

Living the Learning

Seventy participants from eight countries spent four days on the Honduran Caribbean coast learning from each others' experiences of small-scale fisheries

A “Sea Festival” of music, dance, gastronomy, canoe races and other cultural activities on 28 February 2013 on the Caribbean coast of Honduras included around 70 participants from six countries in Central America (Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua), and from two in South America (Brazil and Chile). It marked the end of three intensive working days of

in Central America”, the event was particularly innovative and challenging to organize for several reasons. First of all, the organizers wanted the training to be a living event, with participants living in local communities and experiencing their daily realities. Second, the event was nomadic, each day being spent in a different location, offering different realities and perspectives, moving from the port city and departmental capital of La Ceiba to remote settlements in the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge. Thirdly, the training was not only intended to present information and raise issues with participants, but also to incorporate their knowledge and experiences into the learning process. This required devising a methodology and generating a process that would enable participants to be both information providers and information receivers, to learn from the experiences of others and allow others to learn from their experiences.

Last but not least, the organizers needed to put in place logistical arrangements, provide facilities, and cater for 70 participants from diverse backgrounds, from both marine and inland fisheries, including national-level politically savvy leaders, as well as fishers with little exposure to wider issues.

Booklets

Printed information was developed by ICSF and by CoopeSoliDar, and provided in the form of illustrated booklets in simple language on the themes of Youth, Artisanal Fisheries and Women in the Central American Region, Trade and Certification,

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programmed training and exchanges of experiences between men and women artisanal fishery workers, facilitated and informed by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and CoopeSoliDar, with the co-operation of the Central American Artisanal Fisheries Confederation (CONFEPESCA), an entity that incorporates the National Artisanal Fisheries Federations from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua. Hosting the event and arranging the complex logistics were RECOTURH (Honduran Community Tourism Network) and the local association of artisanal fishworkers from the communities of Rosita, Cuero and Salado (APROCUS) in the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge.

Entitled “Promoting Alliances and Improving the Capacity of Men and Women Small-scale Fishworkers

This article is by **Brian O’Riordan** (briano@scarlet.be) of ICSF’s Belgium Office

Globalization, and Tenure, to be referred to during and after the workshop.

Exchanges between fishworkers from different regions were emblematic of ICSF's early years. Such exchanges were based on the premise that fishworkers have much of importance to learn from one another, through sharing their practical experiences and local knowledge of fisheries, fishing practices, and self-regulation based on the historical dependence of their communities on aquatic resources. Another realization was that in order to survive and thrive, fishing communities need to organize to ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making processes, to ensure that their activities are economically viable and non-conflictive, and to engage in fishery-resource management and arrange resource access. Through sharing experiences, fishers could benefit from lessons learned on how to organize in different parts of the world.

Following its General Body Meeting in July 2010, ICSF decided to place greater emphasis on training activities, after ICSF Members had advocated strongly in favour of doing so. Given a globalized context where artisanal and small-scale fishing communities are losing out ever more to competing interests for space in coastal and inland areas and for access to aquatic resources, it was stressed that training should be especially towards building capacity of fishworker and fishing-community organizations to claim their rights and to engage in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods. Also of importance in this regard is the fact that national policymakers may attend international meetings where decisions are taken; yet neither the fact of this happening nor the implications of such decisions are widely communicated on their return. It is, therefore, important that national-level fishworker leaders and representatives be included on national delegations to such meetings so that they can both have their say in how the decisions are

taken, and ensure that their constituencies are informed. Knowledge about global issues and their implications at national and local levels, and capacity to engage in debate and negotiations on them are, therefore, crucial aspects of training.

The first such training event, entitled "Empowerment through Information: Training Programme on International and Regional Developments of Relevance to Small-scale Fisheries and Fishing Communities in Asia", was organized by ICSF in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2012. Participants included around 30 fishing-community leaders from 10 countries in South and Southeast Asia, namely, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Then, following the very positive experience of engaging with fishworker and support organizations in Central America on the development of the International Guidelines to Secure Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), ICSF decided that the next training event should be in Central America. Apart from building on the basis of already established work and relationships, the choice of Central America was also strategic for ICSF, given its relative lack of previous contact with this region. Organizing

BRIAN O'RIORDAN / ICSF



The training programme at La Ceiba not only raised issues but also sought to incorporate the knowledge and experiences of the participants

such an event in Central America was significant.

