

# Aiming for Holistic Management

A workshop to strengthen small-scale fishery communities in the context of the SSF Guidelines was held on 28 September 2018 at the National Science Foundation in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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A workshop was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). The workshop, held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 was attended by 45 participants from the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD), the Director General of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (DFARD), National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) and Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC), and 15 officers from Coast Conservation Department (CCD), Agriculture

equality and gender mainstreaming. Professor Oscar Amarasinghe, President of the SLFSSF, spoke about sustainable resource management, co-management, value chains and post-harvest practices including fish processing by women, social development and the need to empower fishing community organisations. The need for management to be integrated, inclusive, participatory and holistic was highlighted.

After the technical sessions, the participants were divided into four groups with each group being given two topics for discussion. The group discussions were conducted by Dr. Nilantha De Silva with the help of students from the University of Ruhuna.

The first group discussed the following topics:

*(a) Responsible Governance of Tenure*

Overlapping laws were identified as a key issue hindering the governance of tenure. Other issues such as the loss of beach access; the lack of appropriate regulations and enforcement; and conflicts between resource users were also discussed. For each issue, the various actors with a stake in coastal and marine tenure, including the government departments for Fisheries, Tourism, Wildlife, Forest, Environment, Irrigation, CCD, MEPA, fishing communities, the shipping and tourism industries, etc., were identified. Responsible nodal agencies for coordination and implementation were also identified. It was noted that political commitment is necessary, as is community empowerment and capacity building. The group recommended that a national committee for all aquatic environments (inland and marine) be established.

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Department, Ministry of Tourism, Department of Wildlife, Coast Guard (Navy) and Marine Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative in Sri Lanka, Nina Brandstrup, was the Chief Guest of the event.

Senior Professor Upali Amarasinghe, Joint Secretary of the Sri Lanka Forum for Small-Scale Fisheries (SLFSSF) presented the SSF Guidelines and dealt with issues of governance of tenure, including the need to identify and respect the rights of fishers to fish resources, land (beaches) and adjacent areas, and of gender

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*(b) Sustainable Resource Management*

The group discussed how the lack of knowledge about the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) is a major lacuna, which points to the need for comprehensive studies by the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and universities, with the support of funding organizations and the MFARD. Political support is also needed to conduct national level awareness and monitoring programmes for sustainable resource management. The group called for regulations, based on well-designed studies, to be formulated by the fisheries ministry and relevant policy makers, such as National Science & Technology Commission (NASTEC). Another problem is the failure to recognize research output and the lack of facilities to conduct scientific research. It was suggested that research be translated into policy and sufficient funds allocated for filling research gaps. The group also discussed the need for a national level monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) system for small-scale fisheries.

*(c) Establishing Co-Management Platforms*

In the case of existing co-management platforms, provisions to declare fisheries management areas and fisheries management committees have been made in Act No. 35 of 2013. The deficiencies include the lack of funds for implementation of co-management practices; dysfunctional national advisory committees and inadequate community consultation. To improve these, it was suggested that there be separate budgetary allocations for co-management, and areas be identified where co-management can be implemented. Collaboration between the MFARD, Treasury, district secretaries and all stakeholders in the fisheries sector is critical.

*(d) Community Organizations*

Fisheries Co-operative Societies (FCS) are the existing community organizational structures and play an important role in co-management. Rural Fisheries Organizations (RFO) deal with inland fisheries co-management. The role of Fisheries Lagoon Management Committees (FLMC) (for lagoons) and Fisheries Management Coordination Committees (FMCC) (for marine

fisheries) was also discussed. Several barriers restricting community organizations from fulfilling their roles were identified, one being that cooperatives are not under the control of the fisheries department. Others include the lack of state intervention, fisher participation and funding sources. The group recommended awareness building as a solution to these challenges.

The second group discussed the following topics:

*(a) Social Development*

Three major gaps were identified for the poor health, sanitation and social development among fishing communities: inadequate drinking water, poor awareness and facilities for sanitation and insecure housing. Water purification plants, sanitation drives and housing development and loan schemes were suggested for each issue respectively. Nodal agencies were also identified to allocate responsibilities: the Water Board, the Department of Fisheries, Health, the National Housing Development Authority, local governments, etc.

