

Report on National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries)



December 22-24, 2022

Seva Kendra, Kolkata, West Bengal

Report prepared by
Vaibhav Raghunandan and Ahana Lakshmi



International Collective in Support of Fishworkers Trust
www.icsf.net



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Front Cover

Participants at the National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries)

Front Inside

A fisherman with his castnet, Khyapla Jal, India

Amitrajit Chakraborty, amitrajit.chakraborty21_dev@apu.edu.in

Back Inside

Fishing in Loktak lake

Sandro Lacarbona

Back Cover

A husband-wife fishing duo engaged in sorting shrimps after returning from a fishing trip in Lahiripur village of Sundarban Biosphere Reserve

Amitrajit Chakraborty, amitrajit.chakraborty21_dev@apu.edu.in

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| CCRF | Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries |
| CIFE | Central Institute for Fisheries Education |
| CIFRI | Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute |
| CSS | Central Sector Schemes |
| DISHA | Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action |
| DOF | Department of Fisheries |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FIDF | Fisheries and Infrastructure Development Fund |
| ICAR | Indian Council for Agricultural Research |
| ICSF | International Collective in Support of Fishworkers |
| NABARD | National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development |
| NCDC | National Co-operative Development Corporation |
| NFDB | National Fisheries Development Board |
| NPSSFW | National Platform for Small-scale Fishworkers |
| PMMSY | Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana |
| SC | Scheduled Caste |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SSF | Small-scale Fisheries |
| ST | Scheduled Tribe |

Summary

by Sannidhi Perla

Introduction

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at its Thirty-first Session in June 2014. The implementation of the SSF Guidelines is identified as a significant step for enhancing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to nutrition and food security. As part of the implementation process, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust organized a National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop (Inland Fisheries) at Seva Kendra, Kolkata, from 22 to 24 December 2022. Key fishworker representatives from Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal, attended the workshop.

DAY 1

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

In his introductory remarks, Sebastian Mathew, executive trustee, ICSF Trust, drew attention to the salient aspects of the SSF Guidelines such as the importance of conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources and the promotion of a human rights-based approach. The 2014 SSF Guidelines instrument complements the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), he said, developed within the framework of an ecosystem approach to fisheries. The 2014 instrument is to benefit both men and women, especially to protect tenure rights, and the right to social protection, including the occupational safety and health of fishers and fishworkers. Further, the instrument highlights the need to deter and prevent illegal and destructive fishing gear and practices, both in marine and inland waters. The instrument recognizes that most fish produced in inland fisheries is for direct human consumption. Although marine fisheries were more dominant until the 1980s, inland fisheries, both capture and culture, have grown over time to contribute a greater share of fish production and employment in India.

ICSF held two workshops in the year 2019 where there was a request for a TOT for the marine and inland sectors. Accordingly, a TOT Workshop was held in Chennai in October 2022 for the marine sector. Now, after the inland fisheries TOT Workshop, the participants are expected to go back and impart training to local fishers in their respective areas, especially to apply the SSF Guidelines to better understand local issues and possible solutions, and to explain the national and state-level schemes and legislation. Another objective of the workshop is to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries, he said. The participants were to receive inputs on resource management and to be educated on the right to development and the right to social security which are constitutionally guaranteed. Sebastian then welcomed all participants and introduced the resource persons.

SESSION 1

a. Tenure, Fishing Rights, Institutions and Governance

VV. Sugunan, Assistant Director-General, ICAR (Retd.)

“Mainstreaming SSF Guidelines into the national policy framework is important”, said VV Sugunan in his talk on Tenure, Fishing Rights, Institutions and Governance. He defined tenure in simple terms, elaborating on its vitality and clarified how the ability to access resources is the most relevant

aspect of tenure in inland fisheries. Vulnerable and marginalized groups will stay out of the radar of social development, he warned, if tenure governance is not heeded properly,

There are well-defined parameters of tenure in other agriculture-related sectors, while it is still an emerging concept in fisheries, he said, and enumerated the complexities of tenure and the need to put tenure rights into a legal framework. Tenure is not a standalone process and cannot be viewed in isolation, and needs to be considered within the broader context of land and livelihoods.

Explaining granting of leases, and fishing rights through open access, auctions and licenses, he discussed how issues that arise from a flawed governance of tenure could lead to insecure access to resources. He further explained the matter by giving an example of the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department not permitting access of local communities to water bodies for fishing in wildlife sanctuaries. The protection of small-scale fishers and fish farmers, and providing them with benefits that are enjoyed by their agriculture counterparts is vital, he said.

Tenure rights are associated with the institutional environment that require strong community platforms. The fish stocks should be owned by the community, he said, and reservoir fisheries should be recognized as a community activity. The national and state policies need to focus on open-water fisheries and its contribution to livelihood security. Sugunan emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in approach at both national and state levels to reduce the role of government and to increase the role of the community.

b. Access Rights to Inland Fisheries Resources: Legal and Institutional Aspects

Ganesh Chandra, Senior Scientist, ICAR- Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Barrackpore, West Bengal, India

The inland fisheries legislation and policies were presented by Ganesh Chandra, Senior Scientist, ICAR-CIFRI. He introduced the ‘public trust doctrine’ concept and mentioned how the inland fisheries sector in West Bengal, until 2014, was completely welfare-based, and became revenue-based later to extract rent. In most states, the lease period was for five to 10 years, whereas it was for a period of one to three years in others. Speaking of Assam, Ganesh said the state had the best fisheries legislation, and explained the organization of ownership, control and transfer of fishing rights in the state benefit fishing communities. Introducing Bihar, he spoke about how the fisheries sector had transformed in the last 20 years. The *Panidaar* (water lord) system that started during the reign of Akbar in Bihar had continued until 1990. Now, all the water bodies were owned by the government and were leased out to fishers. He spoke about the formation of cooperatives at the block level in Bihar and the conflicts that arose at the community level. In Uttar Pradesh, both revenue and welfare-based models were visible, he said.

Citing the example of Gujarat, Ganesh spoke how fisheries regulations could be regressive in situations where water bodies dry up too soon. Although the tribal fishers made annual lease payment, the water bodies prematurely dried up making the requirement to pay annual lease amount regressive in nature. In Andhra Pradesh, the government had complete hold over the leasing system and no open access was permitted, he said.

West Bengal Sundarban and its Small-scale Fishing Community

Santanu Chacraverti, President, Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA), Kolkata, India

From the etymology of *Sundarban* to the impact of climate change on the mangroves due to rising sea level and subsidence of the Bengal delta, Santanu’s session painted a complete picture of the Sundarban. With maps showing Bhatir Desh, referred to as the ‘Land of tides’, he explained areas that are accessible, and areas that are not, to vulnerable and marginalized fishers. The fishers put

themselves at great risk, he said, becoming a part of the food chain in the wilderness, often becoming the prey in pursuit of the hunt. The forests are uninhabited by humans, except for poachers. The outskirts of the forests, which were once part of the jungle have had human settlements since colonialization to house fishers and others. Sundarban today consists of 102 islands, 48 of which are forested and 52 inhabited. These figures were meaningless due to the geomorphology changing every day, he said. There had been colonial recognition of the rights of fishers in the Sundarban waters. The Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and 1973 and declaration of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve recognize these rights, he claimed.

After covering the history of Sunderban in brief, Dr Chacraverti said conservation measures are now negatively impacting the livelihood of fishers. As a result, illegal fishing, regardless of hazards, had become a necessity for subsistence, he said. In the discussion that followed, the importance of consultation with and participation of local fishers in decision-making with respect to forest conservation was highlighted. There was an overarching view that fishers be given the right to fish in the buffer areas of Sunderban.

DAY 2

The day started with the participants introducing themselves, affiliated organizations and their area of work. Dr Ananthan, Principal Scientist, Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), steered an interactive activity.

Several issues such as access rights, coupled with the right to rotate access to resources, were discussed, along with measures that the government could adopt: (i) to make juvenile fishing effectively illegal; (ii) to introduce insurance; (iii) to issue identity cards; (iv) to provide police protection; (v) to fix reasonable tenure fee; and (vi) to create artificial water bodies for inland fisheries.

The Odisha trainees expressed concern about ‘outsiders’, more than locals, gaining greater access to the Chilika Lake and how their prawn cultivation led to negative impacts on small-scale fishing. Concerns were expressed about pollution from the mining industry in Hirakud, and indiscriminate water abstraction leading to lower water levels in rivers for fishing. Chilika was connected to the sea at two places and the lagoon mouths had been closed. The Lake has both sweet and saline water regimes; the endemic fish species are specific and an effort should be made to improve such fish stocks, it was observed. The West Bengal trainees raised the issue of soil erosion, Assam faced issues related to flooding, on the one hand, and decreasing flow, on the other hand, in the river Brahmaputra. The trainees from Manipur brought attention to decreasing biological diversity in local water bodies. Rajasthan trainees raised problems from marketing bottlenecks, especially due to exploitation by local traders. It was proposed that fishers’ *gram sabhas* had to function for real empowerment of fishers.

Governance of Indian River-Floodplain Capture Fisheries: Access, Rights, Entitlements, and Responsibilities

Nachiket Kelkar, Programme Lead, Riverine Ecosystems and Livelihoods, Wildlife Conservation Trust, India

Briefly introducing the history of fisheries from the colonial period, Nachiket Kelkar talked about colonial hydrology and the fisher identity, and proceeded to explain the attributes of riverine capture fisheries in India. Drawing upon paragraphs 5.5 to 5.13 of the SSF Guidelines, mainly dealing with tenure rights of small-scale fishers, Nachiket explained the objectives of sustainability, food security, equity, conservation and their inter-relationship in the context of inland capture fisheries of Bihar in

river Ganges. The institutionally-governed rights of fishers were illuminated and situations where the rights were misused, especially by those from outside, were explained. Caste, tradition and other social factors could be constraints, he said, for granting access and rights to resources. He further urged a rethink of the overfishing paradigm and mesh size regulations in the light of riverine stock specificities.

SESSION 2

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and Public Expenditure in Inland Fisheries

Ananthan PS, Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Division, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai, India

Introducing the concept of Budget estimates and schemes, Ananthan's session focused mainly on sub-schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and their benefits to inland small-scale fishing communities. The differences between capital and revenue expenditure, and the difference between Central Sector Schemes (CS), Centrally-sponsored Schemes (CSS), and State schemes were explained in terms of their implementation methods in the context of inland fisheries. He said that the PMMSY (2020-21 to 2024-25) aimed at enhancing production, generating employment and increasing income of fishers. The outlay and the share of the central government, state government and beneficiaries in funding the Rs. 20,050 Crore (Rs. 200.50 billion) scheme were presented.

PMMSY also aims to enhance the productivity of fisheries, improving and establishing a post-harvest and cold-chain infrastructure by constructing cold storage, markets and marketing infrastructure, and taking actions concerning fisheries management and regulatory framework. The utilization of PMMSY funds by states were presented. It was noted that the south Indian states have utilized the scheme more than the rest of the country. The performance of Chhattisgarh was noted to be appreciable in the inland fisheries context.

State-specific schemes from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Odisha, West Bengal, and Maharashtra were compared and contrasted with each other in terms of expenditure. Schemes like Matsya Mitra and Sagar Mitra and programmes like the Majuli development in Assam (an island district in river Brahmaputra, Assam) were discussed. Inland resources per fisher were calculated for different states. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu were found to show better performance than other states. The spending of the state per fisher was also discussed. In the discussion that followed, Ananthan was asked about state and national schemes that have been developed in consultation with fishing communities. Ananthan said that he was unaware of any such schemes, but concurred it would be a good practice to adopt.

Fisheries schemes provided by the state governments- case studies of Odisha, Assam, Bihar, and West Bengal

Arun Pandit, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Focusing on the states of Odisha, Assam, Bihar and West Bengal, Arun Pandit listed the basic characteristics of small-scale fishers, inland resources, production estimates, government schemes, key activities and general recommendations. *Matsya Jagran*, seed bank programme, Majuli development programme, *Jal dhara Jal Bharo* scheme of West Bengal, *Atmanirbhar* Bihar scheme, *Machha Chasa Pain Nua Pokhari Khola Yojana* of Odisha, etc., were some of the schemes that Arun brought attention to at the state level. Several recommendations were made by the speaker such as developing comprehensive insurance, strict enforcement of punishment against destructive fishing practices, and the necessity of schemes to supplement the income of fishers.

