survive on daily income. For them, handling a crisis becomes extremely difficult. Moreover, the multiple crises have been an eye-opener for the sector,

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OSCAR AMARASINGHE

Beach-Seine Net laying *Padu* on the west coast of Sri Lanka. Fishers understand the importance of having a social security system and are interested in being part of a contributory pension scheme that provides adequate benefits for them and their dependants

with emphasis shifting to the attention that needs to be paid on strengthening decent work conditions, including robust social security systems, occupational safety, improved living conditions and training.

This article intends to illustrate the current conditions of decent work standards, social security systems, income support systems and training needs within the small-scale fisheries sector. These findings were derived from field research conducted in 2022-2023, including both commercial and small-scale marine fishers in all fisheries districts in the island.

Sri Lanka has no social security scheme for fishers across all sectors, including both marine and inland. Historically, the country had enacted the Fisher's Pension and Social Security Scheme Act to provide periodic pensions to fishers in their old age, insurance against physical disability, or a gratuity in case of the fisher's death, through the Agricultural Insurance Board. However, the scheme is currently dysfunctional. No new registrations for pensions are being accepted. Moreover, only a very small proportion of fishers have been enrolled in this scheme, and those who are enrolled complain that the pension they receive per month is woefully inadequate to cover their medical expenses, requiring monthly visits to collect a small amount of money. Faced with such a reality, many elderly fishers who should be retired by now continue fishing, using non-mechanized craft to meet their daily expenses.

The government is currently making efforts to introduce a new contributory social security pension scheme for all fishers, which is more comprehensive and flexible than the old system. Fishers understand the importance of having a social security system and are interested in being part of a contributory pension scheme that provides adequate benefits for them and their dependants. The main concern of the fishers was that a contributory scheme should be designed with a convenient payment system that does not require them spending time travelling or lining up in queues.

However, these pension schemes are solely focused on fishers; others are not covered, whose livelihood depends

Source- Fisheries Statistics,2022-Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

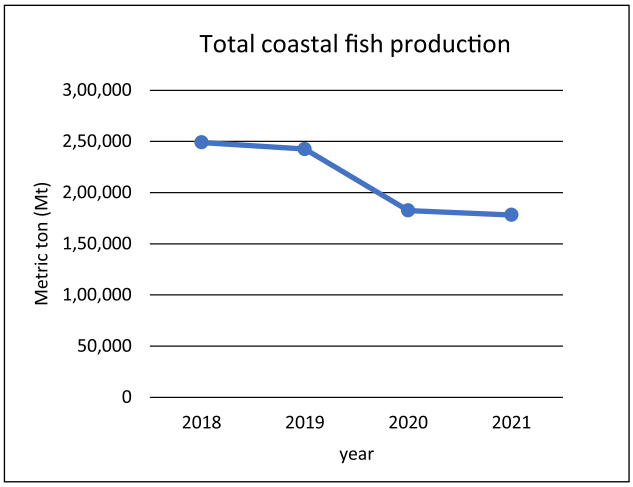

Figure 1 : Total coastal fish production from 2018-2021

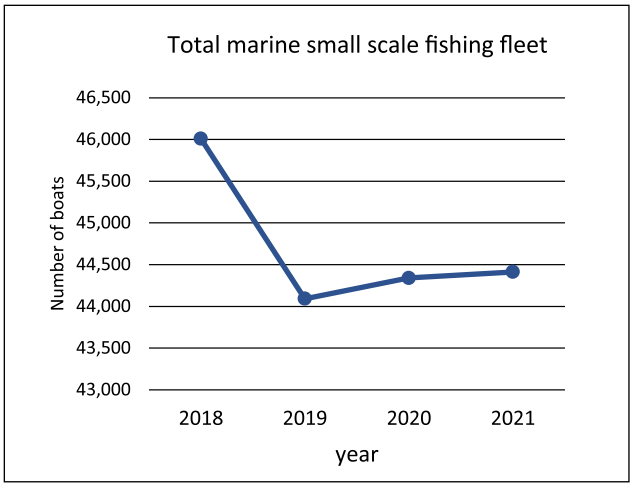

Figure 2 : Total marine small scale fishing fleet 2018-2021

on fisheries, like onshore workers and fish processors, for example. Fisheries co-operatives and rural fisheries societies have been operating welfare schemes for their members within their own geographical areas for a while now. These schemes include facilitation of financial access for small-scale fishers by providing very low-interest loans, maintaining a fund for disaster relief programmes, distributing stationery to children, and distributing dry rations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the fisheries societies are not actively operating in all fisheries districts and, therefore, island-wide coverage cannot be expected.

Despite the high risks in the fisheries industry, which is a hazardous source of employment, the majority of fishers are reluctant to engage with an insurance scheme. However, for multi-day fishers, regulations have been imposed whereby they cannot deploy on trips without insurance. But for small-scale fishers, there are no such regulations. Though they accept that their lives are endangered at sea, they are reluctant to obtain life insurance. Lack of trust towards insurance providers, inability to stake claims for injuries, and the long waiting period for receiving claims can be identified as the reasons behind this general reluctance. Given this lack of interest, most small-scale fishers believe that insurance is not essential as they operate within the coastal range. The existing insurance only provides coverage for fishers under the age of 65, while those above 65 are still engaged in small-scale fishing as they are not physically fit enough for multi-day trips.

Even though fishing is a high risk sector of employment all over the world, occupational safety mechanisms to address the risks involved in the sector are largely lacking. Field research revealed that Sri Lankan fishers operating OFRP boats carry life jackets on board but do not wear them, as they find them disruptive to fishing operations. Many small-scale fishers who operate non-traditional craft do not practise using life jackets at all. As for first aid, while fishers mentioned that they carry first aid boxes with some basic items, most lack knowledge of first aid or the basic actions needed to be taken in a medical emergency. In case of a distress situation, mobile phones are used to communicate with land to ask for help.

Existing practice

Despite small-scale fishers playing a vital role in fulfilling the protein requirements of the nation, policies on developing human resources in small-scale fishing are not adequate. The existing practice is that all fishing techniques are learned on the job. However, the Department of Fisheries conducts training programmes for multi-day boat skippers prior to obtaining their skipper licences. Small-scale fishers revealed during field interviews that they would like

to update their knowledge on new technologies in the sector, especially on fishing gear. It was further revealed during discussions that the younger generation is reluctant to enter the sector, preferring off-sea jobs; they do not see fisheries as a profitable business. They prefer work as crew members on multi-day boats, which generates more income than small-scale fishing operations. They also regard the vessel owner as an employer, who is assumed to provide a safety net, especially in a financial emergency.

Proper awareness of savings mechanisms for fisher families, especially for the women, will help them start saving small amounts from their daily incomes

During our discussions, it was mentioned that small-scale fishers do require proper training and awareness on first aid procedures. Though knowledge of first aid is essential for fishers irrespective of the scale of operation, currently only the skippers of the multi-day boats receive first aid training, even though small-scale fishers have been requesting for such training programmes. They would also like to be trained on multi-day fishing operations so as to help them find employment on multi-day boats.

Some fisherwomen say they have received training on post-harvest production from community-based organizations and non-profit organizations. However, most of these programmes were not sustainable, with only a few women succeeding in starting their own small enterprises. They have realized the importance of building up savings and knowledge about offshore employment to maintain a stable income during the off season when fishing is not possible. Their concern was that many fishermen spend their small, daily income on alcohol, leaving no room for savings. Proper awareness of savings mechanisms for fisher families, especially for the women, will help them start saving small amounts from their daily incomes.

The various challenges that small-scale fishers have faced—and continue to face—have made them a vulnerable group, threatening the long-term sustainability of the sector. The issues currently prevalent in the sector motivate the fishers to move out of fisheries and engage in labour in other sectors. Recent fisheries statistics provide evidence of the sector's declining performance over time. Given that the sector has been operating for decades, fulfilling the nation's protein requirements, providing a proper social security system, occupational safety mechanisms, access to financial services, and training to enhance their knowledge are the vital steps needed to protect the SSF sector and ensure its sustainability.

There is also an imperative need to create robust awareness among fishers about the importance of contributing to the social security system, participating in insurance schemes, and adhering to occupational safety regulations. Only then will the small-scale fishers of Sri Lanka willingly adopt these social security mechanisms, guided by a better understanding.

For more

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Poverty Amidst Plenty

Only comprehensive policy interventions and targeted initiatives can address systemic inequalities and ensure equitable development in the fisheries sector of Bangladesh

The fisheries sector has emerged as a significant contributor to Bangladesh's economy and food security. With abundant water resources and strategic policies, Bangladesh has become a leading producer in the global fisheries market, surpassing its production targets consistently. This success story, however, contrasts sharply with the socio-economic realities faced by fishing communities across the country. Despite the sector's remarkable achievements, fishers continue to grapple with poverty, limited access to education, healthcare challenges and occupational hazards.

This article examines the dichotomy of Bangladesh's fisheries sector's macro-level success and the micro-level socio-economic challenges faced by fishing communities, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to address systemic inequalities and ensure equitable development.

Bangladesh's abundant water resources have propelled it to the forefront of global fish production, with the country emerging as one of the world's leading producers. This success, acknowledged worldwide, saw Bangladesh surpassing its fish production target, reaching an impressive 4.8 million tonnes in 2021-22, a testament to its self-sufficiency since 2016-17. The fisheries sector's multifaceted contributions extend beyond mere numbers, encompassing vital roles in animal protein consumption, job creation, foreign earnings, aquatic biodiversity preservation, and socio-economic advancement. Constituting 2.08 per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and 21.83 per cent of the agricultural GDP, fisheries play a pivotal role in Bangladesh's economic landscape.

Notably, per capita fish consumption has exceeded targets, reaching 63 grams per day, while the sector provides over 12 per cent of total employment opportunities. Furthermore, the country's prowess in fishery is internationally recognized, as evidenced by its rankings in various categories, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Bangladesh stands tall as the third-highest producer in inland open-water capture production, fifth in world aquaculture production, and fourth globally and third within Asia in tilapia production. Bangladesh ranks second for the average growth rate of fish production over the past decade and proudly leads the pack as the foremost hilsa-consuming country among 11 vital nations, further solidifying its status as a global fisheries powerhouse.

While some development initiatives have reached these communities, they continue to lag behind significantly.

Elaborate government infrastructure

The transformation of the country's fisheries sector owes much to a concerted effort across individual, private and public domains, with the government playing a significant role. The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MoFL) spearheads governance, crafting policies, laws and regulations while overseeing key institutions like the Department of Fisheries (DoF), the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC), the Bangladesh

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MD. MUJIBUL HAQUE MUNIR

Setting Sail: Fishermen takeing rest at the local landing station in Bhola island before embarking on their fishing expedition, Bangladesh. Working conditions on fishing boats are also precarious, with inadequate safety equipment and lack of access to medical care during emergencies

Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI), and the Fisheries and Livestock Information Department (FLID).

DoF executes several functions, from extension services to law enforcement, while BFDC focuses on marketing and production. BFRI was recognized with the prestigious National Award Ekushey Padak, the second-highest civilian award in Bangladesh, introduced in memory of the martyrs of the Bengali Language Movement of 1952; it leads fisheries research and development, working in tandem with MoFL. Meanwhile, the Marine Fisheries Academy trains experts for marine fisheries management, while FLID disseminates crucial information and updates across the sector, underscoring Bangladesh's comprehensive approach to fisheries development and management.

Among the government departments, DoF holds a key role in fisheries management, boasting an extensive official structure, spanning the national and sub-district levels. With approximately 5,960 positions under the director general (DG), including an additional director general (ADG) and various officers and staff, it ensures comprehensive governance. Ensuring the production of safe and high-quality fish and fish products is a primary mandate, with measures like Good Aquaculture Practice (GAP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems rigorously implemented.

The Fish and Fish Products (Inspection and Quality Control) Act, 2020, ensures adherence to international standards. DoF also promotes aquaculture and shrimp farming through various means, including extension services, wetland management and technology application, while laws and acts are continually updated to support quality production. The department's historical evolution, dating back to 1908 during the British colonial rule, underscores its enduring commitment to fisheries development.

Furthermore, initiatives such as Fish Seed Multiplication Farms and Brood Bank Development Projects demonstrate ongoing efforts to enhance the sector's sustainability and productivity, also enhanced by DoF via a wide array of activities. They include disseminating improved aquaculture technologies through training and

demonstrations, providing advisory services to farmers, and facilitating the conservation and management of fisheries resources. DoF also plays a crucial role in assisting the administrative ministry in formulating policies and laws related to the sector. Quality control measures are rigorously enforced, with the issuance of health certificates for exportable fish and fish products.

The department conducts surveys and assessments of fishery resources to develop a comprehensive database for informed planning. Moreover, it facilitates arrangements for institutional credit for fish and shrimp farmers, fishers and traders, while also promoting alternative income-generating activities for the rural poor and unemployed individuals to alleviate poverty. Lastly, the DoF actively formulates and implements development projects aimed at ensuring the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources, thereby contributing to food security in Bangladesh.

A contrasting reality

Even as the fisheries sector contributes significantly to employment generation, protein provision and overall economic development, the socio-economic conditions of the fisher community remain a cause for concern. While some development initiatives have reached these communities, they continue to lag behind significantly. A comparison between national data and the socio-economic indicators at the fisheries level reveals glaring disparities. Despite the sector's vital contribution to the national economy, fishers face daunting challenges, from low incomes and limited access to education to higher rates of landlessness and homelessness. These discrepancies underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy measures to address the systemic inequalities faced by fisheries communities and ensure their equitable participation in the country's development trajectory.

The stark disparities between national averages and the socio-economic conditions of fishing communities paint a disconcerting picture of inequality and marginalization. While the national per capita income stands at US $2,064, the income of fishers languishes far below, ranging from $235 to $1,176, indicative of their economic vulnerability. Similarly, adult literacy rates among fishers are alarmingly low at 37.7 per cent, significantly trailing the national average of 74.4 per cent. Education remains a significant challenge, with only 28.33 per cent of fishers completing primary education, compared to the national rate of 81.3 per cent.

Landlessness is a pressing issue also, affecting 12 per cent of fishers, slightly higher than the national average of 11.33 per cent. As much as 25 per cent of fishers find themselves homeless, starkly contrasting with the national homelessness rate of 4.96 per cent.

The lack of accessible schools, coupled with financial constraints and the need for child labour to support family incomes, perpetuates the cycle of educational disadvantage among fishing communities

Access to basic amenities also reveals disparities, with fishers exhibiting lower rates of access to electricity, sanitation and land ownership, compared to the national averages.

Despite these challenges, it is encouraging to note that fisher communities have achieved full access to improved drinking water, although much work remains to be done to address the pervasive inequalities they face. These disparities underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to uplift fishing communities and ensure their equitable inclusion in national development efforts. With no minimum wage set for fishworkers, employment terms are often informally agreed upon, leading to uncertainty and lack of guaranteed benefits such as weekly holidays and incentives.

Health and education: Poor conditions

Working conditions on fishing boats are also precarious, with inadequate safety equipment and lack of access

to medical care during emergencies. Despite legislation like the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, the implementation of occupational health and safety (OSH) regulations remains inadequate, leaving workers vulnerable to life-threatening risks. Studies reveal alarming statistics, with a high percentage of labourers reporting poor workplace security, occupational risks, sickness and accidents. In sectors like shrimp processing, long hours of work in harsh conditions result in various health issues, including musculoskeletal pain and respiratory illnesses, underscoring the urgent need for improved workplace safety measures and healthcare provisions for small-scale fisheries workers in Bangladesh.

Access to adequate healthcare remains a significant challenge for marginalized communities, particularly those in coastal areas, where appropriate health facilities and skilled healthcare providers are scarce. Despite the presence of government sub-district and district-level hospitals, community clinics and private clinics, fishers in island areas often rely on local pharmacy owners and unqualified practitioners for medical assistance, as formal healthcare services are limited. This poses considerable risks for fishworkers, especially those at sea, who have no mobile or floating hospitals available in emergencies.

Research conducted by Atiqur Rahman Sunny and colleagues in 2020 found limited medical facilities in fisher communities, with 60 per cent of respondents resorting to traditional remedies due to the absence of specialized hospitals nearby. Furthermore, studies by Shibaji Mandal and his colleagues in 2017, and others in 2020, reveal alarming statistics, with a majority of fishermen reporting dizziness, vomiting, fever and other health issues during fishing expeditions and upon return. These findings underscore the urgent need for improved healthcare infrastructure and services tailored to the unique needs of fisher communities in Bangladesh. Other studies also highlight the fishers' reliance on unqualified practitioners, further emphasizing the need for accessible and reliable healthcare services in these areas.

The association between poverty and educational exclusion among fishing communities in Bangladesh is starkly evident, as highlighted by several studies. For instance, Altaf Hossain Benjamin Zeitlyn underscored in 2010 that poor health, inadequate school facilities and proximity to non-governmental schools predominantly attended by economically disadvantaged students contribute to the silent exclusion of children from education. The Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh acknowledges the significant educational disparities, particularly at the secondary level, with the gross enrolment rate for the poor lagging behind significantly, compared to their non-poor counterparts. Moreover, approximately five million children remain out of school due to poverty-related factors, a situation that is particularly prevalent among fishing communities.

In the fishing communities surveyed, access to education is challenging, with limited availability of secondary schools and vocational institutes. Most schools are government-owned primary schools or madrasas, often situated at a considerable distance from students' houses. Despite primary education being accessible, the dropout rate after completing fifth standard is notably high, especially among girls, primarily due to financial constraints and parental illiteracy. Data collected reveals a concerning disparity in educational attainment between female members of coastal fishing communities and the overall education situation, with significantly lower completion rates observed among female members of fisher families.

The lack of accessible schools, coupled with financial constraints and the need for child labour to support family incomes, perpetuates the cycle of educational disadvantage among fishing communities. Overall, these findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions and targeted initiatives to improve educational access and attainment among fisher communities in Bangladesh.

For more

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A Portrait of Risk and Resilience

The Caribbean island nation has done well to provide social security to its small-scale fishing community. It must make them resilient to face the effects of climate change

Over the past decades the fisheries sector of Antigua and Barbuda has been interwoven into the social, cultural and economic aspects of national development via major improvements in fisheries infrastructure coupled with the modernization of the fleet. Most of the wooden sloops and dories that dominated the sector in the 1970s have been replaced by modern fibreglass launches and pirogues with the latest fishing equipment (like global positioning system and depth sounder).

Fisheries, including aquaculture, is no longer seen as an informal sector outside the purview of national development but as a priceless asset contributing to nutrition, food security, poverty alleviation and livelihood. Additionally, the sector acts as a 'safety net' in times of economic crises or when there is a 'downturn' in the main engine of growth of the national economy: tourism. This lesson was emphasized during the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession, and more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the number of individuals registering and licensing for the first time or renewing their fisher licence increased by 262 per cent in the first half of 2020, compared to the average for pre-pandemic years.

Despite the great strides made with respect to modernization, fishers are struggling to maintain their traditional access and user rights as they compete with the luxury real estate industry and coastal tourism development. Couple this with the catastrophic threats associated with climate change (tropical storms, floods, ocean warming and acidification, beach erosion and sea-level rise, among others) paints a bleak picture for the sector.

According to the Global Climate Risk Index compiled by Germanwatch, Antigua and Barbuda were ranked seventh globally in terms of economic losses from extreme weather based on average percentage losses per unit GDP from 2000 to 2019. This article provides a portrait of social development in the fisheries sector against this backdrop, as well as provide a synopsis of existing policies, legislation, and programmes.

