

TBTI Working Group 3 – Framework Document

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The intent of this document is to provide a structure for the variety of research studies linked to the project Too Big to Ignore: Global Partnership for Research on Small-scale Fisheries (TBTI) that seek to establish the societal contributions of small-scale fisheries (SSF). Responsibility for this task falls to TBTI's Working Group 3: Broadening the Scope, a group that is focused particularly on the social and cultural contributions of SSF. The handbook begins with a statement of the place of research on the societal contributions of SSF within TBTI. It then moves to a discussion of methodology with two main sub-sections. First, it sketches a theoretical basis for a framework that aims to tie together the studies that will provide evidence for the societal values of SSF globally. Subsequently, the document presents the proposed framework itself that aims to guide Working Group 3's research and outputs.

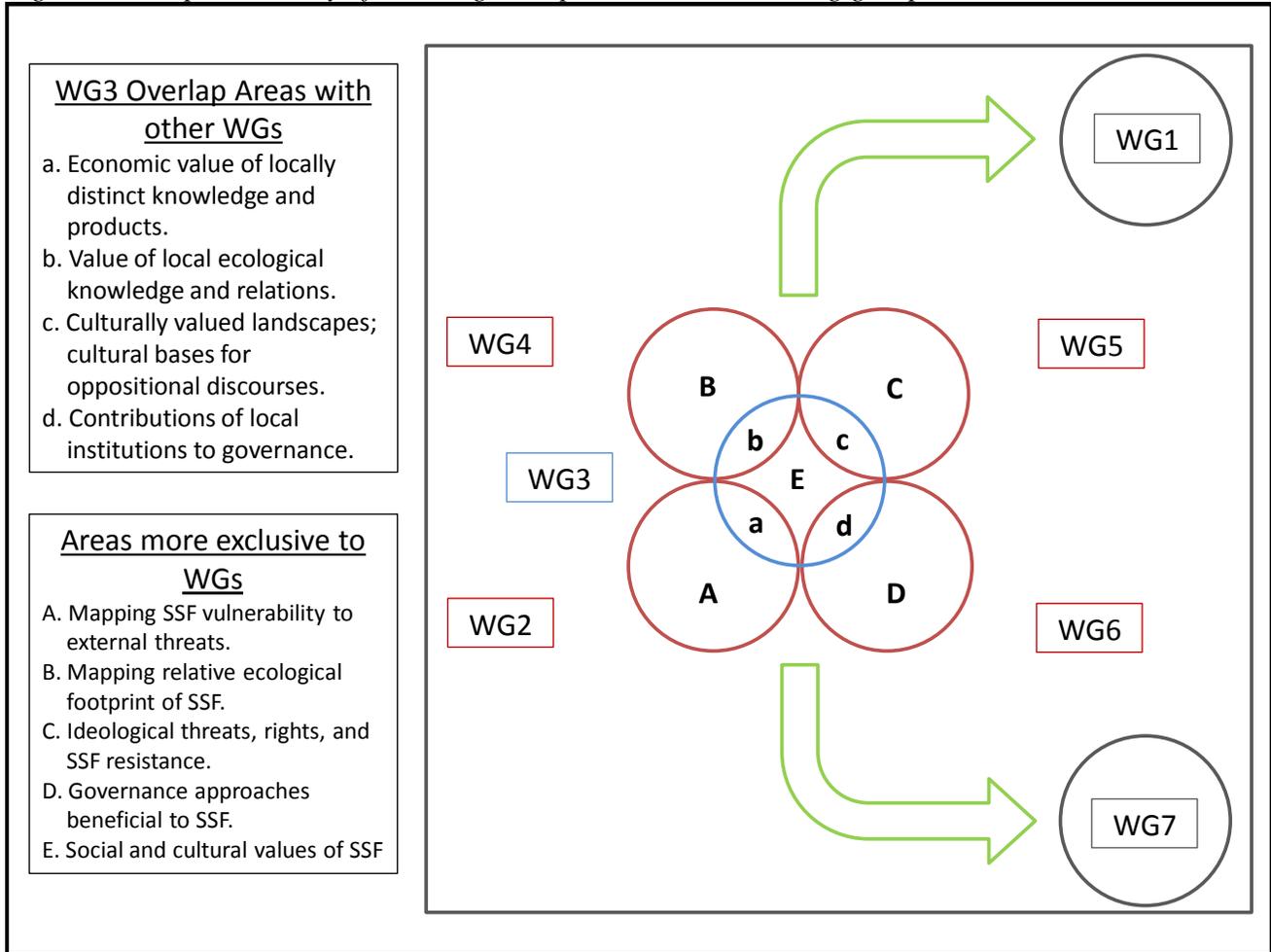
Working Group 3 in relation to TBTI and other working groups

