



Presentation of the Asia and Pacific Regional Advisory Group

We would like to thank to the Advisory Group & the Friends of the Guidelines for organizing this webinar on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines prior to COFI 34, and the given opportunity to RAG in Asia and the Pacific to participate as speaker to bring our experience as Regional Process for the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines and the important link we represent, bridging the gap between the national and the global level and allowing the social movements to monitor and define priorities for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at our national and regional level and to bring it to the global level through the AG SSF-GSF.

We commend the COFI as acceptance of the SSF Guidelines and adopted it in the frame work of Human Rights because of the involvement of Social Movements and concern CSOs. We want to ensure a decent life, human dignity, peaceful future of the fishing communities and their living in a livable environment. We can see this as important elements of the Guidelines.

We are happy to see the collaboration among the Social movements & CSOs focusing the progressive realization of the principles and contents of SSF Guidelines. The LVC, IITC, WFF and WFFP are working in collaboration in National, Regional and international levels focusing the SSF and their wellbeing is a great achievement itself. Now we are having strong force in the field to advocate and implement the plans which Advisory Group of GSF planned.

We have been working in 5 countries, such as India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Thailand. in the Asian & the Pacific region during 2020 and will be extended to another 5 Countries of Bangladesh, Fiji Islands, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines, by 2021. However, the COVID Pandemic disturbed our organizing process and we had to strive hard to cope up the situation and bring our group together. We conducted initial study to assess of the level of implementation of the Guidelines and found that some countries like Thailand is having some attention to incorporate the contents of the guidelines in to the national policy formulation which we are highly appreciate it. However, countries like Sri Lanka, my own country, there was a process to draft a national fisheries policy since 2018 in which we the social movements found that there is a necessity to reconsider the drafted policy and incorporate the essential components in the SSF Guidelines. We advocate that FAO to create enabling environment and measures to endure each country put in SSF priority to develop policy specific addressing SSF with clear implementation plan with Human Resources and budget allocations.

We the RAG Asia & Pacific conducted a study among the Small Scale Food Producers of small holder farmers, fishers, fisher women and coastal communities, found that the small scale food producers are seriously affected by COVID Pandemic. This study is important move as we conducted under the United Nations Decade of Family Farming [UNDF] which we consider the as one important step forward as a collaboration of small scale food producers. We understand, we were able to conduct this survey because of our focus of SSF Guidelines. All these are important steps to work as small scale food producer groups unitedly. However, we urge all the States seriously look into the issues faced by the SSF and to provide compensation to the damage and provide rehabilitation assistance to them with the emphasis of gender equality. Also, we emphasize the address of COVID pandemic should be part of promoting sustainable fishery and ecosystem based management.

We the RAG-Asia and the Pacific are now attempting to draw the attention of the world of the importance of SSF Guidelines to ensure food security and poverty eradication among SSF communities during the year 2022, the International Year of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the United Nations. This is one of the important moments of the history to attend to address the issues faced by the fisher folk communities all over the world. So, we will work towards to achieve the SDGs which States should respect their commitments and prepare action plans to ensure the peaceful future for all human beings and nature.

We urge, all the responsible representatives of the States, IGOS and concerned all at COFI to draw your attention to commit developing National Policies based on the Principles and the policy guidelines adopted at the SSF guidelines and implement with an effective plan of action. Moreover, COFI needs to deliver clear message to State representatives, to create an enabling environment in their respective countries and to employ multi stakeholder platforms to engage civil society when developing national plans and actions on SSF. Once the FAO offices work in the respective countries, it is very important matter to consult the country CSO actors and cooperate with the social movements to implement the SSF Guidelines. . Finally, we propose that each State should have commitment to develop SSF data system with gender aggregated.

Thank you chair for the opportunity to RAG-Asia and the Pacific for this opportunity again.