ICSF chose to work with the Costa Rica-based organization CoopeSoliDar, with whom it had contact since 2008 in the lead-up to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok. In October 2010, in consultation with ICSF, CoopeSoliDar had agreed to anchor a preparatory meeting for civil society organizations in the fishing community of Tarcoles in Costa Rica, ahead of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Consultation on Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries, organized by FAO in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The other key partner was CONFEPESCA. CONFEPESCA and CoopeSoliDar had worked together in co-ordination with ICSF to implement five national and one regional consultation on the SSF Guidelines over 2011 and 2012. It is also noteworthy that at the international level, CONFEPESCA relates to the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), and several of its leaders had been in Loctudy, France, in 2000 for the

which it developed in consultation with the other partners. The methodology was designed to elicit the maximum participation, and to ensure that participants were able both to learn from one another's experiences and knowledge, and to contribute their own knowledge and share their own experiences. The methodology was designed to provide seven "Learning Spaces" around the themes of:

- (i) Small-scale Fisheries and their Diversity in Central America;
- (ii) International Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries in a Context of Diversity;
- (iii) Organization of Small-scale Fishworkers;
- (iv) Governance, Access to Resources and Small-scale Fisheries;
- (v) Property Rights, Access to Resources and Small-scale Fisheries;
- (vi) Listening to the Voices of Important Actors; and
- (vii) Globalization of Fisheries in the 21st Century, its particularities in Central America and implications for small-scale fisheries.

Each learning space was framed by information, and included working groups, participative exercises, feedback sessions and discussions.

Day 1 was designed to celebrate, reflect on, and share perspectives on the diversity of, and prospects for, small-scale fisheries in Central America, and to understand how the SSF Guidelines could provide a tool for realizing a vision of prosperous, thriving, dynamic and sustainable small-scale fisheries.

In Central America, fish consumption is relatively low at between nine and 10 kg per person per year, compared to global averages of 24 kg for developed countries and 17 kg for developing countries, which indicate the potential for improvement.

Survey data

However, as highlighted by the Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA) survey of small-scale fisheries (*Encuesta Estructural de la*

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Constituent Assembly meeting. The partnership was designed to combine the technical expertise of CoopeSoliDar in organizing and facilitating workshops and participative research with the experience and knowledge of CONFEPESCA, rooted in the everyday realities of artisanal fisheries in Central America. Participants were selected by the national federation members of CONFEPESCA, on the criteria of leadership roles and gender.

Deciding on, and implementing, an appropriate training methodology was left in the hands of CoopeSoliDar,

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Pesca Artesanal) presented at the meeting, data on small-scale fisheries is out of date, and does not provide a complete picture. Presenting the SSF Guidelines, the current state of play, and the consultations in the respective countries, the importance of both vision and action were emphasized; it was stressed that to have a vision without action is to daydream, and that action without vision can be a nightmare. Different views of what constitutes small-scale fisheries were shared, and the importance of adopting a human-rights approach to fisheries development was emphasized.

Day 2 started with the theme of "Union is Strength". The programme included looking at the different kinds of organizations required by artisanal fisheries, the different interests they cater to, how they organize, and the factors that lead to their success or failure. We learned that in Central America fishers organize into local associations, trade unions and co-operatives, and that at the national level, these are organized into federations.

In the case of Nicaragua, the national laws stipulate that women must be equally represented in organizations. Generally, artisanal fishworker organizations are based on co-operative principles, and in the case of the national federations, they

are multi-functional, engaging in economic (trade, credit, purchase, etc.), social, fishery-management and political activities.

Presentations were made on the experiences of fisherwomen in Brazil on campaigning for their rights, of the Tarcoles Co-operative in Costa Rica in providing commercial services for its members, and the experience of APROCUS in representing fishing settlements in the Wildlife Refuge.