... about half the fishers in Antigua and Barbuda have a robust degree of financial resilience and adaptive capacity

Basic support, social protection

To ensure fisheries policies were consistent with overall social protection policies as well as to support the process of 'formalizing' and 'professionalizing' the sector, the Fisheries Regulations 2013 were introduced. They state that to be entered into the record as a licensed fisher, an individual is required to be registered under the Social Security Act (1972), and any other labour requirements for Antigua and Barbuda, such as the Medical Benefits Scheme. The enactment of the Social Security Act created a fund to provide the insured population and their dependants with some degree of financial security in the event of sickness, injury, invalidity, maternity, retirement, or death.

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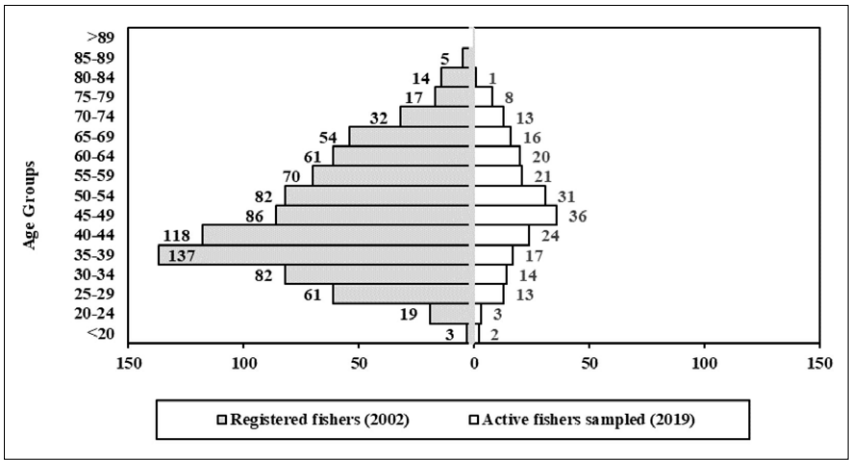


Age distribution of fishers residing in Antigua in 2002 and 2019. Registered fishers N = 841 and active fishers sampled n = 219 (Horsford in press)

Under the Act, all persons 16 years of age or over, and under the pensionable age of 64 years, and gainfully employed are required to be registered and shall be insured for life. Fishers typically register as self-employed contribute 10 per cent of the minimum monthly declared earnings of EC $2,500 (US $926) as a contribution to the Social Security Fund. Some ingenious features of the scheme include: one, the universal coverage offered by the system assures workers that their protection will follow them when they change jobs; two, the scheme's ability to finance the benefits rest on the entire economy and not on a single entity; and, three, benefits under social security also adjust readily to changing wage conditions through benefit and ceiling increases.

An additional condition for fisher registration is engagement with the Fisher Professionalization Programme. Modules are centred around building human capital by providing education and practical skills in areas such as first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, safety at sea and basic navigation, fisheries laws and protected areas stewardship, small business management and record-keeping, outboard engine maintenance, and seafood safety and quality assurance.

In terms of healthcare, Antigua and Barbuda has a robust system funded through public taxation and levies in support of the Medical Benefits Scheme. The scheme covers primary healthcare including healthcare for specific diseases, as well as refunds for services such as laboratory tests, x-rays, surgery, ultrasounds, electro-cardiographs or similar services, hospitalization, and drugs. Registration with the Scheme is mandatory according to the Fisheries Regulations 2013 and as such, fishers and their families are entitled to all the services within.

With the 'greying' of the fishing population, these interventions are becoming increasingly important with respect to retirement, old-age pension and healthcare. In 2002, fishers under 35 years comprised 20 per cent of the population; in 2019, only 15 per cent of sampled fishers were under 35 years. Interventions have also been made into affordable public utilities—potable water, electricity, internet, and telecom—via the Senior Citizens Utility Subsidy Programme. Pensioners, the physically challenged, and those living below the poverty line receive a monthly subsidy of EC $100 (US $37) toward payment of utility bills.

Prioritizing social development has led to the provision of universal free education for children aged five to 16 years, a sharp decline in infant mortality, and an increase in overall life expectancy, with females leading the way according to data from the World Bank (78.0 years versus 75.7 years). Additionally, government has made investments in improving housing stock through programmes such as the EU-funded Housing Support to Barbuda Project, the Low-Income Housing Project, and the Home Advancement (Refurbishment) for the Indigent, as well as new building codes given the islands vulnerability to extreme weather conditions.

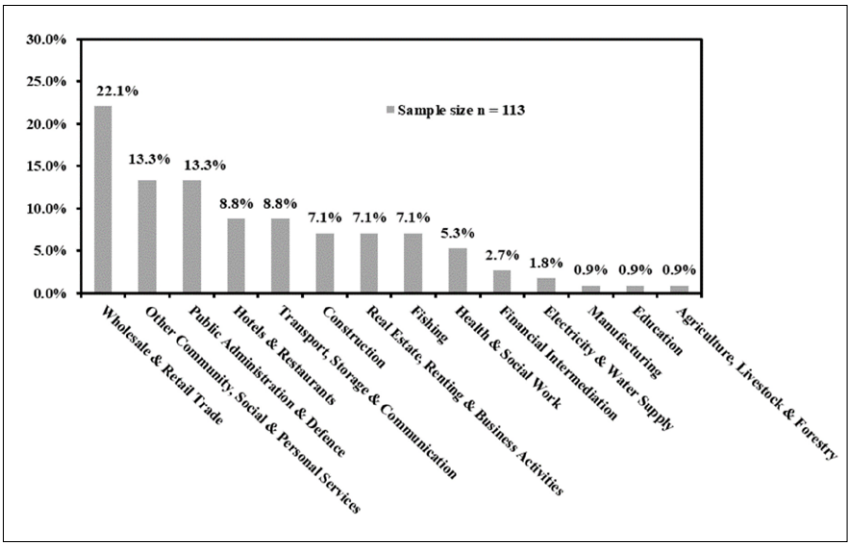
Income support measures

The Peoples Benefit Programme is a social scheme that supports people with disabilities and economic vulnerabilities, with a monthly transfer of EC $215 (US $80). This amount is transferred to a debit card to purchase food and personal items in supermarkets and stores selected by the programme. Economic hardship is the typical criterion for qualifying under this programme; for example, households earning less than EC $800 (US $296) per month before payment

of bills as well as those with physical disabilities or having children with developmental issues are eligible.

The Board of Guardians, a division of the Ministry of Social Transformation, also provides a fortnightly allowance to the poor and destitute. Notwithstanding these programmes, 'occupational pluralism'—having more than one job or multiple sources of income from various occupations or enterprises—was a common livelihood strategy or a means of economic security for fishers. In 2019, 51.6 per cent of fishers had another occupation or source of income within fisheries or outside of the fisheries sector. In general, service and sales occupations were the most common complement, including clerical work, taxi or bus driver, bartender, tour guide, and water sport operator.

There was also vertical integration of businesses, for example, fishing and water sports or a seafood restaurant. This approach to mitigating business risk in fishing by pursuing economic opportunities in other industries suggest that about half the fishers in Antigua and Barbuda have a robust degree of financial resilience and adaptive capacity. This is supported by the exponential gains in human capital in terms of educational attainment since the late 1990s, with 77.2 per cent of the fishers having a secondary education or higher, thereby enhancing labour mobility and resilience.



Complementary employment or source of income by industry for multi-occupational fishers in Antigua in 2019 (Horsford in press)

Decent work

The Antigua and Barbuda Medium-Term Development Strategy emphasizes 'decent wages and work conditions' as vital to sustainable development. The Labour Code establishes the minimum standards employers must meet regarding labour practices and decent work in the country. It includes provisions governing the terms of employment, health and safety issues, the right to join a trade union, collective bargaining, and prohibitions against retaliation towards persons who take industrial action. Article E8 (1) of the Labour Code ensures equal pay for women in both the public and private sectors; "no woman shall merely by reason of her sex be employed under terms of employment less favourable than that employed by male workers in the same occupation and by the same employer". Article C4 (1) prevents discrimination: "no employer shall discriminate to any person's hire, tenure, wages, hours, or any other condition of work, by reason of race, colour, creed, sex, age, or political beliefs".

The code is complemented by specific technical requirements for fisheries such as: minimum age to engage in fishing (16 years); mandatory medical benefits and social security; training in occupational health and safety, and mandatory safety at sea; minimum requirement for food and potable water on board; and a list of mandatory safety equipment for licencing of fishing vessels, including life jackets for each person onboard, flares, VHF radio, tool kit and basic spares for minimum repairs, sound-making device to signal passing vessels, first aid kit and flashlights.

In terms of migrant fishers, freedom of movement is a right of all nationals of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in the economic union area

In terms of migrant fishers, freedom of movement is a right of all nationals of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in the economic union area. These include nationals from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Revised Treaty of Basseterre lays out the provisions for individuals to enter and stay indefinitely in any OECS Protocol Member State except in those circumstances where the OECS national poses a security risk for the receiving country.

In terms of healthcare, Antigua and Barbuda has a robust system funded through public taxation and levies in support of the Medical Benefits Scheme

The free movement of persons is linked to broader goals of regional integration and harmonization in Article 13 of the Protocol of Eastern Caribbean Economic Union in the Revised Treaty of Basseterre. The treaty specifies the movement must be without harassment or impediments. Non-OECS nationals intended to engage in local commercial fishing are required to apply for a work permit specifically for the fisheries sector.

Not with standing these gains, work in fisheries is still precarious given that there is inadequate insurance to mitigate the various risks associated with climate change, like hurricanes and floods, and more recently sargassum blooms. In 2017, only 5.9 per cent of vessel owners reported that they had vessel insurance. High premiums, inadequate coverage (like the policy not covering the extent of fishing operations in the maritime limits), and high deductibles were cited as the main reasons for opting for an emergency saving account to cover unplanned expenses. The precarious nature of fisheries has been acknowledged within the regionally endorsed 2018 Protocol on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Fisheries and Aquaculture. However the biggest hurdle to its complete implementation is funding.

One of the most important decisions coming out of the 27th Conference of the Parties (2022), hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is an agreement to provide 'loss and damage' funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters. Caribbean governments are looking to this ground-breaking decision to establish new funding arrangements, as well as a dedicated fund, to assist Small Island Developing States in responding to loss and damage. This along with disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, taking a whole-of-society approach, ensures that the most vulnerable in society are included.

According to the United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction, "poverty is both a driver and consequence of disasters, and the processes that further disaster risk-related poverty are permeated with inequality." To overcome these challenges, the most vulnerable must have a seat at the negotiation table; they include female-headed households, youth, and fishing communities in low-lying areas. Initiatives such a Mainstreaming Gender in Caribbean Fisheries can empower and up-scale the participation of women and youths in the governance and stewardship of fisheries, thereby unlocking society's full potential—the old adage 'a rising tide lifts all boats.'

For more

Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries: Antigua and Barbuda
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/930.ICSF227_Social_Development_Antigua_Barbuda.pdf

Antigua and Barbuda: Springing Back into Shape
https://www.icsf.net/samudra/antigua-and-barbuda-social-development-springing-back-into-shape/

The Right Direction

Meaningful progress has been made in improving social protection coverage in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, resulting in both better fisher resilience and fisheries management

Over the past decade, the importance of advancing social development for fishers in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region has become more prominent than ever. In particular, for the contracting parties and co-operating non-contracting parties (CPCs) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the extension of social protection coverage for fishers in the region has become an increasing priority. It has been recognized as an essential tool to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience of fishers, while contributing to the twin goals of improved livelihoods and sustainable fisheries management.

Discussions on supporting social protection for fishers have evolved over the last decade and the issue has steadily been reinforced through various political commitments. GFCM's work on small-scale fisheries (SSF) has given impetus to these discussions. It builds on the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for an end to poverty by 2030 and extending social protection to reach the poor and vulnerable. GFCM adopted in 2018 a Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF); it set the goal of improving livelihoods in the region, and highlighted decent work and social protection as key components of future strategy.

But what is social protection and why is it pertinent to GFCM's work? As a body of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), GFCM follows FAO's definition of social protection, namely, the set of policies and programmes that address economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods. It is structured around three main categories: one, social insurance (that is, social security such as unemployment insurance, health insurance, old-age pensions, worker's compensation and maternity leave); two, social assistance (that is, unconditional cash transfers, conditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes and food vouchers); and, three, social inclusion (that is, anti-discrimination measures for, say, disability, affirmative action campaigns for, say, ethnic minorities, and gender equality). FAO, through its work, aims to ensure that social protection systems are well integrated into broader livelihood-promotion and rural-development strategies. For its part, GFCM has taken up this charge, aiming to promote better coherence between fisheries management and social protection programming.

GFCM has been supporting CPCs in developing capacities to conduct regular, up-to-date data collection that can also be used to inform accurate and efficient social protection design

The region and its SSF profile

In the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, SSF play a vital role, accounting for 82 per cent of the region's fishing fleet and 61 per cent of total onboard employment. In addition to their prominence, they also have particular characteristics that make social protection coverage of this sector particularly important. SSF in this region are considered a highly vulnerable population, with variable and unpredictable income characterized by high seasonality and fluctuations in catch and market prices. It is also a

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DANIEL MONLLOR_MARTÍNEZ / FAO / GFCM

Woman cleaning the nets and collecting the fish in Gandia. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by regular undervaluing of the sector's contribution, particularly those from 'invisible' groups like women and gleaners, as well as by high exposure to risk

population with relatively low adaptive capacity, including limited savings and limited access to credit, educational resources and alternative livelihoods.

Their vulnerability is exacerbated by regular undervaluing of the sector's contribution, particularly those from 'invisible' groups like women and gleaners, as well as by high exposure to risk. These risks take a number of forms:

- natural or environmental, such as natural disasters, over-exploited fish stocks, interactions with dangerous marine animals, climate change and pollution;
- economic, such as sudden unemployment due to loss of fishing gear, vessel repairs, price volatility and trade bans);
- health, like injury, illness, old age and death;
- social, such as poor working conditions, limited tenure rights, illegal fishing and migration; and
- political, like potential international maritime boundary disputes, political conflicts and war.

The COVID-19 pandemic only served to further highlight the vulnerabilities of the sector—for both small-scale and industrial fishers alike—and drew the attention of administrations to the importance of extending social protection coverage for the sector.

In order to support GFCM members in better understanding the social protection needs in the region, including potential challenges and best practices, FAO and GFCM published a study in 2019. Titled 'Social protection for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean region: A review', it examined five diverse country case studies in the region. It identified challenges, examined best practices and made recommendations for extending coverage. The conclusions have formed the basis for GFCM's work on promoting social protection coverage in recent years.

The FAO-GFCM study highlighted that most countries in the Mediterranean region have some form of basic social protection systems in place; fishers particularly valued access to healthcare and sickness benefits, unemployment benefits and old age pensions. However, the study identified a number of challenges fishers face in accessing and providing social protection programming for small-scale fishers. Often there is a poor fit between the conventional modalities of social security systems and the realities of the SSF sector. Conventional social protection programmes often have a need for regular contributions; fisheries, however, are characterized by seasonal work and irregular income.

Similarly, there is often a requirement for worker registration and recognition of fishing as a form of formal employment. These conditions are often lacking in a sector characterized by informal work arrangements, often operating without formal work contracts. Similarly, universal (non-contributory) social protection coverage is very limited in the region; there are often concerns about the affordability of extending provision to fishers and fishworkers due to fiscal challenges. Finally, the planning of social protection provision is hindered by a lack of up-to-date information about the size and socio-economic characteristics of the sector, which is typically data poor.

The study noted that conditions for successful social protection extension to the fisheries sector and, in particular, small-scale fisheries, included:

- strong institutional capacity and credibility stemming from good coordination across sectors (fisheries ministries and social ministries) and a vibrant national social protection dialogue;
- strong fisher organizations that can help disseminate information about social protection rights and benefits, as well as promote formalization of the sector and help facilitate contribution payments; and
- sound fisheries management that supports the sustainability of fish stocks and thus promotes a sustainable income source for fishers.

The commission's work

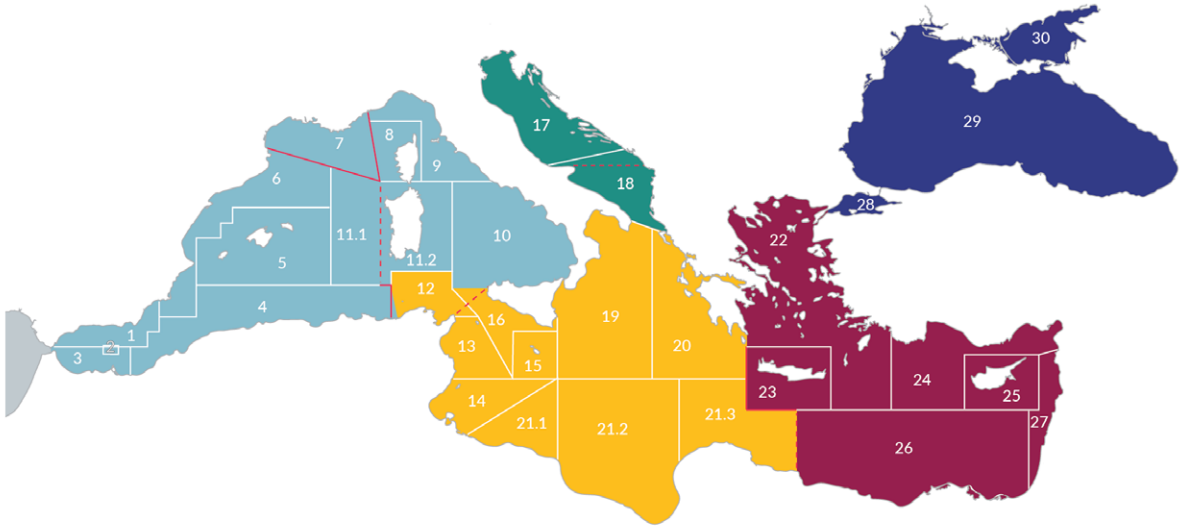
To facilitate social protection provision in its region, GFCM has been working on a number of fronts. First, GFCM has been supporting CPCs in developing capacities to conduct regular, up-to-date data collection that can also be used to inform accurate and efficient social protection design. GFCM has also been driving efforts to raise awareness about vulnerable or 'invisible' segments of the fisheries sector, for example, gleaners and women. It is encouraging enhanced data collection to bring to light their contributions. To this end, GFCM recently published a study on the role of women in Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries.

Finally, GFCM has been promoting complementary incentives between social protection and fisheries management, not only ensuring that data collection can support social protection planning, but also better linking social protection to fisheries management discussions, and encouraging fisheries managers to consider social protection as a tool to ensure good compliance with management decisions.

A concrete example of this is the GFCM-LEX database, a pioneering multilingual online platform that centralizes legal frameworks across countries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region; it aims to bolster efforts in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and foster the implementation of GFCM recommendations. This database now includes relevant social protection legislation applicable to the sector, helping to disseminate information about available programming, build synergies between relevant fisheries and social ministries, as well as identify gaps in coverage to be addressed.

