

Too Big To Ignore Report
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Too Big To Ignore

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Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries Research

Supporting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines
Report from the 3rd World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress

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RESEARCH

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List of Acronyms

COFI – Committee on Fisheries

CSO – Civil Society Organization

FAD – Fish Aggregating Device

FAO – Food and Agriculture Agency of the United Nations

ISSF – Information System on Small-Scale Fisheries

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

RFBs – Regional Fishery Bodies

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SSF Guidelines – The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

SSF – Small-Scale Fisheries

TBTI – Too Big To Ignore research network

3WSFC – 3rd World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress

Summary

In June 2014, 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 (SSF Guidelines). This endorsement marked the conclusion of several years of ardent effort that went into the development of the SSF Guidelines through consultations and negotiations. The preparatory work on the instrument was carried out in close collaboration with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) representing fishers and fish workers, academia, regional fishery bodies (RFBs), and other organizations and stakeholders. The SSF Guidelines are the first ever international instrument specifically designed for small-scale fisheries sustainability, taking into consideration their nature, concerns, and potentials. Through human-rights based approach and several key guiding principles, the SSF Guidelines call on all stakeholders at all levels to contribute to their implementation. While the finalization and endorsement of the instrument itself were of critical importance, the real challenge lies in its implementation. The SSF Guidelines are broad in scope, and their implementation must necessarily engage a wide range of government agencies, CSOs, and research community, as well as small-scale fisheries stakeholders along the entire chain from harvest to markets.

The 3rd World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress (3WSFC), held in Chiang Mai Thailand in October 2018, was an opportunity for researchers, practitioners, fisher organizations, CSOs, and policy makers to share up-to-date information about all aspects of small-scale fisheries and to formulate action plans and capacity development programs to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. This report presents the summary of the discussion about the SSF Guidelines, outlining in particular the roles of governments, CSOs, and research community in the implementation process, and illustrating some of the main challenges and opportunities in the implementation. In addition, the report provides insights on what kind of governance transformation is needed for a successful implementation as well as how best to integrate knowledge and foster communications to enhance this process. From a practical standpoint, the report provides direct examples of how the SSF Guidelines are being implemented in five countries across the globe.

The report was based on the notes taken from various congress sessions, including, among others: a) panel discussion on the roles of government in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (Policy Day), b) regional roundtable discussions (Action Day), c) plenary discussions about research plans, community actions and policy directions (Action Day), d) inputs from congress participants through the cross-cutting questions discussion, and e) direct contribution from early career scientists and developing country participants throughout the congress.

Panel discussion on the roles of government in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

The section below provides highlights from the plenary session on the roles of government in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The section starts with an overview of the plenary, after which the main messages from the session are assembled around the six key themes, all pertaining to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The key themes are as follows: *Innovations, Bright spots about progress, Knowledge gaps, Challenges, Opportunities, and Science-policy interface.*

Session overview

Date: Wednesday, October 24 – POLICY DAY

Plenary speakers:

1. Adisorn Promthep, Department of Fisheries, Thailand
2. Lilian Ibengwe, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Tanzania
3. Hary Christijanto, Department of Fisheries Resources Management, Indonesia
4. El hadji Abdoulaye Coume, Ministere de la Peche et de l'Economie Maritime, Senegal
5. Christopher Arthur, Fisheries Department, Vanuatu

The speakers in this sessions provided example of what the governments of **Indonesia, Senegal, Tanzania, Thailand**, and **Vanuatu** have been doing to promote the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as well as support the sustainable small-scale fisheries. Through these five presentations, the speakers:

- 1) Addressed the importance of participation of local small-scale fisher representatives and CSOs right from the planning stage of the implementation process;
- 2) Described the complexities and hierarchies involved in implementation due to governmental and bureaucratic processes;
- 3) Acknowledged the importance of international collaborations (e.g. FAO, AusAid, etc.) in their efforts;
- 4) Highlighted diverse challenges facing small-scale fishers in their respective countries;

- 5) Emphasized the contributions of small-scale fisheries to national economies and livelihoods; and
- 6) Showcased that the inclusion from the beginning of these processes is a key element for success.

While the efforts undertaken by these governments greatly varied from country to country as they attempted to integrate national targets with local needs, they all appeared to appreciate the importance of core social principles that went beyond fisheries or resource management alone (e.g. human rights, gender equality, dignity, cultural identity, etc.).

The session also underlined the fact that transdisciplinary work on small-scale fisheries needs active inclusion and participation of fishers in the policy-making process. Without such inclusion, it would be difficult to protect communities from marginalization by the neoliberal development. This is where strong policy for governance comes into play, becoming the reference point from which to act to:

- Improve access, opportunity, and equality.
- Strengthen institutional capacity to provide ownership and recognition of small-scale fishers and their needs.

