



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN  
COMMISSION GÉNÉRALE DES PÊCHES POUR LA MÉDITERRANÉE**

**DRAFT**

**SETTING UP A REGIONAL PLATFORM TO PROMOTE  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY  
GUIDELINES FOR SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-  
SCALE FISHERIES**

*Thematic session V*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as in the rest of the world, small-scale fisheries are important in providing livelihoods and nutritious food. The recommendation by the 29<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2011 to develop an international instrument in the form of voluntary guidelines to complement the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) to support small-scale fisheries was based on the recognition of the subsector's important role for food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines)* are global in scope but with a special focus on the needs of developing countries.

The final text of the SSF Guidelines is currently being negotiated<sup>1</sup>. However, while the approval of the instrument itself is of critical importance, the real challenge lies in its implementation: the SSF Guidelines will only become effective if their provisions are put into practice. For this, concerted efforts and strong collaboration by all parties across the world will be required.

The Mediterranean and Black Sea region is vast and rich in diversity. Likewise, the small-scale fisheries of the region are also highly diverse and span a variety of fishing methods, products, markets, and cultural, social and economic settings. When considering the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and developing strategies for their application – anticipating their approval by COFI in 2014 – regional and local characteristics and specificities have to be taken into consideration at the same time as global solidarity and respect of universal principles are promoted.

This regional symposium on sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, organised by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the FAO, provides an excellent opportunity to discuss how a regional platform of strategies and actions for implementing the SSF Guidelines can be promoted and supported.

## Purpose and structure of Thematic Session V and this document

The objective of the Thematic Session V – *Setting up a regional platform to promote the implementation of the SSF Guidelines* – is to discuss how the SSF Guidelines can be implemented in the region, what processes and institutional structures will be needed and what the roles of different actors may be. It is hoped that the session and its discussions will contribute to promoting collaboration and communication among partners and stakeholders – within the region and globally. It is also expected that, through the sharing of experiences and knowledge, the session will provide inputs into the development of implementation strategies and a global assistance programme, which have also been requested by FAO COFI.

This brief background document aims to provide information on the SSF Guidelines development process and their contents. It also aspires to describe the rationale and context of the four topics that will be discussed in the session, i.e. the challenges and opportunities encountered by small-scale fisheries, why a human-rights based approach to development should be adopted, the importance of social and economic development, and the need for capacity development, including strengthening of collective action and organisational structures.

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<sup>1</sup> See below for a more detailed description of the SSF Guidelines development process.

# THE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES GUIDELINES

## The SSF Guidelines development process

The important role of small-scale fisheries in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization has been increasingly recognized during the last couple of decades. In FAO, small-scale fisheries have been a stand-alone item on the COFI agenda since 2003 but the subsector was beginning to receive increased attention already earlier. The CCRF acknowledges the importance of small-scale fisheries and makes reference to, among other things, the need to protect the rights of small-scale fishers and fish workers to secure livelihoods and access to fishery resources (Art. 6.16, FAO, 1995).

In 2005, technical guidelines in support of the implementation of the CCRF were issued on the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty alleviation and food security (FAO, 2005). In 2008, there was a global small-scale fisheries conference in Bangkok, Thailand<sup>2</sup>. The conference was followed by several regional consultations organized by FAO in 2010, involving both the CSO community and governments, to assess how the small-scale fisheries agenda could be moved forward<sup>3</sup>. The process led to the recommendation for an international instrument addressing small-scale fisheries in a holistic manner by FAO COFI in 2011. This voluntary instrument would complement the CCRF with the understanding that although the CCRF covers small-scale fisheries, there is a need to address the subsector more comprehensively.

The COFI recommendation spurred an intensive consultation process, engaging more than 4000 stakeholders and bringing out key issues to be covered in the SSF Guidelines. Most of these consultations, carried out across the world, were led by the CSO community and others were organised in close collaboration with FAO projects and partners. In the Mediterranean and Black Sea region, the FAO SSF Guidelines Secretariat participated in the national events organised in Morocco and Tunisia in June 2011 and in a CSO organised workshop in Denmark, involving also fishers and fish workers from the south of Europe, in March 2012. In October 2012, there was a workshop organised by the Slow Fish International initiative at the Terra Madre world meeting in Turin, Italy. A consultative meeting for the Near East and North Africa region was held in Oman in March 2012.

A draft SSF Guidelines text was prepared early 2013 and is currently being negotiated by an FAO intergovernmental Technical Consultation. A first session was held on 20-24 May 2013. As the work could not be completed, the Technical Consultation is scheduled to resume on 3-7 February 2014. The negotiated text of the SSF Guidelines will be submitted for adoption to the 31<sup>st</sup> session of COFI in June 2014.

