

The Ocean Conference

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FAO's input to the concept paper on theme 5: "Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for a small scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and market" with a focus on SDG target 14.b

I. Status and trends

1. Despite limited data on the sub-sector at the global level, it is estimated that the small-scale fisheries subsector accounts for more than 90% of the full-time or part-time workers directly depended on commercial capture fisheries value chains for their livelihoods. Almost half of these are women. 90-95% of the catch produced by small-scale landings is destined for local human consumption¹.
2. Considering the livelihood function of small-scale fisheries, SDG target 14b is also closely linked to other SDGs, in particular SDG 1 (No poverty), SDGs 2 (End hunger), SDG 5 (Gender equality) SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production) and SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).
3. Countries have recognized the importance of the sector and in 2014, after a long participatory consultation process, the members of the FAO Committee on Fisheries endorsed a new internationally negotiated and agreed instrument dedicated specifically to small-scale fisheries that complements the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. These Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) set out principles and guidance for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance and development.
4. At the regional level and in particular in the SIDS context, there are related important developments:
 - Pacific: the 9th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting endorsed *A new song for coastal fisheries – pathways to change: The Noumea strategy* in 2015, acknowledging the need to dedicate more attention to this sector.
 - Indian Ocean region: the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) Ministers Council recently adopted a new Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Strategy for the period 2015-2025. Its overarching objective is to allow the fisheries and aquaculture sector in IOC Member States to fully realize its potential contribution to sustainable and equitable growth in the region. The IOC Fisheries and Aquaculture Strategy 2015-2025 is rooted in the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for African Fisheries and Aquaculture and recognizes the relevance of the SSF Guidelines for assisting Member States in reaching food security and poverty alleviation objectives. Its first Strategic Axis focuses on the need to establish better fisheries governance frameworks, in

¹ Source : The Hidden Harvest. 2012. World Bank, World Fish Centre, FAO

particular through setting-up mechanisms to improve participation in decision-making processes, including co-management arrangements.

- Caribbean: A FAO/CRFM/WECAFC Caribbean Regional Consultation on the Development of International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries² held in 2012 confirmed the importance of small-scale fisheries as a contributor to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and economic development also in the Caribbean region.

II. Challenges and opportunities

5. Key challenges faced by small-scale fisheries relate in particular to secure access to resources and to markets, as spelled out in SDG target 14.b.
6. Often, overexploitation of resources and degradation of supporting habitats and ecosystems reduce the available resources. Additionally, there is often competition over access to resources, within the fisheries sector, and also from other sectors like tourism, aquaculture, agriculture, energy, mining, industry and infrastructure developments. Conservation-focused measures like MPAs can at times also be challenging for small-scale fisheries livelihoods.
7. Market access for small-scale fisheries actors and their products is restricted through a combination of inappropriate or limited infrastructure, technology and professional skills to produce safe and quality products. This is often compounded by power imbalances, often in favour of middle persons with better access to financial services and market information. These factors often penalize small-scale fisheries actors, in particular women involved in post-harvest activities and marketing to equitably benefit from fisheries value chains.
8. Secure access to resources and markets therefore requires an enabling environment which recognizes and protects small-scale fisheries rights. Such an enabling environment has three key features:
 - a. Appropriate legal, regulatory and policy frameworks,
 - b. Specific initiatives to support small-scale fisheries and
 - c. Related institutional mechanisms for the participation of small-scale fisheries organizations in relevant processes.
9. The SSF Guidelines, which include specific chapters on the responsible governance of tenure, and on value chains, post-harvest and trade, and which are closely related to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure for Land, Fisheries and Forestry in the Context of National Food Security provide an important internationally agreed tool for all to take action to allow small-scale fisheries to make its full contribution to food security and poverty eradication. Importantly, these guidelines promote a human rights-based approach.

