

## Contribution to GSDR 2015 – chapter 3

### Small-scale fisheries– bringing together social development and responsible fisheries

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About 90% of all people employed in capture fisheries engage in small-scale operations. Despite this important figure, the sector is still often marginalized in many ways. In order to support the development of the sector, representatives of over 100 countries, representatives from different UN agencies and related organizations and observers from 65 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations who gathered in Rome for the 31st Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June 2014 endorsed the [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(SSF Guidelines\)](#).

The SSF Guidelines have a long history. It was COFI who had tasked FAO in 2011 to develop these guidelines in a participatory manner. Between 2011 and 2013 over 4000 representatives of governments, civil society organizations, academia and other stakeholder groups from over 120 countries directly contributed to developing the content and the principles of the SSF Guidelines: civil society organizations organized over 20 national and regional consultations and FAO organized three regional consultations.

In May 2013 and February 2014 the SSF Guidelines development process moved into its final phase: government representatives, together with representatives from civil society organizations and other stakeholders met for a Technical Consultation in Rome to negotiate the final text of the SSF Guidelines, going through the text word by word. The outcome of this process was then presented to the COFI meeting in June for finalization and endorsement.

#### **So, what *are* the SSF Guidelines?**

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The SSF Guidelines are the first international instrument dedicated entirely to the immensely important — but until now often neglected — small-scale fisheries sector.

The SSF Guidelines represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development. They were developed for small-scale fisheries in close collaboration with representatives of small-scale fisheries organizations in a process facilitated by FAO. They are directed at all those involved in the sector and intend to guide and encourage governments, fishing communities and other stakeholders to work together and ensure secure and sustainable small-scale fisheries for the benefit of small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities as well as for society at large.

The objectives of the SSF Guidelines are to:

- enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to global food security and nutrition and to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food,
- contribute to the equitable development of small-scale fishing communities and poverty eradication and to improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fish workers within the context of sustainable fisheries management,

- achieve the sustainable utilization, prudent and responsible management and conservation of fisheries resources consistent with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments,
- promote the contribution of small-scale fisheries to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the planet and its people,
- provide guidance that could be considered by States and stakeholders for the development and implementation of ecosystem friendly and participatory policies, strategies and legal frameworks for the enhancement of responsible and sustainable small-scale fisheries, and
- enhance public awareness and promote the advancement of knowledge on the culture, role, contribution and potential of small-scale fisheries, considering ancestral and traditional knowledge, and their related constraints and opportunities.

Underpinned by a human rights approach, these objectives are critical to empower small-scale fishing communities — including vulnerable and marginalized groups — to participate in decision-making processes, and to assume responsibilities for sustainable use of fishery resources.

The SSF Guidelines are divided into three main parts, which are outlined here:

***Part I: Introduction***

This part specifies the objectives, the nature and scope, the guiding principles by which the SSF Guidelines are to be implemented as well as their relationship with other international instruments.

***Part II: Responsible fisheries and sustainable development***

This part provides guidance for fisheries-specific topics such as responsible governance of tenure and sustainable resource management, but also for crucial intersectoral issues: social development, employment and decent work; value chain, post-harvest and trade; gender equality and disaster risks and climate change.

***Part III: Ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation***

This part provides guidance on how to realize the principles and recommendations of the SSF Guidelines through policy coherence, institutional and supporting implementation; information, research and communication; capacity development and implementation support and monitoring.