Key themes

1) Innovations

1. Vanuatu: locally designed, cyclone-resistant, and cost-effective Vatuika FAD and a wide-reaching android, plus cloud-based data collection efforts done by the government through the *Tails PLUS* project;
2. Tanzania: plans to form a '*Fisheries Gender Desk*' - the formation of a national woman network; still in progress as they are currently working on mapping women organisations across the coast;
3. Indonesia: a fisher insurance and ID card scheme (though not exactly an innovation), with a significant coverage (over 100,000 certificates issued so far), although mostly focused on men. The program facilitates access to bank loans and grants insurances; and
4. Thailand: recognition of land rights of nomadic 'sea-gypsies' fisher communities. Also, a fishers' registration system is being put in place. Gender issues have been placed on the policy agenda and there is budget available for the implementation of gender equality strategy.
5. Senegal: A steering committee was set up that led to the development of a National Action Plan. An advisory committee for SSF Guidelines is currently leading the implementation and monitoring; also, a subcommittees were formed as per focal

specific topics, including gender equity, improvement of living and working conditions and other. A draft plan was developed for harmonization, orientation, and local reframing of the SSF Guidelines.

II) Bright spots about progress

1. The most significant changes are observed in government efforts to increase awareness and outreach to diverse fishery stakeholder groups.
2. The countries appeared to have conducted significant outreach and awareness efforts to popularize and reinterpret the SSF Guidelines in local contexts, with assessments of which local needs overlap with which sections of the SSF Guidelines (e.g. Senegal);
3. Innovations underscored by objectives pertaining to access to technology, security, gender issues, and broader human rights in fisheries; and
4. Collaborations of different actors recognized as crucial for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

III) Knowledge gaps

1. In the follow-up session, fishers from the audience argued that many fishers have still no idea of what the SSF Guidelines are or what they are supposed to do. This is a clear sign that there is a translation gap between government plans and local understanding of what and why changes are being done;
2. Data gaps based on fish catch/gear/effort/access research and analysis;
3. Limited understanding of economic and social networks in fishing value chains; and
4. Understanding of fisher behaviour and value chain links in regimes of open-access versus other community-based or state-based regimes remains limited.

IV) Challenges

1. Generic challenges: human rights issues, disaster risk and accident vulnerability of fishers, climate change risk, gender issues;
2. Specific challenges: disaster risk from hydrocarbon exploration (coasts of Senegal); tuna exports and demand pressures affecting adequacy of food for people within countries (Vanuatu); exploitation of labour (Thailand), etc.;
3. Current institutional strength and capacity of fisher communities are significant challenges for direct implementation – institutional reform and political empowerment are prerequisites for the implementation, which will not be achieved easily; and
4. Political commitment and will, including funding sustainability, is another key challenge.

V) Opportunities

1. Keenness of governments to collaborate with international supporting organizations such as the FAO can offer significant opportunities for implementation and monitoring; and
2. Acknowledgement of the importance of involving CSOs and fish workers throughout the supply and value chain provides opportunities for adaptive management.
3. Formation of plans, committees, and management strategies at the local, national, and regional levels.

VI) Science-policy interface *

All speakers emphasized the lack of scientific data on fishing effort, catch, market demand-supply, value chains, etc. as a significant challenge for policy, making it harder to decide where and how to act. Having good data from research and monitoring activities was also perceived relevant for the surveillance of illegal fishing activities, which was thought to be an integral part of policy making.

* (see page 10 for a set of recommendations on how to improve science-policy interface that were compiled from the 'action circle' on integrating knowledge and fostering communications to enhance the implementation of the SSF Guidelines)

Key messages from the Policy Day debrief

At the end of each day the notes from all congress sessions were compiled and analysed. The main messages and recommendations from these notes were then presented the next morning, to encourage reflection and further inclusion of these ideas in the congress discussions.

The following highlights, taken from the debrief that covered the sessions from the Policy Day (Wednesday, October 24), specifically address the issue of the SSF Guidelines implementation.

Roles of Government in the SSF Guidelines implementation

- Attempt to integrate national targets with local needs;
- Describe the complexities and hierarchies involved in the SSF Guidelines implementation associated with governmental and bureaucratic processes;
- Recognize core social principles that go beyond fisheries or resource management alone (e.g. human rights, gender equality, dignity, cultural identity, etc.); and
- Highlight the importance of participation of local small-scale fishers' representatives and CSOs at the early stages of implementation.

Roles of Policy Influencers in the SSF Guidelines implementation

- Adopt a multi-dimensional, transdisciplinary approach;
- Seek broader connections across sectors;
- Understand that we have to build and collect information and data with communities – not just about them;
- The SSF Guidelines can be used to self-evaluate the work of NGOs; and
- Shift the discourse to 'adopting' rather than 'implementing' the SSF Guidelines.