²See <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3207e/i3207e.pdf>

III. Existing partnerships

10. Governments have a key responsibility to support small-scale fisheries at the national and local level, and to incorporate the sector in relevant regulatory frameworks, policies, strategies, etc. – not only for fisheries but for overall socio-economic development. Political engagement at high level together with investments in capacity and participatory decision-making processes will be required in order to realize the new vision for small-scale fisheries.
11. Fishers and fish workers, through their organizations, are main drivers of change and play a major role in the “bottom-up” processes, ensuring that regulatory frameworks, policies and strategies are actually implemented.
12. Other actors, in particular academia and research, but also regional organizations, NGOs and others, should be at the interface of this dual strategy, with a function to connect, to supplement, to document and to strengthen the above-mentioned efforts.
13. There are already a number of important partnerships and initiatives which have been established around small-scale fisheries. Many of these refer to the SSF Guidelines as the global reference framework which provides a common ground for action:
 - CSOs: Major small-scale fisheries organizations and support organizations have joined forces under the IPC Fisheries Working Group³. They played a crucial role in the development of the SSF Guidelines and also now in their implementation⁴, organizing national and regional events, developing materials and advocating small-scale fisheries issues in a vast number of foras. IFAD is an important partner in this, as well as FAO.
 - Academia: The global Too Big To Ignore Research Partnership⁵ is supporting the better understanding of small-scale fisheries and bridging the science-policy gap.
 - UN organizations: FAO has established an Umbrella Programme for the Promotion and Application of the SSF Guidelines to enhancing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and sustainable livelihoods. In this context, FAO is collaborating with other UN organizations, namely IFAD and UNOHCHR, as well as with a large number of partners (governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia, NGOs)
 - Regional organizations: a large number of regional organizations has specifically included small-scale fisheries in their policies, strategies and initiatives (e.g. African

³ The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) is the world’s largest alliance of small-scale food producers, peasant family farmers, artisanal fisher folks, pastoralists, nomads, indigenous peoples and indigenous organizations, the landless, urban producers, alternative consumer movements, rural workers and grassroots organizations, whose aim is to advance the food sovereignty agenda at the global and regional level. Within the IPC, there are several Working Groups which have the legitimacy to operate with the full support of all the IPC organizations on a specific priority theme. FAO has a partnership agreement with the IPC Fisheries Working Group representing member fisheries organizations on food security and nutrition. See also <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/about-us/>.

⁴ See also <https://sites.google.com/site/ssfguidelines/home>.

⁵ See also <http://toobigtoignore.net/research-cluster/ssf-guidelines/>.

Union, SEAFDEC, GFCM, SPC, OSPESCA, CECAF,...). These organizations play an important role as catalysts for change at the national level.

IV. Possible areas for new partnerships

14. What is missing now is a powerful mechanism to bring all of the existing and potential new efforts in support of small-scale fisheries together. This would allow to have a global learning process, an exchange of experiences and to develop synergies.
15. In 2016 the FAO Committee on Fisheries In 2016, agreed on the need for a global mechanism for facilitating interaction between COFI Members and interested actors to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at all levels, and to promote a common vision and implementation approach, which is based on the principles of the SSF Guidelines themselves.
16. As the SSF Guidelines are a tool for all to improve small-scale fisheries, such a mechanism would support awareness-raising on small-scale fisheries needs and opportunities, promote a human rights-based approach, facilitate information and experience-sharing as well as resource mobilization. It could also allow to assess progress, including on SDG14b. Importantly, such a mechanism would promote the full and effective participation of small-scale fisheries actors in the SSF Guidelines implementation, in particular small-scale fisheries communities including women, youth and indigenous peoples.
17. FAO, in close collaboration with the IPC Fisheries Working Group, is in the process of preparing a proposal for such a mechanism and welcomes suggestions and engagement from all interested partners.

V. Guiding questions for the dialogue

- How can we empower small-scale fishing communities to ensure the responsible use of marine resources, as well as the equal distribution of benefits derived from the use of the resources?
- How can we create better synergies among existing efforts in support of small-scale fisheries?
- What are key elements of an enabling environment for secure access for small-scale fisheries to marine resources and markets?