DAY 3

SESSION 3

Case Study- Community Rights over Hadagarh Reservoir in Keonjhar, Odisha

Puspanjali Satpathy, Independent Social Worker, Odisha

Puspanjali presented a detailed case study of how the Forest Rights Act, 2006, (FRA) was used to benefit the fishworkers in Hadagarh reservoir, Odisha. When the Hadagarh sanctuary was declared, it was forbidden to fish in the reservoir. In 2010, the *sarpanch* and several other people prepared a report that 18 villages were dependent on the reservoir for their livelihood based on fishing. They approached the district collectorate several times as the fisheries and revenue departments seemed unaware of fishing rights under FRA.

Hadagarh was a small case but important case study as it is an example to demonstrate that rights can be asserted and acquired under FRA. FRA is not a legislation only for tribals, said Puspanjali; it is also for local communities, and for anyone displaced from forests due to development projects of the government or private sector. Puspanjali gave another example of the river Derjang project where the people availed their rights under the FRA four years ago. The case of Hadagarh where the FRA was instrumental in granting fishing rights needs to be replicated everywhere, she observed. Along with rights, the FRA also prescribes many duties such as the protection of the forest, wildlife and biodiversity, said Puspanjali. She said the duties ought to be paid as much attention as rights.

The trainees expressed reservation about the state of implementation of inland fisheries regulations such as the restrictions on the use of mosquito nets (e.g., Sundarbans, West Bengal). Puspanjali was of the view that the state would be more responsible and accountable if the fishing communities are better organized. The negative impact of white-legged shrimp culture in Odisha, the impact of mangrove in Maharashtra and issues of access in Dimbhe dam of Pune were also raising during the discussion.

Inland Fisheries, Aquaculture and the National Fisheries Policy

Dilip Kumar, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Planning and Policy Adviser, (FAO) (Retired), India

The SSF Guidelines were further elaborated by Dilip Kumar. He mentioned the goals of SDGs, and how SSF can contribute substantially to achieving them. Compared to commercial fish farming, small fishers have a major contribution and place in the Indian context, he observed. The very existence of the farming and fishing sector in India owed a lot to the small-scale producers, he said. The SSF Guidelines complement the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to support overall principles and provisions from a human rights-based approach. The process of preparing the SSF Guidelines was participatory and consultative, he pointed out.

Dilip concurred that India needed production by masses and not mass production by a few individuals. Development that is not equitable is not sustainable, he said. National-level policy needs to be broad enough to guide the states to develop their fisheries and aquaculture policies in a need-based manner. He drew attention to the national fisheries policy which is currently under development, and was of the view that the needs of SSFs are to be heard and heeded in the policy. He was concerned that the fishing communities were still not organized and continued to be economically weak. Collective decision-making, planning and action were necessary, he said. Ensuring ecological wellbeing and maintaining the flow of river at healthy levels were issues that the state must pay attention to. There needed to be greater coherence between fisheries, forest and water resource policies and alternative activities to support fishers should be identified to decrease fishing pressure. In conclusion, Dilip said the National Fisheries Policy had to be supportive of SSF, adopt an ecosystem approach and strengthen the rights of access and the use of resources.

Reflections of Participants

In the group discussion that followed, a trainee from Maharashtra made a few suggestions to address problems such as leasing involving non-uniform payments; poor seed quality in culture-based fish production systems; location of housing away from their fishing grounds/reservoirs; and extending diesel subsidies currently provided to marine fishers also to the inland fishing sector.

A trainee from Assam spoke about how traditional fishers have not been recognized, and how catches in Brahmaputra have decreased due to reduced water flow because of upstream development projects. Further, awareness programmes are to be held about national policies, and welfare schemes, he said, as the system leans singularly on revenue collection. Funding from the central government needs to be enhanced, and rampant corruption in the fisheries department needs to be addressed, he added.

The trainee from Jammu and Kashmir noted that tourism be made mindful of the carrying capacity of the region. A trainee from Odisha raised the need to pay more attention to the issue of migration of fishers from fishing and a trainee from Bihar spoke about promoting fraternity between researchers and fishing communities. A trainee from West Bengal sought to look into fisheries cooperatives in the inland context, especially focusing on how to improve them, based on state-level workshops. The trainees from the states like Assam and Manipur said TOT workshops like the Kolkata one should be held in other states too.

At the close of the workshop, Nachiket Kelkar said that while everyone know about their ;local problems, they should be seen in the conext of what was happening in the outside world. Dilip Kumar said that documentation was important and that it was important to bring to the front ground realities . Ganesh Chandra spoke about the need for the right kind of leadership to ensure that fisheries cooperatives worked. Santanu Chacraverti said that paying attention to the impact of agricultural pollution on inland water bodies was necessary. Preferential access to small-scale fishing communities need to go together with preferential treatment of nature and the environment to deal with climate change impacts, he concluded.

Opening Session

1.1. Welcome Address

Venugopalan, N. Programme Manager, ICSF Trust

N. Venugopalan, Programme manager, ICSF Trust welcomed the gathering to the National Training of Trainers workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries). He invited Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust and B. K. Das to the stage for their introductory remarks.

1.2 Introductory Remarks

Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust

Introducing the workshop, Sebastian said that ICSF had been engaging with the SSF Guidelines implementation since their endorsement in 2014 by the Committee on Fisheries of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). He said that the Guidelines recognized the ecosystem approach to fisheries and a human rights-based approach, and dealt with issues such as who can access fishing grounds and resources, under what conditions and for how long. The scope of the SSF Guidelines included both marine and inland waters, especially men and women working in the range of activities along the value chain, and pre- and post-harvest activities.

He said that inland fisheries were of particular focus in the SSF Guidelines since most of the fish from inland fisheries are for direct human consumption. The inland fisheries sector employed more than one million fishers and fishworkers in India. Inland fish production, both capture and culture, contributed to over three-quarters of the total fish production of India. In addition to tenure rights and inland fisheries, Sebastian said that the impact of destructive fishing practices on inland ecosystems, occupational safety and health issues in inland fisheries, inland spatial planning, harmonization of policies affecting the health of inland water bodies and ecosystems, and how fisheries, agriculture and other natural resource policies collectively enhanced the inter-related livelihoods derived from these sectors were of particular focus in the SSF Guidelines.

Sebastian said that several workshops had since been organized both in the marine and inland sector. The TOT Workshop for Marine fisheries was held in Chennai in October 2022. It was now the turn of inland fisheries. He said that the objectives of the TOT Workshop on Inland Fisheries were to understand issues related to access to inland fisheries resources and adjacent land, comprehend various national and state-level schemes relevant to SSF in light of the SSF Guidelines and understand the significance of national and state level policies and legislation for inland fishers and fishworkers. The training programme was expected to strengthen fishing communities to engage in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of implementing the SSF Guidelines. These were in the realms of recognizing their tenure rights, their participation in resource management, the recognition of their rights to development and to develop social safety nets such as social protection, including social security. Sebastian ended his remarks with a special welcome to B.K. Das, Director, ICAR Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Barrackpore, Dilip Kumar, Fishing and Aquaculture Sector Planning and Policy Advisor, V.V. Sugunan, former ADG Fisheries, ICAR and Ananthan PS, Principal Scientist at Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) who would serve as facilitator. He also welcomed Nachiket Kelkar, Programme Lead of Wildlife Conservation Trust, Santanu Chacraverti, President of DISHA, Pradeep Chatterjee, National Convenor of National Platform for Small-scale Fishworkers and Ganesh Chandra, Senior Scientist, ICAR-CIFRI. Lastly, he welcomed participants from the states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal, interpreters and those who were to carry out audio and video documentation, as well as the social media.

1.3. Keynote Address: Small-scale Inland Fisheries: An answer to Livelihood and Nutritional Security in India

B.K. Das, Director, ICAR- Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal

Das began by providing a brief history of the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, which was started in 1947 in Barrackpore and said that recently the institute had published a document on the growing aqua and inland fisheries. He mentioned that VV Sugunan was actively involved in its preparation. Das said that inland fisheries contributed 1.24 per cent to the national gross value-added products and 7.28 per cent of agricultural GDP. Almost half (43.7 per cent) of the 92.30 million fishers involved in inland fisheries were women. Explaining that inland fisheries may be classified in different ways, he said that small-scale fisheries are usually classified as traditional fisheries, subsistence fisheries and recreational (sports) fisheries. Small-scale fisheries require access to lakes, rivers, reservoirs, wetlands, estuaries, water bodies and canals.

In traditional fisheries, he said that individual households may own nets and other things to fish in traditional ways and required lower energy and capital to harvest aquatic resources. Unemployed poor people often fished using simple gear and tools for subsistence (to consume within their homes). Recreational and sport fisheries was usually practiced by those who went angling and weekend fishing. He said that small-scale fisheries was an unorganized sector with no one looking after the wellbeing of small-scale fishers. While many schemes and programmes were introduced, they were mostly concentrated towards aquaculture development. Small-scale fisheries were being neglected despite the fact that almost 23 million Indians survive because of it as it played an important role in employment, income, food and nutritional security.

Das said that 95 per cent of the world's inland fisheries were small-scale fisheries with 97 per cent of them located in developing countries providing food security, nutritional security, livelihood security and social protection. 90-95 per cent of the catch was used for local consumption and 90 per cent of the people engaged in it were full-time or part time fishworkers, almost half of which were women. It was also to be noted that small-scale fisheries have a small environmental footprint. They reduced harmful fishing effort, catered to SDG and could enhance area management for biodiversity conservation. The recently discussed COP27 of UNFCCC Resolution had mentioned inland fisheries and small-scale fisheries.

In India, Das said, small-scale inland fisheries were categorized by the engine size of the fishing vessel. Small non-motorized fishing vessels between 3-12 m like canoes, dinghies, were usually operated by small family units, individuals or small communities. Most of them were owned and operated by the same person. In cases like hilsa fishing, three or more people were involved in which case they divided work accordingly. While it was labour intensive, there was a direct benefit to fishworkers who could consume as well as earn income from the catch. In comparison to large scale fisheries, the catch per unit was much higher in SSFs.

The hidden harvest of small-scale fisheries was very high. In the wetlands near Bangladesh, around 300 fishers fished daily in their small boats harvesting 4-5 kgs of indigenous fish each, accounting for almost Rs 10 crore (US\$ 1.2 million). While almost 60 per cent of the catch went for their own consumption, the rest was sold in the market. Similar practices were followed in the states dominated by wetlands such as Assam, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh—. Self-consumption often hid the real harvest. If this was accounted for, then it also pointed to how small-scale fisheries helped build food security, and eradicated hunger within communities. Fish have a lot of micro nutrients which also help combat and prevent diseases and illnesses. Research by the project team from CIFRI in Naam Kana, Sundarbans where the local community were provided with small indigenous fish as a part of their meals for one month, found that the haemoglobin count increased and there was reduction in the number of anaemic people. Thus, small-scale fisheries played a huge role in reducing medical expenses and building wellness.

Das said that Fisheries and aquaculture were linked to nine SDGs in different ways. He said that small-scale fisheries would play a huge role in reducing the impacts of climate change in future climate scenarios. However, since the rise in temperatures would also affect fisheries adversely, it was important to build resilience and aid in capacity building. Das explained that one of the challenges in India was the management of rivers and resources that spread across states as it created issues of ownership and problems related to fishing rights. Pollution due to different reasons was one of the biggest threats to inland fisheries today. A lack of legislation and regulation of juvenile fishing was another area of concern. Pesticides kill many larval forms and the loss of breeding grounds due to dams and barrages had created more problems. Fishers also broke rules regarding fishing bans because they did not have alternative sources of employment or livelihood.

Of the 230 species of fish in the Ganga, Das said that about 190 were available for fishers but only 66 have some commercial value. About 75-80 had ornamental value and were more valuable for sport fishing. He said that he was bringing this up because the Clean Ganga mission was a huge talking point and it would help increase livelihoods. Any regulations introduced for fishing need to consider alternative employment for fishers. If this were not done, then the exercise would just remain theoretical and no actual progress towards conservation would be made. Pointing to the decline in hilsa catch since the construction of the Farakka barrage, he said it was a pattern affecting many places across the country. Water pollution—via pesticides, plastic and even industrial operations was hurting fisheries. Small-scale fishers also face a lot of conflict with trawlers which practice juvenile fishing and hurt the ecology.