Insights from ‘action circles’ on ways forward for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

Date: Friday, October 26 – ACTION DAY

During the plenary session #7 on ‘Drawing up roadmaps’, discussions were organized around ‘action circles’ focusing on key topics that emerged during the congress. The aim was to further elaborate on and propose some concrete ideas about the ways forward, thinking in particular about what the participants would like to see by 2022 – the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, and how to get there.

The following text summarizes the discussions from two ‘action circles’ that directly speak to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, offering an important starting point to build a strategic science-policy-community platform for small-scale fisheries. The first ‘action circle’ focuses on the governance transformation and the latter on the significance of knowledge and communications.

1) Action circle on ‘Implementation of the SSF Guidelines through governance transformation’

- Implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be based on social license to operate; building trust with local communities is imperative;
- Provide clear examples of how the SSF Guidelines have been implemented;
- Use SDGs to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- Measure endorsement of the SSF Guidelines and create mechanisms for governance accountability;
- Monitor leadership, maybe create corruption index to understand legitimacy and equity issues;
- Use the SSF Guidelines as a boundary object to create international collaboration for transboundary problems; and
- Tap into various windows of opportunity to influence policy at all levels. Also, establish stronger, innovative partnership with news and social media, NGOs, and CSOs.

II) Action circle - Integrating knowledge and fostering communications to enhance the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

- This should be achieved through ‘learning circles’ – between and among fishers-to-fishers’ organizations and groups like CSOs, academia and governments. In essence, we need to work at multiple levels if we want to get communities engaged, empowered, and get the governments onboard;
- Human rights dimensions must be incorporated as well – this is a key factor for learning circles;
- In addition to regional and global platforms, as well as learning circles, we need to create spaces at the national level that are conducive to learning. Governments might not necessarily be open to sharing power but there might be individuals within it who are willing to do so;
- In terms of learning circles, we need to anticipate that this is about trust-building, power-sharing and institution-building so in order to make the circles effective we cannot avoid going from community to community and working around specific problems and specific solution in order for people to see the benefits of the SSF Guidelines; and
- Women have a key role in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Insights from ‘cross-cutting questions’

To encourage discussions on what can be done collectively to enhance understanding, promote the importance of small-scale fisheries, and support their viability and sustainability, participants were asked to think about the five cross-cutting questions throughout the congress. Particularly relevant for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines were the questions of 1) *What actions are required from civil society organizations, research community and policy people in order to implement the SSF Guidelines?*, and 2) *How to strengthen the policy-science interface?*. The section below provides the responses to these two questions; the answers are gathered from various sessions throughout the congress, excluding those session that have been specifically addressed in this report (e.g. panel discussion on the roles of government in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, action circles).

1) Cross-cutting question on ‘Strategies and actions required from CSOs, research community and policy people in order to implement the SSF Guidelines’

Responses

- Raise awareness on the role of the SSF Guidelines. Also, translate the SSF Guidelines into different languages - provide accessible, plain-language based versions;
- Contextualize and prioritize what elements of the SSF Guidelines should be implemented first and where is the urgent need to do so;
- Since the SSF Guidelines have a major focus on food security and poverty eradication, researchers and policy makers need to showcase which parts of the SSF Guidelines are the most applicable to the small-scale fisheries in the Global North and which to the Global South and in what ways they can be leveraged to achieve the policy goals, whose issues revolve around recruitment, market access concerns, and ultimately access to quota and fishing grounds;
- Highlight gaps in policy in relation to the SSF Guidelines;
- Monitor impacts of policies on fishing communities. CSOs have a large role to play in monitoring the implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- Ensure that communication respects the language and cultural barriers, and that common ground is a set a priori. Implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be

based on communication and sharing of information through mediums such as art, traditional knowledge, stories, technical instruments and others;

- Empower small-scale fisheries, particularly the youth and women. Ensure women are involved in the implementation of SSF Guidelines;
- Promote cooperative research between researchers and fishers. Strengthen and build networks that support fisheries and engage consumers in the benefits of supporting small-scale fisheries. Overall, involve a wide array of supporting actors in the process of implementation; and
- Develop a score card on how the governments are achieving the goals set out in the SSF Guidelines and how those scores cards are developed and who monitors them.

