

Report of the Sri Lanka Workshop on Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-Building in Small-scale Fisheries



24-26 February, 2025

Tamarind Tree Garden Resort, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Report prepared by Siddharth Premkumar

Organized by

**International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
and
Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (FSSF)**





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**Workshop on Strengthening Collaboration and
Capacity-Building in Small-scale Fisheries**

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Fishers preparing for fishing trip at Negombo, Sri Lanka by S Sangeetha/ICSF

Front Inside
Participants at the Sri Lanka Workshop, 24-26 February 2025/ICSF

Back Inside
Recently caught fish sales on Nouakchott beach, Mauritania by Olivier Barbaroux, France/ICSF

Back Cover
Mollusk gatherers, South of Costa Rica, Terraba-Sierpe wetland/CoopeSoliDar R.L.

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List of Abbreviations

APEBACO	Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de Pequeña Escala Unidos de Barra del Colorado
APALE	Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de La Enea
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWFISHNET	African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network
BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme
CAOPA	African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Organisations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBD COP17	Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
CCRF	Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
CFFA	Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy (of the European Union)
CFS	United Nations Committee on World Food Security
CNFO	Caribbean Network of Fisherfolks Organizations
COFI	Committee on Fisheries (FAO)
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CONFEPESCA	Confederación Centroamericana de Pescadores Artesanales
CSIPM	Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the United Nations Committee on World Food Security
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EMEDO	Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEDEPESCE	Federación De Pescadores Artesanales Y Ambientalistas Del Departamento Del Cesar
FENAPESCA	Federación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Panamá
FiTI	Fisheries Transparency Initiative
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
GT	Gross Tonnage
HLPE-FSN	High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPC	International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IPOS	International Platform for Ocean Sustainability
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IUU fishing	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
IYAFa	International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture

JARING	Malaysian Inshore Fishermen Association for Education and Welfare
KGMC	Kapunungan sa mga Gagmay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion
KIARA	The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice
KKAMPi	Confederation of Small Fishers Movements in the Philippines
KNTI	Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia
KWDT	Katosi Women Development Trust
LIFE	Low Impact Fishers of Europe
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MPP	Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NAFSO	National Fisheries Solidarity Organization
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan
NFSF	National Federation of Small-scale Fishworkers
NFF	National Fishworkers' Forum
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPOA-SSF	National Plan of Action for Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries
OACPS	Organization of African Caribbean and the Pacific States
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
RENAMUPES	Confederación Red Nacional de Mujeres del sector Pesquero, Acuicola, defensoras del agua y la Cultura
RFB	Regional Fishery Bodies
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
RPOA-SSF	Regional Plan of Action for Small-scale Fisheries
SEAFDEC	South East Asian Fisheries Development Centre
SEA-SSF Hub	Small Scale Fisheries Hub in South-East Asia
SSF	Small-scale fisheries/fishers
SSF Guidelines	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
SSF-GSF	Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
SSF Hub	Small-scale Fisheries Resource and Collaboration Hub
TAWFA	Tanzanian Women Fish Workers Association
ULAPA	Unión Latinoamericana de Pesca Artesanal
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDROP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas
UNFCCC COP30	Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNWFO	Uganda National Women's Fish Organization
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
WFF	World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers
WFFP	World Forum of Fisher Peoples
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

A three-day international workshop, from February 24-26, 2025, was organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka, by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in partnership with the Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka. Titled ‘Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-Building in Small-scale Fisheries’, the workshop provided a platform to share the concerns and perspectives of 61 participants—including ICSF members, voices from allied global and regional Small-scale Fisheries (SSF) organizations and representatives from international forums and support bodies, multilateral bodies and donors—from 23 countries across the world.

The workshop built upon the four regional workshops to observe the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022) that ICSF organized in 2022 and 2023 in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe, respectively, and the two SSF summits held in 2022 and 2024 in Rome. To this end, the workshop brought together participants from both the IYAFA regional workshops and the SSF summits into a shared, inclusive and informal space to take stock of the outcomes of these events held between 2022 and 2024. The workshop was structured around a three-part programme focused on setting the scene, deepening discussions, and developing a collective strategy for the future. The flexible and open discussions fostered dialogue and discourse between the diverse participants—driving an organic brainstorming of recommendations and ideas on the potential path ahead in anticipation of sustained action. These insights will be key for the future work of ICSF, which—while facilitating the programme—prioritised the inputs, comments and critiques of the various represented groups in order to build an informed understanding of the kind of support SSF organizations need and seek from ICSF.

Key themes and threads of the workshop

1) **Participants made repeated calls to implement the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (the SSF Guidelines) across all regions.**

Related to the significance of the SSF Guidelines, the participants sought the acceleration of ongoing efforts for its implementation, and cited the need to address a growing array of threats, including those arising from elements of the blue economy, such as industrial aquaculture. Other concerns related to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and climate change impacts. As well, participants were keen to address the broader issues within the SSF sub-sector. They underscored that there is a greater need to implement the various elements of the SSF Guidelines at various levels. To this end, they asked whether:

- In addition to national-level implementation through the NPOA-SSF (National Plan of Action for the implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines), there can be regionalisation of the SSF Guidelines to address region-specific issues such as trans-boundary disputes and conflicts/concerns over food security and sovereignty
- The SSF Guidelines could be localised to take advantage of the existing processes, mechanisms and ongoing work in the SSF realm. One suggested pathway to do this could be to extend “duty bearer” (governmental) responsibilities to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines through/by civil society organizations (CSOs), including cooperatives, providing social assistance and development services to SSF communities
- There can be greater coordination and linkage of the SSF Guidelines with other instruments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity’s (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), among others

As well, several participants voiced dissatisfaction with attempts at defining small-scale fisheries, noting that limitations on what constitutes small-, medium- or large-scale pigeon-holes the SSF sub-sector into a discussion on measurements and metrics, and does not facilitate the viewing of SSF, among other things, as a way of life.

2) Across the various regions represented at the workshop, the fundamental concerns of SSF remain overwhelmingly on the side of life, livelihoods and security.

While these are the overarching priority issues concerning SSF, there are several interconnected challenges that tie into them. Among those discussed, one in particular stood out: environmental degradation and resource loss due to illegal fishing, bottom trawling and other destructive fishing gear and practices, and overfishing pressures, negatively impacting the livelihoods and food security of SSF communities.

In this regard, the case of the transboundary dispute in the Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka particularly resonated with several of the participants—who identified with the Sri Lankan SSFs being victimised by the unchecked mechanised trawler fleet incursions from across the border in the Palk Bay. The activities have over time led to damage to the seabed and coral reefs and the destruction of the modest traditional gear employed by the SSF, which has resulted in loss of income due to the lack of viable alternative employment avenues. A number of participants voiced their appreciation for the greater understanding of the issue—particularly the various nuances to the bilateral fishing dispute and its effects on the food and nutrition needs of Sri Lankans.

The universality of trans-border conflicts at sea was remarked on by some participants, who likened the situation to such long-standing disputes as those in the Gulf of Fonseca between the Central American states of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras—where boat seizures and high fines, as well as threats/acts of violence have persisted for nearly half a century. Solutions proposed to tackle this concern involved the empowerment of SSF communities through capacity-building—this will allow/include getting the global community to directly engage and support SSF communities.

3) Participants sought engaging spaces that support, specify and prioritise SSF concerns

Consequently, several participants touched on the need to identify “real and genuine” partners, like-minded institutions, organizations, agencies and political alliances that can potentially move the needle for SSFs. These would be allies who provide spaces and platforms to SSF representatives (with an emphasis on facilitating the greater engagement of actual small-scale fishers who, many remarked, need to be present at high-level events like the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP), etc. As an example, participants suggested working proactively within non-SSF specific, but inter-related, spheres such as the Climate Action space to ensure inclusivity and reduce the propensity for displacement and neglect of SSF in both its platforms and the various initiatives and processes that exist therein.

Another suggestion was to address the impact of trade and tariffs regimes at various levels on SSF as well as to understand the implications of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The need to provide greater engagement of the actual rights-holders impacted by such policies at stages where policy is decided for them (particularly ones that directly affect them) could not be overstated. Additionally, participants wanted support organizations like ICSF to form a strong “bridge” between like-minded groups at the local, regional and international levels. One suggestion was to build resilient regional networks comprising SSF organizations, NGOs, academics and other technical experts (such as climate change scientists) on specific issues of concern to SSF.

4) Formal recognition of the human rights of SSF to also ensure tenure rights and secure access to their traditional inland, coastal and marine areas and habitats

Participants wanted a framework where the right to access and control resources was enshrined and institutionalised (alongside other basic human rights) as part of the national-level decision-making mechanisms governing the SSF sub-sector. They emphasised that such rights would be a necessary pre-condition for other follow-up actions. This would necessitate sending a clearer message on how the SSF would like to employ the SSF Guidelines and push for addressing specific issues. One suggested way to do this was by promoting NPOA-SSF development and implementation as has been the case in a number of countries, including Tanzania, Uganda and the Philippines (among others). On that note, questions were asked as to whether the plans of action could be scaled up to RPOA-SSF (Regional Plan of Action for the implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines) or down to local plans of action, depending on the needs and context of the concerned SSF, and subject to developing appropriate legal frameworks and gaining political support.

In addition, participants noted that local and regional plans of action will depend on the capacity of the national level plans to create a clear path for effective action in the SSF sub-sector. Only based on this can regional mechanisms and structures be in place to perform with efficacy on SSF-related actions, whose outcomes can then connect to international processes like COFI, and SSF summits, among others. One example of this potential pathway came from a group discussion that explored avenues to move discourse from local SSF organizations to national-level cooperatives to address and promote sustainable enterprises and income. This can then be broadened and connected with other regional and international initiatives, for instance, an international cooperative body, to amplify work on SSF-related concerns, such as resource management. Meanwhile, the inclusion and incorporation of local knowledge (understanding of ecological specificities and traditional expertise, among others) was seen to be crucial to the successful implementation of plans of action at higher levels.

5) Adopt a broader and more flexible approach to building alliances where SSF remains central, but with enough freedom to discuss different issues and priorities

Participants asked the question: “Do we want to be known as the sub-sector that works only within the SSF Guidelines framework or should we look at issues affecting SSF around the world?” This question became all the more pertinent since grassroots communities do not all have the capacity or the support to understand, let alone implement, the SSF Guidelines. There were tensions between efforts to reconcile these perspectives and approaches: whether the SSF Guidelines instrument remains central, driving all the SSF sub-sector’s efforts or if there are forums where SSF can be strengthened enough (through capacity-building and support) to discuss challenges like climate change and biodiversity conservation. Conversely, participants noted that a great deal of discourse on SSF was currently framed through other lenses. Creating discourses centred around the SSF sub-sector itself requires capacity-building efforts on the part of support organizations and others to strengthen the diverse perspectives in the SSF space into a “unified, collective voice”. This can be put into practice by taking collective action to challenge governance regimes not directly aligned with/or not prioritising the needs of SSF—underscoring the need for more coherent national policies, particularly when it comes to development.

Proposed pathways of action for SSF actors and organizations

- Strengthening local/national organizations and movements so that they can coordinate better at the regional and international levels.
- Need for continued efforts to create better awareness of the SSF Guidelines, demonstrating that the implementation of the guidelines is possible and tangible.

- Need to promote impactful measures such as NPOA-SSF development and implementation, prioritising advocacy topics, and highlighting platforms that allow SSF to speak with a unified voice.
- Developing mechanisms to maintain trust among peers, and also promoting this at regional and global levels, while engaging with actors beyond fisheries.
- Connecting women and youth with advocacy processes, facilitating knowledge through modern communication platforms.
- Need to develop communications products to reach a broader audience, including for sharing success stories, showcasing ways in which SSF communities through their organizations and movements have overcome adversities. Demonstrating that, even in the face of historical setbacks, it has been possible to find opportunities for improving living conditions.
- Promoting knowledge about SSF rights among fishers themselves, identifying common problems and jointly developing strategies to overcome them.
- Turning spaces for interaction and coordination into opportunities for fishers to feel comfortable, safe, and able to express themselves in ways that ensure they are well understood.
- Building on the knowledge and needs of SSF, coordinating efforts with academia, and linking the outcomes of this cooperation to civil society organizations. Ensuring that these organizations, in turn, feed back into organizations/movements by shaping priority agendas for political advocacy at the international level.
- Participatory Action Research, emphasising the active involvement of SSF as the most vulnerable to issues related to fisheries—being on the front-lines of adverse climate change impacts such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, river overflows, extreme high and low river flows, displacement or disappearance of fish stocks, among others—is critical to shaping understandings of how to counter these threats.



The Sri Lanka workshop brought together 61 participants from 23 countries to chart a path forward for SSF advocacy

Summary of Proceedings

I. Inaugural Session

Stating that sustainable fisheries led by SSF is a real possibility, ICSF Programme Officer Ronald Rodriguez encouraged participants to recognise and directly engage with the various challenges affecting the sub-sector with open minds and brainstorm creative ideas and forward-looking solutions. In his inaugural address, FSSF Executive Advisor Oscar Amarasinghe noted that the different “perspectives and experiences” on offer at the workshop would strengthen both collaboration and cooperation between like-minded SSF groups and representatives and lead to successful solutions. He expressed this sentiment by quoting Martin Luther King Jr., “Though we may have come here on different ships, we are in the same boat now standing alongside each other. Together, we can achieve great things.” Amarasinghe invited to the stage Dhammika Ranatunga, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources, Government of Sri Lanka; FSSF President M.G. Kularatna; ICSF Executive Director Elyse Mills and Subashini Kamalanathan, the National Women Coordinator of National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO), Sri Lanka. He then introduced and invited Maarten Bavinck, ICSF Board Chairman, to deliver the welcome address.

Noting that there were “different kinds of workshops with different purposes, outcomes and processes” with this one requiring collaboration “to jointly trace a broad outline and vision of where SSF goes in the future,” Maarten labelled the gathering as the “descendants carrying the torch forward” of the flame that was lit in the historic 1984 Rome conference, which galvanised the global SSF movement. These sentiments were echoed by Kularatna, who noted that challenges remain in the implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (the SSF Guidelines) and encouraged the workshop participants to formulate viable solutions to remedy the situation. Among these challenges are those posed by the continued marginalisation and “invisibilisation” of women’s roles and voices in the SSF sub-sector. Describing the fight to assert the rights of women in the fisheries sector as a long “struggle within the struggle”, Kamalanathan listed the “lack of recognition, subsidies and (barriers to) membership in fisheries cooperatives for women” as persistent concerns. “We are marginalised further within the marginalised fisheries sector despite our contributions,” she said, urging the Sri Lankan government to use the SSF Guidelines to draft a National Plan of Action (NPOA) for their implementation in order to ensure the rights of SSF communities.

Elyse then provided an overview of the workshop and outlined its methodology, stating that it would “build on the themes, discussions and outputs” from the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022 workshops and the SSF summits from 2022 and 2024. It would reflect and build on the past while looking to the future, she said, highlighting that ICSF’s objectives for the workshop were to: (i) strengthen collaborations and alliances between ICSF and its SSF allies, and enhancing its capacities as a support organization, (ii) create a space for global and regional SSF movements and organizations, to embrace and be strengthened by their own diversity, and collectively move toward a common goal, and (iii) reflect on ICSF’s strategy and programme of action, and gather inputs from SSF representatives on how the ICSF programme can best meet their needs and respond to their requests for capacity-building at global and regional levels (including in relation to key international spaces and processes).

Delivering the inaugural address, Ranatunga described Sri Lanka’s SSF communities as being “indispensable” to food security, sustainable livelihoods, poverty alleviation, the economic, social and environmental well-being of the country and central to its cultural identity. Although SSF accounts for roughly 80 per cent of Sri Lanka’s fisheries sector and contributes 56 per cent of its total marine

fish production—the sub-sector, being the primary source of protein for the island country, faces numerous challenges, Ranatunga said. These include “overfishing, habitat degradation, limited access and resources, climate change, and governance-related issues”, the solutions to which “require a comprehensive approach that prioritises the needs of small-scale fishers and recognises their crucial role in sustainable fisheries management.” This would “promote sustainable fishing practices and providing access to appropriate technology, investing in research and monitoring to better understand fish stocks and ecosystem dynamics,” he noted, adding that other necessary initiatives included “implementing policies that protect coastal habitats and mitigating negative impacts from climate change” while addressing the sector’s importance.

Closing the inaugural session, Amarasinghe voiced concerns about the lessons of the past being forgotten or not acted upon enough to prevent the same conflicts and issues from cropping up again. He wondered whether “anything has changed” and “if we had learned or made any significant difference” in the decade since the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines and other international policy instruments and frameworks, noting that the same problems persist today that were present in the 1970s. Although “solutions to most of these issues are there in the SSF Guidelines... few people understand (their scope),” he stated. Following Amarasinghe’s closing remarks, Ronald invited ICSF board member from Ghana, Peter Linford Adjei, to facilitate the introductions of the workshop’s 61 participants from 23 countries. Welcoming the participants, Peter recounted an African proverb—“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”—to impress on the gathering about the need for “participation” and “collaboration” to identify solutions to the problems facing SSF around the world.

II. Introductions by participants

After a round of introductions, Peter noted the problem of “high expectations” and remembered that the endorsement of important international instruments such as the SSF Guidelines or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been accompanied by the hope and promise of “very good progress for SSF” and “significant change in the lives of the marginalised and impoverished”. However, the reality has been somewhat sobering, he said, calling on the participants to “look at the bigger picture” while tethering and tempering proposed solutions to real-world practicalities. Pointing out that the profiles of all the individuals and organizations in the assemblage have been uploaded to the workshop’s dedicated website (<https://icsf.net/resources/icsfs-international-workshop-on-small-scale-fisheries-sri-lanka/>), Ronald then encouraged the participants to “talk with each other, share and facilitate a more collaborative space” before closing the introductory session and announcing a short coffee/tea break.



The inaugural session, chaired by Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka, Executive Advisor Oscar Amarasinghe (pictured, speaking) set the tone for the rest of the workshop

Session I: Creating a collective ideas board on key priorities and ways to strengthen small-scale fisheries

Highlighting the ‘ideas board’ posted on the conference hall wall, Vivienne Solis-Rivera, ICSF board member from Costa Rica called on the participants to “re-establish the connections” that have been “made too loose” since the IYAFA workshops in 2022 and 2023 and encouraged the gathering to contribute to “gather solutions and identify challenges” on the ideas board. She added that “if we don’t work together, we will see SSF lose their territories and rights”. Echoing Peter’s comments about the expectations of “lofty goals” making it “difficult for some to follow through”, Vivienne said such workshops “need to give room for SSF representatives to share their experiences”. To that end, she invited SSF representatives from Latin America to the dais to “honestly reveal” the “dangers, including threats of violence”, affecting SSF in the region. Referencing “serious and shared threats to SSF around the world” from “blue growth, blue economy and climate change”, Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez, from Panama representing *Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de La Enea* (APALE), FENAPESCA, CONFEPESCA and the Latin American Union of Artisanal Fisheries (ULAPA), noted that the SSF Guidelines are a “tool to fight against all of these” issues. He said the problem was “how to push” governments for their implementation, since “our governments do not know about the SSF Guidelines for varying reasons.” Warning that “we cannot move forward if we don’t use them”, Gavino urged all NGOs and SSF actors to band together across different regions.

Describing SSF in Latin America and around the world as having a “historic culture”, Libia Esther Arciniegas Linan, representing *Federación de Pescadores Artesanales y Ambientalistas del Departamento de Cesar* (FEDEPESCE) and *Confederación Red Nacional de Mujeres del sector Pesquero, Acuicola, defensoras del agua y la Cultura* (RENAMUPES) from Colombia, said the sub-sector had “given our territories food sovereignty with fish protein” and “protected biological biodiversity in our ecosystems” Although fishing has been “acknowledged as cultural heritage”, SSF still “faces political challenges in the SSF Guidelines implementation”, she said, adding that it was “time that all fishermen and fisherwomen... force our governments to consider us not as poverty ridden, but as a sector of wealth, because we create wealth and we move the economy in our territories.” To combat threats of “displacement from our areas”, Libia said the SSF should “demand that the SSF Guidelines be implemented urgently so that our fisheries remain sustainable and our culture does not disappear, while providing opportunities for our future generations.”

These sentiments were mirrored by Josana Pinto da Costa, representing *Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais* (MPP) from Brazil, who stated that SSF “need to defend our territories, not only the land and water, but all the elements related” to “our freedom, culture and way of being”. She listed a number of threats to the SSF lives and livelihoods, including mining, real estate, industrial aquaculture and fishing, privatisation of the beaches, and climate emergency—noting that finding solutions to these problems was dependent on “political will”. “How can we find a solution...without government commitment...(and) goodwill,” particularly when it comes to respecting SSF rights when taking decisions that affect the sub-sector without “free, prior and informed consent”, Josana asked. As well, she noted that “organizations that claim to speak for SSF” must “represent our interests” instead of being “corrupted” by “political friendships”. Concurring with the contention about governments “not listening to SSF”, Jesus Chaves Vidaurre, representing *Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de Pequeña Escala Unidos de Barra del Colorado* (APEBACO) in Costa Rica, said the “support organizations” that claim to represent fishermen must ensure the funds and resources meant for SSF reach their intended targets, instead of staying within these organizations. Noting the situation would soon become untenable for communities facing threats, ranging from compromised institutions to climate change impacts, he stated that the purpose of the workshop needed to be focused on problem-solving and results-oriented discussions, instead of simply “talking about the same problems we all know about”.

Following these comments, Vivienne called on the gathering to consider “what it means to work together” and “about the way movements that represent fishers work”. “How can we, in the bodies that we belong to, reinforce these fishing movements?”, she asked, noting that organizations in this space should “reflect on the 10 years that we have lost concerning the SSF Guidelines implementation” and “why this happened.” Governmental indifference and a lack of respect—as evidenced by the lack of consultations prior to making decisions affecting SSF—should not be mirrored by organizations that claim to represent SSF without platforming them, she stated. Although “support organizations need to take some responsibility”, it was “not a good idea” for them to “become duty bearers”, said



Workshop participants charted a shared calendar, highlighting potential sites of engagement for SSF actors and organizations along a timeline from 2025-2028

Velia Lucidi, Fisheries Programme Manager at *Centro Internazionale Crocevia* and Coordinator for the Working Group on Fisheries of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). Noting that it was “important to distinguish and delineate responsibility”, she added that the SSF are “putting a lot of energy in finding solutions and fighting their battles”, but the burden of implementing the SSF Guidelines “should not fall on them alone”. “SSF communities know what the solutions are, in terms of their knowledge of nature and connection to their territories,” Velia stated, adding that the “SSF Guidelines need to be implemented by the governments” working in conjunction with “intergovernmental institutions”.