Another big problem, he said was the spread of invasive species, where exotic species were prized and take over the ecosystems. In Madhya Pradesh, earlier the tilapia species was a mere 5 per cent and catla dominated with 95 per cent of the catch. The situation has now been reversed. It was important to control the tilapia population and manage the system. He said that an innovative ranching programme in the Ganga had helped increase the carp population in the river. He opined that ranching programmes need to be designed in collaboration with local communities to help the biodiversity of areas and protect fishers' rights.



B.K. Das, Director, ICAR- Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal presenting the keynote address. He spoke on how SSF play a vital role in food sustenance and is helping eradicate hunger



Participants from the states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal during the opening session of the National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries)

The construction of the Farakka barrage meant that migration routes of hilsa, an important fishery earlier, were blocked. Das said that talks were underway to open the barrage gates to allow fish to pass through. He said that it was important to maintain minimum flow in rivers, because without that the fish would not survive. Livelihood of fishers was highly dependent on maintaining river flow, and river valley projects need to consider that. He said that reservoirs need to increase the biodiversity of their fish stock, and promote small indigenous fish, and referred to a study conducted with GIZ in a Ramsar site in Himachal where they found that proliferation of small indigenous fish helped improve the biodiversity of the area, which otherwise might have become a desert. When it came to wetland resources, Das said that they were concentrated in four states in India. Silting, loss of breeding grounds due to dams and barrages, and urbanization were huge concerns with wetlands. Another was ownership of land around wetlands, which often led to conflict between agriculture and fisheries sector.

New governance models need to be adopted for wetlands, he said. An example was Chilika, where government authorities, the Chilika development authority, ICAR CIFRI and NGOs played a huge role in restoration and maintenance of the lagoon. Chilika generates revenue worth Rs 1000 crore (US\$ 126 million) from fisheries and Rs 10,000 crore (US\$ 1.2 billion) from tourism. Das said they were working on a similar model for Loktak lake. He said that conversations with the Chief Minister of Manipur had revealed that they lacked a state fisheries department and are currently developing a Loktak development authority.

Das said that predictive climate modelling was helping to assess the impact of climate change on fish species. An increase in water temperatures—between 2.2-2.4 degrees—in the Ganga, Cauvery and Godavari basins had affected fish breeding grounds and the changing rainfall patterns had affected the breeding cycles of the Catla species. It was important to do an impact assessment and find optimum breeding temperatures for different species. Fishers were responsible for reducing food scarcity and provided income to entire communities. Inland fisheries contributed to wealth and capital generation. But fishing was a seasonal activity in many areas. Pollution, climate change and other mitigating factors were affecting fisher lives. A lack of markets was also a huge cause of

concern and new models had to be explored. Das cited the example of a mango selling model in Odisha, where mandis were created around harvesting areas, so that farmers could come directly and sell their produce, therefore eliminating the middle man.

Das said that it was important to pay heed and keep abreast with fishery schemes and opened the floor for questions from participants. Sunil Dube from Rajasthan cited a concern with introducing tilapia in the Gandhi Sagar reservoir. He asked for more information on how leading agencies were reaching decisions to restrict exotic aquatic fishes which had invaded the local area. Das said that some of these species were introduced at a point of time to increase revenue. The decision had proved wrong in the long run. CIFRI, he said, was sending researchers and scientists to the local governments to advise on combating invasion by exotics and suggest different adaptation practices.

Another participant said that nowadays fishing was done using electricity. The big fish were harvested and the small ones left to writhe and die. He cited this as a reason for the numbers decreasing. The nets being widely used, he said, were like domestic mosquito nets. He asked if it was possible for the government to formulate a policy to use nets with mesh of a certain size.

Das agreed and said this could come about through community efforts. In Chilika there were enclosures and zero size mesh was not allowed. The rule was followed by all. Since fisheries falls within state government, the district administration could be mobilized to enforce this. The question though was which government would issue these guidelines and implement them. Some fishermen might not use the zero mesh and suffer losses, while those that did would earn as usual. Implementation could only be successful with community participation, like the Sardar Sarovar Nigam Reservoir in which Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra were involved. While Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat had already created a governance model, Maharashtra had not and therefore a common plan had not been implemented. It was not being done in the Narmada Control Authority either.

Another concern brought to the fore was that when fish was bought from the market single use plastic bags were used. It was pointed out that without changes in individual lifestyle, there could not be change within a community.

Session 1

2.1. Tenure, Fishing Rights, Institutions and Governance in the context of Inland Small-scale Fisheries in India

V. V. Sugunan, Assistant Director-General, ICAR (Retd.)

“Mainstreaming SSF Guidelines into the national policy framework is important”, said V V Sugunan in his talk on Tenure, Fishing Rights, Institutions and Governance. He said that the inland fish production comes from three forms of fisheries viz., capture fisheries, aquaculture and enhancements. Capture fisheries comprises of catching wild fish stocks from the rivers, lakes, estuaries, etc., while inland aquaculture is the technique of growing fish in captivity on lines with animal farming. Enhancements are processes that combine both capture fisheries and culture norms such as culture-based fisheries, and stock enhancement. Capture fisheries in rivers, estuaries and reservoirs are non-consumptive water use where the wild or stocked fishes in the water bodies are utilized for growing and harvesting fish where no extra demand for water is created.

By and large all activities of inland open water fisheries fall under the definition of small-scale fisheries. Even if the turnover of the fish runs into thousands of tonnes (in some reservoirs), their basic grassroot operations are still at small-scale. Most capture fisheries are operated as common pool resources with free or limited access. Rivers and estuaries are mainly open access common property resources but in some states like Bihar, river stretches are leased out to individuals as a part of age-old practice. Reservoirs are either leased out to cooperative societies or individuals on highest bid basis. Stock enhanced fisheries and culture-based fisheries in reservoirs and wetlands are ideally managed on a community basis involving cooperative societies or SHGs rather than leasing out to individuals. This ensures better participation of fishers in the management process and thereby ensures a better share of the value of fish produced in the water body for fishers.

Sugunan defined tenure in the context of inland fisheries in simple terms, he went on to elaborate its vitality and clarified how the ability to access resources is the most relevant aspect of tenure.



V. V. Sugunan, Assistant Director-General, ICAR (Retd.) presenting on access rights, tenure and governance in inland fisheries in light of the SSF Guidelines. He highlighted how through tenure governance, tenure rights can be maintained

Tenure determines who benefits from the resource, for how long and under what conditions. In simple terms, tenure is how people gain access to natural resources. Since there are several groups of people accessing resources, tenure also defines the relationship between people on utilization of natural resources and makes negotiations among them. Thus, their livelihood depends on the access available to control these resources, making it a very vital aspect of small-scale fisheries. There are well-defined parameters of tenure in other agriculture-related sectors, while it is still an emerging concept in fisheries, he said. He enumerated the complexities of tenure and emphasized the need to put tenure rights into a legal framework. Tenure is not a standalone process and cannot be viewed in isolation and it needs to be considered within the broader context of land and livelihoods.

Explaining the system of granting leases, and fishing rights through open access, auctions and licenses, he discussed how issues that arise from a flawed governance of tenure could lead to insecure access to resources. He further explained the matter by giving an example of the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department not permitting access for local communities to water bodies for fishing in wildlife sanctuaries. The protection of small-scale fishers and fish farmers, and providing them with benefits, at par with those being enjoyed by their agriculture counterparts, is vital, he said.

Tenure defines a period during which a group of individuals can benefit from practicing fishing. At the same time, it is equally important to know whether these people are actually able to get these benefits at all, even after getting permission to access. They may not be able to get these benefits because of many reasons such as societal norms, caste biases, gender biases, etc. It is also important to grant access at the right time. Within tenure, access is presented as the ability to benefit from resources. It is important to know this because in the Indian system, most rights are neither official nor legally represented. Many are often informal or just held as customs. The protection of tenure and access rights to inland water bodies is very critical for achieving food security and livelihood security of fishers who depend on water bodies for their livelihood. Tenure needs to be properly defined and mainstreamed into policies and legal frameworks.

Sugunan highlighted the importance of tenure governance, which was the mechanism through which tenure rights were allocated, maintained and transferred legally. Weak tenure governance could lead to insecure rights and resources. The FAO of United Nations admitted tenure is still an emerging concept in inland fisheries sector. Thus, it is a crucial time when all these parameters are defined. Currently fishing communities have only customary and traditional tenure systems. Ineffective governance of tenure.

2.2. Access Rights to Inland Fisheries Resources: Legal and Institutional Perspective

Ganesh Chandra, Senior Scientist, ICAR- Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal

Ganesh started by saying that there was free fishing in the Ganga but in some areas in the Yamuna, it was cooperative. He said that whenever rivers came from the state of Madhya Pradesh and flowed into the Yamuna, a condition was imposed which was not in the law, but via a government order. In Ghagra, at the panchayat level, leases were given by the Mukhiya. Fishing in the river, Yamuna, was under the cooperative system, and had seen rampant corruption. In Fatehpur, the corruption was being practiced in the name of fishermen but everyone was involved.

One operative system was self-styled, where the fishermen were backed by financiers which was common to all businesses in India. This system was also practiced in the states of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and in the Chilika lake in Odisha. Where there was free fishing. 20 per cent of the catch went to the financier at a lower rate compared to the market.

In Bihar, contracts were signed via cooperatives. Besides the contract for the main river, contracts for streams and tributaries were also done through cooperatives. Traditional fishermen families were

given the right to free fishing in the past, but this was now controlled by the water mafia, politicians and criminals. Seven fishermen were murdered recently. Ganesh said that the family of a fisherman killed in Kahal village three years ago were yet to receive compensation. 14 fishermen were killed in the Khagaria area but an FIR could not be filed because no one had the courage to do so. On the question of the revenue contract, Ganesh said that if the authorized area was 1 km, often 15km was enclosed and captured. Small fishermen did not go there. How and by whom the revenue of that area remained fixed was unclear.

Bihar, he said, was prone to floods. Sometimes areas were submerged and could not be used. It was worth asking if the fishermen would be compensated. A third point he brought up was in relation to a law which was in the Gazette. Fishermen were given identity cards. The revenue area of approximately 60 kms near Bhagalpur was declared a sanctuary. Fishing was banned there. Thus, the fishermen end up stealing just to survive. He concluded his presentation asking if all streams, ponds and tributaries were leased out on contracts where would poor fishermen fish for free?

2.3. The West Bengal Sundarbans and its Small-Scale Fishing Community—A Quick Discussion

Santanu Chacraverti, President, DISHA

Santanu Chacraverti said that forest officers had to be taught that the right to life and right to livelihood were fundamental rights. Fishers were doing what their forefathers and families had been doing for generations. The authorities believed that the areas belonged to the forest department and others could not enter there. The Forest Rights Act, implemented in parts of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra was not applicable in the Sundarban. Three thousand boats, with four to five persons in each go out to catch fish in the Sundarbans, he said. The locals go to the forest to earn their livelihood so it was surprising that the law does not apply only in one small area of India.

Boats which went crab fishing had fewer persons. Fishing takes place both within and outside the Sundarban Tiger Reserve. The Forest Rights Act was not applicable in these areas. The fishermen who went there did not live there. The FRA was not applicable because the forest is used by honey, leaf,



Ganesh Chandra, Senior Scientist, Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal presenting on access rights to inland fisheries resources - legal and institutional perspective

timber, other forest product collectors too. Santanu said that a gram sabha was needed because it was not a tribal area. Fishing rights in Sundarban were recognized before 1973, but there were lots of restrictions now and the fishing community had no say. No one asked them for their opinions on conservation and restrictions. He also said that salinity was increasing in the Sundarban due to climate change. Santanu showed a picture where the river was flowing higher than the adjacent village.

