

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ARTISANAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE 2022 (IYAFA)

On November 19, 2021 the FAO virtually launched the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022,¹ which coincided with the week of 2021 World Fisheries Day. The International Year of Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture wants to build a global momentum to empower small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture and securing a sustainable future for these important sectors. IYAFA 2022 envisions a world in which small-scale artisanal fishers, fisher-farmers and fish-workers are fully recognized and empowered to continue their contributions to human well-being, healthy food systems and poverty eradication through the responsible and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources.

The IPC Working Group on Fisheries (IPFWG) took part to the Launch Event through its representative and vice-chair of the IYAFA International steering Committee, Ms Editrudith Lukanga. In her speech², Editrudith expressed the hope and expectation of the IPCFWG towards IYAFA; the Group welcomes the wish and the efforts of all participants and of the FAO on working together to recognize small-scale fishers and fish-workers' contribution to human well-being and healthy food systems.

The IPC Working group on Fisheries always had a key role in promoting SSF rights: it supported the development of the SSF Voluntary Guidelines and, with the establishment of the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme and the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (SSF-GSF), the Group took on the role of SSF-GSF Advisory Group.

The Group will seize the momentum created by IYAFA to push forward the respect and protection of SSF people human rights and advance the implementation of the SSF Voluntary Guidelines. The SSF Guidelines are a fundamental tool to secure food security and eradicate poverty within SSF communities. They provide an international legal framework based on principles including: human rights and dignity, respect of cultures, non-discrimination, gender equity and equality, consultation and participation, economic, social, and environmental sustainability. They recognise the small-scale fisheries as important actors for the economic, social, and sustainable development and, within their framework, they promote the rights of small-scale fisheries and policies that enables their practices, through a human-rights based approach.

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1) IYAFA official website: <https://www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/home/en/> . To view the recoding of IYAFA 2022 Launch Event: <https://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/item/5716/icode/>

2) Speaking Notes IPC Fisheries Working Group Launch of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022: <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/IPC-Statement-IYAFA.pdf>

Despite their small scale, SSF have a crucial role in food production and nutrition, job creation and poverty reduction and, sustainable use and management of the marine resources and ecosystems. Nevertheless, their contribution is still not fully recognised, their potential in terms of sustainable and equitable development remains ignored and unexploited and SSF rights are far from being guaranteed. The lack of recognition and participation to the public sphere prevent SSF communities from claiming their socio-economic and political rights and in particular their rights to the seas and the land. The loss of access to coastal and marine spaces means for SSF people the loss of their primary source of income and of food security. This appear to be even more relevant when considering the several threats SSF face: illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU); climate change; coast erosion; water pollution and the Blue Economy.

The lack of consultation and of proper information is at the core of the Blue Economy; SSF communities and Indigenous communities, affected by governance and development decision making, are not counted as stakeholders, thus they are not included in the planning and decision-making process. Under the Blue Economy Agenda, there is no space for SSF communities' participation, or their development in real terms. Since the rise of the Blue Economy, SSF have been further marginalised and excluded and have faced cultural loss. National institutions failed to fully implement the fundamental principle of inclusive and democratic decision making (consultations; free, prior, informed consent; proper information) and softened laws and regulations to favour the interest of corporate investments.

The IPC Working Group on Fisheries will seize IYFA to hold the states accountable in implementing the Voluntary Guidelines, a commitment made by all FAO member states in 2014, through the elaboration and use of a people-centred framework for monitoring to assess the real implementation status of the Voluntary Guidelines at local and national level.

Margarita Lizarraga Medal Award 2020-2021

During the virtual ceremony, the FAO Director-General awarded the Margarita Lizarraga Medal, to Margaret Nakato, Coordinator of the Katosi Women Development Trust in Uganda and Executive Director of World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF).

The Margarita Lizárraga Medal was instituted by the FAO Conference in 1997 in tribute to the late Dr. Margarita Saucedo Lizárraga, Senior Fishery Liaison Officer for her decisive role in promoting the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and for her strong commitment towards fostering the promotion of the fisheries sector, especially in developing countries. The medal is awarded to a person or organization that has served with distinction in the application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Ms Margaret Nakato was chosen " in recognition of her success in organizing women in fishing communities to work together, empowering them with knowledge and skills, access to training, markets and technology. As the result, women have a greater voice and strengthened role where they are centrally placed as drivers of transformative initiatives and change with multiplier effects on the wider community. Her vision is empowering women food producers, not just to improve their own lives but the food production and nutrition of entire communities"³. Ms Nakato was also featured as an FAO "food hero" in the 2020 World Food Day celebrations, contributing to the visibility of the fisheries sector as an integral part of sustainable food systems.

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3)Margarita Lizárraga Medal Award website: <https://www.fao.org/fao-awards/conference-awards/margarita-lizarraga/en/>

Ms. Margaret Nakato

Coordinator: Katosi Women Development Trust
Executive Director: World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)

Margaret has successfully organised women in the fisher communities to work together, empowering them with knowledge and skills that centrally place women as drivers of transformative initiatives with multiplier effect on the wider community.

She has a passionate interest in rural development with over 23 years' experience working in fisher communities.

During the celebration to mark Women's Day in 2015, Margaret Nakato was recognized and awarded a Medal by H. E the President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for her contribution to the improvement of women's lives in Mukono through Katosi Women Development Trust.

She holds a Master of Science in Development Management from Open University, UK and Bachelor's Degree in Development Studies from University of South Africa.

" Receiving the medal at the launch of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and aquaculture (IYAFA), I use this opportunity to call for sustained cooperation in support of small-scale fishery particularly with women who occupy more than 50% of the post-harvest segment of the fish value chain. The cooperation should offer options to small scale fishing communities to reframe their strategies for attaining development, offer inclusive and diversified development approaches while promoting access to basic social services and advancing the protection of human rights; all key tenets of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries."