Reasoning that government inaction on the SSF Guidelines implementation may be rooted in a lack of knowledge or lower priority afforded to them relative to the SDG implementation strategies, Md. Mujibul Haque Munir, Head of Social Justice at RDRS Bangladesh, observed that although every government office has a master plan for implementing the SDGs, the “Department of Fisheries does not even know what the SSF Guidelines are”. To address this, Munir said support organizations are “trying to localise the SSF Guidelines in the context of Bangladesh” by “highlighting the linkages between the SSF Guidelines and the SDGs.” Noting that the technical nature of the SSF Guidelines presents a challenge to “non-technical audiences”, Lucyphine Kilanga, a gender expert representing the Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO), Tanzania, said “communicating” them to governments remains a hurdle to mainstreaming the SSF Guidelines. Concurring with Lucyphine’s point on bridging the gap between the SSF Guidelines and policymakers in Africa, Peter stated that a “lot more education, training, engagement, lobbying and advocacy is needed” at the government level. “When a policymaker understands the issue, he or she is more willing to make concessions,” he said, adding that the priority should be on training “focal persons” to act as “liaison and point-of-contact” to “coordinate the implementation of the SSF Guidelines”. “Governments come and go,” so talking about NPOAs is pointless without that level of comprehension and coordination within the civil service, Peter said. Meanwhile, Margaret Nakato, Executive Director of the Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda, stated that it was important to also “include calls to implement other instruments that are furthering the rights of the fishing communities” when talking about the SSF Guidelines implementation. “We must not forget the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). In every community, the land for fisher to access fishing grounds is shrunk, reduced, lost,” Margaret said, adding that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP, 2018) should also be looked at for solutions to “curb the escalating challenges facing fishing communities.”

Responding to the comments from the Latin American fisher representatives, Roberto Ballon, from *Kapunungan sa mga Gagmay’ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion* (KGMC), Confederation of Small Fishers’ Movements in the Philippines (KKAMPi) and SEA-SSF Hub, the Philippines, said “grassroots organizations and cooperatives needed to be empowered, and the coastal communities must be educated” in order to prevent the authorities from “ignoring us... and (instead) to respect us.” He called on global platforms and spaces for SSF to “amplify our voices” to “get the governments’ attention.” SSF “need to be included in the political arena and become part of the decision-making process”, said Roberto, adding that this would allow them to counter such “unconstitutional” measures as a recent decision to allow “commercial fishing vessels to enter municipal waters” reserved for local communities. The problem of “neglect” towards SSF is not restricted to governments alone, but also NGOs and intergovernmental institutions, said Francisco Mari, representing Bread for the World. Although there is increased recognition of the SSF sub-sector today, thanks to the SSF Guidelines, “what has not materialised is an acknowledgement of its importance in terms of food security,” he said. Since the SSF Guidelines endorsement in 2014, there have been only a few instances where fisheries, and SSF in particular, have figured in food security discussions at various international forums and technical committee meetings, Francisco noted. In addition, the rise of industrial aquaculture has

meant further reductions in the importance of SSF in relation to food security—to the extent that the “large funds which goes into food security do not appear in the small-scale fishery sub-sector.” SSF has to compete with fish farming and industrial fishing, he added.

This point of SSF having to compete with other fisheries and aquaculture actors was revisited by a number of participants. Speaking about the Indonesian context, Susan Herawati, representing KIARA (the People’s Coalition for Fisheries Justice), pointed out how industrial aquaculture projects were being touted as “fake solutions” to food sovereignty and climate crisis. At the same time, governments at the national and local level “do not understand the point of the SSF Guidelines or acknowledge our recommendations”. To ensure their implementation, Susan suggested that the SSF Guidelines be tailored to different political systems. Marta Cavalle, Executive Secretary at the Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) Platform, also highlighted the problem of intra-sectoral challenges to SSF. “A lot of large-scale fisheries and other blue economy initiatives, are more influential and powerful, better-staffed and have more resources to lobby for their interests,” Marta said, adding that SSF organizations consistently “need to be in every room we need to be, and be more organized and coordinated”. Acknowledging that this is a challenge because “our activity does not generate the (economic) surplus” as much as others in the sector, she noted that one way to address the issue of influence is to “remove the voluntary aspect of the SSF Guidelines” and make it “part of the legal framework of our fisheries sector policies”.

The urgency of implementing the SSF Guidelines was a common theme of discussion during the session (as indeed the rest of the workshop). Pradip Chatterjee, from the National Federation of Small-Scale Fishworkers (NFSF) in India, suggested that “international bodies, including the FAO and others, should come out with report cards for country-wise implementation of the SSF Guidelines”, adding that this would be a “weapon” for SSF organizations to “push through” the SSF Guidelines. It would enable SSF actors to counter threats posed by lack of climate resiliency and industrial aquaculture, Pradip said. Using the analogy of a football team, Svein Jentoft, ICSF member from Norway, suggested that SSF organizations need to be “strong on both defense and offense” when fighting for the SSF Guidelines implementation. “There is a lot of talk about the defense when we talk about safeguarding rights and social protection, but not enough on what are we going to do when we have the ball, for instance when we have secure access to markets,” he said. Commenting on Libya’s framing of SSF as a source of wealth, Svein asked how the SSF could create wealth by “playing offense” through exploiting access to markets to counter poverty in their communities.

Describing the SSF Guidelines as a “train which has been flagged, but not yet left the station,” ICSF member from India V. Vivekanandan detailed “some fundamental problems with the SSF Guidelines implementation or even discussions.” One, being the question of classification, particularly on the issue of size in regard to what is small-scale and what is large-scale. The question has become divisive,” he said, adding that discussions around the question have tended to disrupt group cohesion among fisheries actors. Another concern is the structure and broad scope of the SSF Guidelines, wherein SSF and trawler owners are “polar opposites” typically pitted against each other in the fishing business—but have a “common interest when it comes to coastal management, resisting the degradation of the coast” against “big companies, the government and investors trying to grab land.” Referencing Svein’s “total football” analogy, specifically on the issue of resource rights utilisation, Vivek noted that going on the offensive is difficult in the Indian context because there was “no clarity” on resource management and rationing. He also stated the diversity of governance regimes and fisheries structures in India’s nine coastal states has added to the “difficulties communicating with different SSF communities”.

Session II. IYafa 2022 and SSF Summits

Following the opening session, participants presented insights from the IYafa regional workshops and SSF Summits. Chairing the session, Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, ICSF board member from Thailand, said there needed to be “more meaningful engagement and sustained collaborations from different regional groups to take the message, insights and discussions of the IYafa 2022 workshops and SSF Summits forward”. To that end, she invited representatives from the various regions for their inputs and ideas.

(i) Report on the IYafa 2022 Europe workshop by Marta Cavallé (Spain)

The objectives, arrived at through a consultative process, of the Europe workshop was to discuss “desirable governance transitions, issues pertaining to women in SSF and pathways of strengthening capacities of SSF and support organizations in Europe”. By doing so, the workshop was intended to shape inspiring narratives for the future of small-scale fisheries, highlighting the importance of desirable and equitable futures. The narrative of the workshop emphasised that SSF are “losing the battle” in Europe and are “at a point of no return”, necessitating a call to action “with a sense of urgency”, Marta said, borrowing Svein’s football analogy to note the need for SSF actors to “become more offense-oriented”. A number of governance solutions were discussed:

- (i) By providing access to the fishery resources in fishing areas, which included questions on issues of taxes and quotas—and in particular, “how we are battling for Article 17 of the European Common Fisheries Policy (concerning the need for transparent and objective criteria for resource allocation), that could be a real entry point for small-scale fishers to get better access to resources”, but has “never been implemented by the EU member States”.
- (ii) Boosting the co-management scheme in Europe, meaning a framework of “shared governance between administrations, fishers, NGOs, and scientists” together developing a better model of fisheries management. “Although this is still coming very slowly, this approach is what we want to have, instead of a top-down approach,” Marta said.
- (iii) Governing “access to a sustainable and faithful system, so how to get more access to resources, and how to also have more direct value chains”

The workshop culminated in the creation of a Women’s Action plan that highlighted the “need to recognise the crucial contributions of women in fisheries”, to promote capacity building and support for women in SSF organizations, and to provide inclusive spaces in the co-management process for women to participate meaningfully. As well, the workshop touched on the need for gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive technologies and working conditions. In addition, the participants created a statement detailing the “current economic model in Europe of development, based on the unsustainable extraction of natural resources, and the logic of privatisation” that has led to “systemic changes” in the fisheries and other sectors.

(ii) Insights from the IYafa 2022 Africa regional workshop and SSF workshop (2023) by Lucyphine Kilanga (Tanzania)

The workshop examined SSF empowerment through control of the entire value chain where harvest and post-harvest functions are linked. It recognised the active roles of strong women’s organizations such as Tanzanian Women Fish Workers Association (TAWFA), Uganda National Women’s Fish Organization (UNWFO, Uganda—where banning of the silverfish fishing posed challenges, but workarounds were proposed) and African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET). It discussed improved technologies, particularly in the post-harvest phase in order

to promote nutrition and food security and acknowledged the strong support from regional CSOs and NGOs to promote fisheries livelihoods. The workshop also stressed the need for inclusive policies and regional cooperation; protecting and recognising Indigenous People's Fishing Rights; to sustain coastal fishing communities; regulating commercial fishing practices; providing access to fishing grounds; promoting sustainable fishing methods and empowering local decision-making. As well, it highlighted the marginalisation of women in SSF including: limited access to resources; post-harvest loss; exclusion from decision-making; gender norms and barriers; lack of financial support; non-gender responsive, informative or responsive grassroots initiatives; and women not really prepared to be resilient and adapt in the face of challenges. The two outcomes of the workshop were a Women Action Plan and a workshop regional statement.

Following the workshop, Lucyphine noted, there has been “empowerment through controlled intervention where we have different initiatives connecting pre-harvest and the post-harvest phases”; and “active roles played by strong women's organizations”. She highlighted the participation of TAWFA in the eighth meeting of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS, formerly known as the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States or ACP) Ministers Responsible for Oceans, Inland Waters and Fisheries in 2024. Similarly, UNWFO has advocated for alternative livelihoods for women in fisheries following the silverfish fishing ban. Other initiatives are ongoing regarding nutrition and food security. She pointed to the construction of a ‘Fish Innovation and Resource Centre’, where “we are going to do aggregation, processing, trading and also packaging, as well as the business development skills for empowering women in small-scale fisheries”. Despite the successes, Lucyphine cautioned that challenges remain: including “poor land resiliency” or poor capacity of a land ecosystem to withstand and recover from disturbances like droughts, floods or human activities, while maintaining its essential functions and structures, and the “lack of adaptive capacity” against emerging threats. For women in fisheries, this manifests as “limited access to resources; harvest loss issues; exclusion from decision-making; gender norms and barriers (as a standard) and a lack of financial support”. In addition, the “lack of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive initiatives” further impedes women's participation in the sector. The SSF sub-sector as a whole is threatened by overfishing, destructive practices (such as dynamite fishing), IUU fishing, weak enforcement of policies as well as official prioritisation of industrial aquaculture. There are persistent problems of insufficient ancillary infrastructure, although Lucyphine noted that organizations were working to address this, for example, by “constructing ladders at fish landing sites and improving drying racks”. She also stressed the need for “deeper linkages between governance and management” practices using a “collaborative governance approach” to ensure the “long-term sustainability and resilience of coastal fisheries”.

tee System for SSF in Europe



Participants presented insights and outcomes from the IYAFA 2022 Regional Workshops and SSF summits

(iii) Report on the IYAFA 2022 Latin America and Caribbean workshop by Henrique Callori Kefalas (Brazil) and Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez (Panama)

The workshop was conducted in the spirit of “searching for solutions” and the participants were passionate and displayed a high level of professionalism, Henrique said. While the Caribbean concerns were directed at the fight against blue economy strategies and industries, the Latin American perspective was on adopting a shared governance and human rights-based approaches. These separate foci highlighted the challenges of diversity of language and experiences, but from that diversity came alliances, he added. Gavino described the workshop as a huge opportunity where a wide representation of fishermen and fisherwomen together addressed a variety of topics such as encroachment of traditional SSF areas by industrial fishing vessels. Other discussions talked about the role of women and focused on working with local communities on Cardoso Island, near Cananeia, Sao Paulo state, Brazil, to help develop their capacity to hold such projects despite government scepticism. “The island of Cardoso is a state park and conservation area, which lies inside the traditional territories of the local community. There were plans to deliver all the infrastructure in the park to the private sector for tourism activities, which was opposed by the community,” Henrique said. “So, the regional workshop was their first experience of managing this space and organizing such an event.”

The outcome of the workshop was the Cananeia Statement, which focuses on a number of SSF issues relating to the Latin American and Caribbean regions—including “management and recognition of traditional territories and knowledge, social security, and the many challenges posed by the 30x30 goal of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.” It also noted the importance of education, training, communication, health and food security, and the capacity to build coalitions among the various SSF actors in the two regions. Although there were common issues concerning points of conflict between SSF interests and global economy, the workshop also discussed concerns specific to each region: for instance, in the Caribbean context, strategies to counter the blue economy were discussed, while the importance of shared governance models and a human rights-based approach to fisheries management was highlighted for the Latin American region. The workshop also produced a plan of action to promote gender equity, emphasising the roles played by, and importance of, women in small-scale fisheries; connecting their experiences and perspectives; and identifying specific challenges such as knowledge gap, barriers to entry and access, economy and health concerns, gender-based violence and patriarchy.

(iv) Insights from the IYAFA 2022 Asia regional workshop by Azrilnizam Omar (Malaysia) and Ahilan Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka)

The regional workshop focused on the need for protection of tenure rights for small-scale fishers and indigenous community, since tenure rights are either being violated for development and investment (ocean grabbing) or not recognised (as in the case of customary rights) by some governments, Azrilnizam said. The challenges posed by illegal or destructive fishing gear and practices, and pollution from gas leaks, agriculture and industrial aquaculture were discussed, as were the concerns of SSF communities impacted by a decline in fisheries resources due to climate change impacts such as changes in water quality and temperature, sea level rise, coastal erosion, floods and droughts. In addition, the workshop addressed the risks to small-scale fisheries from economic development, specifically from industries like oil and gas, sand mining, tourism activities, and industrial aquaculture, Azrilnizam said, adding that SSF are rarely consulted when development-related decisions are taken by governments. To counter this, the participants suggested greater networking and collaboration between fisheries actors, NGOs and academia at the national, sub-national, regional and international levels, and to “strengthen the knowledge base of civil society organizations to produce effective advocacy efforts towards supporting and protecting SSF interests”.

An important outcome of the workshop was the ‘Women’s Action Plan’, which highlighted concerns related to the ‘invisibilisation’ of women in fisheries, their relative lack of influence compared to men, the dearth of training, marketing and capacity-building opportunities, absence of family support, social protection and compensation coverage. In addition, the need to create inclusive, participatory spaces and platforms for women within the SSF sub-sector was discussed, Azrilnizam said, while also pointing out the lack of reliable and specific data relating to women in the fisheries sector across Asia. Ahilan described how women in fisheries need to “think holistically—while gender policies in fisheries needed to be simultaneously strengthened all along the value chain in order to raise the profile of the vital work done by women in the sub-sector”. He noted that the workshop also highlighted tenure rights, in the context of “land grabbing by State and non-State actors and conflicts on the ground—particularly due to destructive and illegal fishing practices—and the limitations of legal avenues to address these concerns. The issue of migrant fishers, and the conflicts and challenges posed therein, and concerns of alternative livelihoods were also discussed. Many of the issues raised at the regional workshop can be solved by implementing the SSF Guidelines, both speakers noted.

(v) Reports on the SSF Summits in 2022 and 2024 by Mitchell Lay (Antigua and Barbuda)

Recounting his personal experiences from the Summits, Mitchell provided a summary of his major takeaways and concerns. These included the need to: promote local level the SSF Guidelines implementation; disseminate and build awareness of locally relevant SSF Guidelines; address governance issues at all levels, and engage in processes impacting SSF (local to global), including RFMBs, RFMOs and COFI (agenda); monitor guideline implementation, including by operationalising the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (SSF-GSF); build and strengthen SSF organizations and networks; collaborate with other actors, including NGOs, CSOs, academia; raise awareness of threats to SSF, including from elements of the blue economy and document SSF success stories, and produce/share positive narratives. While acknowledging the logistics and planning process of the summits as well as the participation of various actors and stakeholders in SSF spaces, Mitchell also cited a number of missed opportunities such as why SSF Summit outputs were not geared towards garnering inputs for COFI sessions. He noted that it was a clear opportunity to generate solid communication products and appropriate advocacy on the relevance of SSF. This was a point that resonated with the workshop participants and became a common recommendation over the following sessions. “If SSF were to be considered a species listed on the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) ranking, we would be red-listed with a footnote that says immediate action must be taken. This is the type of reality that came to me at the summits,” Mitchell said, adding that discussions and breakout group sessions at the summits stressed the need to both “prioritise livelihoods and well-being” and to have “policy and management measures of human experience” that could be “disseminated in a manner that is relevant to (and actionable by) fishing communities”.

Other takeaways from the summits concerned the monitoring of the SSF Guidelines implementation, including by operationalising the SSF-GSF; disseminating and building awareness of the SSF Guidelines that are locally relevant, which requires that they be translated into a language that is clearly understood by the readership; addressing government issues at all levels and “engaging in all processes impacting SSF, including fisheries management bodies, regional fisheries management organizations and COFI itself”; and “documenting SSF success stories in order to shape this positive narrative” as an “appropriate advocacy tool to look at SSF relevance”. Concluding the session, Ravadee thanked the speakers and noted that it remained essential for SSF organizations to participate and be “visible” when the “world does not recognise us” and the “system does not really work for us”. She expressed frustration about an inability to effectively participate in decision-making structures under key institutions and wondered if SSF organizations should focus only on own institutions. added.”

Session III. Group discussions on strengthening our collective strategies and support for SSF organizations

Following a short break for tea/coffee, the participants broke into four regional groups to discuss three pressing questions:

1. What are the key priorities for SSF organizations at the regional and international level?
2. What are the key regional and international mechanisms, processes and institutions for addressing our priorities?
3. How can we engage with the SSF Guidelines implementation process to promote our key priorities?

Chairing the session, ICSF member from Colombia Lina Saavedra noted that the groups “should not forget that we should also have a global vision and perspective”. “In that spirit, each group should also work on common strategies we can all adopt to move forward collectively. Even though we are divided into four groups, let us think in terms of the collective whole,” she said. She asked the various group facilitators to “prioritise inclusivity and participation”, emphasising the importance of providing the SSF representatives a space to offer their perspectives. Lina also requested the participants to take into account the new opportunities and new processes that have emerged post-IYAFA 2022 workshops, and to examine if existing processes are addressing priorities and needs. Reiterating that message, Maarten suggested the discussions “build on the richness and usefulness of the IYAFA reports” and “focus on the new initiatives and responses” that have emerged in the two-year interim period (between the regional meetings and the Sri Lanka conclave) to “take things forward”. He invited participants to share some the outcomes of the IYAFA workshops to set the tone for the breakout group discussions.

Following the Latin America and the Caribbean regional workshop, Gavino said, “one of the most positive results was the formation of ULAPA, a pan-Latin American body of SSF organizations to provide a unified voice” for the sub-sector “that will be heard at the global level”. Libia added that RENAMUPES (National Confederation of Women in the Fisheries Sector) was created in Colombia, and had “started to organize local workshops to define and determine the future of artisanal fishing in the country”. Benjamin Campion, ICSF member from Ghana stated that nearly 30 SSF organizations across Africa have opened regular communication channels through WhatsApp and quarterly Zoom meetings to discuss fisheries-related issues, disseminate information and provide updates. Margaret added that members of forums for women in fisheries had been “mobilised to be active participants” and the KWDT had made efforts to “induct young people to be part of knowledge-sharing initiatives”.

As the group discussions wound down, Benjamin reconvened the session and invited the group’s facilitators and rapporteurs to share insights and outcomes.

(i) Latin America and the Caribbean Group: represented by Libia Linan (Colombia), Jesus Vidaurre (Costa Rica) and Ana Paula Rainho (Brazil)

The group discussed the necessity of “sharing experiences at the regional level while developing new tools for the international level”, Jesus said, adding that it recognised the need for “capacity-building efforts from international organizations, as well as technical support and scientific expertise and the economic support and follow-up funding to initiate and continue any campaigns”. These were deemed necessary to “strengthen SSF organizations and develop new alliances with international bodies, academia and from the scientific community”. To this point, Ana Paula stated that the group felt “we need to be open to alliances with hitherto unlikely potential partners”. “For instance, in Brazil the office of the public prosecutor could be a powerful ally in helping build a legal framework for the SSF Guidelines implementation,” she said, adding that SSF organizations “need to understand the laws in order to improve compliance with the law while strengthening organizational capacities.



Latin America and the Caribbean regional group discussion on strengthening collective strategies and support for SSF organizations

Meanwhile, Libia added that over the past three years, “region-specific priorities have reinforced the SSF sector” in Latin America and the Caribbean,” noting that “without such priorities, the SSF cannot be strong in every sector that we need to be.” She also suggested that pilot projects in Latin America can be replicated at the world level so as to export these insights and practices.

(ii) Asia Group: represented by Aarthi Sridhar (Dakshin Foundation, India)

At the heart of the group’s discussion, Aarthi said, was a “tension” regarding whether to “centre the SSF Guidelines” or “look at the cross-cutting issues that affect SSF communities around the world” as a consequence of the “dramatic” shifts in global power dynamics over the decade since



Asia regional group discussion on strengthening collective strategies and support for SSF organizations

the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines in 2014. “Within this new world order, how are we to safeguard SSF communities,” she asked, adding that many in the group “underscored the need to urgently implement the SSF Guidelines. While this would give “local communities on the ground the recognition they need,” dissenting voices countered whether the SSF Guidelines alone would make SSF a priority and “get them into the room on other kinds of issues—such as climate-related impacts, climate adaptation challenges, biodiversity conservation and so on.” While these were all underscored as challenges also faced by SSF, Aarthi noted that the group struggled with how to address them. The group also acknowledged that “communities on the ground may not have the capacity or ability to engage with these challenges or implement the SSF Guidelines”—which necessitates hard questions about action plans, beneficial discourses and building alliances at the local and larger contexts.

(iii) Africa Group: represented by Peter Adjei (ICSF Member, Ghana)

The key priorities identified related to access to resources, with the group noting that “when fishers are pushed, they are resorting to unsustainable fishing practices to survive. This is leading to environmental degradation.” The lack of sufficient infrastructure and support was also an area of concern—as was the lack of fisheries-related policy in some African countries. Meanwhile, in other countries, “these policies do exist, but there is no enforcement. Often, government agencies act as mere rubberstamps without an understanding of the processes involved,” Peter said, adding that the involvement of SSF actors and organizations in the decision-making process can address this. In order to overcome this hurdle, the group discussed the need for “meaningful lobbying and advocacy to determine who are the SSF sector’s allies” and asked whether “we have really expanded our network to identify and include partners that can make a difference?” When it comes to engagement, in terms of the regional and institutional mechanisms, the group looked at the African Union (AU); sub-regional bodies, like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa); and then regional small-scale fisheries networks such as (AWFISHNET) African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network and CAOPA (African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries). The group also looked at key mechanisms and processes at the global level such as the SSF summit and COFI, as well as development organizations and institutions that SSF actors need to participate in, and engage with, Peter said.