*(b) Employment and Decent Work*

The group suggested several actions to ensure occupational health and safety in small-scale fisheries along with the identification of departmental responsibilities: search and rescue mechanism, technology and skill training (DFARD, NAQDA, Navy, Coast Guard); weather alerts and warnings (Department of Meteorology, DFARD); awareness raising on labour laws and rights (DFARD, NAQDA and Department of Labour); vessel safety and life-saving equipment (DFARD, NAQDA and CEYNOR); and health programmes (DFARD, Ministry of Health).

*(c) Gender Issues*

Several issues related to gender in fisheries were highlighted. A policy for 25 per cent representation of women in all decision making bodies was recommended. The importance of educational programmes as a solution to cultural barriers was discussed, along with issues of women's safety and security at the workplace. The responsibilities of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Fisheries and Ministry of Policy Planning were identified. The group observed that unequal wages

between men and women needed to be rectified using better regulation by the Ministry of Labour.

The third group discussed the following topics:

*a) Value Chains, Post-Harvest and Trade*

The group discussed issues of post-harvest handling losses, destructive or illegal fishing practices (e.g. dynamite), the lack of infrastructure (ice storage, anchorage, etc.), the absence of standardized boat design and low supply of labour. Added to these, appropriate fish grading systems and auctions were not available to small scale fishers, which leads to exploitation by middlemen. Women are underrepresented at landing sites. The lack of awareness among fishermen is a problem, leading to inferior quality and prices (for example, bottom set gill nets were kept for too long in the sea causing a deterioration in fish quality). Promoting fishing activities as a family business (by engaging in diverse links in the value chain), adopting new technology and providing training were suggested by the group. Better access to credit facilities and strengthening of extension services were a few other solutions to iniquities in the value chain.

*b) Disaster Risk and Climate Change*

In the discussion on disaster risk reduction, the need to strengthen weather warning systems was highlighted. Fishing communities also need proper communication equipment and other technology. The role of the Meteorological Department, Disaster Management Centre, DFAR and community organizations was discussed. An appropriate insurance scheme for fisheries needs to be developed. The effects of climate change on fisheries have not been adequately studied, which requires more funds to be allocated to research agencies. The rights of fishers in instances of beach erosion have not been established and this needs a proper legal framework.

The final group discussed the following topics:

*a) Policy Coherence, Institutional Coordination and Collaboration*

A persistent issue for small-scale fishers is of government officers flouting regulations and overstepping their authority. Addressing this requires discussions with relevant institutes (for

example, on fishing in wildlife reserves). One solution is to inform both officials and communities about rights and duties. Responsible agencies were identified such as departments of Fisheries, Wildlife, NAQDA, NARA, etc. Management plans for small-scale fisheries need to be developed that create common platforms for all stakeholders. Some laws need to be updated while others need implementation through increased coordination between stakeholders. (For example, an update in the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, 1996 so that roles and responsibilities are clearly specified.)

*b) Information, Research and Communication*

Lack of robust information (including traditional knowledge) and data about small-scale fisheries was highlighted, with a suggestion to form a dedicated unit to collect and constantly update this information. (The MFARD could lead this initiative, with contributions from universities, technical institutes and NGOs.) The collection, storage and dissemination of information were discussed in detail. The group discussed legal barriers, exchange of information between institutes and the community, the scarcity of trained officers, etc. The group felt that demonstration farms for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture can help in dissemination of new knowledge and training. Communication and collaboration between institutes needs to improve and a mechanism should be developed in universities to identify research areas relevant to the socio-economic needs of small-scale fisheries. This will need funds to be allocated for research, a plea also made by the other groups. 3

**For more**



<https://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/events/sri-lanka-1>

**Process of Building Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries: Proposal from Sri Lankan Fisheries Communities, Negombo, Sri Lanka, 22 November 2011**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/yemaya/detail/EN/2192.html?>

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