

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

IYAFA 2022: Asia Workshop -Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions aim to identify key issues for small-scale fishers and fishworkers in Asia in line with the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines and the objectives of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022. The questions cover the environmental, economic, and social aspects of small-scale fisheries, with particular emphasis on strengthening governance and organizations. The thematic areas identified by participants will guide the development of the workshop agenda.

Response by: Zaw Zaw Han, Evergreen Group, EGG, Myanmar

Personal Experience

1) How are you linked to small-scale fisheries in your country? Can you describe the major characteristics of the sector?

EverGreen group worked to help fishers affected by cyclones in 2008. Fishers in the country use drift nets, stow nets, long lines and some small traps to catch crabs. Some small nets like push snet and cast nets are also common in the area. There is almost no processing in the area. Catch is sold to collectors. Crabs (alive) are exported mainly to China.

Environmental Sustainability

1) Have you been involved in conserving or managing (marine or inland) fisheries resources? Are there any lessons that you would like to share?

Yes, there are a few concerns. The mesh size of nets often don't follow regulations and catch undersize fish. Mangrove destruction is common in the area. In some places, electric shock fishing has also been observed. There are not enough control measures in place.

Economic Viability

1) What challenges do small-scale fishers face in getting boats, gear and engines in your country? How do they deal with these challenges?

Affordability is a huge issue. Fishers often go to loan sharks to secure funding at high interest rates.

2) What challenges do small-scale fishers and fishworkers face in accessing local/regional/international markets (e.g. competition from sellers, infrastructural

issues, poor access to loans)? Do they receive any support (e.g. from the government) to facilitate access to these markets?

Marketing is the main challenge. Fishers have to go through local collectors or brokers, who in turn sell the product to wholesale markets and export companies. Fishers can't reach out to exporters directly. There is no affordable credit system. There is no government support for marketing. Poor infrastructure is also a huge issue.

3) Do you think the income generated from small-scale fisheries is adequate to meet small-scale fishers and fishworkers' basic needs?

Small-scale fisher families are part of the subsistence economy. Often, small-scale fishers turn to cutting mangroves to make a living.

Social Sustainability

1) What are the main government programmes available in your country for addressing poverty and improving the standard of living of fishing communities (e.g. education, health insurance, pension scheme, housing, sanitation)? What are the barriers to accessing such programmes?

At the moment Myanmar is under political turmoil and it is difficult to comment about social sustainability. Before the pandemic some associations were established and functioned with the support of aid agencies and the government.

2) What are the most common fisher and fishworker organizations in your country (e.g. trade unions, cooperatives, community-based organizations)?

Community Based Organizations were most common till a few years back.

3) Are many fishers and fishworkers members of these organizations? Are women active in these organizations? How do these organizations help fishers and fishworkers improve their lives and livelihoods?

Till 2019 many organizations in the Ayerwaddy Region were functioning well. Women participation was also good.

Governance

1) Do fishers and fishworkers in your country have rights to fishing grounds granted by the government? Do they have traditional rights? Are their human rights protected?

The current political situation and subsequent turmoil has affected the entire nation. Fishers are not exempt from its impact

- 2) **Have you heard of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines)? If yes, how can the SSF Guidelines improve your well-being?**

We are not aware of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

Gender Equality and Equity

- 1) **What are the major challenges faced by women in fisheries in terms of access to resources, markets and participation in fisher and fishworker organizations in your country?**

Women participate in inland fishery activities. No discrimination has been found.

- 2) **Are there laws or policies that benefit or protect the rights of women in fisheries?**

There are no specific regulations and policies for women fishers. There are no specific women organizations either.

Food Security and Nutrition

- 1) **Is there any legislation or policy recognizing food security and nutrition as a human right in your country (e.g. right to food act, nutritional guidelines)?**

The Ministry of Health issues guidelines for nutritional education.

- 2) **How do small-scale fisheries contribute to local food security and nutrition?**

Small-scale fishers sell valuable catch and keep the rest for daily consumption. Fisher diet comprises mainly of fish. It is their main source of protein

- 3) **Are there similarities between fishing and farming communities in your country (e.g. in terms of challenges, opportunities, culture, social organization)?**

Both communities have been left behind by the development agenda. Access to services and resources are major challenges for both.

Resilience

- 1) **What kind of changes did the COVID-19 pandemic cause in small-scale fisheries in your country? How did fishers and fishworkers respond to these changes? Did they receive any support from the government or other organizations during the pandemic?**

In 2020, some fishers received rice, and pulses from the government as part of Covid-19 relief.

- 2) **What are the major threats fishers and fishworkers face and what are their impacts? These may include environmental threats (e.g. cyclones, typhoons, coastal erosion and degradation) and other threats (e.g. eviction, aquaculture development, sand mining, river diversion, land reclamation, infrastructure development, industrial activities, pollution).**

Cyclones are a major threat in the delta. In some areas, industrial pollution has impacted fishers. Infrastructure development has also proven to be problematic.

