Aquaculture

Shrimp farms or shrimps harm?

Myths abound about how the farmed shrimp industry can alleviate rural poverty, as the case of Thailand shows

During the last two decades, shrimp aquaculture has become an increasingly important alternative to ocean-caught shrimp. By the late 1990s, roughly a quarter of the world's 2.5 million tonnes of shrimp came from farms, up from just one-twentieth in the early 1980s.

Globally, the farmed shrimp industry, which represents a substantial component of the increasingly important aquaculture, has often borne the brunt of criticisms especially about environmental damage. In fact, whether from the North or the South, concerned NGOs have often, quite rightly, campaigned against the industry's negative impacts upon mangrove systems, its salinization of waterways and its transformation of coastal ecologies.

Shrimp farming in countries such as India, Indonesia, Thailand and Ecuador has developed because of the relative cheapness of coastal land, the poor regulatory frameworks governing land use and title, the eagerness of local and foreign elites to profit, and the seemingly insatiable desire for shrimp among consumers in countries like Japan, the US and the European Union .

Yet, what has been remarkably absent from much of the analysis of the shrimp industry is an assessment of the labour conditions in the industry. The boosters of shrimp farming, be they government agencies, multilateral banks or transnational corporations, wax lyrical about the benefits which accrue to shrimp farmers in the developing world.

However, shrimp farm owners only constitute a small proportion of the total numbers of participants in the sector. Besides the industry's environmental impact, one must ask whether people have benefited from the increased opportunities for employment shrimp farming has created in rural areas?

A case study of Thailand might answer this question, apart from providing some background to the circumstances of the industry's development. Thailand became the world's leading exporter of farmed shrimp in the mid-1990s. It is also the home of the developing world's leading transnational agribusiness company, Charoen Pokphand , otherwise known as the CP Group.

Thailand's shrimp industry grew through the co-ordinated efforts of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the CP Group and Thai government agencies, all of whom helped construct an institutional and infrastructural framework to facilitate rapid expansion, minimal regulation and maximum profits. Tax incentives, tariff-free technology imports, income tax-free holidays, and export credits formed part of the generous packages offered to Thai and foreign companies setting up operations in Thailand's rural areas.

Within a short time, factories were springing up in coastal rural areas to process the shrimp produced on surrounding farms. Each factory employed upwards of 2,000 workers.

More jobs

Farms also became sites of employment, and in the 10 years between 1985 and 1995, the occurrence of wage labour rose from 14 per cent to 33 per cent in all the farms. By the end of the 1990s, farmed shrimp generated over US$1 billion in exports, although this was down from a peak of US$2 billion in 1995. This made shrimp one of the most valuable of Thailand's exports

and an industry central to the economy. One might think that with its high value, this would transfer into better conditions for those working in the industry, but one would be wrong.

Workers who are employed on farms are often locals whose previous occupations are no longer viable. For example, on the eastern coasts of southern Thailand, many shrimp farm workers were previously small-scale fisherfolk, who obtained most of their catch within the 3-km coastal zone. Shrimp farms, however, have caused significant pollution through the silting of tidal zones and the increased presence of organic matter. The net effect has been to reduce coastal fisheries and thus damage the possibilities for local fisherfolk, generally meaning they must seek alternative sources of income.

But making the move to working on a shrimp farm is not necessarily an advancement. Firstly, most shrimp is grown over a 4-month period, with a one- or two-month break in between each crop, during which there is no employment. Secondly, continuous wages during the crop depend on successful harvests, and with the very high rates of crop loss in the industry, there are no guarantees of income. Thirdly, the rates of bankruptcy at the farm level are very high, and there is often little security of employment, with workers often changing farms every year. More importantly, even if all the right conditions are met and there is a good harvest, farm workers, if their incomes were to be spread out over a single year, would not even receive Thailand's legal minimum wage (about US$4 a day).

However, the main source of employment generated by the shrimp industry is in the large processing factories. However, rather than 'liberating' people through wage labour, these factories can actually reinforce existing inequalities, as well as create new ones.

The factories are industrial plants whose workforce is entirely female. The work conditions involve standing all day, with workers having to seek permission to go to the toilet. Management of the factories is quite clear on the reasons behind the all-female labour force: they are cheaper than male workers. While workers generally receive the minimum wages, they must pay for their own transport to the factories. There are no unions, overtime is compulsory, all hiring is casual and there are no employment guarantees.

New opportunities

Those supporting the industry have argued that by employing women, the factories are, in fact, giving women an income they once never had, and are allowing them to pursue new opportunities. Yet this is only one side of

the story. Surveys done at the factories have found that around two-thirds of the women are married, with children. The immediate consequences of their employment is not greater freedom but actually a reinforcement of the gendered division of labour which, under these arrangements, expects women to perform child-rearing duties and provide additional family income.

None of this takes into account the undocumented workers whose position within the farmed shrimp industry is even worse. In southern Thailand, there are factories where Burmese workers are housed in locked-in conditions (that is, they can not leave the factory premises), where average wages are half the legal minimum and where strike activity has been met with violence and harassment.

Clearly, the picture of employment in the farmed shrimp industry in Thailand is not one of simple improvement in people's livelihoods. There are complex and contradictory issues at play. Yet, it is obvious that new forms of exploitation have emerged. In an industry where significant export revenues and profits have accrued to transnational companies, such as Charoen Pokphand and Mitsubishi, and to local elites, it is time that increasing attention was drawn to the means by which such wealth can be redistributed more equitably. While the environmental impact of shrimp farming will continue to garner campaigns and protests, the conditions and future of the shrimp industry's workers should now be of equal concern to interested parties.

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Report

Fisher folk conference

Globally fishy business

A recent meet in Thailand focused on Asian fisheries in the era of globalization

Millions of people in Asia depend on fisheries for a living, making it a critical component of economic growth and a major source of food security in the region.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), in 1990, 84 per cent of the world's fishers were concentrated in Asia—9 million in China, nearly 6 million in India, and 4 million in Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines taken together. The majority are small-scale, artisanal fishers, eking out a living from coastal and inshore resources.

A conservative estimate would place the total number of people involved in fishing, processing, trading and other fisheries-related activities in Asia at about 120 million. For artisanal fishing communities, fishing is a source of livelihood as well as a culture and a way of life.

Asian fisheries have, however, witnessed major changes in the past few decades, as governments have sought to modernize the sector by bringing in more efficient gear and technologies, including bottom-trawling and purse-seining.

The focus on expanding production and exports has received an impetus in the current phase of globalization. It was to discuss these developments and their implications for the small-scale marine and inland fisheries sector that representatives of fisherfolk and peasant organizations as well as NGOs from 11 countries in Asia met from 25 to 29 January 2002 at Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand for the *Asian Fisherfolk Conference: Cut Away the Net of Globalization*.

Representatives from the following countries were present: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, along with representatives from the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and Aotearoa-New Zealand and South Africa.

The conference was organized with the following objectives:

- to analyze the impact of globalization, specifically liberalization, privatization and deregulation, on the small-scale fisheries sector;
- to document initiatives and gains by Asian fisherfolk to improve their situation, such as, but not limited to, organizing, peoples' campaigns, advocacy, resource management and lobbying;
- to learn about the role and situation of women in the fisheries sector; and
- to consolidate networks among fisherfolk organizations in the Asian region.

Joint effort

The workshop was a joint initiative of several organizations. These included the the Federation of Fisherfolk of Thailand, the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), the Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (FSA), NGO-COD, the World Wildlife Fund, the Andaman Project, the Prince of Songkhla University and the Waliluk University—all from Thailand, as well as PAMALAKAYA (the National Federation of Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

(ICSF) and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).

Participants felt that globalization processes lead to a loss of income and livelihood, dislocation from fishing grounds, denial of access rights, breakup of communities, social problems, loss of traditional systems of knowledge and wisdom, degradation and destruction of aquatic resources and violations of human rights.

The pressure on women of fishing communities has increased in specific ways, translating directly into increased workloads, stress and pressure to earn higher incomes. Participants called for a reversal of laws, programmes and policies as well as the dismantling of institutions of globalization that are primarily attuned to the interests of powerful economic players and that marginalize fishing communities.

Participants demanded an immediate halt to, among other things, the following:

- destructive use of fishing gear like trawlers, push-nets, anchovy purse-seines (using lights), fine-meshed nets and other similarly destructive practices, that deplete aquatic resources, and destroy the very livelihood of artisanal fishers;
- fisheries access agreements between countries, as well as joint ventures and other similar arrangements for harvesting and utilizing aquatic resources, that deplete these resources and deprive local fishers of their livelihoods;
- investment, subsidies and other forms of State support to the industrial and large-scale sector and to non-owner operated mechanized vessels, that have led to overcapacity and overcapitalization;
- further growth in capacity of domestic industrial fleets in several countries of the Asian region and the export of this overcapacity (through formal and informal means) to waters of neighbouring countries, impacting negatively on artisanal fishers, both of the home country and of the country they fish in;
- 'free trade' in fish and fish products, given the overwhelming evidence from all parts of the world that free trade in natural resources leads to the rapid destruction of resources and of livelihoods of the majority, even as it brings in profits in the short run for a few;

- imports of fish and fish products, especially of products harvested / processed locally, that push down prices and impact negatively on incomes and livelihoods of local fishers / processors, including the women;

- export-oriented policies of governments, often under the compulsion of repaying foreign debts, even as domestic fish supplies stagnate, and sections of the population are malnourished, endangering local food security and sovereignty;

- export-oriented aquaculture, mariculture and other similar forms of monoculture, not including traditional aquaculture, that are displacing local communities and destroying their environment;

- collection of live coral fish and coral reefs for export;

- adoption of technologies, programmes and policies that marginalize the role of women in the fisheries sector;

- big 'development' projects, such as construction of dams, bunds and barriers that destroy the livelihood of local fishers, both in the inland and marine sectors, displace local communities and destroy local habitats such as mangroves;

- the privatization of coastal commons and water bodies through activities like industrial expansion, tourism, aquaculture and the establishment of national parks, which displace local communities and destroy their way of life;

- polluting activities including indiscriminate use of agrochemicals, mining, dumping and transshipment of toxic and nuclear wastes, that impact negatively on the health of local populations and lead to the degradation of inland and coastal habitats;

- introduction of exotic species in inland water bodies for aquaculture, a practice that has led to the extinction of local species and impacted negatively on local ecosystems;

- introduction of genetically modified fish species in water bodies, even on an experimental basis, in keeping with the internationally agreed 'precautionary principle';

- violence against small-scale fishers, including destruction of their life and gear by the owners of industrial and commercial fleets;

- detention of fishermen by neighbouring countries in the Asian region for alleged illegal fishing; and

- human rights violations by the State, in the form of arrests and detentions of members of fishing communities and their organizations.

Participants called for establishing participatory mechanisms to ensure that all decisions related to the use and management of fisheries resources at the local, national and international level are made in partnership with the fisherfolk.

They stressed the need for States in the region to work out appropriate mechanisms for the release of artisanal fishers who drift into the waters of neighbouring countries and face punishments completely disproportionate to their offense. They also called for an agreement that ensures safety for artisanal fishers who target shared stocks between countries, taking into account traditional rights to access such resources. In this context, they endorsed Point 7 of the Statement from the recent meeting organized by ICSF, titled *Forging Unity: Coastal Communities and the Indian Ocean's Future*.

Above all, participants called for the sustainable and non-destructive

management and use of the resources of the lakes, rivers, seas and oceans by all humankind and asserted that the rights of artisanal fishing communities—the guardians of these water bodies—to use, manage and benefit from them, must be protected and accepted.

Finally, participants committed to protecting the rights to life and livelihood of fishing communities and to protecting and conserving aquatic resources, indigenous species and ecosystems, while demonstrating concrete alternatives towards a people-centred development. They also committed to observing World Fisheries Day on 21 November, the Anti-WTO day on 30 November and the World Food Day on 16 October, at the Asian level with a regionally co-ordinated action by fishing communities to demonstrate their solidarity.

This report has been filed by Chandrika Sharma (icsf@vsnl.com) of ICSF, who attended the Hat Yai conference

Platform for collaboration

These are policy recommendation for the rehabilitation of small-scale fishing communities along the Andaman coast of southern Thailand after the tsunami

The earthquake that occurred near Sumatra island in Indonesia on 26 December 2004 resulted in tsunami that hit the Andaman coast of southern Thailand. The tsunami greatly devastated the lives, property and infrastructure of coastal communities, along with coastal resources in six provinces, namely, Krabi, Phang Nga, Satun, Phuket, Trang and Ranong.

Among the hardest hit groups are the small-scale fisherfolk who have resided in the coastal areas for many years, and have traditionally sustained their livelihoods through small-scale fishing activities. Based on the information collected on 13 January 2005 by the Fishery Development and Extension Office that functions as a co-ordinating unit for relief initiatives for marine and fishery-related areas, the tsunami resulted in 5,315 large-scale and small-scale fishing vessels being damaged. With regard to the large-scale vessels (more than 10 m in length), Phuket, Ranong, Phang Nga and Krabi have suffered the most among the six provinces. The total number of large-scale vessels damaged is 1,337. Likewise, 3,978 small-scale fishing boats (less than 10 m in length) have also been damaged. The greatest damage to small-scale fishing boats was reported from Krabi, Phang Nga and Trang Provinces.

The extent of destruction of fishing gear has also been phenomenal. To date, 49,548 pieces of fishing gear have been destroyed, along with a large amount of aquaculture equipment (such as floating cages), fish ponds and fish nursery areas. The overall destruction has so far led to a widespread setback of the community's livelihoods across the six provinces.

With regard to loss of life amongst the small-scale fisherfolk, the rapid survey and most recently updated data from the Coalition Network for Andaman Coastal Community Support reveals that, out of the 418 fishing villages located along the Andaman coast, 186 villages have been affected. Data collected on 15 January 2005 revealed 662 deaths and 1,016 missing persons. (This does not cover Ban Nam Kem, Kao Lak and Phi Phi Island, where search activities are still going on. A preliminary survey reveals that at least 4,900 people have been killed, while 6,000 people remain missing.)

In all, 2,205 houses have been destroyed, along with 2,519 fishing vessels and a large amount of fishing gear like fish cages, crab nets and traps and shrimp nets.

The majority of the population along the Andaman coast are small-scale fisherfolk, mainly Muslims, followed by Buddhists, the Mokens and the *U-rak-ra-woy*. The two last groups are also known as sea gypsies. These fisherfolk are closely linked to the sea through their fishing activities. Some also take up supplementary livelihood activities such as farming.

Severely damaged

Thirty communities were severely damaged by the tsunami. These include Ban Bangben, Ban Ow Koey, Ban Nanok, Ban Talaynok, Ban Tobnua, Ban Pekampuan, in Ranong Province; four communities in Koh Ra Island and Koh Phra Thong Island; and four villages in Kokhao Island, Ban Pak Triam, Ban Nam Khem and two villages at the Pakarang Cape and some communities in Tab Lamu, Pang Nga Province, three Moken and U-rak-ra-woy communities at Rawai, Sapam and Siray in Phuket Province, two U-rak-ra-woy communities in Phi Phi Island, and Ban Sangka-oo and Ban Hualaem in Lanta Island, Krabi Province, Ban Kohmook in Trang Province, Ban

Borjedlook and two other villages in Sarai Island in Satun Province.

