

Too Big To Ignore

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# TBTI Cluster on the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines

Concept note

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RESEARCH

POLICY

MOBILIZATION

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**Prepared by**

**Svein Jentoft, UIT – The Arctic University of Norway**

**Nicole Franz, FAO, Rome**

**María José Barragán Paladines, Memorial University, St. John's**

**Ratana Chuenpagdee, Memorial University, St. John's**

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Too Big To Ignore  
Memorial University  
St. John's, NL  
Canada A1B 3X9

[toobigtoignore@mun.ca](mailto:toobigtoignore@mun.ca)  
[toobigtoignore.net](http://toobigtoignore.net)

## Introduction

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This concept note is meant to spur interest among small-scale fisheries researchers and organizations and the Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) members in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). The SSF Guidelines were endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June 2014 after a long participatory consultation process which involved over 4000 stakeholders from over 120 countries. This concept note helps to guide activities in the “SSF Guidelines Cluster” within the TBTI research partnership. The cluster is devoted to the study of the implementation process of these guidelines. TBTI members and other individuals and organizations interested in this topic are invited to join the effort.

The endorsement of the SSF Guidelines was indeed a landmark achievement, but now the challenge of implementation lies ahead. The commitment and capability to implement the SSF Guidelines vary within countries and regions, as do the national policies and strategies for fisheries governance. Thus, there is no reason to assume that the implementation process will be smooth, that the SSF Guidelines will release immediate response, and that results will appear in the short run. However, first national and regional efforts are made and it will be important to capture, document and analyze those processes to share lessons and inform future implementation in other countries and regions.

The SSF Guidelines represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development. They were developed in close collaboration with representatives of small-scale fisheries organizations and other relevant stakeholders in a process facilitated by FAO. The full text can be found at this address: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4356e.pdf>. The SSF Guidelines complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related instruments as well as other negotiated voluntary international instruments such as the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* and the *Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*.

The SSF Guidelines are broad in scope, and their implementation will necessarily engage a broad range of government agencies, civil society organizations, as well as small-scale fisheries stakeholders along the entire chain from harvest to markets. The SSF Guidelines are stressing the need to be gender sensitive, as the sector involves both men and women. How to coordinate the implementation process among a large variety of actors,

all with different competencies, mandates and resources within the governing system and the system-to-governed is an important governability issue, also from a research perspective.

There is considerable literature on the subject of implementation research. The implementation of the SSF Guidelines is likely to meet many of the same challenges faced in other international and national codes of conduct and agreements. Thus, there are things that can be learned from similar implementation processes and from the studies that have been carried out on them. A paper on the implementation process authored by Svein Jentoft (<http://www.maritimestudiesjournal.com/content/13/1/16>) outlines some of the research questions related to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. They will not be repeated in any detail in this concept note.

## Researching the implementation process

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FAO can help to create awareness and facilitate the implementation process of the SSF Guidelines, but it is first and foremost the states and civil society organizations, in particular fisher and fishworker organizations, to which the SSF Guidelines are addressed, that will have to take them up. The SSF Guidelines do after all call for governance reform, and if necessary also new legislation, to provide livelihood security for small-scale fisheries and communities. Such reforms are inherently political, and are likely to meet stumble-blocks, and possibly resistance, as they inevitably interfere with established systems, policies and interests. What FAO will do, and what TBTI can help with, is to support the implementation process by documenting and analyzing the experience, and by providing input that will facilitate the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and therefore promote good governance of the small-scale fisheries sector. How well, and if at all, governments around the world are ready to implement (or even already started implementing) the SSF Guidelines is a question that can be researched for every single country. The aim of the cluster is to try to contribute to this research as good as we possibly can.

There are people within universities, research institutes and community-based organizations, who are interested in small-scale fisheries in one way or another, who we would like to mobilize and engage with to support the work of this cluster. TBTI does not have the funding to support major research projects, but the COFI members, when endorsing the SSF Guidelines, have committed themselves to provide research funding

on the sector (paragraph 11.9), something that stakeholders may need to remind them of.

The implementation has already started in some parts of the world. For instance, the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF) is currently (February 2015) organizing a series of workshops on the SSF Guidelines implementation in India, Myanmar and Thailand. India is in an interesting phase promoted by the new President; apparently introducing more comprehensive approaches to development and decentralization. The National Human Rights Commission in India is rather active and has engaged with fisheries also in the past. The challenge remains in moving from a workshop to actual implementation.

Costa Rica may have been the first state to integrate the SSF Guidelines into the implementation in its 2015-2018 National Development Plan. How it happened and why, is a research question. It would be very interesting to see which other countries follow suit, and what for instance other countries in the region are learning from this example. South Africa has a recent small-scale fisheries policy that is now being implemented. How this policy corresponds to the principles and concerns outlined in the SSF Guidelines is a research question, which can also be extended to the fisheries policy of other countries. Are small-scale fisheries a specific policy focus? If not, why; if yes, how? And how big is, and what explains, the “gap” between what is stated in the SSF Guidelines and the current policy and governance practice with particular countries?

The research effort does not have to, and in fact cannot, wait until the SSF Guidelines are actively implemented and start to take effect. The latter is expected to happen perhaps several years from now. It is in any case important to know more about what situation small-scale fisheries are in and in which context the SSF Guidelines are to be inserted. It is also important to investigate the governing system, understanding which agencies may play a role in the implementation, what their capacity is and what policy frameworks they are working under. Research should occur at all levels, at the local community, state and regional levels. A particularly interesting question relates to the processes that occur across scale and boundaries, for instance the interaction that take place between local communities and small-scale fisheries organizations at different levels, and the links to and between government agencies at various levels, including regionally.

