

Challenges to Implementing the SSF Guidelines in South Asia

Sebastian Mathew

International Collective in Support of
Fishworkers (ICSF)

South Asian marine capture Fisheries

- Marine capture fishery production- 5.4 million tonnes (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) in 2014; two-thirds from India
- Number of active marine fishers dependent on fisheries for a livelihood: 1.5 million fishers (two-thirds in India); includes both men and women
- Fishing fleet: nearly 300,000 vessels (Bangladesh: 52,000 vessels; India: 200,000 vessels; Maldives: 900 vessels; Pakistan: 10,000 vessels; and Sri Lanka: 32,000 vessels)

Inland Fisheries

- 113 river basins, of which 14 are major; Ganges - Brahmaputra – Meghna the most significant, followed by Indus, Godavari and Krishna river basins
- Seasonal and perennial capture fisheries systems in watercourses and wetlands
- Culture-based fisheries systems in seasonal reservoirs and floodplain lakes
- Enhancement fisheries systems in permanent larger reservoirs and open floodplains

From Living Resources to Fishing Communities: SSF Guidelines

- Small-scale fishing communities are vulnerable and marginalized; their women are discriminated against
- Small-scale fishing communities' contribution to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization is not fully realized
- Small-scale fishing communities are not involved in policy and decision-making processes
- Small-scale fishing communities have poor access to health, education and other social services
- Women in small-scale fishing communities do not participate fully in all aspects of small-scale fisheries

Salient aspects of the SSF Guidelines

- Probably the first international instrument that recognizes the need to secure tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities to marine and inland fishery resources, to fishing grounds, and to the adjacent lands
- Responsibilities of duty-bearing States highlighted
- Implementation process with full support of CSOs at various levels

Objectives

- To enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security
- To contribute to the equitable development of small-scale fishing communities and poverty eradication and to improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fishworkers
- To achieve the sustainable utilization, prudent and responsible management and conservation of fisheries resources consistent with CCRF

Objectives (Cont.)

- To promote the contribution of SSF to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the planet and its people
- To provide guidance for the development and implementation of ecosystem friendly and participatory policies, strategies and legal frameworks for the enhancement of responsible and sustainable SSF
- To enhance public awareness and promote the advancement of knowledge on the culture, role, contribution and potential of small-scale fisheries

How to achieve the objectives?

- Promoting a human rights-based approach
- Empowering small-scale fishing communities to participate in decision-making processes
- Assuming responsibilities for sustainable use of fishery resources
- Placing emphasis on the needs of countries in the region and for the benefit of vulnerable and marginalized groups

Nature and scope

- SSF-Gs recognize the greater diversity of SSF
- Do not prescribe a standard definition of SSF
- Do not prescribe how the Guidelines should be applied in a national context
- Specifically relevant to subsistence small-scale fisheries and vulnerable and marginalized (V&M) people
- Identification of activities and operators considered small-scale and V&M groups that need greater attention (at the regional, national or sub-regional level)

Nature and Scope (Cont.)

- Identification and application are guided by meaningful and substantive participation, consultative, multi-level and objective oriented processes
- SSF-Gs to be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions

Guiding Principles

- International human rights standards
- Responsible fisheries standards and practices
- Sustainable development (Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*)
- CCRF and other relevant instruments
- Special attention to V&M groups and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food

Guiding Principles (cont.)

- Human rights (universal and inalienable, interdependent and indivisible, equal and non-discriminatory (including gender equality and equity))
- Participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law
- Respect for cultures
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability (precautionary approach, risk management, etc)
- Feasibility and social and economic viability

Relationship with other instruments

- The Guidelines may be used to guide amendments and inspire new or supplementary legislative and regulatory provisions

Responsible Fisheries and Sustainable Development: Recommendations

- Governance of tenure in SSF (12 paras) and sustainable resource management (8 paras)
- Social development, employment and decent work (18 paras)
- Value chains, post-harvest and trade (10 paras)
- Gender equality (4 paras) (plus 25 paras in others dealing with gender)
- Disaster risks and climate change (9 paras)
- (61 paragraphs)

SSF Guidelines Implementation

- “All parties are encouraged to implement these Guidelines in accordance with national priorities and circumstances” (13.1)

Implementation Issues

- Contextualizing the SSF Guidelines is important
- Individual and collective human rights of fishers, fishworkers, and fishing communities, both men and women, to be defended
- Right to decent work of fishers and fishworkers including migrant workers to be defended
- Interaction between various social development actors in the context of fishing communities to be promoted
- Collaboration with non-fisheries institutions, especially national human rights commissions is important
- Action at local, provincial and state level needed with active participation of fishing communities and CSOs

Implementation Issues (Cont.)

- Developing clarity on what to implement by whom, how to implement, where to implement, and when to implement at various levels (local, sub-regional, national, regional)
- What SSF actors could implement alone (vertical linkages) or in partnership with the State
- What SSF actors could implement in partnership with CSOs from other sectors (horizontal linkages)
- What others implement at the behest of SSF actors
- Creating conditions for implementation (legislation, policy, strategy, coherence, etc.)

Implementation of the SSF Guidelines in South Asia

- National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017, India, recommends implementing the SSF Guidelines
- Implementation Plan under the National Policy includes developing and elaborating action points for the SSF Guidelines with timelines

Thank you