After the tsunami, a lot of aid was given to the affected communities, mainly from the government, the private sector and public organizations that came to the affected areas to provide immediate relief and initiate long-term rehabilitation plans. Nonetheless, the aid programmes and a number of policies followed by these different groups lacked a holistic or integrated approach. Each organization executed its own plan, without co-ordinating with other agencies. This resulted in duplication and other problems.

Relief assistance in the temporary camps lacked a clear co-ordinating structure that could allow for appropriate and rapid decisionmaking. Due to the lack of needs assessments, the number of houses built did not match the actual numbers of people who needed housing. Furthermore, the temporary shelters were built without consultation, based on orders from Bangkok, and did not correspond to the actual needs of the victims.

For instance, in Ban Huai Lame Klang, on Lanta Island, where the majority are Muslims, shelters were built on the premises of a Buddhist temple, when the existing school could have been used as a temporary shelter. The Muslim community, therefore, could not live there, which meant that the money and effort were wasted.

Since the assistance was aimed to fulfill immediate needs, many of the initiatives were conducted rapidly, without considering the importance of supporting existing community systems and ensuring community participation, as well as with little consideration for environmental and social aspects. This lack of people-centred and environmental concerns will create additional problems.

Food assistance for the affected people was implemented in a chaotic manner, and the affected people were excluded from sharing management responsibilities. Consequently, there were problems of unequal distribution of food. Also, food aid often contradicted local cultural norms. Many of the victims were Muslim, so the distribution of non-*halal* tinned food caused unnecessary distress.

The government policy on relocating fishing communities away from the sea has not been well received by the affected fishing communities, as it would require them to completely change their way of life. The fishing communities wish to live near the sea, along the coast or canals, because they need to look after their boats and fishing gear. When ashore, the boats must be within sight of the owners, especially during storms. This requirement is strongly embedded into the traditions of the small-scale fisherfolk.

The loss and damage of fishing gear has rendered the small-scale fisherfolk unemployed. There is thus a need for immediate assistance for repair and replacement of destroyed gear and boats. Nonetheless, government policy on compensation has been restricted by legal and bureaucratic constraints. For instance, those who are entitled to receive compensation must have a registered boat and fishing gear, a permit to fish and a licence issued by the Department of Fisheries, along with seven other official documents. Thus, the compensation process has become a slow and painstaking one.

Additionally, there are legal questions over property rights, especially where claimants live on government-owned land, public land, land that belongs to members of the royal family, private land or land that has unclear title. There are also instances of multiple title deeds, and sea gypsies who do not have Thai citizenship face a special problem. The affected victims who fall under these categories are required to approach a committee for a case-by-case review.

Bureaucratic delays

All these bureaucratic processes further delay relief for the affected communities, and the speed at which they can get back to normalcy and stand on their own feet, rather than depend on donations. Such delays lead to other social problems, such as indebtedness and migration.

Previous initiatives in rehabilitating the environment have been segregated sectorwise, and not viewed from a perspective of natural resource management as a whole.

Past technical studies and research on geology, risk areas and the rehabilitation of coastal resources have not resulted in guidelines that could be used in policy planning for natural resource management. Nor have these studies suggested how to ensure community participation, and integrate the local community's traditional knowledge in formulating policy frameworks and action plans, which would include promoting the use of non-destructive fishing gear and techniques. There is also no clarity yet on the role of community and local organizations in the planning and implementation of such plans.

The tsunami has only worsened the long-term problems faced by the small-scale fisherfolk. Yet, the rehabilitation of community and coastal resources could turn this catastrophe into an opportunity. This should be the time to revive the community in a sustainable way, by squarely facing the problems that each group has. The primary focus should be on participatory consulting to rebuild local social systems and to stress that the people themselves must be the driving force in rehabilitating their community and natural resources, which will differ in each area. The process requires a great deal of time and effort in formulating detailed action plans. The preliminary approach includes the establishment of the community's central fund to support community initiatives and occupation development, to conduct resources assessment and to implement rehabilitation activities, for instance, the replanting of mangroves, seagrass management, re-installment of artificial coral reefs, and releasing fish species.

To ensure that the community can undertake the above activities, studies and work plans must be sensitive to local ecology, and support the participation of the community and their organizations. The engagement of these groups should take into account both local and scientific knowledge as well as the experience of neighbouring countries that have faced similar problems of natural disasters before. Additionally, capacity building and participatory learning should be supported in order to enhance the community's ability to manage itself.

Support gaps

The government must clearly identify and enforce a variety of actions to support the affected families, all of which must share the same high principles and standards. Additionally, it should clearly explain these measures to the affected groups. There should not be gaps in the support or overlaps, where duplication of effort can

take place. This would reassure the affected groups that they would receive fair treatment from the government's aid programmes.

The government must be responsible for providing food to the victims during the next three to four months. The distribution of food must be systematic, with specific handout times and measures to ensure equal distribution for communities who are fully engaged in rebuilding their homes, or repairing boats and gear.

Assistance must be provided for the repair and/or replacement of boats and fishing gear, apart from immediate compensation. There is also a need for an accurate, periodically updated, database on loss and damage, and relief distribution. Apart from functioning as a monitoring tool, this could serve as a platform of collaboration between the government and the community to collectively identify responses to their problems.

In the matter of housing, the legitimacy of ownership documents must be verified. In cases where the claimants do not have legitimate legal documents to establish ownership of the land, the government should delegate such land to the community, to establish permanent settlements. In cases where the land in question belongs to private owners (which implies that, technically, before the tsunami, the people living there were squatters or disputed owners), and where the community strongly affirms its wish to remain in the same area to support livelihoods, the government must intervene to resolve the conflict, perhaps by redistributing the land or granting long-term lease. Permanent settlement would not only provide security to the community, but would also give it a sense of ownership and encourage the formulation of long-term development and community management plans. Relocating the coastal communities elsewhere must be avoided. Equally important, the government should take this opportunity to re-assess all land title deeds for coastal areas, as previously the issuance of documents for these areas was not transparent. Many areas of public land were sold to the private sector, despite the fact that the fishing community had been living there for a considerable time. They frequently did not even realize that the land that their ancestors had lived on and passed down through several generations had already become the private property of powerful individuals.

Lack of infrastructure

The lack of basic infrastructure in coastal communities has caused many social problems. Many of the communities are densely populated and often do not have access to electricity or clean drinking water. The government should now take

advantage of the post-tsunami situation to deliver the necessary infrastructure immediately through people's participation. The affected people should also be given a chance to identify their needs and participate in the decision-making process. Many victims do, in fact, have the strength and desire to work together to rebuild what has been lost. The government should provide the financial resources and utilities needed, but the people who are going to live there should control their design and deployment.

There is also a need to organize and support stress-relieving activities and trauma care centres to reassure the victims that they are not alone in their suffering. These activities will improve their mental health and help them start rebuilding their shattered lives.

To support the livelihoods of the fishing community, the government must guarantee prices of seafood for an initial period of three months (January to March). As an incentive to continue fishing, fishing quotas should not be enforced, and fuel should be provided at subsidized rates for fishing vessels. Additionally, the government should discourage the use of destructive fishing gear and techniques, particularly trawl and push nets, and ensure that the Fisheries Act is enforced rigidly.

The government should also consider a permanent mechanism of compensation for fishermen when they are forced to abandon fishing due to natural disasters or uncontrollable causes.

In providing permanent settlements for the community, the government must have an accurate picture of the needs of the community. Through government agencies like the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs), village heads should be urged to work together with the community to identify settlement areas, and design houses and floor plans in coherence with their own particular traditions and culture.

A single tsunami relief fund should be established, and managed by appointed committees, composed of representative sectors of society, including community organizations. To ensure that relief measures are implemented in an integrated manner, the government must work with the affected groups to enhance sharing and collective formulation of community-based rehabilitation plans.

These recommendations have been formulated by the Collaborative Network for the Rehabilitation of Andaman Communities and Natural Resources, and the Coalition Network for Andaman Coastal Community Support (rrafa@loxinfo.co.th), Bangkok, Thailand

Imagining the Future

The subsidiarity principle is one of the more powerful ideas to have been suggested for restructuring—or re-imagining—the fisheries field

If governance is defined as the capacity to think beyond the confines of sectoral interests and immediate needs, imagination is one of its key ingredients. Images of how society might look are critical to efforts for solving problems and opening opportunities. After all, the very definition of what constitutes a problem or opportunity depends also on the way the future is imagined. To take this discussion to the field of capture fisheries: Do we dare imagine the world's 30 mn fishermen happily leaving their dangerous occupations to blend into the industrial workforce? This is, after all, what has happened to countless other professional groups in history, and their erstwhile members are not necessarily the worse off for it. Or, to present a contrary view, do we imagine a world in which small-scale fishing communities are given historical rights to the resources that they have always relied on, and will hopefully live happily ever after? Although this image will appeal to many of those who support small-scale fishermen today, it also has its potential shadow-side: historical rights may not only keep others out, they can also lock people in. All we want to point out here is that it is not only important to possess images, but to investigate their possible consequences too.

Principles go beyond images. Where images paint pictures, express ideas and sometimes also formulate hopes, principles are the measuring rods that separate the wanted from the unwanted, the good from the bad. There are many principles floating around, and often they are unspoken. The subsidiarity principle is one of the more powerful ideas to have been suggested for restructuring—or re-imagining—the fisheries field, not only with regard to management but also to technology. We, therefore, believe it is worth paying more attention to it.

The adjective 'subsidiary' is more familiar to the ordinary person than the noun 'subsidiarity': it suggests a relationship in which one entity is auxiliary to another. A subsidiary firm is thus a company that is owned by (or possesses a legal relationship with) another, bigger company. The derivative notion of 'subsidiarity' has its origins in the realm of political and legal thought, referring to the relationship between higher and lower political units in society. P G Carozza provides a working definition in his paper, "Subsidiarity as a Structural Principle of International Human Rights Law" in The American Journal of International Law Vol. 97: "Subsidiarity is the principle that each social and political group should help smaller or more local ones accomplish their respective ends without, however, arrogating those tasks to itself."

Images of how society might look are critical to efforts for solving problems and opening opportunities.

Helping others

Carozza is discussing the relationship between groups or entities situated at various political and social levels, and their respective duties. In his formulation, subsidiarity refers to the task of higher political units to 'help' lower units in accomplishing their

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Small-scale fishers ought to be assisted by industrial fishers in negotiating how to share resources and territories. A scene from a fishing harbour in Chile

goals, without appropriation of these tasks taking place. We will return to this unusual perspective below.

Other definitions of subsidiarity emphasize the rights of lower units vis-à-vis higher ones, and the notion that whatever can be decided at a lower level should also be done there. The subsidiarity principle is thereby a potent force in protecting inferior units from the interference of their 'superiors': it is only if the task or issue cannot be effectively addressed by the inferior unit that the higher-level unit is allowed to step in. In the United States, the notion of subsidiarity has played an important role in defining federalism; in the European Union, it has recently been accepted as one of the constitutional principles. The Edinburgh European Council of December 1992 issued a declaration on the principle of subsidiarity, which was subsequently developed into a protocol by the Treaty of Amsterdam. Subsidiarity came to play an important role in structuring the relationship and the distribution of competences between European and national-level agencies.

In the field of fisheries, authors have referred to subsidiarity to discuss the relationship between government and user groups, and the role of participation therein (see, for instance, "From the Bottom Up: Participatory Issues in Fisheries Management: Issues in Institutional Design" by B J McCay and S Jentoft in Society and Natural Resources, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1996). Following the 2004 tsunami in Asia, John Kurien in "Tsunamis and a Secure Future for Fishing Communities" in Ecological Economics 55, 2005, has used the term to discuss the responsibilities of various parties with regard to disaster relief. Both resonate an echo of the concerns of co-management, and the most appropriate way to distribute rights and responsibilities between the parties involved.

In his contribution to the discussion panel at the Sixth Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, in June 2005, Sebastian Mathew brings in another perspective. He suggests the implementation of "scale subsidiarity". By this he means the process "whereby larger fishing units are considered in a fishery only after exhausting the possibility of employing smaller fishing units in the same fishery." Small is hereby given priority over big—this is a symbolic reversal of events occurring in so many fisheries, in which the big and mighty have pushed the small off the lane.

Scale subsidiarity, or technological subsidiarity as we propose to call it, has results that are similar to other proposals for the support of small-scale fisherfolk. The Statement from the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop, prior to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheres (4SSF) in Bangkok in October 2008, thus requests access and management rights over local or traditional sea territories (Articles 1 and 2); Article 3 lends priority to small-scale fisheries in exclusive economic zones; and Article 4 strives to prohibit industrial fishing in inshore waters. In all these cases, small-scale fishermen are given territorial rights. These are motivated and anchored in a human-rights discourse that provides small-scale and indigenous fishing communities a preferential position.

Primordial rights

Although an application of the subsidiarity principle to technologies has similar consequences, it is rooted less in a discussion of primordial rights than in effectiveness. The argument is

that when small-scale fishers can do the job just as well (or better), they are given priority; when they are not yet up to the task, however, other parties have a role to play. But effectiveness with regard to what? Four criteria suggest themselves:

1. prevention of harm to the marine environment, which nurtures the fishery;
2. ability to catch what the ocean allows, taking account of environmental limitations, thereby contributing to the well-being of human society;
3. generation of a maximum of livelihood opportunities, in accordance with the need thereto; and
4. providing high-quality protein for consumers in local, national and international markets (in that order).

The advantages of small-scale versus industrial fishing are proven quite easily for criteria 1 and 4 above (although there will always be exceptions). This is not to deny that small-scale fishing sometimes has negative environmental consequences, and that improvements must be made. But the second criterion is more difficult to prove.

Can small-scale fishers indeed replace industrial fishers in capturing maximum sustainable yields? Are there not many instances where this would be done away as wishful thinking? After all, some fishing grounds are distant, and some target species are not within reach of small-scale fishing technology.

Applying the subsidiarity principle technologically would, therefore, need careful consideration of the particular ecological and social contexts because, at the end of the day, it is that context that determines what technology is appropriate or not. Then we would also need a finer gradient than 'big versus small'; the technology most appropriate to the situation may well be of intermediate scale.

It is easy to see that the scaling up or down of fishing technology that is already in place and in use is challenging. It would need a governance mechanism with sticks and carrots, and a design that allows decisionmakers to know and understand the particularities of the social and ecological system within which the technology shall operate. Thus, organizational subsidiarity accompanies technological subsidiarity.