Fishing rights though given in the 1970s legally had never actually been implemented on ground, he said and hence was required was a change in the framework. Policies were drawn up by officers trained without the requisite knowledge. This mindset needed to be changed. While the officials believe it was encroachment, it was actually poverty and hunger that took men into the forest in spite of the danger of encountering tigers. Forest Rights adhere to natural practices, where the real custodians of the forest are the community. What was required was better governance, without which all the discussions by NGOs and civil society groups are meaningless. Santanu said that being informed and determined to fight for one's rights is the way ahead. Workshops such as this, were critical for meeting others from the sector, and to learn from each other's experiences.

2.4. Interaction and Group Discussion

For the discussion, participants were divided state-wise. The participants from Odisha were divided into two groups, one from the Chilika and other, from the Hiraikud region.

Key points made by the Chilika group were that in Chilika the rights of the local fishermen were restricted while outsiders got better rights. Chilika's area had been reduced from 1150 square kms to 700sq kms, however nothing had been done to address this problem. Production in Chilika had gone down for many reasons. But the revenue earned from cooperative auctions had been increasing by 10 percent every year. Participants asked for a proper review to be conducted and a new rate fixed to reduce the burden on fishermen. Siltation, zero-gauge nets were also major issues for fishers from Chilika. Participants said that in 2018, the Odisha government had stopped the Chilika Fishermen's *Bheri* lease system. Two cases were brought up by the Matsya Jeevi Sangathan in the High Court. They said that the lease was stopped because outsider entries increased, and it became a problem for the local community. Chilika is connected to the sea by small streams which are very important



Santanu Chacraverti, President, DISHA presented on Sundarban and its small-scale fishing community. He spoke on the challenges the community faces in terms of their rights and the changing climate

for fish entry. But these were being closed now, a problem that needed to be fixed soon. Locals had demanded that the government release small fish in Chilika which would help increase fish stock since their catch was not substantial.

One of the chief discussion points from the Hirakud group was that people's rights had been violated following the Hirakud Reserve project. Many residents were paddy farmers who became fishers. A lot of mining and industry projects had come up in the region which were dependent on water from Hirakud. This meant that the water for the agriculture and fishing community was reduced. Fishing had gone down because of water pollution. There were no storage facilities and nor were there any good market links for fishermen to sell their catch. Another discussion point was that there was a patch in the Hirakud reservoir that dried up in October, but payment for the full area for the entire year was expected. There was a lack of awareness about schemes and facilities in the area. For example, people were not sure of the insurance policies that they could take. Participants pointed FRA needed to be implemented everywhere.

In Assam, fish workers have launched All Assam Fish Worker Welfare Association and were working through it for fishermen. Since there were no Government schemes, fishermen bought fish to breed in ponds. Floods started in Assam in April 2022 causing several problems. Agriculture and fishing were hugely affected. Flooding caused ponds to overflow and since there were no initiatives to prevent floods, the ponds could not be saved. Assam's largest river, the Brahmaputra runs from Pasighat to Bonda in Bangladesh. The river's current had reduced considerably downstream and the depth had increased. Traditionally available fish were not available there anymore, the reason being a barrage built upstream. The barrage, named after Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, went across rivers from Arunachal Pradesh and Sarangpur and stored more water than required. Fishermen had lost livelihoods, and have seen their catch reduce. Many don't want to do the work anymore, participants said. Apparently fish worth Rs 1 crore (US\$ 122,002) was released into the Brahmaputra river last year by the government, but there was no fish available. The All Assam Fish Worker Welfare Association wanted to discuss this matter with the Assam's Fisheries Department and Forest Department. It was necessary to plan and ensure fish was there for fishermen living on the banks. Another major issue was identifying fishermen, and giving them licenses. In Assam this sector was not yet organized. Participants said that they planned to start work in the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary, where there is a small river with plenty of fish. Since it is a national park, fishing is not allowed. The condition of fish workers in Assam, participants said, was pathetic. Although recently organizations had been formed, the sector was mainly unorganized. Meetings had started during the pandemic period. According to Blue Revolution data for 2014-16 Rs 3000 crores (US\$ 366 million) was allotted to Assam. But the work at the ground level did not reflect this. According to the scheme, every legislative constituency is to have a minimum of 400 to 500 ponds. The ponds would be accessible to domestic animals too. A participant revealed that in 3-4 constituencies no such work has been undertaken. No officer could actually show where the ponds were located. Though there was a claim that data was available, as far as Assam was concerned the data was fake and the Rs 79,000 (US\$ 963) allotted per pond had been consumed without any pond creation. Nothing has happened for aquaculture and fish worker welfare in Assam. The Rs 7500 crores (US\$ 915 million) allotted in 2021 to the Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) was of no use to anyone. A total of Rs 2050 crore (US\$ 250 million) had been invested in this scheme but so far nothing had happened on the ground. No extension was provided in 2022.

2.5. Governance Questions in India's River-floodplain Capture Fisheries: Access Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities

Nachiket Kelkar, Programme Lead, Riverine Ecosystems and Livelihoods, Wildlife Conservation Trust, India

Nachiket Kelkar said that his talk would be mainly about rivers and areas around them. He would also speak about managing fish in tropical regions of India, Africa and South West Asia. This would be presented along with examples so that new dimensions could be grasped.



Participants during the interaction session. A range of topics, including livelihood, impact of uncertain climatic conditions, tenure rights were discussed

Besides discussing problems, he said, there was a need to give direction to the work and think ahead to solve problems. Their team had been working for 20-22 years in areas around Gangapur, Gandak, Kosi, Mahananda rivers of Bihar, collecting data of wildlife, fisheries, along with climate change. A detailed scientific study too was in progress.

Firstly, he said, it was necessary to remember history. The Britishers ruled over the rivers of India too. The effects of the Zamindari system strengthened by them was felt till date. Knowing that fish would provide income, the British built lots of canals and dams. Dams were built to prevent floods, to help build the railways and for cultivation of land. All this was necessary to increase income from rent and revenue. Simultaneously, markets were also increasing. In earlier years, people were fishing in their own areas for their own needs and some was taken by the British. The British made people realize there was a market for fish. In East Bengal—Bangladesh now —this gave rise to patrons and customers who gradually became middlemen and increased the supply of fish. Nachiket said this was all documented.

In 1870-71, the Imperial Fisheries Department was established under the supervision of Director General Francis Dey. The impact of his work could be felt till date. In a 400-page report, Nachiket said that Dey had stated that fish decreased because even small fish were caught and killed, and for this, he had blamed the fishermen. New laws that came into place in 1897 regarding minimum mesh size were in force even today. They did not seem to give importance to major changes made to river waters. Because of British experimentation, the people of Bengal faced starvation.

They also tried different social experiments in Punjab and Mysore, the consequences of which were felt even today. Many arrangements, which could be called informal customer access modes, were made. Due to all this, no concrete policy was ever formulated. Every area adopted its own method of working and later state-level management began. The condition of rivers kept worsening with construction of dams and barrages increasing after independence. Fisheries emerged with the start of aquaculture. The initial spawn in 1930-40 came from the very same rivers that were a major source of revenue. People were now restricted to fishing in one place which was not the practice earlier.

Nachiket next discussed the SSF Guidelines which included food security, nutrition and justice. The person whose life depends on fishing as a livelihood, he said, must receive sustainable permanent development. Environmental conservation includes protection and promotion of the ecosystem on which fish depend. The guidelines were precise despite there being considerable overlaps. He

pointed out that policy coherence, meant that policy should be operated in an integrated manner. Currently many policies were in conflict with each other. Policies were created without discussions and the battle for rights was a constant one. Not much attention was paid to special planning for rivers. It was easier to work on lakes and ponds.

Nachiket referred to Das's key note address saying exchange of information and collaborative participatory data collection occurred in very few places. Information about river fishing was limited to what was supplied in the market. The register gave information about different traders but not everything was recorded there. Bengal, Odisha and probably Assam were good examples of monitoring data. But in the South and the North, like UP and Bihar monitoring, was not done by community, but only periodically by the state. Even this did not reach the Fisheries Department. Nachiket said that the State Fisheries Department had complimented CIFRI for having collected so much data.

He said that by creating protected areas, conservation was achieved, but it directly compromised equity and justice. It was necessary to balance both. If there was a private auction, and a pond was bought by someone for Rs 5 lakhs (US\$ 600), the objective was maximizing profit. The buyer would not be bothered by who lived or died. The main focus was on making profit. In a cooperative, all members shared benefits; it was a different matter whether there were any at all. In the North East, Kelkar said that communities themselves made arrangements to create production regions, but was not aware if the same happened in other places in India. The North was the best example for community level organization. The objective was to be self-sufficient, and enable the community to take decisions. Water bodies were free for access, fishermen could come and use as they wished—use dynamite or even fish with electricity. Complaints were dealt with legally and outside the legal system too. Nachiket said that there needed to be a middle path where some laws could be enforced

Another issue arose when traditional fishermen or those who belonged to those castes asked for rights. It was constitutionally wrong to give access to someone on the basis of caste but analysis of some policies showed that many traditional communities were identified on the basis of caste. Now many people wanted to break the caste barrier and do other jobs and there was no reason that it be restricted. In Bihar a particular community who were not really fishermen but were dependent on



Nachiket Kelkar, Programme Lead, Riverine Ecosystems and Livelihoods, Wildlife Conservation Trust, India presented on governance questions in India's river-floodplain capture fisheries. He discussed on access, rights, entitlements and responsibilities

the river, got their names inserted into schemes via their MP. This affected them negatively. Conflicts now were inter-community and inter-village and were intensifying. There was no dialogue between them, Nachiket said.

Nachiket said that different methods of fishing were practiced, many of which—like putting dynamite, fishing with electric wire, or fencing the whole channel— were harmful. No progress could be made without stopping these practices. On the other hand, using small traps in the river, with nets with very low mesh size had been in practice for 200 or more years. But if these nets trapped small fish, then it needed to be stopped. The point was that methods that were harmful should be avoided.

Nachiket cited the example of Lake Victoria in Africa. A team had been studying people there for 40-45 years. Poverty in Africa was more than in India. In 1982, it was observed that people caught fish in many ways including using mosquito nets provided for malaria protection. These nets caught small fish too. The observers were shocked thinking if the people caught everything, there would be nothing left for the future. So, they banned small nets and subsequently big nets too. In reality though, only one factor caused a decline in fish production. Rain would increase the fish production and a lack of rain would cause production to crash. Thus, the community had adapted and would eat whatever fish was available. This practice was seen in other places too.

People in, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Amazon all eat small fish, he said. The fish production does not depend on size of the fish but the quantity of it. In a river, 15-20 species were caught in an entire season. So even if the quantities of one species decreases, it is made up by others. Catching gravid fish causes a lot of damage too. There is a seasonal ban on killing fish during rainy days which is to protect fish. However, this is rarely followed. Nets below 50mm cannot be used to catch fish. But Nachiket said that even with nets of 300mm, bigger egg-laying fish could be caught, which was a problem. Saying that unless policies were updated to new ways of thinking, problems would be repeated, he said that in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, since 2006, nearly 60-70 per cent of fishermen have quit the profession.

Nachiket said his organization was working on hyper stability—where the supply of fish was absolutely stable. For example, a fisherman who caught 5kg of fish at a particular spot, would get 5kgs there regularly, because that place was the preferred habitat of fish. Once a huge amount was caught, the quantity crashed. Nachiket explained that if someone was not catching fish of different types, at the same place, then the catch would decrease although there were other species aplenty.

The role of the Fisheries Department, he said was very important. In most states, he observed that they were only focused on aquaculture. The river could be used to generate revenue in a cooperative way for the State Fisheries Department. Where the river flow was good like in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Assam, river fishing provided revenue. There was a prevalent attitude that fishing was for the poor. This negated the desire to facilitate change. This attitude would change only if the Fisheries Department ran determined campaigns.

Without cooperatives there would be no progress, he said. Communities were shrinking due to migration, so management was difficult. Without cooperation and collaboration, problems would never be solved. Nachiket said that till date, women were not given any leadership roles or management opportunities, except perhaps in a few ponds. But if women were given charge there was a 100 per cent chance that they would work better than men. Unfortunately, men would not let that happen. Hence, politics at the local level needed to be mobilized. Otherwise, three questions would forever linger ominously: If people leave fishing what will the future be? If goons take control what will the future be? What can be done to create a cooperative collaborative way ahead?