## The SSF Guidelines purpose and contents

The SSF Guidelines are intended to support the visibility, recognition and enhancement of the already important role of small-scale fisheries and to contribute to global and national efforts towards the eradication of hunger and poverty. They apply to small-scale fisheries in all contexts, to all actors – men and women – throughout the value chain, are global in scope but with a specific focus on the needs of developing countries.

The consultations clearly indicated the importance of applying a human rights-based approach to the governance and development of the small-scale fisheries subsector and to take all three pillars of

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<sup>2</sup> The conference, *Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing together responsible fisheries and social development*, was organized by FAO in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) and the Government of Thailand on 13-17 October 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Regional consultative workshops on *Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing together responsible fisheries and social development* in Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America-Caribbean.

sustainability - environmental, economic and social – into account. The consultations also pointed to the importance of empowering small-scale fishing communities to take part in decision-making processes and allow them to be responsible for their own development. Moreover, the need for secure access to key resources – in particular to fishery resources and land – and hence ensuring tenure rights was also emphasized.

Accordingly, the SSF Guidelines are based on international human rights standards, responsible fisheries governance and sustainable development according to the Rio+20 outcome document 'The future we want'. The SSF Guidelines are closely linked to the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (the Tenure Guidelines), endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (the Right to Food Guidelines) are another important international instrument. This instrument was adopted by FAO member states in 2004 and considers economic, cultural and social rights as an integral part of the work of food and agriculture agencies.

On this basis, the SSF Guidelines outline an important number of key guiding principles that will underpin their implementation: i.e. Human rights and dignity; Respect of cultures; Non-discrimination; Gender equality and equity; Equity and equality; Consultation and participation; Rule of law; Transparency; Accountability; Economic, social and environmental sustainability; Holistic and integrated approaches; Social responsibility; Feasibility and social and economic viability.

With regard to subject matter contents, the SSF Guidelines address:

- Five main thematic areas:
  - o Improved tenure governance and resource management
  - o Social development, employment and decent work
  - o Value chains, postharvest and trade
  - o Gender equality (cross-cutting)
  - o Disaster risks and climate change (cross-cutting)
- Four areas related to creating an enabling environment and supporting implementation:
  - o Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration
  - o Information, research and communication
  - o Capacity development
  - o Implementation support and M&E

#### ***More information on the SSF Guidelines and related instruments***

*The SSF Guidelines drafts together with reports and information on the consultation process and related workshops are available at [www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en). Many other meetings and consultations also provided insights into what will be required in terms of future work. Reports from the CSO-led consultations can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/events>.*

*The web page for FAO's work on the Right to Food Guidelines is [www.fao.org/righttofood/right-to-food-home/en/](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/right-to-food-home/en/) and the Tenure Guidelines are available at [www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/](http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/). There is also a preliminary version of a technical guide for implementing improved tenure governance in fisheries: [www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3420e/i3420e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3420e/i3420e.pdf).*

## **The importance of implementation**

The SSF Guidelines will only be effective if they are widely accepted by different interest groups, including, among others, governments, CSOs, NGOs and academia, and systematically applied in accordance with the guiding principles established therein. In response to this challenge, COFI noted

at its 30th Session the need to develop implementation strategies for the SSF Guidelines at various levels including related policy reforms and recalled that the 29<sup>th</sup> session of COFI had also agreed to the establishment and implementation of a global assistance programme which would support this process.

During the consultation process underpinning the drafting of the instrument, implementation was already considered and the two processes have been seen as parallel and overlapping. The consultations have led to increased awareness of small-scale fisheries and, in some instances, appear to have influenced policy and contributed to better involvement of small-scale fishing community representatives and civil society organisations (CSOs) in policy processes. Still, once the SSF Guidelines have been finalized and endorsed, increased and concerted efforts will be needed to ensure their implementation at all levels.

Two international workshops, organized by FAO in Rome, have provided some recommendations with regard to the SSF Guidelines implementation and future work:

- The Workshop on *International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries*, held in February 2012, noted the need for an integrated approach. The preparation and implementation of the SSF Guidelines should not be seen as separate events but as an integral part of other initiatives. There is a need to build bridges between different stakeholder visions – within the fisheries sector as well as outside – to ensure coherence. Partnerships will be essential in this context and implementation will require concerted efforts and organizational development and strengthening of capacities at all levels.
- A workshop on *Strengthening Organizations and Collective Action in Fisheries: a way forward in implementing the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries*, held in March 2013, explored the roles of different types of fisheries collective action and cooperative organisations and proposed elements for a capacity development strategy to strengthen organizations and collective action in small-scale fisheries. A number of different types of collective action and cooperative organizational forms were explored. These included customary community-based organisations, cooperatives and societies, and advocacy groups and networks. The workshop recognized that organisations provide a platform through which small-scale fisheries stakeholders exercise their right to organize, participate in the development and decision-making processes and influence the fisheries management outcomes.