Similarly, GFCM has been partnering with local SSF organizations, like the Tunisian Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries, to raise awareness among its members about their rights to social protection access and to help facilitate adherence to existing programming. Lastly, the GFCM has been partnering with FAO's SocPro4Fish project that has been working in Tunisia to strengthen the resilience of fishworkers to cope with

FAO



FAO statistical divisions GFCM geographical subareas (GSAs)

GFCM subregions

Contiguous Atlantic area | Western Mediterranean | Central Mediterranean | Adriatic Sea | Eastern Mediterranean | Black Sea

01. Northern Alboran Sea	07. Gulf of Lion	13. Gulf of Hammamet	19. Western Ionian Sea	25. Cyprus
02. Alboran Island	08. Corsica	14. Gulf of Gabès	20. Eastern Ionian Sea	26. Southern Levant Sea
03. Southern Alboran Sea	09. Ligurian Sea and northern Tyrrhenian Sea	15. Malta	21.1. Southwestern Ionian Sea 21.2. South-central Ionian Sea 21.3. Southeastern Ionian Sea	27. Eastern Levant Sea
04. Algeria	10. Southern and central Tyrrhenian Sea	16. Southern Sicily	22. Aegean Sea	28. Marmara Sea
05. Balearic Islands	11.1. Western Sardinia 11.2. Eastern Sardinia	17. Northern Adriatic Sea	23. Crete	29. Black Sea
06. Northern Spain	12. Northern Tunisia	18. Southern Adriatic Sea	24. Northern Levant Sea	30. Azov Sea

Note: At its forty-fifth session in November 2022, the GFCM agreed to divide GSA 21 (Southern Ionian Sea) into three marine subareas. The subdivision of GSA 21 into GSAs 21.1, 21.2 and 21.3 will be applied in 2023.

For more

The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2023 – Special edition
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/498fd9bf-7ab3-4c4b-8ddc-9405c2c3ed02/content

Social protection for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean region – A review
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/677d1769-6909-49cc-abd3-ecb897acf170/content

Women in fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region: roles, challenges and opportunities
https://openknowledge.fao.org/bitstreams/e1957b62-4658-4232-bd95-9c64ab56bb46/download

macro- and micro-level covariate impacts and shocks by increasing the understanding of the current scenario, reducing the barriers to access social protection, and promoting economic opportunities and better management of resources.

The efforts made to draw attention to the role of social protection for promoting both fisher resilience and fisheries management, as well as the efforts made to address challenges for provision and promoting best practices, has begun to show results. Meaningful progress has been made in improving social protection coverage in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

Since 2020, social protection coverage is steadily being extended. Health insurance coverage has been extended to fishers in an additional CPC (with 71 per cent of all CPCs now providing health insurance for fishers), old age pensions have been extended to fishers in an additional two CPCs (with 67 per cent of all CPCs now providing old age pensions for fishers) and unemployment benefits have now been extended to fishers in an additional three CPCs (with 38 per cent of CPCs now providing unemployment benefits for fishers). Although there is still work to be done, progress is being made in the right direction.

A Formidable Arsenal

Social protection schemes in the Eastern Caribbean's small-scale fisheries can be enhanced

Spanning around three million sq km, the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) is a complex mosaic of maritime jurisdictions. It surrounds nearly 30 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with diverse ecological, socio-economic, cultural and geo-political characteristics. Providing a single perspective on social protection in CLME small-scale fisheries (SSF) is, hence, virtually impossible. In this article we focus on SSF social protection in the more homogenous Eastern Caribbean sub-region.

All fisheries in these islands are small-scale with relatively short value chains, primarily domestic labour forces, and local consumption. The landings are a mixture of coastal (for example, jacks), oceanic (tunas), demersal (conch) and pelagic (dolphinfish) species harvested by motorized vessels under 12 metres using several types of fishing gear. Many nearshore coral reefs are degraded and/or over-exploited, but there are healthier and more productive ecosystems offshore with the potential for moderate expansion of commercial fishing (with the aid of fish aggregating devices).

Post-harvest participation by women can be significant in some fisheries and locations (as with flyingfish in Barbados). The overall market orientation is mainly towards domestic sales; some are linked to tourism; a few higher-valued species are exported regionally (for example, spiny lobster) and globally (yellowfin tuna). Even with these broad-brush social-ecological system similarities, some differences exist in social protection from which we can learn.

Learning and adapting to build resilience in SSF social-ecological systems are central to the projects implemented by the University of the West Indies, in collaboration with fisherfolk organizations. This article shares perspectives based on our applied research with local, national and regional fisherfolk organizations over several years. However, we are not writing on their behalf. Caribbean fisherfolk have strong voices for advocacy on social protection that are free of academic filters.

... many basic human rights and public services are adequately provided and governed by state authorities

The fabric of social protection

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines social protection as the "set of policies and programmes that addresses economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods". Components of social protection typically include social assistance, social insurance and labour market interventions. All are seen in the Eastern Caribbean SSF, but can be enhanced.

Social protection in Eastern Caribbean SSF was subjected to immense scrutiny during the COVID-19 pandemic. This scrutiny continued into the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) as attention was paid to climate change and variability, disaster risk management, gender mainstreaming, value chains, decent work and other aspects of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

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UWI-CERMES

Social protection for seasonal postharvest livelihoods is important to many women. Since the total values of SSF goods and services are not easily measured and hence there has been little SSF empowerment based on true value

(the SSF Guidelines). With the 10th anniversary of the SSF Guidelines being celebrated this year, and initiatives underway that are relevant to climate justice, blue justice and social justice, there are more voices advocating for examining and improving social protection in SSF. Below we share some of the perspectives that we think require additional applied research to support and design enhancements.

Governments of Eastern Caribbean SIDS pay much attention to social and economic coastal management and development, including in many SSF communities. The real empowerment of these communities is, however, often far less apparent. During the COVID-19 pandemic and IYAFA 2022 periods, the value of SSF in inter-sectoral linkages such as with tourism, was clear. For example, SSF act as social safety nets and seasonal sources of livelihoods during tourism downturns, and as components of tourism agri-food chains and marketable cultural services in times of prosperity.

Since the total values of SSF goods and services are not easily measured, and contributions to gross domestic product are underestimated in official statistics, there has been little SSF empowerment based on true value. Retaining power over coastal community futures and shifting Blue Economy options are political priorities in Caribbean SIDS. There are many examples of the power asymmetries between SSF and economic development, with links between SSF social protection and governance of tenure. However, the underlying power dynamics are often inconspicuous and may be obscured by deficiencies in social-protection administration.

On a more positive note, many basic human rights and public services are adequately provided and governed

by State authorities. These amenities reduce or eliminate structural inequalities that could otherwise disadvantage SSF. For example, the Eastern Caribbean SIDS typically rank high in access across their populations to health, education, sanitation, housing, energy, public transportation and other basic socio-economic support systems. Child labour is not an issue and gender parity in education is the norm. Few SSF communities are so isolated or neglected that they cannot gain reasonable access to public services that meet basic needs. This is not to say that there is no poverty; just that SSF communities do not stand out in this regard.

Although national social security insurance schemes are available in these SIDS, people in informal sectors and workers who are self-employed such as most fisherfolk perceive the benefits and options available to be inadequate. Contributory schemes do not take the seasonality of SSF livelihoods adequately into account. Consequently, national schemes are under-subscribed by fisherfolk who are also unable to afford private social insurance schemes. Some fisherfolk organizations in the sub-region have tried to assist their members by forming insurance pools, but the economies of scale required to achieve affordable premiums usually cannot be reached. There is also a perception in recent times that national insurance schemes risk depletion due to population longevity and irresponsible State spending from them during global economic downturns.

Caribbean innovations

On the other hand, the region has been innovative in introducing parametric insurance that can simplify and expedite payments for loss and damage due to climate-related hazards. Insurance products are available in some countries to sustain the livelihoods of fisherfolk and promote resilient fisheries via disaster risk reduction. This is supported by initiatives such as the Fisheries Early Warning and Emergency Response (FEWER) mobile app suite and institutional communication system co-designed with fisherfolk to allow better preparation for, and response to, increasingly extreme weather events. In recent times, cost-effective SSF vessel monitoring systems (VMS) have been introduced in several countries to improve search and rescue by coast guards, with the potential for self-help through community-based assistance in cases that are not life-threatening.

State-run financial services and private-sector commercial credit are available to both women and men with small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) along entire fisheries value chains. Funding sources range from State agency micro-credit windows to co-operative credit unions and mainstream commercial banks. Their services span capital investment through to operating expenses, although high-risk venture capital for SSF is scarce. Loan interest rates may be concessionary, but grants and revolving loan schemes are becoming less common. When property is required as collateral, men may have an advantage in successfully obtaining credit, but women are usually seen as less risky debtors regarding repayment. Women frequently subscribe to, and run, the community-based rotating credit associations that remain culturally embedded in many SSF. Informal social protection needs to be better documented in SSF to understand social capital assets and avoid their depletion.

Turning to labour force considerations, most complementary income-generation and alternative livelihood initiatives targeting SSF have generally been project-linked and situation-specific. Few efforts have resulted in more sustainable livelihoods, with an exception being some small-scale marine algae aquaculture at the household level. Tourism-oriented diversification includes coastal transportation such as water taxis, tours such as sea turtle encounters, and food services such as the 'fish fry'. Labour market interventions also tend to be associated with marine protected areas (MPAs) where capture restrictions, no-take zones and displacement of fishers occur. In a broad view, such initiatives may prepare fisherfolk for developing more Blue Economy roles.

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Caribbean SSF communities are vulnerable to climate and other risks need insurance coverage. Decent work, with occupational health and safety in all components of fisheries value chains, are more recent areas for fisherfolk advocacy in SSF social protection

Self-employed fishing industry workers do not receive seasonal unemployment benefits at present, but at no time are all fisheries closed, and entry into fisheries is usually easy.

Decent work, with occupational health and safety in all components of fisheries value chains, are more recent areas for fisherfolk advocacy in SSF social protection. Issues arise more often in post-harvest activities. These are linked to ensuring high-quality seafood standards and are maintained in state-run fish landing sites that serve as public markets, allowing fisherfolk to have their own small businesses. State maintenance and operating standards for equipment, sanitation, ice supply and refrigerated storage may fall below the needs of trained SSF businesswomen, threatening their livelihoods and household income while compromising public health. State-induced uncertainties are a major concern when added to ecological and economic uncertainties such as from climate change, natural capture fishery variability and global energy costs. It is often in response to uncertain SSF livelihood structures and processes that we hear the loudest calls for social protection.

In the Eastern Caribbean SSF, harvest-sector labour conditions are not as problematic as in other parts of the region and the world. Fishing enterprises operate primarily within kinship and community social structures that provide culturally embedded forms of protection and stewardship. However, the closely packed countries have not institutionalized maritime trans-boundary mechanisms for movement of people and capital, or social protection, which are desirable.

Migrant fisheries are not an issue, but illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing exists. Some IUU fishing is an artefact of national and trans-boundary SSF governance

being unresponsive to customary fishing practices, but there also is a need to combat crime at sea using (often stolen) fishing vessels for the illegal movement of goods and drugs, as well as human trafficking. Fisherfolk are often the victims, rather than perpetrators, of these crimes. Adequate social protection includes attending to their safety. The regional programme of action to combat IUU fishing requires additional resources for more comprehensive implementation.

Approaches to the future

Professionalization of Caribbean SSF, for the purpose of social protection, can be quite contentious. There is a general move towards fisherfolk attaining formal certification for their skills and knowledge all along the fisheries value chains. It is beneficial to become qualified in safety, navigation, seafood handling, customer service, and so on. But fisherfolk are wary of state-designed professionalization resulting in increased administrative burdens, licensing barriers, restrictions that impede occupational mobility, and rules that impact culturally embedded kinship or community-based apprenticeship systems for SSF livelihoods.

An uninformed approach to professionalization could reduce their current adaptive capacity to deal with the uncertainty and variability of multi-species, multi-gear, seasonal SSF facing increasing climate risks. SSF livelihood flexibility is critical to self-organized social protection that needs to be maintained.

Another challenge to improving social protection in the Eastern Caribbean is the limited institutional capacity of fisheries authorities for ecosystem approaches to fisheries (EAF). This applies especially to the human dimensions of EAF for which most officers are not prepared. The recent trend of assigning SSF to ministries responsible for the Blue Economy, instead of their conventional colonial location within ministries of agriculture, has opened windows of opportunity for SSF to engage more comprehensively across multiple sectors of the economy and society that can enhance social protection.

However, limited sex-disaggregated socio-economic data, few multi-dimensional poverty assessments, and no gender analyses or other social-science evaluations constrain the fisheries sector. Fisheries officers are few and most lack social science education or specialized training relevant to social protection. This is slowly improving with more regional advanced inter-disciplinary marine programmes, but there is an immediate need for better networking with partners to fill these gaps.

Fisherfolk are playing important roles in filling gaps to create a well-informed foundation for social protection such as through the Leadership Institute of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO). Their capacity-development initiatives, designed and delivered by the fisherfolk of the region, can address a lack of trust in social-security systems, limited knowledge about rights of access to social protection, and perceptions that social-protection benefits are not relevant to everyone engaged in SSF. Succession planning to prepare young fisherfolk, and more women, for leadership can significantly improve knowledge on, and advocacy for, social protection. Some regional NGOs and academics have partnered with fisherfolk to add climate justice and blue justice to their arsenal of reasons for improving social protection.

Overall, our perspective on social protection for SSF in the Eastern Caribbean is positive despite the shortcomings. It is encouraging that more fisherfolk are becoming aware of the importance of social protection as their right, and that expanding multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments, NGOs and academia are in place to address the issues. All the topics discussed above could benefit from more and better applied research, but just as important are the many initiatives of the fisherfolk themselves in advocacy and policy influence to improve their social protection.

For more

Social protection to foster sustainable management of natural resources and reduce poverty in fisheries-dependent communities. Report of the FAO Technical Workshop, 17–18 November 2015, Rome
https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/473035/

Building food security and resilience into fisheries governance in the Eastern Caribbean
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-014-0703-z

Building the Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40152-017-0073-5

A First Look at the Science-Policy Interface for Ocean Governance in the Wider Caribbean Region
https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2015.00119/full

INTERVIEW

Power to the People

Five members of the Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT) talk about various policies and initiatives to empower small-scale fishing communities in Uganda

The existence of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) provides retirement benefits to formal sector employees in fisheries-related industries. But the majority of fishers and fishworkers are in the informal sector; they lack coverage

*This interview with **Margaret Nakato** (nakato@katosi.org), **Vaal Namugga, Joan Kayisinga, Catherine Nalugga** and **Jackline Kasoga,** members of the Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda, was conducted by **N. Venugopalan** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Manager, ICSF*

Does the Government of Uganda pay due attention to social and economic development to empower small-scale fishing communities? How?

The Government of Uganda has made strides to put in place policies and initiatives to bolster the social and economic development of small-scale fisheries (SSF) communities through the National Fisheries & Aquaculture Policy, and the newly completed National Plan of Action (2023) for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as well as via infrastructure development and programmes to alleviate poverty. However, these initiatives are characterized by weak implementation, low budget allocation and inadequate monitoring.

The Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, the Youth Livelihood Programme and the Parish Development Model (PDM), which aim to increase access to financing to meet the needs of the fisher people have all been characterized by shortcomings. According to the 2023 SSF People-Centred Assessment of the SSF Guidelines Implementation in Uganda, fisherfolk reported that the funds allocated to fishers through the government development programmes are insufficient to support them to engage in fisheries and the process of accessing these funds is cumbersome.

How does the government promote investment in human resource development (HRD) in the areas of health, education, literacy, digital inclusion and other technical skills?

The Health Sector Development Plan (HSDP) includes strengthening health infrastructure, training healthcare workers and healthcare financing, as with the national health insurance scheme. However, fisher communities highlight the inadequate access to healthcare due to distantly located facilities, which are poorly equipped with medicines. "You only find Panadol, a painkiller. We don't have quality health services except for the medicines for bilharzia brought once in five months,".

HRD through education includes allocating resources towards education development to enhance access, quality and equity in education through infrastructure improvements, teacher training and curriculum reforms, the introduction of free Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to equip youth and adults with skills relevant for employment through training and programmes targeting out-of-school youth and adults, which offer basic literacy, numeral skill and vocational training, all of which have been enhanced.

Although distance was the challenge for fishers to access education, disruption of the SSF economic activities by regulations and policies prevented children from being placed in good schools. More so, TVET does not reach fishing villages and due to poor UPE and USE many in the community do not benefit from financial support for higher education through bursaries and scholarship programmes provided by the government. There is not much information on how digital inclusion and information and communications

technology (ICT) development efforts are expanding internet access and promoting ICT literacy through the National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U) that supports entrepreneurship to bridge the digital divide in fisher communities.

How do you ensure that fishing communities have affordable access to services such as health, education, literacy, digital inclusion, housing, basic sanitation, safe drinking water and energy sources?

The Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), through women working in groups, has played a key role in increasing access to social services. KWDT has provided communities with income-generating opportunities, enabling them to access healthcare, particularly in areas where health centres are inadequate and poorly equipped.

Fishers and fishworkers organized in groups have been trained on financial literacy to ensure they run viable and profitable businesses. With support from GIZ RFBCP, the trust has trained and graduated 600 participants in business development services and functional knowledge and skills for women in fisheries. Complemented with training on the SSF Guidelines, this has enhanced their capacity to make informed decisions.

To bridge the digital divide, women in fishing communities were trained by KWDT on using digital apps like Abavubi for marketing and record-keeping. In all 9,764 people were trained on mobile monetary transactions to enhance their capacity to navigate digital financial systems, and understand cybersecurity, especially in rural communities where cyberfraud is rampant.

Most fisher communities are informal settlements where land is the key factor for housing. Land conflicts and irregularities in collection of rental fees by landlords deter efforts to access housing. Since 2017, when forests have been cut, houses are being de-roofed more often and people are increasingly seeking refuge in other people's houses. Training by KWDT on human rights, including land regulations and establishing of village disaster management committees (VDMCs) in 13 fishing villages have helped fishing communities make informed decisions on building houses 200 m from the lake as a community initiative to reduce vulnerability to flooding and destruction.

For over seven years KWDT has been implementing a comprehensive water and sanitation programme, in partnership with the Germany-based non-profit arche noVa, in 13 fishing villages, including two islands. Construction of water sources, latrines and bathing facilities is complemented with the promotion of standard good hygiene practices not constrained by the diverse culture beliefs prevalent. Menstrual hygiene education, training to maintain the functionality of water and sanitation facilities, and the use of ecosanition latrines have also been promoted. Waste management committees, primarily comprising women, convert organic waste into briquettes, as an alternative to firewood and charcoal. Women are trained as borehole technicians to maintain water sources, and communities are trained on safe water practices to prevent contamination and outbreak of diseases. Women's groups also use music and dance to effect change through the Women Advocacy Committees (WACs).

Interventions on energy conservation and the use of renewable energy have included marketing solar lights, energy-saving fish-processing technologies (like solar driers) and climate-adaptation technologies have been introduced to women in groups.

How are the rights of children to education protected in fishing communities?

UPE and USE are government initiatives to provide free education at the primary and secondary levels. The government also enacted the Education Act (2008), mandating compulsory primary education and delineating responsibilities to ensure compliance. KWDT has contributed to the rights of children to education through the construction of classrooms, and water and sanitation facilities in fisher communities. Women have been trained on human rights with support from Fokus Frauen and they are playing a key role in protecting the rights of children to education.