In conclusion, we would like to go back to Carozzo and his definition of subsidiarity, which argues that social and political groups should 'help' smaller or more local ones to accomplish their respective ends. Translated to fisherfolk and their technologies, it suggests that industrial fishers should assist small-scale fisherfolk in doing their work, before seeing what is left for themselves to do. A start would be for small- and large-scale operators to get together and negotiate a deal on how to share resources and territories between themselves. A deal developed from the bottom up is likely to be more sustainable than one imposed on fisherfolk from the top down.

...industrial fishers should assist small-scale fisherfolk in doing their work, before seeing what is left for themselves to do.

Facilitating such encounters would be among the responsibilities that government agencies should assume if no one else is there to initiate them.

This would appear to be a wonderful idea—not treating industrial fishers as the 'bad guys' who have to be forcibly removed from the sector, but as compatriots who have a role to play *vis-à-vis* their weaker brothers.

As an idea, it may seem far-fetched, but not necessarily impossible to realize. As some would argue, it is a matter of getting the institutions right—and the principles behind them.

But before we can make it happen, we have to imagine it, as imagination is the mother of all social, institutional and technical reform. Before we can do something, we have to dream it.

For more

icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/resources/presentations/pdf/english/1118331992550***uni0101.pdf
Small-scale Fisheries Perspective on an Ecosystem-based Approach to Fisheries Management

Now Let's Take It Forward

In the light of the discussions at the Bangkok meet on small-scale fisheries, it is time to work towards the future of the sector worldwide

Undeniably, the Civil Society Statement adopted at Bangkok on 13 October 2008 by the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop, prior to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF), organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, and subsequently presented to it, was a singularly significant achievement. It marked the beginning of a new-found unity and common purpose of organizations active in small-scale fisheries across the world, beyond just the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). While not perfect, the Statement lays the basis for a global understanding of 'rights-based fishing'. It is significant to highlight that the Statement had its origins in the contributions made by fishing communities at various forums organized in direct preparation for the Bangkok workshop.

While not perfect, the Civil Society Statement lays the basis for a global understanding of 'rights-based fishing'.

The Statement traverses pre- and post-harvest processes, and intersects with various other themes critical to the protection of small-scale fisheries. Amongst these are value addition, gender equity, environmental protection, and the protection of the rights of local and indigenous communities. Activities and practices that have negative impacts on these processes are also addressed—like harmful industrial aquaculture and undemocratic ecolabelling schemes.

The Statement will find resonance in all fishing communities, whether in developing countries or in industrialized, so-called 'developed' countries. While a new liberalism flourishes in these developed countries, their indigenous fishing communities are being displaced and marginalized to make way for luxurious corporate extravagance.

Ultimately, the belief that access to small-scale fisheries is a basic human right and not a tradeable or transferable economic commodity, holds steadfast in the Statement—as it did in the main 4SSF Conference. That this view never came under attack or challenge during the 4SSF Conference is significant. It is, therefore, self-evident that the perspectives argued in the Statement should have considerable influence in shaping the development of global and national policy frameworks for small-scale fisheries. Or will it?

There can be no illusion that the unity found in the Civil Society Statement is by no means complete or binding on absentee groups. Many who share the vision argued in the Statement stand outside only due to their physical absence or lack of knowledge thereof. Opportunities must be created to bring them under the banner of the Statement without diluting its central thrust. The Statement must be used to garner greater support in fishing communities across the world.

Policy positions

There can be no illusion too that FAO and national government policies will miraculously conform to the views argued in the Statement. Arriving at

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global policy positions (as mediated by bodies like the United Nations and FAO) are complex and intricate processes. Implementing these is even more challenging. Changing or developing national fishery policies are just as complicated. Competing national interests and the strong power that commercial conglomerates hold on these, often lead to the voices of small-scale fishing communities being confined to the fringes. Influential too is the carrot of easy money that international fishing companies offer developing nations' governments (particularly in Africa) to access their natural marine resources at the expense of the local small-scale fisheries. This is done in the misplaced belief that these monies will bring relief to poverty-stricken nations. Creative ways will have to be explored to address this matter.

The 4SSF Conference was silent about how the views expressed at Bangkok will be taken forward. How can a 'human-rights-based fishery' be achieved in real terms? What practical steps will be taken to 'walk the talk' of 4SSF? What is the future of 4SSF?

For 4SSF to be branded as a success, the following three areas will have to be addressed in the coming period.

National-level organization

It is imperative that small-scale fisheries maintain a high level of organization at local and national levels. Meeting local needs will not emerge from the mere adoption of an international 'consensus statement'. This must be supplemented by engaging in hard and active struggles on the ground on an ongoing basis. Communities must use every available organizing tool to articulate their demands and voice their aspirations. Fishing communities must find a space in the minds of influential policymakers. This is only achieved by being upfront, vocal and relevant.

Importantly, these activities must be inclusive and involve all stakeholders in small-scale fisheries who share the vision described in the Statement. But, critically, this work must also be done in a manner that empowers poorly literate and marginalized fishing communities to assert their rights as human beings. The traditionally acquired knowledge of fisher people must be institutionalized and inserted into the general epistemic science worldwide. Traditional knowledge is relevant and will contribute to the sustainability of natural resource management.

Moreover, such organization must actively include women and other marginalized groups in the fishing or coastal community so that they can claim and protect their rightful places and equitable involvement in the sector. In many communities, the role of women has proven to be a powerful one. It both corrects their historical marginalization and the crucial role that they play in sustaining the social fabric of communities. This position must be alleviated and institutionalized.

It is imperative that small-scale fisheries maintain a high level of organization at local and national levels.

Such national-level mobilization will contribute greatly to ensuring that the democratic voices of small-scale fishers become part of the national political landscape. This, in turn, will help to influence national policy.

International solidarity

It is necessary that we must reach international solidarity as much as we can. Such solidarity must translate into a global action plan to achieve the effect of the views expressed at the 4SSF meet.

Specific local challenges do not necessarily equate into global challenges. But it is clear that local issues can also be globalized into universal demands. Struggles at the national level can find their roots in a global ideological position. The adage of "acting locally while thinking globally" remains relevant. While some of the processes at the 4SSF meet were disempowering, WFFP, nevertheless, succeeded in making sure that the collective civil society voice was heard. The power of civil society must not be underestimated.

ROMAIN LE BLEIS/PÊCHE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT

Guinean fishermen setting a gillnet while rowing. The concerns of small-scale fisheries cannot be forever relegated to the sidelines of the global agenda

The challenge is to extend this international solidarity. The more voices that can be rallied to support this position, the stronger will be the collective global voice of small-scale fishers. But critical is the need for an action plan that can drive this voice, especially now that we are no longer in the same physical space that 4SSF provided. What is needed now is the outline of such a global action plan. This must target all the existing international institutions as they currently exist.

FAO co-operation

Given that FAO was the principal organizer of the 4SSF Conference, it is necessary that it plays an active role to make sure that the views expressed at Bangkok are taken forward. It would be highly immoral for it to not think beyond Bangkok.

FAO has the power of influencing the agenda and work of its Committee on Fisheries (COFI). Civil society organizations must make sure that FAO stands tall to the task of placing the deliberations of the Bangkok meet on the working agenda of COFI. Hopefully, FAO will do so by itself. Were that not to happen, the spirit of Bangkok would have been attained in vain.

Importantly also, the concerns of small-scale fisheries must be placed on the mainstream agenda of the United Nations. They cannot be forever relegated to the sidelines of the global agenda.

In conclusion, we should state that the tasks and challenges ahead are not easy. The Bangkok meet provided an opportunity for civil society to come together to express its views uniformly—and it did so powerfully. It also provided a platform for FAO to listen to, and intersect with, these views.

Now let's take it forward.

For more

www.wffpfishers.org/home.html
World Forum of Fisher Peoples

sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/
Civil Society Preparatory Workshop

Building Resilience or Transformation?

In the wake of discussions at the Bangkok meets on global small-scale fisheries, it is now time to map out the trajectory of a human-rights approach to small-scale fisheries

Inside the exhibition centre near the entrance to the venue of the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF) held in Bangkok in October 2008, was a poster of an old, extremely thin woman, sitting alone on a wooden craft with a net in her hands. The poster's message was aimed at increasing the productivity and resilience of small-scale fisheries.

The juxtaposition of the image and the message felt strangely discordant to me, having just attended the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop, prior to the official 4SSF conference, where I had listened to stories from fishworkers and their supporters describing the current climate in which small-scale fishers operate globally, and the daily violations of their dignity and rights, particularly those of women.

The word 'resilience' was used by several speakers at the 4SSF conference, from the opening evening to the closing session.

The word 'resilience' was used by several speakers at the 4SSF conference, from the opening evening to the closing session. Small-scale fishers were urged to become resilient in the face of the global financial crisis, even as their past resilience in adapting to difficult conditions was praised. My own discomfort with the term comes from the difficulty I have had as a researcher in South Africa in trying to find a methodology that translates, to the fishers with whom I work, the analytical usefulness of the term in describing ecological systems and their processes. Added to this was the need to transform the systems of political and economic privilege we experience, in which 'risks' and 'vulnerabilities' are invariably 'violations'.

The increasing use of the term 'resilience' in fisheries management literature reflects the growing application of a socio-ecological approach to natural resource management that has permeated a very wide range of both natural and social science disciplines, as is evident from the extensive literature on the subject. The vast proportion of this work attempts to further extend and refine the application of this 'resilience' approach in various contexts. The concept has been most often applied to disaster management, and a plethora of publications have appeared in the past two years with 'resilience' in their titles, aimed at building communities' resilience to natural disasters.

From a fisheries management perspective, useful interventions have been made to extend understanding of the impacts of human agency on system interactions, and the importance of examining systemic change in terms of multiple scales, as well as the need to locate any inquiry within the context of 'change for what and for whom?'.

Long-standing critique

While there is a very extensive and long-standing critique of systems theory in general, there is surprisingly little

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debate within fisheries management literature on whether or not this socio-ecological approach adequately accommodates the multiple expressions of human agency and power that shape fisheries systems. In the current context of small-scale fisheries, does the application of this approach capture sufficiently the dominance of the neoliberal market system, and stimulate opportunities for 'transformative circumstances'? Does it accommodate the most distinguishing feature of our human systems in the context of the discussions at the Bangkok meets—our moral and ethical capacities to determine the boundaries of 'responsible fisheries' and the power relations within which our choices are embedded?

The increased use of the term 'resilience' and the paradigm it connotes is perhaps most strongly reflected in the July 2008 report on world resources, entitled "Roots of Resilience: Growing the Wealth of the Poor", a joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank and the World Resources Institute (WRI).

The report (hereafter called the WRI report) states its thesis as "successfully scaling up environmental income for the poor", which requires three elements: (a) ownership over the natural resources that they use; (b) capacity for development, which is defined as "the capacity of local communities to manage ecosystems competently, carry out ecosystem-based enterprises, and distribute the income from these enterprises fairly"; and (c) connection, which is described as "establishing adaptive networks that connect and nurture nature-based enterprises, giving them the ability to adapt, learn, link to markets, and mature into businesses that can sustain themselves and enter the economic mainstream".

The WRI report locates 'resilience' at the heart of this approach: "They also acquire greater resilience. It is the new capacities that community members gain—how to build functional and inclusive institutions, how to undertake community-based projects, and how to conduct a successful business—that give rise to greater social and economic resilience. It is the insight that ecosystems are valuable assets that can be owned and managed for sustained benefits that builds the foundation of ecological resilience. Together, these three dimensions of resilience support the kind of rural development whose benefits persist in the face of challenge."

...ecosystems are valuable assets that can be owned and managed for sustained benefits that builds the foundation of ecological resilience.

Resilience is defined as "the capacity of a system to tolerate shocks or disturbances and recover". The WRI report argues strongly that rural communities are facing increasing challenges: it posits climate change as one of the most serious challenges, while also citing population growth, "the disruption of traditional systems of land tenure, depressed and volatile prices for agricultural commodities, and armed conflict" as "serious sources of vulnerability" for these communities, and that "the ability to adapt to (them) would be crucial to the survival of rural communities".

At the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop at Bangkok as well as

SIFFS

A scene from the fishing village of Kasaba, Kerala, India.
There is need to adopt a human-rights approach to small-scale fisheries

at the official 4SSF Conference, the need to adopt a human-rights approach to small-scale fisheries predominated discussions. In the preparatory processes facilitated by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), Federation of Southern Fisherfolk (FSF) and the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), this issue was also strongly articulated. The keynote papers by Chandrika Sharma and Edward Allison captured these sentiments strongly. Sharma stressed that the human-rights approach was not a question of choice, but was mandatory: It is not "a means to an end but an end in itself". The Statements adopted at all the preparatory processes, including the Civil Society Statement presented at Bangkok, emphasize the centrality of a human-rights approach to fisheries and coastal resource management.

In South Africa, their own 'resilience' has been the biggest obstacle for artisanal and small-scale fishers...

How is it possible then that there is such disparity between these processes and the WRI report, which represents the current collective thinking of the key international institutions dealing with the protection, promotion and financing of natural resource management? The WRI report does not mention 'human rights' even once in its entire 200 pages. What it does do is explain very clearly the paradigm behind the poster of the vulnerable, elderly small-scale fisherwoman displayed at the Bangkok conference. It does so by developing a very strong, apparently seamless, argument for an economic-efficiency approach to the access to, and use and governance of, natural resources, including many examples from small-scale fisheries around the world. The WRI report is based on the premise that poverty must be addressed through enabling rural communities to use natural resources more "productively and sustainably". The aim is ultimately "to enter the economic mainstream". Building ecological, social and economic resilience is a means to achieving this.

The WRI report demonstrates most visibly how concepts and terminology are embedded in the social and economic relations within which they are used. "Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)" with "tenure security rights", "capacities" and "networks" are the tools that will be used. Participation and empowerment are instrumental, motivated primarily by expedience; they facilitate processes, reduce conflicts, and thereby promote sustainability and fast-forward the process of "scaling up local enterprises". The benefits are described in monetary terms: "currency"; "resilience dividends"; "incentives"; and (to) "overcome current deficits". The report notes that "incentive is born of self-interest" and hence governments must create the incentives for enterprise development. Sustainability makes good monetary sense, it would appear.

The WRI report never questions the legitimacy of the model of the global economy, industrial expansion or the system of capitalism upon which these are based. The need to adapt and become resilient to the impacts of climate change is explored with no reference to the 'drivers' of climate change. Reference is made only to the broader global community through the fact that political and social instability will arise if the poor cannot adapt to the challenges of poverty and climate change, which is "of increasing concern to the international community".

Useful examples

The WRI report highlights best practices in CBNRM in building "capacities" and "networks", and focuses on useful examples of success, but fleeting attention is paid to real issues of conflict or difference. The report is particularly patronizing in its assumption that until now, rural communities have not had local-level customary practices that have managed resources sustainably for generations, or social networks that have served the functions of the social

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South African fishers, along with allied workers, marching at Cape Town to fight for their rights to the sea

capital that is now envisaged. Instead, it is suggested that it will be "the new capacities that they gain that will give rise to greater resilience".