The floor was opened for discussion. Participants generally agreed that the scientific reasoning presented by Nachiket was very good. Communities wanted freedom to fish. In times of crisis, if there was conflict between communities, even basic needs were snatched away. Over the last two days there had been talk of destructive fishing methods, barrages restricting fishing etc. Inter

departmental linkages were required. Where there was water there would be fish and fishermen. In the name of development though, restrictions were imposed.

It was pointed out that the word fishery was not there in the entire policy. The participants asked who qualified as traditional fishermen. Was it those whose livelihood depended on rivers and ponds? In Bihar, rights for free fishing were given to traditional fishermen and their dependents. Participants said that the rights of traditional fishermen must remain, not expire, just because they left to do other work. It was pointed out that many new cooperatives were corrupt and used fishermen as pawns. Traditional fishermen in Bihar were not well educated and therefore exploited by cooperatives. One participant pointed out that there were thousands of factories on the banks of the Ganga. Their poisonous wastes flowed directly into the river. Merely taking a bath in the river was now considered dangerous. The participant asked if the administrators should be sued for this.

Debashis asked Nachiket what his relationship, as a scientist, was with the government and the Fisheries Department. Nachiket replied that he was in favour of scientific enquiry and observation. It was necessary to give fishermen their rights. He said his organisation did not advocate or take sides, and only supported science, and that it was necessary to keep questioning and changing and evolving ways of thinking to suit the needs of the environment. He pointed out that many people often do not read reports, but merely acknowledge that it was received. Reading would anyway not provide solutions. It was necessary to take action. His job was to collect information and present his findings. If the person in front did not read the report, then the work would never be done. He ended by saying that they were trying to translate their work in as many languages as possible.

Session 2

3.1. Fisheries schemes provided by the state governments- case studies of Odisha, Assam, Bihar, and West Bengal

Arun Pandit, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal

Arun started by stating that it was never clear if the money from schemes reached the persons it was intended for. He gave the example of Uttarbanga Matsyajibi Forum and Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum who had demanded that a credit card be provided to all. For example, a scheme announced by the Chief Minister said that if the nationalized bank did not give credit cards, the government would pay the cooperative bank to lease the cards to those with more than 33 decimal ponds. Out of 1200 applications, 24 had been sanctioned, but they had not yet received the money. Bank mergers and changed IFSC codes had also resulted in problems.

Arun said that alternative livelihoods were often spoken about but were not possible in reality. To replace hilsa fishing, poultry farming was suggested. But this thought remained on paper only. In West Bengal the main problem was department infrastructure. Every block had a Fisheries Officer, but only a minority worked for fishermen. West Bengal's agro-climate was suitable for aquaculture. While it is a major supplier of fish seed for the country, because of the high consumption of fish, they had to import from other states. There were a number of schemes available. He said that in Assam, a land locked state, 90 per cent of the population consumed fish. There had been a 34 per cent growth in the sector over the last five years which was very impressive. The state, he said, had huge potential because of the diverse topographic conditions resulting in numerous rivers, floodplain wetlands, ponds and low-lying areas, which form rich fisheries resources in the state. There were almost 1.6 million male fishers and 1 million female fishers in the state. . Currently the demand for fish in the state was around 4 lakh metric tonnes and there was an estimated gap of 0.07 lakh metric tonnes between demand and supply. The department had identified establishment of fish



Arun Pandit, Principal Scientist, Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal presented an analysis of inland fisheries schemes applicable to the community. Arun said that there needed to be schemes regarding the restoration of ecosystems and conservation of small indigenous fish which are being driven to extinction

seed factories, feed mills, new ponds in low-lying areas and large-scale adoption of integrated fish farming in potential areas as key activities.

Bihar has the highest number of fish farmers and fishers in the country, said Arun Pandit, because its rich inland fishery resources and has almost attained self-sufficiency. The state had various fishery extension schemes. One involved training and the other dealt with exposure visits cum training. It was important to make people aware of scientific fish production practices so they could enhance fish production in the state. They had targeted over 7000 trainings within the state and 230 outside the state. The budget for this was Rs 7.7 crore (US\$ 932,875) for the year. Arun said that there needed to be schemes regarding the restoration of ecosystems and conservation of small indigenous fish which are being driven to extinction. Climate change was among a host of factors that was reducing catch. Adaptation and mitigation were necessary to counter this. Arun said that while it was good to introduce schemes that would encourage best practices, it was also important to punish miscreants.

As an example, he said that the law said that small hilsa should not be caught, but it was evident that people were catching it. Small hilsa were freely available in the market. Laws needed to be enforced properly. It was necessary to ensure that fishing ban periods were followed properly. He said that practices like juvenile fishing, poisoning, using dynamite and poisons like Formalin etc needed to be outlawed. Odisha has the largest area under inland fisheries resources in India and has a well-developed harbour in Paradeep. The state had a number of schemes such as Popularisation of Fishery Machinery/ Equipments/ Implements for Intensive Aquaculture in Odisha, Input Assistance to Women Self Help Groups for pisciculture in Gram Panchayat tanks and Award of scholarship to meritorious children of the fisherman community

3.2. Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and Public Expenditure for Inland Fisheries

Ananthan PS, Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Division, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai

Ananthan started by asking if everyone was aware of Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), which was being implemented from 2019-20. He said he would discuss the schemes provided in the sector and the money spent over three years by Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Rajasthan as well as the Central Government. Ananthan outlined the terminology he would be using, this included words such as Budget Estimate, Budget Outlay and Plan Outlay. He said it was necessary to remember that the financial year was between April and March. The Department gave a budget estimate before the start of the financial year. The budget was made after the estimate and sent to the Assembly. The Finance Department would subsequently approve it, after which the money was allotted. All of this took time, he said. A revised estimate was usually made around September or October.

Ananthan said that the actual expenditure would be known only after the financial year ended. Every document would list three things — budget estimate, revised estimate and actual expenditure. It was necessary to pay attention to actual expenditure, he said. The Central Government and State Government listed expenditure under different categories. Capital Expenditure, he said, went into construction or new asset creation for long term gains. Examples of capital expenditure were fishery farms, hatcheries, landing centres and cold storage units. Revenue Expenditure covered the salary of department staff, social welfare programmes, development programmes, aquaculture and inland capture fisheries' welfare benefits.

There were three types of schemes, Ananthan explained. The first, Central Sector Schemes (CS) were sponsored and mostly implemented directly by the Central Government and sometimes by the state. A second type were the centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) implemented entirely by the State Government.



Anathan PS, Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Division, Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai presenting on Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and public expenditure for inland fisheries

The third were schemes which saw contributions from the Central Government, State Government and beneficiaries. Anathan also said that many states like Chhattisgarh had self-designed and funded schemes. Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana's outlay was Rs 20,000 crore (US\$ 242 million), Anathan said. He clarified that the entire money would not come from the Central Government. The Central Government's share was only about Rs 9000 crore (US\$ 1.09 billion), the State Governments would contribute between Rs 6000-7000 crore (US\$ 700-850 million) and the remainder would come from beneficiaries themselves.

Some schemes, he said, were called non-beneficiary, which meant that they were not for an individual, but for an entire community or village. These were funded by the State Government and the Central Government together. If the government contributed 40 per cent, the beneficiary would cover the rest. For women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the government would contribute 60 per cent. In North Eastern states and Union Territories 90 per cent of the scheme was funded by the Central Government. Of the Rs 20,000 crores (US\$ 242 million), the Central Government would give Rs 9,400 crores (US\$ 1.13 billion). The state would give around Rs 5000 crores (US\$ 605 million). Allocation would happen when states asked for it. Anathan said that it was important that fishermen unions and associations put pressure on state governments to ask for allocation. There was no separate allocation for Other Backward Castes in these schemes.

There was a Central Government scheme for the marine and Inland Sector, he said. The document was available on their website. There were a lot of infrastructure development-oriented schemes. NFDB and Eicher also provided funding. In addition money was available for training exposure and capacity building. He said that there are lots of centrally sponsored schemes and the documents were available in different languages. All of these was grouped under three categories. Inland fisheries and aquaculture were also there in the BR Blue regulation scheme, previously run by the FFDA. All schemes had been integrated and benefits reduced by 10 per cent, he said. This included ornamental recreation fisheries, sports fisheries, ecotourism and aqua-tourism.

A second category was post-harvest and cold chain infrastructure development which, he said, was a weak link. There were provisions to construct landing centres and options to develop post-harvest infrastructure. If individual fishermen wanted to become retailers and needed two wheelers or three

wheelers, a support of Rs 2 lakh (US\$ 2423) was available. In addition, the motorcycle would need an ice box. This kind of scheme was implemented in Telangana.

Support of Rs 8 lakh (US\$ 9692) to sell live fish in a modern kiosk was available. Unlike earlier, private parties could send proposals and create infrastructure for retail markets. They could avail the same benefits of trading and marketing. A third category was for fisheries management and managing regulatory frameworks. The state government could bring in new policies, create new regulatory frameworks and develop new management plans. For this, provision had been given specifically for all states. Over the last three years only one or two states had taken benefit of this, said Ananthan. He added that while there was no vessel insurance or life insurance in India, accident insurance was available, and NFDB was drafting guidelines for this.

Ananthan said that a fishery health scheme was announced in September 2021. There was a commitment towards Blue Revolution schemes for two years but people desired more. The Central Government was supposed to spend Rs 9700 crores (US\$ 1.17 billion) over 5 years. In 2021, less than half the annual target, Rs 880 crores (US\$ 106 million) was spent—. To meet targets, the government needed to spend at least Rs 2000 crores (US\$ 242 million) every year. Ananthan said that in his presentation, a combined figure for five years was given for Assam and Manipur. Details for Orissa and Andhra Pradesh would be given separately, he said. Pointing out that Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala had significant expenditure and benefits, he said that in the North and North Eastern states, demand and expenditure were lower. West Bengal had asked for and received Rs 1.5 crore (US\$ 181,728) for the first time as earlier they had never asked for funds from the Central Government.

Bihar's state budget included Fisheries from 2011. Their estimate for 2020 was Rs 300 crores (US\$ 36 million) but the actual expenditure was only Rs 80 crores (9.6 million). Thus, despite being allotted the money, Bihar could not spend it and returned 40-42 per cent. Their expenditure on department staff salaries was Rs 20 crore (US\$ 2.4 million). Inland fisheries accounted for the rest. Compared to Bihar, Jharkhand's expenditure was lower than their capital expenditure but performance per capita and resources was a little better Rajasthan's budget was a mere Rs 12-13 crores (US\$ 1.57 million approximately) of which nearly 90%—Rs 11 crores (US\$ 1.3 million)—went in salaries, Ananthan said. There was next to no expenditure on development and welfare, perhaps because the number of fishermen in Rajasthan was less than 50,000.

Ananthan said Uttar Pradesh's expenditure was lesser than that of Madhya Pradesh. In Assam from a budget of Rs 83 crore (US\$ 10.5 million), Rs 17-18 crore (US\$ 2 million) went towards paying salaries. The department also had fewer staff and so they hired people for extension training and data collection between the community and the department. They were also fully funded by the Central Government, and centrally sponsored schemes were implemented. Odisha, Ananthan revealed, had performed better in 2021. In the three years prior, their expenditure was between Rs 110-120 crores (US\$ 14 million). In 2021 it was Rs 220 crores (US\$ 26 million), of which administrative expenses accounted for a mere 10-12 per cent. They spent over Rs 200 crore (US\$ 24 million) in implementing state sector schemes, development and welfare

Ananthan said that every state had the same story. Their budget estimates were much higher than actual expenditure and Capital expenditure was even lower. Of Maharashtra's total expenditure of Rs 140 crores (US\$ 16 million), Rs 90 crores (US\$ 10 million) went to marine fisheries—which covered only 6 districts. While the remaining 30 inland districts had more fishermen, the investment was a mere Rs 3 crores (US\$ 363,457). Ananthan next compared the department budget of coastal states and inland states. Pointing to his presentation he said that the states marked in blue—Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu—spent more. For comparison, he showed a slide that illustrated the area covered by water bodies in each state and the number of fishermen in the state. This would give an estimation of per capita water area for fishers in each state. If official figures were correct, the per capita water area in Uttar Pradesh was less than half an acre. In Bihar it was 0.07 acres and in Jharkhand fishermen would get 3 acres. Assam and Manipur also had very little water

area available per fisherman. These numbers helped illustrate the pressure on lowland fisheries and the potential available.

