

The Next Steps

FAO is committed to continuing to promote collaboration and engagement by all stakeholders in the next vital stage of implementation

A major event for small-scale fisheries worldwide occurred during the 31st Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in Rome during 9-13 June 2014: the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). As pointed out during the ICSF Workshop on Implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries, held in Puducherry (Pondicherry), India, during 21-24 July 2014 (the 'Pondy Workshop'), even if voluntary, the SSF Guidelines represent a morally binding agreement for governments. Civil society organizations (CSOs) played a major role in achieving this important goal.

The SSF Guidelines emphasize the importance of social equity and food security, and promote a human-rights-based approach. They complement important international instruments like the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VG Tenure), and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (Right to Food Guidelines), which guide governments and others in improving food security and poverty-eradication policies and advancing sustainable development. It is critical to nurture these links to enable individuals and communities to develop their capabilities to actively and meaningfully participate in

decisionmaking and to shape their future.

During the development of the SSF Guidelines it was noted that, while the official endorsement of the SSF Guidelines of course is critical, the real challenge lies in their implementation: the SSF Guidelines will only become effective if their provisions are woven into the daily life of fishing communities. The SSF Guidelines provide the link between fishing and the larger aspects of life of SSF communities. This multidimensional perspective poses a number of challenges. CSOs will have to continue playing a role in not only

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reminding governments that the SSF Guidelines are intersectoral, but also in ensuring meaningful community involvement in the implementation, including by marginal and vulnerable groups.

Implementation issues

In 2012, COFI had already agreed on the need to develop implementation strategies for the SSF Guidelines and recalled that in 2011, COFI had agreed to the establishment and implementation of a related Global Assistance Programme (GAP). In response to this, FAO started considering implementation issues more explicitly since 2013, including through the organization of a workshop on Strengthening

*This article is by **Nicole Franz** (Nicole.Franz@fao.org), FAO Fisheries Analyst. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

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Small-scale fishers in Malta. FAO advocates for adequate consideration and inclusion of the small-scale fisheries perspective in international development initiatives

principles of the SSF Guidelines mainstreamed in policies, strategies and actions at international, regional, national and local levels. Mainstreaming is also important in the context of FAO's work: elements of the SSF Guidelines should be embedded in all relevant FAO projects so that they become an integral part of the FAO programme of work. It will also be important that FAO continues advocating for adequate consideration and inclusion of the small-scale fisheries perspective in the international arena, particularly in areas of FAO's mandate, such as food security and ocean management.

In June 2014, COFI welcomed the proposal for a GAP based on four components:

1. Raising awareness: knowledge products and outreach

The SSF Guidelines can only be implemented if those concerned and able to make a difference are aware of their existence and understand their contents. FAO knows that considerable efforts will be required to raise awareness of the SSF Guidelines and to enhance the knowledge among all stakeholders at different levels. Partnerships will play a crucial role in ensuring that all stakeholders are reached.

FAO, therefore, will strive to engage strategically with actors and partners to influence policies and funding priorities towards supporting the SSF Guidelines implementation. Potential partners include those in the fisheries arena and those in related fields, for example, NGOs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and national co-ordination agencies.

SSF Guidelines ambassadors

Activities under this component could include the development of implementation guides (e.g. on different topics, for different countries/regions), translation into local languages, use of social media, identification of 'champions of change' and 'SSF Guidelines ambassadors', and dissemination of information at relevant events.

Organizations and Collective Action in Fisheries (Rome, March 2013), an e-consultation on Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (November-December 2013), and a dedicated session in the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (Malta, November 2013).

FAO seeks to continue the overall strategic approach for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by building on the inclusive and consensus-seeking spirit and environment that characterized their development process. Implementation will be based on participation and partnerships and anchored at the national and local levels within a framework of regional and international collaboration, awareness raising, policy support and capacity development. This requires support to, and collaboration with, many different actors, including governments, civil society, regional organizations, development agencies and international financing institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and the private sector.

The aim of the strategic approach promoted by FAO is to have the

The expected results of these activities will be a broad awareness and understanding of the SSF Guidelines, across regions and countries as well as among different stakeholder groups. This awareness will be fundamental for continued action and provide a basis for other impact-oriented implementation support.

2. Strengthening the science-policy interface: sharing of knowledge and supporting policy reform

The consultation process revealed that there is a need to better understand and recognize the importance of small-scale fisheries and their current and potential contribution to food security and poverty eradication. To elevate the small-scale fisheries sector on the policy agenda, data and information generation and sharing is needed. Thus, the second component of the GAP will address the need for a strengthened knowledge base and promote policy reforms for sustainable resource management combined with social and economic development.

Accordingly, FAO will work to ensure that activities under this component include among others efforts to identify, analyze and document existing best practices and lessons learnt with regard to participatory management systems and holistic and human-rights based approaches integrating resource management and a livelihoods perspective (including traditional and local management systems and knowledge). Other activities could consist of the promotion of collaboration between research initiatives on small-scale fisheries governance and development as well as increased interaction between researchers and fishing communities as well as technical support and assistance for reviews and revisions of policy and legal frameworks to create enabling frameworks for the SSF Guidelines implementation.

The expected results of this component would be an increased

understanding of the issues, challenges, opportunities and approaches relevant to achieving the sustainable use of aquatic resources and secure livelihoods. This improved understanding should be translated into guidance that can be widely disseminated and utilized, supporting the integration of the SSF Guidelines' principles and contents in policy documents, strategies and plans at national and regional levels.

