



Too Big To Ignore: Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries Research (TBTI)

TBTI sessions at the 70th Annual Conference GCFI

Date: Friday, November 10, 2017

Room: Regency 1, Hyatt Regency Merida

SUMMARY REPORT

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08:30-10:15	Session 1: The big questions about sustainability and viability of small-scale fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean
Session Chair	Maria Pena (CERMES, West Indies)
	<p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Silvia Salas (CINVESTAV, Mexico): TBTI book on viability and sustainability of small-scale fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean ➤ Stuart Fulton (COBI, Mexico): From fishing fish to fishing data: the role of artisanal fishers in conservation and resource management in Mexico ➤ Sergio Mattos (Ministry of Planning, Brazil): Implications of institutional and legal framework for small-scale fisheries development in Brazil ➤ Patrick McConney (CERMES, West Indies): Stewardship for sustainable small-scale fisheries
10:30-12:30	Session 2: Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines in Latin America and the Caribbean: What will it take?
Session chair	Silvia Salas (CINVESTAV, Mexico)
	<p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Angel Gumy (Independent Consultant, Italia): The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries and some potential key issues in the context of the Latin American and Caribbean region ➤ Maria Jose Espinosa (COBI, Mexico): The contribution of civil society to implementation of Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines in Mexico ➤ Sanya Compton (CERMES, West Indies): A protocol for implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines across the Caribbean region ➤ Maria Pena (CERMES, West Indies): The UWI-CERMES Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT): a short overview ➤ Eduardo Boné (EDF, Cuba): Small-scale fisheries, science-based management and community involvement in Cuba
14:00-15:45	Session 3: Is “transdisciplinarity” an answer to the wicked problem in small-scale fisheries governance?
Session chair	Maria Jose Espinosa (COBI, Mexico)
	<p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Silvia Salas (CINVESTAV, Mexico): The need for transdisciplinarity in research and policy-making ➤ Minerva Arce (ECOSUR, Mexico): Transdisciplinary capacity development in Mexico - the Sonora workshop ➤ Sergio Mattos (Ministry of Planning, Brazil): Applying the transdisciplinary perspective in small-scale fisheries: the case of Itapissuma, Brazil ➤ Romina Alzugaray (Center of Fisheries Research, Cuba): Bridging boundaries in fisheries between science and management through community involvement in Cuba ➤ Katia Frangoudes (Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France): Gender in small-scale fisheries: transdisciplinary perspective

This November, TBTI organized several sessions at the 70th Annual Conference of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), in Merida, Mexico. The sessions were in line with the theme of the GCFI conference: “*towards the sustainability of tropical fisheries strategies, models and tools*”, and focused on sharing the lessons learned from the work done by the TBTI collaborators in Latin America and the Caribbean. Information about the program, presenters and sessions chairs is available [here](#).

Through an overview of the TBTI main objectives, the audience was informed of the importance of the project, and the efforts of the TBTI members to raise the profile of small-scale fisheries around the world. Session 1 started by introducing the big questions about sustainability and viability of small-scale fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean, under the concept of the new TBTI book on ‘Viability and Sustainability of Small-Scale Fisheries in Latin American and the Caribbean’ that will be launched in early 2018. Presenters showcased several case studies from the book, which depicted the following issues: the role of artisanal fishers in conservation and resource management in Mexico, from fishing to data collection; the implications of institutional and legal framework for small-scale fisheries development in Brazil; and stewardship for sustainable small-scale fisheries. The presenters examined factors and conditions for sustainability and viability of small-scale fisheries and questioned whether current policies and institutions adequately support small-scale fisheries for them to become viable and sustainable. Participants worked in small groups to consider the challenges in more details, and offer recommendations for success.

Based on the discussion within the Group 1, for fisheries to become viable, the perspectives of fisherfolk need to become central. They emphasized that a viable fishery depends on legal and institutional frameworks that can deal with issues such as taxes, investment, operational budgets, insurance, credit, stock viability, monitoring and enforcement, innovation and strengthening of the public-private partnership. The group also discussed the management actions required for protecting resources, including: having diverse fish products as a way to add value; safety at the sea; health certification; control and the use of fishing gears in a responsible way; diversification of activities in order to sustain income during the off-season and, most importantly – achieving community engagement.

Group 2 focused their recommendations on responsibilities towards a healthy environment for small-scale fisheries and management measures for protecting and sustainably harvesting the resources. According to them, the actions need to be shared among all stakeholders and they should all be in the same context in terms of language (legal or scientific), and timing. They also noted that the fundamental challenge of connecting the social, natural, and governance systems could be explored through the integration of key issues such as capacity building and responsibilities towards a healthy environment for small-scale fisheries. Group 3 focused their recommendations on the importance of understanding and classifying the system on different dimensions and scales. Fishery viability should be assessed on different levels (community, national, and worldwide), as well as on different time scales (shore vs. long terms) and economic considerations (benefits). It was also emphasized that a viable fishery depends on individual goals, as well as on effective communication between the fishers and the government within a management system.

