

A Fishy Partnership

The proposed Global Partnership for Oceans must recognize, and protect, ocean space for coastal fishing communities to safeguard their culture, dignity and source of livelihood

In a speech, “A New S-O-S: Save Our Seas”, Robert B. Zoellick, former President of the World Bank Group, announced in Singapore the formation of the Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO) at *The Economist* World Ocean Summit in February 2012. The Bank would mobilize US\$300 mn in catalytic finance, he said, and the GPO would leverage an additional \$1.2 bn in five years.

Almost four months later, the GPO was launched at the Rio+20 Summit in Brazil (See “A Declaration for

not-for-profit environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry associations and certification agencies.

The GPO proposes to address institutional weaknesses that not only created conditions for open access leading to overexploitation of fishery resources, but also institutional weaknesses that failed to stop pollution and habitat loss, says the draft Framework document. It would customize examples of successful reforms to restore the health of the world’s oceans, through co-ordinated action for investment in Priority Ocean Areas at the regional level in developing countries to reduce poverty. The investment—not only in financial resources but also in terms of human and institutional resources and innovations—would be made mainly in marine and coastal areas under national jurisdiction but could also include, for example, rights-based management of tuna fish stocks in the high seas.

Rights-based advocates

The criteria to identify the Priority Ocean Areas are to be developed late-2013 by the GPO Blue Ribbon Panel—a panel drawn from 15 countries, predominantly comprising representatives of academe and the private sector, followed by an equal number of representatives of governments, multilateral bodies and environmental NGOs. Nearly two-thirds of the panellists are from OECD countries (nearly 60 per cent are from just one country). Some of the panellists are internationally known advocates of rights-based fisheries from industrialized countries. The

Healthy Productive Oceans to Help Reduce Poverty”, page 23). To translate this Declaration into reality, a Framework document for a GPO is being prepared. A draft is online (see www.globalpartnershipforoceans.org).

The GPO is proposed to be a partnership of governments, regional and multilateral organizations, United Nations (UN) agencies, foundations, research institutions, private sector companies, and civil society organizations (CSOs). One year after its launch, the GPO has nearly 150 participants.

While the government partners are currently divided mainly between the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the CSOs comprise mainly for-profit and

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This article has been written by **Sebastian Mathew** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Adviser, ICSF

GPO Action Plans for Priority Ocean Areas are hoped to be developed to achieve targeted outcomes for healthy oceans by 2022. These Action Plans, most likely, would be announced at the Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth at The Hague, The Netherlands, in February 2014.

Enhancing the capacity at local, national and regional levels through appropriate investment is expected to close the gap between some of the significant previously agreed international commitments and their implementation. These commitments are drawn from Agenda 21 of the 1992 Earth Summit, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (JPOI) and the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The commitments thus extrapolated for action range from those outstanding since 2004, such as implementing the International Plan of Action (IPOA) to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), to implementing selected Aichi Targets set for 2015-2020 relating to habitat protection, including the protection of coral reefs; adopting an ecosystem-based approach to conserve marine biodiversity; sustainable management of aquaculture; mitigation of nutrient pollution; and creation of coastal and marine protected areas (MPAs).

The global investment mechanism would include core funding directly to developing-country governments from a multi-donor trust fund to be steered and managed by the World Bank and co-financed by the Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as well as parallel financing from interested GPO partners.

The funds would be made available under GPO Action Plans in Priority Ocean Areas, subject to a rigorous monitoring and evaluation regime employing an evidence-based approach to determine progress. In addition, a private investment

fund would be created to respond to upstream public sector investment by supporting private investment in downstream activities. The private investment fund would, for example, invest along the value chain in response to public sector investments in rights-based management reforms in fisheries.

Grouped under three programme components, namely, (i) sustainable seafood and livelihoods, (ii) critical coastal and ocean habitats and biodiversity, and (iii) pollution reduction, mainly seven targeted outcomes are expected by 2022

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES / GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA



Small-scale fishers put fish in traps as bait to catch crab in Batu Kawan, Penang, Malaysia. The GPO must adhere to a human-rights-based approach to fisheries

through GPO Action Plans in Priority Ocean Areas. These are:

1. to increase global food fish production from both sustainable aquaculture and sustainable fisheries;
2. to reduce the open-access nature of fisheries by creating responsible tenure arrangements;
3. to enable the world's overexploited fish stocks to be rebuilt and to increase the annual net benefits of capture fisheries by at least \$20 bn;

Without protecting human rights of the poor, it is often pointless to create tenure arrangements to reverse overfishing and reduce poverty.