By invoking laws against child labour, women in groups have been ensuring that all children in their communities go to school. Poverty in fishing communities, poor school infrastructure, the long distances that need to be surmounted to reach school, and the lack of meals, water and sanitation have all contributed to the violation of children's rights to education.

With increasing poverty, children are working with parents in fishing and in stone quarries. Poverty is the major driver of child labour in fishing communities. KWDT is supporting economic empowerment, particularly of women, to address these challenges. "In our community, we ensure that all children of school-going age attend school", according to the Bugoye women's group. "We rescued girl brides who were taken from the east and brought to our landing site and made sure the men responsible were arrested," according to the Bisobooka women's group.

What social security measures are available to protect workers and their families along the small-scale fisheries value chain?

The existence of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) provides retirement benefits to formal sector employees in fisheries-related industries. But the majority of fishers and fishworkers are in the informal sector; they lack coverage.

What social protection measures are available to fishing communities (marine and inland)?

Financial services and credit access through the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are available in fishing communities through governmental and non-government organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Efforts to diversify livelihoods among fishing communities include training and support in alternative activities like agriculture, aquaculture and craft.

Are there services such as savings, credit and insurance schemes accessible to small-scale fishing communities, especially women?

Access to services such as savings and credit are at present scarcely provided by organizations and insurance schemes are notably absent. Savings mechanisms are primarily informal, including physical savings boxes, group savings, and mobile money services provided by telecommunication companies. According to KWDT's assessment report, savings boxes are vulnerable to theft; the loss may go unnoticed for an extended period.

Mobile money transactions, while common, are susceptible to scams, and the process of replacing a lost phone is cumbersome, with telecom offices being physically located mainly in cities and major trading centres, posing accessibility difficulties for the fisherfolk. Despite progress on access to credit, high interest rates, short-term loans and inadequate capital are among the other prevailing challenges.

Are there complementary and alternative income-generating opportunities for small-scale fishing communities? Examples?

Small-scale fishing communities in Uganda have access to complementary and alternative income-generating opportunities to diversify livelihoods and enhance their economic resilience, including, but not limited to, agriculture, livestock rearing, trade, tourism, hospitality, handicrafts, brick making and sand mining, among other sectors.

Is decent work, minimum age requirements, and acceptable working and living conditions protected for all small-scale fishworkers, even those in the informal sector?

The legal frameworks, including the Employement Act (2006), protect the rights of all workers, including small-scale fishworkers. However, fishers and workers engaged in the assessment of the implementation of SSF Guidelines highlight minimal or zero access to decent employment as a result of the lack of social services.

Do you have measures to eradicate forced labour and debt bondage of women, men and children, both resident and migrant, in small-scale fisheries?

Uganda has implemented a comprehensive framework to combat forced labour and debt bondage. Within SSF, measures include awareness on legislative frameworks that prohibit such practices, mechanisms for monitoring implementation, capacity

building for officials, and collaboration with legal NGOs. KWDT has contributed to awareness through training 2,016 persons from 15 districts on the SSF Guidelines, with support from GIZ RFBCP, and 3,500 persons on human rights and gender, with support from Fokus Frauen and arche noVa.

Are conditions conducive for men and women of small-scale fishing communities along the value chain? Free from crime, violence, piracy, theft, sexual abuse and corruption?
Fishing communities are characterized by high rates of crime, violence, piracy, theft, sexual abuse and corruption, all of which affect the conditions for men and women engaged in fisheries-related activities. Criminals often find refuge in fisher communities due to their remote locations. Violence, particularly towards women, is exacerbated by the use of illicit drugs, alcoholism and poverty. The participatory disaster risk assessment done in 13 fishing communities, with support from arche noVa, identified eight cases of domestic violence and four of theft as threats to the lives of the women. They are also more prone to losing their fishing equipment—nets and boat engines—to theft, as compared to fellow fishermen.

The competition for fisheries resources has fuelled sexual abuse, as well as the use of sex to gain access to fisheries resources. "We bear the children of fishermen in order to secure access to fish," reported a fisherwoman in Lutoboka. The use of derogatory names to describe women who directly engage in fishing creates an even more unpalatable environment.

In Uganda the fishing environment is marked by payment of bribes to rescue confiscated engines and boats. "We pay UGX 70,000 per month to access and fish from the LPA," reported a fisher. "We usually collect money as a community to recover our fishing equipment," reported another.

How are migrant fishers treated? Are they integrated into fair and equitable sustainable fisheries? Is there regional co-ordination for regular migration of fishworkers across national borders?
Uganda's fishery is characterized by migrant fishers, given the number of shared water bodies. Nonetheless, a harmonious relationship exists among the fishers, although conflicts arise occasionally.

Is there effective and timely access to justice for victims of violence and abuse?
Timely access to justice for victims of violence and abuse along the fish value chain in Uganda is limited to legal centres in fisher communities. Ignorance, low rates of reporting, and poverty further constrain the ability to get justice. KWDT, along with other development actors, has put in place measures to enhance legal access, including through training on human rights, to enable communities to recognize and report violations, and create platforms where communities, individuals and victims can engage in dialogue with the authorities to link them to the various reporting mechanisms. Continued efforts are needed to address the existing challenges and ensure that victims receive timely and effective support and redressal.

Do you think better social development institutions, processes and mechanisms contribute to effective fisheries management?
They can significantly enhance fisheries management. Integrating the social development of fisher communities with government plans, coupled with investing in the implementation of the plans, can have a huge impact on effective fisheries management.

Empowering fishing communities, promoting livelihood diversification, improving social protection and community well-being, building capacity, sharing knowledge, facilitating conflict resolution and social cohesion, and advocating for policy reform and governance improvements can contribute to sustainable fisheries outcomes. They do so by fostering local stewardship, reducing dependency on fisheries, addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities, enhancing governance effectiveness and promoting inclusive and equitable decision making.

At the global level, such initiatives facilitate international co-operation, knowledge exchange and policy harmonization, leading to more responsive and sustainable fisheries management practices.

For more

Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP)
https://mglsd.go.ug/uwep/

The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP)
https://mglsd.go.ug/ylp/

Parish Development Model
https://ict.go.ug/programmes/parish-development-model/

Govt directive on silverfish sparks hike on prices in Busoga
https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-directive-on-silverfish-sparks-hike-on-prices-in-busoga-4563132

Fishermen in Namayingo, Uganda, want Fisheries Protection Unit disbanded over human rights violations
https://www.icsf.net/newss/fishermen-in-namayingo-uganda-want-fisheries-protection-unit-disbanded-over-human-rights-violations/

Ministry Of Health Strategic Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25
https://www.health.go.ug/cause/ministry-of-health-strategic-plan-2020-21-2024-25/

A Cloak of Invisibility

Costa Rica needs to adopt a human rights approach and promote community governance of the sea, while strengthening local and indigenous communities' diverse organizational structures

Costa Rica has never conducted a fisheries census. For this reason, the country lacks official information on the precise number of people working in fisheries, or of those active in the small-scale artisanal fisheries value chain. Current figures are mere extrapolations from non-fishery-related information sources, such as government institutions responsible for health, poverty and education, among other issues.

Costa Rica's government has made slow and painful progress in addressing the structural problems facing small-scale fisheries

This weakness of information sources about small-scale fishworkers has been highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and, at a domestic level, by representatives of small-scale fisheries, who stress the need for robust official statistics.

Data submitted by the State of the Nation Programme (PEN) for 2022 reveal that only 1,477 fishermen or fisherwomen had received any financial assistance from the government. It is estimated that about 4,742 fishworkers are covered by basic health schemes for sickness and maternity. A survey carried out by the Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA) estimated that 6,100 small-scale artisanal fishing vessels were registered in the country, employing about 14,800 small-scale fishworkers, of whom 13,860 are men and 940 women. This information base has not been updated by government institutions.

A 2022 report presented by PEN estimated that the total could reach about 30,000 when all workers along the production chain, working in seas, rivers or lakes, and shellfish collection, are included. Given the scarcity of available reliable data, it is reasonable to conclude that small-scale fishworkers operate mainly in an informal setting, subject to high levels of social, economic and environmental vulnerability and under conditions of poverty and extreme poverty.

This conclusion is consistent with official data from the National Census and Statistics Office (2020), identifying the country's coastal regions (Pacific, Chorotega and Huetar Caribe), as the geographical areas with the highest poverty and extreme poverty rates in Costa Rica, according to a multi-dimensional analysis of poverty.

In addition to the above, a 2019 study carried out by the civil society organization CoopeSoliDar R.L. with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the National Women's Institute (INAMU), interviewed 480 women from small-scale fishing communities in Costa Rica. The study highlighted that women associated with small-scale fisheries constitute the population group most severely affected by the impact of informal working arrangements, poor access to decent work and healthcare, or lack of access to sea and land tenure, among other factors.

The informal character of the work carried out by small-scale fishermen and women and shellfish collectors has resulted in the criminalization of their activities. Because they are not included in the national licensing system, they are seen as engaged in illegal fishing by official institutions like the National Coastguard Service, the Ministry of Environment and Energy,

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the National System of Conservation Areas (MINAE/SINAC), and environmental non-governmental organizations. Being illegal, the government cannot include them in its annual work plans, exacerbating the problem and lack of opportunities.

The question of recognition

In the past, government institutions have always approached small-scale fishing communities merely as groups living in poverty and not according to the work they undertake. This is one of the reasons why the government's social care programmes cannot solve their social and economic problems. Worse still, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS) does not recognize any small-scale fisheries-related labour or wage category in the official listing.

In particular, the country lacks robust information on the main problems facing the small-scale fisheries sector. Numerous information gaps have never been addressed, such as the situation of young small-scale artisanal fishers, or the impact and situation of migratory groups on coastal areas. The main problems faced by small-scale fisheries are summarized in Table 1.

Costa Rica's government has made slow and painful progress in addressing the structural problems facing small-scale fisheries. Main developments derive from the efforts of representatives of fishworkers and shellfish gatherers, supported by accompanying organizations, which have had an impact on public policy making. It is worth noting, among these efforts, the signing in 2015 of an executive decree on the official implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

Furthermore, the Network of Responsible Fishing Areas and Marine Territories of Life, with the technical support of CoopeSoliDar R.L., carried out the National Congress for Small-Scale Fishworkers and Shellfish Collectors thrice—in 2018, 2021 and 2023—enabling stakeholders to analyse the situation, establish a work agenda and submit proposals for solutions to the national authorities and to society at large, in a series of National Congress Statements.

In conclusion, the following points are noteworthy:

One, Costa Rica's small-scale fisheries present deep structural weaknesses, associated with access to decent work, education opportunities, health, land tenure and rights to the sea. The informal nature of artisanal fishing activities seriously hampers the integration of workers in frameworks of decent work and markets and their ability to contribute as development actors in their own territories. Women fishers and shellfish collectors, migrants and young people suffer the most from economic and social exclusion and vulnerability.

Two, it is both urgent and necessary to secure the participation of small-scale fishworkers in defining public policy, in particular on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as well as the recognition of shared governance models or other models used by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Three, public policies should recognize traditional knowledge, making its use mandatory when concluding conservation and fisheries management agreements. Nowadays,

The National Network of Responsible Fishing Areas and Marine Territories of Life is a structure for innovation and recognition of the human rights of small-scale artisanal fishworkers in Costa Rica. The network congregates a variety of organizations, from responsible fishing areas, fisheries organizations of various kinds, marine management communities, indigenous groups, African-descent groups, and associations of shellfish gleaners, among other forms of fisheries and community organizations. Since its establishment, the network has led the struggle to defend small-scale fishworkers operating both in marine and inland waters, and to strengthen artisanal fishing practices to ensure the proper use and protection of marine and coastal resources. It is currently estimated that the network represents around 7,000 people from local and indigenous communities present in both the Caribbean and the Pacific shores of the country.

Table 1. Main problems small-scale artisanal fisheries face

Problem identified by artisanal fishermen and women	Description
Right of access to the sea and to decent work	Because of the informal nature of their work, many fishworkers and shellfish collectors' activities are criminalized as illegal fishing. Being illegal fishers, they cannot obtain adequate social coverage.
Access to land and land tenure	The country faces a fundamental problem of spatial planning in coastal marine areas (regulatory plans and the implementation of the Coastal Zone Law) that directly affects the development of small-scale artisanal fisheries.
Fair product marketing	The informal character and precarious conditions of many storage facilities, along with the presence of intermediaries, lead to marketing of seafood in poor conditions.
Marine protected areas enlargement under 30x30	The Government of Costa Rica has led a global initiative with the objective that countries party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) increase the surface of marine and continental protected areas by at least 30 per cent or more by 2030 (30x30). The government, through SINAC/MINAE and environmental organizations, has been promoting the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs). Artisanal fisheries representatives who participated in meetings with the authorities have denounced that the Costa Rica government has breached the principle of free, prior and informed consent. This constitutes an infringement of local and indigenous communities' rights to information and objection to studies, projects and processes meant to be implemented in their territories that affect their livelihoods. In 2020 and 2021, the Bicentenario Marine Management Area was created and other MPAs were proposed, without taking into account the human rights perspective. Consequently, people in fishing communities are at risk of losing their right to marine resources that are not only their source of livelihood but their way of life, the root of their culture and identiry, and where they have grown up.
Other problems: Access to education Access to drinking water, electricity	Virtual education measures, taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, affected young people in coastal marine communities. Communities such as Dominicalito and Isla Caballo have no supply of drinking water, causing frequent health problems. Isla Caballo Island has no electricity supply either.

Source: CoopeSoliDar R.L., 2019. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KeOOoIIHRVBdn-_j6ZbTcyXlkBs4HkdD/view

For more

Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries: Costa Rica
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/930.ICSF226_Social_Development_Costa_Rica.pdf

Costa Rica: Recovering Connections
https://www.icsf.net/samudra/costa-rica-social-development-recovering-connections/

State of small-scale artisanal fisheries in Costa Rica, and social and environmental implications
https://drive.google.com/file/d/19JcOar5fVAq0AzgM8J-7CcgAaJsQU4So/ivview

it is clear that implementation of various models should be promoted, particularly in marine management.

Four, there is an urgent need to transform how knowledge is generated in fisheries management, recognizing traditional knowledge as key to enable more sustainable forms of fisheries management.

In particular, small-scale fisheries show clearly the need to develop a strategy that, taking into account biological and technical aspects, puts a firm focus on people, with the adoption of a human rights approach and the promotion of community or shared governance of the sea, strengthening local and indigenous communities' diverse organizational structures and making fishworkers not just involved, but leading the way forward.

The Need to Say 'We'

The Latin American and Caribbean Workshop on IYAFA 2022 issued a global Call for Action for sustainable and equitable small-scale fisheries

A tourist village in Cananeia city in the south coast of the Sao Paulo state in Brazil hosted 45 fishermen, fisherwomen and supporters from 16 different countries on 2-5 November in 2022. They had gathered for a workshop on Latin America and the Caribbean, titled: IYAFA 2022 – Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries. The organizing committee comprised the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), Comissao Nacional de Fortalecimento das Reservas Extrativistas (CONFREM), Instituto Linha D'Água (LDA) and Associacao de Moradores Itacuruca Pereirinha (AMOIP).

The workshop's main objective was to deepen fishworker organizations' knowledge and analysis of food security and tenure rights so as to strengthen their capacities to engage with these issues internationally. Another objective was to empower the local community of fishers to receive big groups and interact with them.

The participatory methodology was invoked at the workshop, with prior activities such as self-introductions with the aid of cultural artefacts and visual representations of fisheries-related activities. All the event sessions focused on active and collective participation.

The workshop was organized into six sessions. The first was a group presentation, in which countries were divided into gatherings by language. The second session discussed issues related to social security, education and health. While other sessions deliberated on the Blue Economy and gender, the fifth session featured regional leaders discussing the creation of a platform for working together, namely the Latin America Union of Artisanal Fishers or ULAPA. The last session discussed and approved the final statement of the workshop. The meeting also organized a field trip that exposed participants to the traditional fishing methods used in the area.

In parallel to the workshop, and as an alternative model of media and information literacy ('edu-communication'), youth communicators of the fisher organizations had the opportunity to join a practical course on collaborative audiovisual coverage (CAC) that generated a video about the workshop. This was shown at the end of the event to all participants. Local professional artists also employed graphic techniques to report the week's activities.

The workshop's main objective was to deepen fishworker organizations' knowledge and analysis of food security and tenure rights so as to strengthen their capacities to engage with these issues internationally

These methods complemented the production and translation of the final report, which was prepared by Ligia M. Rocha, Sivaja K Nair and Janani Ganesan of ICSF. It was designed to make the discussions from the workshop accessible to all.

Communications for the 21st century

The CAC training consisted of three skill development modules. The first dealt with research, script writing and planning for audio-visual production. The second elaborated on production, direction and recording, and discussed the technical knowledge required to execute the skills developed in the first module. The third focused on

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Table 1 - Main results discussed in the workshop groups

	Caribbean	Brazilian	Spanish
Expectations, main challenges and strategies needed for small-scale fisheries	Women in fisheries, youth in fisheries, recognition of SSF, education and training, networks and governance, and information sharing.	Political action, aquaculture and sustainable fisheries, privatization, and strengthening the SSF community through alliances, skills training and ground-up policy making.	Building solidarity, problems with MPAs, problems of industrial fishing, demanding territorial rights and using documentation to procure rights.
Social Security, Education and Health	Need to have exclusive social security schemes for artisanal fishworkers and information about it. Retirement plan assistance fund does not apply to fishers. Educational programmes need to include new methodologies and language accessible to fishers.	There is specific legislation for fishworkers, but it is still linked to agriculture. Traditional knowledge should be a part of formal education systems. Mental health of fishworkers should be prioritized. Occupational diseases in artisanal fisheries should be recognized by the national health system.	Need a social security system. Educational programmes should include information about fishing activities (new technologies) and ancestral culture. Special programmes for adult literacy and education must be created. Medical care facilities must be available for communities, the sick often have to travel two–four hours to receive treatment.
Challenges and strategies to confront the Blue Economy	Blue Economy approach is a strategy to minimize the real contribution of small-scale fisheries, their catch and their contribution to the economy	Fishers participation in meetings and debates, including in the management councils of protected areas, is restricted in Brazil. Movement of ships, dredging of the sea, big industries, such as construction of ports, not only cause environmental damage but also displace local communities.	Biodiversity and the Blue Economy are interlinked. artisanal fishers' voices are so underrepresented. Economic projects displace fisher communities and do not buy its products. Sport fishing is also a problem.
Women in Small-Scale Fisheries and Gender Equity	Before the SSF Guidelines were released, the Caribbean had never discussed gender issues in fisheries.	It is necessary to educate and make women aware of their rights; banks should provide financial schemes that cater to women; Women-specific diseases need to be recognized as work-related diseases; Government employees must be sensitized about gender issues.	Recognize the rights and work of fisherwomen across the value chain; to provide security for women in order to avoid femicide; women's achievements must be considered equal to that of men

the creation of the final product: the editing and publishing processes to get the video ready for broadcast.

In the graphic facilitation work, the ideas and information discussed in the workshop were transformed into visual imagery to help systematize content for ease of understanding. The facilitators guided the creation of two real-time narrative panels throughout the workshop, capturing the essence of the discussions visually in real time.

The focus of the workshop on the risks and opportunities of the Blue Economy agenda in the region was based on a critical dialogue about the results of ICSF's study titled 'Baffling Shades of Blue: Addressing the Impacts of the Blue Economy on Small-Scale Fisheries in Latin America'.

