



## First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea

27–30 November 2013, St. Julian's, Malta

### Background paper – Thematic session V Setting up a regional platform to promote the implementation of the Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (SSF Guidelines)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.<sup>1</sup>

The draft SSF Guidelines text was developed through an intensive consultation process, engaging more than 4000 stakeholders. Most of the consultations, carried out across the world, were led by the civil society organizations (CSO) community and others were organised in close collaboration with FAO projects and partners. 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 sustainability - environmental, economic and social – into account.

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. They 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)

<sup>1</sup> See [www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en).

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- 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, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The final text of the SSF Guidelines is currently being negotiated. 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. 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. Two international workshops, organized by FAO in Rome, provided some more specific 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. 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. Moreover, 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*.

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 SSF Guidelines implementation in the region. The objective of the Thematic Session V – *Setting up a regional platform to promote the implementation of the SSF Guidelines* – is to discuss 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.

Four different topics will be discussed during the Thematic Session V:

- Challenges and opportunities for the small-scale fisheries sector in the Mediterranean and Black Sea
- Human-rights based approach: current situation and needs in terms of access to basic economic, social and cultural rights
- 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
- 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

It is expected that the Malta conclusions coming out of the symposium will emphasise the need for concerted efforts by all to ensure effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines. 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 implementation 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.