## Suggested research methods and questions

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Research may employ a broad range of methods and techniques, for case-studies at different scales, also in the form of participatory research, involving directly representatives of fishing communities and civil society organizations. The local community may be both the focus and locus for this research; a government agency or a regional organization likewise. Other methods like surveys may also be employed. Implementation research is a specialty of political and public administration science, but in the case of small-scale fisheries, we are not only interested in what is happening within the governing system, but also on the ground – within the system-to-be-governed, and other disciplines have a contribution to make to this.

For learning to occur between countries, some standardization to allow comparison should be instituted. There are, for instance, some basic things one would need to know about small-scale fisheries and the governing system in all countries and how they differ/align in relation to the principles of the SSF Guidelines at all levels. The list of questions below is not meant to be exhaustive but suggestive as to what researchers within our cluster might focus on. See also the accompanying template designed to help with the data collection.

As to the small-scale fisheries sector, information on at least the following variables would be useful:

- Dominant governance mode in small-scale fisheries (e.g. hierarchical-, co-, self-, mixed governance design)
- Organization of small-scale fisheries stakeholders (e.g. type, number and scale of organizations, membership, agenda)
- Dominant technologies (e.g. gear types) and markets supplied by small-scale fisheries (e.g. what happens after landing)
- Fisheries management instruments (e.g. gear/area/seasonal/quota restriction)
- Interaction with other sectors, marine-resource users and/or marine activities (conflict, compatible, independent)

With regard to the governing system, information on the following variables would be helpful:

- Current ideologies, perceptions and policies targeting the fisheries sector as a whole and small-scale fisheries in particular; how are small-scale fisheries defined and targeted?

- Which agencies are responsible for small-scale fisheries? What are their world-views, strengths and weakness? At what scales do they operate, what linkages do they have with others and how are initiatives coordinated?
- Legal frameworks: What is the legal status of small-scale fisheries? Are their human rights, including their tenure rights, secure? Which jurisdictional conflicts affect small-scale fisheries, and to what extent and in what form is there legal pluralism?

Research should also be targeting the implementation process specifically and be forward looking:

- Which government agencies are responsible for the implementation process, and for which issues? How well coordinated is the implementation process?
- What roles do fisher and fish worker organizations and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have in the implementation process? Are they directly involved and how, are they consulted, or are they playing a reactive function?
- What other actors, organizations and funding agencies have/could have keen interests in the SSF Guidelines implementation? What role can they play?
- How is or would the implementation process be funded?
- Does/would the implementation lead to minor or major institutional and legal reform?
- What are the stumbling blocks envisioned and experienced? Is there resistance to their implementation, and what is done to overcome it?
- How is information about the SSF Guidelines spread? Are stakeholders aware about them? If not, why? Do they reach the local community and how are they received there?

## **Mare conference, 24-26 June 2015, Amsterdam**

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A preparatory meeting on the cluster took place in December 2014 in Rome in connection with a workshop on the SSF Guidelines implementation organized by FAO. The next opportunity to discuss this initiative will be at the Mare Conference in Amsterdam in June 2015, which will function as a kick-off meeting for the cluster. A special panel session on the SSF Guidelines is meant to gather participants interested in the subject to discuss what the research questions are and what investigative strategies should be employed. Cluster members attending the MARE Conference are also invited

to participate in the TBTI Cross-Cluster Meeting to be held on June 22-23, before the conference.

The session aims:

- a) To provide an introduction to the SSF Guidelines and a brief overview of ongoing initiatives and processes to implement the SSF Guidelines; and
- b) To exchange experiences and perspectives on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines of panel members.

The ultimate objective is to document these experiences and to contribute to developing a methodology to assess the enabling environment for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at various levels. Such a methodology should be able to help assess the baseline status of the following aspects in relation to coherence with the principles of the SSF Guidelines:

- Legal, regulatory and policy framework
- Institutional framework
- Information, research, communication, and mobilization environment
- Level of capacity (human, financial, technical, and logistic) – within the public institutions and of other relevant stakeholders, in particular fisher and fishworker organizations.

The outcome of such an assessment should allow identifying potential priorities and entry points for the SSF Guidelines implementation research. It should also explore relevant developing indicators to monitor progress of the implementation. The panel session will present starting points for such research, drawing on specific experiences and views of the panelists and will provide an opportunity for conference participants to join the cluster initiative.

## Expected cluster outcomes/deliverables

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In addition to the standard academic outputs in terms of research articles and monographs, the cluster will facilitate the production of an e-book that shall function as a source of experienced-based knowledge about how the implementation takes places in different countries and regions around the world, and what lessons are learned. This compilation will help countries learn from each other, as one may assume considerable confusion among states and civil society in terms of their role in the implementation and



what actions to take. The cluster coordinators will have a responsibility to coordinate the work with the e-book. Another output from the cluster is a 'tracking' of the SSF Guidelines implementation around the world through the TBTI Information System on Small-Scale Fisheries (ISSF). In form of an interactive map, the system will help us document different activities related to the SSF Guidelines, monitor the progress and identify areas where we should do more to raise awareness and mobilize support. Ideally, a multi-language (i.e., English, Spanish, and French) interface of the research instruments used (e.g. questionnaires) and results (e.g. research briefs) obtained through the development of this initiative will be made available within the TBTI-ISSF.

If you are interested in participating in the work of the SSF Guidelines cluster or have questions and/or suggestions, please contact [toobigtoginore@mun.ca](mailto:toobigtoginore@mun.ca).

Too Big To Ignore  
Memorial University  
St. John's, NL  
Canada A1B 3X9

[toobigtoignore@mun.ca](mailto:toobigtoignore@mun.ca)  
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