

SUMMARY

VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION



Published by

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ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is in status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations. It also has Liaison Status with FAO. As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF's activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and actions, as well as communities.

With support from

Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project



Phuket, Thailand

Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are collaborating through the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project to better the lives of their coastal populations by improving regional management of the Bay of Bengal environment and its fisheries.

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The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) were adopted by member countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and were officially approved as an international instrument in June 2014.

What is very special about the SSF Guidelines is that it was created as a result of a very long history of the struggles of small-scale fishworkers around the world appealing for greater recognition of their status and their role in the fisheries sector of their countries.

Although, the world over, small-scale fishers form the backbone of fish economies, they have been ignored and often discriminated against in the process of the modernization of the fisheries sector. Despite this neglect, the sector has survived and has remained vibrant in most countries.

However, as a result of decades of this “official neglect”, in many countries, small-scale fishing communities, although they contribute the largest share of the fish caught, continue to be poor and marginalized and deprived of their human rights for socioeconomic and cultural development .

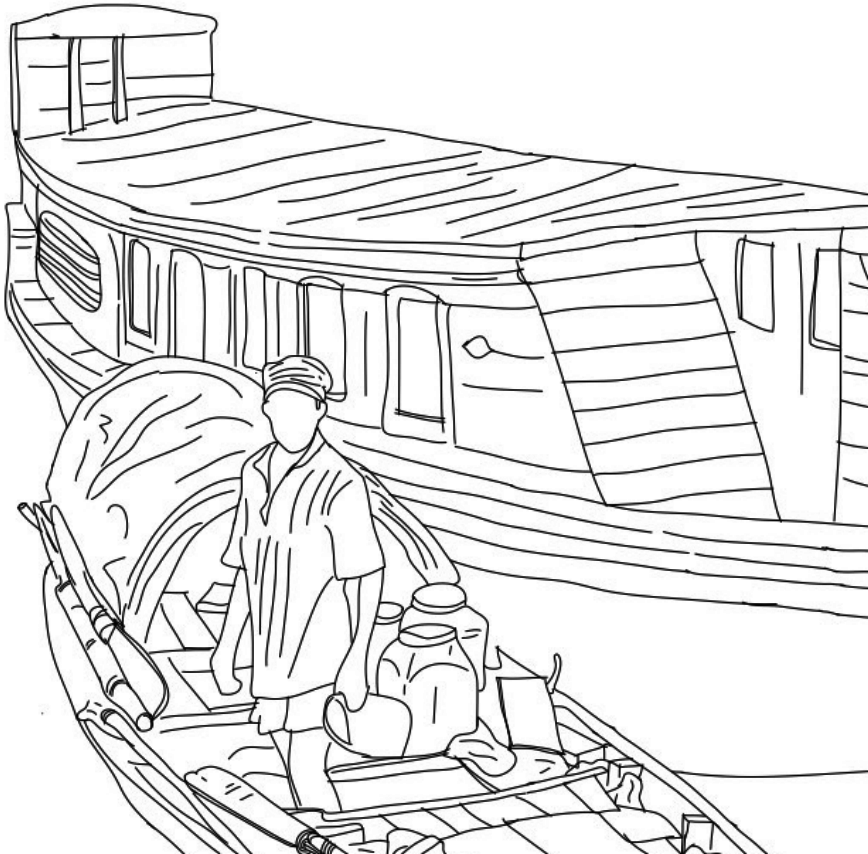
The SSF Guidelines are both a recognition of this reality by FAO member countries and, at the same time, an effort to bring small-scale fisheries back to the focal point of fisheries development and management.

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) was one leading civil society organization (CSO) that was instrumental in making the formulation of these Guidelines an extremely participatory process. In fact, these Guidelines have been officially dedicated by the FAO/UN to the memory of Chandrika Sharma, the Executive Secretary of ICSF, who was a champion of the rights of small-scale fishworkers around the world. She has been missing since the Malaysian Airlines MH 370 flight disappeared in March 2014; she was on her way to Mongolia for an FAO conference to create support for the passing of the Guidelines.