The WRI report notes briefly—in a small boxed insert—that equity is an important consideration, but fails to draw the logical conclusions. There is no suggestion that the fundamentally unequal and exploitative relations that underpin the current global economy should be changed or questioned. Even the notion of an ethic of care, and the need for a nurturing approach, most strongly voiced by feminists from developing countries, has been appropriated and is asserted as the need to develop a "nurturing natural enterprise".

How is it possible that the reality that I have heard described by fishers is so different? Consider these examples: tourism initiatives blocking fishers' access to traditional landing sites in Tanzania; ecotourism 'opportunities' in South Africa, where the traditional communities did not know that they owned 60 per cent of the tourist lodges; marine protected areas (MPAs) in Indonesia that have excluded fishers dependent on resources such as water for their basic survival...

In South Africa, their own 'resilience' has been the biggest obstacle for artisanal and small-scale fishers, evidenced by the fact that nearly 15 years after the death of apartheid and the introduction of democracy, in a country with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, small-scale fishers still do not have access to their traditional fishing grounds, and are being squeezed out by the industrial fishing sector. Women have indeed been 'resilient': they have been like shock absorbers in their communities, adapting to the vagaries of the apartheid capital that set up the industrial fishing enterprises in their towns, drew them as seasonal labour into the lobster export processing industry and then, more recently, spat them out when consumer demand in the North shifted towards live lobsters. The women have been resilient in the face of the individual quota system, which failed to allocate fishing rights to their male partners, dividing their communities, destroying their social capital, and introducing privatized, individual notions of 'rights'.

There has lately been much talk of the "death of capitalism" but, as Lenin predicted, capitalism has proved to be very resilient, in particular, global capital. It has a way of reinventing and mutating into increasingly insidious forms, and finding new markets and labour supplies. Is this the new approach to the rural poor who are dependent on natural resources? The WRI report appears to be a 'pro-poor' approach to building the wealth of the poor so that they can fund poverty alleviation, and cope with the fallout of industrial capitalism. Yes, the WRI

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A mussel harvester from Eastern Cape, South Africa.
The world over, fishers are seeking a new ethic that prizes human dignity

report is correct: small-scale fishers want ownership; they want to build social capital and practise CBNRM; they want to reduce poverty, and scale up; and they want to engage in the broader markets. But this will not happen on the scale envisaged if the systemic obstacles are not engaged with, and challenged. And, as we heard repeatedly at the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop at Bangkok, fishers want to engage with a transformed market, one which is based on a different ethic, on a system that prioritizes the human dignity and collective responsibility of all to secure the well-being of the community.

The challenge for us, post-Bangkok, appears to be the need to explore what this trajectory of a human-rights approach would look like from the perspective of implementation and action. We know that much of the language of human rights is already present in a wide range of international and regional instruments, including fisheries instruments and commitments. Many of the methodologies and tools that we are now using to assess our fisheries systems contain the potential to identify the systemic challenges and threats to the human-rights approach. But we now need to take this a step further and develop an integrated approach to strategies for intervention that we must activate to ensure that these commitments are realized. Fishworkers and fishing and coastal communities need to lead a process of mapping out this approach, being aware of the danger that it has already been pre-empted by opportunistic global governance, financial and technical aid institutions that are already using the language of a human-rights approach in their interventions.

As we have heard from many of the speakers at both the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop and the 4SSF Conference in Bangkok, a human-rights approach will, of necessity, require a more transdisciplinary approach that will link small-scale fisheries management and implementation with a wide range of other sectors and institutions. New forms of alliances among fishworkers, their supporters and activists in other sectors will be necessary, as will a fundamentally altered approach from the State and other fisheries management institutions towards their 'stakeholders'. We need to identify the mechanisms that must be put in place to expand fisheries management mandates to the interstices of this integrated approach.

Most critically, it appears to me that, as individual fishworkers, activists, researchers, academics or fisheries managers, we need to find ways to strengthen this 'reflexive' capacity of human systems that the resilience literature highlights, and individually and collectively create the pathways towards a radically transformed system and a new set of socio-ecological relations for using, producing, consuming and sustaining our fisheries resources.

For more

www.resalliance.org/
Resilience Alliance

pdf.wri.org/world_resources_2008_roots_of_resilience.pdf
World Resources 2008: Roots of Resilience - Growing the Wealth of the Poor

http://www.worldfishcenter.org/v2/ourwork-ssf.html
Productive and resilient small-scale fisheries: WorldFish Centre

Food for Thought

In the follow-up to the 4SSF Conference, fishworker organizations must capitalize on the positive experiences of social movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in the struggle for food sovereignty

The Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, "Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development" (4SSF), held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2008, constituted the first opportunity for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to listen to, and take into account, the voices of many fisherfolk representatives from all over the world, as well as of the organizations working with them, and to understand their claims and demands related to the achievement of a true social development for the fisheries constituency.

One of the emerging conclusions within the world of small-scale farmers is that there is no opposition between the farmers of the North and the South.

At the same time, fisherfolk organizations took the Bangkok opportunity to collectively discuss these issues. The Constituent Assembly of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers, held in Loctudy, France, in October 2000, was the last opportunity for many fisherfolk organizations to meet and exchange views. The international context has changed radically since then. As evident during informal conversations in the corridors of the Bangkok conference, a longer process is needed for proper discussion about the different social and economic conditions in each fishery context. Discussions among fisherfolk also revealed differences of perspective about what small-scale fisheries means in varying geographical contexts.

A similar debate took place some years ago on how to better define what was understood by 'family farm/small-scale/peasant agriculture' (agricultura campesina in Spanish and agriculture paysanne in French).

Comparing different socioeconomic contexts, a poor small farmer can be either a wheat producer in Manitoba, Canada, with 300 ha of farmland, or a rice farmer in the Red River Valley, Vietnam, cultivating just 5,000 sq m in order to survive; both will have to employ their children and wives in the farm; none will be able to send their children to school/university; and none will have great control over their future.

The debts incurred by the Vietnamese farmer to buy a carabao buffalo will be equal to the debt the small Canadian farmer will have to incur to buy a tractor.

One of the emerging conclusions within the world of small-scale farmers is that there is no opposition between the farmers of the North and the South; rather, there does exist an opposition between an industrial model of agriculture, which is dominant in the North (but is also present in the South, as, for example, with the case of a Malaysian financier who bought 5,000 ha of land to cultivate rice) and the family farm/small-scale agricultural model of production, which was once the mainstay of lively rural communities, both in the North and the South.

In great crisis

These days, the family farm/small-scale agricultural model of production

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is in great crisis, principally due to a lack of fair agricultural policies or, even more commonly, because agriculture and rural development are absolutely not priorities for government policy.

The other fact we have realized over these years of work is that none of the food producer constituencies will be able to confront their problems on their own. They represent the subaltern part of society and, therefore, they need to link up with others in the same situation to generate critical mass. The issue of food and agriculture cannot be separated into compartments: agriculture, fisheries, forests, natural resources management, and local and global markets are all interconnected. Therefore, whenever we think about an action or a platform for struggle, we must take into account this interrelation and view the different sectors as a whole. This is probably one of the main reasons why the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) was born in 1996.

An important effort must be made to capitalize on the experience of the positive processes in which social movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) have been engaged in for years in the struggle for food sovereignty, in particular, the Voluntary Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Food and the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD).

The process that led to the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization for the Right to Adequate Food is probably among the most successful in terms of the effective participation of CSOs in the definition of an international instrument that

MASSIMO VOLLARO

Farmers, indigenous peoples and workers' leaders at a march during the Forum for Food Sovereignty, held in Rome in June 2002. Food producer constituencies will not be able to confront their problems on their own

could lead to food sovereignty. In fact, the civil society Right to Food Working Group (RTF WG) had an important role in facilitating civil society intervention in the FAO Inter-governmental Working Group, set up by the World Food Summit: five years later (WFS: fyl), which elaborated and negotiated the Voluntary Guidelines text that was finally approved by the 127th Session of the FAO Council in November 2004. The RTF WG was initially set up in 2002 by FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) International and several other CSOs from different continents. In 2003, it was formally defined as the RTF focal point of the IPC (IPC WG RTF). The RTF WG had also an important role in the negotiation of the first standard-setting instrument adopted by an intergovernmental group, which has already been adopted as an important instrument for the monitoring work of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR).

From the point of view of CSOs, ICARRD represents a major contribution in form and substance to the debates and actions that need to be taken around agrarian reform and rural-development issues in the coming years.

While considering social development in small-scale fisheries from a human-rights perspective, it is essential that the human rights of fisher peoples are legally recognized, enforced and effectively implemented at the national level. These rights must include legally mandated rights to access fishery resources, to land, to food and housing, to gender equality and decent working conditions. For small-scale fisheries, social development should include the principle that fisher people also need non-discriminatory and sound economic policies that will permit fishers, particularly women, to earn a fair return from their labour, capital and management, and encourage conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

Fisheries policies should strengthen local and national markets, and need to strike a balance between national policy spaces and international disciplines and commitments. Finally, also to be considered is the development of a human-rights-based monitoring of the social development of fisher peoples. Such monitoring aims at controlling governments' performance in the light of the contracted obligations in human-rights law. It goes beyond traditional monitoring exercises done by States through the statistical units within different ministries. The monitoring efforts *per se* belong to human-rights obligations. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Implementation of the Right to Food dedicate several parts to monitoring mechanisms as key components of a national strategy for the realization of the right to food, and provide practical guidance on how to set up, and develop, such monitoring instruments. The autonomous monitoring capacity of fisher peoples and their organizations should be strengthened so that we can make more effective use of recourse mechanisms and other legal provisions instrumental to defending our rights.

It would be instructive to recall the process towards ICARRD. Social movements and CSOs gathered around the food sovereignty approach always include fisheries whenever issues related to agrarian reform and access to natural resources are being considered. The Forum for Food Sovereignty, held in Rome in June 2002, stated, "Food sovereignty requires…access to land, water, forests, fishing areas and other productive resources through genuine redistribution, not by market forces and World Bank-sponsored, market-assisted land reforms" and "to achieve food sovereignty…we will struggle to realize genuine agrarian and fisheries reform, rangeland and forestry reform, and achieve comprehensive and integral redistribution of productive resources in favour of the poor and the landless".

International agenda

For its part, FAO, as a further step in putting land and rural-development issues as a top priority

PATRICIO IGOR MELILLANCA/ECOCEANOS

A scene from San Antonio fish market, Chile. Fisheries policies should help fishers, especially women, earn a fair return from their labour

on the international agenda, organized ICARRD, which was hosted by the government of Brazil in 2006. Paragraph 14 of the ICARRD final declaration, undersigned by 92 governments, states: "We recognize that policies and practices for broadening and securing sustainable and equitable access to, and control over, land and related resources and the provision of rural services should be examined and revised in a manner that fully respects the rights and aspirations of rural people, women and vulnerable groups, including forest, fishery, indigenous and traditional rural communities, enabling them to protect their rights, in accordance with national legal frameworks."

From the point of view of CSOs, ICARRD represents a major contribution in form and substance to the debates and actions that need to be taken around agrarian reform and rural-development issues in the coming years. ICARRD has been unique in allowing rural social movements (of farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, landless and agricultural workers and producers) and other CSOs to participate in the process, on equal footing with their governments, and in a manner that is respectful of the autonomy of CSOs. Rural social movements and other CSO have been referring to ICARRD as a good practice to organize civil society participation in international conferences. The challenge now is to bring together civil society efforts with supportive initiatives that sympathetic governments and FAO and IFAD might further launch to fulfill ICARRD commitments. Resistance to implement ICARRD is still very strong, even more in the current context of aggressive agrofuel expansion.

Recently, FAO's Land Tenure Unit approached the IPC to start discussing the process of adopting voluntary guidelines on land and natural-resources tenure. Given the fact that secure rights of access for the poor and vulnerable are increasingly affected by climate change, violent conflicts and natural disasters, population growth and urbanization, and demands for new energy sources such as bio-energy, FAO, IPC and other interested organizations feel that there is a need for such guidelines. Yet more work is required to define their exact scope and framework. Following the positive examples of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food and the ICARRD process in terms of effective participation of social movements and other CSOs, FAO agreed to apply a similar methodology, which is already reflected in the tentative plan of work. The IPC greatly welcomes this, and will engage in the process, with the participation of fisher organizations and farmers and indigenous peoples.

The IPC is of the opinion that this initiative could become highly relevant in the current context of the food crisis. In fact, the issue of access to, and control over, land, sea and natural resources by marginalized rural groups has been neglected in the analysis of the current food crisis and in the policy proposals made by the UN High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crises. On the other hand, the IPC considers that it is absolutely crucial for FAO to apply a human-rights-based approach—for example, using the instruments like the Voluntary Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Food—not only in its work on access to land and natural resources for food production but also as part of its strategic framework for larger action.

For more

www.foodsovereignty.org/new/
International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty - IPC

www.icarrd.org/sito.html
International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

www.fao.org/righttofood/
Right to Food Unit, FAO

Recognizing Rights and Freedoms

The following Statement by civil society organizations at Bangkok sought to correct the neglect of small-scale and indigenous fisheries, so as to avert impending disaster and conflict

Preamble

We, 106 participants from 36 countries, representing small-scale fishing communities and indigenous communities dependent on fisheries for life and livelihood, and their supporters, having gathered in Bangkok from 11 to 13 October 2008 at the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop;

Building on prior preparatory processes, in particular the Statement developed by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and preparatory workshops organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and other organizations in Asia (Siem Reap, Cambodia), Eastern and Southern Africa (Zanzibar, Tanzania), and Latin America (Punta de Tralca, Chile);

Recognizing the principle of food sovereignty outlined in the Nyelini Declaration;

Declaring that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that the development of responsible and sustainable small-scale and indigenous fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner;

Recognizing that all rights and freedoms apply equally to all men and women in fishing communities and recognizing the continued contribution of women in maintaining the resilience of small-scale fishing communities;

Declaring that the dependence of fishing communities on aquatic and coastal living natural resources is shaped by the need to meet life and livelihood in their struggle to eradicate poverty and to secure their well-being as well as to express their cultural and spiritual values;

Recognizing the complementarity and interdependency of fisheries-related activities within fishing communities; and

Recognizing the interconnectedness between the health and well-being of coastal communities and of aquatic ecosystems;

Hereby call upon the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), other United Nations agencies, regional fisheries bodies and our respective national governments, to:

> **...the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible...**

Securing access rights

1. Guarantee access rights of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities to territories, lands and waters on which they have traditionally depended for their life and livelihoods;
2. Recognize and implement the rights of fishing communities to restore, protect and manage local aquatic and coastal ecosystems;
3. Establish small–scale fisheries as the preferred model for the exclusive economic zone (EEZ);
4. Establish and enforce measures to prohibit industrial fishing in inshore waters;

*This **Statement** was finalized by participants of the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop, on 13 October 2008, at Bangkok, prior to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand*

PATRICIO IGOR MELILLANCA/ECOCEANOS

A total of 106 participants from 36 countries met at the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop at Bangkok, prior to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries

5. Prohibit illegal fishing and all destructive fishing gear and practices;
6. Reverse and prevent the privatization of fisheries resources, as through individual transferable quotas (ITQs) and similar systems that promote property rights;
7. Reverse and prevent the displacement of fishing communities through the privatization of waters and lands of fishing communities for activities that include tourism, aquaculture, defence/military establishments, conservation and industry;
8. Ensure that the declaration, establishment and management of marine protected areas (MPAs) bindingly involve the active participation of local and indigenous communities and small-scale fishers;
9. Ensure the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge and customary law in fisheries management decisionmaking;
10. Guarantee the equal participation of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities in fisheries and coastal management decisionmaking, ensuring their free, prior and informed consent to all management decisions;
11. Recognize the traditional fishing rights of small-scale and indigenous fishers from immediately neighbouring adjacent States and set up appropriate bilateral arrangements for protecting their rights;
12. Protect all marine and inland water bodies from all forms of pollution, and reclamation;
13. Reject industrial aquaculture and genetically modified and exotic species in aquaculture;
14. Recognize, promote and protect the diversified livelihood base of fishing communities.