In September 2013, a meeting was organised by the FAO Sub-regional office in Tunisia in collaboration with local partners to discuss the *strengthening of small-scale fisheries organizations in North African countries*. The meeting was attended by participants from Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia and it showed the interest of stakeholders to develop capacity to be able to position themselves at the national, regional and international levels and to identify common regional objectives.<sup>4</sup>

## SESSION DISCUSSIONS

### Challenges and opportunities for the small-scale fisheries sector in the Mediterranean and Black Sea

The decision to create an international instrument in support of small-scale fisheries and the contents of the SSF Guidelines reflect an acknowledgement of the challenges they face. At the same time, the opportunities the subsector represents are recognised and there is hope that the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development can be increased by giving the subsector the right support.

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<sup>4</sup> A presentation on the outcomes of this meeting will be given during the Session V – see also below.

While there are regional, national and local differences, there are basic key challenges of small-scale fisheries that seem to be of global relevance.<sup>5</sup> These include the vulnerability context, in part explained by a dependence on exploiting a limited natural resource and the inherent unpredictability of the fishing profession but also due to the often remote locations of fishing communities with limited access to social services – aggravating problems of ill-health (including prevalence of HIV/AIDS) and low levels of education. Weak organisational structures make it difficult to have a say in decision-making and development processes. Small-scale fishing communities are often the weaker party in competition and conflicts with industrial fishing operations and with other sectors such as tourism, aquaculture, agriculture, energy, industry and infrastructure.

Pollution, environmental degradation and overexploitation of resources are other key concerns faced by fishing communities. Many small-scale fisheries are effectively unregulated and poorly monitored, especially in developing countries and inland waters. Customary practices for allocation and sharing of resource benefits that generally used to be in place in small-scale fisheries have often been eroded because of centralised fisheries management systems, technology development and demographic changes.

While women also participate in the fisheries workforce, they are often more disadvantaged and vulnerable than men, as many forms of social, political and economic marginalisation are gender specific. Work done by women, which includes reproductive, household and community services, in addition to economic activities more directly related to fisheries, is often valued lower than that of men. Women in small-scale fisheries may hence face somewhat different challenges than their male counterparts and due consideration must be given to gender roles.

Poverty and social inequalities are also two of the main causes behind child labour in the fisheries sector. Child labour in different forms exists in particular in the informal sector and children engage in both fishing (mainly boys) and post-harvest (predominantly girls) activities.

Many fishing communities are located in areas that are prone to natural disasters. Where land and water meet is one of the most environmentally dynamic environments that exist and it is often the hostility of these areas that provides opportunities for the poor. Climate variability and change are leading to generally more frequent extreme weather events and natural disaster hazards.

While the list of challenges in the small-scale fisheries sector is long, there are also many opportunities. Progress has been made with regard to enhancing the understanding of the complexity of poverty, its vulnerability context and the range of coping strategies applied by fishing communities to address threats and sustain livelihoods. There is recognition that poor people's own perception of the sources of their vulnerability needs to be respected. Developments in the governance arena in many parts of the world include decentralisation of resource management responsibilities and the introduction of co-management arrangements. There is also increased recognition of the need to link fisheries management with social and economic development, and to take a holistic view of fishing rights and human rights.

Against the general context described above, it is suggested that the discussions of the Thematic Session V focus on regional, national and local specificities and characteristics:

- What are the key challenges for small-scale fisheries in the region? Are there national and local differences that would need to be considered in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines?
- What key opportunities and strengths exist? What best practices are available in the region that should be shared and that could be replicated – regionally and globally?

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<sup>5</sup> This section is based on an information paper prepared for the 29th Session of COFI in 2011: *Good practices in the governance of small-scale fisheries: sharing of experiences and lessons learned in responsible fisheries for social and economic development* (COFI/2011/8).

## Human-rights based approach: Current situation and needs in terms of access to basic economic, social and cultural rights

The human-rights based approach (HRBA)<sup>6</sup> builds on a set of universally agreed values, standards and principles. Human rights encompass civil and political rights, economic social and cultural rights, and collective or solidarity rights. They include legally-mandated rights to decent working conditions, gender equality, children's rights and the rights of migrants and other potentially vulnerable groups. The HRBA brings in legal tools and institutions and strongly promotes the empowerment of people.

However, when using the term *rights* in a fisheries context, it has tended to imply fishing rights as part of rights based fisheries management. It is only recently that the discourse has evolved to a human rights perspective and the right to secure and just livelihoods, including social and economic rights as well as rights to related resources (such as land). Linking fishing rights and human rights reflects a move towards an approach more in line with the reality of the diverse livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities and the complexity of poverty.

