

CONCEPT NOTE

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

Asia Workshop:

*IYAFA 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries
5 to 8 May 2022, Bangkok, Thailand*

Context

The UN General Assembly has proclaimed 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022), with FAO as the lead agency. This provides an opportunity to further reiterate the objectives and promote the implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines.

Approximately 90% of the 140 million people engaged in fisheries globally work in the small-scale fisheries sector, predominantly, but not only, in the Global South. These small-scale fisher people (men and women) catch half of the world's seafood and provide over 60% of the fish destined for direct human consumption. For each fisher person in the small-scale sector, at least four other people are engaged in related land-based activities, such as the preparation of equipment, fish processing, and marketing. In total, more than 500 million people are estimated to depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. As a family-based activity, fishing makes a direct contribution to household food security, where women play a particularly important role both as the link with the market and as the provider of food in the household, in addition to their reproductive role. This significant contribution to food security, livelihoods and to local and national economies is expected to improve through the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Small-scale fisheries provide the first and most important link in a long chain of social, cultural and economic activities that contribute to the health and well-being of local communities and wider society. Fishing constitutes far more than merely an economic activity, but rather forms part of the culture, identity and way of life of fishing communities, marine and inland, with customs, food habits, rhythms of life, rituals, spiritual beliefs, value systems, traditions and social organization closely linked to fisheries, and to the aquatic milieu on which their livelihoods depend. The provision of fish and fishery products by small-scale producers also plays an important role in food sovereignty, enabling low-income consumers for whom other comparable sources of food are not readily accessible, to enjoy their right to food and other human rights. Often, small-scale fisheries have been the only form of social protection available and accessible to many marine and inland fishing communities.

Women play a vital but largely unrecognized and undervalued role in realizing the right to food by supplying fish and fishery products. The FAO estimates that in 2018, 59.5 million people, at least 14% of whom were women, were directly engaged either full time, or more frequently part time, in capture fisheries or aquaculture. This is likely to be a gross underestimate given that women's work in the fisheries sector is often unpaid and unrecorded. The most significant role played by women in fisheries is at the processing and marketing stages. Active in all regions of the world, women have become significant entrepreneurs in fish processing. In fact, most fish processing is performed by women, either in their own household or as wage laborers in the large-scale processing industry. However,

despite their entrepreneurial success, women often have to deal with considerable hardships and adverse working conditions. They may also face unequal competition for accessing raw materials for their processing and trading activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the lack of social protection and the disproportionately negative impacts of pandemic control measures on the small-scale fisheries sector. While reducing the supply of fish to the post-harvest sector, and diminishing access to fishing grounds and resources, including of migrant fishers, the pandemic control measures have exacerbated poverty in the small-scale sector, the burden of which is disproportionately shouldered by women.

Objectives of the Workshop

In this context, ICSF and its members are organizing four regional workshops and women's exchanges in 2022 in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, in partnership with fishworker organizations globally.

The overall goal of the Asia workshop is to strengthen the recognition of small-scale fisheries' crucial contributions to global food security and nutrition, the importance of tenure rights in the sector, and social development.

The objectives of the workshop are:

- To increase international engagement of fishworker organizations regarding food security, tenure rights and social development issues;
- To deepen cooperation between fishworkers and like-minded organizations regarding food security, tenure rights and social development; and
- To amplify the voices of women in the inclusive development of small-scale fisheries.

The workshop is an opportunity to take stock of how the SSF Guidelines are being implemented in Asia to eradicate poverty, ensure food security and nutrition, and promote the tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities.

The Asia workshop will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 4-8 May 2022 at the Berkeley Hotel, Pratu Nam, 559 Ratchaprarop Road, Makkasan, Rachatewi, Bangkok 10400 Thailand Tel: (66 2) 309-9999 ext. 3114, Mobile: 087-547-3936 and Fax: (66 2) 309-9900-0.

Participants

The workshop will include 45 participants from community-based organizations, national and international fishworkers' organizations, women in fisheries networks, and civil society organizations from 11 South and Southeast Asian countries - including Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam.¹

¹ The target groups will primarily be drawn from organizations involved with the preparation, negotiation and implementation of the SSF Guidelines in Asia since 2011, such as IPC's Asia Regional Group, and fishing communities and organizations that ICSF members work with in their local and national contexts.

Methodology

The workshop will be in three days, plus an additional day for exchanges between Women in Fisheries (four days total). The workshop will focus broadly on discussing the obstacles to securing rights to food security and nutrition in fishing communities and how small-scale fisheries contribute to the food security and nutrition of others in their local and national contexts. Another focal point of the discussions will be on how to ensure the protection of tenure rights in small-scale fisheries, including rights to access and use of marine and inland waters, and coastal and riparian lands.

The specific methodology of the workshop will be developed once inputs have been collected from participating organizations. Fishworkers' inputs to the process will be key in determining the questions and specific topics that will be discussed in the workshop. ICSF has developed a questionnaire and country fact sheets to be shared with participants. Some of the sub-themes that may also be addressed in the workshop, and which are central to the work of ICSF and its fishworker partners, include: human rights of fishers, fishworkers and fishing communities; social protection; impacts of 'blue economy' agendas on small-scale fisheries; impacts of climate change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives on small-scale fisheries; roles of fisheries organizations, associations and cooperatives; decentralization of fisheries governance structures; mainstreaming gender equality/equity in fisheries; and promoting decent work and social development of fishing communities.

The workshop will involve:

- Collaborative discussions and activities in which fishworkers are able to share their experiences and perspectives, learn from each other, and develop collective strategies and plans of action for addressing these issues in their local and national contexts;
- Providing open, inclusive spaces for fishworkers' and like-minded organizations to meet face-to-face and deepen their cooperation on advocacy work related to food security and tenure rights; and
- Exchanges between Women in Fisheries, which highlight their experiences, the challenges they are facing, and the creative solutions they have developed to address these challenges.

The general structure of the workshop includes:

- **Day 1:** Discussions and presentations on access to resources for small-scale fishing communities
- **Day 2:** Discussions and presentations on social development for sustainable fisheries, food security and poverty eradication.
- **Day 3:** Exchanges between women in fisheries and development of a gender action plan
- **Day 4:** Development of a collective declaration or action plans on specific themes that participants want to prioritize.