Securing post-harvest rights

15. Protect access of women of fishing communities to fish resources for processing, trading and food, particularly through protecting the diversified and decentralized nature of small-scale and indigenous fisheries;
16. Improve access of women to fish markets, particularly through provision of credit, appropriate technology and infrastructure at landing sites and markets;
17. Ensure that international trade does not lead to environmental degradation or undermine the human rights and food security of local fishing communities;
18. Put in place specific mechanisms to ensure that trade promotes human development, and that it leads to equitable distribution of benefits to fishing communities;
19. Effectively involve fishing communities in negotiations dealing with international trade in fish and fish products;
20. Guarantee institutional arrangements that give priority to fish for local consumption over fish for export or for reduction to fishmeal;
21. Regulate processing capacity, particularly in export-oriented fisheries, to be in line with the sustainability of the fishery;

22. Reject ecolabelling schemes, while recognizing area-specific labelling that identifies socially and ecologically sustainable fisheries;

Securing human rights

23. Protect the cultural identities, dignity and traditional rights of fishing communities and indigenous peoples;
24. Implement legal obligations arising from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequently adopted human rights legislation, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP);
25. Guarantee the rights of fishing communities to basic services such as safe drinking water, education, sanitation, health and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services;
26. Guarantee the rights of all categories of workers in the fisheries, including self-employed workers and workers in the informal sector, to social security and safe and decent working conditions;
27. Implement the ILO Work in Fishing Convention 2007, and extend its provisions to include inland and shore-based fishers;
28. Ensure that States seek the free, prior and informed consent of small-scale fishing communities and indigenous peoples before undertaking any project or programme that may affect their life and livelihoods;
29. Adopt specific measures to address, strengthen and protect women's right to participate fully in all aspects of small-scale fisheries, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, and securing their safety against sexual abuse;
30. Take urgent and immediate steps for the release and repatriation of arrested fishers, in keeping with the provisions of UNCLOS and human-rights instruments;
31. Protect men and women engaged in regional cross-border fisheries trade against harassment;
32. Enact and enforce legislation to create autonomous disaster prevention and management authorities based on the need to rebuild and revitalize small-scale and indigenous fisheries;
33. Establish mechanisms to support fishing communities affected by civil war and other forms of human-rights violations, to rebuild their lives and livelihoods;
34. Improve institutional co-ordination at all levels to enhance the well-being of fishing communities;
35. Guarantee rights of fishing communities to information in appropriate and accessible forms; and
36. Provide support to capacity-building of fishing and indigenous communities to participate in governance of coastal and fisheries resources.

National governments have a legal obligation to implement international human-rights instruments. We demand that all governments take these obligations seriously and create the environment for fishing communities to fully enjoy these rights. We demand the urgent establishment of independent mechanisms to monitor, and report on, the implementation of human-rights obligations.

We call on the FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to include a specific chapter in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) on small-scale fisheries, recognizing the obligations of States towards them.

We also recognize our responsibility as representatives and supporters of small-scale and indigenous fisheries to assist the local communities, who have so far been marginalized, to claim their rights at national levels.

We reiterate our deep sense of urgency about the neglect of small-scale and indigenous fisheries, and demand immediate action to avert impending disaster and conflict.

For more

sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/statement/statement.pdf?attredirects=0
Civil Society Workshop Statement

www.icsf.net/SU/Bk/EN/5
ICSF Guidebook: Understanding the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007

www.un.org/Overview/rights.html
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Right Form of Rights

Deliberations at the 4SSF Conference at Bangkok seemed to offer hope for a shift away from the customary simplistic thinking on rights-based management in fisheries

The Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (officially titled "Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development", and abbreviated as 4SSF), co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, from 13 to 17 October 2008, at Bangkok, will surely go down in history as signalling an end to the simplistic approach to rights in fisheries.

For long, the simplistic view held that fishery managers could solve problems merely by handing out the right to fish to whomsoever they pleased. This perspective did not really differentiate those who are allocated fishing rights, be they fishers, corporations or communities: All will be well as long as rights are just handed out—so goes the simplistic view..

So when we talk about access rights and management rights, let us do it within the context of social, economic and human rights—of individuals and communities.

Despite the element of credibility in that view—that if fishers have secure access to their fisheries, they will find it worthwhile to take care of the resources and hence management is more likely to succeed—it misses some key ingredients. Among these are: the different forms of rights (to access the fishery, to take part in management); the various holders of rights (fishers, communities); the frequent occurrence of pre-existing rights in many locations; and the need to link fishing rights with social, economic and human rights. Figuring out the right form of rights requires an understanding of all this, something that the simplistic view ignores.

The simplistic view is popular with those promoting property rights in fisheries. It has dominated the 'rights-based management' paradigm, the subject of many treatises and conferences. The result has been the excessive promotion of one form of rights—individual transferable quotas (ITQs)—which is remarkably unsuitable and damaging to small-scale fisheries.

Unfortunately, FAO, the principal organizer of the 4SSF Conference, has been party to these simplistic confluences on rights-based management, the worst example perhaps being the various 'FishRights' conferences it has facilitated. However, it is not only FAO that has been at fault. Academics—including myself—have been writing fairly thoughtlessly about 'rights-based management', though admittedly taking a reasonably broader approach that avoids the worst of the simplistic thinking. But that's still not enough. Frankly, too many of us have been caught up in an overly narrow approach to rights in fisheries.

Basic premise

So how do we move to a bigger, better, non-simplistic vision of rights? First, let's consider the term 'rights-based management'. True, this expression has been misused, but let us look at those two words to examine what they really mean. Surely, the basic premise behind them is that fisheries management needs to take place in the context of rights—all the various forms of rights.

*This commentary is by **Anthony T Charles** (tony.charles@smu.ca) of Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada*

What then are the rights to be considered? Given their mandate, fisheries agencies may be inclined to focus only on so-called 'use rights' over access to the fishery. That is where the attention has been focused, and it is worthy of some attention. But we need a broader vision of rights; so we will have to add social, economic and human rights to the picture—rights that are fundamental and cannot be given out or taken away by governments. To this we ought to add a focus on collective, or community rights, which may work particularly well in some small-scale fisheries, but which have received too little attention. Management rights need attention too—the right to be involved in managing a fishery (as in co-management). Finally, let's not forget that along with rights come responsibilities. Why not talk then about 'responsibilities-based fisheries management'?

The broader view of rights in fisheries is then a multi-faceted mix that, in its entirety, can be good for small-scale fisheries, good for communities, and good for the sustainability of coastal ecosystems. Moving out of the simplistic mode of thinking into a broader view of rights can, and will, have a big impact —just as how challenging the equally simplistic 'tragedy of the commons' thinking has moved us ahead over the past couple of decades.

So when we talk about access rights and management rights, let us do it within the context of social, economic and human rights—of individuals and communities. Let us recognize that rights may already be in place; there are certainly many documented cases of this in small-scale fisheries. And let us move towards the 'bigger picture' that comes with the realization that the fisheries 'silo' really must connect to broader policy and legal frameworks, and to the well-being of coastal communities, in order to address, in a holistic way, the many issues facing small-scale fisheries. For example, ensuring access rights to subsistence fishing in coastal communities may serve food-security goals, and incorporating post-harvest aspects in rights discussions may help reinforce the rights of women involved in marketing fish.

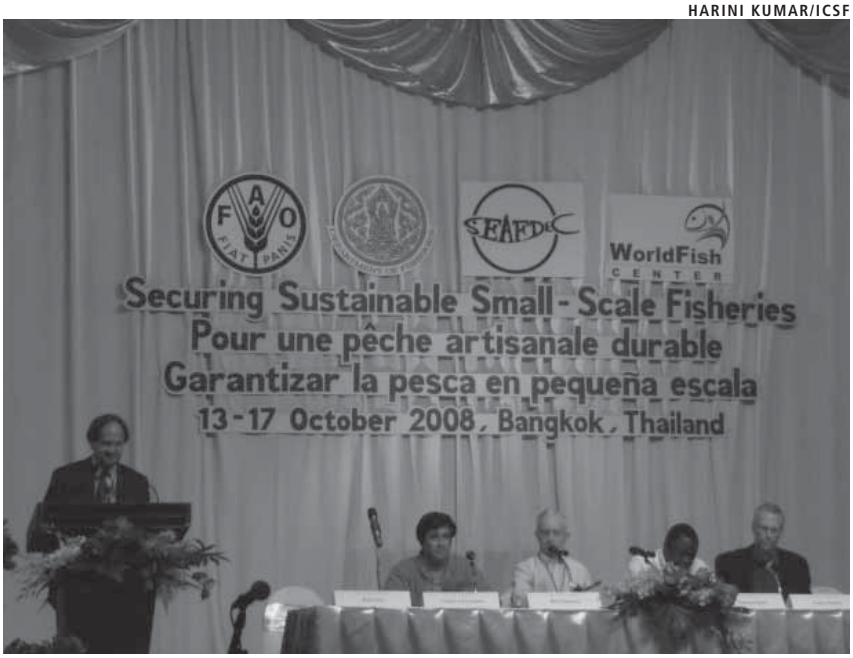
To get started, let us push for a re-defining of 'rights-based management' in fisheries. Every time we hear someone promoting fishing rights, or rights-based management, let us ask them whether they are speaking of the full range of rights that has to be considered, or whether they are still talking simplistically…

And now to look back on the 4SSF Conference. I had the opportunity to put forward the above thoughts early in the conference. Admittedly, my 'prediction' was as much a hope as anything, but that hope arose from two key realities. First, the conference itself was structured in a manner that lent it the potential to make progress. Of the three main themes of the conference itself, two focused on rights: (i) access rights and (ii) the links of fishing rights with human rights. This set the scene for progress in broadening the vision of rights in fisheries.

Civil Society Workshop

Second, a majorly successful event took place before the conference began—the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop organized by fisherfolk organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations. Over a hundred people

HARINI KUMAR/ICSF



Panel session at the 4SSF Conference in Bangkok. The Conference was structured in a manner that lent it the potential to make progress

from around the world succeeded in developing a statement on the policies and directions needed to improve the well-being of small-scale fisheries worldwide. The consensus document that they ironed out galvanized the main conference, and will undoubtedly be used in later discussions on many fronts. A key element of the Statement was the need to factor in social, economic and human rights into our thinking on fishery rights.

Progress at the 4SSF Conference was not all smooth. The first day focused largely on access rights, and, to some extent, management rights, but not on building the linkages to human rights and community rights. The second day turned to post-harvest and trade aspects. While these are certainly relevant to small-scale fisheries, the emphasis on them did not really advance the agenda of developing a broader vision of rights. The third day of the conference, however, managed to bring everything together, as it were, and one could sense the palpable energy in the air as a strong set of plenary speakers and excellent discussions synthesized the ideas on rights into a package that could potentially move things forward.

Now the momentum needs to be maintained—through research and documentation of the conceptual advances in connecting the various forms of rights...

On the final, fourth day of the conference, a panel of diverse participants spoke positively of the progress made thus far. By then, fisher organizations were already beginning to move to the next step of consolidating and presenting their positions to the forthcoming meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) early in 2009. (The ups and downs over the course of the week-long conference were well documented in an impressive newsletter, Daily Rights, produced by the civil society group, and available at http://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/).

Will all that happened at Bangkok lead to a transformation in thinking on fishery rights? Will there be success in moving beyond the simplistic thinking that has become commonplace in too many quarters? Such a paradigm shift will be a challenge, no doubt, but I feel more confident about my prediction about the end of simplistic thinking in rights-based fisheries management, having seen momentum in the right direction. In particular, the 4SSF Conference has, hopefully, once and for all, institutionalized a recognition of the need to:

- connect fishery rights to social, economic and human rights;
- take into account traditional or pre-existing rights;
- pay attention to community-level rights and local stewardship opportunities;
- broaden perspectives to include post-harvest aspects; and
- look beyond the fishery 'silo' in addressing rights.

Now the momentum needs to be maintained—through research and documentation of the conceptual advances in connecting the various forms of rights, through ongoing interactions between fisher organizations and FAO (notably to prepare for the 2009 COFI meeting), through the linking of rights to broader frameworks such as the ecosystem approach to fisheries, and through an evolution, particularly at the national level, of comprehensive multi-sectoral approaches to rights. The coming months will surely be critical in making progress.

For more

www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X7579E/X7579E00.HTM
Use of Property Rights in Fisheries Management - FAO

www.icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/dossier/pdf/english/issue_82/ALL.pdf
Sizing Up: SAMUDRA Dossier

sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/newsletter
Daily Rights Newsletter

Filling The Gap Between Theory and Practice

While Thailand has been proactive in implementing the SSF Guidelines, much work is required to join social development with sustainable fisheries

In 2015 all UN member states, including Thailand, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that include: Ending poverty, improving healthcare and education, tackling climate change, reducing inequality, and stimulating economic growth. Thailand has committed to achieving these goals by 'leaving no-one behind', thus laying the groundwork to achieve social and economic equality and acting as an impetus to transition from an 'upper-middle income' country to 'high income' country, as outlined in Thailand's 20-year National Strategy (2018-2037).

SDG 14 is titled 'life below water'. It calls for the sustainable use and conservation of oceans, sea and marine resources, including small-scale fisheries. It acknowledges the critical importance of marine resources to poverty, employment, nutrition and food security, among other things. That said, years of over-exploitation has caused unprecedented damage. Though a natural check like the COVID-19 pandemic has relieved the pressure, this goal acknowledges more needs to be done.

Thailand is a Southeast Asian nation with a tropical climate and an abundance of diverse water resources. This makes Thailand one of the world's major exporters of shrimps, fish and fish products, generating roughly 20 percent of the total food product export. Moreover, an abundance of small-scale fisheries provide for local consumers. Recent growth in the fisheries sector has brought about severe challenges, like the degradation of marine fishery resources and ecosystems because of overfishing. The importance of SDG 14 to Thailand is obvious, as is the necessity of clear regulation and intervention. Thailand has adopted a number of international and national policies, including the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). These focus on strengthening the capacity and resilience of small-scale fishing communities, including access to resources and markets.