TBTI aims to generate systematic knowledge on small-scale fisheries globally as a means to provide a thorough basis on which to argue for their actual and potential societal contributions and to show the ways in which they are threatened. The work of the project is divided into seven working groups. Of these, groups 1 and 7 are concerned with building a small-scale fisheries database and disseminating TBTI's messages about SSF. The responsibilities of the other four substantively-focused working groups, aside from working group 3, are briefly indicated in the next paragraph. Working Group 3's assignment is most directly oriented to the overall goal of TBTI to provide evidence for the societal contributions of SSF as it is tasked with developing a framework and tools for arguing the values of SSF. As will be detailed below, these are both objective, quantifiable values, and the important subjective values of SSF that are critically important but difficult to convey in a summary form.

Given this mandate to generate evidence for the societal importance of SSF, Working Groups 3's work thus reaches into the areas of the other 'big questions' working groups: 2, 4, 5 and 6. In the TBTI proposal, the impression is given that working Groups 2, 4 and 5 are all concerned with threats. In the spirit of the project, however, it is evident that these groups are also interested in the capacity of SSFs to advocate for their interests and in the societal contributions of SSFs in the areas of focus of each WG. WGs two and five are looking particularly at how SSFs are coping with economic change (2) and encroachment by other sectors or actors (5). Working group 4 is concerned with the threat – and promise – of SSF with regard to aquatic ecosystems. In coordination with all of these working groups, working group 6 seeks to identify institutions and governance arrangements that are friendly to SSF and their indigenous governance systems and to propose measures for strengthening such arrangements. In its work to develop a framework and tools for assessing the societal contributions of SSF, working group 3 must include some attention to economic, ecological, and institutional indicators of the benefits of SSF. Its main focus, however, is on the social and cultural contributions of SSF. Working Group 3 thus must necessarily work closely with the other big questions working groups, and Working Groups 1 and 7, to ensure that Working Group 3's methodology complements rather than duplicates the work of these others.

In an attempt to further position WG3 in relation to the other working groups, Figure 1 shows the respective areas of focus of the seven working groups from the perspective of WG3.

Figure 1. Complementarity of Working Group 3 with other working groups



The intent of the figure is only to show the overlap between WG3 and the other big question working groups. There are overlaps among those working groups as well that the figure does not attempt to capture. The main contribution of the diagram is to indicate the areas directly pertinent to each working group’s mandate (capital letters) and those areas that overlap with WG3 (small letters). As the mandate of WG3 is to identify the “aspects of small-scale fisheries that need to be accounted for and emphasized in order to increase awareness of their actual and potential social contributions and their overall societal importance”, research conducted by WG3 must to some extent incorporate attention to the areas marked with lower case letters that overlap with working groups 2, 4, 5 and 6. For example following *a*, WG3 should coordinate with WG2 to ensure that data are gathered to show the economic contributions to SSF in such areas as employment and GDP. Coordination of complementary work by the various working groups is the task of WG1.

Theoretical considerations

Social science research on small-scale fisheries has shown that an essential part of their value lies in their particularity; that is small-scale fisheries are distinct from other forms of human-environmental relationships and each specific small-scale fishery is a distinctive social and economic arrangement that is not easily reducible to the general small-scale fisheries type (McGoodwin 2001; Johnson 2006). Research on SSF within TBTI must therefore balance generalizing, quantitative statements about SSF with a rich array of case studies showing diversity. A further complication for assessing the value of small-scale fisheries is that how they are seen varies considerably. At the grossest level, what is of value to a small-scale fisher may be very different than external, non-fisher, evaluations of the importance of small-scale fisheries.

The challenge for TBTI is to devise an approach to valuing small-scale fisheries that accommodates this variability and a degree of indeterminacy yet can still make positive statements at global and micro-scales about the contribution of small-scale fisheries. We suggest an integrated approach that takes into consideration key issues concerning all TBTI's big questions (each associated with a working group), and embeds them within social wellbeing framework. Social wellbeing provides the analytical tools to understand the material, perceptual, and social relational factors that structure the landscape of small-scale fisheries (Coulthard, Johnson et al. 2011). Inclusion of the social wellbeing approach has the additional benefit of providing a basis to argue for the indeterminacy of judgements about small-scale fisheries but also to advocate for the intangible aspects of small-scale fisheries that fisheries social scientists argue are so fundamental to their distinctiveness and value.