These Guidelines have over 100 paragraphs which are distributed across 13 sections. This document is only a summation of the contents of the Guidelines. It was produced for ICSF by John Kurien, founder Member of ICSF, who has worked for the last four decades with small-scale fishing communities in many areas around the world, particularly in Kerala, India.

PREFACE

The SSF Guidelines were developed as a complement to the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. They address small-scale fisheries and encompass all the activities along the whole value chain undertaken by both men and women. Small-scale fisheries contribute half the global fish catches and employ 90 per cent of the world's fishers and fishworkers. Small-scale fisheries and fishing communities represent a diverse and dynamic subsector with particular characteristics that depend on their location. They are often family enterprises, strongly anchored in local communities. They continue to be marginalized. Poverty in small-scale fishing communities is multidimensional in nature. Securing and increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries face many challenges and constraints. These Guidelines were developed through a unique, participatory and consultative process. They are consistent with, and promote, international human-rights standards.



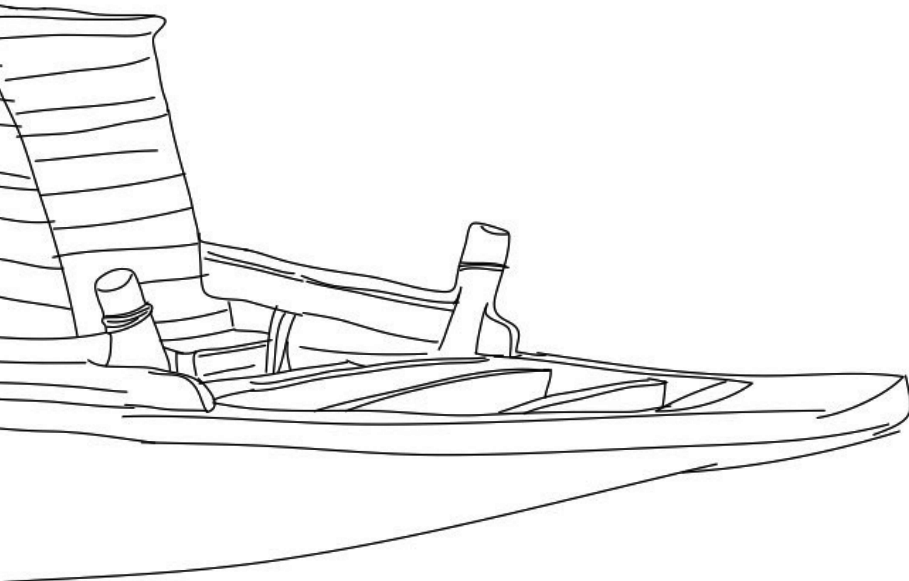
1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the SSF Guidelines are to ensure that small-scale fisheries will:

- enhance global food security;
- promote its contribution to the economic and social future of the planet;
- contribute to improve the socioeconomic situation of fishworkers; and
- achieve sustainable use of fishery resources.

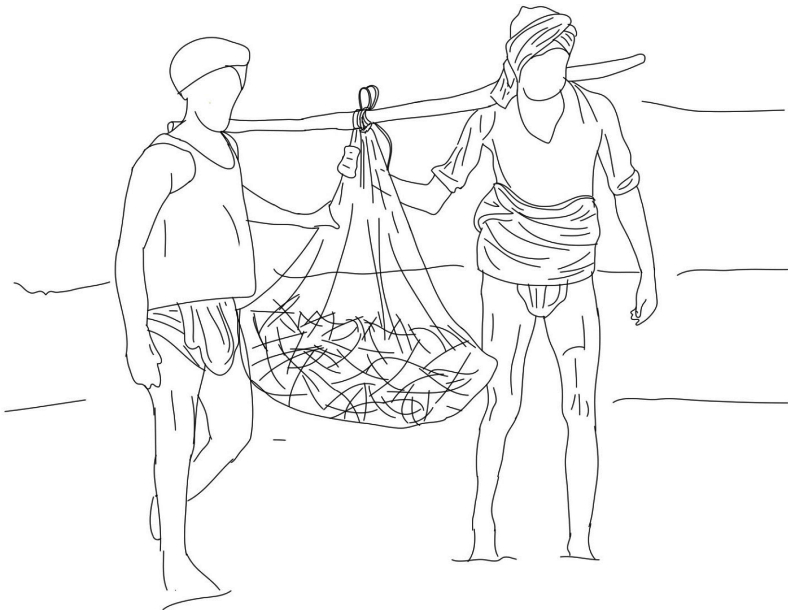
In this process, the Guidelines should increase public awareness about the role, contribution and potential of small-scale fisheries.