Artisanal fishers, ethnic fishers and women fishers have historically been left out of decision-making processes of national and social development.

Research seeks to review legislation informing social development in Thailand, as also to ascertain how social development can help aid the conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal, freshwater and brackish water diversity. While the study examines issues of poverty, inequality, employment, decent work, social inclusion, occupational health and safety, education, livelihoods, sanitation, water, clean energy, climate change, domestic violence and the family institution, this article highlights

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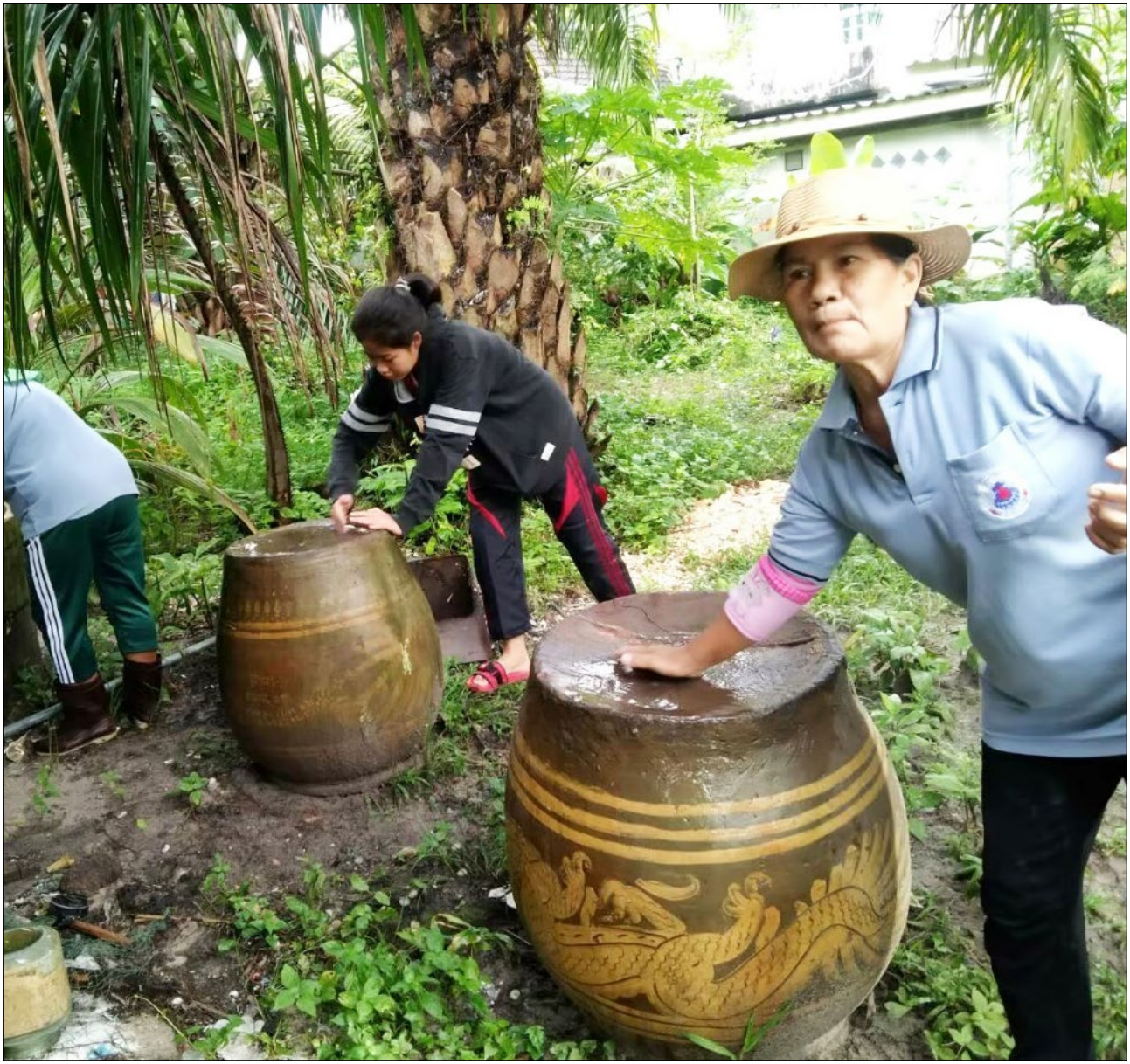
SDF / THAILAND



Village health volunteers trying to reduce mosquito menace in a fishing village in Thailand. There has been an effort to specify social inclusion in policy statements, but in reality, there are still vast gaps that make this discussion purely theoretical

the key findings. Conclusions were drawn through document reviews and analysis, focus groups and national workshops.

What the research found

In 2019, the government's policy statement was ratified and features twelve major polices and twelve urgent policies that help the country meet the SDG goals. Importance is placed on social inclusion, community empowerment and developing public heath and social security systems that cover suitable education, healthcare and employment. Since ratification, progress has been made in the realms of social security and social development.

The findings suggest that the poverty rate has decreased from 9.85 per cent in 2018 to 6.24 per cent in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruptions to economic growth, employment and poverty reduction. That said, further gains have been made with the development of the 'health security for all' programme that provides all citizens, including artisanal fishers, access to medical care. In addition, progress has been

made in terms of access to education (all children are guaranteed access until at least grade nine), public supply of utilities and sanitation.

Some progress is obvious. But more needs to be done to put theory into practice. Artisanal small-scale fishers, ethnic fishers and women fishworkers have historically been left out of national fisheries policies and decision-making processes. This has largely been attributed to gaps in government data sets, for example, on women's roles in the artisanal fisheries value chain. This shows that even though there has been an effort to specify social inclusion in policy statements, but in reality, there are still vast gaps that make this discussion purely theoretical. The consequences of this exclusion have led to a lack of knowledge and opportunity, especially with reference to the development of capacity building policy.

Further, the drive to achieve the targets outlined in the SDGs has led to the growth of development gaps and overlapping priorities. The government has indeed been promoting investment for economic growth based on marine and coastal resources (as outlined in the major policy five), such as the construction of sea ports, industrial estates and the tourism service industry, this growth concurrently removes access to the resources fishers rely on for a living, depriving them of their livelihoods. Further issues of access have arisen due to the promotion of aquaculture and mariculture as an enterprising opportunity.

The research that informs this article concludes that Thailand has comprehensive measures in place to achieve the goals set out in the SDGs, but in practice they lack coherent transition from theory to action.

Research recommendations

Considering the broader social and economic development, the following suggestions will enhance the position of small-scale fishers, both men and women:

- Developing a database system covering the whole population, ensuring it is updated and maintained regularly. It will provide an informed baseline for future policy and intervention.
- A review of the concept of development based on the principles of shared national benefits and balanced conservation and rehabilitation practices.
- Development of an area-based approach to management of fisheries and natural resources.
- Prioritisation of good governance within resource management.

Thailand has comprehensive measures in place to achieve the goals set out in the SDGs, but in practice they lack coherent transition from theory to action.

- Reevaluation of the policies on fisheries and natural resources and environmental management. They currently lack linkages to social development policies and implementation.

Adoption of these recommendations will lead to the development of policy which truly leaves nobody behind.

For more

Sustainable Development Foundation
http://sdfthai.org/

Marine Fisheries Management Plan of Thailand: A National Policy for Marine Fisheries Management
https://fisheries-refugia.org/regional-inception-workshop/inception-presentation/21-21-fr-inception-workshop-marine-fisheries-management-plan-thailand/file

The Right Form of Rights
https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue_51/3236_art_ART-01.pdf

Guardians of the Sea
https://www.icsf.net/images/yemaya/pdf/english/issue_34/1649_art01.pdf

A Level Playing Field

Fishers in Thailand have formed the Fishers Rights Network to collectively demand better wages and working conditions to prevent labour and human-rights abuses

Despite international pressure and government efforts to revise policy, Burmese and Cambodian migrant fishers in Thailand's seafood industry still face significant labour-rights abuses. While there have been some positive steps taken to improve conditions in the Thai fishing industry, such as Thailand's Draft Fisheries Act and the ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention (C188), migrant fishers still face severe exploitation. Thailand ratified C188 in 2019, but effective implementation and enforcement remain major challenges to realizing structural reform that mitigates the significant problems remaining in the industry, both in Thailand and throughout the region.

... fishers are now recognizing they have the ability to reshape the industry and improve their future, if they organize to build power.

Among the problems still facing migrant fishers in the Thai fishing industry are:

Poor health and safety conditions: Conditions on board vessels remain substandard. Fishers regularly report inadequate food and clean drinking water, poorly stocked and inaccessible first-aid kits, insufficient protective equipment, poor training, cramped sleeping quarters, the absence of toilets, and limited hours of rest that increase injuries and accidents on board vessels.

Financial exploitation: Many fishers report receiving wages significantly lower than the amount stated in their employment contracts, and, in most cases, wages are paid in cash rather than as monthly bank transfers as required by Thai law. Fishers continue to remain at high risk of debt bondage due to unlawful migration and high broker or document fees.

Document retention and movement restrictions: Fishers report that their passports, work permits, automated teller machine (ATM) cards, bank passbooks, and other important documents are often held by the boat captain or owner, and are not accessible. This restricts the movement of fishers and limits their ability to change vessels, access payments, freely transfer or remit earnings, and report abuse.

Ineffective implementation and enforcement of ILO C188: Despite ratification, significant gaps remain in the effective implementation and enforcement of C188. Thai law and labour inspections currently do not meet the standards outlined in the Convention.

However, despite these problems, fishers are now recognizing they have the ability to reshape the industry and improve their future, if they organize to build power. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has been assisting fishers in forming the Fishers Rights Network (FRN), the first and only independent and democratic trade union for migrant fishers in Thailand. Since its inception in 2018, the FRN has established organizing centres in three major Thai fishing ports, and organized over 3,000 migrant fishers. The main organizing centres are in Songkhla (in the 'Deep South'), Ranong (on the Andaman Sea coast along the Myanmar border), and in Trat (eastern Thailand on the Cambodian border). These strategic locations have allowed

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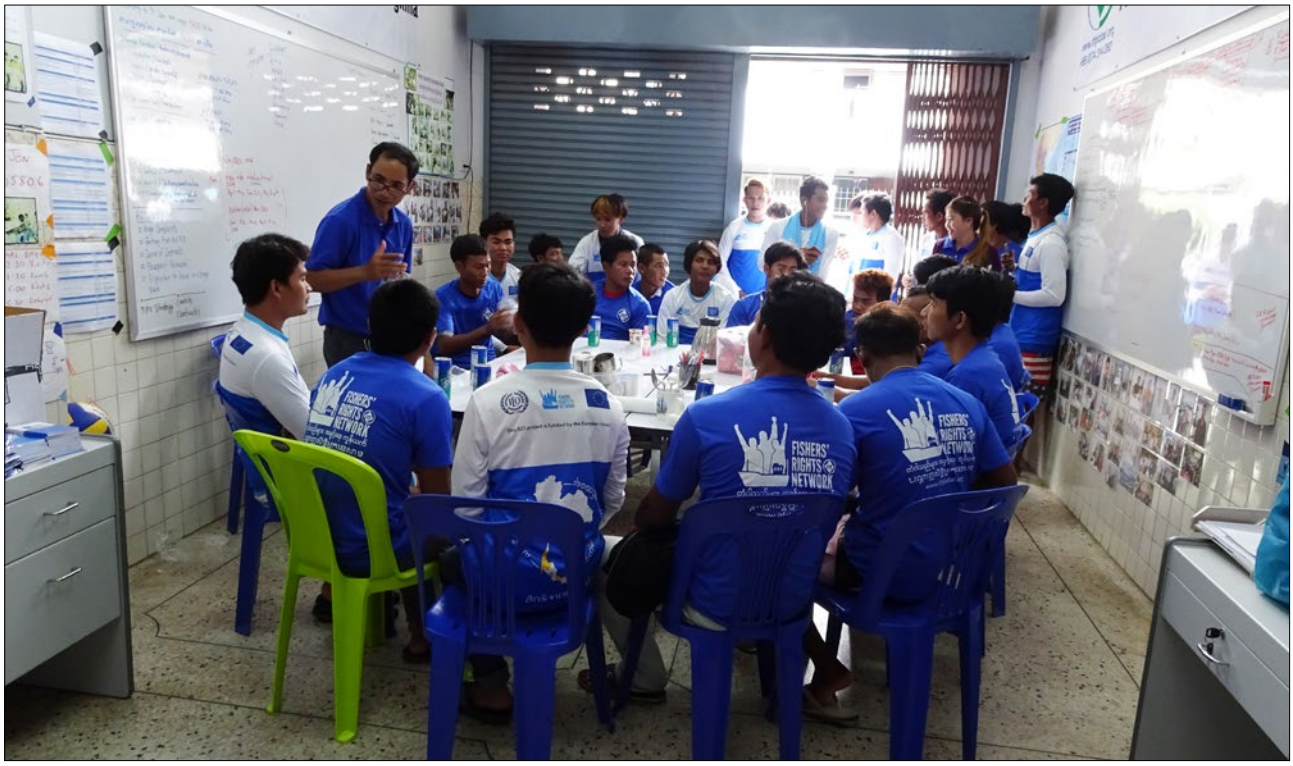


A Fishers Assembly in Songkhla, Thailand, in May, 2018. Fishers have demanded that the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) be enforced and that all fishers have a copy of their employment contract in their own language

the FRN to organize fishers as they enter the country and while they work on board fishing vessels.

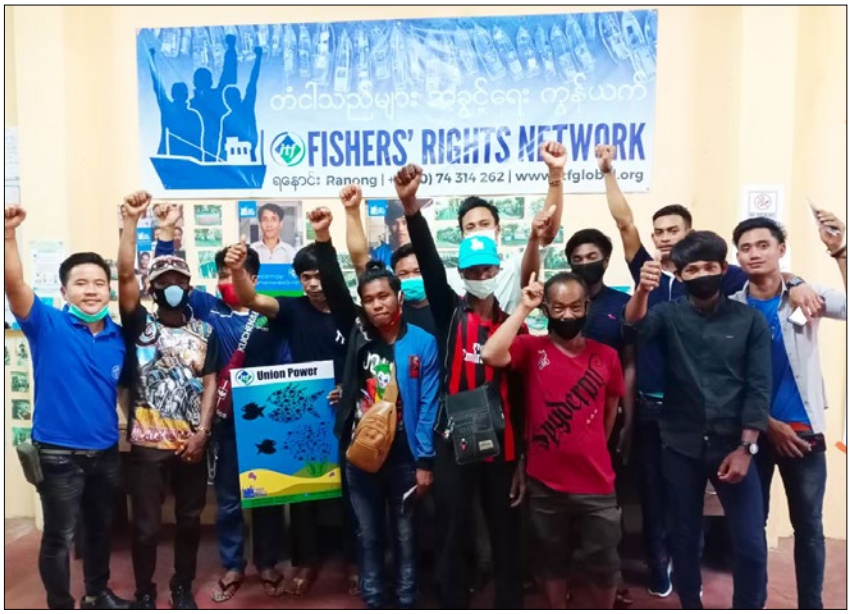
Some of FRN's daily organizing activities include small group meetings, health and safety training for fishers, and observing government Port In/Port Out (PIPO) inspections to help ensure that labour-rights protections for fishers are enforced. FRN fisher leaders have also co-ordinated across seaports nationwide to campaign for greater labour rights at sea, recognizing strength in solidarity as the driving force to sustainably change working conditions in the industry.