Africa regional group discussion on strengthening collective strategies and support for SSF organizations

(iv) Europe Group: represented by Svein Jentoft (ICSF Member, Norway)

Although the issues affecting SSF elsewhere are also present in Europe, it is unfortunate that these are not featured in SSF discourse as much as the concerns of the Global South, Svein observed, noting that the group's aim was to get "Europe higher on the priority list". Noting that "the SSF Guidelines specifically state that they are primarily for the developing world", the relative lack of attention to the concerns of European SSF "gives the governments, perhaps even the FAO, the reason they need to forget about them". The group identified a number of additional issues with the SSF Guidelines, noting that they need to be made "more accessible, not just to governments". "The SSF Guidelines starting with the guiding principles should inform actions, but it must be remembered that if the SSF Guidelines were to be endorsed today, there are newer questions such as the blue economy and concerns that would need answers," Svein said, adding that a "lot of things said in the SSF Guidelines are relevant in the context of the blue economy, but have to be brought there."

Similarly, the group discussion highlighted the relative lack of emphasis on youth and children in the SSF Guidelines—compared to the "upwards of 75 mentions of women and gender", Svein said, which demands attention and a "stronger focus for the possibilities that young people offer, including young women" towards the future of small-scale fisheries. Particularly since SSF communities are "almost disappearing in Europe". This is one of a number of issues that "are not particular to Europe, but they are somewhat extreme there", he added. The group also attempted to map the institutional landscape of Europe's fisheries sector, citing the Common Fisheries Policy as part of a series of "priorities, processes and policies" that need to be understood—in order to engage with the CSOs and academic communities that are part of the policymaking paradigm.

Summarising the findings, Benjamin said the discussions had delved into emerging threats as well as new concepts such as blue economy, adding that some commonalities could be seen as well across the various regions. This indicated that there is relativity along with diversity in the SSF sub-sector.



Europe regional group discussion on strengthening collective strategies and support for SSF organizations

He opened the floor for a general discussion on the session. Participants noted the need to make SSF organizations more vibrant with greater reach, with support organizations like ICSF needing to work to create a bridge between the SSF and governments. “SSF organizations tend to be more visible at the regional level, but we need to amplify their voices to create linkages between national, regional and global organizations. If any one part of this bridge is weak, the structure will not be strong enough,” Munir said, adding it was up to ICSF and other support organizations to “minimise the gaps between national and international-level organizations”. Noting that “problems have to be discussed in terms of the SSF Guidelines as well as a more agile human rights approach adapted to the needs of each region,” Vivienne said the solutions for SSF organizations have to include a “very strong component of organizational strengthening”. If this “capacity building (is to be) in a normative way, taking into the consideration the concerns of various SSF organizations, we need a bottom-up approach,” she added. This would allow ICSF to “play an important role here, bringing together the enormous diversity of actors” in the sector, including civil society, academia, and governments, Vivienne said, while emphasising that “social movements have to be followed by their point of view.”

Following the floor comments, Ronald closed the session for the day and invited participants to take part in a cultural event at dinner. The programme featured a traditional dance and musical performance, originally meant as tribute to honour the island country’s sovereigns.

Session IV: Panel discussion on resolving transboundary fishing conflicts in the Palk Bay

The morning session on the workshop's second day featured insights into the transboundary fishing conflicts in the Palk Bay, a persistent thorn in bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka, which were examined through the lenses of regional history, politics and geography. The panel was chaired by Vivek, who provided a background of "one of the oldest unresolved conflicts" in his opening remarks. The fishing communities in both Tamil Nadu, the southwestern Indian state, and northern Sri Lanka share centuries-old linkages—linguistic, cultural and inter-personal—that has added nuance to a conflict about fishers' rights to traditional waters, access to resources, lives and livelihoods, he said. All of which plays out in the Palk Bay, a 30-40 metre deep water body that has historically been resource-rich. Relations between the two communities remained amicable even after an agreement demarcated the maritime border between the two countries in 1974 and the establishment of the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in 1976, Vivek said, adding that the eruption of the Sri Lankan civil war in 1983 between the ethnic Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority disrupted (among other aspects of their lives) the fishing activities of SSF in northern Sri Lanka.

Until the end of the war in 2009, Indian fishers had "free run" in Palk Bay, expanding their operations significantly and undergoing vessel mechanisation from small craft to large trawlers—although they were caught in the crossfire between the Sri Lankan navy and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) seaborne units on occasion. Following the war's conclusion, there has been "intense conflict" between the two groups after Sri Lankan SSF resumed fishing operations to find their waters had been occupied, said Vivek, adding that a series of dialogues at both the fisher-to-fisher level and through official channels have been unsuccessful in resolving the dispute. Increased vigilance and enforcement by the Sri Lankan navy has seen Indian trawlers impounded and auctioned, while their fishers—primarily daily wage earners—being detained and arrested, though only to send a message, he said. Meanwhile, the political support of various parties—and the skewed media narrative portraying fishers as victims of Sri Lankan aggression—in Tamil Nadu has compounded the problem since Indian fishers' labour under the misconception that their politicians will find a solution and license them to operate in Sri Lankan waters, added Vivek, inviting the panellists to the stage.

The gathering then heard the crucial perspective of the Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen, represented by Annalingam Annarasa, President of the Federation of Jaffna District Fisheries Cooperatives Union. Describing the conflict as having affected about 99 per cent of fishermen in Jaffna and the Northern Province since 2009, Annarasa said a resolution needs to be found for the sake of the 200,000 individuals, including 50,000 families, involved in SSF who have experienced loss of livelihood and income. The destruction of the traditional fishing gear, characterised by the use of gillnets and other modest equipment, and degradation of environmental resources due to trawling, has forced the northern SSF to seek other forms of employment and is "destroying our future", he added, noting that both governments have been engaging with the issue "only infrequently", while "academics and the media have not adequately addressed the issue along the lines of resource and livelihood loss."

While the previously cordial relationship between the two fisher groups no longer exists, Annarasa said the community bears "no grudges against the Indian fishermen" or the Tamil Nadu government, which supported the cause of the Tamil minority. Both sides "can live very peacefully with each other in this region, but that is only possible if our rights are safeguarded, he added, noting that were the "very powerful trawling vessels" cease their incursions, fishers could "look forward to a resolution through positive discussions". However, he stated that "neither government is in a position to control the situation" even though there has been "a lot of talk, but not enough firm action". Meanwhile,



The panel discussion on the transboundary fishing conflict in the Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka heard from SSF actors, civil society, academia, media and government representatives

the “bottom trawlers overexploit marine living resources and damage the seabed in the Palk Bay... and victimise our people through these activities”. Calling on both governments, SSF organizations, academics and journalists to focus on the problem – which needs “transparency and support”, he singled out the Indian media for “linking the (transboundary dispute) issue with Kachchatheevu since only a few arrests are taking place near that island.” The disputed island is claimed by both countries despite the 1974 maritime border agreement, which has also made it a political flashpoint between the Tamil Nadu state government and the Indian Union government—to the point that neither side can reconcile with the idea of ceding it to Sri Lanka, Vivek had said earlier, adding that the Indian media has historically wedded this sense of ‘loss’ to the narrative of Indian fishers “losing their fishing grounds” and therefore having to enter “illegitimately occupied” Sri Lankan waters.

Following these remarks, Ahilan, who has been engaging with these issues since 2015, presented the dispute as an “asymmetry of power” between mechanised Indian bottom trawlers, which encroach upon Sri Lankan waters at least three times a week (and daily in some areas), and Sri Lankan fishers, whose “lifetime savings are destroyed” in terms of their investments in gillnets and gear that are “ripped through” by trawlers in just one night. In addition, they lose income due to being unable to fish during these incursions, which also damage the environment and deplete fish stocks. Highlighting the long-term impact on coastal communities over the past 16 years of the conflict, he said the social institutions, such as fisheries’ cooperatives, that survived a 26-year civil war are in decline—one such cooperative in Jaffna district going from 25 employees and possessing extensive infrastructure in 2010 to just a single part-time employee at present. Since cooperatives represent the community’s link to governance structures and are service providers, Vivek had previously described them as “important survival mechanisms” for fishers and “vehicles for their future development”

Since the end of the civil war, there have been a number of dialogues between northern Sri Lankan fishers and trawler owners in Tamil Nadu, Ahilan said, adding that “ultimately, the profit motive” overrode attempts at resolution. In 2016, however, a ministerial-level negotiated settlement resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that led to attempts to phase out trawling, said Ahilan, who described the MoU as a “huge lost opportunity” as trawlers returned *en masse* during the

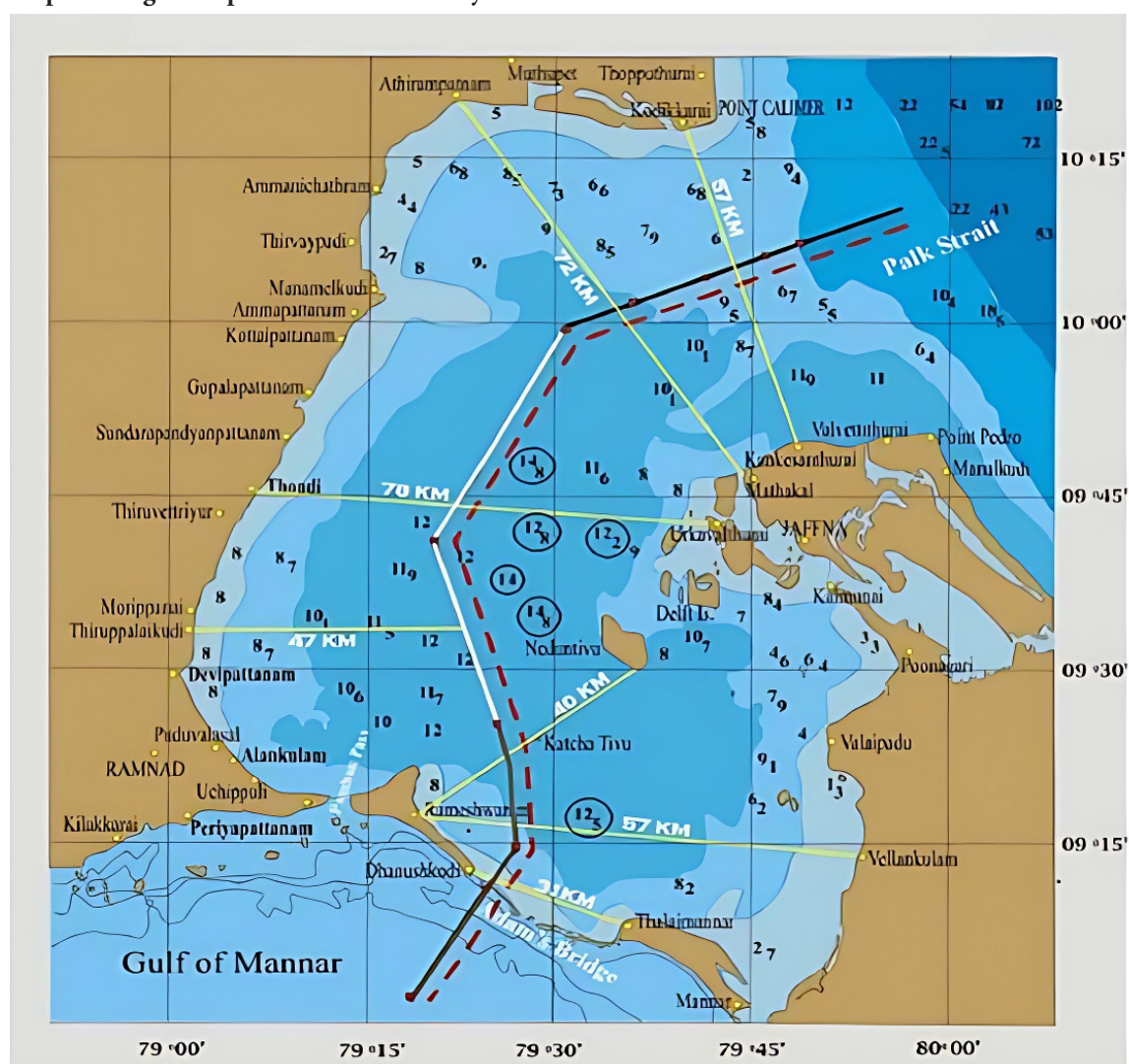
COVID-19 pandemic. Ahilan contended that the issue can be framed: as a legal one, in terms of a maritime boundary being crossed; a foreign relations issue between two neighbours; a security issue; and a political, possibly ideological, one in terms of trying to change the narrative on the Tamil Nadu side. Its multi-dimensional character necessitates “collaboration between academics, researchers, intellectuals and the fisher organizations to change the discourse” since “political concerns and interests tend to change on both sides,” he said.

Pointing out that Sri Lanka had arrested more than 500 fishers from Tamil Nadu, Olencio Simoes, General Secretary of the National Fishworkers’ Forum (NFF), India, said that these were “mostly daily wage workers” being jailed. Because trawler operations are based on a profit/loss-sharing mechanism, the trawler owners “threaten the crew” to increase fish catch “by any means possible”. Since the fishers’ wages depend on the quantum of the catch, they are “basically being forced” to comply, he added. As the trawling fleet in Tamil Nadu has expanded to more than 5,000 vessels, this has led to reduced catch in the historic waters—which also incentivises incursions. The end result is that a number of destructive and illegal fishing practices are followed, including bottom trawling, pair trawling or bull trawling, LED light fishing, among others, Olencio said, noting that there were laws against destructive gears in India that are not being implemented. He suggested that if the transboundary dispute could be framed in terms of banned destructive fishing gears, it might “pressure both governments” to restart the dialogue.

Contending that dialogue between fishing communities is key, Pradip Chatterjee, National Convenor of the National Federation of Small-Scale Fishworkers (NFSF), India, suggested that fisher-to-fisher talks should form the base of the conflict resolution process. He presented an evolving position paper from the NFSF that encouraged both governments to declare the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar as a small-scale fishing reserve to be administered by the SSF communities on both sides, which will “jointly decide the norms of fishing in the Bay and the Gulf and monitor the same”. The paper also calls on the Indian government to “respect the ban on bottom trawling declared by Sri Lanka in 2017 and come up with a matching ban on bottom trawling” in Indian waters—while also putting in place “proper and adequate rehabilitation schemes for fishers”. It reminds both governments to extend the provisions under section 3 of article 73 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that prohibit the imprisonment or meting of corporal punishment to fishers who trespass into another country’s historic waters—and to facilitate the repatriation of arrested fishers along with impounded personal belongings, craft and gear at the earliest, without letting any damage to set in. To avoid such encroachments, the NFSF paper recommends that the administrative regulatory authorities and maritime defense forces of both the countries assist their respective fishers to avoid entering each other’s territory.

Revisiting Ahilan’s argument about power dynamics, Meera Srinivasan, who reports on the long-simmering conflict for *The Hindu* newspaper (published in India), suggested that the issue can be understood in terms of various “power asymmetries”: (i) in the bilateral relationship, where India is positioned as a powerful regional country and bilateral lender who was the “first responder” during Sri Lanka’s economic crisis, extending a US\$4 billion emergency line of credit to combat critical fuel and medicine shortages; (ii) in access to resources, where the SSF in northern Sri Lanka—using passive and “very modest gear” and non-motorised craft—have to compete with powerful bottom trawlers that are “virtually scooping” fisheries resources from the seabed; (iii) in terms of political influence, where the fishing communities along the 1,000-km stretch of coastline in Tamil Nadu, are a “very critical electoral constituency” within the southern Indian state, whereas the northern Sri Lankan SSF have a “limited reach” at the national level (Ahilan had stated previously that Sri Lankan SSF leadership is unwilling to risk losing its traditional political support from Tamil Nadu by lobbying for the community); and (iv) Sri Lankan Tamil SSF communities are yet to recover from the civil war and

Map showing the depth contour in Palk Bay



Source: Resources and livelihoods of the Palk Bay: Information from India and Sri Lanka by Hussain Mohamad Kasim

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281198322_Resources_and_livelihoods_of_the_Palk_Bay_Information_from_India_Sri_Lanka

recent economic crisis (rising fuel prices compounded the problems of loss of livelihood and income), whereas Indian trawler owners are wealthy, politically-connected, reap large profits from their fishing operations and can absorb losses due to impounding and auctioning of encroaching vessels.

Although the conflict is one of competing livelihoods of two sets of Tamil fishermen on either side of the Palk Bay, Meera noted that there were competing narratives at play as well—juxtaposing the “less heard, less visible,” but no less compelling account of Sri Lankan SSF returning to the villages they were displaced from during the decades-long civil war and attempting to rebuild their livelihoods from scratch against the “unhelpful and misleading” media coverage served for consumption in India of “innocent” Tamil fishers versus “evil” Sri Lankan navy. However, she suggested that positioning bottom trawling, and not Indian vessel incursions, as the “antagonist” in the dispute had opened a “small window” for the new Sri Lankan government to broach the issue with India in 2025. This window would likely close in the lead up to state polls in Tamil Nadu in 2026 since it will become an electoral issue at that point, Meera said.

Noting that transboundary issues are not uncommon around the world, Rajdeep Mukherjee, Policy Analyst at the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), India, suggested that one of the roots of the Palk Bay fishing conflict can be traced back to the lack of a consultation process with fishers (by either side) during the demarcation process of the maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka. Another source of friction is the absence of a capacity management plan or assessment of resources that would allow for a balancing of fishers' requirements and sustainable fishing practices, he said, adding that this dearth of data—since “no substantial scientific exercise” has been undertaken in the disputed area by either side over the past two decades—has meant the Palk Bay issue falls into a “grey zone” where solutions may not be black and white and policy and governance decisions and monitoring, control and surveillance models are based on unvalidated “assumptions” drawn only from fishers' accounts. There is no conflict in both sides agreeing to conduct scientific assessments, which may be the first step towards framing a shared management solution, Rajdeep suggested.

Looking at alternative solutions is important, he said, since a government-level enforcement response would be for both sides to “put a flotilla of coast guard vessels” to prevent encroachment, which is impractical. At present, production from trawlers do not contribute very much towards food security, which was the initial rationale for their use, Rajdeep noted, adding that most of the catch from trawlers now goes to the fishmeal industry, which supports the development of aquaculture. Despite recent protests and calls by fisher groups in India to monitor and reduce trawling-related impacts, he wondered whether there were any technical solutions that could reasonably replace trawling as a source of income and livelihood. Among his suggestions were incentives such as a “buyback scheme” or promoting universal basic income.

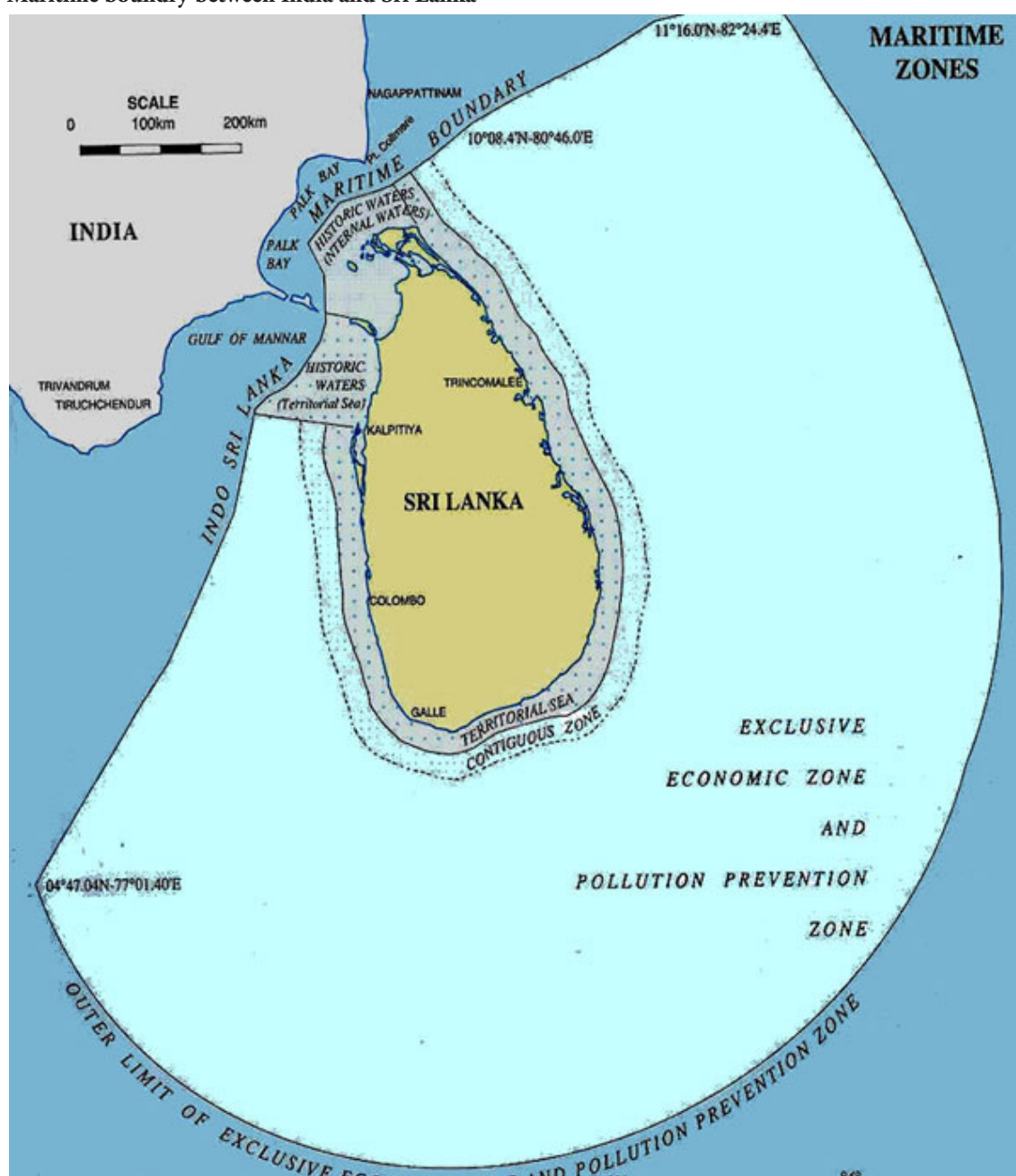
Thanking the panel for raising a number of questions and suggesting avenues to frame and resolve the issue, Vivek said the lack of transparency or cues from the governments as to their preferred policy direction remain hurdles in the conflict resolution process. He invited queries and comments from the gathering. Participants remarked on the universality of transboundary conflicts, with M. Adli Abdullah from Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union (KNTI) noting that the depletion of fisheries resources and fish production was the root cause of encroachment. Likening the situation to incursions by Chinese and Thai trawlers in Indonesian waters, he said that the trawlers are confiscated by the government and auctioned to SSF, while the proceeds are used to fund social development in the SSF sub-sector (such as scholarships for children). There were also issues of incursions near the Andaman Islands (that, together with the Nicobar Islands, forms a Union Territory of India), Adli added, stating that these can be addressed by promoting better bilateral relations between countries. Meanwhile, Vivienne cited Costa Rica's ban on trawling as a cautionary tale since there was no review of the value chain before that decision was taken. Noting that closing a large fishery providing income and livelihood opportunities without due diligence impacts economic conditions and quality of life of SSF communities, she said that women in fisheries were particularly hit hard by the ban.