Social wellbeing is an approach developed in the UK (Gough and McGregor 2007) that attempts to synthesize lessons from the international development literature about poverty alleviation. Beyond its relevance for understanding poverty, the social wellbeing perspective provides a framework based on the notion of what makes us well that is also useful for thinking about to what and why people assign value. Social wellbeing argues that wellbeing can first be divided into objective and subjective dimensions. The objective dimension consists of the material assets or resources that people possess, such as health status, education levels, or income. The subjective dimension stands for personal evaluations of how one is doing. A third, and critical dimension, is the relational. This dimension refers at one level to the social relationships that a person is involved in. More profoundly, however, the relational dimension is also an acknowledgement that what we value materially and how we perceive how we are doing depends on our relationships with others. If, for example, our material needs are met quite respectably, but we are surrounded by people who are much wealthier, we may consider ourselves to be deprived.

The relational dimension also highlights the social variability in assessments of what is valuable and thus links to the concern expressed above that our research be attuned to diversity. Social wellbeing provides a way to address the variability of assessments of small-scale fisheries' value, including distinctions within small-scale fisheries but also between small-scale fishers and other interested parties. In terms from another disciplinary tradition, social wellbeing sees small-scale fisheries and their valuation in complex systems' terms. Valuations can be seen as diverse emergent properties of small-scale fisheries that are perpetually changing. More practically, our challenge is to develop a methodology that uses the relational perspective of social wellbeing to capture the diversity, complexity,

and dynamics of small-scale fisheries valuation, while using the TBTI thematic framework as a template for identifying the basis for the argument in favour of small-scale fisheries.

The integrated theoretical framework for WG3 thus looks like this:

Objective

- Economic contributions of SSF (WG2)
- Distinctive practices of and objects used by SSF (WG3)
- Ecological knowledge (WG4)
- Uses of space by small-scale fishers and related groups (WG5)

Subjective

- Value given to fishing and fishing practices (e.g. job satisfaction; non-fisher admiration or disdain for SSF or ignorance of them) (WG3)
- Distinctive identities and social practices of SSF (WG3)
- Particular meanings and attachments associated with coastal ecologies and maritime space by small-scale fishers (WG3 and WG5)

Relational

- Consideration of importance of SSF, and aspects of SSF, for different groups (e.g. insiders/ outsiders/ men/women; owners/crew; etc.) (WG3)
- Considerations of variations in understanding and expression of objective and subjective dimensions for different groups (WG3)
- Contributions of SSF institutions to coastal and fisheries governance (WG6)

The objective and some subjective dimensions are most readily measured quantitatively. Some subjective dimensions and the relational dimensions showing the variation in and complexity of how SSF are valued are only properly addressed through detailed qualitative studies. The following section takes the first step in operationalizing this framework in an attempt to balance relatively objective measures of SSF societal contributions with detailed case studies to indicate the complexity entailed in making such objective evaluations.

Methodological considerations

Research in WG3 needs to include work in two areas: (1) collation of macro-level data on the contributions of SSF, and (2) compilation or undertaking of numerous case studies to illustrate micro variations in SSF. The first of these efforts would contribute to the Information System for Small-scale Fisheries (ISSF), coordinated by WG1. The second area of work would contribute publications in several formats, including edited volumes. A first list of proposed data needs and the work plan for each area are outlined below.

Area 1: Macro-level data needs and plan

Macro-level data ambitions can be roughly grouped according to the logic of the theoretical framework in the previous section. The table below presents indicators related to that framework in two groups:

Group 1: Indicators that can be addressed through existing secondary source data on national-level objective contributions of SSF. Collation of these data is already recognized as an objective for WG1.
 Group 2: Indicators on the diverse contributions of small-scale fisheries that are less likely to be easily addressed through existing data and that will likely require innovative analysis of secondary sources or the undertaking of original research focused on them.

The indicators listed in the table below are not comprehensive, and we expect that more will be added in future. Equally, the ones that are listed will need to be refined and elaborated for each country. They should be seen as important areas for inquiry, rather than the exact questions that will be asked for each case study. The indicators should also be seen as applying to small-scale aquaculture, even if they are framed in reference to small-scale fisheries. The ideal for each indicator in group 2 would be to be able to make generalizations about them at the national level. Nonetheless, we recognize the significant challenge that this poses and recognize that data may only become available at sub-national or case study levels. Regardless of comprehensiveness, our ambition is to have the data available through the ISSF in order to stimulate further work to add to them. This means that contributors will need to be clear about the spatial coverage of the data they provide and they will need to specify the exact questions used to gather the data on each indicator.

