

Interactive Dialogue 4: Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

Wed 29 Jun 2022, 3.00 pm

Tejo Hall, Altice Arena, Lisbon, Portugal

not necessarily respond to the points raised by the panel speakers but rather can highlight issues in accordance to the objectives of that particular session, eg focus on concrete solutions to addressing the challenges and gaps in the attainment of SDG 14 targets by sharing experiences and best practices, presenting voluntary commitments and stimulating innovative partnerships.

My name is Editrudith Lukanga. I am the Co Founder and Executive Director of EMEDO, a support organization for Small scale fisheries; a member of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)

I am also the secretary General of the African continental network of Women Fish Processors and Traders that draws its membership from the African Union countries, that todate has members in more than 40 countries.

I am also the Vice Chairperson of the International Steering Committee (ISC) of IYAFA; the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)

Firstly, let me say how delighted I am to be invited to participate in this event, that has a focus on sustainability of our fisheries and access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets, in the UN Ocean Conference.

My intervention will focus on some concrete solutions to addressing the challenges and gaps in the attainment of SDG 14 targets by sharing experiences and best practices.

- This year, 2022, has been declared the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture by the United Nations. The slogan for the year is ‘Small in scale, big in value’ and this is something that we need to continue to highlight. The importance and potential of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development still need to be properly recognized and capitalized on. About 500 million people depend on small-scale fisheries in one way or another – for food, nutrition and/or livelihoods.
- The small-scale fisheries is estimated to account for at least 40% of the global catch from capture fisheries and provide employment across the value chain for an estimated 60.2 million people, nearly 90% of the total number employed in fisheries globally. The economic value of these fisheries, however, is only a part

of their importance and, for example, another nearly 53 million people were estimated to engage in subsistence activities. Considered from a holistic and integrated perspective, as they should be, small-scale fisheries define the livelihoods, nutrition, identity and culture of substantial and diverse segments of humankind.

- The global community has identified the main issues for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries – and agreed on how to tackle them.
- This agreement is enshrined in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication – the SSF Guidelines for short.
- Since their endorsement in 2014 many have taken action to implement these Guidelines, so there is a huge wealth of experiences available from that which we all should consider and learn from, to upscale and improve.
- The SSF Guidelines are based on the human rights-based approach. They were developed in a participatory manner with thousands of small-scale fishers and fish workers contributing their views. A key premise of the SSF Guidelines is to continue this participatory approach, which is indeed seen as essential for securing sustainability of the subsector. This requires that small-scale fisheries actors are represented and participate effectively in discussions and decision-making at all scales. For this to happen, they need representative organisations, and the ongoing efforts to support capacity development need to continue. The African Union and the Regional Economic Communities in Africa for example, have been supporting the development of fisheries non-state actor platforms as part of creating the necessary structures for consultations and shared decision-making.
- The SSF Guidelines also speak specially on access to marine resources and markets, the issues at the heart of SDG 14.b.
- We also have examples on how small-scale fisheries actors are strengthening their organizations to ensure they have access to resources and are involved in their management, as true resource stewards.
 - This is happening for example through capacity development on the ecosystem approach to fisheries and co-management, through research on human rights and small-scale fisheries in countries like Ghana and South Africa, but also by documenting the value of indigenous food systems that depend on fisheries.
 - Still, it appears that most SSF catch does not provide any formal devolution rights to fishers. According to the Illuminating Hidden Harvests study in fact formally 40% of the catch has co-management rights for fishers, but it is likely only about half of these rights are actually implemented on the ground

- There is much more to do by countries to create the facilitating conditions, so that fishers can truly exercise tenure rights in small-scale fisheries.
- Often small-scale fisheries are only associated with local and domestic markets, but they also contribute to regional and international trade. And we have many examples on securing access to markets for small-scale fisheries.
 - In Africa, women working in fish processing and trade have joined forces through the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET), to build their capacity to produce highly nutritious food, add value to it, reduce food loss and waste and ensure a fair distribution of benefits.
- Increased attention is being given to the women in fisheries and how they contribute to sustainable food systems. The role of women is often not recognized although they represent 40% of those who participate in small-scale fisheries. Women – who tend to engage in the postharvest sector - contribute significantly to food and nutrition security, including at household and community levels, but by not recognizing this role and ensure that women are represented around the decision-making table, a key opportunity is lost for progressing towards the SDGs. In the context of AWFISHNET, several countries are supporting dedicated national women in fisheries associations, for example, in both Tanzania and Malawi, Kenya, Uganda just to mention a few, women are increasingly making their voices heard through being organized.
- So, we know about the challenges, we have agreed pathways to change and related tools and good practices.
- What we need now is recognition of the contributions of small-scale fisheries and the political will to support them to prosper. One key pathway is to implement comprehensive participatory National Plans of Action to implement the SSF Guidelines in all countries! In Tanzania we have such a plan already, and Namibia just launched its NPOA-SSF last week. Madagascar, Malawi and Senegal are also working on such plans – and they are an example for all of us to follow. These plans are developed in collaboration by governments, small-scale fisheries actors and other partners, from the very beginning.

Despite these good examples; we need studies and reflections where implementation is not happening or is not easy. And we need to identify what those complexities are. Or at least some of the elements that contributes to it. All is not good everywhere out there in the world.

Is it the climate crisis and the attitude that some governments have toward it? Is it loss of fishing ground space due to increased 'blue economic' activities in or near the fishing grounds of SSF? These are just some of the important questions that need answers.

I think that during iyafa governments and FAO must also produce a plan to monitor and report on implementation so that the world can keep a check on overall achievement of the objectives of the Small scale fisheries guidelines. And it is not just good stories. It is also about struggles at community level that faces aggressive commercialisation, oppression, war, and privatisation disguised as development.

The social movements as well, must commit to produce a report (maybe for COFI) on what we perceive progress has been.

At the same time ssf communities must also be able to voice what has improved in their lives since the adoption of the guidelines. If any.

Lastly, I want to leave you with the following messages;

- Equity is critical to a sustainable ocean economy
 - We need to ensure that the rights of SSFA are protected. Access to fish and access to markets is essential.
 - Women need equal rights and equal access to aquatic resources.
 - Programs to build capacity for youth and indigenous groups, for dignified work and decent incomes with safety nets, can ensure social resilience
 - We already have the policy tools to do so (SSF Voluntary guidelines). Now we deserve government support and prioritization of their implementation
- The International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 is an opportunity for all of us to get this right.

THANK YOU

Closing remarks

Call on the Ocean Conference to increase support for concrete actions to be taken to promote resilient fishing dependent communities. This should be reflected in a specific paragraph of the final declaration, in line with the COFI 34 recommendation (para 65), to recognize the importance of small scale fisheries, and the support they need to offer a sustainable future to small scale fishing communities and global food security.