In Brazil, the navy is responsible for organizing fishermen and for providing fishing licenses. But it does not recognize women's rights to engage in fishing. This has been one of the main struggles of the National Fisherwomen's Network (*Articulação Nacional das Mulheres Pescadoras*)—to get recognition of their rights as fishers and fishworkers.

The next module on Day 2 dealt with governance issues, looking at the entire ecosystem from the mountains to the sea; exchanging thoughts on what an "ecosystems approach" means; and on the issues arising from the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) and what it means for resource access, livelihoods and participation.

Property rights

The day closed on issues of property rights, resource access and small-scale fisheries, with

presentations from El Salvador on the issue of the three-mile zone, from Honduras on the Fonseca Gulf, and from Panama on the Bastimentos National Park.

Day 3 took off on the theme “Men are not the only actors in fisheries; everyone needs to participate, and each of us has a role”; the issue of division of labour by gender and the respective roles of men, women and youth were examined. Men, women and youth split into three working groups.

The men’s group was asked to reflect on, and respond to, a range of statements, and agree on whether they were true or false, myth or reality. The men seemed very modern, reporting that in Central America, men and women participate equally in all fishery-related activities, and share equally the domestic tasks of cleaning, cooking and childcare. The women did not totally agree with that view. It also became clear that, after reflecting on the numbers of women in decision-making roles in fisheries organizations, on the participant list of this event and others, it is clear that men and their roles are far more visible than women.

...globalization is leading to the privatization of fishery resources and water resources...

In this sense, there is still much work to be done to change traditional gender roles and perceptions. Men need to acknowledge and respect the role of women, accept them as equals, and question power relations and human values that affect equality between men and women.

Of particular significance was the presence of youth from Central American fishing communities. They highlighted that they often feel excluded, and would like to be integrated into all activities; that they have a right to be included in training activities, planning and decisionmaking; to be involved in

fisheries governance and responsible fisheries; and a right to their fishing territories and not to be displaced from them by tourism and other activities.

Introducing the theme of globalization, Juan Carlos Cardenas from Chile pointed out that we are living in a defining moment of history as regards the future of the human race both as a species (due to human impacts on nature) and as a society (due to trends in ownership and control of resources and political processes). Globalization is effectively a kind of colonization, only now the role of States is being replaced by transnational companies and financial institutions.

Globalization is resulting in a struggle over the control of markets, access to natural resources, control of energy sources, and securing food supplies. It is a process that is determining what products we produce and consume, in what form, where production and consumption take place, and by who. In short, globalization respects neither national sovereignty nor the rights of people and their communities.

Drawing on the example of Chile, Juan Carlos Cardenas illustrated how globalization is leading to the privatization of fishery resources and water resources (the transfer of public ownership and common property to private—individual or company—ownership), and how fishery production is being channeled into high-value export products, with food supplies dependent on low-cost, low-quality imports. He used the examples of the new Fisheries Law in Chile and the Association Agreement (Free Trade Agreement) between Chile and the European Union (EU) to illustrate his presentation.

Day 3 ended with participants reflecting on their visions for the future. In a rapidly changing world, how did they view the future?

Small-scale fisheries

In five years time, what would be the fate of small-scale fisheries, and how would participants like it to be? Could small-scale fisheries continue

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At the Sea Festival, Juan Carlos Cardenas from Chile highlighted the fact that we are living in a defining moment of history in terms of human impact on nature

to provide livelihoods for men and women in fishing communities, and will modernization and improvements support a decent living for them?

Or would modernization and improvements inevitably lead to a smaller number of actors making a better living, with the majority having to diversify or find alternatives to make ends meet?

Without exception, the visions shared were optimistic, foreseeing small-scale fisheries as playing a more important role in societies, in economies, in food security, and in providing a decent living in Central America, under the protective umbrella and guiding hand of CONFEPESCA. †

For more



[sites.google.com/site/
jornadadeaprendizaje1/home](https://sites.google.com/site/jornadadeaprendizaje1/home)

Central America Training Event Website

[www.oldepesca.com/userfiles/file/
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OLDEPESCA - Informe sobre la situación actual del comercio pesquero en América Latina y el Caribe

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