3. Empowering stakeholders: capacity development and institutional strengthening

The consultation process for the development of the SSF Guidelines made it clear that small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities can, and should, be effective partners in the SSF Guidelines implementation—both in the planning and when carried out. Capacity development, therefore, should be the backbone of SSF Guidelines implementation. Developing capacity is closely linked to empowerment and to ensuring that small-scale fisheries actors and communities are able to take an active role in shaping the future of the sector and of their own livelihoods. This will require attention to organizational structures and modalities for fair and effective representation.

Capacity development will hence be required at different levels, for different stakeholder groups and with respect to different skills and abilities. Some activities relevant to this component, which emerged from the consultation process and related events, include the identification of needs for organizational development and strengthening, at the fishing-community level as well as at national and regional networks levels, and the provision of the related support.

Cross-sectoral linkages

Other activities could consist of assistance to communities and their organizations to establish cross-sectoral linkages, partnerships and dialogue with government agencies, research institutions and other development partners to address

identified development and resource-management needs; the sensitization and training of government officials and development partners in issues related to the SSF Guidelines implementation (especially on the human-rights-based approach to development and participatory management of natural resources).

The GAP can support capacity development and institutional strengthening, thereby creating some of the key building blocks for a

COFI acknowledged FAO's role in the development and implementation of the SSF Guidelines, which included a monitoring process through COFI.

long-term process of continuous improvement of the situation of small-scale fisheries and increased contribution of the sector to food security and poverty eradication.

4. Supporting implementation: programme management, collaboration and monitoring

In June 2014, COFI acknowledged FAO's role in the development process and stressed that FAO's role in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines includes a monitoring process through COFI. FAO's facilitating role in the SSF Guidelines development and implementation process was also highlighted during discussions at the ICSF Pondy Workshop. It should, however, be noted that the GAP will need to be complemented through collaboration with, and support from, other initiatives in order to bring about substantial and sustainable results.

Potential activities relevant for this component, which were recommended during the SSF Guidelines development process, include the promotion of implementation experience exchanges and collaborative planning and the establishment of a mechanism to allow for participatory and inclusive discussions on best practices to accelerate learning across countries

and different regions. This component would also support the development of a comprehensive implementation monitoring system and reporting on implementation progress to FAO Members and others. Monitoring and evaluation procedures for the GAP itself will be based on FAO standards for results-based monitoring and comply with donor requirements.

This component is expected to provide results in the form of transparent and efficient programme management and strengthened collaboration, leading to overall more effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Informing about implementation outcomes is also expected to increase the awareness of the SSF Guidelines and, hence, create a virtuous circle of events.

A Programme Secretariat based in FAO will plan and oversee the programme activities on a day-to-day basis, working closely with other relevant projects and programmes of FAO, other Rome-based agencies and other development partners.

The Secretariat will encourage partnerships and support the preparation of project proposals to be submitted for funding, in particular with regard to demand-driven technical support at regional and national levels.

It is expected that many activities will be implemented in close collaboration with partners, and that the role of the Secretariat will often be one of facilitation rather than direct implementation. The Secretariat will also develop mechanisms for monitoring programme activities and results, and will support reporting on overall implementation progress.

Programme Steering Committee

The Secretariat will be guided by a Programme Steering Committee consisting of representatives from various stakeholder groups, including small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities. This Committee will also play a role with regard to programme oversight in order to ensure transparency and accountability.


FAO will report to FAO Members on progress in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. During the consultation process, it was also suggested that the Committee on World Food Security could support the monitoring processes, complemented by monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations human-rights system, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This option needs to be further explored by FAO and its partners.

The 31st Session of COFI recommended that FAO should further develop the GAP in a participatory manner, discuss the roles of different partners in the implementation and emphasized the role of governments in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, as well as that of regional and local fisheries organizations to ensure ownership of the SSF Guidelines. It also recommended building on existing experiences and institutional structures and processes. All these recommendations will be taken on board as FAO moves forward with the SSF Guidelines implementation.

The ICSF Pondy Workshop provided a first opportunity to gather ideas to further develop the GAP. FAO perceived the meeting as part of a process towards defining a more specific plan of action and to bring the global process back to the local level, ensuring community-driven change through local empowerment. Other upcoming opportunities to consult stakeholders include the 6th General Assembly of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples, the 2nd Congress on Small-scale Fisheries in Merida, Mexico, in September; a side event during the Committee on World Food Security in Rome, Italy, in October; and a side event during the 67th conference of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in Barbados in November. The outcomes of these events will feed into an Expert Workshop on the Development of a Global Assistance Programme in support of the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context

of Food Security and Poverty Eradication that will be held in FAO in Rome in December 2014. The outcome of this workshop will also inform a workshop organized in December by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on the design of its Coastal Fisheries Programme under the GEF6 funding.

The relationship between governments and CSOs is changing, and the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines has provided small-scale fisheries stakeholders with an important tool to work together towards sustainable and socially equitable small-scale fisheries development.

FAO is committed to be part of these new relationships and to continue the promotion of collaboration and engagement by all stakeholders, at all levels. As noted by a speaker during the ICSF Pondy Workshop, the alliances between CSOs and an open spirit for engagement with others are strengths that need to be nurtured by all, even when faced by the challenges of engaging with new partners whilst retaining the inclusive, human-rights-based spirit of the SSF Guidelines. If we can do this, we will ensure that this spirit, so strongly promoted by Chandrika Sharma, will live on. 

For more


www.fao.org/fishery/topic/16152/en
Securing Small-scale Fisheries

www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en
**International Guidelines on
 Securing Sustainable Small-Scale
 Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)**