

Buying into a Noble Idea

An early champion of the interests of small-scale fishers, the East African nation of Tanzania is among the trailblazers in plans to implement the SSF Guidelines

The United Republic of Tanzania is endowed with about 349,000 sq km of marine and freshwater bodies, comprising substantial fishery resources. This has made the fishing industry one of the major sectors of the country's economy. For the past six decades, the government has been struggling to develop the industry to secure benefits from the resource, especially in terms of increased employment, income, fish supply and generation of foreign currency from exports. There exists a large gap between the potential yield and actual harvest. The maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for both inland and inshore

For the past six decades, the government has been trying to find the root cause behind the low level of production. This generated multiple prescriptions, confusing the means that needs to be pursued. The list of suggestions has included the following issues: open access, poverty and profit motive, the tragedy of the commons, overcapacity, overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, environmental degradation, lack of capital, lack of credit facilities, low level of technology, marketing barriers, high cost of transport, numerous dispersed fishing grounds and landing sites, high post-harvest losses, women's exclusiveness, flaws in government policies and the lack of a culture of savings.

Dealing with these diverse prescriptions has been difficult, especially in optimizing the effective use of limited physical and financial resources. The search for effective SSF management was why Tanzania was among the first countries to buy the idea of developing an international instrument for providing guidelines on how to go about dealing with multiple SSF challenges. It participated in almost all consultative platforms that deliberated the development of the SSF Guidelines. This includes the global SSF Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand, the regional consultative workshop in Zanzibar as well as the technical workshops in Rome.

Implementation plan

Following the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) during its 31st session, the country began to plan for its implementation. With financial and technical support from the Food and

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marine waters stands at about 2.14 mn tonnes per annum; the actual yearly production ranges between 370,000 tonnes and 470,000 tonnes.

Since becoming independent 60 years ago, the government of Tanzania, in collaboration with the private sector, and local as well as international organizations and development partners, has executed several fisheries development programmes and projects aimed at developing small-scale fisheries (SSF) in the country. Although some progress has been made, a lot remains to be done, especially in devising a workable strategy for increasing production and engaging increased numbers of youth and women in gainful employment in fisheries.

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Processing of small pelagic fish in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. The maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for both inland and inshore marine waters stands at about 2.14 mn tonnes per annum; the actual yearly production ranges between 370,000 tonnes and 470,000 tonnes

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), plans were put in motion to ensure the noble objectives in SSF Guidelines were put into practical effect.

The process began with the national awareness-raising workshops that deepened the relevant SSF actors' knowledge and understanding of the thematic areas and guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines. This was followed by the formation of a National Task Team (NTT) consisting

of personnel from the central government, the local government authorities (LGAs), academia, research institutions, women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), beach management units (fishers' organizations), and the private sector represented by the National Association of Fish Processing Companies. The overarching Terms of Reference (ToR) for NTT were to engage stakeholders across the country—from marine and inland fisheries—in consultative


planning and development of a National Plan of Action (NPOA) for implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Over 6,500 persons were effectively engaged in the consultative process of situation analysis, issues identification and in planning on how best the country can implement the SSF Guidelines. It is worth noting all the steps involved in developing the NPOA. The NTT strived towards ensuring the process was participatory and inclusive to ensure ownership, which is an important element of sustainable approaches.

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team repackaged the message around an institutional framework and the issue of proportional representation, legitimacy of fisheries regulations, and macro issues such as the negative impact of coastal urbanization, coupled with the development of beach-front tourist hotels and commercial port development activities. Likewise, the vivid side effects of unco-ordinated cage farming, which denies access rights to capture fishers, was highlighted to illustrate an urgent need for addressing human-rights issues in SSF.

Human rights

Furthermore, it was explained to the stakeholders that by preventing illegal fishing, a great majority of people can continue accessing food fish, and that this is not violation of human rights but rather a requirement for upholding human rights, provided the rules are legitimate. The approach proved to be a useful tool in building constituencies among stakeholders. Copies of the National Plan of Action-SSF Guidelines will soon be available online. 

The NTT managed to collect adequate data and information with regard to salient issues in SSF that need to be addressed. The data and information were collected based on the Participatory Research Assessment (PRA) approach used across the country. It included review of historical data and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) in fishing communities and districts. Also, consultative platforms at community, district and national levels were organized for verification and validation of findings in the course of developing the draft NPoA.

Finally, the draft was endorsed by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. The NPoA-SSF Guidelines present major issues identified; they outline challenges and mitigation measures based on the thematic areas of the SSF Guidelines, namely, human rights; responsible fisheries; sustainable development; and ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation.

The human-rights dimension was initially misunderstood, since a great majority of stakeholders thought it was geared at protecting illegal fishers from being arrested, prosecuted and punished. However, the NTT managed to create awareness with regard to broader human-rights issues. The

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National Task Team (NTT)

<https://www.nationallgbtaskteam.co.za/>