For Munir, the effective resolution of transboundary issues required the active involvement of SSF actors—and strong collaborations with support organizations. Referencing similar disputes between India and Bangladesh, he said SSF organizations have been working to secure their release. Due to issues of transparency around such conflicts and the available redressal mechanisms, Munir suggested fisher organizations prioritise capacity-building and knowledge-pooling regarding the legal issues around transboundary disputes in order to better address them. Expanding on this comment, Rajdeep said countries are increasingly violating UNCLOS provisions regarding the handling of seized fishing vessels—noting that maritime border encroachments are being treated on par with civil violations with stiff penalties and confiscation of vessels and fish catch. While raising the stakes in this manner could be intended to act as a deterrent, Rajdeep suggested that these actions may be due to raised pressure from fish importing countries that threaten to stop imports without guarantees that the catch

was not sourced from illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This necessitates lobbying efforts targeting both importers and producers by SSF actors and support organizations, he said.

In his closing remarks, Vivek noted that what set the Palk Bay dispute apart from other transboundary conflicts is the “umbilical cord” aspect of the bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka. Neither side is willing to sacrifice a multi-dimensional relationship over an issue, which can otherwise be solved overnight with political will and stringent enforcement, he said, adding that the same logic of circumspection does not apply when dealing with incursions by Taiwanese or Thai fishing vessels, for example, into the Indian EEZ. The protracted period of deliberations and dialogues over the issue on the Indian government’s side has meant that the government will “have to bear responsibility and... absorb the shock” if justice is to be served for Sri Lankan fishing communities, Vivek said.

Maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka



Source: https://www.tamilnet.com/pic.html?path=/img/publish/2018/11/Current_zones.jpg&cwidth=600&height=687&caption=The%20current%20zones

Session V. Overview of civil society spaces in key international processes

Chairing the session, Margaret described it as a discussion into the international spaces including processes available to SSF actors and how to better navigate them in order to handle the issues affecting the sub-sector. “Where is our space to engage with the policymakers? As we learn about these experiences, we will explore how we can improve our engagement within those spaces,” she said.

A. FAO-COFI processes

The first set of inputs came from FAO representative Lena Westlund who explained how the FAO’s Governing Bodies—the Conference, Council, Council Committees, Technical Committees (such as the Committee on Fisheries, COFI), and Regional Conferences—carry out the organization’s vision and policies in an effective and transparent way. The FAO is guided and governed by its members. On COFI, Lena described its biennial sessions as a unique space for governments to discuss global fisheries issues—adding that fisheries organizations engage with the sub-committee on fish trade and the sub-committee on aquaculture.

Detailing COFI’s responsibilities, she noted that its terms of reference (ToR) include:

- 1) Reviewing FAO fisheries work programmes and their implementation, which also governs what the fisheries and aquaculture division do;
- 2) Conducting periodic general reviews of international fishery problems and examine possible solutions;
- 3) Reviewing specific matters relating to fisheries and to make recommendations as may be appropriate;
- 4) Considering the desirability of preparing and submitting to Member Nations an international convention under Article XIV of the Constitution; and
- 5) Reporting to the Council or tender advice to the Director-General.

Lena touched on COFI’s subsidiary bodies: the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, which advises COFI on technical and policy matters related to aquaculture; the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, which is a forum for consultations on technical and economic aspects of international trade in fish and fishery products including pertinent aspects of production and consumption; and the newly-formed Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management (that had its first meeting in January 2024), which provides essential technical and policy guidance on fisheries governance and management—with the aim of advancing the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The scope for international SSF organizations to engage with COFI spaces include:

1. Attending meetings as observers after demonstrating their relevance to SSF issues, sustainability, and community well-being;
2. Engaging with Member Nation delegations to discuss their views and concerns, and advocate for matters of mutual interest to be included in Members statements to COFI;
3. Engaging with Regional Civil Society Consultations by participating in or providing inputs into meetings of regional organizations and highlighting regional SSF priorities that can feed into regional strategies, and into COFI discussions;
4. Helping to track how the SSF Guidelines and COFI decisions are implemented at the national level using various monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) tools;

5. Collaborating with NGOs, academic institutions, national governments and international networks who also engage in COFI and that support SSF to help strengthen messages;
6. Advocating for the SSF Guidelines by preparing materials and providing interventions that emphasise their importance, such as “side events” at COFI and other spaces.
7. Reviving the SSF-GSF, a global partnership mechanism that has “not really been operationalised properly”, but has regained momentum following the SSF Summit 2024; and
8. Highlighting the SSF agenda in spaces related to food security, Lena noted that the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), for example, has an existing system for collaboration with civil society organizations: the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples’ Mechanism (CSIPM) for relations with the CFS.

On the topic of national implementation of the SSF Guidelines, Lena explained that the FAO is supporting the development of national plans of action (NPOAs-SSF) through consultative and participatory processes. These processes are usually led by national task groups helmed by the relevant ministry in cooperation with SSF actors and other stakeholders. The NPOA-SSF is a “context-specific and systematic approach”, which includes assessing SSF needs in a “holistic manner”. The FAO guidance (available at <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/npoa-ssf/about-npoa-ssf/en>) divides the process into three phases: (i) initiation (featuring sectoral and governance assessments and stakeholder mapping); (ii) consultations and drafting of the NPOA; and (iii) implementation of the NPOA-SSF, and monitoring and evaluation. Lena noted that although the SSF Guidelines are referred to now in a number of policies and initiatives at the regional and global levels, implementation has to be accelerated at the local level in accordance with context-specific priorities and circumstances requiring both top-down and bottom-up processes. Lena also referred to the ‘Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) study by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, providing information on the contributions of SSF to sustainable development. The IHH provides an approach



FAO representative Lena Westlund providing a briefing on COFI during a session overviewing the civil society spaces in key international processes

for compiling information on SSF that can be applied at the country level. The IHH work continues with partners, and guidance and materials are available on the FAO SSF Guidelines website. There is also the legal database, SSF-LEX, and guidance for reviewing policy and legal frameworks in the context of the SSF Guidelines. She also pointed out that there are courses on offer at the FAO's e-learning academy.

B. SSF Summit

Noting that participating at national, regional and global fisheries bodies and highlighting the platforms and spaces available to SSF was key to ensuring “our voices are heard”, Margaret reiterated the need for SSF organizations to engage with both their respective country's delegates to these processes and becoming involved as Observers. She then invited Velia to deliver a presentation on the SSF summit. Describing the SSF summit as a multi stakeholder platform that primarily serves the SSF communities and indigenous people—designed by them and for them—Velia said it was a unique space for collaboration and dialogue with other actors, both within the SSF sub-sector and in the wider NGO sphere. She highlighted the role played by the IPC's Working Group on Fisheries in conceptualising the biennial event (which the IPC jointly organized with the FAO and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Small-Scale Fisheries Resource and Collaboration Hub (SSF Hub), and SwedBio in 2022 and 2024) as a place of autonomy without “external interference or influence” for SSF to organize and “shift the conversation” ahead of COFI meetings. Since COFI is a “technical place, the SSF summit is intended to “share knowledge and coordinate efforts” while “addressing SSF-related governance mechanisms and issues and proposing solutions” in a “space of unity, increased visibility and solidarity”. She added that it also offers “avenues for meaningful collaboration and engagement with national governments, proliferation of new networks and alliances.”

The agenda of the SSF summit, the development of which is led by the IPC and formulated after a consultative process with SSF actors (including ICSF and CAOPA), have featured topics such as customary tenure rights, social development and the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. These were discussed at plenary sessions and smaller group discussions, where participants—from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America—were divided by region to share their experiences and perspectives. While noting that “dialogue helps overcome hurdles and points of conflict”, Velia acknowledged that the SSF summit had obstacles to “meaningful engagement and collaboration” such as “issues of power imbalances and representation, language and accessibility barriers and the co-option of SSF narratives.” Following Velia's presentation, Margaret invited Josana to offer her inputs drawn from SSF experiences in these spaces.

C. Reflections from SSF representatives (Josana Pinto da Costa, Brazil)

Noting that SSF have been attempting to navigate “very challenging spaces” that are supposed to be places for “preparation, dialogue and interaction for us to learn”, Josana stated that instead of “competing to air their views”, organizations at COFI and the SSF summit should “realise that this is a collective process” and “collaborate to have our voices heard”. She added that SSF needed to “participate more, not have partners speak for us in our names without consulting us”, contending that the “representation of youth” and the “visibility of women in fisheries” were other things missing from SSF spaces. Voices of the youth and women representatives from SSF communities needed to be amplified and empowered, said Josana, who also highlighted the issue of gaps in interpretation becoming an impediment to effective communication. This becomes especially important when discussing region-specific experiences regarding the fights for territorial and tenure rights, for fair access to markets and resources for production, for the recognition of traditional knowledge systems and culture, for instance, she added. Thanking the speakers for their inputs and for highlighting the challenges and opportunities in spaces for SSF actors, Margaret opened

the floor to discussion. The concerns aired by Josana were shared by other fishing community representatives such as Libia, who stated that she “didn’t feel the spaces at COFI and SSF Summit were for us as SSFs.” The overview on FAO and COFI spaces prompted a number of pertinent questions from the participants. While the majority of these queries were posed on the second day of the workshop, the responses came during the morning session on the following day due to the field visit to SSF communities in Negombo lagoon over the post-lunch period. Margaret then invited Vivienne and Ronald to deliver their presentation on the Convention on Biodiversity.

D. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Noting that the CBD utilises a human rights-based approach since “there can be no conservation without the people,” Vivienne highlighted three aspects of the CBD relevant to SSFs: (i) area-based conservation that recognises customary law and rights of SSF communities and indigenous peoples; (ii) the 30x30 commitment under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; and (iii) the role of women in SSF. Suggesting that the participants hear firsthand accounts about SSF communities’ role in protecting their traditional territories, she played a video of fishers from across Latin America who identified the initiatives adopted, and threats faced, by their communities. Meanwhile, Ronald described the CBD as a “technical process” with “high-level discussions and negotiated language”. As a framework convention, each country defines specific actions for CBD that leads to the formulation of a global-level biodiversity framework, which feeds into the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Although influential, the CBD has barriers to SSF participation—being a party-driven process, only some space is allocated for indigenous peoples and local communities, he added. To overcome this, support organizations like ICSF (which has Observer status) attempt to find an overlap by highlighting the case of indigenous fishers because SSF actors “lose by default” if they do not participate at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP).

E. Reflections from SSF representatives (Jesus Chaves Vidaurre, Costa Rica)

Picking up on this concern of exclusive spaces, Jesus said that all spaces for SSF needed to account for the difficult circumstances SSF fishermen are in. This includes providing economic assistance to representatives to attend such international events with confidence, knowing that the days taken off work does not mean their families are going hungry. He stated that fishermen also needed to be present at SSF workshops, summits and every platform open to them, but could not do so because of financial constraints and a lack of confidence-building measures at such events that prevents many fishers from raising their voices and speaking out to a global, influential audience. Noting that the vast majority of SSF live in poverty (and extreme poverty), he said that a lack of financial and organizational support results in these perspectives and experiences being ignored at high-profile events. Jesus likened this neglect to the apathy shown by governments who “give SSF some crumbs”, but do not protect their rights even as communities are displaced from their traditional territories in favour of agriculture and blue economy initiatives such as industrial aquaculture. Responding to this comment, Vivienne stated that the participants need to think “how a person who has not been privileged to study can understand these concepts and navigate this system”.

After Margaret opened the session for discussion and remarks, there were a number of pertinent responses and perspectives from the participants. Commenting on the “welcome” attention given to food sovereignty during the presentations—particularly since the concept does not appear in the SSF Guidelines, Svein also noted that it would be interesting to see whether the impacts of blue economy initiatives on the SSF sub-sector are highlighted at future FAO meetings and the next edition of the SSF Summit. He also referenced Ahilan’s inputs during the Palk Bay discussion to highlight the role scholars have in addressing SSF issues—remarking that the “SSF Guidelines are also talking

to academics”—and the value of research in these spaces, calling for more voices from academia to be integrated into the process during future editions of these events. Thanking the presenters for highlighting that COFI is a ‘technical’ space, ICSF member from India Sebastian Mathew cautioned that if inputs to COFI are filtered, “only those technical elements” will be addressed. He stated that the SSF Guidelines is not a technical instrument alone since it contains several human rights elements and expects interventions from civil society actors and SSF organizations to be centred around a human rights-based approach. This model can also lead to collaboration with other spaces, Sebastian added, highlighting the issue of decent work as one possible area where the International Labour Organization (ILO) could have a role. He also wondered whether the SSF summit could follow a “kind of triage” system in deciding what topics will be addressed and developed—in order to better link with COFI and other processes. On the formulation and implementation of NPOAs, Sebastian said that the Palk Bay transboundary dispute evinces how conflicts and concerns in SSF can be highly localised, necessitating response mechanisms to be developed at the local level.

Meanwhile, Francisco suggested that COFI ought to look into implementing a participatory approach for civil society actors similar to the CSPIM for CFS that could be more “fisheries sensitive”. As well, he noted that the CFS science-policy interface, ‘High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition’ (HLPE-FSN), is formulating an action plan to link food security and fisheries production. This would be an opportunity for the IPC to link the two spheres at the next SSF summit, in order to solicit inputs and perspectives from SSF communities and organizations that can be incorporated in the HLPE-FSN plan. Lauding the presenters for their insights on the various spaces for SSF, Margaret brought the day’s proceedings to a close. Following lunch, participants went on a field trip to three specially selected sites—as facilitated by NAFSO—in Negombo Lagoon. After the site visits to: a women’s group in Munnakkaraya village; the marginalised Sea Street SSF community; and various fisher groups in Negombo Lagoon and the fish market, participants recounted their experiences at the NAFSO office over tea and snacks in the evening.

The morning session on the final day of the workshop devoted time for presenters to respond to queries and critiques about available SSF spaces and avenues of engagement with high-level processes. Margaret reconvened the previous evening’s question and answer segment.

Responses to questions posed to Lena Westlund (Italy)

- In response to a question from Svein on whether there was a mechanism within FAO for Member States to report back what they are doing to implement the SSF Guidelines, Lena replied in the affirmative. “Before COFI each year, FAO sends out a questionnaire to all its members. This questionnaire includes questions on the SSF Guidelines, which also feeds into the reporting on the target SDG 14b.1 (on access rights for SSF).” While acknowledging that this is a self-reporting mechanism, Lena said it provides an overview of how countries perceive their implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The questionnaire results, aggregated at the regional level, are available among the documents provided for the COFI sessions and hence accessible on the FAO website. Citing this reporting system as a positive, Svein said that it reminded the bureaucracies in Member States about the necessity of implementing the SSF Guidelines. He wondered whether the FAO could analyse and disseminate that data at the SSF Summit so as to provide an overall picture of what actions are being taken at the State level.
- On the prospects of auditing FAO member countries, as was queried by a number of participants, Lena stated that FAO cannot evaluate the performance of its members unless they so request, hence the self-reporting mechanism.
- Noting that the SSF Summit was crucial from the perspective of the SSF Guidelines implementation, Sebastian wondered whether the FAO could provide backstopping to

non-technical elements through the Summit, which would help formulate interventions at other relevant forums and processes such as CBD, ILO or regional bodies like the African Union. Lena noted that the FAO can provide technical support. The FAO would like to see the entirety of the SSF Guidelines implemented. She said that “whatever request would come from civil society with regard to technical support from our side, we are very open, flexible and happy to support to the best of our ability.”

- In response to Sebastian’s follow-up query on whether the NPOAs could be scaled down and localised, Lena said it “could make sense” to develop and implement action plans at a “lower level”, particularly in large countries. Similar to how regional plans of action (RPOA) scale up efforts to cover several countries, there were “no issues” with scaling down and “planning for a smaller area”, she added, noting that governments and stakeholders might “want to think about how the plan is integrated into legal frameworks and how it gets the necessary political support”.
- Stating that Bread for the World remained sceptical about the need for the COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, Francisco questioned whether the new committee does not preclude the chance for SSF to have a “secure institutional space” in the future, thereby leading to further ‘invisibilisation’ of the sub-sector. To this, Lena responded that the sub-committee was “still evolving”. The agenda for its second meeting next year was still under discussion by the bureau of the sub-committee, she said, adding that “SSF are definitely in there” despite the focus on the fisheries management across the sector as a whole. One agenda item being developed refers to “social aspects of fisheries” and the “role of SSF in fisheries management, which would be a point where SSF could come in quite strongly”, Lena said.
- A question that piqued the curiosity of several participants was whether it was possible to take a closer look at the definition of SSF and move it beyond being limited to the dimensions of the craft, and not the “fisher’s way of life”. The lack of context- and site-specific definitions was “becoming problematic for SSF” and women in Thailand’s fisheries sector, said Ravadee, since fishing licenses and entry into the official database of registered fishers depends on the classification of the vessel used. To this, Lena replied there was “some work ongoing”. The IHH study used a matrix with many more characteristics than vessel length and capacity or engine size and power to define SSF and research is being conducted on the definitions used in different countries. This will “hopefully... lead to recommendations for SSF in a broader sense than just being based on metrics as is often the case now,” Lena said, noting that “it would be up to each country to agree to look at these recommendations”.

Criticisms and responses related to industrial aquaculture

During the Q&A session and the subsequent period for reflection, comments and discussion, several participants raised concerns over industrial aquaculture and Blue Economy initiatives undertaken by countries around the world. The remarks prompted responses from Lena and interventions by other participants.

- Likening the impact of industrial aquaculture on SSF in Thailand to the use of destructive fishing gear, Ravadee noted that there was a policy push to expand industrial fish farming across all provinces in the country. This would be “problematic” to SSF in terms of access to resources, lost income from depleting fish stocks, she added.
- The promotion of non-native species when implementing aquaculture on an industrial scale in Colombia was remarked upon by Lina Saavedra, who suggested that the FAO has to have site- and context-specific criteria when deciding whether to support industrial fish farming. Noting that governments in Latin America are “not aware of the SSF Guidelines or don’t care about implementing them”, she asked how the FAO could address this—and suggested that

supporting localised plans of action incorporating and strengthening the efforts of local SSF actors, CSOs and academics might be a good start.

- The impacts of industrial aquaculture as practiced in Indonesia—trawling for trash fish (fish with low market value) that goes to fishmeal factories, waste- and pollutant-related environmental degradation, upheavals in land usage patterns, fisheries production meant for export and not domestic consumption, among others—have led to adverse changes on the value chain in the fisheries sector, said Susan Herawati, noting the emphasis on profit has been accompanied by a lack of concern towards the human rights of fishers, and particularly women in fisheries.
- The negative effects of industrial aquaculture on the economy and culture of SSF communities must be highlighted as should its impact on native species, said Libia, adding that the FAO must be in “solidarity with fishers” on this matter. Adding to this comment, Gavino said industrial aquaculture is not “an answer to food insecurity” since “not even one per cent” of farmed fish production stays in the communities they are sourced from. Nor is it a viable alternative livelihood for the majority of SSF due to the expenses involved, Gavino added.
- Stating that aquaculture encompasses a whole range of activities, Vivek said the focus of discourse on the “very ugly parts” of industrial fish farming alone had lent negative, even “pejorative”, connotations to aquaculture. This ultimately hurts the SSF actors and organizations, who tend to “generalise” and do not differentiate between particular forms of aquaculture—which elicits negative responses from academics, scientists and administrators, he added. A position paper to highlight which practices and types of aquacultures are to be countered is required, he said. Remarking on the need for this differentiation, Vivienne stated that aquaculture is not synonymous with “mass produced industrial fish farming” since there are “lots of examples of local and traditional” fish farming systems, which have had positive outcomes for the communities that practice them. She urged the FAO to conduct an appraisal of the fish farming sub-sector in order to add nuance to this narrative.

Noting that the FAO’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) works on “all aspects” of the sectors, Lena reiterated that the FAO work programme is determined by its member countries. Therefore, the NFI will work on aquaculture if members are interested in it, but the FAO “promotes responsible aquaculture” that “should not... harm other sectors”, she said. While acknowledging that the application of aquaculture practices and policies varies between countries, Lena added that these initiatives “should not be in competition with small-scale fisheries. She invited participants to share specific concerns, which will be conveyed to the NFI division.

Meanwhile, Marta Cavalle remarked that industrial aquaculture was simply one of a cohort of problems affecting the SSF sub-sector, with the emphasis on “energy sovereignty” emerging as a major threat to SSF communities in Europe. The impacts to livelihoods and the ecosystem from energy sector plans to tap into offshore wind, for instance, still need to be understood, she said, adding that the blue economy narrative about under-utilised aspects of the ocean needs to be counterbalanced. Such initiatives are going to bring “prosperity to a few, not the many, and certainly not for the SSF”, Marta said, contending that fisher communities will be in a competition for space against the energy industry despite official assurances about cohabitation. Commenting on the need to balance economic interest and sustainable practices in the fisheries sector, Roberto Ballon said “inclusive economic enterprise” combined with “environment-friendly aquaculture models” across the value chain, including post-harvest and cold storage facilities would ensure the viability of the SSF sub-sector. The challenges faced by SSF communities, the marine ecosystem and biodiversity and the fisheries sector necessitates increased collaborations and a recognition of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems, he added. There needs to be a ‘whole-of-sector’ approach, bringing in all possible stakeholders to address their concerns, Roberto said.

Wrapping up the discussion, Velia said such conversations would be crucial to shape narratives and discourse in the lead-up to the SSF Summit next year, which will be further proposed as inputs into the agenda at COFI. During COFI 36, there was an “incredible push through” on aquaculture and blue transformation, she said, calling on participants to use the SSF Summit space to strategise and build a counter narrative that will provide the basis for raising the need, at COFI, to review FAO programmes and priority areas in the fisheries sector. This will provide a clearer picture of the state of implementation of the SSF Guidelines and progress on R/NPOA development, noted Velia, adding that she would convey the viewpoints of workshop participants to the IPC. Re-emphasising the importance of promoting the “prepared and informed voices” of fishers’ representatives at the SSF Summit, Vivienne said these perspectives from communities on the front-lines of impacts from climate change and blue economy initiatives will be key to shaping the narrative and strengthening the global SSF movement and organizations.

Session VI. Ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward

Thanking Margaret for helming the session over two days, Ronald highlighted the collective ideas board once more as a tool to focus efforts and come up with concrete steps to “maximise the potential of SSF spaces”. He then introduced Henrique Kefalas as the chair of the next session, which involved inputs from selected speakers on the various aspects of the SSF landscape that they deemed necessary to highlight—ideas and proposals for organization and collaboration among them, with the remaining participants engaging in discussion afterwards. Introducing the presenters, Henrique noted that one of the session’s objectives was to “figure out how to deal with all the issues that were pointed out over the course of the workshop and how we can advance and strengthen our spaces.”