4. to halve the current rate of natural habitat loss and reduce habitat degradation and fragmentation;
5. to increase MPAs to include at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas;
6. to conserve and restore natural coastal habitats to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to climate-change impacts; and
7. to reduce pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Agreed international commitments do not, however, include any specific commitments relating to reducing the open-access nature of fisheries or to increasing the annual net benefits of capture fisheries. There are, to our knowledge, no international commitments to a rights-based approach to fisheries either.

The targeted outcomes of GPO are thus a hybrid of unilateral prescriptions coming from the World Bank and some of the international commitments already agreed upon under the UN or its specialized agencies. It is, however, moot if these unilateral commitments indeed can prevent overexploitation of fisheries resources and reduce poverty in the developing world.

Overexploitation of fisheries resources has been attributed to

open-access fisheries. An increase in food-fish production from capture fisheries is presumed contingent upon introducing secure rights to remove open access.

However, the FAO's *State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)* 2012 reports how Western Central Pacific, Eastern and Western Indian Ocean—home to one the largest concentration of poor fishers in the world—have shown continuously increasing trends in catch since 1950.

This is despite the absence of any clear tenure rights in marine capture fisheries in these areas. Sustained increase in food-fish production in the face of value-chain constraints has not, however, dented the poverty of vulnerable coastal fishing communities in countries like India, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

In inland fisheries, on the other hand, where there are tenure rights and no open access, these rights have been spirited away by middlemen and merchants, pushing active fishers deeper into poverty in South Asia, especially in Myanmar.

Without protecting human rights of the poor, it is often pointless to create tenure arrangements to reverse overfishing and reduce poverty. Even with regard to New Zealand, which has a well-known case of rights-based fisheries management reforms, there are documented human-rights abuses on board time-chartered fishing vessels, raising serious concerns about the social consequences of rights-based fisheries even in rich countries (see article by Christine page 8 in this issue of *SAMUDRA Report*).

Rights-based fisheries

Also, in the case of Iceland, another well-known case of rights-based fisheries reforms, the Human Rights Committee of the UN concluded in 2007 that the property entitlement privilege accorded permanently to the original quota holders, to the detriment of other fishermen, was not based on reasonable grounds (see *SAMUDRA Report* No.49, March 2008, page 44). In order to integrate social responsibility into economic and ecological sustainability of GPO

investments, GPO Action Plans must adhere to a human-rights-based approach to fisheries, consistent with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, which is currently under negotiation.

This is perhaps necessary, considering that small-scale fisheries contribute two-thirds of global fish catches for direct human consumption, and employ more than 90 per cent of the world's fishers and fishworkers. Compliance with FAO guidelines would ensure that GPO-funded activities achieve their outcomes upholding principles of human rights and dignity, respect of cultures, non-discrimination, gender equity and equality. The FAO Guidelines are likely to be adopted in 2014.

Employment and income are still important considerations in fisheries

development in many developing-country fisheries. The GPO Action Plans ought to discuss employment of fishers not only in the context of alternative employment in tourism or offsetting loss of employment due to overfishing or pollution, but also in the context of creating employment in sustainable fisheries.

Even for successful outcomes in conservation and management of fisheries resources, it is important to invest in the welfare and human development of fishing communities, especially in sea safety, decent work and better work and living conditions. In this context, implementing the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, of the International Labour Organization (ILO) could be part of GPO Action Plans in Priority Ocean Areas. Fishers protected under sound labour legislation are far more likely to contribute to sustainable fisheries

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Artisanal purse-seiners landing anchovies in Pisco, south of Peru. Small-scale fisheries contribute two-thirds of global fish catches for direct human consumption

than fishers who enjoy no such protection.