ICSF

Participants of the Latin American and the Caribbean Workshop - IYAFA 2022 Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries. The fundamental rights of fishers include the right to land, social development and decent work, along with women's rights, a transversal theme of the workshop

The fundamental rights of fishers include the right to land, social development and decent work, along with women's rights, a transversal theme of the workshop. The main topics discussed at the workshop are summarized in Table 1.

Two final documents were agreed on by all the participants: the Gender Equity Action Plan for Small-Scale Fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean; and the Cananeia Statement. A global Call for Action was discussed by the participants, which includes five areas of immediate concern for artisanal fishworkers. They are:

- Urgently ensure preferential access and collaborative management of the entire coastal zone.
- Ensure women's participation and support their role in innovation.
- Protect small-scale fisheries from competing sectors of the Blue Economy.
- Be transparent and accountable in fisheries management.
- Build resilient communities to address climate change. Provide prospects for young people.

The presenters at the workshop also strongly recommended that the SSF Guidelines be effectively implemented in all Latin American and Caribbean countries through dissemination in all languages.

For more

Report on Latin American and Caribbean Workshop – IYAFA 2022: Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 2-5 November 2022, Brazil Report
https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/930.ICSF231_LAC_Report.pdf

Latin America and the Caribbean Workshop: IYAFA 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, Brazil, 2-5 November 2022
https://www.icsf.net/resources/latin-america-workshop-iyafa-2022/

ICSF
https://www.icsf.net/

A Robust Platform

The database SSF-LEX provides detailed information on the legal and policy frameworks governing small-scale fisheries across several countries

The 10th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) is just the occasion to celebrate and highlight SSF-LEX, a tool that supports their implementation. National policies and legal frameworks should address many issues highlighted in the SSF Guidelines to the greatest extent possible. Legislation provides the strongest possible framework for fisheries governance; it facilitates resource management; empowers and protects right holders; and serves to hold duty beaters accountable. Moreover, it facilitates implementation and enforcement of international and regional instruments into national legislation.

SSF-LEX, a specialized subset of FAOLEX, is a database dedicated to the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector

SSF-LEX, a specialized subset of FAOLEX, is a database dedicated to the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector. It provides detailed information on the legal and policy frameworks governing SSF across several countries, facilitating access to crucial legal and policy instruments.

SSF-LEX also supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); it can be used as a tool for monitoring and reporting on SDG 14.b, specifically, indicator 14.b.1 that tracks progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework that recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries.

SSF-LEX's contents: country profiles

The SSF-LEX homepage provides users with a list of national policies and legislation specifically mentioning the SSF Guidelines. Currently, 20 countries and the EU have been identified to have laws and policies incorporating the Guidelines. Additionally, users can find information on FAO legal guidance aimed at advancing their implementation. It includes a policy and legal diagnostic tool for sustainable SSF; a legislative guide titled 'Legislating for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries'; and an e-learning module on legal and policy considerations for sustainable SSF. The tab 'select a country' on the home page allows users to find country profiles that analyse the national legal and policy frameworks.

SSF-LEX contains country profiles that are meticulously structured against the Guidelines, offering comprehensive information on various aspects relevant to SSF. The profiles are divided into seven sections. Each profile begins with an introduction presenting data on the marine sector and employment across the value chain, fleet and production. The profiles in section two list relevant international, regional and bilateral instruments and agreements to which the country is a party. This aims to emphasize the need for policy coherence with international law and instruments, for example, by integrating ratified instruments within national legal frameworks.

Section three examines each country's constitution in relation to the SSF Guidelines and their principles, such as human rights and dignity, gender equality and respect for cultures. Section four details the main

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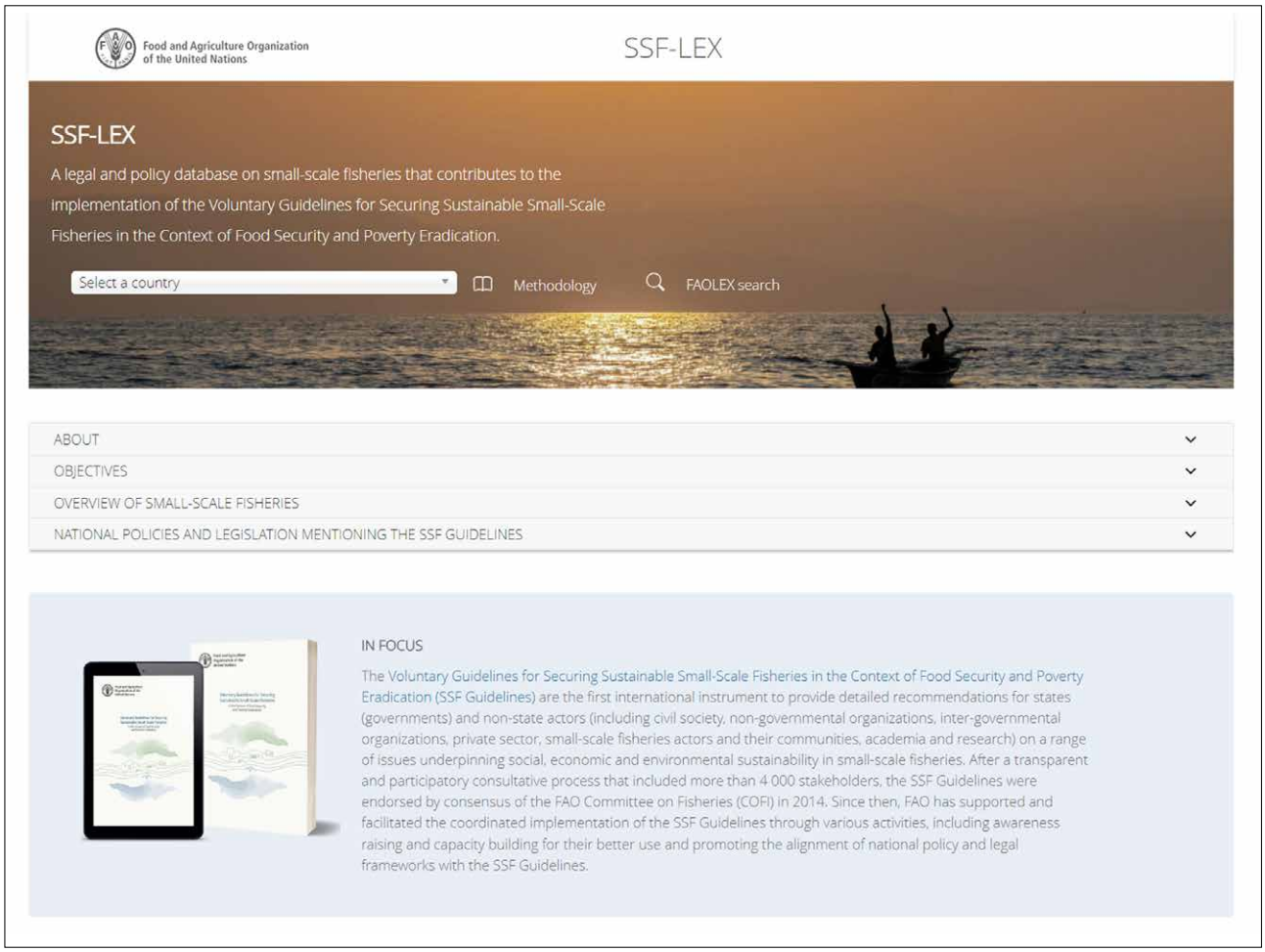

government institutions responsible for SSF and their mandates. This can inform how to promote policy coherence and cross-sectoral collaboration. Section five deals with definitions, analysing how countries define SSF and related terms in their laws and policies, where such definitions exist, as some countries may not have specific definitions of such terms.

Fisheries legislation and policies relevant to SSF are tackled in section six; it analyses the main fisheries legislation and policy in the country and provides a brief analysis of the main relevant provisions. Section seven is on the national regulatory framework; it is divided by topics based on the thematic areas of the SSF Guidelines, namely, governance of tenure, sustainable resource management and conservation, social development, employment and decent work, value chains, post-harvest and trade, gender equality, and disaster risks and climate change. In this section, users will find an analysis of the legislation and policies relevant to each of these topics. Such legislation and policies may or may not be specific to fisheries. Each section concludes with a list of relevant legislation and policies, with links to the original instrument.

Development process

It's worth our while to consider examples of information reflecting the SSF Guidelines, and their provisions, found in SSF-LEX country profiles. Some examples:

Senegal: The profile illustrates the constitutional commitment to a healthy environment and explains how the work of the CLPA (conseils locaux de peche artisanale) is a space for uniting small-scale fishers and stakeholders for better resource management and conflict resolution. The Senegal

fisheries policy recognizes the role of women in small-scale fisheries.

Morocco: Small-scale fishers are categorized as professionals, thanks to a provision dating back to 1922 stating that all seafarers, including small-scale fishers, must have a seamen's book. Morocco boasts eight Maritime Professional Qualification Centres, ensuring small-scale fishers are trained.

Oman: Article 22 of Oman's fisheries law emphasizes marine safety, data provision and control systems for artisanal fishers. Omani artisanal fishers follow the 'Senate Al-Bahar', a set of community-agreed practices. While not formalized, the fisheries law sometimes leans on it for guidance.

Solomon Islands: The Fisheries Management Act recognizes customary rights and ensures access for customary fishing. Indigenous Solomon Islanders have the right to fish in waters where they are entitled by custom to fish. Fisheries management regulations require fisheries licence holders not to cause destruction to a customary rights area.

SSF-LEX country profiles are developed through a comprehensive process. They are drafted based on information from FAOLEX and other relevant sources, and reviewed by national experts to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. This methodology ensures that the profiles provide a reliable and thorough analysis of the legal and policy frameworks relevant for small-scale fisheries.

The list of legislation and policies is updated with the data automatically retrieved from FAOLEX, ensuring that SSF-LEX stays up to date with the most current legal and policy documents.

Using SSF-LEX

SSF-LEX is designed for user-friendly navigation, allowing users to easily access various country profiles as well as a curated list of relevant legal and policy instruments. The platform also has a comparison feature allowing users to compare the legal frameworks of different countries side by side, identifying best practices and policy gaps. This feature is particularly beneficial for identifying successful policies and regulatory approaches that could be adapted or adopted in other contexts, aiding stakeholders in understanding how other countries legislate for the SSF sector, harmonizing national regulations with international standards and guidelines, and supporting research and advocacy efforts.

The database can serve a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments and civil society organizations, by providing comprehensive and accessible legal and policy information pertinent to SSF. It can be used to inform the development of targeted policies and legislative reforms in support of SSF, fishworkers and their organizations. Additionally, it raises awareness of existing legislation and policies in a country that require better implementation.

It assists users in understanding the rights of small-scale fishers and their communities, as well as the obligations of governments and other actors towards small-scale fisheries. It also assists users in understanding how national legislation and policies align with some of the provisions in the SSF Guidelines, helping in the identification of gaps and good practices.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the SSF Guidelines, SSF-LEX stands out as a robust platform supporting small-scale fisheries. Its user-friendly interface, detailed country profiles and powerful comparison feature make it an invaluable resource for governments, policymakers, researchers and small-scale fishers.

For more

SSF-LEX website
https://ssflex.fao.org/

SSF Guidelines
https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en

SDG Indicators Data Portal
https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-data-portal/data/indicators/14b1-access-rights-for-small-scale-fisheries/en

Legislating for sustainable small-scale fisheries
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a3578713-85a4-411d-8ac2-fc413ab97e49/content

A policy and legal diagnostic tool for sustainable small-scale fisheries
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c6841088-5d0a-4804-9b34-71977f6ad524/content

FAO elearning Academy
https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=881

Parametric Insurance

A comprehensive approach through insurance programmes to protecting small-scale fisheries and fisherfolk from the increasing risks that result from climate change

The World Risk Report 2020 identifies the Pacific as a hotspot for climate change and disaster risk. Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Kiribati are listed in the 20 countries most at risk and vulnerable to disasters. Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) have limited capacity to effectively manage risks and overcome significant economic losses after a disaster. Up to 60-80 per cent of Pacific islanders rely on agriculture and fisheries for their income and food security. Communities dependant on farming and fishing are often the most affected by extreme weather events such as storms or heavy rainfall. Yet farmers and fishers have little or no access to disaster risk financing options to deal with the effects of climate-related disasters.

There are limited ex-ante financial instruments and the ex-poste financial instruments deployed are usually reallocated from government budgets, external and internal borrowing or donor assistance and international humanitarian aid.

For instance, in 2016, Fiji was hit by a Category 5 tropical cyclone Winston that impacted about 63 per cent of the country's total population; the Fiji government estimated the loss and damage at US $1.3 billion. The government had to take out a $50 million loan from the World Bank. Another example is of Tonga in 2022; the Tongan undersea volcanic eruption and tsunami affected over 80 per cent of the people engaged in subsistence reef fishing; fishing vessels were damaged. The government had requested $240 million to Tonga's development partners for recovery, including to improve food security. As per the World Bank, the highest adaptation costs for Pacific island countries by 2040 will be coastal protection, with a sea level rise of 126 cm by 2100 and increased cyclones' intensity.

In light of the above, the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP) was launched in December 2020 with an objective to improve the financial preparedness and resilience of vulnerable communities such as fishers, farmers, MSMEs, with specific focus on women and persons with disabilities, against impact of climate change and natural hazards. The Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme is jointly implemented by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN University- Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Market-based parametric meso and micro insurance schemes, which provide immediate liquidity after disaster, were developed and launched by the programme. Parametric insurance is based on predefined parameters and unlike indemnity-based insurance, the payout is done rapidly, usually within a fortnight after an extreme weather event.

The solutions launched cover a total of 17,963 households across all the countries by end of 2023, protecting almost 90,000 individuals which includes fishers and farmers. 40 per cent of those covered are women, 6 per cent are persons with disabilities

The market-ecosystem approach

PICAP directly works with private sector insurers and re-insurers to design, test and scale risk financing and insurance solutions. The programme leverages digital solutions and uses

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UNCDF, 2019 JOHN RAE

Fisherwomen at work. The products are tailored to the country context and each country has its own distinct climate risk insurance product and the premium rates are set at 7-10 per cent of the sum assured considering affordability, and factoring risk exposure and vulnerability

localized aggregation model, such as partnerships with co-operatives and development banks, to drive adoption and achieve scale. The programme also collaborates with governments to support innovative policy dialogues and industry dialogues through national- and international-level working groups.

Based on our experience in Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa and PNG, there is an expansion planned to other Pacific island countries such as Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu where the products will be specifically focused on fishers

There is also a strong focus on using digital solutions to reach the last mile and the programme has partnered with digital solution providers to create a customer onboarding platform as well as partnered with mobile network operators for payments directly into customers' mobile wallets.

The programme has launched micro- and meso-level parametric insurance in Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa and Papua New Guinea; it will soon expand to the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati. The improved and new climate disaster risk financing and insurance products range from a stand-alone wind speed cover to a multi-peril cover that includes wind speed, rainfall, earthquake and drought. There are also macro to micro insurance products for social welfare beneficiaries and a meso-level insurance product in Fiji called Anticipatory Action Insurance.

The products are tailored to the country context following a demand and supply side study, hence each country has its own distinct climate risk insurance product and the premium rates are set at 7-10 per cent of the sum assured considering affordability, and factoring risk exposure and vulnerability. The solutions are also improvised based on stakeholder consultations and feedback. For example, in Fiji, discussions with

fishers and farmers revealed that they faced economic loss in case of continuous heavy rainfall despite the event not turning up as a cyclone or catastrophic event. Thus, a stand-alone rainfall product was launched.

Impact on the fisheries

The solutions launched cover a total of 17,963 households across all the countries by end of 2023, protecting almost 90,000 individuals, including fishers and farmers. About 40 per cent of those covered are women; 6 per cent are persons with disabilities. The solutions have had a significant impact on the fisheries sector with the payouts helping them to build back better and faster after a disaster strikes. For instance, since 2021, close to 1,500 households have received claims payout ranging from $200 to $1,000.

Interviews with fishers have shown how the payouts have helped them. A case in point is a beneficiary who mentioned that before being covered by parametric insurance, after events of heavy rain, they would usually resort to whatever money that they had left from the boat business as well as the shares from the *qoliqoli* (traditional fishing grounds) to meet their household expenses. However, after receiving the payout, for the first time, it helped him to cater for household expenses since his income was affected and he did not have to dig into his savings.

Based on our experience in Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa and PNG, there is an expansion planned to other Pacific island countries such as the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu where the products will be specifically focused on fishers. King tides, a phenomenon that is seen in Tuvalu, happens every year. However, earlier this year, there was massive destruction when the king tides grew up to 3.41 metres through heavy rainfall, strong winds and waves. Thus, measures to enhance resilience in the fishing sector are vital for mitigating financial losses during adverse weather conditions and ensuring the sustainability of local fishing communities.

UNCDF, along with the local partners in each country of intervention, plans to introduce insurance for observers on fishing vessels, recognizing their vulnerability at sea. Fishers' insurance covering life and equipment underscores the risks to livelihoods from hazards related to climate change. As in the current countries of implementation, there will be targeted insurance awareness campaigns with aggregators and insurance companies spearheading it.

The project contributes to the overall 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, that is developed by the Pacific Islands Forum, particularly to the thematic area of climate change and disasters, by building the capacity and resilience of communities to effectively address the impacts of climate change and disasters through climate risk transfer instruments. Starting next year, the solutions will also be expanded to countries beyond the Pacific to Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, thus protecting the livelihoods of the fishing communities at large.

The programme will continue to collaborate with development banks, fisheries cooperatives and national provident funds for group aggregation in new countries of expansion. There will also be a specific focus on conducting advocacy campaigns through ministries of fisheries officials and the programme will continue to expand on co-creating solutions with stakeholders following deep dive studies.

Disclaimer: These are the authors' personal opinions not those of UNCDF or its donors.

For more

Disaster Risk Financing Solutions for farmers and fishers in Fiji and their preferences
https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/disaster-risk-financing-solutions-farmers-and-fishers-fiji-and-their-preferences

Go Back, Retrieve It

The Sankofa Project seeks to investigate the gendered socio-economic effects of the fisheries closure in four coastal regions of Ghana to understand how the policy affects communities

A research project was launched in Ghana to focus on equitable, inclusive and sustainable fisheries management. Titled Creating Synergies between Indigenous Practices and Scientific Knowledge (ISIPSK), it is led by Okafor-Yarwood at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, and funded by the PEW Fellows Program in Marine Conservation at the Pew Charitable Trust. Local partners from Ghana collaborating with the university for the research initiative include the Fisheries Commission of Ghana, the Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), and the Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG). The project is now named 'Sankofa', meaning, to wit, 'go back and retrieve it'. In this particular case, it refers to going back to retrieve positive historical practices that promote sustainable fisheries.

In Ghana, after the near collapse of several important fisheries, the government implemented closed fishing seasons, including a one-month-per-year closure for small-scale artisanal fishers

Fisheries are vital to food security and the livelihoods of millions of people in West Africa. Despite this, the region's fisheries suffer from over-exploitation, pollution and the impacts of climate change. In Ghana, after the near collapse of several important fisheries, the government implemented closed fishing seasons, including a one-month-per-year closure for small-scale artisanal fishers. Although intended to improve fisheries sustainability, the closure has had broad economic and social impacts.