These objectives should be achieved through the promotion of a human-rights-based approach. Small-scale fishing communities should be empowered to participate in decision-making processes, and assume responsibility for sustainable use of fishery resources. Emphasis in these Guidelines is given to the needs of developing countries and the concerns and benefits of vulnerable and marginalized groups among the small-scale fishing communities.



2. NATURE AND SCOPE

The SSF Guidelines are voluntary and global in scope, with a focus on developing countries. They are meant to cover all fishery-related activities in the marine and inland aquatic waters. They are addressed to all stakeholders concerned with fisheries —states, INGOs, CSOs, NGOs, academic bodies and the private sector. They acknowledge the diversity of small-scale fisheries and recognize that there can be no standard definition for them. States should, through a participatory and transparent process, define which fisheries are small-scale — thus falling within the purview of these Guidelines — and identify the most vulnerable people therein since the Guidelines are most relevant for them. The Guidelines should be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and institutions.



3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These Guidelines are based on 13 guiding principles. These are based on international human-rights standards, responsible fisheries standards and sustainable development practices, paying attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups and the need to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.

These principles include:

01. human rights and dignity;
02. respect of cultures;
03. non-discrimination;
04. gender equality and equity;
05. equity and equality;
06. consultation and participation;
07. rule of law;
08. transparency;
09. accountability;
10. economic, social and environmental sustainability;
11. holistic and integrated approaches;
12. social responsibility; and
13. feasibility and social and economic viability.

4. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The SSF Guidelines should be interpreted and applied consistent with existing rights and obligations under national and international law and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments.

These Guidelines may be used to guide amendments and inspire new or supplementary legislative and regulatory provisions. However, nothing in the Guidelines should be read as limiting or undermining any rights or obligations to which a State may be subject under international law.



5. GOVERNANCE OF TENURE IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A. RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF TENURE

Responsible governance of tenure of appropriate resources is central to achievements of the socioeconomic and cultural development and realization of the human rights of small-scale fishing communities. Small-scale fishing communities should have secure, equitable and socio-culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources, fishing areas and adjacent land and forests. Special attention should be given to tenure rights of women. All forms of legitimate tenure rights should be identified, recorded and respected. This should be undertaken, with legislation if necessary, specially taking into account the customary and preferential rights to aquatic resources and land of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Where legal reforms have conferred rights to women, they should be appropriately accommodated in customary tenure systems. The role of small-scale fishing communities and indigenous peoples to restore, conserve, protect and co-manage local aquatic and coastal ecosystems should be recognized. Where states own or control land and water resources, their tenure rights should be established taking socioeconomic and environmental objectives into consideration, in particular, when they are collectively used and managed by small-scale fishing communities.

Granting preferential access for small-scale fisheries to fish in national waters is incorporated in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Article 6.18). Building on this, states should implement measures such as exclusive zones for small-scale fisheries. Before agreements to grant resource access are entered into with third parties, the claims of small-scale fishing communities to such areas should be given due consideration.

Other users are exerting increasing competition for small-scale fisheries areas, leading to conflicts. States should ensure that small-scale fishing communities are given special support and are not arbitrarily evicted or that their legitimate tenure rights are infringed upon or extinguished. In the case of large-scale development projects, states and other parties should hold meaningful consultations and undertake relevant impact studies to assess the impact on small-scale fishing communities.