(i) Inputs from Mitchell Lay (Antigua and Barbuda)

Focusing on the structures and organizations that support small-scale fishers, Mitchell reasoned that this was an important topic to cover since SSF communities are facing “challenges in terms of our capacity to update our abilities and operate efficiently in the governance mix.” In particular, he said SSF were “impacted severely by the other actors that have the ability, resources and influence to sway decisions that affect the fisheries sector.” To counter this, SSF have to look at the whole idea of participation in different terms—and build a narrative that promotes the relevance and contributions of the sub-sector. Noting that capacity-building meant to engender participation could come from many areas, Mitchell suggested adopting a multi-pronged approach to develop:

1. The capacity of SSF organizations across regions since most are “very weak and need significant support just to be credible” in order to benefit their constituents. This requires organizational support: that could involve addressing something as foundational as having a “physical office space and administrative staff”, which goes a long way towards capacity-building efforts. In addition to this technical ability, there needs to be “good operational standards, record-keeping, financial management,” among other things;
2. The capacity of individual fishers for “responsible stewardship” since in the SSF sub-sector, “all of us have to manage our own businesses in addition to managing our organizations.” Building individual and organizational capacity would address a broad suite of issues;
3. Financial capacity and economic support to ensure the meaningful participation of fishers. This includes “not just building the capacity to participate, but supporting the arrangements to go to the spaces we need to be in as well as supporting livelihoods while we are there”;
4. Advocacy and communications capacity, since it is critical to have tailored communications strategies and products, particularly in the context of presenting narratives that promote SSF in a positive light and raise the profile and relevance of SSF efforts. “The general public needs to be made aware of the importance of SSF to wider society” and this will have “very significant knock-on effects”;
5. Capacity for collaboration, with the focus being to assist fishers to effectively cooperate, and not simply interact, with other actors and similar models. This also includes creating or supporting the operations of platforms at the national and regional levels that foster inter-sectoral participation and collaboration on specific synergistic areas; and
6. Research since much more needs to be highlighted about fisheries and oceans beyond “repeating conservation agendas”. Instead, there needs to be more in-depth study of subjects that mean a lot not just to SSF, but the general public—for instance, food and nutritional health benefits of fish-based diets and their effect as “powerhouse foods” to address heart conditions, diabetes, malnutrition and obesity issues. “All these need to be better highlighted,” he noted.

(ii) Inputs from Margaret Nakato (Uganda)

Addressing the challenges facing the SSF sub-sector needs a multi-faceted approach combining collective action and collaboration (on various issues, including the roles of women in fisheries), lobbying and advocacy, and strengthening SSF organizations to be resilient and adaptable, Margaret said. In this regard, community engagement is crucial so to bring together disparate perspectives within the community and build a grassroots momentum to demand rights and access from governance structures. To this end:

- She suggested augmenting SSF lobbying and policy influencing capacity through regional advocacy networks. This would involve creating or strengthening the regional alliances of SSF organizations to engage policymakers at national and regional levels. Another avenue would be through community-led policy dialogues to facilitate direct engagement between fishers and policymakers to ensure SSF voices shape policies on tenure rights, access to resources, and environmental protection. As well, she recommended the adoption of legal support and rights-based approaches, which would involve the provision of training on SSF rights under national and international frameworks (for instance, the SSF Guidelines).
- Collective action and collaboration is needed: Margaret recommended the facilitation of dialogues on fisheries conflict while engaging with regional fisheries organizations, fisheries and resources research bodies, SSF organizations and food producers' forums. She highlighted the collaboration between KWDT and FIAN Uganda to illustrate this point of working with different actors to “have our voices elevated and heard”. Similarly, she suggested engaging with issues of women's leadership and gender equality in fisheries in partnership with women's advocacy platforms to establish a strong women-led coalition within SSF networks to amplify gender-responsive policies. As well, she called for the integration of policies on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention into SSF governance frameworks and workplace safety initiatives.



Participants presenting suggestions during a workshop session on ideas for collective action and collaboration

- Arguing that SSFs can be an engine for wealth creation, Margaret proposed the creation of SSF enterprise hubs that establish collective fish processing, storage, and marketing hubs to reduce post-harvest losses and improve profits. At the same time, ensuring direct market access and fair trade will create alternative market pathways that bypass exploitative middlemen, ensuring fair prices for SSF products. In addition, undertaking initiatives to secure women's access to financial and other resources in order to push for recognition of women's role in fisheries and ensure access to landing sites, markets, and financial resources is key to equitable wealth. As well, she suggested building capacity to invest in technology for market linkages—calling for the development of digital platforms connecting SSF producers to buyers, sharing price trends, and facilitating online trade.
- Finally, she called for SSF organizations and cooperatives to be strengthened through engagement in international and regional decision-making spaces; organizational development and encouraging the involvement of youth in SSF by developing mentorship and vocational training programmes to encourage young people to engage in SSF.

(iii) Inputs from Libia Liñan (Colombia)

While collective action is important, the SSF community is not at a point where it can speak for its constituents with a “collective, unified voice”, Libia said. In Colombia, and the wider Latin American region as a whole, decision-makers are enacting plans without accounting for the needs of local, regional and national communities. Although SSF communities must plan actions that address these needs, such efforts have to be buttressed by partnerships with allies in academia and elsewhere that respect the traditional knowledge and practices followed by small-scale fisherfolk. Noting that “fishers speak from the heart even if they sometimes can't speak or present well,” Libia said SSFs need to shore up—and showcase—its resilience, particularly in the face of adversities like climate change. In order to do so, it is important to highlight that:

- SSF are important actors in the local economy, but do not have access to the resources that will help strengthen the sub-sector and its leadership structures at the local and national level in order for fisher communities to gain resiliency and continue to work sustainably. “We are defending both food sovereignty and traditional knowledge that have endured despite the most adverse moments,” she said.
- Women in fisheries sector are raising the profile of the historical culture of the SSF in terms of food security, and caring for the ecosystems of traditional territories and areas. While women have a voice in the decision-making scenes where they can plan and propose, a lot of these efforts are not taken into account.

(iv) Inputs from Laed Mengsai (Thailand)

Since SSF has become a political issue in Thailand and other places, the “fight to advocate to politicians what is to be policy and what should be law is important and necessary even though it requires a lot of time and effort”, said Laed, adding that SSF communities need more opportunities both to “engage in decision-making” and to “share and voice our concerns” through meaningful participation at international platforms like this workshop. As well, support needs to be in the form of capacity-building, advocacy and knowledge sharing efforts since there are threats from blue economy and economic development-related initiatives that need to be identified and countered, he said. “The governments, local authorities and individual officers as well as wider public needs to understand how we are important to economy, the society and the sustainable development of the country,” he added. Despite this, “outside actors” are intervening to threaten the SSF in support of initiatives such as blue economy – framing the problem as one of lack of recognition, respect and visibility for SSF communities. This is particularly important since:

- “When we talk about fishery management, our talk is in general terms. We have to include SSF in policy discussions at the micro and macro levels. Recognition is a very important issue for our visibility, participation and human rights. Right now, meaningful participation is very important at all levels, particularly in policy direction. We need the opportunity to directly participate in the processes and spaces that affect us.”

One way to make the SSF sub-sector visible is by urgently implementing the SSF Guidelines. This will inform the general public that it is an issue of our livelihoods, Laed said, adding that the lack of visibility and recognition is why “our traditional methods and way of living are not formally accepted in the government system. That is why we are not getting the proper support from government and the legal system.” For instance, when a disaster happens, SSF concerns are not taken into consideration during the decision-making process and fishing communities never get compensation since the sub-sector is not a development priority for the government. Thanking the presenters for their perspectives, Henrique solicited reflections from the gathering.

Need for communications output to shape narratives

Responding to the calls for tailored communications strategies and products, Joelle Philippe, Communications Officer at Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), Belgium, suggested that establishing working relationships with trusted journalists is critical to any civil society groups. For SSF support organizations, it is important to invest in personnel that are sensitized to the needs of media, particularly when it comes to providing quality and timely information and sourcing documentation and creating records of the work being done. This also provides more transparency to the work, which can help when approaching donors and raising funds, she said. Communications output should also match the agenda of the organization and cut through the noise on social media to get the message across, Joelle added, noting that this will also buttress advocacy efforts. As well, it is important to highlight “powerful human-interest stories” from the SSF sub-sector to connect with actionable points since these leave a deeper emotional impact, she said, while noting that this is particularly difficult for support organizations that are geared towards “technical” outputs. In terms of communications, films are also a powerful medium to convey SSF messages and stories to the general public, Marta said, adding that showcasing such concrete outputs at platforms such as the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) lends credibility to, and bolsters, the advocacy and fundraising activities of organizations—in addition to increasing the potential for collaborations.

Echoing the points about shaping narratives, Sisir Kanta Pradhan from Padraka Foundation, India, said there was a need to bring SSF discourse into deliberative spaces with “overpowering” narratives such as the climate change sphere without being drowned out, which will also create more opportunities for working with academia, community and media organizations and policy actors. This level of collaboration will lead to stronger and more vibrant spaces for SSF voices, he added, noting that the SSF summit is one such platform. As well, community-level actions and existing fisheries instruments such as co-management plans need to be shored up through to realise their potential benefits and opportunities. The need to raise the profile of fishers’ voices through various media platforms was seconded by Roberto, who said information sharing and communications capacity must be built into SSF organizations. Using the example of the entry of large commercial fishing vessels into the municipal waters reserved for the SSF in the Philippines, he said such encroachments were only possible because SSF concerns were not receiving attention from the public or the national government. To counter this, Roberto said call to action statements from international forums would add visibility to such issues and pressure governance structures to address them.

Meanwhile, Lucyphine highlighted the ‘invisibilisation’ of SSF stories, particularly related to issues of safety such as the drowning deaths of fishers, which is rarely reported in the media. To shine the spotlight on such concerns, which is ignored by national fisheries policies in Tanzania and

elsewhere, SSF organizations have to network beyond the fisheries sector and approach human rights organizations, artists and journalists to communicate the message to a wider audience, she added. Following this multi-stakeholder approach led to the WHO now recognising drowning deaths as a major issue and taking the matter up with the Tanzanian government, Lucyphine said. Remarking on the importance of highlighting the vulnerability of fishers on the water, Gavino said that no one investigates when an industrial vessel or narco-trafficking speedboat collides with a fisher's craft, leading to loss of lives. But there is no follow-up coverage or closure for the families, he added, noting that the fisher's death is reported in brief and the matter is closed.

Reflections on collaboration and representation

The concept of collective action does not appear in the SSF Guidelines, but they do address the topic of participation, but it is important to differentiate between the various types of actors in the SSF realm when talking of potential avenues for collaboration, Svein said. Revisiting his football metaphor, he distinguished between support organizations like ICSF, which “are good at playing defense” in arguing for fishers' rights, fighting for new legislation and inserting themselves into the policy process, and the community-building organizations such as cooperatives, which are established to create a more effective value chain. Noting that this latter group of actors has not received much attention at the workshop, Svein said it is important to do so since the SSF Guidelines talk about cooperatives and co-management and argued that support organizations should take the initiative to promote capacity-building in community-level organizations to create deeper linkages.

At platforms where the topic of fisheries governance come under discussion, support organizations like ICSF should facilitate the participation of fishers' representatives to put across challenges facing the SSF sub-sector, said Mike Abaka-Edu, representing the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC). Forums like the workshop should hear firsthand from members of coastal communities on the front-lines against threats from climate change and blue economy, he said. This sentiment was reemphasised by Jesus Vidaurre, who said SSF communities attempt to look for partners and self-mobilise funds in order to attend international events, but the prohibitive cost means their representatives cannot be present everywhere they need to be. While noting how SSF cannot “leave such spaces to be occupied by others”, he added that gaining visibility becomes “useless” without following-through on adequate preparation and bringing concrete proposals to such discussions. This necessitates research, and since governments are mostly unwilling to study SSF concerns—there must be collaboration with academics, Jesus said. As an example, he referenced a recent preparatory workshop in Costa Rica that featured researchers from domestic universities and the University of Nice, France, the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) as well as officials from the environment and fisheries ministries and member of fisheries regulatory authorities. Noting that the workshop discussed the various needs and concerns of the SSF sector, he added that it helped prepare a document for presentation at the UNOC in Nice in June 2025.

However, Josana da Costa sounded a note of caution about being open to collaboration since such connections need to be built on trust—which cannot exist without “prior training, planning and capacity-building processes”. She also called for collective action strategies that encourage the participation of fishers' representatives, drawn from women and the youth in these communities, in order to “renew” SSF spaces while ensuring “continuity” for the future. Therefore, Josana said, the agenda at these spaces should address the concerns of this next generation of leaders: how they feel about the prospects for the fisheries sector and how they relate to SSF discourse in their territories. Closing the session, Henrique invited the participants to continue their discussions over a short break for tea and coffee.

Session VII: Group discussion on ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward

Following the break, Ronald introduced Marta as the chair of the next session, which featured group discussions related to collective action and collaboration. Describing the group discussions as a useful way to tie into the reflections from the previous session, Marta urged the gathering to concretise and brainstorm potential avenues for collective action and collaboration in SSF spaces. She identified the two guiding questions to steer the discussion: (i) how can we work together for more meaningful outcomes at the international level? and (ii) how can we collaborate to better support national, regional and global SSF networks? The participants were divided into four groups, each with a facilitator for the discussion and rapporteur to assist in note-taking. Following the lunch break, the groups each sent a representative to provide feedback on their respective discussions. This post-lunch session was chaired by Olencio Simoes, who began with encouraging presenters to adopt a “bottom-to-top” approach in order to connect better with the issues under discussion.

Inputs from Group 1: represented by Muhammed Mujibul Haque Munir

Noting that this group centred their discussions based on issues that were common to SSF communities in several countries, cutting across regions, Munir reasoned that this approach was more helpful when formulating positive outcomes at the international level. Rather than attempt to tackle “every issue, everywhere”, he said that SSF actors have to have “clarity on which agenda works in what space”. To this end, “strong collaboration among the key stakeholders” and engaging local governments is fundamental, which necessitates a mapping exercise that provides information on key spaces and processes to interact with, and potential support actors and knowledgeable partners to collaborate with, for advocacy at the international level. The effort has to be democratic and inclusive, in terms of representatives—meaning that there needs to be enhancement of the capacity of local and regional organizations. Using this approach, the group identified a gap in the Asia region, noting a dearth of regional SSF bodies (besides the IPC’s Regional Advisory Group (RAG) for Asia-Pacific) and suggested



Group discussion on ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward - Group 1

priority agendas for political advocacy at the international level—this creates a state of cooperation among organizational actors, Henrique said. It is envisaged that this partnership will strengthen existing relationships and structures, Margaret added, stating that the intent was not to “create tensions and diversions, but use the existing spaces to bring in other actors, indigenous peoples to ensure the empowerment of communities at the grassroots level”. “This is where everything has to happen, in the community,” she added, noting that, in this bottom-up approach, the IPC and ICSF have the “collaborative role of offering technical expertise, knowledge about the SSF Guidelines, conduction action-oriented research, and facilitating resource mobilisation”. This will ultimately “enhance cooperation with FAO and other international institutions”, Margaret said.

The group also provided ideas regarding ICSF’s role in supporting regional-level organizations, while highlighting the region-specific contexts of the work:

(i) Asia

- Social trust existed, but it is no longer present. However, in the context of SSF, this trust is still present, especially due to the shared use of marine space. What are the local, regional, and international collective actions? How can we look at different contexts to understand the mechanisms of collective actions?
- Strengthening the capacities of SSF organizations—from the grassroots level. This would include: defending SSF rights, ensuring that actors in the sub-sector know and take ownership of their rights; developing organizational and collaboration capacities; improving post-harvest processes through exchanges and experience-sharing, ultimately increasing income; and strengthening partnerships with journalists, including at the regional level.
- Recognising that each country has its own organizations, while building capacities to understand what is happening at the global level. At the same time, understand what is happening with SSF organizations in a broader context. For instance, in Thailand, fisheries law does not recognise the importance of SSF, and they expect ICSF to help by taking a position on this issue.
- ICSF does not need to do too much; since many organizations are already working directly in the sub-sector. What can be done is to contribute to efforts that are already underway. There is uncertainty about the role of ICSF at the national level. National-level organizations need to be strengthened so they can operate at regional and international levels.

(ii) Africa

- The cooperation between ICSF and other actors should not replace existing collaborative actions in the territories. It is necessary to integrate and strengthen what is already present and in progress. Suggestions were made for integration between different levels and types of organizations (ICSF, IPC, regional academics, as well as inter-regional dialogues), emphasising the need to clarify the roles and actions of each actor.
- Identify who is part of the movement, and what their priorities are? Based on the information from this mapping exercise, ICSF can present platforms that integrate common agendas and provide opportunities for exchanges and articulations.

(iii) Latin America and the Caribbean

- Highlighting successful cases that demonstrate how the SSF Guidelines are “not an unattainable utopia”, but rather something necessary and tangible, is a critical step. As is turning integration events into opportunities for local income generation.

(iv) Europe

- ICSF’s role is as a support organization rather than a representative body. There has to be a shared focus on people and communities, meaning a human rights-based approach.

- In Europe, fisheries are seen as an economic sector, a place to invest. The SSF Guidelines are not considered relevant because SSF is entirely marginalised in the region. However, fishers in the Western world need the SSF Guidelines just as much as the Global South. It is essential to recognise that while SSF is growing in the Global South, it is declining in the Global North—it is an activity that is disappearing in the region. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen ICSF's presence in Europe. Overall, there needs to be more solidarity with SSF communities in the Global North.

Inputs from Group 3: represented by Joelle Philippe

The importance of “getting out of the fisheries bubble” and looking to other important processes such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) was discussed as potential pathways to positive outcomes for SSF networks, Joelle said. However, while there needed to be a division of efforts and objectives among SSF support organizations to deal with the unique challenges of working in these disparate spaces, the group noted, the aim should be common to all: to get the best possible outcome for SSF communities at each process. Although the SSF Guidelines provides a framework and mandate for action, the discussion also looked at the need to accommodate “nuances and differences of opinions” between SSF organizations. To ensure that there remains common ground, the group mooted the idea of a neutral facilitator to smooth over any differences and disputes that emerge. The question of preparedness—of understanding the processes and issues at stake at different forums and SSF spaces—was also examined by the group, which highlighted the value of SSF organizations supporting both each other and fisher representatives to navigate these events. This is particularly important since there is a competition for visibility and co-opting of SSF perspectives and concerns at these spaces, Joelle said. The use of visual communications tools to aid in better understanding the processes is linked to ensuring informed representation and meaningful participation, she added. Another point of discussion was collaborating with academics and research that takes into account the traditional expertise, perspectives, informed consent and needs of SSF communities, which also ties into avenues for fishers to access information.



Group discussion on ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward - Group 3

Inputs from Group 4: represented by Gustavo Silveira and Velia Lucidi

The need to have a single unified voice is central to achieving meaningful outcomes for SSF, Gustavo (ICSF Member from Brazil) said, noting that access to different kinds of information (which is good in itself) posed the risk of fragmented representation. To overcome this issue, the group recognised the need to improve lines of communication at all levels, taking particular care to ensuring regular and transparent two-way communication channels between the local and international levels. One suggested way to do this was through newsletters and community networks so that the information discussed at international events trickles down to fishing communities, and vice versa. This also ensures the preparedness of SSF representatives at these spaces and processes, which “benefits the continuity and sequence of discussions” and moves the needle forward. The group also discussed the need to map the various actors and support organizations in the SSF landscape to avoid redundancy in advocacy and research efforts, while protecting fishers’ spaces and voices from appropriation. Another way to ensure continuity is by including representatives of the youth in these discussion spaces, Gustavo said.

While speaking as one, it is important to respect and value the diversity of perspectives across the SSF sub-sector, he added, noting that this involves initiating dialogues and promoting ongoing collaboration and communication efforts among SSF actors, including support organizations. This will ensure a “level playing field” where representatives can “articulate themselves” without competing for spaces, resources and visibility, which “undermines the SSF movement”. Meanwhile, Velia added that there was a need for regional platforms to form the “middle ground” to link the national and global levels. She noted that the IPC Working Group on Fisheries has helped form three regional processes in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia that has brought various SSF organizations together to work towards the implementation of the SSF Guidelines under the SSF-GSF. “Being involved in these processes helps organizations to engage at a global level and provides coordination through regional secretariats,” Velia said, adding that the secretariats follow the structure of the CSIPM regional sub-divisions and have “one or two regional meetings” every year. Thanking the presenters for their inputs, Olencio closed the session.



Group discussion on ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward - Group 4

Session VIII: Discussion on workshop follow-up work

Facilitated by Elyse and Ronald, the participants collectively developed a group calendar and timeline of efforts needed to build on the momentum from the Workshop. The calendar pinpointed common priority activities and events and spaces to collaborate in, while a Workshop Committee was formed to decide follow-up activities. The committee members are Henrique Kefalas (ICSF, Brazil), Susan Herawati (KIARA, Indonesia), Muhammed Munir (RDRS, Bangladesh), Azrilnizam Omar (JARING, Malaysia), Margaret Nakato (KWDT, Uganda), Lucyphine Kilanga (EMEDO, Tanzania), Olencio Simoes (NFE, India), Aarthi Sridhar (Dakshin Foundation, India), Ana Paula Rainho (ICSF, Brazil), Marta Cavalle (LIFE, Spain) and Joelle Philippe (CFFA, Belgium).

Introducing the session, Ronald suggested that the participants “not try to reinvent the wheel”, but instead work as a team to “coordinate their action and efforts through cohesive and continuous engagement”. The idea was to not duplicate each other’s efforts, while maximising resources to work towards common objectives, “passing the ball between ourselves to the ones closest to the goal”, he said, borrowing Svein’s football metaphor. Ronald expressed hope that the session would address the calls for concrete plans of action—set along a clear timeline mapping the activities of individual SSF actors and organizations alongside major processes and spaces such as the SSF summit in 2026—heard throughout the workshop. This would also provide ICSF and other support organizations with suggestions on the scope and scale of support needed by SSF actors across regions and “see where we fit in”, Ronald said, clarifying that ICSF could not commit to any recommended action right away.

The participants gathered at the ideas board and provided inputs on the charts provided.:

- **Ways to strengthen SSF (for SSF actors and organizations)**
- ➔ There needs to be increased focus on the practical components of participation, including networking, capacity-building and resources for staffing and support infrastructure for organizations (funds, office spaces and technical support) and individuals (leadership).
- ➔ Promote inclusive spaces and platforms that allow fishers to make their voices heard, rather than having them interpreted—which exacerbates the issue of appropriation. Turn spaces for interaction and coordination into opportunities for fishers to feel included, which encourages meaningful participation.
- ➔ There needs to be more data and research on SSF, particularly on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Create a centralised online platform for storing and sharing information. Available statistics need to be shared in a timely and transparent manner. Research also needs to be conducted on SSF-related subjects that can be tailored into outputs of importance and interest to the general public, such as fish-based diets and public health.
- ➔ Establish a community-led conflict resolution mechanism, including local leaders and stakeholders that sets and enforces explicit rules, such as clear boundaries for resource use, to avoid conflicts between different user groups. Related to this, there needs to be a proper resource management framework: community-led co-management systems, for example.
- ➔ Provide financial support to SSF and ensure that these resources reach the intended recipients, in order to be present at all the spaces fishers need to be represented.
- ➔ Build trust to enable collective action through prior interaction and preparation processes (developing collective strategies and creating opportunities to work together at SSF spaces and international events) and networking efforts: such as joint fundraising initiatives to support shared priorities and common interests.

