

# Co-operate to Move Forward

An Africa Workshop focused on creating awareness about the SSF Guidelines, lobbying for their implementation, and aligning them with national fisheries policies

Despite the already highlighted importance of small-scale fisheries (SSF), the acknowledged need to develop infrastructure for improving post-harvest handling facilities for fisherfolk, and public investment in SSF is still very minimal in many communities. Little has been done to improve access to fisheries resources and social services. In Uganda, for instance, supporting private investors in fishing communities has taken precedence over supporting local communities that had supported food production in the country. Women's role in governance in the export-led

inter-governmental negotiations, also with the participation of civil society organizations, to guide interventions in SSF, aimed at eradicating hunger and promoting sustainable development.

Globally, threats to a smaller-scale mode of food production in fisheries have intensified, expropriating from the many and appropriated by a few. Interventions from other sectors, such as real-estate development, result in land acquisition along coastal and inland waters that restrict fisherfolk's access to fishing grounds. Global arrangements for funding of the development of water bodies further contribute to the demise of SSF, on which more than 200 mn people worldwide depend for their livelihood.

Strategies discussed by the 31 members of the WFF from the five continents were to amplify the voice of small-scale fisher communities, complemented by concerted efforts at the regional level, where issues that affect small-scale fishers were shared. The strategies focused on creating awareness about the SSF Guidelines, lobbying for their implementation, and aligning these Guidelines with national fisheries policies as they strengthen and give more importance to small-scale fishing communities.

## Social development

The meeting also evaluated the regional capacity-building workshops carried out in Asia and Latin America. The lessons learned from the completed regional workshop guided the preparation of the Africa Regional Capacity-building Workshop that was hosted by the Association pour le développement de Fisher (ATDEP), in Tunisia, in September 2017.

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fishery industry, and their access to fish for trade and local consumption, are declining over time.

The World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (WFF) had its General Assembly, held every three years, in January 2017 in Salinas, Ecuador, hosted by FENACOPEC, a member from Ecuador. Discussion during the General Assembly explored members' capacities to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines), endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014, and also debated how to reach a consensus on an implementation plan. The SSF Guidelines were a product of

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The Africa workshop was meant to create awareness about the SSF Guidelines among the members present, which included leaders of small-scale fisher organizations from 13 African countries. The workshop also took into consideration the regional needs in SSF. It explored how members' interventions at the national level could contribute towards implementation of the Guidelines. The presentations revealed a rich experience in actions of small-scale fishing communities, inspiring WFF members to seek documentation of these for learning and continued transfer of good practices.

The formation of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) was an important development, in which the WFF Co-President became the General Secretary. The Guidelines were translated into the local languages by ATDEP for the Maghreb region. The social-development initiatives that contribute to sustainability of the SSF were shared by KWDT from Uganda. Accounts of training of fishing communities by ATDEP and the Sierra Leone Artisanal Fishers' Union (SLAFU) were all inspirational stories on how to secure the livelihoods of fisher communities. Child-labour practices that are common especially in SSF were discussed to explore measures to curb them. Participants noted that in some countries, such as Mauritania, child labour is not a choice. It is imposed by the financial situation of the families, and by the customs or the politics of the region. In Tunisia, as reported by the participants, fishermen experience shortage of labour as young people do not want to practise fishing activity anymore. To remedy this shortage of labour, they are forced to make their sons work with them, thus transferring the tradition of fishing from father to son and from older to younger generations.

The Africa Workshop also sought the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context



In January 2017, the 31 members of the WFF during the General Assembly in Salinas, Ecuador, discussed the strategies that could amplify the voice of small-scale fisher communities

of National Food Security (VGT), parallel to the SSF Guidelines, as loss of land adjacent to water bodies results in loss of fishing grounds, particularly of small-scale fishing communities. The need for intensified regional activities and co-operation, to engage with regional fisheries bodies and governance institutions such as the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AUIBAR), was emphasized. It is important to organize SSF communities, especially women, into co-operatives to enhance their production and increase their access to the markets. When small-scale fish producers are equipped with knowledge and skills to improve the quality of their production, processing and how to access and maintain markets, they can reduce post-harvest losses, claim a relative share of the fish market, and be able to produce in large quantities, as opposed to individual household production.

Governance of land, water and fisheries resources should be improved and put into the hands of small-scale fisherpeople who are directly engaged with, and are affected by, the poor governance of such resources. Privatization of resources, in many of the countries, has placed the resources in the hands of a few private investors, further marginalizing the local population/fisherfolk as they have no, or limited, access to the resources that they protect and that have been a source of their livelihoods for decades. 3

#### For more



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