Disputes over tenure rights involving small-scale fishing communities should be resolved by the state in a timely, affordable and effective manner with remedies including restitution, indemnity, just compensation and reparation, being promptly enforced.

Displacement by natural disasters and/or armed conflict is increasingly affecting small-scale fishing communities. States should take every effort to restore access to traditional fishing grounds and coastal lands, keeping sustainability of the fishery resources in mind. In these circumstances, mechanisms should be established to support communities affected by grave human-rights violations to rebuild their lives and all discrimination against women in tenure practices should be eliminated.

B. SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Measures should be adopted for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources and due recognition given to the requirements and opportunities of small-scale fisheries. Rights go together with responsibilities. Tenure rights are balanced by duties focused towards conservation and sustainable use.

Small-scale fisheries should use fishing practices which do least harm to the environment and the associated species. States should support small-scale fisheries to take responsibility for resource management. States should involve the communities in the design, planning and implementation of management measures, ensuring equitable participation of women and other vulnerable groups. Within the scope of national laws, states should promote participatory management systems.

States should establish and promote monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems applicable and suitable for small-scale fisheries. States should aim to deter, prevent and eliminate all illegal and destructive fishing practices and small-scale fishers should support MCS systems and also provide the authorities information needed for management.

States should clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to co-management arrangements, resorting to legally supported processes. Small-

scale fisheries should be represented in relevant local and national professional associations and bodies and take active part in the fishery decision- and policy-making process.

In promoting co-management, both states and small-scale fishers should support the men and women engaged in harvesting, and also the pre- and post-harvest operations, to contribute their knowledge, perspectives and needs.

States should ensure that the tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities are protected where transboundary issues are involved with regards to shared waters and resources.

States should avoid policies and financial measures that contribute to creating fishing overcapacity, leading to overfishing and having an adverse impact on small-scale fisheries.



6. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK

All parties should take a holistic approach to small-scale fisheries development and management. States should promote investments in health, education, literacy, digital inclusion and other technical skills.

States should promote social-security schemes for all workers in small-scale fisheries along the entire value chain. States should support the development of schemes for savings, credit and insurance, with emphasis on inclusion and access of women to these services.

All should recognize the full range of activities of the small-scale fisheries value chain as being economic and professional operations.

States should promote decent work for all.

States should ensure the progressive realization of the right of small-scale fishers and fish workers to an adequate standard of living. States should pursue inclusive, non-discriminatory and sound economic policies in order that these workers earn a fair return from their labour, capital and management. States and other parties should support alternative income-generating opportunities. Conditions should be created for small-scale fishing communities to carry out their fishery-related activities.

Migration is a common livelihood strategy. States should recognize and address the underlying causes and consequences of transboundary movement of fishers.

States should address occupational health, safety and unfair working conditions. States should work towards elimination of forced labour and prevent debt bondage.

States should provide access to schools and education facilities, recognizing the importance of children's well-being and education for their future.

The complexity of safety-at-sea and inland waters and the multiple causes behind the deficiency should be recognized by all parties.

The safety and occupational health of small-scale fisheries must be integrated into the general management of fisheries.

States should protect the human rights and dignity of small-scale fisheries stakeholders in situations of armed conflict.

7. VALUE CHAINS, POST-HARVEST AND TRADE

The central role of the post-harvest sub-sector of small-scale fisheries should be recognized by all parties. Women play a central role in the post-harvest sub-sector and this should be recognized by all parties.

Investments in appropriate infrastructures, organizational structures and capacity development of the post-harvest sub-sector should be fostered and provided by the state.

Traditional forms of associations of fishers and fishworkers must be recognized.

Ways must be sought to avoid post-harvest losses and create value addition.

States should promote equitable and non-discriminatory trade of small-scale fisheries products in local, national, regional and international markets. Promotion of international fish trade should not adversely affect the nutritional needs of people for whom fish is an inexpensive food that is critical to their diet and overall nutritional well-being.