- Set up a clear definition of collaboration and examine its practical aspects—particularly those that apply to both cases when the interests of the potential partners align and when they do not.
- Cast a wider net for potential partners, looking at academic researchers, journalists, artists, human rights activists, and filmmakers, for example, and foster enduring collaboration links between support organizations. At the same time, build linkages with, and between, regional fisheries organizations, SSF organizations, national-level fisheries research and food producer organizations, etc.
- Promote women's leadership and gender equality in fisheries through women's advocacy platforms and addressing gender-based violence; highlight women's roles along the fisheries value chain to prevent their invisibilisation and marginalisation.
- Collaborate on, and support, initiatives aimed at wealth generation and strengthening SSF organizations by increasing engagement in international and regional decision-making spaces; organizational development and youth involvement in SSF and mentorship.
- Invest in communication and advocacy efforts to “let SSF be heard and be known” and highlight the sub-sector's importance and relevance, share outcomes of important processes and meetings, strengthen lobbying and policy influence efforts through regional advocacy networks, community-led policy dialogues and legal support and human rights-based approaches.
- **The SSF Guidelines implementation process**
- Encouraging governments to prioritise the SSF sub-sector by integrating its the SSF Guidelines principles and provisions into fisheries policy. As well, fewer ‘silo-ed’ government departments will reduce the risk of redundancy and bureaucratic hurdles.
- Engage with new threats and concerns that have emerged in the decade since the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines, including blue economy initiatives.
- Make the SSF Guidelines more accessible and available for both fishers and the public, bridging the producer-consumer divide.
- Look to other mechanisms to supplement the implementation process, such as the General Fisheries Commission Mediterranean (GFCM) Regional Plan of Action for the Mediterranean.
- FAO should continue to explore different ways to implement the SSF Guidelines, while engaging with governments at formal processes. There are local communities that are implementing the SSF Guidelines and should be strengthened. As well, there are academics helping with the implementation that should be supported.
- Need for regional SSF networks (especially in Asia) such as the IPC Regional Advisory Groups: to advocate for the SSF Guidelines implementation and demonstrate that implementation is possible and tangible by highlighting success stories in the region.
- Mapping of SSF organizations and support organizations to identify influential actors and potential allies in order to more efficiently divide efforts and cover more ground—avoiding redundancy and duplication of work as well.
- Connecting women and youth with advocacy processes to instill leadership experience and build capacity for future SSF leaders to engage in SSF spaces, ensuring continuity and credibility
- **Threats to SSF**
- Industrial aquaculture and blue economy

- ♦ Governments and intergovernmental organizations are providing more support and resources to industrial aquaculture than SSF.
 - ♦ Industrial aquaculture flooding the market with fish products and competing with SSFs; and consuming resources and contaminating fishing areas used by SSF.
 - ♦ Expansion of energy sector into fishing areas, growth of initiatives like tourism, offshore energy and coastal development displacing SSF from fishing areas.
 - ♦ There is a need to understand and balance local food security and impact of industrial aquaculture on local environments and ecosystems with global food security and global demand for increased production from aquaculture.
 - ♦ Promote only traditional aquaculture methods that are proven to be sustainable, clearly differentiating between this and industrial aquaculture through key messaging.
 - ♦ Academia and support organization should collectively respond to such threats through the implementation of participatory research and creating research outputs that can be fed into advocacy and lobbying efforts.
- Climate change/emergency
- ♦ Provide more support to building capacity of SSF organizations in order to participate in national policy processes.
 - ♦ More research on sustainable activities done by SSF communities—in order to prevent the institutionalisation of ‘unsustainable interventions’ from above.
 - ♦ Generate more attention to adverse climate change impacts (sea level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into aquifers, etc.) and highlight its impacts on SSF and communities (loss of fish landing sites and difficulty in accessing fish stocks, shortage of potable water, among others) to trigger policy response.
 - For instance, there is a trend of fish stocks moving to cooler areas (either going deeper or polewards) due to low oxygen in warmer waters. This phenomenon should be taken into consideration by RFMOs when allocating catch quotas for countries. Fishers have restricted access to fish stocks due to this movement away from their traditional fishing grounds. Catch quotas are determined by RFMOs based on historical trend in fish catches. Evidence suggests that declining trends in fish production are not solely due to over capacity in fishing, but also due to poor access to fish stocks due to movement of fish to oxygen rich area.

➤ **SSF movement Shared Calendar and timeline**

The workshop participants mapped a path of action between 2025 and 2028 that ranged from general reminders about SSF-relevant days of remembrance, including March 1 (World Seagrass Day), March 8 (International Women’s Day, June 8 (World Ocean Day), June 29 (International Fisherfolk Day), November 21 (World Fisheries Day), among others, to identifying specific sites for potential collaboration such as the UN Ocean Conference (June 2025) and the upcoming third session of the SSF summit in 2026. Responses from participants were generally categorised to fit three purposes: (i) to identify/signify willingness to collaborate; (ii) to provide information; (iii) to provide/look for support. The inputs varied in scale, from high-profile processes like COFI to local fund-raising efforts, highlighting the full spectrum of activities engaged in by SSF organizations. The responses from fishers’ representatives sought to raise visibility and support for their efforts to address the challenges and threats faced by their respective communities.

The timeline of suggested activities and relevant sites for action follows:

→ **2025**

- ♦ Consultations between SSF support organizations to begin as soon as possible to enhance coordination and share information and responsibilities.
- ♦ SSF communities in the Latin America and Caribbean region are looking to collaborate with academic researchers to formulate local plans of action in their territories.
- ♦ Conduct informal input sessions on key ideas of concern to SSF communities: particularly related to climate change impacts, biodiversity and aquaculture/Blue Economy.
- ♦ Collate and share fisheries-related statistics and outputs from various forums and conferences relevant to SSF communities and actors in the SSF space; work towards creating a centralized database to store this information on an ongoing basis.
- ♦ Engage with the WTO Secretariat on the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies on the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism, which addresses issues of environmental and economic sustainability and requires 111 instruments of acceptance to enter into force.
- ♦ Issue SSF call to action, present research papers and conduct side-events at the third edition of the UNOC in Nice, France.
- ♦ Issue a statement of support for SSF in the Philippines, who are under threat by commercial vessels expanding their operations into municipal fishing waters reserved for municipal fishers.
- ♦ In March 2025, gather in Bangkok to reflect on the tenth anniversary of the SSF Guidelines at a regional workshop co-organized by the FAO and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC).
- ♦ Stakeholders' Conference on Uganda's National Plan of Action for Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) (March 2025) to raise awareness about Uganda's NPOA-SSF and its priority areas for engagement and support; engage in dialogue with relevant stakeholders towards implementation of the NPOA-SSF; strengthen political will and commitment to implement the NPOA-SSF.
- ♦ The 2nd General Assembly of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFishNET) in Senegal in March 2025: priority on empowering women in the African fisheries and aquaculture sector.
- ♦ The 3rd Global Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sri Lanka in September 2025: Organize national level meetings to strategize, strengthen and build capacity of organization leaders, including women and youth.
- ♦ Set up regular informal zoom meetings for all SSF actors to share knowledge and updates.
- ♦ In September 2025, mark the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), which resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, that addresses the role of women in the economy and sustainable resource management.
- ♦ The 9th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF9) will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from October 1-3, 2025. The conference theme is 'Transforming Aquaculture & Fisheries for gender justice'.

- ♦ Disseminate information about the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30) before it convenes in November 2025 in Belém, Brazil. Provide financial support, legal advice, communication consultancy services and capacity-building for youth and women in Brazil's SSF, who plan to conduct a 'Fishing Scream' side-event.

→ **2026**

- ♦ CBD COP17: The 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP17) will be held in Yerevan, Armenia in 2026. It will focus on addressing global environmental challenges and enhancing biodiversity conservation.
- ♦ Conduct research at the national level for potential collaborations between SSF communities, organizations and researchers and jointly develop a pathway to start working on conflict resolution mechanisms to highlight injustices in fisher territories.
- ♦ Build capacity, strengthen resiliency and raise the profile and visibility of SSF communities and organizations ahead of the 3rd SSF Summit in Rome and COFI 37.
- ♦ Select and train leaders, particularly from women and youth in fisheries, with the aim of sending them to the 3rd SSF Summit in Rome.
- ♦ Engage with, and highlight the efforts of, SSF communities in the Amazonian region that are working to mitigate the impacts of the dry season.
- ♦ Ahead of the 3rd SSF Summit, organize a series of web-based training programmes on the SSF Guidelines to provide an orientation to the principles and provisions therein.
- ♦ COFI 37—Sub-committee on Fisheries Management: as well, SSF actors and organizations should engage with the FAO regional conference and consultations in the lead-up to the COFI meeting.
- ♦ SACSFA by FSSF Sri Lanka: The South and South-East Asian Conference on Small Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture (SACSFA) aims to address the sustainable use and management of fisheries resources, equitable development of fishing communities, and poverty eradication.

→ **2027**

- ♦ Conduct post-COFI assessments and training programmes to implement the SSF Guidelines and work toward the formulation of regional or national plan of actions (R/NPOA).
- ♦ CFS 55: the provisional policy agenda for the 2027 meeting of the UN Committee on World Food Security focuses on 'Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for food security and nutrition' and the rights of indigenous people. Work towards this should begin no later than 2025.

→ **2028**

- ♦ Organize regional SSF programmes to assess the involvement of governments and track progress on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- ♦ Between 2025-2028, there is to be ongoing participatory action research focusing on economic, environmental, political, social challenges of fisheries in northern Sri Lanka.

Session IX: Closing reflections and key takeaways from the workshop

Chairing a session soliciting reflections from workshop participants, Cornelie Quist, ICSF Member from The Netherlands, invited a few members from the gathering for a candid conversation about the take-home messages and follow-up actions planned. Participants spoke of gaining insights into the universality of the concerns and challenges faced by SSF communities.

(i) Inputs from Mike Abaka-Edu (Ghana)

Learning about how bottom trawlers and destructive gear are impacting SSF around the world was an eye-opening experience for Mike, who highlighted the panel discussion in the transboundary fisheries dispute in the Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka. “Incursions into the fishing waters of artisanal fishers by bottom trawlers is something I learned is present in other countries. Through the discussions and conversations with fishers (during the field visit), I heard that the situation for those on canoes and wooden boats becomes unbearable,” Mike said, adding that he will “collaborate with institutions in Ghana to educate and create awareness among my fellow fishers” of such shared concerns. “The encroachments into the fishing waters by industrial trawlers has forced SSF in Ghana to apply all manner of obnoxious chemicals during their fishing operations, which is not only illegal, but also destructive,” he said, adding that this and other “burning issues” will be discussed and addressed.

(ii) Inputs from Lucyphine Kilanga (Tanzania)

Calling for the development of a ‘theory of change’ approach that incorporates both “activist and feminist perspectives”, Lucyphine stated that viewing the threats facing the SSF sub-sector through these lenses and in their “specific social contexts” would have “transformative” impacts at the grassroots-level. She drew parallels between the transboundary fishing conflicts in the Palk Bay and disputes over access to resources in Lake Victoria, between fishers from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. “There have been cases of fishers being shot and killed after unknowingly crossing the border,” Lucyphine said, noting that it was a missed opportunity not to have a “fisher from Lake Victoria, who could have learned from the panel discussion and conversed with Sri Lankan SSF to take home some suggestions”. She also spoke about the challenge of advocacy work with limited fisheries data, since that is key to presenting agendas to policymakers. “A possible connection to the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) made at this workshop will be really useful, especially when dealing with the issue of data,” Lucyphine said, citing the often “political nature of data” as one of the reasons it is difficult to access it—this in turn makes it a challenge to measure outcomes in the fisheries sector.

(iii) Inputs from Gavino Acevedo Gonzalez (Panama)

Contending that SSF “must adopt a business model” and “develop business attitudes” to “gain more autonomy”, Gavino said the “many shortcomings” of the “invisibilised” sub-sector in Panama, and Central America in general, could be attributed to its “overdependence on the government” or NGO support. He highlighted the transboundary fishing conflict in the Gulf of Fonseca, the waters of which are shared by SSF in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. “Although it is not a problem of industrial fishing, artisanal fishers operate without navigation equipment and have to pay heavy fines, with their own money and catch, when they cross the borders due to strong currents and wind,” he said. Besides learning from the Palk Bay discussion panel, Gavino said the workshop helped reopen lines of communication between ULAPA and international fisher organizations such as the WFFP.

(iv) Inputs from Roberto Ballon (The Philippines)

Noting that the workshop had highlighted shared concerns for SSF across the world from climate change, environmental degradation, overfishing, offshore mining and IUU, among others, Roberto

said fishers in the Philippines are “suffering” many of the same challenges. “Sharing the take-home lessons and experiences with my community will inspire us that we are not alone in this fight,” he said.

(v) Inputs from M. Adli Abdullah (Indonesia)

Recalling the work done to develop the SSF Guidelines prior to its endorsement in 2014, Adli said the workshop had highlighted the need for fishing communities to “continue the fight to implement” its principles and provisions in order to “protect their traditional fishing rights”. Pointing out similarities to the fisheries conflict in the Palk Bay, he stated how Indonesia’s experience with fisher disputes between several countries (including Malaysia, Australia, the Philippines and India) suggested that conflicts could be resolved through improving bilateral relationships and mediation by international organizations like the FAO.

Thanking the speakers for sharing their perspectives, Cornelie then asked the gathering for their opinions and reflections from the workshop. She voiced her hope for the new ‘Steering Committee’ to keep the momentum going. Citing the need to build “strong and flexible alliances”, Susan said the discussions at the workshop had highlighted the importance of working together to provide inclusive spaces to amplify and protect the “real voices” of SSF representatives. For Libia, the workshop was an important opportunity to turn the spotlight on the efforts of fishing communities in “preserving our territories and ecosystems” while “highlighting the roles that women play in the fisheries sector”, which often gets “overlooked”. Meanwhile, Marta stated the need to see more representation from European fishers at such workshops since these are the “first steps toward generating alliances, and understanding how SSF are organizing around the world”. She also called for the ‘Steering Committee’ to “ensure continuity going forward so as to not lose momentum and dilute efforts.

Stating the importance of such forums “where conversations are important than decisions and final conclusions”, Francisco expressed hope that the workshop’s findings would shape the strategies and future work of ICSF and the different SSF actors in the gathering. Describing the SSF Guidelines as a resource to “visualise both the strengths and shortcomings” of the SSF sub-sector, Jesus called for their continued implementation and reiterated the importance of representation at such spaces. To facilitate the meaningful participation of fishers’ representatives, workshops must provide interpretation services in all their native languages to “capture the message”, Josana said. For Munir, the workshop’s emphasis on “strengthening collaboration among the national, regional and international bodies” was important in order to “minimise the gap between ground-level and global advocacy”.



Closing reflections and key takeaways from the workshop

Session X: Vote of thanks

The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks from Upul Liyanage, Secretary, FSSF, Sri Lanka, who expressed his gratitude to the organizers for the “smooth execution” of the event, and the participants of the workshop for their “active engagement, thoughtful questions, and collaborative spirit”. In her closing remarks, Ravadee noted that the workshop had laid the “groundwork for collaboration”, and urged the gathering to “not lose momentum (and) continue to engage with each other, with policymakers, and with researchers to find solutions.”



Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF) Secretary Upul Liyanage (right) delivered the vote of thanks at the closing session chaired by ICSF Member Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk

Annexures

Annexure 1

Concept Note

ICSF is committed to promoting and defending equitable, gender-just, self-reliant, and sustainable small-scale fisheries around the world. We believe in strengthening fishing communities and SSF organizations, protecting their local and ecological knowledge, enhancing their social development, and sustainable fisheries, based on a human rights-based approach embedded in the principles of the SSF Guidelines. ICSF prioritises working in a spirit of diverse dialogue and cooperation, to influence the decision-making processes of multilateral bodies, governments and organizations in favour of small-scale fishing communities, particularly in order to cope with the multiplicity of accumulated and new threats. Based on the experiences of its members and allied SSF organizations, ICSF focuses its work around five key themes: tenure rights, access and use; food security and nutrition; marginalisation within the blue economy; environmental crises and climate change; and social protection and social development.

Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka, is a platform that is inclusive (all relevant stakeholders), participatory, integrated (all sub-sectors are present) and holistic (looking at fisheries as a component of the coastal ecosystem).

Building upon the four IYAFAs regional workshops ICSF hosted in 2022 and 2023 in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe, and the two SSF Summits held in 2022 and 2024 in Rome; ICSF organized an international SSF workshop in Sri Lanka from 24 to 26 February 2025.

Objectives

- 1) Strengthening collaborations and alliances between ICSF and its SSF allies, and enhancing its capacities as a support organization.
- 2) Creating a space for global and regional SSF movements and organizations, to embrace and be strengthened by our diversity, and collectively move toward a common goal.
- 3) Reflecting on ICSF's strategy and programme of action, and gathering inputs from SSF representatives on how the ICSF programme can best meet their needs and respond to their requests for capacity-building at global and regional levels (including in relation to key international spaces and processes).

Participants

The workshop included 61 participants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America – including ICSF members, representatives from global and regional SSF organizations, participants from ICSF's IYAFAs Regional Workshops (2022-2023), participants from the two Small-Scale Fisheries Summits in Rome (2022 and 2024), and allied support organizations.

Methodology

The workshop was held over three days, and structured around a three-part programme focused on setting the scene, deepening our discussions, and developing a collective strategy for the future. Discussions were open and flexible, in order to foster horizontal brainstorming and a comfortable, informal environment. ICSF facilitated the programme, but prioritised using this space to hear from the SSF participants, and building an informed understanding of the kind of support SSF organizations need and seek from ICSF. The contributions made by representatives from SSF organizations were therefore central to the workshop, in order to guide ICSF's work in the coming years.

Annexure 2

Programme

Day 1: Setting the Scene 24 February 2025	
8:00–9:00	<p>Registration: ICSF and FSSF</p> <p>Logistics: Mr. Ronald Rodriguez, Programme Officer, ICSF</p>
9:00–10:00	<p>Inaugural Session</p> <p>Chair: Prof. Oscar Amarasinghe, Executive Advisor, Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka</p> <p>Welcome</p> <p>(5 minutes)</p> <p>Prof. Maarten Bavinck, Chair of the Board, ICSF, The Netherlands</p> <p>Opening remarks</p> <p>(10 minutes each)</p> <p>Prof. M. G. Kularatne, President, Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka</p> <p>Ms. Subashini Kamalanathan, National Women's Coordinator, National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO), Sri Lanka</p> <p>Overview of the workshop</p> <p>(10 minutes)</p> <p>Dr. Elyse Mills, Executive Director, ICSF, The Netherlands</p> <p>Inaugural address</p> <p>(15 minutes)</p> <p>Mr. Dhammika Ranatunga, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources, Government of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka</p>
10:00–11:00	<p>Introductions by participants</p> <p>Chair: Mr. Peter Linford Adjei, Member, ICSF, Ghana</p>
11:00–11:15	COFFEE/TEA BREAK
11:15–12:45	<p>Session 1: Creating a collective ideas board on key priorities and ways to strengthen small-scale fisheries</p> <p>Chair: Ms. Vivienne Solis-Rivera, Board Member, ICSF, Costa Rica</p>
12:45–13:45	LUNCH
13:45–15:30	<p>Session 2: Presenting insights from the IYAFRA Regional Workshops and SSF Summit</p> <p>Chair: Ms. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, Board Member, ICSF, Thailand</p> <p>Presented by regional groups of workshop participants, with support from ICSF members (10 minutes each)</p> <p>LAC: Ms. Josana Pinto da Costa (MPP, Brazil; WFFP) and Mr. Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez (APALE, Panama)</p> <p>Supported by Mr. Henrique Callori Kefalas (ICSF, Brazil) and Ms. Vivienne Solis-Rivera (ICSF, Costa Rica)</p>

Africa: Ms. Lucyphine Julius Kilanga, Environmental Management & Economic Development Association (EMEDO), Tanzania; WFF)

Supported by Mr. Peter Linford Adjei (ICSF, Ghana) and Prof. Rosemarie Nyigulila Mwaipopo (ICSF, Tanzania)

Asia: Mr. Azrilnizam Omar (Malaysia Small-Scale Fishers Network for Education and Welfare; WFFP) and Dr. Ahilan Kadirgamar (University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka)

Supported by Ms. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk (ICSF, Thailand)

Europe: Ms. Marta Cavallé (LIFE, Spain)

Supported by Prof. Maarten Bavinck (ICSF, The Netherlands) and Ms. Cornelia Quist (ICSF, The Netherlands)

SSF Summit: Mr. Mitchell Lay (CNFO, Antigua & Barbuda; WFFP)

Supported by Ms. Velia Lucidi (IPC Secretariat, Italy)

Discussion

15:30–15:45 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

15:45–17:45 **Session 3: Group discussions on strengthening our collective strategies and support for SSF organizations**

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the key priorities for SSF organizations at the regional and international levels?
2. What are the key regional and international mechanisms, processes and institutions for addressing our priorities?
3. How can we engage with the SSF Guidelines implementation process to promote our key priorities?

Chair: Prof. Lina Saavedra, Member ICSF, Colombia

Break into regional groups:

LAC (EN/ES/PT): Ms. Libia Arciniegas Liñan (Facilitator); Dr. Ana Paula Rainho (Rapporteur).

Asia (EN): Dr. Aarthi Sridhar (Facilitator); Mr. Ronald Rodriguez (Rapporteur).

Africa (EN): Mr. Peter Linford Adjei (Facilitator); Dr. Benjamin Campion (Rapporteur).