Group	Indicator	Related working groups
1	Employment in SSF by gender	WG 2, 3
	GDP contribution of SSF	WG 2, 3
	SSF fish production as % of total national production	WG 2, 3
	Fish as % of national animal source food	WG 2
	Others?	
2	% part time vs. full time fishers in SSF sector (economic integration of SSF into larger economies)	WG 2, 3
	Seasonal and annual variability in SSF employment (stability of employment in SSF)	WG 2, 3
	Rates of women’s formal and informal paid work in SSF (gendered contribution of work in SSF)	WG 2, 3
	Degree to which distinctive material culture aspects of SSF present (e.g. architecture, dress, boat design)	WG 3
	Number of distinct SSF ‘ethnic’ groups recognized	WG 3
	Number of distinct fisher languages or dialects	WG 3
	Subjective wellbeing of SSF compared to that of general population	WG 3
	Fisher and non-fisher perceptions of the sub-national regional and national economic, cultural and social values of SSF (Likert scale type response)	WG 3
	Richness of SSF systems of indigenous knowledge	WG 4, 3
	Degree to which indigenous knowledge informs formal understandings of fisheries ecology	WG 4, 3
	Spatial extent of SSF along national inland and marine coastlines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of total coastline inland and marine • In comparison with extent of other coastal users 	WG 5, 3
	Degree to which SSF rights to coastal space are formally recognized	WG 5, 3

	Degree to which indigenous SSF management institutions are present	WG 6, 3
	Degree to which arrangements exist for SSF to contribute to formal fisheries governance processes	WG 6, 3
	Others?	

A proposed timeline for further elaborating these indicators is given in the final section of the document.

Area 2: Case study data needs and plan

Ideally, case study research would aim to meet two objectives:

1. provide data to contribute to the macro data needs of Area 1;
2. provide richly detailed case studies of how individual small-scale fisheries diversely contribute to (or run counter to) the regional, national and global common good. These case studies will be brought together in two proposed edited volumes, as described below.

In order to meet objective 2, possible research foci need to be left as open as possible as long as they match the general objectives of WG3 to address the complexities of the social and cultural contributions of SSF. The macro-level indicators listed above should be a point of reference when conceptualizing the case study research. At the same time, studies would ideally add richness to our understanding of the valuation of small-scale fisheries by showing how perceptions of the value of SSF vary and, indeed, are even contested. Topics might include the importance of distinctive SSF cuisines, narratives about coastal or aquatic places, the commodification of romantic notions of SSF lifestyle for tourist consumption, fears about inter-generational declines in fisheries knowledge, SSF belief systems and rituals, SSF job satisfaction and way of life studies, livelihoods plurality, etc. The basis for these studies might be newly undertaken research specifically for TBTI, additions to ongoing research, development, or fisheries management engagements, or restudy of already gathered research materials using the lens of WG3.

Methodologically, the integration of the social wellbeing approach with project objectives provides a valuable benchmark to guide these studies. Social wellbeing theory stimulates an appreciation for social relational variation in particular contexts while also directing attention to material and subjective considerations. Case studies based on ongoing or new research could be built with varied blends of methods, some putting more emphasis on interpretive ethnographic work and others grounded in participatory development approaches or larger scale survey approaches.

We envisage the collation of case studies in two edited volumes. The first of these will focus on the Asia and Oceania region; the second will be global in scope. We will also aim to publish syntheses of WG3’s work as journal articles and as chapters in a volume that brings together the overall contributions of TBTI.

Timeline and template development focused on the first volume of case studies

WG3 Objectives through 2015	Completion date or period of work
Preliminary testing of WG3 framework and reflection	October and November 2013

Presentation of case study descriptions, refinement of framework, and possible crafting of a case study template (not all contributors must attend this meeting; results will be conveyed to the whole group)	Hyderabad meeting December 13, 2103
Full scale research studies for volume 1	January to June 2014
Contributions to WG1 database	May 2014 onward
Submission of draft papers for volume 1	August 15, 2014
Presentation of findings of volume 1 case studies	Merida WSFC 2 September 21-25, 2014
Submission of edited volume 1 for publication	January 2015

Contributors of case studies will have two months in October and November 2013 to reflect on the application of the framework to their geographical areas of focus and do some preliminary testing of it, either in the field or in the examination of existing data sets. The results of this phase of work will be presented and discussed in Hyderabad in the form of case study descriptions. The intention there will be to produce a refined framework document that will be the basis for the systematically conducted area 2 studies that will be the foundation for addressing WG3’s longer term objectives the publication of the edited volume and systematic contributions to the SSF database. The expectation is that in this phase the contributors will do their best to gather data in areas 1 and 2 at the local and national levels as specified in the methodology section. Lessons from this entire research exercise should then be translated into a yet more elaborated framework to guide the global case studies for volume 2 and future studies on the societal value of SSF that could continue to feed into and strengthen the ISSF and other databases on small-scale fisheries.

A separate call for case studies and a timeline for volume 2 will sent out following the Hyderabad meeting in December 2013.

References

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