The Sankofa project seeks to investigate the gendered socio-economic effects of the fisheries closure in four coastal regions of Ghana to understand how the policy affects communities, especially its impacts on women, who typically process, distribute and sell the catch. The project will involve working with community leaders and fishers to identify practices inspired by local ecological knowledge that can be integrated with state-sanctioned management interventions to inform the development of more sustainable, equitable and locally appropriate marine conservation measures.

The project focuses on Ghana's four coastal regions: Volta, Central, Western and Greater Accra. However, data collection could be extended to communities in other countries, such as Ivory Coast or Togo, in the pilot phase of implementing a closed fishing season. The latter will inform areas of intersection, allowing developments to be viewed through a cross-comparative case study.

The objectives of this project are three-fold: one, advancing knowledge on the gendered impact of the closed fishing season, focusing on socio-economic implications, using an interdisciplinary (science-policy interface) and cross-regional approach; two, examining how indigenous practices can be integrated into marine conservation interventions; and, three, developing innovative ways of disseminating information to develop an effective sub-regional fisheries conservation and sustainable livelihood plan.

Collaboration

CaFGOAG is a sub-contractor and the fishers association collaborating on the project and other collaborators

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CAFGOAG SECRETARIAT

Fishermen mending net, Canoe Basin, Tema. Train more members in data collection and prioritize fishers' participation in data collection to support the implementation of fisheries co-management in Ghana's artisanal fisheries sector is the next action plan

contributed to identifying the research sites across the four regions where data will be collected. They also helped in designing the research questions and appropriate methodologies for data collection. As part of its role, CaFGOAG will support access to research sites, support community entry and other resources required for the successful completion of the project, identify relevant stakeholders to participate in the research, and create awareness about the project among stakeholders. CaFGOAG has provided two research assistants for the project and will promote the implementation of the recommendations based on the research findings.

On 24 November 2023, project partners held a successful first inception meeting, hosted by the executive director of the Fisheries Commission. The meeting was called to enable a discussion among partners on the project implementation strategies, the selection of project sites, and the responsibility of collaborators. A series of engagements was planned among collaborators to finalize arrangements before data collection.

By 2024, three meetings have been held already. The first was on 12 March 2024. The discussions centred on the project sites, research methodology and tools, communication tools, and resources needed for the successful implementation of the project. The second meeting was on 16 April 2024, discussing the community entry plan presented by CaFGOAG and the training for research assistants on the methodology and instrument for data collection, which is scheduled for May. Fieldwork and data collection are slated for July 2024 and will be preceded by community and stakeholder engagements. The third meeting, held on 7 May 2024, was the first of a two-part training for research assistants, with the second scheduled for later in preparation for fieldwork in July.

The project is in line with the principles of Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale

Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). The project will specifically highlight the plight of small-scale fishers in the face of declining fisheries, as well as the implementation of conservation measures. The project will contribute to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries in Ghana through the promotion of integration of indigenous ecological knowledge with state-sanctioned management interventions to inform the development of more sustainable and locally appropriate marine conservation measures.

The expectations

The project will mobilize and support women and men in maritime small-scale fisheries to make a major contribution to livelihood, employment, food security and revenue by promoting their participation in decision-making, and implementation of measures that reflect the aspirations of fishing communities. This will contribute to achieving healthy and resilient fishing communities.

The project partners cut across researchers, policy makers, regulators and fishers working together to inform fisheries policy and implementation. This is remarkable at a time when Ghana is at an early stage of implementing the fisheries co-management policy. Planned engagements with the Small Pelagic Co-Management Committees will further strengthen the committees and make them effective. This collaboration is beneficial for a number of reasons.

One, it will enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the research findings, which is very important for influencing policy decisions. It offers fishers the opportunity to have input into management interventions that reflect their aspirations. For CaFGOAG, it enhances the credibility of the work the association does, both now and in the future.

Two, the collaboration offers an opportunity for training and capacity building for members of CaFGOAG, something very much needed to increase knowledge and experiences, which will positively impact the work of CaFGOAG and artisanal fishers in Ghana.

Three, the collaboration is important for data sharing and access. This collaboration offers many prospects for facilitating access to valuable resources from partners that CaFGOAG can rely upon in engagements with members and other stakeholders.

Four, CaFGOAG has the opportunity to receive valuable insight and expertise guidance from partners, particularly the University of St Andrews, as technical assistance for its work as a fishers' association, which will improve effectiveness and efficiency. Through this collaboration, the university is making available to CaFGOAG equipment that will aid the organization's role in the research project and its work even later on after the project concludes.

And, finally, five, the collaboration expands CaFGOAG's professional networks, connecting the association with researchers, policymakers, regulators and other stakeholders. CaFGOAG will leverage this to improve engagement with all relevant fisheries stakeholders in the quest to effectively participate in fisheries management and governance with a goal of ensuring sustainable fisheries livelihoods for members and all fishworkers in Ghana. The benefits of the collaboration on this research project are enormous, and CaFGOAG needs to put the experiences to be gained to good use. To this end CaFGOAG plans to:

- Sustain and expand the network of collaborators and partners for more policy research projects and other initiatives. Collaborations will be explored for fisheries policy advocacy initiatives towards more inclusive fisheries governance.
- Train more members in data collection and prioritize fishers' participation in data collection to support the implementation of fisheries co-management in Ghana's artisanal fisheries sector. This will also improve the science-policy interface anchored on fishers' active and effective participation in decision making, leveraging on the improved capacities to deepen engagements with members and other stakeholders, and improve the internal structures and workings of the association to be able to perform effectively and efficiently.

For more

Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG)
https://www.cafgoagghana.org/

Creating synergies in Ghana's small-scale fisheries
https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/marine-fellows/fellows-directory/2023/ifesinachi-okafor-yarwood

Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)
https://fcwc-fish.org/

Spawning, Banning, Learning

An analysis of spawning periods of marine fish resources along both India's west coast and east coast reveals differences in the peak spawning periods for pelagic and demersal stocks

A new analysis of the spawning period of species along both the coasts of India suggests it may be appropriate to review the timing of the seasonal closure of marine fisheries in India.

The analysis is based on 526 historic fish and shellfish spawning records over a 64-year period, on Indian fisheries in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal between 1954 and 2018. The spawning records on 129 species are contained in the Indian Marine Life Histories (INMARLH) database. Its analysis revealed that along the west coast, 69 per cent of the species spawn during the April-May period and 65 per cent in the November-December period. Along the east coast, 68 per cent spawn during March-April. There were differences in the peak spawning periods for pelagic and demersal stocks along both coasts.

Spawning refers to the reproductive process of fishes, where they release their eggs and sperm into the water to fertilize and produce offspring. It is an essential part of their life cycle and ensures the continuation of their species. The specifics of spawning can vary from species to species, sometimes significantly. It is influenced by the physiological and biological state of the animal, environmental cues and favourable ecosystems, among other factors.

In India, the spawning period or peak period of spawning of important marine finfish and shellfish resources has been relatively well-studied for the past several decades; several insightful reviews are also available. However, the methodologies applied to these studies are varied and, often, subject to inaccuracies. Since Indian seas are situated in tropical and subtropical latitudes, the finfish and shellfish resources, in general, have short life spans, fast growth and protracted spawning periods with peaks. Information on spawning and other biological attributes of marine finfish and shellfish resources have been recently collated into a database called INMARLH, available from a public repository. This analysis draws from this database to determine the spawning pattern of Indian commercial marine fishes.

... the spawning periods of most species are timed in a manner that the progeny—larvae and juveniles—begin their life when there is maximum primary productivity in the seas

This database is a collection of biological and fisheries information on marine fish and shellfish species published in research journals and reports between 1954 and 2018. The database contains 3,132 records on 644 fish stocks from the four coastal eco-regions of India, namely, northwest, southwest, southeast and northeast. The 644 stocks belonged to 133 species; 90 genera; 55 families and 19 orders. INMARLH contains information on the number of spawning months in a year of 129 species. They were further classified into those off the west coast (76 species) and those off the east coast (53 species). Based on the realm of occurrence, they were further categorized into pelagic (50 species) and demersal (79 species). All analyses were carried out using spreadsheets.

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SUNIL MOHAMED

Fishing vessels docked near the Munambam fishing harbour, India. Conservation managers and fisheries policymakers may consider to revise the ban period and promote more effectively the long-term sustainability of marine fish populations in India

Table 1. The total number of records and species in the INMARLH database used in the present study.

	Total	East Coast	West Coast
Number of records	526	181	345
Number of species	129	53	76
Number of pelagic records	202		
Number of demersal records	324		

Statistic	NSM
Count (n)	526
Average	5.73
CV	74.41
Q1	3.00
Q2	4.00
Q3	7.00
Q4	12.00
Min	1.00
Max	12.00
Std Dev	3.00

Zooming out

The analysis of data shows that spawning occurs in all the months of the year. Along the west coast, 69 per cent of the species spawn at their maximum during March-May; a secondary peak of 65 per cent of the species is observed during November-December. The least number of species, 55 per cent, spawn during the monsoon period of June-September.

The difference between the maximum and minimum percentages is small. The relatively lower number of species spawning during the southwest monsoon may also be due to poor sampling during the monsoon season. Off the east coast, the maximum number of species spawning observed during March-April was 68 per cent and a secondary peak of 57 per cent was seen in February-May. The least number of species spawning was 30 per cent, observed in September.

When the data is examined coast-wise and realm-wise, the results show a similar trend for both coasts. This is apparent in the month-wise data of pelagic and demersal species spawning along the west coast (see Figure 2). The

largest number of demersal species spawning is 72 per cent in October-December. The minimum number of demersal species spawning was 51 per cent in June. In the case of pelagic species, the maximum number of spawning species observed was 83 per cent in April-May; the minimum was 26 per cent in September. The difference between maximum and minimum in both demersal and pelagic species was significant, sometimes more than double.

Off the east coast, the spawning of demersal species peaked at 67 per cent in March-April; the lowest point observed was 43 per cent during September (see Figure 3). In the case of pelagic fish stocks, also, the maximum was 90 per cent observed during March-April; the minimum of 14 per cent occurred in September. The difference between maximum and minimum was substantial on the east coast in the case of pelagic and demersal stocks.

Our observations indicate that, in general, the spawning periods of most species are timed in a manner that the progeny—larvae and juveniles—begin their life when there is maximum primary productivity in the seas. This is especially evident along the west coast for both pelagic and demersal during the southwest monsoon. For demersal species, a clear secondary peak spawning occurs after the monsoon in November-December, probably timed to catch the secondary production peak during the pre-monsoon period.

These inferences need to be confirmed with more detailed studies on the life cycles of individual species. Also examined was the periodicity of spawning, that is, the number of months each species spawns. It was observed that the maximum number of species, 15-25 per cent, spawn for three to four months in a year along both the east and west coasts of India. Another 10-15 per cent of the species spawn for seven months and throughout the year. When the data was analysed, it was observed that 61 per cent of pelagic species had relatively shorter spawning periods of three to five months, while 58 per cent of the demersal species had comparatively longer spawning periods of four to seven months. More importantly, 18.2 per cent of the demersal species were spawning throughout the year.

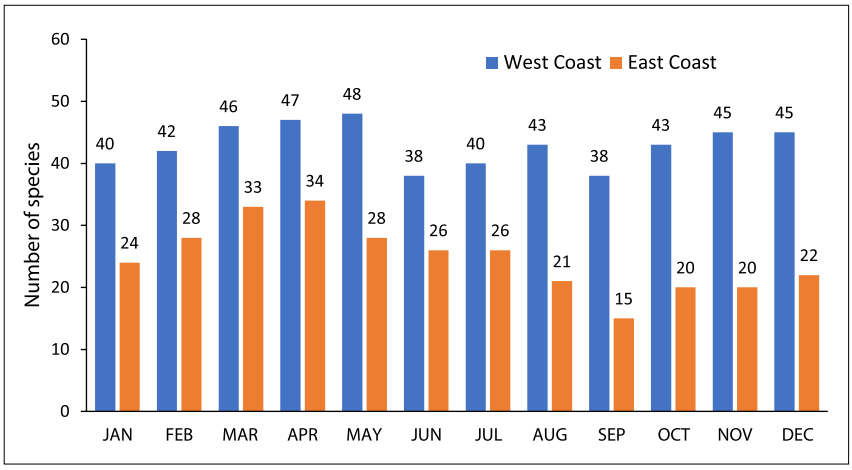

Fig.1. Bar chart showing the number of species spawning in different months of the year along both the west and east coasts of India. The total number of species over the year would exceed the actual number of species in the database because most species have prolonged spawning periods

The application

Protecting the spawning periods of fish is crucial for the conservation and sustainability of fish populations and marine ecosystems. To protect spawning periods effectively, it is important to establish and enforce regulations that

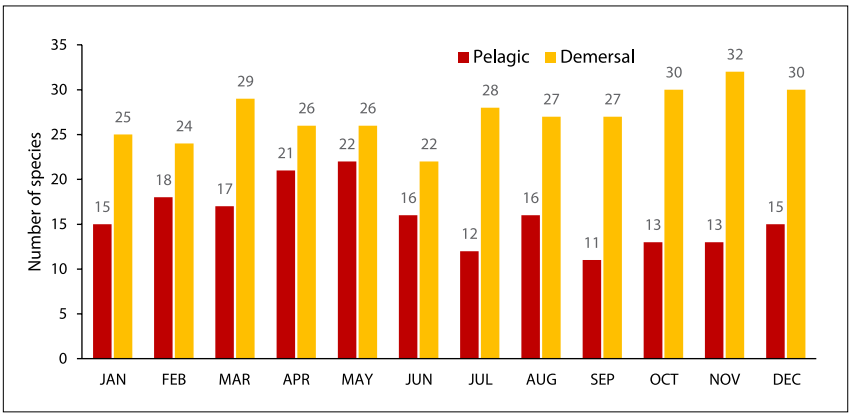

Fig.2. Bar chart showing the number of pelagic and demersal species spawning in different months of the year along the west coast of India

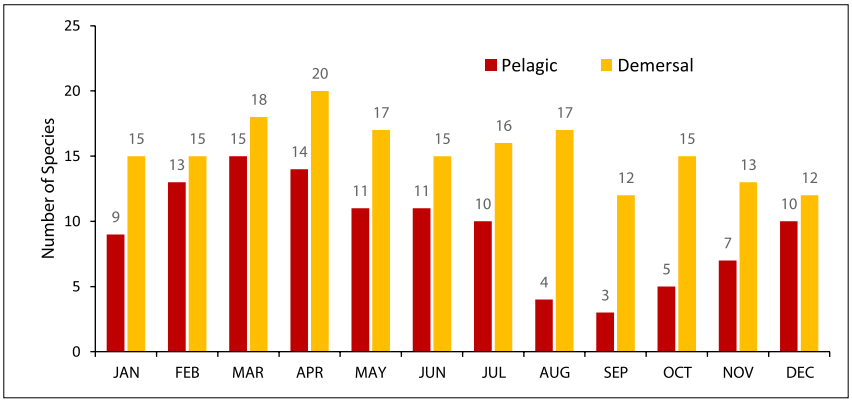

Fig.3. Bar chart showing the number of pelagic and demersal species spawning in different months of the year along the east coast of India

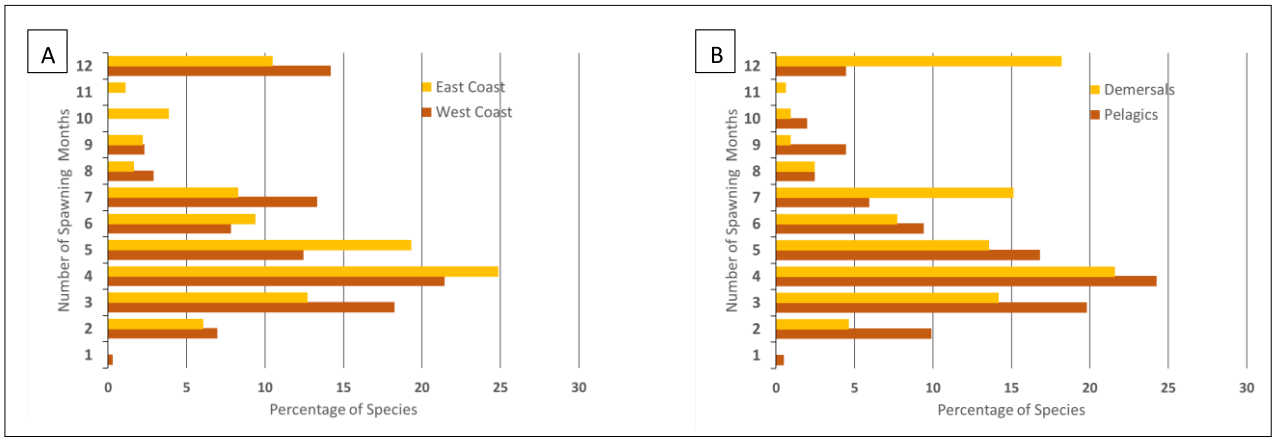

Fig.4. Chart showing the periodicity of spawning or the percentage of species that spawn for different durations (months) in a year on the east and west coasts (A) and among demersal and pelagic species (B) along both coasts.

restrict harmful activities during these times. This may involve implementing fishing bans, establishing protected areas, improving water quality, and minimizing disturbances to spawning habitats.

Some of the objectives for conservation are:

- Reproductive Success: The spawning period is a critical time for fishes to successfully reproduce and ensure their survival. By protecting spawning periods, we allow fishes to carry out their natural reproductive behaviours without disturbance or disruption, increasing the chances of successful reproduction and population replenishment.
- Genetic Diversity: Fish populations rely on genetic diversity for their long-term survival and adaptation to changing environments. Protecting spawning periods helps maintain healthy population sizes and allows for the mixing of genes between individuals. This genetic diversity enhances the overall resilience and adaptability of fish populations.
- Population Maintenance: Many fish species have specific spawning grounds or habitats where they gather in large numbers to spawn. These areas can be sensitive and easily disrupted by human activities such as over-fishing, habitat destruction or pollution. Protecting spawning periods ensures that these critical habitats remain undisturbed, allowing fish populations to maintain stable numbers and fulfil their ecological roles.
- Sustainable Fisheries: Fisheries management often includes regulations and measures to protect spawning periods. By implementing fishing restrictions or seasonal closures during spawning periods, we can prevent recruitment over-fishing and the depletion of fish stocks. This approach supports sustainable fisheries by allowing fishes to reproduce and replenish their populations, ensuring a continued supply of fish for both ecological and human needs.
- Ecosystem Health: Fishes play crucial roles in maintaining the health and balance of aquatic ecosystems. They contribute to nutrient cycling, control populations of prey species, and serve as a food source for other organisms. Protecting spawning periods helps maintain healthy fish populations, which, in turn, supports the overall biodiversity and functioning of aquatic ecosystems.

While all points in the above list are important, preventing the fourth or recruitment over-fishing is the main basis on which India implements a seasonal fishing ban along both the east and west coasts. The ban is for 61 days from 15 April to 14 June along the east coast and 1 June to 31 July along the west coast.

Conservation managers and fisheries policymakers may consider this information to revise the ban period and promote more effectively the long-term sustainability of marine fish populations in India. It is also important to remember that biological information on species is always dynamic and subject to better understanding with time.