Europe (EN): Prof. Svein Jentoft (Facilitator); Dr. Elyse Mills (Rapporteur)

17:45–18:45 **Feedback from group discussions by Rapporteurs**

Chair: Dr. Benjamin Campion, Member, ICSF

19:30 DINNER AT THE HOTEL

Day 2: Deepening our Discussions || 25 February 2025

- 9:00–11:15 **Session 4: Panel discussion on Resolving Transboundary Fishing Conflicts in Palk Bay**
 Chair: Mr. V. Vivekanandan, Member, ICSF, India
Speakers:
 Dr. Ahilan Kadirgamar – Senior Lecturer, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka
 Mr. Annalingam Annarasa – President, Federation of Jaffna District Fisheries Cooperatives Union, Sri Lanka
 Mr. Olencio Simoes, General Secretary, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), India; WFFP
 Mr. Pradip Chatterjee – National Convenor, National Federation of Small-Scale Fishworkers (NFSF), India
 Ms. Meera Srinivasan – Correspondent, The *Hindu*, Sri Lanka
 Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee – Policy Analyst, Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP-IGO), India
Discussion
 SSF actors, civil society representatives and academics from Sri Lanka shared their views on how eliminating IUU fishing in Palk Bay will improve livelihoods of local fishers. Their counterparts on the Indian side, including members of the media, offered their views on the possible means of resolving these conflicts towards empowering local fishers in Sri Lanka.
- 11:15–11:30 COFFEE/TEA BREAK
- 11:30–13:30 **Session 5: Overview of civil society spaces in key international processes**
 Chair: Ms. Margaret Nakato, Executive Director, Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda; WFF
Inputs (20 minutes each)
 Ms. Lena Westlund (FAO): COFI, Sub-Committees and National Plan of Action for the SSF Guidelines implementation (NPOA-SSF)
 Ms. Velia Lucidi, Fisheries Program Manager, Centro Internazionale Crocevia International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), Italy
Reflections from SSF representatives:
 Ms. Josana Pinto da Costa, Member of the National Coordination Committee of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen (Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais -MPP), Brazil; WFFP
Inputs (20 minutes)
 Ms. Vivienne Solis-Rivera and Mr. Ronald Rodriguez (ICSF): Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
Reflections from SSF representatives
 Mr. Jesus Chaves Vidaurre, Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de Pequeña Escala Unidos de Barra del Colorado, Costa Rica
Discussion
- 13:30–14:30 LUNCH
- 14:30–18:00 **Field visit to meet Sri Lankan fishers at Negombo Lagoon**
 Organized by NAFSO, Sri Lanka
- 19:30 DINNER AT THE HOTEL

Day 3: Moving Forward with a Collective Strategy || 26 February 2025

- 9:00–11:00 **Session 6: Ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward**
 Chair: Mr. Henrique Callori Kefalas, Member, ICSF, Ghana
Speakers (10 minutes each):
 Mr. Mitchell Lay, Coordinator, Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, Antigua & Barbuda
 Ms. Margaret Nakato, Executive Director, Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda; WFF
 Ms. Libia Esther Arciniegas Liñan, Federación de Pescadores Artesanales y Ambientalistas del Departamento de Cesar (FEDEPESCE)/RENAMUPES, Colombia
 Mr. Laed Mengsai, Member, Thai Association of the Federation of Fisherfolk, Thailand
Discussion
- 11:00–11:15 COFFEE/TEA BREAK
- 11:15–13:15 **Session 7: Group discussion on ideas for collective action, collaboration and ways forward**
Questions for discussion:
 1. How can we work together for more meaningful outcomes at the international level?
 2. How can we collaborate to better support national, regional and global SSF networks?
 Chair: Ms. Marta Cavalle, Executive Secretary, Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE), Spain
Group 1 (EN): Mr. Muhammed Mujibul Haque Munir (Facilitator); Mr. Ronald Rodriguez (Rapporteur)
Group 2 (EN): Ms. Susan Herawati (Facilitator); Mr. Henrique Callori Kefalas (Rapporteur).
Group 3 (EN): Ms. Joelle Philippe (Facilitator); Prof. Lina Saavedra (Rapporteur)
Group 4 (ES/PT): Ms. Velia Lucidi (Facilitator); Mr. Gustavo Silveira (Rapporteur)
- 13:15–14:15 LUNCH
- 14:15–15:15 **Feedback from group discussions**
 Chair: Mr. Olencio Simoes, General Secretary, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), India; WFFP
- 15:15–16:00 **Session 8: Discussion on workshop follow-up work**
 Facilitator: Dr. Elyse Mills, Executive Director, ICSF, The Netherlands
 Support: Mr. Ronald Rodriguez, Programme Officer, ICSF, The Philippines
 The establishment of a workshop follow-up committee and decision-making about what the committee will do.
 Developed a group calendar, pinpointing common priority activities/events and spaces to collaborate in.
- 16:00–16:15 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

16:15–17:45 Session 9: Closing reflections and key takeaways from the workshop

Chair: Ms. Cornelia Quist, Member, ICSE, The Netherlands

Speakers (10 minutes each):

Mr. Robert Ballon –Kapunungan sa mga Gagmay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion (KGMC), The Philippines

Mr. Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez – Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de La Enea (APALE), Panama; ULAPA

Ms. Lucyphine Julius Kilanga – Environmental Management & Economic Development Association (EMEDO), Tanzania; World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF)

Mr. M. Adli Abdullah – Indonesian Traditional Fisherfolk Union (KNTI); World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

Discussion**17:45–18:00 Vote of thanks**

Chair: Ms. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, Board Member, ICSE, Thailand

Mr. Upul Liyanage, Secretary, Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (FSSF), Sri Lanka

19:30 DINNER AT THE HOTEL

Annexure 3

Field visit to Negombo

Negombo Lagoon is a large estuarine lagoon situated in Negombo, south-west Sri Lanka, renowned for its fishing activity and production. The lagoon, which opens to the sea at its northern end, measures 12 km in length from south to north and 3.75 km at its widest point, and has a mean depth of about 1.2 m. Covering an area of approximately 32 square km, it is one of the most productive and sensitive ecosystems in Sri Lanka, receiving its fresh water input primarily from the rivers Dandugam Oya and Ja-ela. However, the lagoon is characterised by a brackish water flora (seaweeds) and some mangrove forests in the northern part. Together with the Muthurajawela marsh, which lies to the south, the lagoon and marsh land constitute a conjoined, tidally influenced coastal wetland.

The lagoon, and its near coastal environment, is home to a diverse array of aquatic life – with 89 species of benthic invertebrates, 29 mangrove species, seven sea grass species and 140 species of fish having been recorded. The lagoon and the adjacent reef areas function as the major nursery, refuge and feeding grounds for most shrimp species.

The field trip involved visits to three sites in the lagoon, facilitated by NAFSO. The first site visit to Munnakkaraya village was facilitated by Praadeep Wanigasuriya and Ashoka Karunarathne. The second site visit to the Sea Street area was facilitated by Subashini Kamalanathan and Ranulya Jayasinghe. The third site visit to fisher groups in Negombo Lagoon was facilitated by Kularatne Mohottala Gedara, Pradeepa Marian and Nimal Perera.

Sri Vimukthi Fisher Women Organization

A women's group based out of various villages in the lagoon, the Sri Vimukthi Fisher Women Organization (SVFWO) was launched in 2000 by fisher women as a means to resist the arrest of their husbands and sons by Indian authorities in 1999. In total, 185 fish workers on 35 multi-day fishing boats were arrested by the Indian Coast Guard for allegedly violating the IMBL between India and Sri Lanka. The arrests came at a time when attacks by the now-defunct ethnic Tamil militant group, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), were a security concern for India, which was also hosting a visit by then US President George W. Bush.

Desperate to bring the fishermen home, the women attempted various measures to secure their release to no avail. They approached NAFSO (National Fisheries Solidarity Movement), which enlisted the support of various Indian groups – National Fishworkers' Forum, the Alliance for Release of Innocent Fishermen (ARIF) and South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) – through intermediaries at the forefront of fisherfolk rights activism, Father Thomas Kocherry and V. Vivekanandan. Through a series of campaigns, the fish workers and crew members were released – although the vessels' skippers were detained even longer.

That initial group of women – 10 of whom are still with SVFWO and NAFSO even 25 years later – coalesced through the struggle and the organization has since been at the helm of many fisheries-related agitations and campaigns: struggles against sea planes in Negombo lagoon, hikes in fuel prices, and tensions against the Colombo Port City Project, among other interventions. It has also become involved in various issues of concern to farmers, plantation workers, displaced communities, people affected by war and with workers.

Today, the SVFWO has steadily built up a strong economic base, which the organization taps into for the upliftment of women's economic wellbeing. To this end, they have their own savings and loans schemes charging reasonable interest rates. Such efforts have allowed women in Negombo to gain a measure of financial independence and avail loans in amounts up to 50,000 LKR. Visitors from the workshop asked the SVFWO about their activism and struggles, as well as these economic activities in detail during the visit.

Sea Street

The small-scale fishing community in Sea Street are among the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in Negombo since they use very traditional fishing equipment and engage in subsistence fishery. Numbering around 10 SSF groups with 105 members, the community's concerns are often neglected by the authorities. For instance, the MV X-Press Pearl container ship wreck in May 2021 – an ecological disaster wherein tons of hazardous chemicals, plastic pellets and other pollutants spilled into the waters off Sri Lanka's west coast and later washed up onto its beaches and further inland. For the fisherfolk of Negombo, the crisis came as a dual shock: both over the loss of livelihood following an official ban on fishing off the impacted coastline for 45 days; and the lack of any proper compensation to offset this loss of income.

The living conditions of those fishers remain among the most desperate in the absence of much-needed systematic approaches for their well-being and survival; the lack of proper marketing facilities for their fish catch; little (if any) extension of services for women to engage in fishery activities and earn from fish production. In addition, low fish catch has further added to difficulties facing the SSFs, which are negatively impacted by dredging along the west coast that have led to ecosystem loss, damage to the sea bottom and disturbances to the sea weeds and coral reefs.

Further, sand has been mined for the Colombo Port City Project and the construction of a super highway – exacerbating the SSFs' problems of low fish catch, sea erosion, loss of coastal grounds for their fishing purposes, which includes post-harvest practices. The people of Sea Street people participated in agitations against the Port City project and received 2 million LKR as compensation. However, the SSFs continue to deal with serious declines in fish catch due to such destructive activities in the sea.

Negombo Lagoon Fisher Groups

This visit was organized by Janawaboda Kendraya, an organization that engages with SSF issues, urban land issues and lagoon fishers in the Negombo area. As one of the richest inland water ecosystems in Sri Lanka, fishers in Negombo receive the highest catch of fish and prawns from the lagoon. During the early 2000s, there were around 3,000 fishers active in the lagoon, but this number has fallen drastically owing to lagoon pollution, reclamation, mangrove destruction, aquaculture practices, garbage dumped from Negombo city, sewage outflows into the lagoon, the dumping of engine oil into lagoon water, among other concerns. At present, there are around 20 or more fishing gear types being used in the lagoon – even though some of them are harmful to the sustenance of the lagoon.

The fishing practices in Negombo are traditional in nature and unique to the lagoon: in addition to stake and net fishing, there are brush files, crab nets, log fishing (Katta), and a host of other fishing practices, in operation in the Negombo lagoon.

Janawaboda Kendraya has been engaged in the organization of lagoon fishers, which includes the formation of a Negombo lagoon protection committee. They have implemented several campaigns, calling for the demarcation of the Negombo lagoon, mapping of the destruction caused to the area, raising awareness among the fisher groups, and advocating for the rights of the lagoon fishers.

Visitors from the workshop learnt from the fisher groups about the campaigns they engage in to protect the lagoon and to ensure the rights of fishers are respected, for instance, the land rights of the urban poor fishing communities of Gampaha district.

Annexure 4

Pre-workshop Meeting Summary Report

by Ronald B. Rodriguez, ICSF

Asia Group: 7 February 2025 | 1:30 PM IST

Latin America Group: 12 February 2025 | 8:00 AM CST

Europe and Africa Group: 14 February 2025 | 9:00 AM CET

In the lead-up to the ICSF Sri Lanka International Workshop on ‘Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-Building in Small-Scale Fisheries’, a series of pre-workshop regional meetings, held over Zoom Conferencing, were organized for participants from Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Africa. The pre-workshop meetings held for the Asia Group on 07 February 2025, the Latin America Group on 12 February 2025, and the Europe and Africa Group on 14 February 2025 provided context, rationale for participant selection, workshop objectives, and guide questions for the dialogue process. Participants offered valuable input, suggesting the sharing of experiences and reflections from their personal and organizational engagement in the SSF spaces, improvements to the workshop format, and clarification on the scope and roles of ICSF and SSF actors within the workshop.

The pre-workshop meetings gave the participants an opportunity to better prepare for the workshop. This allowed them to be part of the co-creation of a more conducive space for dialogue and collaboration, as well as in co-designing the process towards crafting strategies to advance SSF interests at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Based on these discussions, changes will be made to the workshop design to further encourage and ensure that the discussion space is co-facilitated by the ICSF and the participants.

Collaboration and Capacity Building

A recurring theme across all pre-workshop regional meetings was the recognition of the greater need for collaboration between ICSF and SSF allies, strengthening ICSF’s capacity as a support organization, and building capacity within SSF communities. The Asia group suggested a strong focus on discussions to strengthen coastal conservation and improve pre- and post-harvest capacities. The Latin America group emphasised the need to provide a space within the workshop to discuss collaborative spaces, enhance communication strategies, and clarify ICSF’s role in supporting and encouraging the agency of SSF actors. The Europe and Africa group called for a more in-depth discussion on the practical definition of collaboration and how the movement can advocate for more meaningful engagements beyond superficial interactions.

International Processes and SSF Engagement

All groups recognised and agreed that discussions on the engaging with international processes and institutions relevant to SSF would be valuable for the movement. The Asia group proposed including a discussion on strategies to engage with VGSSF processes to promote SSF priorities at different implementation levels, particularly connecting the local to the national and bridging the gap in the more technical conversations at the international level. The Europe and Africa group expressed concerns about the effectiveness of international conferences and the need to analyse how certain spaces and environmental NGOs’ increasing presence may limit SSF engagement in these spaces. The Latin America group raised issues regarding potential limitations in the FAO’s approach to NPOA implementation and impact of the interest of funders on which NPOA should be prioritised for implementation and support. This points to the need for a discussion on how to improve communication and presentation of these plans and supporting initiatives.

SSF Priorities and Guidelines

Central to these pre-workshop discussions was ensuring the linkage between key priorities for SSF organizations at regional and international levels, and how the SSF Guidelines could be leveraged to contribute to advancing these priorities. The Asia group suggested exploring themes such as the role of the SSF Guidelines in diverse contexts, capacity building, and the impacts of overfishing and the shift in attention among governments and fisheries organizations towards greater aquaculture production. The Latin America group called attention to the limited support given to the region in terms of programs to implement NPOAs, and how the movement can address this to promote greater participation from SSF communities and civil society organizations. The Europe and Africa group emphasised the need to encourage dialogue on addressing the livelihood concerns of SSF communities and developing a common voice within the SSF movement.

Key Suggestions and Inputs from Pre-workshop Meeting Participants

Sharing Experiences and Reflections. The Europe and Africa group suggested sharing experiences and reflections from regional workshops and summits, particularly regarding local engagement and participation. Although this is already included in the programme, a more dynamic presentation geared towards inspiring actions should be considered. The Latin America group highlighted the value of sharing reports and other materials from previous regional workshops that could aid in the development of strategies and identifying areas for collaboration.

Improving Workshop Format. The Asia group's suggestions for topics will cover a multitude of issues that can be captured using the "Ideas Board" to facilitate further idea sharing. The Latin America group discussed the broad nature of the workshop questions and the need for a facilitation method that will make sure that the discussions capture the voices of the SSF actors, while also guiding the process towards identification of concrete next steps for the alliance.

It worth noting that the pre-workshop meetings showed that there remains a technical challenge to the conduct of virtual meetings and proves the importance of in-person interaction in ensuring full participation from participants coming from different backgrounds and areas of the world.

Clarification on Scope and Roles. The Asia group sought clarification on the scope of the workshop discussions, proposing themes such as the impact of climate change, poverty, and fragmentation among SSF actors. The Latin America group emphasised the need for clarity on ICSF's role and the importance of SSF actors being protagonists in the workshop. The Europe and Africa group requested clarification on the design of each session and possibility of a more dialogic approach to encourage more productive interaction between the presenters and the rest of the participants.

Asia Group Participants

1. Elyse, Netherlands | ICSF
2. Sebastian, India | ICSF
3. Venu, India | ICSF
4. Ronald, Philippines | ICSF
5. Aarthi, India | Dakshin Foundation
6. Meera, India | Journalist
7. Roberto, Philippines | KGMC/KKAMPi / Southeast Asia SSF Hub
8. Upul, Sri Lanka | FSSF
9. Upali, Sri Lanka | University of Kelaniya

10. Pradip, India | National Platform for Small-Scale Fishworkers

11. Munir, Bangladesh | RDRS

12. M Adli Abdullah, Indonesia | KNTI

Latin America Group Participants

1. Elyse, Netherlands | ICSF

2. Ronald, Philippines | ICSF

3. Lina M. Saavedra Diaz, Colombia | University of Magdalena | ICSF

4. Gustavo Silveira, Brazil | Amazonia Nativa OPAN | ICSF

5. Beatriz Mesquita, Brazil | Joaquim Nabuco Foundation | ICSF (will not be able to participate in-person in Sri Lanka)

6. Ana Paula Rainho, Brazil | ICSF

7. Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez, Panama | Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales de La Enea (APALE) / ULAPA

8. Libia Esther Arciniegas Liñan, Colombia | Confederación Red Nacional de mujeres pescadoras acuícolas Defensoras del Agua y la Cultura (RENAMUPES)

• *Interpretation:* Sofia Norton

Europe and Africa Group Participants

1. Elyse, Netherlands | ICSF

2. Ronald, Philippines | ICSF

3. Peter Linford Adjei, Ghana | TESCOOD | ICSF

4. Rosemarie Mwaipopo, Tanzania | University Dar es Salaam | ICSF

5. Marta Cavalle, Spain | Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE)

6. Joelle Philippe, Belgium | CFFA

7. Alieu Sowe, Gambia | Gambia Fisherfolk Association /WFF Africa

8. Velia Lucidi, Italy | IPC Secretariat, Working Group on SSF

9. Lucyphine Kilanga, Tanzania | EMEDO

Annexure 5

IYAFA Workshops: Key Messages

Compiled by Ahana Lakshmi and N. Venugopalan, ICSF

1. IYAFA Asia: Key Messages

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
1 Access for small-scale fishing communities to resources		
Access rights/ Access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenure rights are there for some countries recognised by law (Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar) • Dedicated areas for SSF – but others encroached; there were violations – intrusions by commercial fishers • Tenure rights for short period (1 year) in Myanmar – increased uncertainty among fishers • Collaboration and coordination between stakeholders • Fishers not consulted before development projects are initiated, some countries non-voluntary resettlements • Access to resources denied due to development projects; land reclamation and similar projects reducing access, increased competition and conflicts • Customary rights not recognised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved implementation of legislation • Finance for implementation • Strong fisher organizations to combat anti-fisher development projects • Building strong fisheries organizations • Dialogue among stakeholders
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overfishing, illegal fishing • Climate change impact • Pollution – disappearance of resources – made licences to harvest or tenure rights worthless • Trawling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the technical capacity in areas like data monitoring for effective enforcement and compliance • Co-management promoted by government
Law and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many countries have access rights for SSF in their laws, but weak implementation is a major challenge • Lack of awareness of laws and policies • No legal documentation to land titles (used for housing etc.) • Conflict of interest and corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of laws among SSF
2 Social Development		
Access to health and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing communities often excluded from schemes • While primary education was available in most countries, fishers need general improvement in education and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital empowerment

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote areas were not well-served • Short supply of doctors and medicines in fishing communities • Marine fishers suffered specific diseases, not treated specially by the government • Welfare schemes may exist but access to pensions, insurance, social security and other schemes was low; women and migrants often excluded • Usually, welfare schemes were not fisher-targeted except for the ban-period support • Some countries had employment insurance, but women could not access as they were not recognised by the legislature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness on the need for sanitation as well as systems of waste transportation and processing • Strengthening of small-scale fisheries institutions • Access to health and childcare for women and children
Safety of fishing operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat insurance did not exist in many places • Climate change impacts • Lack of modern technology in boats • Some exclusions in training – e.g. women not included in training on safety at sea • Increased accidents because larger boats intruded and damaged gear of small boats; illegal fishing operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel registration and registration of all persons going for fishing • Increased awareness to avoid accidents • Early warning systems • Life-saving equipment
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to formal and safe finance and credit • While farmers were recognised and could open bank accounts with very low balance, fishers were ineligible • Fisherwomen were not recognised by many governments and hence lack of access to schemes • Membership linked access to schemes • Lack of data about fishers – many countries lacked this data, which meant that programmes could not be designed appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong fisher organizations that can promote coops and manage credit and finance, make the government take cognisance of their problems • Recognise fishers like farmers
3 Women in fisheries		
Incomes & Livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of diversified income sources, dependence on husband's income • Significant wage gaps • Loss of net-making livelihood because of replacement by factory made nets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable cooperatives and strengthen institutions • Training programmes for women; support - transportation, child care and funding – needs to be provided

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean grabbing, loss of fishing grounds – loss of access to resources • Loss of mangroves – loss of livelihoods • Cyclones, natural disasters, pollution etc - decrease in catch - impact women fishers 	
Policies and women's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of data to drive policy-making • No health care schemes focusing on fisher women • Lack of technology, facilities and fishing gear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-disaggregated data • Increased representation of women in government committees related to fisheries and co-operative societies and other organizations • Separate funding in budgets • Dialogue and networking to follow bottom-up approach • Open spaces for women to participate in fisheries governance
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not recognised as fishers because they are largely involved in post-harvest • High involvement in inland fisheries, yet not recognised as fishers • Traditional skills and insights not recognised • Patriarchal society, poor support from family especially menfolk, in some countries had to work at dawn to avoid scrutiny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-based/ women-focused organizations to be created and built • Consolidation of women's voices so that they are articulated correctly on the political stage • Build women's capacity • Family support must be encouraged to facilitate women's participation in organizations, networks and community work • A national and regional action plan to strengthen capacity, empower women-led initiatives, and eradicate the social norm of women being shackled by household responsibilities • Create bank of best practices bank
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor condition of markets, road-side vendors faced harassment by police 	

2. IYAFA Africa: Key Messages

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
1 Access for small-scale fishing communities to resources		
Access Rights/ access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecurity of tenure rights especially on community land • Traditional tenure rights apply only in some countries, in others they have been made obsolete by national governments. • There are individual or private rights or areas where leadership enforces rights of access • Importance of documentation • Liberal policies have not contributed to actually maintaining and sustaining people's traditional rights • Absence of maps for the various activities in the marine and continental waters • Competition with other Blue Economy sectors • Challenges on access rights in inland fisheries are distributed along the entire value chains with challenges arising from one segment also affecting the others • Lack of political will and commitment at the government level • Insurgency and internal conflict • Gender inequality limited women accessing their rights, and the ways in which they could use resources • The SSF Guidelines and the Tenure Guidelines had played a role in policy development and used to inform human rights issues in some countries e.g. Ghana, but full implementation not achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community tenure rights give community ownership, could also widen access of people to resources; but must be protected by law • Involvement of fishers in updating maps of coastal and marine areas • Capacity building
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource shrinkage due to pollution and habitat destruction • Fish shortage – high impact on women – forcing women to build toxic relationships for survival • Commercialisation of fisheries sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's refusal to buy illegal fish • Need to harmonise MCS across the region to curb IUU fishing
Law and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many policies, but not much known about them • Marine fish access agreements should be supported by international law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be holistic • Legislation and policies need to be implemented

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Awareness and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries often subject to many unfair regulations • Laws and policies not translating into transformation at ground level • Increased gender-based abuse and human rights abuse despite existence of laws and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of fisher advocates, activists, associations • Information platforms • Building and enhancing alliances, choosing alliance partners • Raising the profile of traditional and customary knowledge and practices to influence at the top level • The SSF Guidelines a good tool to fight for human rights and access rights of SSF communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient organizations – difficulties in targeted advocacy because of mobile livelihoods • Inadequate literacy levels to make informed decisions • Low awareness on legislation and policy among stakeholders • Lack of information around human rights instruments 	
<h2>2 Women in Small-scale fisheries</h2>		
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low capital/access to capital at high interest rates from private money lenders • Security of investments (in fishing boats, gear, working capital for fishermen) • High cost of fishing gear • Corruption, lack of transparency in scheme allocation • Lack of ownership of working tools/ fishing gear – vessels • Cultural variation in asset ownership (gear may be owned but not boats) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperatives • Internal group financing (e.g. chits) • Regular savings
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate fisheries resource • Limited access to landing sites, travel, registration of landing sites • Competition with fish meal factory (higher prices offered by the factory) • IUU in the artisanal sector • Impacts of climate change on resources • Cultural variation in harvest activities (e.g. oyster fishing acceptable but marine fishing is not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value addition can change perceptions • Development of the value chain to avoid waste in post-harvest losses