Traditional knowledge is recognized as one of the guiding principles of GPO. Integrating commitments under Agenda 21 regarding the use of local and traditional ecological knowledge of fishing communities into GPO Action Plans in Priority Ocean Areas could strengthen and nurture responsible tenure rights.

This can improve information and generate ownership from traditional communities to fisheries management reforms and assist in empowering fishing communities outcomes that are likely to promote sustainable fisheries. Activities for investment under the GPO should

From a longer-term perspective on sustainable development, building up meaningful decision-making responsibility under GPO Action Plans in relation to marine and coastal areas is contingent upon investing in bottom-tier institutions such as fishers' associations, gear groups, trade unions and co-operatives at local and national levels to enable their participation in planning and implementation of fisheries conservation and management activities.

In line with Agenda 21, small-scale artisanal fisheries development and management need to be integrated into marine and coastal planning in Priority Ocean Areas. The GPO Action Plans should have a duty to recognize the rights of small-scale fishworkers, women, indigenous people and local communities, including their rights to the utilization and protection of marine and coastal habitats on a sustainable basis.

The emphasis on rights-based fisheries of GPO Action Plans must not only be underpinned by a human rights-based approach but must also be balanced with approaches such as co-management, input controls and technical measures, together with capacity development of fisheries departments, and greater co-ordination between fisheries and environment authorities as well as other departments dealing with ocean resources.

Consultation

Noticeably absent as regards the coastal and marine protected areas to be created under GPO Action are mechanisms to ensure proper and meaningful consultation and participation of fishing communities in their planning and implementation. Likewise, by incorporating the right to life and livelihoods of coastal fishing communities as the basic principles into these Action Plans, the GPO could take an important stance to defend these communities against the harmful impacts of coastal development, coastal deforestation, no-take fishing zones, arbitrary conservation programmes, destructive

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include support to local fishing communities to organize, maintain, exchange and improve traditional knowledge of marine living resources and fishing techniques.

While the GPO recognizes how private certification systems downstream would drive more sustainable fisheries upstream, it is important for GPO investments to offer safeguards to prevent non-tariff barriers to trade applying, among others, the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and choosing least trade-restrictive trade measures, as proposed in Agenda 21.

Due consideration is required to the special conditions and development requirements of developing countries under international trade regimes. Also, in line with IPOA-IUU, GPO Action Plans should not support unilateral trade measures. Trade-related measures to prevent, deter or eliminate IUU fishing should be used only in exceptional circumstances where other measures have proved to be unsuccessful.

fishing practices, fisheries access agreements, offshore oil and gas exploitation and extraction, offshore mining, and land- and sea-based sources of pollution.

Under the GPO umbrella, a powerful multilateral finance institution such as the World Bank could win support especially from finance, energy, environment, mining and industry ministries, as well as the private sector, to address the concerns of fishing communities in countries falling under Priority Ocean Areas.

In Singapore, Zoellick sent out an S-O-S to save our seas from pollution and to save our fish stocks “crashing from overexploitation”. Fishers, along with seafarers, are the original users of the seas. Fishing would still rank as the number one profession when it comes to employment in ocean space. The seas must, therefore, be saved also for coastal fishing communities to protect their culture, dignity and source of livelihood.

The final Framework document ought to emphasize the social dimension and ensure that Priority Ocean Areas and GPO Action Plans are required to effectively integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

It is, however, still unclear how far the proposed GPO fund would raise US\$300 mn in catalytic finance, and leverage an additional US\$1.2 bn, as announced by Zoellick. The challenge facing donors must be whether to commit scarce financial resources to a GPO financial mechanism or to back the ongoing efforts of UN and its specialized agencies.

We do not need a singular GPO steered by the World Bank, but rather we need several GPOs under different UN agencies, where civil society organizations, especially those representing fishing communities, are assigned a role in setting funding priorities and in decisionmaking. Rather than creating just an overarching mechanism under a multilateral finance institution such as the World Bank, it would make better sense

to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to save our seas from pollution, FAO to save our fisheries from overexploitation, and CBD to save our marine and coastal biological diversity from destruction, together with support to the ILO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to provide decent work and to strengthen local and national institutions for sustainable development. **3**

For more


www.globalpartnershipforoceans.org

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www.icsf.net/en/samudra/article/EN/49.html?start=12

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