For more

Indian Marine Fish Life Histories (INMARLH) database for determining resilience and vulnerability of tropical marine species
https://www.seanoe.org/data/00709/82124/

An appraisal of the studies on maturation and spawning In marine teleosts from the Indian waters
https://eprints.cmfri.org.in/1230/

Application of biological and fisheries attributes to assess the vulnerability and resilience of tropical marine fish species
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0255879

Seasonal Fishing Ban: Need for collecting and applying the right type of scientific information
https://eprints.cmfri.org.in/14319/

Caught in the Deluge

The extreme flooding in South Brazil highlighted the vulnerability of small-scale fishers to climate-induced disasters

Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil suffered extreme flooding in the months of May and June of 2024. It has severely disrupted the livelihood of small-scale fishers who depend on the region's aquatic ecosystems (see Table 1). The flooding, driven by unprecedented climate change-induced rainfall, affected thousands of people and caused 147 deaths. It devastated infrastructure, including shops, factories, farms and essential services like transportation and electricity.

Record-breaking rainfall raised river and lagoon levels, particularly impacting Patos Lagoon, Brazil's largest coastal lagoon and a critical area for biodiversity and fisheries. The influx of freshwater from inland watersheds disrupted the saline balance, essential for species like shrimp. The sudden floods, following another major flood in 2023, exposed the need for better disaster preparedness and response.

This article reviews recent news and official data on the disaster in South Brazil. It includes insights from two leaders of artisanal fishing coastal communities in South and Northeast Brazil (see Table 1), who have also faced major floods. We identify key challenges, focusing on social, economic and environmental impacts on small-scale fishers. Additionally, we examine responses from support organizations and propose effective policy options. Our goal is to raise awareness to advocate for small-scale fisherfolk worldwide who are facing climate impacts.

The floods have displaced thousands, creating climate refugees and causing a humanitarian crisis. Many have lost their homes and face prolonged periods in temporary shelters, with uncertain futures. The psychological and social toll is immense, with families separated and livelihoods lost. Returning residents find homes filled with mud, dead animals and ruined possessions. The loss of basic amenities like electricity and clean water worsens their struggle. In rural areas, destroyed homes and community infrastructure further isolate vulnerable populations, complicating recovery efforts.

The floods have amplified the existing injustice faced by traditional peoples and communities. Civil Defence data shows 450 municipalities affected, with 76,884 people in shelters, 538,545 displaced and 2,124,203 impacted, overall. The disaster has left 125 missing and over 800 injured, pointing to environmental neglect and socio-political failures. Traditional communities, already facing precarious conditions and institutional racism, were particularly vulnerable.

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Financial losses

Economically, the floods have closed major highways and airports, and caused widespread blackouts. The region, reliant on agriculture and fisheries, has halted economic activities, leading to significant financial losses. The artisanal and industrial fisheries sector, vital to the local economy, is severely affected. The suspension of fishing activities has led to millions in losses. Patos

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Table I: Interviews with artisanal fishers leaders in coastal communities increasingly affected by major floods in the Northeast (Marine Extractive Reserve of Canavieiras, Bahia state) and South (Patos Lagoon, Rio Grande do Sul state) Brazil.

Lílian Santana Santos Fisherwoman from Canavieiras Marine Extractive Reserve (Bahia state, Brazil), coordinator of the Women Fisher Network from South Bahia state, and coordinator of the Mother Association of the Canavieiras Extractive Reserve.	**Nilmar da Conceição** A fisherman from the Patos Lagoon (city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil), regional coordinator of the National Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen, and president of the Z3 Fishers Colony.
1. **Could you share how your experience with the floods a few years ago was and how it impacted your life and fishing at that time?** "The floods in consecutive years greatly impacted our lives. We live in a protected Extractive Reserve. Floods used to occur in normal cycles, as my grandparents and parents told us, bringing an abundance of freshwater fish. However, the floods of 2021 and 2022 were problematic, especially for us artisanal fishers. Chemicals and pesticides used in cocoa, eucalyptus, and coffee plantations contaminated our rivers during heavy rains, killing crabs, crustaceans, and fish. One example is the mussel beds, which almost disappeared due to changes in water salinity."	1. **How did the recent floods impact your daily fishing activities and livelihood?** "We are from the Z3 Fishermen's Colony, located in the south of Lagoa dos Patos, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. There are about 13 communities like ours, totaling around 4,000 fishers and approximately 1,000 families. We experienced a flood in October 2023, and just as we were beginning to recover, another flood hit in May 2024. The impact on our fishing activities was enormous. About 70% of the community was flooded, including houses, fish markets, gear sheds, boats, and nets. This led to massive destruction of essential fishing equipment, such as freezers for preserving the fish. Fishing teams were affected, and many houses were destroyed. Our livelihood is severely threatened, and recovery will be long and difficult."
2. **What long-term strategies or measures were most effective in helping you and your community recover from that previous flood?** "Our initial strategies included moving stranded riverine residents, family farmers, and fishers to higher ground. We organized food donation campaigns as fishers couldn't fish due to fish die-offs and deteriorating aquatic vegetation. We distributed food baskets, hygiene products, mattresses, and blankets. For instance, we helped fishers from Curva do Leão, whose homes were flooded, and who had to build huts on the roadside. We are in dialogue with the municipality to provide subsidies and relocate these people to less vulnerable lands."	2. **What kind of support or assistance do you believe is most urgently needed for you and your community to recover and rebuild?** "We received a lot of solidarity from society, both from within and outside the state and even from abroad, in the form of food, water, and medicine. From the government, only the army and civil defense helped us. Some NGOs, such as the National Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen, the Fishers Pastoral Council, and the Fisheries Council, also supported us. However, from the federal government, specifically the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, we only received food baskets. We requested two months of emergency aid in the previous flood but didn't get a response. Now, in this second flood, we are again asking for emergency aid for the 4,000 fishers in the Lagoa dos Patos region. So far, we only have promises and media attention but no concrete benefits. We hope they fulfill the promises, but we know it's not easy. The urgency is for the fishing families of Lagoa dos Patos. We urgently need cleaning supplies to resume fishing activities, repairs to homes, and replacement of fishing gear."
3. **Based on your previous experience, what recommendations would you give to fishers facing the recent flood?** "My recommendation is to unite forces. Climate change is here, and its impacts will worsen. Fishers, farmers, and the entire community must seek public policies and pressure the government to create support programmes. We must relocate those living on riverbanks who are most impacted by floods and curb laws that ease pesticide use. Protecting our ecosystem and ensuring food security is essential. We should unite to seek government support, create support programmes, and pressure for the relocation of the most affected people, as well as curb the use of pesticides that harm our environment."	3. **What are your biggest concerns for the future of artisanal fishing in your region after this disaster?** "The future is uncertain. The lagoon's recovery will be long, with much debris, and we don't even know what's in the lagoon now. In October 2023, when we could have resumed fishing, we faced the first flood, and now another one has come. We urgently need material support to restart our fishing activities. The uncertainty about the continuity of artisanal fishing and the possibility of sustaining our families is a major concern. The lack of effective action from the authorities only increases this insecurity. Here is our appeal to partners, friends, and supporters: we need immediate help to overcome this challenge and ensure a future for artisanal fishing in our region."

Lagoon, supplying 30 per cent of Brazil's pink shrimp, is particularly impacted, as the operations of supply chains and markets nationwide have been disrupted. Agricultural losses are also significant, with many farmers unable to plant or harvest crops due to flooded fields. Infrastructure damage hampers transportation and logistics, compounding economic losses. The combined effects on agriculture and fisheries ripple through local businesses, reducing income and increasing poverty.

Environmentally, the floods have severely impacted ecosystems. Freshwater mixed with sewage and contaminants causes long-lasting damage to aquatic environments like Patos Lagoon. Pollutants and debris disrupt habitats, leading to potential long-term ecological damage. Estuarine ecosystems, the breeding grounds for numerous fish species, are particularly vulnerable. Contamination from urban run-off and agricultural chemicals threatens water quality and aquatic life, risking a decline in fish populations and affecting biodiversity and livelihoods.

Small-scale fishers around Patos Lagoon have been severely impacted by the floods. Boats, equipment and fishing grounds have been destroyed, halting fishing activities, especially shrimp fishing, due to disrupted salinity levels essential for shrimp larvae. This disruption during the crucial May-June season has led to significant economic losses, affecting both local and national markets.

The challenges thrown up are immense: prolonged economic hardship, loss of income, and uncertainty about the future. Many fishers cannot return home due to the destruction, and are struggling to access relief and support. The psychological toll is severe, as fears arise about the future of their profession. Fishing communities face the loss of essential gear and infrastructure like piers and storage facilities. Replacing these assets is costly, more so due to the immediate income loss. Contaminated fishing grounds also raise safety and marketability concerns, complicating economic recovery.

The Solidarity Network in Defense of Artisanal Fisheries in the Pampa Biome, along with other organizations, has requested a meeting with government representatives to discuss the impacts of the floods and assess possible federal assistance. The network stresses the importance of this hearing for the government to understand the dire situation, which ranges from income loss to community flooding and devastation. They aim to prevent a repeat of 2023, when artisanal fishing communities were left without assistance despite several reports on the impacts. However, as of 10 June 2024, the meeting has not taken place.

Fisher leaders emphasize the disconnect between political proclamations and tangible support, highlighting unfulfilled promises and the vulnerability of communities. They stress the need for genuine empathy, effective public policies and unity among affected communities. Floods are intensifying along Brazil's coast. Before Rio Grande do Sul, another artisanal fishing community in the Canavieiras Extractive Reserve (Resex) in Bahia was affected in 2022.

Local fishers and community organizations are proactively seeking support and implementing strategies to cope with the disaster's effects. These efforts include emergency relief and rebuilding initiatives, though gaps remain. Community leaders call for immediate financial assistance, essential supplies and long-term recovery plans. Organizations like the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) are instrumental in providing immediate relief, distributing food, water and other necessities, and advocating for government support and policy changes to address the root causes of such disasters.

Disaster relief

Various governmental and non-governmental organizations have mobilized to assist in disaster relief. The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture and other entities are delivering emergency food parcels but these interventions are not enough. More substantial and co-ordinated efforts

are needed to address both immediate and long-term needs. Government responses include the Plano Rio Grande, a state initiative focusing on short-term social assistance, medium-term infrastructure rebuilding, and long-term economic development. Despite these efforts, many affected individuals report delays and bureaucratic hurdles in accessing aid, highlighting the need for streamlined and efficient disaster-response mechanisms.

There is no data on water quality yet, but the fishery will likely take more time to recover from the environmental impacts. Research and monitoring are needed in the mid- and long-term periods. Immediate relief measures should provide financial aid, rebuild infrastructure and meet the basic needs of the affected communities. They should include direct financial support for replacing lost equipment and covering living expenses. Emergency funds should rebuild critical infrastructure like piers and storage facilities to enable fishers to resume activities. Notably, the Brazilian government has not set aside any emergency fund for fishery impacts.

Short-term relief should include psychological support for affected individuals, including addressing mental health. Temporary shelters need upgrading for better living conditions, and efforts should focus on reuniting displaced families and restoring community cohesion. Capacity building, community-based resource management, and improved disaster preparedness are crucial. Fishers need to be trained on sustainable practices, developing early warning systems, and enhancing local disaster-response capabilities. Education and training can build community resilience to future disasters.

Mid-term strategies should focus on diversifying income sources for fishing communities, and reducing reliance on a single economic activity. This could involve promoting small-scale aquaculture, community-based tourism and other complementary activities to provide alternative livelihoods during crises.

Policies for climate change adaptation and resilience must be integrated into fisheries management. This involves creating sustainable fisheries management plans that consider climate risks, promote alternative livelihoods, and invest in research to monitor and respond to environmental changes. Governments should work with local communities to develop policies that enhance the fisheries' resilience to climate impacts.

Long-term nature-based adaptations should include restoring and protecting natural habitats like mangroves and wetlands, which can buffer against flooding. Investments in infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather events, such as elevated buildings and flood-resistant roads, are essential for coastal community sustainability.

The community-led approaches should be integrated into adaptation strategies. Empowering local fishers to participate actively in decision-making processes ensures that their traditional knowledge and practices are respected and incorporated into climate resilience plans.

The extreme flooding in Rio Grande do Sul highlights the vulnerability of small-scale fishers in South Brazil to disasters induced by climate change. The profound social, economic, and environmental impacts require urgent, co-ordinated action from the government, NGOs and the international community. Integrating climate change policies with sustainable fisheries management is essential to enhance resilience and ensure the long-term viability of small-scale fisheries. This approach emphasizes unity, advocacy and policy change to address the challenges faced by artisanal fishers and the broader community.

For more

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Living Off the Sea

The 16th edition of the Pêcheurs du Monde film festival, held in Lorient, France, focused on how fishing is vital for both ocean biodiversity and livelihoods

The Pecheurs du Monde film festival in Lorient, France, took some 3,000 people on a journey around the oceans of the world on 15-24 March 2024. According to Olivier Broudeur, president of the professional jury, the festival offered the opportunity to focus on the ocean and the people living off it. Participants got to know people who live under very different conditions and they were impressed by their determination in facing challenges.

The festival had a jury of both professionals such as filmmakers, fishers, specialists and scientists, as well as young people, mainly high school students. One prize is awarded by the public and another, called the Chandrika Sharma Award, by the festival team. (On 8 March 2014, Chandrika Sharma, the then executive secretary of ICSF, was on her way to an FAO meeting in Mongolia aboard the Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, which disappeared in the seas. From 2008 to 2014, she had been deeply involved in the process of the formulation of the SSF Guidelines. The Chandrika Sharma Award, which honours a film illustrating the role of women in fisheries, is the Lorient festival's tribute to her.)

In awarding the prize for the feature film *A Letter from Yene*, directed by Manthia Diawara, the professional jury highlighted the film's powerful testimony/manifesto linking local development issues with global challenges. The short film *Squid Fleet*, by Will Miller and Ed Ou, won awards from both juries; it shared a fascination mingled with horror at the spectacle of massive exploitation of fisheries resources with total disregard for human rights and biodiversity.

The two juries gave a special mention to *Haulout* by Russian directors Evgenia Arbugaeva and Maxim Arbugaev. It portrayed the emotions of a researcher observing the spectacular disappearance of walruses as the sea ice melts. *Against the Tide*, by Indian director Sarvnik Kaur, touched the young jury members with the intensity of the contradictory debate between two friends, both of them fishermen, over the type of fishing to be practised:

> **The theme of the festival was: the fisher, the sea and the plate. It raised the question of the place of consumers**

one that takes only the necessary share of food or one that seeks to maximize profit.

Special mention was made of *Inertie* by Nicolas Gayraud, which shows the disarray of fishermen in the Cotentin region of France, for whom the main threat lies in the globalization of fisheries. Should not we give priority to defending the sea, as suggested in *On the Borders of the Sea* by Sebastien Thiebot and Claire Marchal? The schoolchildren voted in favour by awarding the film their prize.

Fishing communities are worried because they are rarely consulted, reports Quebec director Jean Guenette in his film *Le Silence des morues*; it won the Public Award. Despite the modernization of equipment and practices, fishers' organizations are powerless because politicians do not listen to their voices.

Focus on food politics

At a time when food insecurity is back in the global spotlight, with the

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https://pecheursdumonde.org/festival/

Razzia sur l'Atlantique poster at Lorient Film Festival 2024. We need to allow fishers to be the stewards of the oceans, as shown in a number of films screened at the festival

situation worsening for the poorest populations, the role of fishers (like that of farmers) is being called into question. It is a true contradiction of our times! The right to fish for a living is being challenged. The film *Aimer la mer a Gaza*, by Sarah Katz and Samia Ayeb, was more than just symbolic; it won the Chandrika Sharma Award. In 2014, a young fisherwoman confronted her male colleagues and the Israeli navy to go fishing. Today, the ports and the boats have been destroyed, as recounted in the very moving video testimony of the young woman. The struggle of the Gazan fishers to feed their population reveals global concerns: war, pillage, commercial competition, excessive environmental constraints and derogatory campaigns, all impose limits on the role of fishers in contributing to people's food security.

Director Nicolas van Ingen's *Razzia sur l'Atlantique* was awarded a special mention in the schoolchildren's awards. It is a relentless investigation into the plundering of resources off the coast of Africa. European and Chinese agri-food groups are monopolizing fish stocks to produce fishmeal for industrial aquaculture of salmon in Norway or Scotland, or sea bream in Greece or Turkey. They steal food from poor people and provide for the rich. This form of colonial plundering is contributing to the migration of young Africans and the increasing scarcity of fish.

The Canadian film *Where the River Widens* by Zachary Greenleaf reminds us of the fusion among the cultures of the First Nations, between humans and the sea. This was also one of the themes in the film from Madagascar, *Between Land and Sea*. Isn't it time for our productivist, over-consuming societies to reconsider the link with the living creatures of the seas? Marion Jhoaner, president of the young people's jury, stressed this warning when the awards were announced: "Should we give in to the promise of easy money or face, individually and collectively, the ethical issues—both environmental and social—of fishing practices?"

The theme of the festival was: the fisher, the sea and the plate. It raised the question of the place of consumers. Enthusiastic chefs from Lorient invited consumers to taste recipes based on local (and often despised) species. Kitchen workshops provided an opportunity to show how to add value to these fishes and enable fishers to sell all their catch—not just the species considered noble by the usual market—and at prices affordable for both consumers and fishermen. Such value addition is also a way of better safeguarding biodiversity by diversifying the consumption of fish. On this occasion, Chef Nathalie Beauvais, a member of the 2024 jury, presented her latest book of recipes.

The festival also provided an opportunity to recall the long history of fishers and the links between humans and the sea. The films bear witness to the cultural and scientific contribution of the seas to humanity as a whole. Biologist Pierre Mollo, a special guest of the festival, presented excerpts from his documentaries, a testimony of his close relationship with fishers over decades. Sociologist Alain Pichon analysed the image of fishworkers through archival documentaries. These two events were among the festival's highlights.

The festival wouldn't exist without a glimpse into the future of fishing. Since 2023, it has set up an exceptional meeting with young people from the maritime high schools of Brittany in France. The four schools have responded by sending groups of students to the festival. The 'Fishing for the Future Days' session provided an opportunity to listen to the views and questions of future fishers, to debate with professionals, through screenings, and to discover the port's facilities and businesses. The debates showed that the youngsters were very conscious about the social and environmental issues that need to be taken into account.

Forum for exchange

Once again at the festival, the interdependence of local and global dimensions were highlighted by many films. The interaction of land and sea is as obvious as it is vital. People live off the sea, but the sea is threatened by all the pressures and pollution coming from land, as reflected by the crises in the world of fisheries. While many tourism brochures display pictures of whales, dolphins, seals and coral fish in protected areas at all latitudes, where fishers are excluded, and 'Blue Growth' is happening next door through oil or gas fields, the real question is: Will industrial fish farming, based on the plundering of resources in countries of the South, be the only way to feed the people of the North? Is this the end of the sea as a source of food?

These questions force us to examine the values that underpin our lives and our societies. Scientists such as Alain Biseau have shown that today, thanks to a policy of controlling fish stocks, the majority of species in the North Atlantic are no longer threatened by overfishing. Julien Mata showed in the film *Pecheur 2.0* that an endangered species such as the bluefin tuna can thrive, thanks to adapted fishing techniques and good management.

That, ultimately, is what this is all about: we urgently need to enable fishers to adapt to climate change so that fishing and biodiversity can coexist and provide the food we need. Regulated fishing and co-operation between fishers and scientists are the key to healthy marine biodiversity.