To implement the SSF Guidelines applying a HRBA, an enabling environment is required, including appropriate policy priorities. The importance of participation and empowerment, including legal empowerment and the rule of law, should be stressed as well as the need to explicitly focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups. Applying a HRBA has consequences for how to address different situations, also when the focus is on resource management. For example, in a context of overfishing where there is a need to reduce fishing effort to allow resources to recover, the right to social security has particular importance. Social security can be vitally important in a transition phase where small-scale fishers and fish workers otherwise would suffer from loss of income when reforming a fishery with a view to ensure the sustainability of the fishery resources. The importance of considering both men and women – often having different professional roles – should be stressed and gender based discrimination must be avoided.

For the discussion of Thematic Session V in relation to the HRBA, the following questions could be raised:

- What examples of successful application of a HRBA are there in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region?
- Are there regional specific challenges for applying HBRA?
- What good practices exist with regard to the promotion of gender equality?

## Social and economic development of fishers, fish workers and fishing communities to enhance the sustainability of small-scale fisheries, including the post-harvest sector, and their contribution to food security and poverty alleviation

Within the context of recognising the need for a wider framework based on human rights, the importance of secure access to resources and tenure rights should be stressed. Not being able to count on certain basic resources increases vulnerability and small-scale fishing communities need to be

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<sup>6</sup> This section draws on a keynote presentation by Mr Rolf Willmann on *A human rights based approach in small-scale fisheries – a quest for development as freedom* given at the MARE Conference People and the Sea VII in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in June 2013.

entrusted with stewardship for the resources they depend on for their livelihoods. However, it also has to be recognised that introducing self-governance community-based arrangements in a poverty context may pose problems because of other preoccupations and a related lack of incentives as well as insufficient capacity on behalf of small-scale fishing communities. Unless the more pressing concerns of individuals and communities are dealt with in parallel with resource and fisheries management issues, poor people may have great difficulties engaging in the process.

The root causes to poverty hence need to be addressed by strengthening the political and economic rights of the small-scale fisheries actors, empowerment and capacity building. Fishing communities should have access to health, education and other social services. Their resilience needs to be increased – in general and with regard to natural disasters and climate change consequences in particular. It requires a focus on reducing vulnerabilities and promoting responsible fishing practices together with addressing social and economic development needs. While some experience exists from such integration of resource governance and social development, tools and methods still need to be developed in order that environmental, resource and community rights and sustainability are considered concurrently.

The Thematic Session V may want to discuss the following:

- What are the key social and economic development issues for small-scale fisheries in the region?
- What examples of good practices exist – in fisheries or other sectors – with regard to holistic and integrated approaches that can inform SSF Guidelines implementation?

### **Review of national experiences in terms of collective action and organizations (e.g. fishers cooperatives and associations) and to strengthen them, including through capacity development and the creation of regional and sub-regional associations**

Fisher and fish worker organizations have an important role to play in development processes. Strengthening local organizational structures help people to be represented and take part in decision-making processes. There is a need to work with communities to enhance their organizational capacity, building on existing structures and strengths. The focus should be on enabling individuals and institutions to effectively use their newly acquired capacity to address their priority needs.

The FAO workshop in March 2013 noted the importance of supporting knowledge mobilization, leadership capabilities (of men and women), research partnerships and the use of effective communication tools (making use of new technologies and social media). Platforms and networks for experience sharing and collaboration were mentioned in the context of needing to strengthen existing organisations and ensuring that the necessary institutional structures and capacity are in place to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries. The need for empowerment through organisational development and collective action appears to be a key element of SSF Guidelines implementation.

The regional meeting in Tunisia, held in September 2013 and mentioned above, noted the need to support fisheries organisations and the establishment of a regional platform.

The Thematic Session V may wish to tease out what the needs are more specifically in this regard in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region:

- What regional organisations and networks already exist that could be built on for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines?
- What are the most important gaps with regard to collective action and associations?

## Conclusions and salient issues

The SSF Guidelines offer a great opportunity to support small-scale fisheries by representing a comprehensive and holistic framework for policy and action. Their implementation will however require concerted efforts by all including political will and resources. Governments, CSOs and NGOs, research institutions and all other stakeholders are called upon to support this process. The provisions of the SSF Guidelines should become an integral part of regional, national and local policies, strategies and action plans, and human and financial resources should be put forward for this purpose.

The SSF Guidelines process must be transparent and participatory. Special efforts should be made to also include the poor and marginalised in decision-making. Collaboration, communication and sharing of experiences and knowledge should characterise the actions undertaken.

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