Session 2 focused on the challenges and uncertainties for the implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objectives and principles of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)* were presented, highlighting some of the key issues for their effective implementation in Latin American and Caribbean region. The rest of the session explored the following topics: the strategic role of the civil society for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, depicted through an example of how Mexican stakeholders engage and commit; the importance of having a protocol for implementing the SSF Guidelines across the Caribbean region; the importance of gender as a fundamental component that can foster stakeholder integration and facilitate search for a common vision in the Latin American and Caribbean region; and science-based management and community involvement in Cuba. The SSF Guidelines touch upon many

important principles, including human rights, and aim to address a range of social, ecological, economic and governance issues that are complex and politically contentious. The presenters demonstrated how early lessons and reflections on ways to overcome obstacles and support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at various levels, scales and locations, can be useful for the development of the SSF Guidelines implementation strategies.

During the Q&A period, which focused on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, participants agreed that facilitating a dialogue on issues that can be both common or context specific, something that was identified as a wicked problem for the small-scale fisheries development, can be a way to engage stakeholders towards looking at solutions that best fit their need, realities and ways of life. Creating a community of practice that involves researchers, users, markets, civil society organizations, and consultants is key for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as no single actor is able to implement them singlehandedly. Communication and reflection are the two important factors for the process of problem solving; they allow the fishers to see the full process of problem identification and they also bring about a more creative and integrated solutions.

Session 3 questioned if a “transdisciplinary approach” is an answer to the wicked problems in small-scale fisheries governance. TBTI identified the need for transdisciplinarity in research and policymaking, an approach which involves engaging non-scientific actors. Presenters shared studies on transdisciplinary capacity development (Mexico); applying the transdisciplinary perspective in small-scale fisheries (Brazil); and bridging boundaries in fisheries between science and management through community involvement (Cuba). The session ended with a discussion on how practitioners can address issues such as gender in small-scale fisheries through a transdisciplinary perspective. It is worthwhile noting that women represented 65% of the audience at the TBTI sessions.

At the moment, transdisciplinarity is receiving a lot of attention, replacing the existing multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches as a mean to address complex problems in fisheries. Participants shared thoughts and exchanged ideas about whether transdisciplinarity is indeed a solution to the ‘wicked’ problems in small-scale fisheries. Moving from disciplinary to transdisciplinary approach requires a full spectrum of changes, such as: using different methods and integrating different tools for communication; producing and facilitating changes within the community; bringing together stakeholders from different disciplines; integrating local knowledge and scientific knowledge; looking for a common language and believing that we must think outside the box. Through a problem solving approach, which, for example, looks at the impacts on the family and community income, common and wicked problems in the small-scale fisheries may be identified.

*Towards the sustainability of tropical fisheries strategies, models and tools:
Remarks and contributions from the TBTI sessions*

Discussions on viability and sustainability of small-scale fisheries are moving towards a common understanding, as a way to identify wicked problems and find solutions at the adequate social level to discuss what fishers want and need to know. It is impossible to explain a wicked problem through a single system (either natural, social or governance), more so because of the lack of data. As such, it is worthwhile exploring the connections between these systems to establish a comprehensive understanding of the different dimensions.

Building on the transdisciplinarity approach is not an easy task as it depends on the nature and the context of the problem. If the problem is clear, it may be possible for an experienced and/or a specialized individual to apply this approach. In this respect, TBTI is tracking and developing important tools to understand and propose problem-solving methods. This can be achieved by integrating local knowledge and recognizing that

fishers have for a long time been discussing issues and using informal methods that, in some way or another, were already transdisciplinary in nature. By communicating with other people involved in small-scale fisheries (managers and other stakeholders), a movement towards an effective examination of the complexity of fisheries was gradually established, one that encompasses multiple perspectives to transparently delineate conflicts and tradeoffs, and a transformative approach that uses research as a tool to address fisheries concerns.

As highlighted during the presentations on gender issues, it is crucial to recognize that stakeholders must engage at all social, cultural and hierarchical levels. In this regard, it was observed that youth is not following their parents but that they instead leave the fishing sector. In addition, although youth likes ecology and marine sciences, they seem to dislike fisheries science. It was also emphasized that the data about the involvement of women in the fishing sector is still being treated just as a variable, which means that there is still a division of labour by gender in the workplace. Women continue to be vulnerable to the political agendas that come with the change of governments, and there is still a need to foster their visibility through existing international agreements (i.e. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman – CEDAW*). Women differ from other social groups because they cut across all social classes, and in order for them to have the same rights, the barriers of social exclusion must be cut down. The gender concept still poses challenges, and it raises the necessity to introduce the concept of 'person': to think of the humans, to consider the symbolic and emotional connections, and culture. At the same time, there is a recognition of the necessity to highlight the concept of gender as a social issues, as a way to properly address the viability of small scale fisheries.

People often complain that government does not acknowledge the contribution of fisheries to food security because, on average, fisheries have a low impact on the GDP. However, it depends on what exactly you are interested in, which requires taking into account the specific context when enforcing fishing regulations. Whenever you speak to fishers they talk about illegal fishing and corruption, and they feel powerless to change these issues. So, how do we implement public policies when the state does not know what is the actual problem? To achieve a win-win situation, we need to figure out how to interact with the governance system and how to address the gender issues. We also need to identify problems related to governance, and find ways for all disciplines to work together towards solving fishers' problems. Beside the governance system, there are also social aspects, all of which require a strong involvement and commitment. Communication means interpreting ways on how to manage the information, the organization and the system to be governed. To be successful, we need to foster the existing networks and continue working together.