The elimination of fishers would enshrine the victory of the exploiters of the sea, behind an 'environmental smokescreen', as is the case of land reserves in Africa or America. On the contrary, we need to allow fishers to be the stewards of the oceans, as shown in a number of films screened at the 16th edition of the Lorient film festival. It also turned into a forum for exchange, reflection and creative prospecting to ensure that fishing communities have the right to make a living from the sea while respecting marine life.

For more

16th Pêcheurs du Monde film festival
https://pecheursdumonde.org/

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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

West Africa's falling fish stocks

Average fish catches by traditional fishing communities along the west African coast have declined significantly over the past three decades. Along the Gulf of Guinea, stretching from Côte d'Ivoire to Nigeria, fishers launch their wooden canoes from the beach to catch small pelagic fish, like sardines and anchovies, which they sell into local informal markets to make a living. They have done this for generations, but since the 1990s, a decline in the catch has put their livelihoods at risk.

In Ghana, total landings of small pelagic fish fell by 59 per cent between 1993 and 2019, despite increased fishing efforts. Landings of *Sardinella aurita*, a favoured species, declined from 119,000 tonnes in 1992 to just 11,834 tonnes in 2019. Côte d'Ivoire has experienced a parallel fisheries decline, with its catch plummeting nearly 40 per cent between 2003 and 2020.

The continuing decline in fish catches has serious implications for some of the poorest families in the region. Ghana, for example, has more than 200,000 active fishers. More than 2 mn others along the value chain, including thousands of women who process and sell fish at markets along the coast, are now at risk as well. Already living at or below the international poverty line (US $2.15 per person per day), these communities now face further income loss. In essence, they are falling deeper into poverty.

In west Africa there are now seven times as many canoes engaged in ocean fishing as there were in 1950. Today's canoes have larger nets and bigger crews, and many have powerful outboard engines.

Source: https://theconversation.com/west-africas-falling-fish-stocks-illegal-chinese-trawlers-climate-change-and-artisanal-fishing-fleets-to-blame-226819

INLAND FISHERIES

Report shows dire state of Mekong's fish — but damage can still be undone

The threatened fish of the Mekong River are inching closer to extinction, according to a new report that cites piling pressures on the waterway. Though the situation is serious, conservationists say it's not too late to turn the tide for the river's freshwater species.

The nearly 5,000-km (3,000-mile) Mekong supports millions of people across six countries, from its headwaters in China to its delta in Vietnam. The river, a key vein in mainland Southeast Asia, faces a rising tide of threats, from unsustainable fishing and invasive species, to hydropower dams and sand mining, all compounded by climate change.

Nearly a fifth of the known fish species in the river are threatened to some degree with extinction, according to a recently release report, "The Mekong's Forgotten Fishes". The report was compiled by 25 organizations, including conservation NGOs WWF and Conservation International, and the IUCN, the global wildlife conservation authority, which is responsible for the Red List of Threatened Species.

The report determined that at least 19 per cent of species are threatened with extinction. It calls for a global "Emergency Recovery Plan" for freshwater biodiversity to be implemented in the Mekong, with an emphasis on letting the river and its tributaries flow more naturally, improving water quality, protecting and restoring critical habitats and species, and curbing unsustainable resource extraction.

Despite the threats, the report notes conservation bright spots, including the discovery of new species, and emphasizes that it is not too late to protect the river, its fish and the millions of people who depend on it.

Source: https://news.mongabay.com/2024/04/report-shows-dire-state-of-mekongs-fish-but-damage-can-still-be-undone/

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI)

The Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union

To achieve the goals of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which is independent, just, prosperous, and sustainable as stated in Pancasila and the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, on 15 May 2009 the Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolks Union (KNTI) was established in Manado, North Sulawesi Province. This establishment is a form of awareness and determination of at least 100 fisherfolk leaders from several regions in the country to hold the Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolks Congress at the same location. KNTI is a mass-based organization of traditional fisherfolk, fish and seaweed aquaculture, salt farmers and fisheries and marine product processors; it has a structure from the national to the regional level.

KNTI is a forum for the struggle to meet the living needs and future interests of traditional Indonesian fisherfolk. Fighting for the fate of traditional fisherfolk whose rights to life and livelihood have been displaced or threatened. Building independent economic strength among traditional fisherfolk, strengthening the knowledge and direct action of traditional fisherfolk in preserving the marine and coastal environment. Taking strategic steps to ensure the fulfilment of basic rights such as the right to education, health, and housing for fishing families. The right to obtain protection for land and water areas, as well as the right to obtain welfare and strengthen the role and position of fisherwomen.

By 2024, the KNTI management structure is spread across 68 districts/cities; more than 100,000 members; 20 co-operatives; managing seven mangrove conservation areas; five aquaculture centres; four coastal children's reading houses; two community-based tourism programmes; as well as economic development initiatives for fishermen and fisherwomen in several region. The union's

objectives are: Fight for all matters relating to the livelihood and future interests of Indonesian traditional fisherfolk, with the aim of: one, creating an organized, educated and independent traditional fisherfolk's organization; two, realizing a sovereign, prosperous and cultural livelihood of traditional fisherfolk; and, three, realizing fair and sustainable management of marine and fisheries resources.

The union has a management structure at the national to sub-district/village levels. It also has an autonomous body whose function is to implement KNTI policies relating to women and youth, namely: Indonesian Coastal Women's Association (KPPI); and Indonesian Youth and Coastal Student Union (KPPMPI).

KNTI advocacy if on the following matters: one, protection of over-fishing areas for traditional and small-scale fishers and access to production factors, along with the strengthening social protection; two, increasing critical knowledge and awareness of fisherfolk regarding their rights; three, protection of healthy and sustainable marine and coastal environments; four, building the economic independence of fishing families by improving the fisheries business ecosystem from upstream to downstream.

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The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024

Key Messages

- **World fisheries and aquaculture production** hit a new high in 2022. Successful initiatives should be upscaled to consolidate the vital role of aquatic foods for global food security, nutrition and livelihoods.
- Global fisheries and aquaculture production surged to 223.2 mn tonnes, with 185.4 mn tonnes of aquatic animals and 37.8 mn tonnes of algae.
- Of the total aquatic animal production, 89 per cent was used for human consumption, equivalent to an estimated 20.7 kg per capita in 2022. The rest went on non-food uses, mostly fishmeal and fish oil.
- An estimated 61.8 mn people were employed in the primary production sector, mostly in small-scale operations. Sex-disaggregated data indicate that 24 per cent of fishers and fish farmers were women compared with 62 per cent in the post-harvest sector.
- Over 230 countries and territories were involved in the international trade of aquatic products, reaching a record value of USD 195 bn – a 19 per cent increase from pre- pandemic levels in 2019.
- In low- and middle-income countries, the total net trade (exports minus imports) of aquatic animal products reached USD 45 bn – greater than that of all other agricultural products combined.
- Further transformative and adaptive actions are needed to strengthen the resilience of aquatic food systems and consolidate their role in addressing hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Aquaculture can meet the rising global demand for aquatic foods. Future expansion must prioritize sustainability and benefit regions and communities most in need.

- In 2022, global aquaculture production reached 130.9 mn tonnes, valued at USD 312.8 bn, 59 per cent of global fisheries and aquaculture production.
- Inland aquaculture contributed 62.6 per cent of farmed aquatic animals, marine and coastal aquaculture 37.4 per cent.
- For the first time, aquaculture surpassed capture fisheries in aquatic animal production with 94.4 mn tonnes, representing 51 per cent of the world total and a record 57 per cent of the production destined for human consumption.
- Aquaculture remains dominated by a small number of countries, with many low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean not exploiting their full potential.
- Out of some 730 farmed species items, 17 staple species represent about 60 per cent of global aquaculture production, while other species are important at local level.
- Targeted policies, technology transfer, capacity building and responsible investment are crucial to boost sustainable aquaculture where it is most needed, in particular in Africa.

Global capture fisheries production remains stable, but sustainability of fishery resources is a cause for concern. Urgent action is needed to accelerate fishery stock conservation and rebuilding.

- Global capture fisheries production of aquatic animals has fluctuated between 86 and 94 mn tonnes per year since the late 1980s.
- In 2022, the sector produced 92.3 mn tonnes, valued at about USD 159 bn and comprising 91.0 mn tonnes of aquatic animals – 79.7 mn tonnes caught in marine areas and 11.3 mn tonnes in inland waters – in addition to 1.3 mn tonnes of algae. With a share of 43 per cent, marine capture fisheries remain the major source of global aquatic animal production.
- The fraction of marine stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels decreased to 62.3 per cent in 2021, 2.3 per cent lower than in 2019.
- When weighted by their production level, an estimated 76.9 per cent of the 2021 landings were from biologically sustainable stocks. Effective fisheries management leads to stock recovery, and urgent action is needed to replicate successful policies and reverse declining sustainability trends.

Global demand for aquatic foods is projected to increase further. Expansion of sustainable production is vital to ensure healthy diets from healthy oceans, lakes and rivers.

- In 2022, global apparent consumption of aquatic animal foods reached an estimated 165 mn tonnes, increasing at nearly twice the annual rate of the world population since 1961.
- Global annual per capita apparent consumption of aquatic animal foods rose from 9.1 kg in 1961 to an estimated 20.7 kg in 2022.
- Aquatic animal foods provide high-quality proteins – 15 per cent of animal proteins and 6 per cent of total proteins worldwide – and key nutrients including omega-3 fatty acids, minerals and vitamins.
- The potential of aquatic foods to contribute to food security, nutrition and poverty reduction is increasingly recognized in major global fora such as the UN Food Systems Summit and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Efforts must continue to promote aquatic foods for healthy diets from healthy oceans, lakes and rivers.

Aquatic animal production is expected to increase by 10 per cent by 2032. The Blue Transformation Roadmap aims to ensure sustainable fisheries and aquaculture growth while promoting equitable benefits and environmental conservation.

- Aquatic animal production is expected to increase by 10 per cent by 2032, driven by aquaculture expansion and capture fisheries recovery. It will reach 205 mn tonnes – 111 mn tonnes from aquaculture and 94 mn tonnes from fisheries.
- Up to 90 per cent will be destined for human consumption, at a rate of about 21.3 kg per capita.
- Consumption per capita is expected to grow in all continents, but will likely decline in Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, where many people rely on aquatic foods for nutrition.
- Exports of aquatic animal products will grow, involving 34 per cent of the total production in 2032, down from 38 per cent in 2022.
- The FAO Blue Transformation Roadmap paves the way for sustainable growth, promoting equitable benefits and reversing environmental degradation.

Small-scale fisheries are a vital source of nutrition and livelihoods for millions of people. Greater global recognition and action are needed to support and empower these communities.

- Small-scale fisheries contribute an estimated 40 per cent of the global catch and support 90 per cent of the capture fisheries workforce, with women representing 40 per cent of all those engaged in the aquatic value chain.
- Some 500 mn people rely on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods, including 53 mn involved in subsistence fishing – 45 per cent of whom are women.
- The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries were endorsed a decade ago, yet the vital role of small-scale fisheries is not sufficiently recognized.
- Enhancing the recognition and governance of small-scale fisheries through co-management approaches remains crucial to secure sustainable exploitation, equitable socioeconomic development and equal opportunities for all.

Source: https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a4151f1e-3130-4504-a7d7-4b066de59030/content

INFOLOG: NEW RESOURCES AT ICSF

Publications and Infographics

ICSF's Studies on Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries

https://www.icsf.net/useful-resources/all-icsf-publications/

ICSF conducted a series of studies on "Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries" in eight countries to examine how social development of small-scale fishing communities contributes to responsible and sustainable small-scale fisheries. The countries studied were: Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Ghana, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Brazil, Thailand and India (specifically, the States of Kerala/Tamil Nadu and West Bengal).

International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) workshop reports

The Asia workshop was the first of the series of four regional workshops organized by ICSF in connection with the proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) by the United Nations, and it was followed up by workshops in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa and Europe. The workshops, which featured over 200 participants from 52 countries, revolved around discussions on the SSF Guidelines implementation and monitoring, and specifically focused on the themes of tenure rights, social development and gender and women in fisheries.

Asia Report: English

Africa Report: English and French

Latin America and the Caribbean Report: English, Spanish and Portuguese

Europe Report: English and Spanish

IYAFA Film

https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-workshops-in-the-international-year-of-artisanal-fisheries-and-aquaculture-iyafa-by-icsf-2024-2/

IYAFA 2022: Small-Scale Fisheries Summit Report, 2-4 September 2022, Città dell'Altra Economia, Rome, Italy. FAO, 2022

https://www.icsf.net/resources/iyafa-2022-small-scale-fisheries-summit-report-2-4-september-2022-citta-dellaltra-economia-rome-italy-by-fao-2022/

The main purpose of the Small-Scale Fisheries Summit was to create a true opportunity to promote dialogue among small-scale fishers and fishworkers, key partners and decisionmakers in advance of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) 35th Session on 5-9 September 2022 in Rome, Italy

FLASHBACK

Now Walk the Talk

The tenth of June ought to be celebrated as "World Small-scale Fisheries Day" since it was on this historic day in 2014 that the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) formally endorsed the International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). In adopting the Guidelines, COFI also honoured Chandrika Sharma, former Executive Secretary of ICSF, for her invaluable contributions to small-scale fisheries.

By adopting these Guidelines, the international community has lent its weight to the struggles of fishers, fishworkers and their communities in the small-scale sector, as well as to Indigenous Peoples worldwide to defend their right to secure life and livelihood from fisheries-related activities, both marine and inland. The adoption of the Guidelines marks an expression of support to a politically and economically marginalized people, beleaguered by, among other things, pollution, displacement, conflicts over space and resources and climate-change impacts, and poor access to education, health and housing facilities.

The Guidelines represent the first formal attempt to talk in the same breath about equitable development of fishing communities and sustainable small-scale fisheries. They recognize small-scale fishing communities as a subsector that demands multisectoral and multistakeholder solutions. The Guidelines are couched in the language of a 'rights- based approach', where human rights take priority over property rights. Developed in an inclusive, ground-up and participatory manner, the Guidelines weave together international human-rights standards and soft and hard legal instruments that deal with fisheries, labour, women and gender, land, food, nutrition, ecosystem, trade and climate change. They deal substantially with most of the concerns of small-scale, rural and indigenous communities worldwide, as articulated through a raft of workshops of civil society organizations (CSOs), held in Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America since 2011, in preparation for the FAO technical consultations in May 2013 and February 2014.

The Guidelines will now have to move into the implementation mode. In this context, firstly, they should be made relevant for all vulnerable and marginalized groups who depend on small-scale fisheries. The time has now come to walk the talk!

– from SAMUDRA Report, No. 68, August 2014

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEETINGS

2nd Small-Scale Fisheries Summit (SSF Summit 2024), Rome, Italy, 5-7 July 2024

https://ssfhub.org/ssf-summit-2024

Committee on Fisheries, COFI36 Thirty-sixth session, 8-12 July 2024, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

https://www.fao.org/cofi/documents/en

Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 21

October–1 November 2024 - Cali, Colombia

https://www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-16

WEBSITE

2nd SSF Summit

https://www.icsf.net/resources/2nd-small-scale-fisheries-summit-ssf-summit-2024-rome-italy/

2nd SSF Summit site provides detailed information about the current status of the SSF Guidelines implementation at the national, regional and global level to inform future actions.

SSF Hub

https://ssfhub.org/

The SSF Hub is an online, interactive, and multilingual platform for small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their allies to share knowledge and collaborate.

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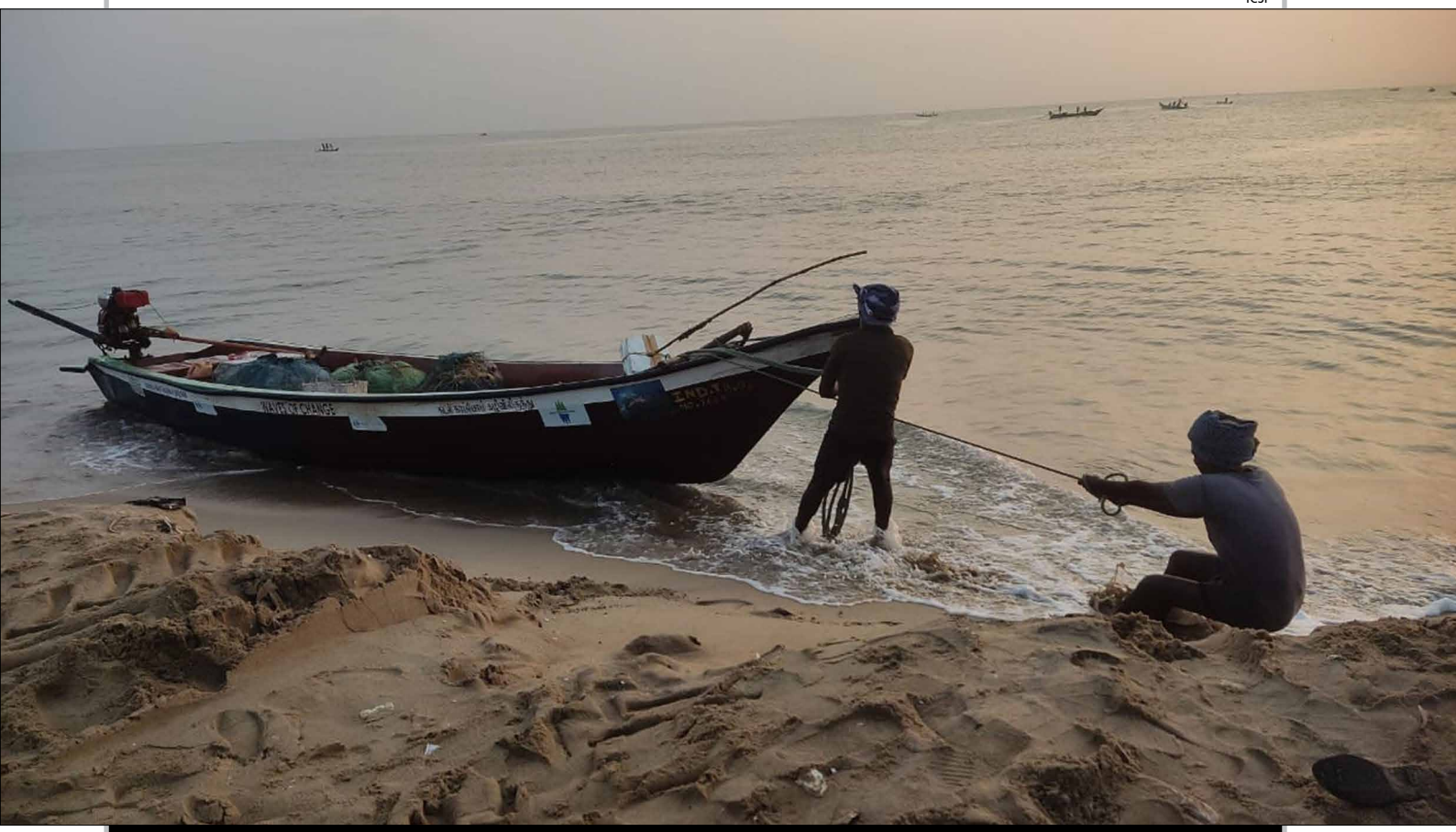

Endquote

Nowhere Else...

Nowhere else than upon the sea do the days, weeks and months fall away quicker into the past. They seem to be left astern as easily as the light air-bubbles in the swirls of the ship's wake, and vanish into a great silence in which your ship moves on with a sort of magical effect

— **from *The Mirror of the Sea* by Joseph Conrad**