Ananthan asked that thought must be put into why fishing was decreasing in some states despite rising demand. A month ago, the directors of Fisheries departments from each state and the Joint Director and Secretary from the Central Government were in Mumbai for a survey. They had also discussed the problems and challenges other state departments. He said that in West Bengal, subsidies had been given for many years which made fishing economically viable. Now people questioned the need for subsidies, since fishing was viable. Ananthan said that many major banks like Bank of Baroda had signed memoranda with NFDB for fisheries projects and landing areas. NCDC, the National Co-operative Development Corporation, was a funding agency, and not an individual co-operative. Members and federations could fund cooperative federations, he said. Ananthan mentioned that a representative he had spoken to had said that in four years, they had received only one proposal from a fishery cooperative. This procedure, he said, needed to be used more. If despite reducing interest percentage, it was not attractive, then what could FIDF do to make it more attractive?

Any commercial funding agency, private bank, national bank, NABARD, NCDC would ask for financial viability and collateral. Since fishing was carried out in common water bodies, collateral was always an issue. If a fisherman had no title over land or water body to give as collateral, then banks would not give loans. Ananthan said that co-operative societies which were financially strong could take loans. He gave the example of NCDC in Kerala who were financing Kerala Matsya for 30 years.

3.3. Community Rights over Hadagarh Reservoir in Keonjhar, Odisha- Case Study

Puspanjali Satpathy, Independent Social Worker, Odisha

Puspanjali started by saying that there was a strong link between the Forest Rights Act and the fishermen community. In Hadagarh, Odisha, there was a reservoir that was part of a medium irrigation project. This reservoir and dam were constructed in 1976 and the area was declared a sanctuary. Marginalized tribals living there claimed that under the Forest Rights Act, they had the right to fish there. Puspanjali said there was a reservoir in Kalindi river spread over 4876 acres. The area had a fishermen cooperative with 542 members, 10 fishermen families and 532 tribal families. When the area was declared a sanctuary, they were told they could not fish there. The sarpanch and ward members formed an FRC committee consisting of members from 18 villages dependent on the reservoir for their livelihood. In 2007, the department issued restrictions on fishing. After repeated requests to the Collector, fishing rights were restored in 2010. She pointed out that Fisheries and Revenue Departments did not have much knowledge about the Forest Rights Act, and about their jurisdictions. She said at Chitrakoot, she had recently met people from Maharashtra who too had received rights to water bodies under the Forest Rights Act.

Puspanjali said that Hadagarh was an important case study for areas where water bodies were within a forest. They had shown that it could be claimed under Forest Rights Act by tribals. If people were displaced due to Government development projects, even non-tribals got rights. That people would always protect a water body was a point that needed to be raised, she said. The Forest and Revenue department would support their cause if they could be convinced of it. In Hadagarh, the Secretary waived the lease fee, saying that under FRA it was for free use.

Puspanjali said that it was encouraging to see solutions to many problems being found at the local level. Even the National Fisheries policy advocated that the ecosystem-based approach was appropriate. This meant that human beings who were dependent on forests and water bodies would be recognized as part of the ecosystem. Protection of habitats and protection of traditional forest dwellers was one and the same, she emphasised. She said that it was important that wins at micro levels were converted to wins at macro levels. Examples like this were encouraging. Puspanjali said it was necessary to fight to protect the right to livelihood.



Pushpanjali Satpathy presenting her case study on Community Rights over Hadagarh Reservoir in Keonjhar, Odisha. In her presentation she highlighted how even the national fisheries policy advocated the ecosystem-based approach

Puspanjali said that since two-thirds of the Sundarbans fell in Bangladesh, it would be interesting to see what they did for stock enhancement and natural seed collection, and what the forest department did regarding water bodies. She felt that fishermen often think that asking for these rights is a stunt and instead asked only for subsidies. She moved on to ask what sustainable models entailed, where the money to enforce them was coming from, and who was promoting them. It was necessary to analyse their work and if they provided any incentives.

She said that they worked with CIP for about 12 years. The Government encouraged cage culture to raise big fish because it was good for exports. In Dimbha, people used the cages only to raise tilapia. There were no restrictions from the Government or the Fisheries Department. After the cyclone when the cages were flooded, it was found that the water body was full of tilapia. People needed to work together to force a strategy change. Puspanjali concluded by saying that they heard news from Maharashtra where mangrove forests were destroyed for bullet train projects. Practices were often adopted for short term benefits. It was necessary that all plans for the long term consider the rights of people as well as the environment.

Session 3

4.1. Inland fisheries and Aquaculture Policy Elements which Deserve Incorporation in the Proposed National Fisheries Policy

Dilip Kumar, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Planning and Policy Advisor (FAO) (Retired)

Dilip Kumar said his presentation would discuss things to be incorporated in the National Fisheries Policy—currently in process of being made—so that it could fulfil the objectives of small-scale fisheries. Small-scale fisheries were very important for providing food security and nutrition, he said. They fulfilled the SDGs of poverty alleviation and hunger eradication. Small-scale fisheries accounted for half of the world’s fish production. SSFs were focused on human consumption unlike industrial fishing which was used for fish and animal meal etc.

Dilip pointed out that fish was very nutritious and contained more protein, vitamins, minerals and micro nutrients in quantities which were also easily digestible. Fish contained Omega 3, a rich source of fatty acids that regulate neural and cardiac health and helped in brain development in children. Fish could help overcome malnutrition that more than 150 million women suffered from. Small farming and small fishing were the backbone of this country, Dilip said. What was needed was to increase production, and this could be done by involving more people.

In 1995 many countries got together to discuss how fisheries would provide food and livelihoods for the present and future generations. The SSF guidelines were similar, and focussed on a rights-based approach. The process by which these guidelines were made was participatory and involved consultations with stakeholders and members of civil society . He highlighted the purpose of this policy. The first objective was to increase the contribution of small fisheries which would contribute to food and nutritional security at the global level. The second objective was to ensure equitable development. Thirdly, it was to ensure that all resources were harnessed in a sustainable manner,. Sustainable development meant development that was equitable and beneficial for all. He said that



Dilip Kumar, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Planning and Policy Advisor (FAO) (Retired) presented on inland fisheries and aquaculture policy elements which deserve incorporation in the proposed national fisheries policy. He insisted resources to be harnessed in a sustainable manner, so that present and future generations can thrive

the management of our small-scale fisheries should be judicious and at the same time, as per the CCRF's provisions, and principles. Globally, small-scale fisheries must support the sustainable future of the planet. Sustainable use of resources and small-scale fisheries should be emphasised at every platform.

Dilip moved on to say that earlier, in his keynote address, Das had said that fishery was a state subject and so it could not be regulated by the Centre. Every state had its own vision and own rights, so who, then, would make the policy? He went on to clarify that the policy would be a general framework, and, States would adapt this framework to their needs, resources available and constraints experienced. First, a marine fishery policy was made to outline where and how fish was extracted, and if resources were saved and used well. Then came a policy on inland fisheries and aquaculture, and then on marketing, value chain management and regulating standards. Subjects initially covered by different policies were later integrated into one. The National Fisheries Policy would cover all these things.

The fishing industry was relatively unorganized today and economically weak, he said. It was necessary to organize them, teach them to organize themselves and help them take collective decisions. Learning this was important, for if they learnt this, they could do anything. This could not be done individually, it had to be done collectively. Until they were organized, they will not be empowered, he opined. He emphasised this saying that it was very important for self-help groups and cooperatives to be organized. Sometimes cooperatives did not work properly, because they were controlled by a set group of people who took all the decisions with others remaining unaware. Dilip said that this should not happen in an organization.

Water bodies needed enough water for fish to survive and thrive, Dilip said. Building of dams resulted in water getting diverted from one area to another. The reservoirs got silted. It was necessary for the flow and quantity of water to be maintained for fish to survive. While reservoir water was often used for irrigation, there must be enough for fish to survive too. He said that it was important to maintain a balance.

Dilip said that ecosystem restoration needed to consider these aspects too. Fish breeding areas must be protected by identifying them and including them in policy. If the reservoir was given to a fishing community, then there had to be a hatchery and seed stocking facilities. Also, roads, electricity, housing, schools were needed for the community to thrive. The policy must also include social security, necessary infrastructure development support, and ecosystem restoration. Ranching should be part of the policy as should conservation and livelihood.

Dilip said that it was important to ensure that destructive gear was not used for fishing. In coastal areas, the term - overfished resource – was used to refer to too many people fishing in one place. This happened when the community did not have another source of livelihood. Dilip said it was therefore necessary to identify other activities to reduce the pressure on resources. He stressed on the need to support and introduce any additional activities so that alternative sources of livelihood are available for small-scale fishermen.

Two things were very important for fishery cooperatives, he said. They needed to be organized and need to have the capacity to run their organization properly. Dilip pointed out that fishermen often did not have marketing skills and it was necessary to empower them with business skills. For the fishing community there needed to be an inter-state and an intra-state policy, Dilip said. He pointed out that there was no mention of the role and participation of women in the presentation. It was necessary to include them in management. Dilip concluded by saying he was sure that that ICSF would continue to support and strengthen institutions. It was necessary to formulate policies that put women in the mainstream. Institutional strengthening in the fisheries sector would not happen only by empowering the community; the Department of Fisheries and their entire system needed to be empowered too.

4.2. Interaction and Group Discussion

The discussion was focused on the progress of the National Fisheries policy. The first question was about how National fisheries in India was different from western countries.

One participant said that cooperatives were often formed without any consultation with fishers. Often, fishermen living in the same area, block or district came together and formed a cooperative. In the cooperative there were people who were actually fishermen and there were also people had nothing to do with fisheries. It was important to stop these people from being part of cooperatives. Since there were no rules that disbarred them, non-fishermen could also join fishing cooperatives. The onus fell on the community to ensure that it was fishermen who were organized and empowered. It was pointed out that in presentations seen on day two, the lease amount was based on hectares, geographical location and production. Participants said that when the lease went to the Mahamandal the amount increased by 10-15 per cent. In tribal areas, leases were only given tribals not to outsiders. Dilip said that this was correct. In Madhya Pradesh, at the Indira Sagar reservoir, fishing rights were still with tribals. Both reservoirs in Gujarat, Sardar Sarovar (37,000 hectares) and Ukai (60,000 hectares), were tribal dominated and are in tribal areas, where only tribals had rights. Participants spoke of Dimbhe where the catchment area became large due to heavy rains. In ten days the dam was filled and overflowed. When the gates were opened, the seeds and big fish got swept away. If the gate of the dam was left fully open for five or six hours, there was a loss of a lot of fish.

During Covid-19, the government had said that lease money would not be taken. But the seeds that the government was supposed to provide were not being given either, participants said. In Maharashtra generally a family of five would build a house on the coast. The government said that 50-100 persons needed to stay together in a place. These were landless people, and therefore would never be able to stay together. A participant said that if this was a government policy, it needed to be changed.

Participants said that Maharashtra did not have a separate law for inland waterbodies. There was only one law which covered both marine and inland fisheries. In Gujarat, they had one law for marine and one for inland fisheries and a third for reservoir fisheries was made in 2004. If this was done in Maharashtra, tribal areas would automatically benefit. This needed to be conveyed to the



Participants from Odisha during the group discussion. The discussion was based on the session on National Fisheries policy

Maharashtra State Government. In Bihar, participants said, fishermen had to pay tax on the fish caught. They asked that this be removed as Tax was already paid for river water. They revealed that cooperatives only helped a chosen few. The poorest fishermen never received help. One participant said that in cooperatives in Bihar, there were no simple fishermen, but only goons and mafia persons. The fishermen were labourers and their only fault was that they did not have money.

There was no democratic environment within cooperatives, participants said. A mere few of them were run properly with fishermen as decision makers. Cooperatives had, in general, become a den of corruption. Dilip said that he had been to Bihar twice in the last three months and returned having observed the 10 day long elections. In two blocks in Bhagalpur—Eknath Nagar and Jagdishpur—the Fisheries department officials were bribed and the board was suddenly announced, having won unopposed. There was no advertisement for nominations. How could anyone go to the election commission and get nominations done secretly, he asked.