FRN campaigns have played a vital role in pressuring the Thai government to ratify ILO C188 and have influenced other pieces of important legislation and policy. FRN's work was also a factor in the recent downgrading of Thailand on the United States Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. In addition, FRN has worked with key allies to negotiate supply-chain agreements with large seafood corporations, such as Thai Union, the largest tuna company in the world. The Vessel Code of Conduct with Thai Union covers several provisions of employment and working conditions, including health and safety, wages and payment provisions, equality/fair treatment, and freedom of association.

In June, FRN leaders called on the Thai Government to enforce employment contract provisions after conducting a three-month survey of 520 fishers in eight provinces. The research revealed that 87 per cent of fishers do not possess a copy of their employment contract, 96 per cent do not completely understand their contract, and 89 per cent have not had their contract translated or explained in a language they can understand.

The fishers have issued three demands to the government regarding their employment contracts: (1) Effectively enforce the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) and ensure that all fishers have a copy of their employment contract in their own language; (2) Ensure that all PIPO centres allow fishers to review and verify the contract presented by their employer at inspection, and report violations in a safe and protected space; and (3) Support Thai agencies to enforce employment contract

ITF-FRN



A meeting of fishers in Ranong, Thailand, in January, 2020. Since its inception in 2018, the FRN has organized over 3,000 migrant fishers in three major Thai fishing ports

provisions and protect all fishers' rights, including those of migrant fishers.

Beyond national-level campaigning, FRN members have taken collective action at the vessel level. Earlier this year, 11 Burmese FRN members won nearly USD 5,000 in back pay after their Thai employer tried to cheat them out of their full pay. The fishers had worked for more than six months without payment. Acting on a complaint filed by the union, the Ranong Department of Labour Protection and Welfare ordered the employer to fully compensate the fishers.

For far too long, Burmese and Khmer migrant fishers have worked for owners who break the law and continue to make huge profits in the global seafood market from their labour. Until now, fishers have not fought hard to protect their rights, but as FRN members begin to fight back and win landmark cases such as the abovementioned one, there is a sense that the tide may be turning across the industry. This victory proves that fishers can stop corrupt owners from cheating them.

FRN fishers have overcome significant obstacles faced by migrant workers in their struggle towards organizing and collective bargaining rights. Currently Thai labour law does not meet international labour standards, and restricts migrant workers from legally forming their own union and collectively bargaining with their employer (as per ILO Conventions 87 and 98, which Thailand has not ratified). Without the fundamental right to organize (protected by law), migrant workers remain vulnerable to labour exploitation and risk employer retribution, unfair penalties, and termination if they collectively organize and demand better wages and working conditions.

By building the FRN, migrant fishers have been organizing to build power to prevent labour and human-rights abuses in Thailand, and to level the playing field with employers to negotiate fair employment contracts with decent wages, benefits and safe working conditions. Significant legal reform is still needed in Thailand to protect migrant fishers. All workers, regardless of nationality, should be allowed to exercise their fundamental human rights, including the right to join or form a union.

For more

Fishers Rights Network
https://justiceforfishers.org

Thai Union Vessel Improvement Program and Code of Conduct
https://www.thaiunion.com/files/download/sustainability/20200813-tu-vessel-code-of-conduct1.1-guidance-en.pdf

Trafficking in Persons Report – US Department of State
https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TIP_Report_Final_20210701.pdf

ILO Endline research findings on fishers and seafood workers in Thailand
https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_738042/lang--en/index.htm

Determination Renewed

ICSF's Bangkok workshop was a vibrant start to a series of international events to commemorate the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022)

In 2017, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed that 2022 was going to be observed as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022). Its lead agency is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), in collaboration with other stakeholders. A core function of IYAFA is to promote the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

This was the first in-person meeting organized by ICSF internationally since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

In this context, ICSF and its members decided to organize four regional workshops and women's exchanges in 2022: one each in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, in partnership with global fishworker bodies and civil society organizations. The first in this series of workshops was the 'IYAFA Asia 2022 – Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries', held in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 5-8, 2022, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF).

The main objectives of the Asia workshop were to increase the international engagement of fishworkers' organizations with issues of food security, tenure rights and social development in small-scale fisheries (SSF) in the region; to deepen cooperation between fishworkers and like-minded organizations in addressing these issues; and to amplify the voices of women in the inclusive development of small-scale fisheries.

This was the first in-person meeting organized by ICSF internationally since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following all COVID-19 protocols, ICSF was able to bring in a diverse group of 50 participants from the Asia region. The representation included men and women from fishworker organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) from 11 countries in the region. They are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Special efforts were made to ensure gender parity in representation.

Kick-off

The workshop opened with opening remarks from SDF director and ICSF member Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk. She encouraged participants to have deeper conversations on SSF, encompassing themes of livelihood security, human rights, social development and sustainability, to go beyond food security or healthy fish stocks. She stressed the importance of women in fisheries and drew attention to the issues faced by them, particularly the challenges they face in realizing gender equity in the sector.

In his inaugural address, Taworn Thunaji, the Deputy Director General of Thailand's department of fisheries, emphasized the importance of ensuring sustainable utilization of natural resources for equality and fairness towards SSF, adding that sustainability is the key to ensure livelihood and food security. He elaborated on the aim of the Government of Thailand to bring together multiple stakeholders

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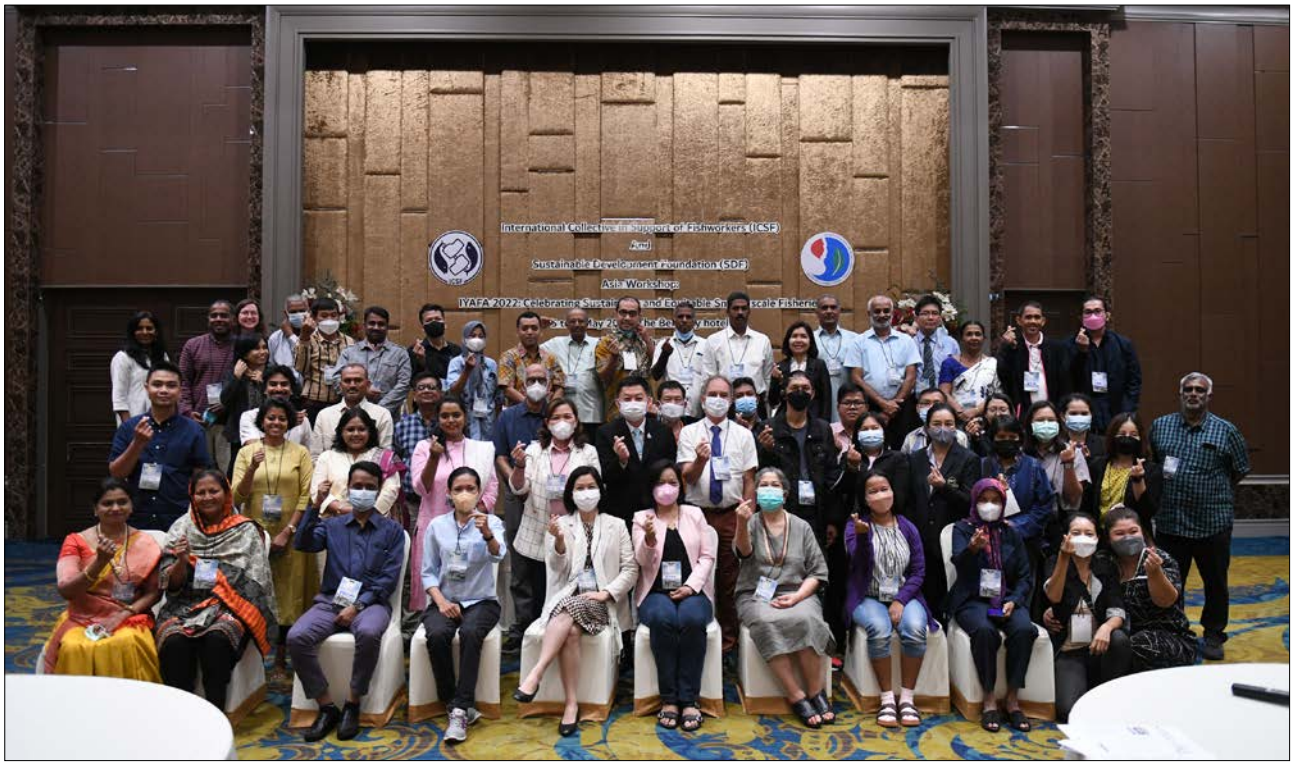

Participants at the IYAFA Asia Workshop in May, 2022. The meeting brought together 50 fishworker and and civil society representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam

in its processes, and detailed the government's efforts to support artisanal fishers and small-scale fish farmers.

While detailing the issues faced by SSF in Thailand, Piya Thedyaem, chairperson of the Thailand Association of the Federation of Fisherfolk, remarked on the similar challenges observed in fisheries across the region.

Panitnart Weerawat, senior instructor at the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC), pointed to the challenges in quantifying the vastness of the small-scale sub-sector, in terms of employment and production. She further discussed the collaborations of SEAFDEC in capacity building, marine resource management and development. Following the inaugural address, participants watched an introductory video celebrating SSF across the 11 countries represented at the workshop.

Introducing the workshop and its objectives, Sebastian Mathew, ICSF's executive director, drew attention to the institutional and legal structures ensuring the rights of SSF. He urged participants to use regional initiatives to contextualize the international SSF Guidelines within countries' national circumstances, and to base the discussions surrounding the SSF Guidelines on the rights and dignity of the people engaged in SSF. He also highlighted the importance of collaborative governance cutting across various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and development partners, to ensure the sustainability of the sector and protect the rights and social development of the people involved.

Access to resources

The inaugural address was followed by a presentation on access to resources by Maarten Bavinck, ICSF chairperson. He observed the emerging shifts in labour and livelihood patterns among the fishing communities in the region, linking them to insecure tenure rights to both fishery and other resources. He cited the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), the SSF Guidelines (2014) and other instruments. He emphasized

the relevance of tenure in sustaining the lives and livelihoods of fishing communities. Explaining formal and informal systems of tenure prevalent in fisheries in Asia, he called for holistic policy and management approaches that recognize diverse forms of tenure rights, in order to sustainably manage fish stocks and protect the rights to resources of small-scale fishing communities. ICSF member V. Vivekandandan chaired the session.

Thereafter, the participants came together in groups of two-to-three countries to discuss the major challenges for SSF communities to access resources. Individual country experiences emerged through this exercise. Vietnam and Cambodia, for example, reported that tenure rights of SSF were protected in law, but there was concern about poor implementation. The participants from these countries also pointed to climate change and ecological degradation limiting access to land and water bodies, further complicating tenure rights in fisheries.

Similar conditions prevail in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Myanmar, where tenure rights were protected; in Malaysia even preferential access was given to SSF. However, fishers' rights were disregarded by coastal reclamation and development projects.

In contrast, Sri Lanka and Pakistan participants stated that they had no legal protection for customary tenure rights of SSF. Participants from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand said they have constitutional or legal protection of fishers' access rights to coastal resources. However, they noted the precarity of these rights: governments can claim coastal land and resources at any time for other uses and industries.

The participants reiterated the need to address the disconnect between policy and implementation, regressive changes in national legislation, disregard for the customary rights and institutions, and the challenges from new developments in coastal, marine and inland areas. The participants unanimously agreed on the need to formally recognize the rights of fishing communities to both land and fishery resources; they emphasized that creating spaces for dialogue among stakeholders, capacity building and organizing communities are the ways forward.

Social development

The second day kicked-off with Mathew's presentation on social development in SSF. Citing several international legal instruments guiding social development policy, he drew on the linkages between well-being and environmental sustainability. He noted that social development is key to enhancing human rights, through policies that include vulnerable and marginalized groups, and ensure their economic equality and empowerment, thereby incentivizing conservation and resource management.

Mathew stressed that social protection is a major component of social development, along with housing, sanitation, health and education services to which fishing communities should have access. He drew attention to diverse formal and informal structures for social protection, and invited participants to point out specific examples in their national contexts. He also presented a cogent case for organizing fishers into a formalized workforce to negotiate their rights to social services.

The presentation was followed by an enthusiastic discussion; the participants deliberated the need for collaboration between government agencies (guided by fisheries departments); institutional arrangements to ensure delivery of services; political participation of fishing communities; and how a universal, rather than sectoral, perspective to social protection will be preferable to include relatively small sectors such as fisheries and its workers.

This was followed by group discussions guided by questions on the availability and accessibility of social development measures in national contexts. The participants from Sri Lanka pointed out that the economic crisis in their country might further deprive vulnerable fishers of welfare measures.

The Bangladesh team compared the national averages of development indicators like income and literacy rates to that of small-scale fishers to

highlight the socioeconomic position of SSF in the country. They pointed to the need for targeted schemes for fishers, considering their unique vulnerability in the face of natural hazards, climate change and other environmental factors.

The Thai participants drew attention to the poor living and working conditions of fishworkers in their country. Participants from India and Pakistan shared similar experiences.

Describing the universal primary health and education schemes in their countries, representatives from the Philippines and Vietnam noted the inclusion of fishers in these schemes. However, they also mentioned that fishing communities usually live and work in remote locations or areas; all too often, this limits their access to drinking water, housing, power, waste management and other services.

The Cambodian representative talked about the pitiful conditions of people living in the floating villages of Tonle Sap, without access to any infrastructure and social development schemes. He also talked about the income diversification strategies employed in Cambodia.

The Indonesian participants noted the lack of data on fishers and fishworkers, hindering the planning and delivery of government programmes. The Malaysian representative painted a different picture: SSF workers are included in government development schemes and are covered under social protection measures.

Most of the country representatives said there were large gaps in awareness of, and access to, universal schemes and basic services. The participants called for an improvement in essential services, and reiterated the need for strong social protection measures, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties in the sector.