Benefits from international trade should be fairly distributed and effective fisheries management systems should be in place to prevent overexploitation of fishery resources driven by market demand.

Environmental, social and other relevant assessments (among others) should be integral to the policies and procedures undertaken to ensure that adverse impacts of international trade on the environment and the culture, food security and livelihoods of small-scale fisheries can be gauged and equitably addressed.

Access to timely and accurate market and trade information for stakeholders in the small-scale fisheries value chain should be enabled by the state.

8. GENDER EQUALITY

Gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies. States should comply with their obligations under international human-rights law and implement the instruments to which they are party with regard to women's issues.

Specific measures to address discrimination against women should be adopted. Gender equality should be realized by establishing policies and legislation and altering those that are not compatible with this objective.

Functional evaluation systems should be developed to assess the impact of legislation, policies and actions for improving women's status and achieving gender equality.

Better technologies of importance appropriate to women's work should be developed.



9. DISASTER RISKS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Combating climate change requires urgent and ambitious action. Special attention should be paid to small-scale fishing communities living on small islands. An integrated and holistic approach with cross-sectoral collaboration is needed. Plans for adaptation, mitigation and aid, as appropriate, should be provided.

In case of disasters caused by humans that impact small-scale fisheries, the responsible parties should be held accountable. The impact of climate change and disasters on different facets of the post-harvest and trade activities should be taken into account. The concept of “building back better” should be applied in disaster response and rehabilitation. Energy efficiency along the whole value chain must be encouraged and promoted.



10. POLICY COHERENCE, INSTITUTIONAL CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

To promote holistic development in small-scale fishing communities, states should recognize the need for, and work towards, policy coherence.

States should develop and use spatial planning approaches, taking due account of the small-scale fisheries interests and role in integrated coastal zone management.

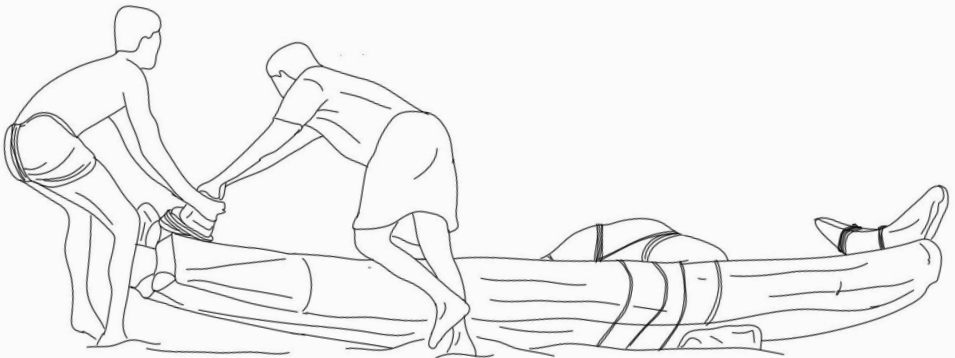
States should adopt policy measures to ensure the harmonization of policies that affect the health of marine and inland water bodies and ecosystems.

Fisheries policy should provide a long-term vision for sustainable small-scale fisheries.

There should be well-defined points of contact in government authorities and agencies for small-scale fishing communities.

Small-scale fisheries stakeholders should promote collaboration among their organizations.

States should promote local governance structures that contribute to effective management of small-scale fisheries. International, regional and sub-regional co-operation is needed to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries.



11. INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

States should establish, in a transparent manner, systems of data collection relevant for decisionmaking on sustainable management of small-scale fisheries. Effective decisionmaking requires communication and information. States should strive to prevent corruption, increase transparency and hold decisionmakers accountable.

Small-scale fishing communities are holders, providers and receivers of knowledge. Information of relevance, necessary for responsible small-scale fisheries and sustainable development, should be made available. Knowledge, culture, practices and technologies of small-scale fishing communities should be recognized and documented.