Few fishermen have land rights in Kashmir, one participant revealed. The historical Dal lake used to have a fishermen community but due to the houseboats there were no fish now in the lake. Work was ongoing to clean the lake. The machines used for cleaning had destroyed Jodal's famous Kartha carp. The fishing community was concerned about the inflow of waste. Tourism had hurt fisher livelihoods and a national call was needed to bring attention to this, the participant said.

A participant from Odisha said that fishermen needed to be issued identity cards. Only fishermen who entered water bodies must get rights, not outsiders, he said. Participants asked if it was possible for fishers to live in sanctuaries and restricted areas. In totally restricted areas like the Sundarbans what rights would they have? Participants said that the forest department often charged people with false cases for fishing and this needed to be looked into. Participants said that all water bodies are getting encroached, so there needed to be rules to prevent encroachment. Participants gave the example of Chilika, where the forest department immediately arrested persons for poaching, but no strong action was taken for encroachment.

Discussions revealed the various issues that need to be addressed regarding women in fisheries. These included infrastructure for sanitation, toddler care etc. Relocation of fishermen was discussed. People were relocated 90kms away from Dimbhe sanctuary in Bargarh district Odisha, the original place of their livelihood. While they got some compensation, they were never provided with alternative livelihood options.

In Manipur it was difficult to make living from fishing, participants said. 40 kms of Manipur's 204 km of rivers were inside Keibul Lamjao National Park, a mere 4 kms was given for fisheries. The rest was under Wildlife Protection Act and a No Development Zone. They had been facing problems for a long time. In 1983 NHPC built a dam and fish migration stopped. On the other hand, all the rivers flowing into the catchment area dried up because of bad management. With low circulation of the river, fish numbers had come down. It was necessary for the Forest department to have a better understanding of the relationship between fishery and water bodies, opined the participant. Forest protection was an important issue but human rights too must be protected. There needed to be integration and collaboration of all the departments.

The leasing system in Assam is such that actual fishermen who went fishing could not get leases. The leases were taken by corporates. Discussions revealed that there are 61 scheduled tribes and 16 Sub Communities in the Schedule Castes and all were now considered fishing communities. Only two actually do fishing, but their rights were taken by other 14 communities as well. There were no welfare schemes for the fishermen in Assam. Brahmaputra was the largest river of Assam where all fishermen worked but nothing had been done to improve production. Fish numbers had reduced in the Brahmaputra because a big bridge had been built in a place called Dhaula Kuan Bhala Hariya, in front of Sariya. The flow had reduced and so there were no fish anymore. The same had happened in Shubham Shree, one of the rivers in Assam. While dams were needed for electricity production, big dams that affect fishers' livelihoods were not needed. The effects of dams on people's lives need to be taken into consideration in the national policy, said the participants. In the Blue Revolution

only Rs 56 crores (US\$ 6.7 million) was allotted to Assam. Participants wanted to know how that money had been spent. There had been a lot of corruption in the Fisheries Department, they said and added that in the last three months almost 300 employees had been dismissed. They asked for this to be thoroughly investigated. Participants reiterated that National Policy must help identify the right fishermen.

4.3. Workshop Reflections and Panel discussion

Moderated by Pradip Chatterjee, National Convener of NPSSFW

Participants were invited to offer their reflections and learnings from the three days in the workshop.

Dhrubajyoti from Assam said that they felt they discussed issues with the right people in the right place. There were many problems fishermen had faced for years. Senior scientists, district officers, retired directors and social activists had come together at this workshop to help find solutions for them. He commended the effort made to take it to the right place. He thanked ICSF for conducting the workshop. He said that it was great to meet representatives from so many states and know what is happening in Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan. They had seen these places on Google but meeting people gave them more information. It is good to hear that the National Fishing Policy was being drafted and it was good to discuss it. Information shared on FRA and PPS was very useful. He did not know that the preamble said they have forest rights. He would like to see it and learn more.

He said that the fish workers of Assam were still unorganized. They had started an organization called Assam Fish Workers Welfare Federation but were facing a lot of difficulty in running it because of political issues. At their next meeting, he said that he would show them photographs from this workshop and describe how so many esteemed people were working for fisher rights. He observed that there always seemed to be a conflict between scientific knowledge and traditional knowledge. To take a middle path, such training workshops were needed. Problems of the fishing community were similar everywhere. It was thought that cooperatives would solve the problem, they were slowly getting corrupted, so there needed to be some measures to check it.



Participants representing the various states of India presenting their learning and reflections during the Panel discussion. The Panel was moderated by Pradip Chatterjee, National Convener of NPSSFW

A participant from Kashmir thanked the organizers for the invitation and the opportunity to listen and learn many things and express their opinions. He said that tourism must be encouraged depending on capacity. Tourism caused waste and sometimes burdened the local population. He clarified that they are not against tourism but ultimately the fishing and mountain community suffered because of it. He requested that a workshop be organized in Kashmir which would incorporate issues specific to Kashmir.

Another participant said that when they came, they did not know what to expect from the workshop. He learnt that in Odisha, fishermen were allowed to fish and earn their livelihood even in sanctuaries. In his place, there were restrictions on this and people were arrested, cases registered, and their nets and dinghies taken away. They were often forced to migrate elsewhere. Before coming to the workshop, he was like a man stumbling in the dark, wondering what would happen with no access to information. But it was heartening to know that environmentalists, scientists, activists and fellow fishermen were running the movement with great enthusiasm.

Closing Session

5.1. Remarks

Nachiket Kelkar

Nachiket started by thanking everyone who had come saying that he had learnt a lot. Not just about issues but how different people thought about the same problem. His connection with ICSF had expanded his world view. Everyone knows the problems of their own area well but they need to be seen in context, in terms of what is happening in the outside world. In today's global world, no problems are local even if they appear to be so. He said that in organizing a workshop, two points are of importance. First, the roles of the presenters must be defined. For example if an expert or a scientist is talking about something, it must be remembered that they are carrying out studies and it is not always necessary that your local problem gets reflected in their work. Their role is to understand things at a different level. When there are people from different backgrounds with different understanding are meeting, it is necessary that the roles played by different people are understood by participants who do not indulge in fault-finding. Everyone in the room had the same goals, or they would not be there.

There are many ways in which workshops can be conducted. One is having interactive sessions with breakout groups where people write their issues on slips of paper without naming themselves and stick them on a board. A storyline is then built up around these issues listed by a team. It is not easy for everyone to keep listening to the same problems again and again. The problems have to be put forward for discussion in new and interactive ways. The third thing is that it is necessary to have state level workshops, which, while difficult to organize must be done at least at the regional level, because there are a lot of culturally common problems. He ended by saying that inland fisheries is a state subject and that is an important consideration.

Dilip Kumar

Dilip appreciated the high-level discussions and interactions at the workshop and said its impacts would be far reaching. Taking the example of cooperatives, he said they had heard that 90% of the cooperatives did not function. It was here we understood why and now it is necessary to try to figure out how to solve the problem. It is clear that public property resources should be made available to cooperatives, it is not for individuals. But there is no documentation on what happens when you give the resources to cooperatives. In a future workshop session when these issues are discussed, a write-shop could be held for documentation so that it can be discussed in other higher forums. He said it was very revealing to see another side to the work cooperatives do. The assumption that cooperatives were there to only work for people was now revealed to be untrue. He concluded by saying that ground realities should not be covered up and should be brought to the front.

Ganesh Chandra

Ganesh spoke on how there was considerable talk about cooperatives and unions in the last couple of days. He used to assume that they were the same side of the coin, but actually they are two sides of the same coin. He added that he thought that cooperatives were formed for the betterment of the local people. In Bihar, over two decades, he had seen one cooperative falling and another cooperative rising. The fishery cooperative which began very well has fallen behind. Sudha the milk cooperative has progressed well. It is better than Amul within the state. The decline in fisheries cooperatives can be attributed to the wrong kind of leadership in fisheries. He said he gained a lot of information in the workshop especially from representatives from Maharashtra. He spoke about the issues regarding reservoir fisheries which should be for the masses and not mass production for few.



Closing remarks of the workshop shared by resource persons. Seated L to R- Dilip Kumar, Ganesh Chandra, Santanu Chacraverti and Nachiket Kelkar

Santanu Chacraverti

Santanu said there were two conferences happening—one within the hall and another that occurred in the corridors, which was also important. Individual interactions helped him gain a lot of information. He gained a lot of knowledge about different states though he had no experience of Fisheries. He had knowledge of Environment and social rights. In this sector the question wasn't just about environment protection but also social welfare and protecting livelihoods. He stated that we are in a planetary crises, environmental crises, and so, right now, nature and environment should get preferential treatment.

V V Sugunan

V V Sugunan said that after witnessing the proceedings during last few days, it has become abundantly clear that the thoughts of all of them in the room - whether they be the fishers, scientists or representatives of organizations- were on the same lines. Everyone was speaking the same language and sharing the same concerns and frustrations as mainstreaming the principles of SSF guidelines into the policy and legal instruments of the country is not happening. Lack of implementation of the guidelines results in situations where resources are being snatched away from fishers even without any consultations, and hardly bothering about the loss of livelihoods and income of these vulnerable section of the society. The fishing community is competing with several powerful sections of water-intensive sectors who have more influence on the decision makers. These include agriculture, aquaculture, tourism, hospitality and entertainment to cite a few. Although all answers and roadmaps are given in the guidelines to synergize the activities of multiple water-users, it is an uphill task to make the decision makers aware of the need to implement them. It is necessary for the inland fisheries community to keep alive the consultations like this and continuously engage the decision makers in the process.

However, everything is not lost and some silver linings are appearing in the horizon, he said. Things are changing albeit slowly due to the continuous efforts of research institutions, civil society and fishers' groups to create awareness among decision makers about the value of ecosystems goods and services. The governments are also influenced by the international conventions and exposure to different multi-national fora. The SSF guidelines, CCRF and the ecosystem approach have been accepted by India and so the country is duty-bound to implement them. Consultations of these kind are very vital in engaging the government machinery on a continuous basis. There is already some recognition of the value of capture fishery and some impact is visible in the mindset of policy

makers. As a result, there is a better understanding of the relevant issues as reflected in the recent discussions on Indian Fisheries Policy formulations. Thus, it is not an “all is lost” situation.

Now there are mandatory social and environmental impact assessment on all new projects and relevant institutes are being consulted before approving development projects. For instance, CIFRI is now being consulted about the numbers of dams, what kind of fish pass would be built and how much water needs to be released. Earlier, fisheries research institutes were not consulted on the environmental impact while commissioning such on-river projects, he said. Engineers themselves calculated minimum flow and gave the clearance for dam construction. Now there is better understanding on the downstream flow requirements and CIFRI is being consulted on the quantity of water to be released to downstream stretches based on the principles of environmental flows.

He cited a personal experience at Kurichhu in Bhutan, where a thermal project was constructed by NHPC. After half the construction of the fish pass was completed, they asked CIFRI to give de facto clearance. However, CIFRI could make them accept the modifications before the dam was commissioned. Earlier, the claims of fisheries institutes were dismissed on the ground that the cost of fish production lost due to development projects is much less and insignificant compared to the other benefits such as higher production of electricity and food grains. This approach never considered the loss of ecosystem processes and resultant loss of fish-based livelihoods and income in the downstream stretches. Although attitudes are changing and there is better awareness on the issues related to livelihoods of inland fishers, we have a long way to go. It is important to continue the fight at different levels including national, state and local administrative levels to ensure change. ICSF is playing a lead role in creating such awareness and catalysing the change. Let us be optimistic and continue with our fight.

5.2. Vote of Thanks

N Venugopalan, ICSF Trust proposed a detailed vote of thanks.