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate knowledge, publicity of fisheries policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender desk in the Ministry of fisheries and livestock established, but had to go beyond mere establishment • Mobilising people in the form of associations, cooperatives; mobilising across social groups • Movements bringing fisherwomen together – psychological support, roof over heads • Self-mobilisation and self-initiatives • Family planning for women and day care and child-minding facilities for the children within the fisher communities • Effective representation of women in decision-making • Building healthy environment • Alternative livelihoods based on their culture
Women-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender stereotyping, socio-cultural norms and traditions, patriarchy • Inadequate social security • No security (personal safety) • Challenges in networking • Inadequate access to health care • Lack of competition to take up the leadership roles • Abandonment, neglect of families and children • Early marriage and child-bearing • Need for alternate income generating activities 	
Processing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate storage • Poor fish processing methods • No proper guideline on quality control and value addition • Poor/inadequate or unavailable infrastructure • New infrastructure (e.g. fishing harbour) but reduced resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community infrastructure that supports women's activities • Innovative projects accessible for women • Relevant, accessible and affordable technology - accessible, modern/innovative – to improve productivity, value addition

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate market information systems • Market access, transportation • Market volatility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to lucrative markets • Connectivity to regional markets • Establish community marketing cooperatives
General		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership, advocacy, skills, and entrepreneurial skills for women to participate in decision making

3 Social Development and Decent Work

1. **Poverty eradication:** Most countries have poverty eradication policies, but implementation is poor
 2. **Employment:** While training institutes are available, they are often located in remote areas
 3. **Decent work in fishing:** Schemes available but low publicity in some countries, absent in others. NGOs created awareness. Policies for migrants were not available (except for Seychelles). In countries like Ghana, the Chief Fisherman of the community was responsible for setting rules and regulations for decent work
 4. **Social inclusion policy:** general for the population; in some countries, all enjoyed equal rights whereas it was not so in others
 5. **Health policy:** general for the population and the coverage varied by country
 6. **Literacy and education policy:** Education as a fundamental right helped in including fishers. However, there were increasing concerns in some countries about the use of drugs, teen pregnancies and high drop-out rates from schools
 7. **Housing for fishing community:** Generic policies were available, but did not target fishing communities
 8. **Sanitation, drinking water and energy:** Generic policies were available but were not properly implemented. Poor hygiene in fishing areas was common.
- More involvement of the community
 - Ensure implementation of existing policies by the government
 - Creation of awareness especially regarding education, sanitation, GBV etc

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
	<p>9. Climate change: Experiencing the impact of climate change had made governments aware and keen to implement (e.g. seasonal lake closures) but generally there were some strategies, but no specific plans of action; and in some cases, there were no policies.</p> <p>10. Institutions supporting Fishworkers were available and fishers did benefit once they entered such networks</p> <p>11. GBV policies exist but not sufficiently implemented; increased violence where awareness was low. In some countries there were no GBV policies but communities and human rights activists were active in preventing GBV</p> <p>12. Access to justice was general, empowerment of fishing community attempted through paralegals and human rights defenders, need greater expansion of effort</p> <p>13. Conservation and sustainable use of resources: yes, once the fishers saw the benefits, for example, of lake closure</p>	

3. IYAFA LAC: Key Messages

Topic	Key Points	Potential Solutions
1 Social Security, Education and Health		
Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary to establish policies exclusively for fishing • Campaign to highlight fishworkers' rights and their need for social security • Retirement plan assistance fund should include fishers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening artisanal fishers' organizations for better representation and for demanding rights • National Fisheries Organizations (NFO) should educate fishers about their rights • Create special social security packages for artisanal fishers • Accessible and affordable insurance, various models
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional knowledge should be a part of formal education systems • Education programmes must be adapted for fisheries, delinked from agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to include new methodologies in a language accessible to fishers • Include ancestral knowledge in education • Adult literacy programmes

Topic	Key Points	Potential Solutions
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to prioritise mental health • Occupational diseases and hazards in SSF need to be recognised by the national health system • Antidotes to fish poisoning needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFO to create health awareness • Training including about safety at sea • Partnerships to be forged with academia to study health issues related to artisanal fishing • Awareness on disease prevention including healthy diets and lifestyles • Working health centres for communities
2 Blue Economy		
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a solution for fishing communities, they are often displaced • Tourists do not buy local products • Resorts block access for fishers • Sport fishers are not regulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower communities to manage resources • Make mandatory for tourist complexes to buy local produce • Implement ancestral access rights
Other challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted participation by fishworkers in meetings and debates • Destruction of shoreline due to dredging, port construction; also displacement of communities due to infrastructure construction • BE has led to loss of rights, displacement and loss of traditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishers must organize themselves • Fishers must follow the EIA process • Dialogues with Ministry of Environment, government; • Participation in public hearings • Legal demarcation of fishing community territory
3 Women in Fisheries		
Roles and Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of roles and rights of women in fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase leadership capacities, capacity building • Teach children about women's rights at an early age • Provide security for women
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's knowledge – traditional medicine, practices, aptitude for management, adept at handling technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like Chile, other countries could make boats that can be handled easily by women
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women should be put in charge of administration • Equitable division of labour must be there • Domestic work must be paid for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific programmes for women to be promoted • Banks to provide women-specific schemes • Women networks

Topic	Key Points	Potential Solutions
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisanal fishing impacts women's bodies, plus issues of pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare needs to be preventive, addressing risks as well as sexually transmitted diseases • Traditional knowledge must be valued
Violence against women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All kinds of violence should be recognised and addressed • Ability to access justice and support networks
Masculinity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a strategic plan for gender equality at all levels • Men should be supportive of women's rights and struggles.

4. IYAFa Europe: Key Messages

Topic	Key Challenges	Potential Solutions
Access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overfishing and depleted stocks • Inequitable quota distribution • Economic and social disparities • Underrepresentation of small-scale fishworkers • Lack of societal recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build new narratives in fisheries management with a holistic approach including multiple disciplines, but notably social science support • Proactive measures and legal actions to address unfair practices in fishing • Enhanced community engagement for equitable practices. • Appropriate inclusion of SSF Marine Spatial Planning to ensure their access to customary fishing grounds and resources • Policy reformation and legal actions for SSF rights • Community-centric initiatives • Adaptive co-management and competency building
Co-management and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse interpretations of co-management across Europe lead to implementation challenges. • Power dynamics and industry bias raise a tendency to favour large-scale fisheries operators. • Private equity interest in marine spaces threatening traditional fishing practices and SSF. • Lack of competencies and means for adequate SSF participation in co-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting broader societal understanding of SSF • Building alliances with diverse stakeholders • Creating a new governance culture (learning and adaptation in co-management) • Collaborations beyond fishing community (other stakeholders) • Leveraging successful models of co-management • Increased awareness and advocacy • Enhancing climate change adaptability

Annexure 6

Feedback from the Participants

Prepared by Ahana Lakshmi

These are based on the responses of 36 participants from the workshop

Key insights

Participants reported a wide range of learnings from the workshop, particularly the:

- Ways in which fisher leaders are innovating to address new challenges; and highlighted the need for more engagement with leaders from fishworkers organizations
- Emerging cross-cutting challenges that underscored the need to revisit and rethink old strategies of alliance-building and advocacy as well as SSF discourse and rhetoric
- Importance of sharing the right narrative, told with a nuanced understanding of the local situation; highlighting linkages of international issues/ experiences with local practices/ issues
- Collaboration and communication; need to bridge gaps; undertake grassroots action and constant capacity-building; engage with journalists and academics—seek partnerships across platforms
- Implementation of the SSF Guidelines; need to secure SSF spaces, especially at the international level; share methodologies
- Relevance of regional organizations and initiatives; relevance of well-prepared fisher voices
- Climate change impacts on SSF and the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations' (RFMO) roles to deal with these threats, as well as the challenges posed by Blue Economy initiatives
- Cultural dimensions of conflicts and severe impacts of aquaculture on SSF
- Issue of industrial trawlers disturbing SSF plays out in many parts of the world
- Use of 'Whisper translation' to facilitate communication for SSF with limited literacy
- Need to plan sustainability of SSF ecosystems – as they are linked directly to fisheries livelihoods
- Community-led co-management and strengthening fisheries governance and policy advocacy

Suggestions and comments

Many participants felt that the workshop was well-organized with excellent logistics and attention to detail. One suggestion was to for the newly-formed Steering Committee to take follow-up actions so that momentum was not lost. Another was to organize regional workshops and involve more grassroots-level leaders and increase participation of movement leaders and individual SSF.

Participants said that having pre-workshop meetings to prioritise issues and then focusing only on those issues; having a write-shop for solutions; creating actionable recommendations and toolkits to implement were essential to preparing attendees' mindsets before heading to the workshop. Some felt that more attention should be paid to group dynamics as it was relevant to discussion group composition (cutting across professions and perspectives) and quality. In addition, opportunities for smaller group discussions are needed; with participants asking for more spaces and more free time for informal discussions.

The need for better time management was highlighted, with speakers being instructed beforehand to be concise and keep to the allotted time limits; and having speakers intersperse their presentations with short video clips were other suggestions. It was also suggested to club related sessions. In the case

of dignitaries who were unable to attend or cancelled on short notice, there were suggestions to have a video or an audio message prepared beforehand to address such eventualities.

Another suggestion was to solicit more funds to enable greater and more diverse participation, especially of women fish processors and other key actors/ players who can support the movement. The need for a dedicated media strategy to strengthen SSF voices was also a common recommendation.

Sessions and topics

A number of participants found the panel discussion on the transboundary fisheries conflict in the Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka to be very insightful. As this was a shared concern for many participants, the gathering was able to listen to different perspectives from the panelists and participants. Breakout groups for regional/group discussions were identified as the favourite sessions by many participants, since these helped strengthen collective strategies and support for SSF organizations apart from allowing everyone a chance to speak. Learning about SSF and their issues across the world was a highlight of the workshop for many participants. One participant found the coffee breaks useful as they presented opportunities for exchange of ideas between sessions.

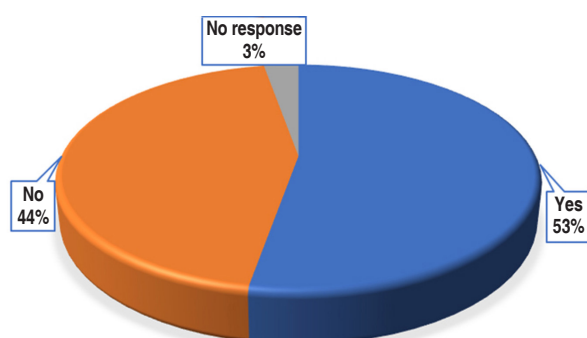
The field trip to various sites in the Negombo Lagoon was memorable for many respondents as it helped in shaping their understanding of local practices and created connections with local people, communities and organizations. One participant said that the perspectives of the Tamil fishermen and the panel discussion on the Palk Bay transboundary conflict left an impression, while another said that sharing space with a fisherwoman from Colombia and being a witness to her powerful messages was memorable. One respondent noted that it was good to have the inaugural session full of anticipation, solidarity and goodwill from speakers and participants.

Workshop webpage

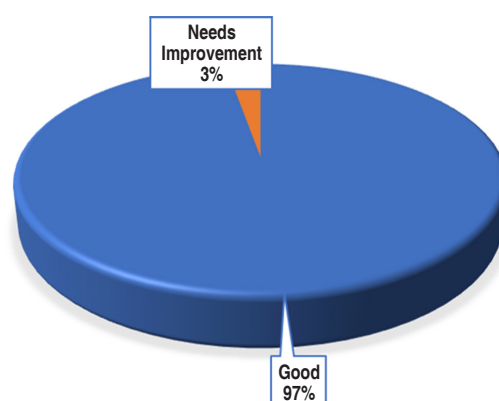
Participants said that while the dedicated webpage for the workshop looked good and had all the needed information, its layout could have been improved. They suggested that social media apps could be more effectively used, and noted that while critical publications can be shared, strategic conversations need not be uploaded on the portal. There was also a suggestion that HTML links rather than PDF documents be used for information such as profiles. Some participants were not aware of the webpage and suggested that organizers needed to draw more attention to it and at various times.

The following charts were prepared based on the answers received to the questionnaire:

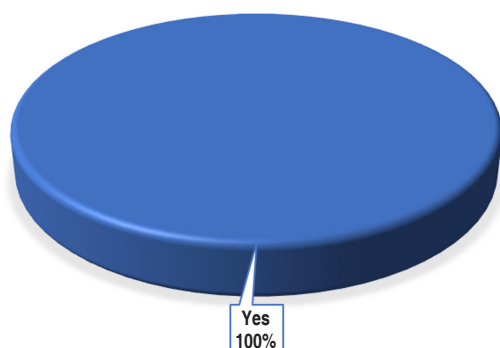
1. Adequacy of time to discuss issues and formulate action points



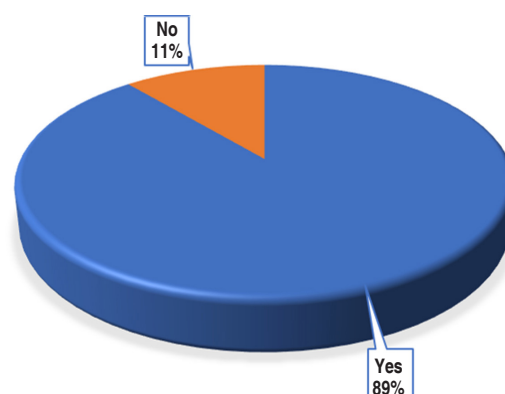
2. Interpretation at the workshop



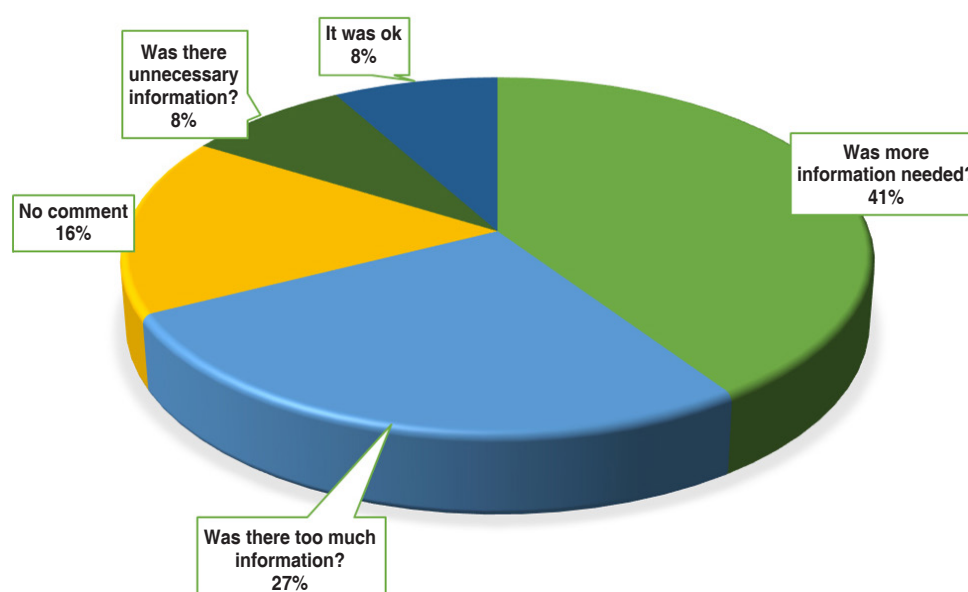
3. Usefulness of materials given: 100 per cent replied in the affirmative



4. Adequacy of methods used (group discussions, explanatory presentations)



5. Content of the workshop



Conclusion

Participants, on the whole, returned positive comments on the workshop as well as the materials provided to them. They found the sessions useful, even when the time allocated ran short, or when certain sessions were prolonged beyond the allotted time. Group discussions scored highly among respondents as these helped in exchanging viewpoints, while learning that SSF problems appeared to be similar worldwide was insightful for many participants.

Annexure 7

List of participants

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

1. Mr. Mitchell Lay

BANGLADESH

2. Mr. Muhammed Mujibul Haque Munir

BELGIUM

3. Ms. Joelle Philippe

BRAZIL

4. Ms. Ana Paula Rainho
5. Mr. Gustavo Falsetti Viviani Silveira
6. Mr. Henrique Callori Kefala
7. Ms. Josana Pinto da Costa

COLOMBIA

8. Ms. Libia Esther Arciniegas Liñan
9. Ms. Lina Maria Saavedra Díaz

COSTA RICA

10. Mr. Jesús Chaves Vidaurre
11. Ms. Vivienne Solis Rivera

GERMANY

12. Mr. Francisco Marí

GHANA

13. Mr. Benjamin Betey Campion
14. Mr. Mike Abaka-Edu
15. Mr. Peter Linford Adjei

INDIA

16. Ms. Aarthi Sridhar
17. Mr. Rajdeep Mukherjee
18. Mr. Olencio Simoes
19. Mr. Pradip Chatterjee
20. Mr. Sisir Kanta Pradhan
21. Mr. V. Vivekanandan

INDONESIA

22. Mr. M. Adli
23. Ms. Susan Herawati

ITALY

24. Ms. Lena Westlund
25. Ms. Velia Lucidi

MALAYSIA

26. Mr. Azrilnizam Omar

NORWAY

27. Mr. Svein Jentoft

PANAMA

28. Mr. Gavino Antonio Acevedo Gonzalez

PHILIPPINES

29. Mr. Roberto Ballon

SPAIN

30. Ms. Marta Cavallé

SRI LANKA

- 31. Mr. Ahilan Kadirgamar
- 32. Mr. Annalingam Annarasa
- 33. Mr. Ashoka Kumara Karunarathana
- 34. Mr. M. G. Kularatne
- 35. Ms. Meera Srinivasan
- 36. Mr. Oscar Amarasinghe
- 37. Ms. Ranulya Jayasinghe
- 38. Ms. Subashini Kamalanathan
- 39. Mr. Upali S. Amarasinghe
- 40. Mr. Upul Liyanage

SWEDEN

- 41. Ms. Hanna Wetterstrand

TANZANIA

- 42. Ms. Lucyphine Julius Kilanga
- 43. Ms. Rosemarie Nyigulila Mwaipopo

THAILAND

- 44. Mr. Laed Mengsai
- 45. Ms. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk

THE NETHERLANDS

- 46. Ms. Cornelia Quist
- 47. Mr. Maarten Bavinck

UGANDA

- 48. Ms. Margaret Nakato

INTERPRETATION

- 49. Ms. Sofia Norton
- 50. Ms. Mercedes Rafael Ramos
- 51. Mr. S. Sivagurunathan
- 52. Mr. Francis Rajan

DOCUMENTATION

- 53. Mr. Siddharth Premkumar

AUDIO-VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

- 54. Mr. Benet Amakantha

ICSF STAFF

- 55. Ms. Elyse Noble Mills
- 56. Ms. Ganga Devi S
- 57. Ms. R Manjula
- 58. Mr. Ronald B. Rodriguez
- 59. Ms. S. Sangeetha
- 60. Mr. Sebastian Mathew
- 61. Mr. N Venugopalan

IDEAS BOARD

TABLÓN DE IDEAS

KEY PRIORITIES PRIORIDADES PRINCIPALES

ISSUES

PROBLEMAS

Lack of communication materials as product of the SSF summit
- no dedicated team/organization that do this for us

Cambio climático/
CLIMATE CRISIS

Se desconocen las Directrices

Government & Inter-governmental organizations strong prior support to Aquaculture from SSF

BLUE ECONOMY (fisheries, aquaculture, marine resources) looking for out of fishing area

AQUACULTURE
Fishing up resources and communicating fishing areas used by SSF

AQUACULTURE
Finding the market with fish products and competing with SSF

Local food security & livelihoods dependent on environment
Global food security/ Global demand for increased production from aquaculture

Expansion of Energy sector in Fishing Areas

CONVENTIONAL AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY (CFS)

Regional POA-SSF
NPOA-SSF
Local POA-SSF

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES (COF)

NATIONAL PLANS OF ACTION for SSF Guidelines Implementation (NPA-SSF)

Small-Scale Fisheries SUMMITS

UN OCEAN CONFERENCE (UNOC)
WLA, FWA, SFA

HOW CAN THE SSF SUMMIT SERVE AS A SPACE FOR SSF TO WRITE & PUBLISH A ROAD MAP?

PROCESSES PROCESOS

SPACES/EVENTS

ESPACIOS/EVENTOS

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN SSF FORMAS DE REFORZAR PPE

Find SYNERGIES in SSF

Justicia climática

Inclusión en la arena política
Ser parte de la agenda política

MORE DATA SHARED BY FAO on SSF and SSF Guidelines Implementation

Mayor participación movimiento secundario alimentario

Necesitamos estrategias de adaptación al Cambio Climático

Participar en todos los espacios posibles

Se necesita el compromiso de los gobiernos

Consentimiento Pleno libre e Informado

El tema de derecho a las aguas

SSF llamado a la acción

Defensa del territorio (todas las elementos del territorio)

Acceso a la pesca sostenible y acceso a la conservación

Reconocer la conservación con la gente

Alternativas que sean de estas comunidades

Zonas costeras, ríos y lagos

Oponerse a la acuicultura intensiva

Desarrollar una estrategia de ataque y un equipo para la implementación de la conservación

Clear message on supporting or fighting against aquaculture. There are good/sustainable aquaculture and bad aquaculture.

ADRIANA should express to report with clarity the importance of policy making

Promote SSF/ Traditional aquaculture that are proven/ shown to be sustainable (i.e. central-east American ones)

Defensa de Derechos colectivos

Develop a clear definition and practical aspect of Collaboration that applies to both cases when interests align and when they do not align

Apoyo financiero

Incidir en los gobiernos para la consulta

Caso de emergencia sucediendo

Educar a las autoridades políticas, + educación

Promote platform that allow fishers' voices rather interpretation of their voices

Focus on Practical Components of Participation: elaborating a Capacity Building Manual for creating a support to fishers from SSF

Forum to share experiences of Good Practices

FAO de SSF
Indicador de calidad
Indicador de calidad
Indicador de calidad

Trabajar juntos

Que las organizaciones que se unen se unan y que hablen por nosotros

Que el financiamiento llegue al Sector

Involucrarse en los gobiernos para elevar la pesca de pequeña escala

Políticas en contra de la pesca pequeña escala

Crear rigidez
Crear mecanismos de gestión de recursos

Sentir responsables para la implementación de la conservación

More Data and Research on SSF

Unir Fuerzas

SDG son obligatorios (deben de implementarse)

Beneficiarios de la conservación

Que las organizaciones que se unen se unan y que hablen por nosotros

Que el financiamiento llegue al Sector

Involucrarse en los gobiernos para elevar la pesca de pequeña escala

Políticas en contra de la pesca pequeña escala

Crear rigidez
Crear mecanismos de gestión de recursos

Sentir responsables para la implementación de la conservación



Report of the Sri Lanka Workshop on Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-Building in Small-scale Fisheries

ICSF in collaboration with Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (FSSF) had organized an international workshop titled 'Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-Building in Small-scale Fisheries' from February 24-26, 2025 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The workshop, which brought together a diverse group of 61 participants from 23 countries, built on the insights and outcomes of the four regional workshops jointly organized by ICSF with partners in connection with the proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) by the United Nations. The workshop aimed to both build an informed understanding of the kind of support SSF organizations need, and develop a collective plan of action for future work.

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