II) Cross-cutting question on 'Recommendations for strengthening science-policy interface'

Responses

- The policy, academic, and CSO communities need to recognize the importance of traditional knowledge and values in policy drafting and formulations. They also need to translate the technical knowledge into relevant and accessible information so that fishing communities can gain ownership of the contextual knowledge to negotiate with regulators;
- Increase the analysis and research of social issues related to small-scale fisheries. Also, science and policy are needed to improve the recognition of the immense social, and ultimately ecological, benefits of small-scale fisheries when compared to the large-scale sector;
- Think of ways policy can inform science and vice-versa. In the end, we should move beyond the science-policy interface, recognizing that policy needs to be based on input from everyone concerned. Part of this depends on improving collaboration and partnership of researchers with small-scale fisheries organizations and communities and vice versa;
- Incorporate transdisciplinarity into policy frameworks and strategies;
- Recommend solutions or ways forward and not just identify problems; and
- Political boundaries and geopolitical aspects make research difficult, which is why we need to address some of the issues, such as transboundary fisheries from a regional perspective; implement joint collaboration in collecting data, formulating policy and implementing programs.

Reflections about the SSF Guidelines implementation

The section below provides additional inputs and recommendations about the SSF Guidelines implementation that were reflected by the congress participants throughout the congress, particularly early career scientists and development country participants who received financial support to attend the congress. These reflections are organized into four main themes: *recommendations*, *challenges*, *opportunities* and *actions* for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Recommendations

- The sustainability of small-scale fisheries is affected by interacting, levelled social and environmental drivers of change, including climate change. Not all small-scale fisheries are the same or similarly affected by these drivers. Implementing the SSF Guidelines in these dynamic contexts represents scientific and moral imperatives;
- Human rights and social justice perspectives are guiding lights for our work. This includes bringing the research and messages to where the people are and facilitating increased voice for communities;
- The human rights approach will have to challenge the dominant development model and the narrow-minded conservation discourse;
- Fishers' organizations need to build capacity to negotiate with regulators as equals. This means that capacity building is a permanent task. When fishers' organizations are strong they are much more effective at speaking with one voice and can build more convincing arguments against key risk factors; and
- Inclusion of transdisciplinarity in the research concepts, proposals, projects, governance approaches, fishing practices in order to improve viability of small-scale fishing communities, reduce their vulnerability and promote small-scale fisheries sustainability.

Challenges

- Lack of meaningful dialogue between policy and stakeholders. How do we engage fisher community in a meaningful way so that they feel that their issues and voices are recognized?;
- Fishers' organizations need to fight for a seat at the decision-making table. This will be easier achieved if the organization is representative of its various communities. Transparency and participation are key to the interactive process with other stakeholders but that also means that the fishers' organizations must be accountable to the base;
- Engaging stakeholders who did not participate in the consultations for SSF Guidelines; and
- What are the alternative livelihoods available for the fishers is not clear so we need to put small-scale fisheries in the large-scale economic system to better understand how the changes in other sector influence or shape small-scale fisheries-related livelihood.

Opportunities

- The SSF Guidelines are linked to the SDG, particularly in Goal 14. Goal 14.b "Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets". Look at how the SSF Guidelines could be used as a tool to realise the SDG Agenda. Together the SSF Guidelines and SDG can be used as the blue print for sustainable development of small-scale fisheries;
- Small-scale fisheries are getting more attention in policy processes; 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture is an important momentum for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries;
- Development of Global Strategic Framework in support of implementing the SSF Guidelines;
- There is now more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research across the social and natural sciences;
- Participation and adult learning techniques in training workshops are effective ways of communicating and exchanging knowledge with local communities; and
- Crowdsourcing portal such as ISSF, activities and exercises, games, interactive discussions and pictures are effective ways of relaying messages to communities who have few facilities and low levels of literacy.

Actions

- Governments need to recognize community's rights to their fishing areas; the SSF Guidelines are a useful tool for this but they must be accessible in different media and languages;
- Organize fishers in each community to speak in one voice, build capacity and promote education to enhance communication between them and the government and participate in decision-making processes. Facilitate and encourage fishers' participation in meetings, clearly outlining the benefits of this approach;
- Ensure communication across multiple levels and work towards improved messages and communication strategies;
- Better integration of marine and inland fisheries to amplify the voice of small-scale fisheries;
- Facilitate involvement of women in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- Promote the transparency and participation in the process of implementation;
- Encourage the development of international or national initiatives to collect more consistent data on small-scale fisheries for integration in the policy processes;
- Better dissemination of policies available on small-scale fisheries so that fishers become better informed;
- Transdisciplinary teams need to foresee an active participation of the fisher community along the program/policy formulation cycle as a fundamental element of long-term small-scale fisheries sustainability;
- Proposed structure of the SSF-Global Strategic Platform: 1) Advisory group, 2) Friends of SSF Guidelines (COFI and governments), 3) Knowledge sharing platform, 4) FAO Secretariat; and
- Use the regional and global networks (TBTI) to build political will.

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