6. Programme

| Day 1 THURSDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2022 | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 09:00 AM- 09:15 AM | Introductory Remarks Mr. Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust |
| 09:15 AM- 10:00 AM | Keynote Speech: Inland fisheries in India Dr. B.K. Das, Director, ICAR- Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Kolkata, West Bengal |
| 10:00 AM- 11:30 AM | Session 1: Access rights, tenure and governance in inland fisheries in Light of the SSF Guidelines Dr. VV. Sugunan, Assistant Director-General, ICAR (Retd.) Access Rights to Inland Fisheries Resources: Legal and Institutional Perspective Dr. Ganesh Chandra, Senior scientist, CIFRI |
| 11:30 AM- 11:45 AM | Tea/Coffee Break |
| 11.45 AM- 1. 00 PM | The West Bengal Sundarban and its Small-Scale Fishing Community—A Quick Discussion Dr. Santanu Chacraverti, President, Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA) |
| 01:00 PM- 02:00 PM | Lunch |
| 02:00 PM- 03:00 PM | <i>Session 1: (Continued)</i> Session 1: Interaction and Group Discussion Moderated by Dr. Ananthan PS, Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Division, Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) |
| 03:00 PM- 03:15 PM | Tea/Coffee Break |
| 03:15 PM- 05:00 PM | Session 1: Interaction and Group Discussion (Cont...) |

| Day 2 FRIDAY, 23 DECEMBER 2022 | |
|---|---|
| 09:00 AM- 11:00 AM | <p><i>Session 1: (Continued)</i></p> <p>Governance questions in India's river-floodplain capture fisheries: access, rights, entitlements, and responsibilities</p> <p>Dr. Nachiket Kelkar, Programme Lead, Riverine Ecosystems and Livelihoods, Wildlife Conservation Trust, India</p> |
| 11:00 AM- 11:15 AM | Tea/Coffee Break |
| 11.15 AM-01.00 PM | <p>Session 2:</p> <p>Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the SSF Guidelines</p> <p>Dr. Ananthan PS, Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Division, Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai</p> |
| 01:00 PM- 02:00 PM | Lunch |
| 02:00 PM -03:00 PM | <p>Analysis of Inland Fisheries Schemes and the SSF Guidelines</p> <p>Dr. Arun Pandit, Principal Scientist, ICAR- CIFRI, Kolkata, West Bengal</p> |
| 03:00 PM- 03:15 PM | Tea/Coffee Break |
| 03:15 PM- 04:00 PM | Interaction |

| Day 3 SATURDAY, 24 DECEMBER 2022 | |
|---|--|
| 09:00 AM- 10:00 AM | Community Rights over Hadagarh Reservoir in Keonjhar, Odisha- Case Study Ms. Puspanjali Satpathy, Independent Social Worker, Odisha |
| 10:00 AM- 11:15 AM | Session 3: Inland fisheries and aquaculture policy elements which deserve incorporation in the proposed National Fisheries Policy Dr. Dilip Kumar, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Planning and Policy Adviser, (FAO) (Retired) |
| 11:15 AM- 11:30 AM | Tea/Coffee Break |
| 11:30 PM- 01.00 PM | Session 3: Interaction and Group Discussion Moderated by Mr. Venugopalan. N |
| 01:00 PM- 02:00 PM | Lunch |
| 02:00 PM- 03:30 PM | Workshop Reflections: Panel Discussion Moderated by Mr. Pradip Chatterjee |
| 03:30 PM- 04:00 PM | Closing remarks Dr. Dilip Kumar, Dr. Ganesh Chandra, Dr. Nachiket Kelkar and Dr. Santanu Chacraverti |
| 04:00 PM- 04:15 PM | Vote of Thanks Mr. Venugopalan. N, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust |

7. Concept Note

I. Introduction

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at its Thirty-first Session in June 2014. The implementation of the SSF Guidelines is identified as a significant step for enhancing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to nutrition and food security. As part of the implementation process, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust is organizing a National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop (Inland Fisheries) in Kolkata from 22 to 24 December 2022. Key fishworker representatives from Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal, are expected to attend the Workshop.

II. Context

Till about the year 2000, marine fish production dominated India's total fish production. The inland fisheries in India in 2021-22 contributed over three-quarters of the national fish production of 14.73 million metric tonnes. The inland fisheries sector also contributes to the livelihood of 1.24 million fishers. In spite of the fact that the inland fisheries sector has grown in absolute terms, the development in terms of its potential is yet to be fully realized, especially to make use of India's vast inland water resources.

Inland fisheries and inland water bodies come under List II (State List, entry 21) of the Indian Constitution and therefore subject to legislation at the state level. Transboundary rivers, such as Narmada, Cauvery, Krishna, and Brahmaputra, however, come under the Union List when it comes to disputes over water resources.

The inland fisheries sector is dealing with multiple challenges including overfishing, pollution, environmental degradation, poor access to water bodies, climate change impacts and natural and human-induced disasters. The scattered distribution, a diverse management regime and weak governance have not been helpful either.

III. Background

The SSF Guidelines seek, among other things, to ensure that small-scale fishers are not arbitrarily evicted and their legitimate tenure rights are not extinguished or infringed (para 5.9). Towards addressing the grievances of small-scale fishers, States are to provide access to justice through impartial and competent judicial and administrative procedures (para 5.11). In regard to large-scale development projects, the SSF Guidelines draw attention to ensuring access to judicial and administrative procedures for dispute resolution, and to provide effective remedies such as reparation, indemnity, and just compensation to affected fishers and fishworkers (para 5.11).

In regard to protected areas and livelihood options, the SSF Guidelines draw attention to ensuring the participation of small-scale fishing communities in the design, planning and implementation of management measures including protected areas (para 5.15). To compensate for livelihood losses from seasonal closure of fisheries, social security protection for workers in small-scale fisheries (para 6.3) are proposed to be employed.

The SSF Guidelines note that the tenure rights, including customary rights, to marine fishery resources, small-scale fishing areas and adjacent land of small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities, with special attention to women, are to be secured through law and are to be identified, recorded and respected. Likewise, the State is to recognize and protect

publicly-owned resources that are collectively used and managed (para 5.6). Further, States are to grant preferential access of small-scale fishers to fish in waters under national jurisdiction, and to create exclusive zone for small-scale fisheries.

IV. Aim of the Workshop

The workshop would enhance the capacity of fishworkers' organizations, CSOs, and community-based organizations to engage with the SSF Guidelines to negotiate issues of concern in regard to policy, legislation, lives and livelihoods of the SSF communities within the framework of resource management and social development.

V. Objectives of the Workshop

To comprehend, consistent with the SSF Guidelines, issues related to the just access of small-scale fishers, fishworkers and fishing communities, including women, to inland fisheries resources and adjacent land through the responsible governance of tenure at the state and local level;

To understand existing schemes and entitlements with respect to the lives and livelihoods of small-scale fishers and fishworkers; and

To discuss implications of policies of concern to small-scale fishers and fishworkers (e.g. National fisheries policy, 2020 and legislation at the state level on inland fisheries).

VI. Methodology

The resources for the TOT Workshop (Inland fisheries) are developed after undertaking a need assessment of fishworkers' organizations. Practical exercises and group work are planned to help trainers to address their concerns. Background documents and power point presentations are to be shared to introduce and explain each theme. The TOT Workshop (inland fisheries) will be followed up by a one-day capacity development training workshop in several states of India, led by the trained participants.

VII. Expected Outcome

Strengthened capacity of inland fishing communities to actively engage in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

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FEEDBACK

Based on the feedback collected from 32 participants

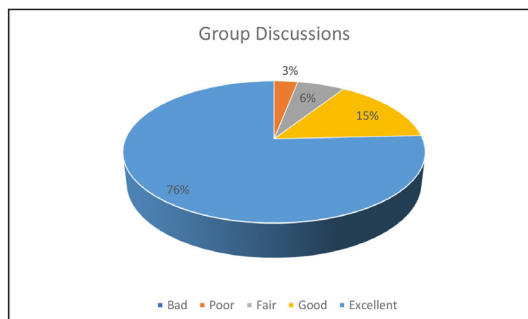
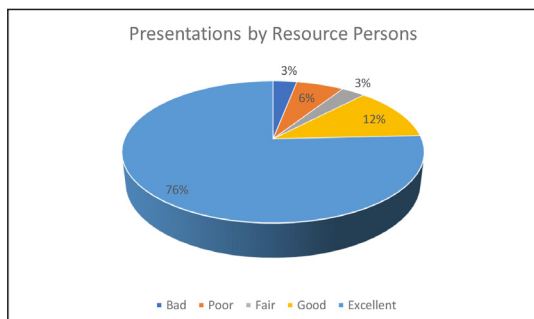
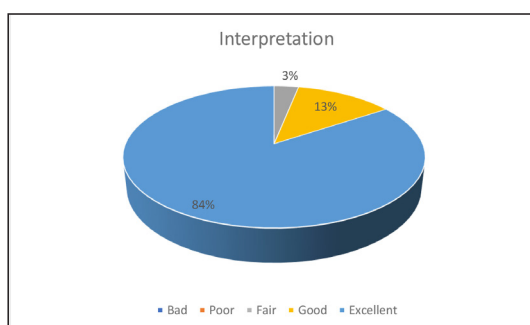
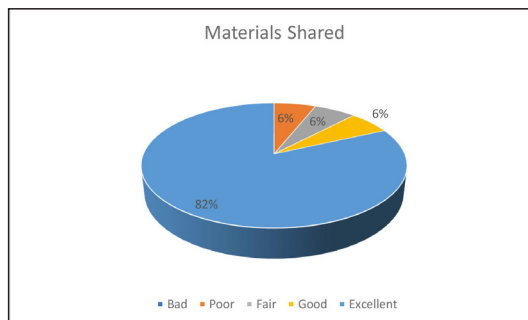
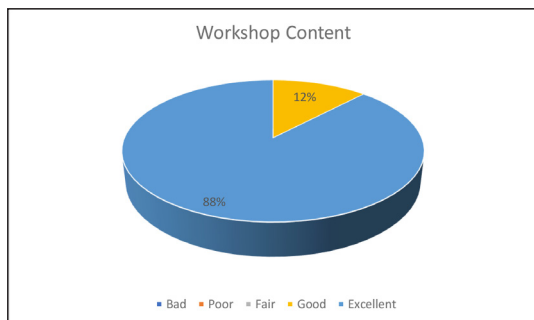
Key Learnings

The workshop empowered participants to build knowledge on issues related to institutions, policies concerning fishers and fisheries, and issues related to access, tenure, and rights of fishers. The participants found the session on fisheries-related schemes, including PMMSY, to be very insightful. Most participants opined that this workshop enabled them to look into fisheries cooperatives in the inland context, particularly focusing on how to improve them. Some trainees suggested that more state-level training workshops should be held to build the capacity of a larger section of the community. There was a demand for awareness programs focusing on national policies and welfare schemes pertaining to SSF communities to be organized. One of the participants voiced that there is often a conflict between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge, and this workshop provided a platform for healthy discussions as there were representatives from scientific organizations, research organizations, as well as NGOs.

Suggestions and comments received

The participants provided valuable feedback on ways to improve future workshops. Firstly, they suggested that more reading material in regional languages be shared before the workshop to better equip them to understand the various sessions. Secondly, they felt that the time spent on group discussions and interactions could be increased, as opposed to time spent on presentations. Thirdly, they recommended a dedicated session on experience sharing to enable peer-learning. During the current workshop, a participant learned that in Odisha, fishermen were allowed to fish and earn their livelihood even in sanctuaries, while he did not have such privileges. Fourthly, participants expressed interest in workshops on ecosystem restoration and the impact of climate change on the ecosystems concerning small-scale inland fishers. Finally, some participants suggested that field visits be included in the workshop to provide practical learning and exposure. The suggestions received were critical, and would aid in designing future workshops that would meet the needs and expectations of the participants and enhance their learning experience.

Based on the answers received for the ranking questions asked, the following charts were drawn





Report on National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries)

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust organized a National Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Inland Fisheries), India at Seva Kendra, Kolkata, India on December 22-24, 2022. There were forty-seven participants from the states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal. The three-day workshop was organized with an aim to enhance the capacity of fishworkers' organizations, CSOs, and community-based organizations, particularly working in the inland fisheries sector to engage with the SSF Guidelines to negotiate issues of concern in regard to policy, legislation, lives and livelihoods of the SSF communities. The sessions had presentations by resource persons apart from panel and group discussions to help the participants address their concerns.

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