Voices of women

The third day of the workshop was dedicated exclusively to exchanges on women's roles and experiences in fisheries. Drawing from the workshop photo exhibition, participants used images of women fishworkers to highlight the crucial role of women

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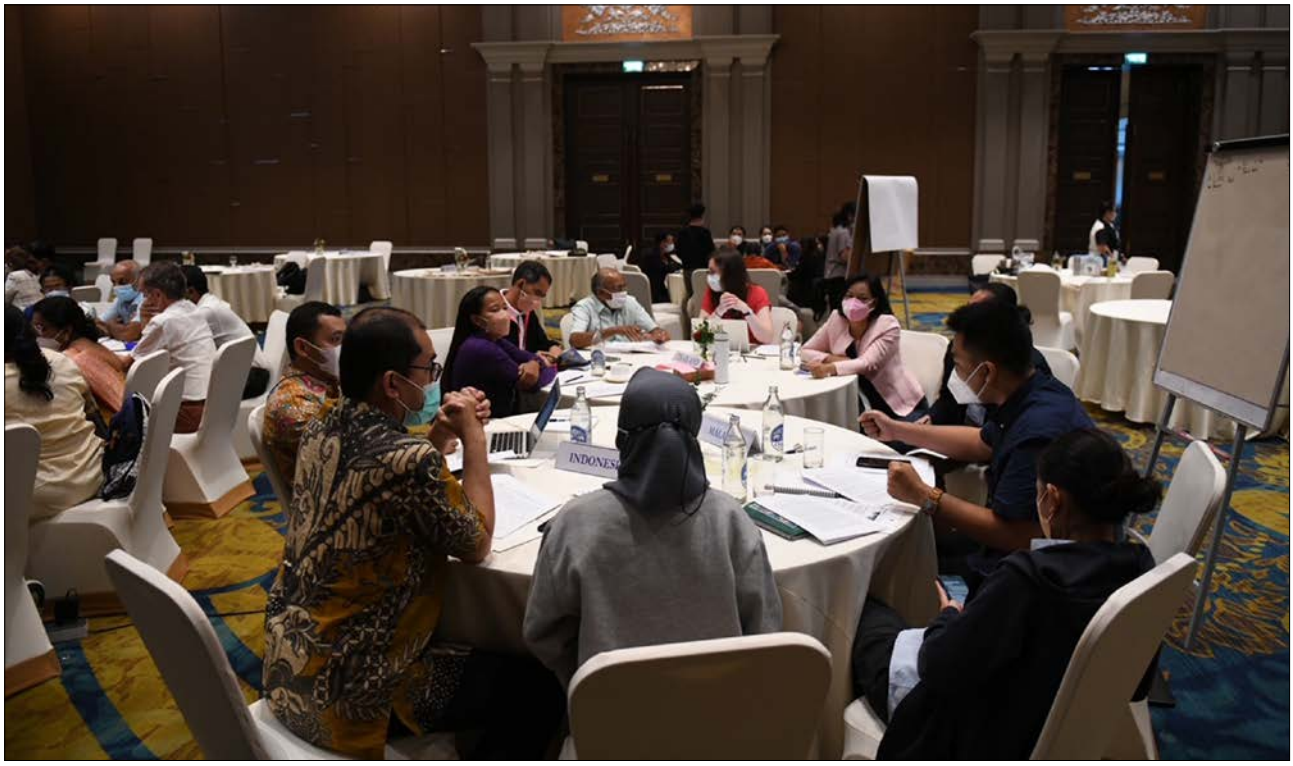

Workshop participants discuss issues around access to resources for small-scale fisheries. They emphasized the need to formally recognize the rights of fishing communities to land and fishery resources

Looking to the Future

Reflecting on the Workshop, two participants discuss the range of commitment and contributions needed to strengthen fisherfolk movements around the world

A Foundation for Collaboration

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) organized a workshop titled 'Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries' in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 5-8, 2022. It commemorated the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022.

Holding an international meeting in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge. However, all fears and anxieties were overcome by the longing to meet and share stories with friends from small-scale fisheries. The workshop was, first and foremost, an opportunity to understand common challenges.

The whole world—all sectors—suffered the impact of the pandemic. The fisheries sector was no exception. All workshop participants from fisher organizations, NGOs, cooperatives, and woman fishworkers gave strong testimonies of how this crisis reached their fishing villages. In Indonesia, small-scale fisheries felt the impact in various ways. From restrictions on fishing activity, to difficulties in selling their catch, to decline in fish prices, and even in the lack of access to social assistance provided by the government.

The climate crisis is another challenge for the fisheries sector. Starting from the migration of fish stock to changes in the marine food chain due to ocean acidification and coral bleaching, each has had impacts direct and indirect on small-scale fisheries. Fisherfolk cannot predict the time and location of fishing. There is also the high risk in going to sea during extreme weather. Sea level rise and extreme weather due to climate change also cause destruction to coastal villages from waves and tidal flooding.

Unclear coast

The workshop identified another key challenge: conflicts over coastal areas and resources, with fishing communities often threatened by other users. This 'ocean grab' to control and utilize coastal and marine resources weakens social well-being and exacerbates ecological damage. Ocean grabbing also occurs when trawling or other destructive fishing methods decrease the availability of fish for small-scale fisherfolk, interfering with their rights to resources.

The Bangkok workshop was a very important opportunity. It provided a space for consolidating discussions between social movements in Asia and for reflecting on the achievements and challenges in each country. The contributions of small-scale fisheries in providing food in the world can no long be underestimated. In order to ensure the availability of fresh and nutritious fish, the fishing areas for traditional fishers need to be protected. The marine environment must also be maintained in order to remain sustainable. The point is to make the sea a foundation for food sovereignty.

In addition, countries must be encouraged to be more active in providing protections for small-scale fisherfolk at the national level. The SSF Guidelines, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, as well as other relevant international instruments, need implementation to strengthen the roles of scale-small fisherfolk in food supply, employment generation and well-being.

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Abundant Diversity, Common Challenges

Attending the IYAFA Asia Workshop organized by ICSF and SDF was a remarkable experience. One of its highlights was the opportunity to meet and interact with the fisher representatives and organizations from 11 Asian countries.

The four-day workshop, divided into multiple sessions, provided all participants an opportunity to discuss the issues related to their specific region and present them to the forum to find common ground. All the sessions were insightful; there was ample time to engage with each of the topics with experts from the relevant sector. The sessions on access to resources, on the SSF Guidelines and on women in fisheries were particularly useful. They will help me elaborate on these issues with the stakeholders in my region of work.

The roundtable discussions showed that the issues discussed by Sri Lanka and Pakistan were very similar in nature to those faced by fishers in India, such as those related to coastal resource grabbing in the name of development, displacement of fishers for infrastructure and tourism, degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems, and the destruction of mangrove forests.

One of the main problem identified is the lack of recognition of the customary rights of fishers, worsened by the fact that national governments see the coasts as a way to boost their economy. Trawling and marine pollution were reiterated as big threats to the health of the marine ecosystem and to the future of fishing communities in almost all the participating countries.

The issues that resonated with all the Indian participants were related to women fishworkers, dilution of coastal regulations, and the focus on further mechanization of the sector while ignoring the needs of the small-scale fishers. The imperative to define small-scale fisheries was discussed in depth by the fisher representatives from India. We also highlighted the issues faced by migrant fishworkers during the COVID-19 lockdowns in India.

Most countries stressed the need for proper implementation of existing laws for the protection of the coast, fish stocks and rights of small-scale fishers, as also the need for the governments to take the SSF Guidelines into consideration while drafting new fisheries policies and legislations. The workshop statement was a sound summary of the issues discussed over the four days.

I hope this statement is considered seriously by Asian governments while developing policy for the fisheries sector. That they go one step ahead and become a reference for international fisheries negotiations of the future.

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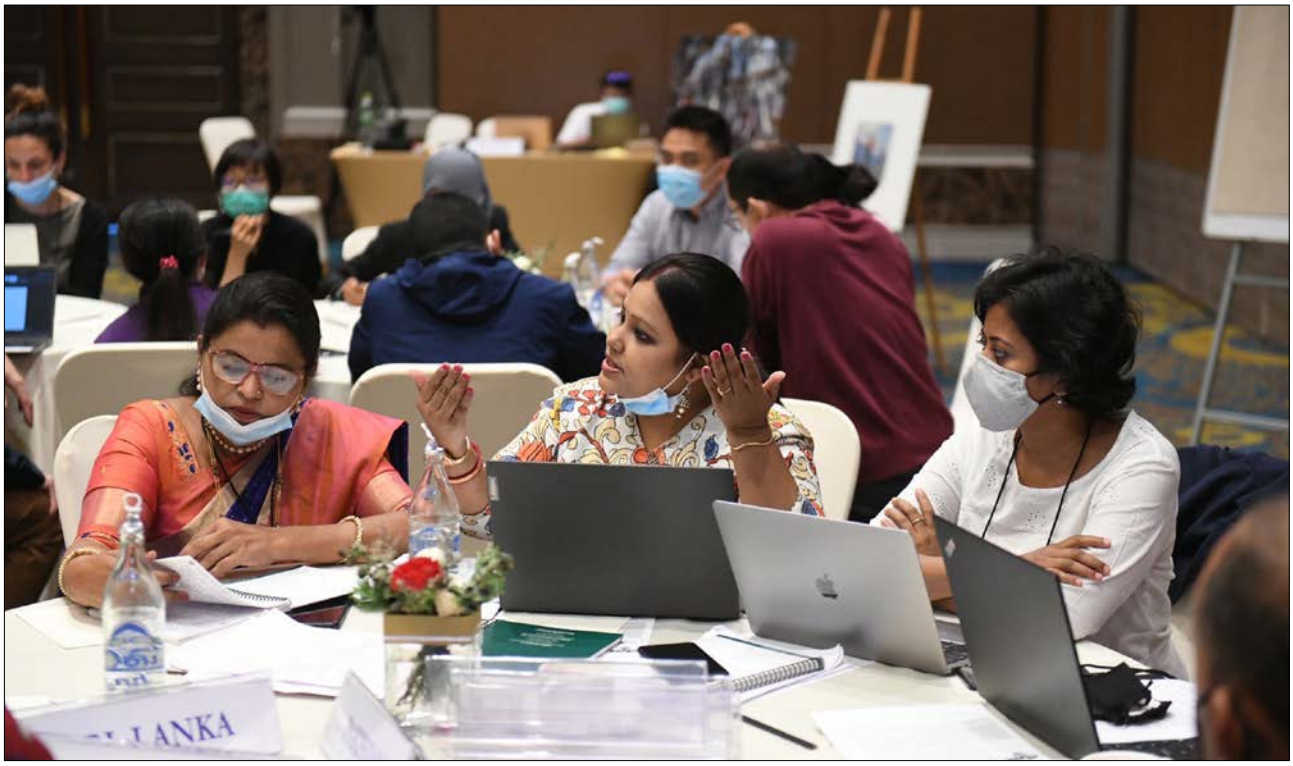

Indian and other South Asian participants all echoed issues related to women fishworkers, the dilution of coastal regulations, and mechanization of the sector, which marginalizes small-scale fishers

in the sector. Women participants shared their experiences, recognized the common challenges they face and outlined the collective actions that are needed to achieve gender equity in their fisheries.

Thereafter, a recorded presentation by Arlene Nietes Satapornvaint, a specialist on gender issues in Southeast Asian fisheries, focused on how the invisibility of women in the sectoral policies and discussions is in sharp contrast to the large female fisheries workforce – formal and informal, paid and unpaid, full-time and part-time. Their invisibility is reflected in the lack of appropriate infrastructure for women in post-harvest fisheries, and of targeted programmes for women in fisheries policy. She remarked that fisherwomen often bear a triple burden, with their productive, reproductive and organizational responsibilities.

Kyoto Kusakabe, professor at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, stressed the importance of post-harvest fisheries. "Fishing provides the fish, but post-harvest activities are what turns it into income," she said, detailing the wide scope of women's pre- and post-harvest activities, ranging from net making through fish processing to fish vending. She highlighted the social, economic and human rights challenges women face. Recognizing the role of women in fisheries through gender-disaggregated data and assessments of their needs through a gendered analysis of the sectors is the best way to address discrimination against women, she said.

Group discussions then identified the key challenges women face in terms of recognition, access to resources and markets, social development, and participation in decision making. Participants shared their insights on how to address some of these problems, including mobilizing women to demand action (as expressed by participants from the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and India); generating gender-disaggregated data (India, Bangladesh); integrating women fishworkers into fisheries cooperatives (Sri Lanka); and using innovative marketing and technology to improve women's incomes (Vietnam).

Integration of women into existing cooperatives was identified as an imperative to further the collectivisation efforts of women. Formalization based on inclusivity, consultation and social protection is integral in improving the visibility and recognition of women fishworkers, leading to the protection of their rights, it was noted.

In the concluding session to develop a regional plan for action on gender, the participants pointed to the need for more gender-disaggregated data, meaningful participation, capacity building, networking and dialogue. Some called for a regional platform to share knowledge, challenges and success stories.

MEL framework

Considering the long-standing interest to monitor and learn from ongoing initiatives to implement the SSF Guidelines, the last session of the workshop was dedicated to a discussion on the FAO's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework - a set of indicators and tools that governments, civil society and other stakeholders can use to assess the progress made on implementing the SSF Guidelines in their national contexts.

Lena Westlund from the FAO traced the process to develop the MEL Framework. She detailed its principles and enabling conditions: policy coherence, research and communication, implementation support and monitoring. She said that the framework is participative, gender-sensitive and in alignment with the SSF Guidelines. Elyse Mills, programme associate at ICSF, explained the work undertaken by the organization to refine the assessment indicators and to prepare a handbook for users of the MEL Framework.

A group discussion on improving SSF Guidelines implementation in the country context followed the presentations. Country participants (from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Bangladesh) held that CSOs and CBOs need to be actively involved in the implementation of the guidelines. The need to build capacity of communities (Thailand, Myanmar), to include inland fisheries (India), to mainstream gender equity (Indonesia), and to draft appropriate fisheries policy (Pakistan) were discussed and debated at length by the participants.

Reaching a consensus

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the Workshop Statement, prepared in consultation with the participants, listing their recommendations and aspirations for IYAFA 2022. The statement noted the unique importance of fisheries in the Asia region (in terms of employment and production) and highlighted fishers' and fishworkers' experiences with regard to the three main focal points of discussions at the workshop: tenure rights, social development and gender.

Cognizant of the major disruptions in the sector associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it called upon governments, the private sector, CSOs and the international community to address these challenges. To ensure fair and equitable distribution of resources, while protecting the customary tenure rights of fishing communities and their active participation in governance.

The statement also called for the recognition of women's contributions in fisheries, greater access to resources and markets, enhanced social protection and social development measures, and capacity building of fishers and fishworkers, especially women.

The Statement urged governments to redouble efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines, upholding a human rights-based approach. Reading the final statement together, participants brought to a fulfilling conclusion four days of intense discussions and planning. They parted with the promise of looking to the future with renewed determination to make the SSF Guidelines a reality.

For more

Asia Workshop: IYAFA 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 5 to 8 May 2022, Bangkok, Thailand
https://www.icsf.net/resources/asia-workshop-iyafa-2022-celebrating-sustainable-and-equitable-small-scale-fisheries/

ICSF's SSF Guidelines
https://www.icsf.net/ssf-guidelines/

ICSF IYAFA 2022: Asia workshop statement: Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries
https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-iyafa-2022-asia-workshop-statement/