States should provide support to small-scale fishing communities — particularly indigenous people and women — that rely on fishing for subsistence. Existing and appropriate platforms and networks at the community, national and higher levels must be used to promote the flow and exchange of information.

States should make available funds for small-scale fisheries research and encourage data collection and analyses to be collaborative and participatory.

States should promote research into a variety of realms, in the context of gender relations in order, to inform strategies that will ensure equitable benefits for men and women in fisheries. Recognizing the role of small-scale fisheries, and in order to increase awareness of the nutritional benefits of eating fish, States should promote the consumption of fish within consumer education programmes.

12. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The capacity to participate in decision-making processes should be enhanced.

States should provide capacity building for small-scale fisheries to benefit from market opportunities.

Capacity development should be a two-way process. Knowledge and skills should be developed to support sustainable development and successful co-management arrangements.



13. IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AND MONITORING

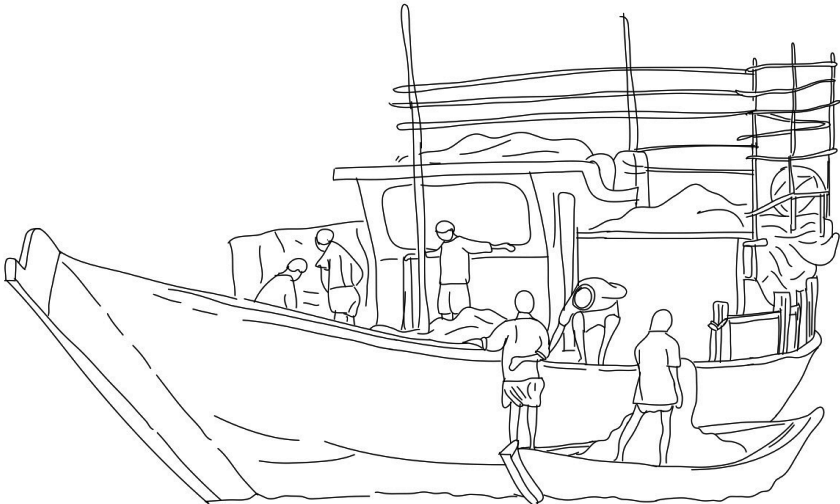
All parties are encouraged to implement the SSF Guidelines.

United Nations and its specialized Agencies should support voluntary efforts by States to implement these Guidelines.

States and all other parties must work together to create awareness of the Guidelines, and disseminate simplified and translated versions.

The importance of monitoring systems should be recognized. Legitimate representatives of small-scale fishing communities should be involved both in the development and application of implementation strategies for the Guidelines and in their monitoring.

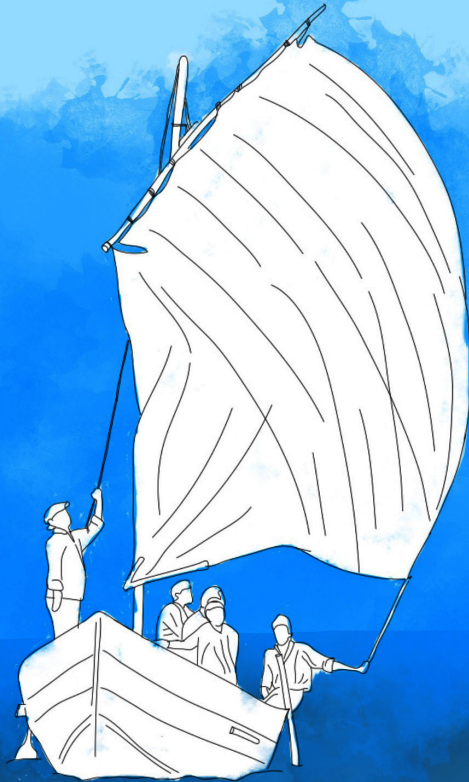
FAO should promote and support the development of a Global Assistance Programme.





The full text of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, is available at:

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/18240/en>



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