

## Contribution to GSDR 2015 – chapter 3

### Fisheries and aquaculture – promoting decent work as a strategy for responsible fishing

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Fisheries and aquaculture provide food, nutrition and jobs to around 820 million people worldwide. Despite the economic and social value fisheries and aquaculture generate, the majority of people and communities dependent on them for their livelihoods are poor and socially and politically marginalized. This is because employment in fisheries and aquaculture most often does not provide sufficient income, exploitation of fish workers is common and working conditions are extremely hazardous.

Promoting decent work in fisheries and aquaculture is an important strategy that can lead to more effective fisheries management and responsible aquaculture, while also improving the prospects of livelihoods and food security. Improved working conditions in fishing and aquaculture can furthermore enhance response to market demand and hence improve business through export and market access.

Fisheries and aquaculture represent a diverse sector- from highly organized commercial operations to the more common informal, small-scale and artisan livelihoods – but a lot of the decent work challenges are found across the board.

Households that depend on capture fisheries, and poor fishers in small-scale fisheries in particular, are prone to very high levels of vulnerability closely related to the intrinsic insecure and hazardous nature of their economic activity and the livelihoods associated to it. First and foremost a high occupational risk: few land-based occupations confront their participants with the risks of losing all of their productive capital, as well as their lives, every time they go to work.

Fish farmers engaged in small-scale aquaculture mostly depend on unpaid family labour, including children. Due to limited access to land, infrastructure and inputs, yields tend to be small, and consequently rural small-scale aquaculture often does not contribute to reduced poverty.

Women play an important role as workers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, mainly in post-harvest activities, but also as fishers and fish farmers. Still, women generally have less control over the fish value chain, their activities are less profitable, and they have access to fish of poorer quality.

Developing-country fisheries include a substantial small-scale sector employing over 90 percent of the world's fish workers, therefore the discussion inevitably concerns the role of small-scale fisheries (SSF). Adopting and implementing labour standards in fishing and improving safety at sea in small-scale fisheries would be consistent with the human rights based approach under the recently endorsed [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(2014\)](#).

Sustainable conservation and management of oceans, marine and coastal biodiversity requires enhanced attention to the critical labour conditions of fishers and fish workers, which today frequently are overlooked. Even though labour regulation exists, ratification and enforcement is

poor, due to several factors such as informality, small-scale operations, seasonality of employment and phenomena such as flags of convenience.

Limited organization and voice of the majority of stakeholders in the sector, such as small-scale fishers and fish farmers, and workers in fish value chains, hinder their capacity to influence policy and legislation and access better employment opportunities. Additionally phenomena such as Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in capture fisheries is closely linked with labour abuse, including exploitation of poor migrant workers.

The FAO Blue Growth Initiative recognizes the importance of ensuring that that existing blue jobs and those created are also decent jobs to secure the sustainable contribution of the marine and fresh water aquatic environment to global economic and social development. For fisheries and aquaculture development to lead to poverty alleviation, a human rights-based approach which goes beyond the right to the fishing resource is required, and other rights such as the right to decent work and social protection need to be promoted and protected. FAO works with governments, civil society, private sector and other UN agencies to enhance the availability of jobs, including alternative employment, and to improve labour conditions along the whole fish value chain, from catch to markets. FAO also aims at accelerating action to address the often critical labour conditions in marine and inland capture fisheries and aquaculture, fish processing and distribution by supporting the development and application of normative frameworks, such as the [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(2014\)](#), the [Convention 188 on Work in Fisheries \(2007\)](#), and instruments regulating Safety at Sea such as the [International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, \(1995\)](#) and the [FAO/ILO/IMO Safety Recommendations for Decked Fishing Vessels of Less than 12 metres in Length and Undecked Fishing Vessels \(2012\)](#).

**Related links:**

[Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries \(1995\)](#)

[FAO / ILO Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture \(2013\)](#)

[FAO/ILO/IMO Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, Part A – Safety and Health Practice \(2005\)](#)

[FAO/ILO/IMO Implementation Guidelines on Part B of the Code, the Voluntary Guidelines and the Safety Recommendations \(2005\)](#)

[FAO/ILO/IMO Document for Guidance on Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel \(2001\)](#)

[FAO/ILO/IMO Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels \(2005\)](#)