

A Report by:

The Regional Advisory Group of AFRICA of the
**INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

**PEOPLE-CENTRED ASSESSMENT OF
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR SECURING
SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES
IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND
POVERTY ERADICATION**



The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) is an autonomous and self-organised global platform of small-scale food producers and rural workers organisations and grassroots/Community based social movements whose goal is to advance the Food Sovereignty agenda at the global and regional level.



PEOPLE-CENTRED ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR SECURING SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

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ABBREVIATIONS

WFF – World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers
WFFP – World Forum of Fisher Peoples
SSF Guidelines – Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization
COFI – Committee on Fisheries
GSF – Global Strategic Framework
IITC – International Indian Treaty Council
OHCHR – United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RAG – Regional Advisory Group
IPC – International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IPCFWG – IPC Working Group on Fisheries
LVC – La Via Campesina
IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development
IUU – Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
BMU – Beach Management Units
KWDT – Katosi Women Development Trust
CLPA – Local Artisanal Fishing Councils
ANR – Agriculture and Natural Resources
SSF-GSF – Small-Scale Fisher-Global Strategic Framework
MoFAD – Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (Ghana)
DOPA – Densu Oyster Pickers Association
NPOA – National Plan of Action
IVNP – Ivindo National Park
ICCN – Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation
SSF – Small Scale Fisheries
CBO - Community Based Organisations
FGD - Focus Group Discussion
MPA - Marine Protected Area
PPP - Polluter Pays Principle

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, recognizing the absence of an international UN instrument to safeguard and advance the human rights of small-scale fishers, two global fisher movements—World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) and World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)—initiated a campaign to develop such a framework. This marked the start of a lengthy and intensive process, ultimately leading to the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

More than 4000 voices from fishers, fishworkers and others in over 120 countries articulated views and positions that shaped the contents of the SSF Guidelines. The final text of the Guidelines was negotiated by members of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and endorsed by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2014.

The SSF Guidelines represent a landmark international initiative to promote responsible governance and management of SSF (small-scale fisheries) and provide a comprehensive framework to address the unique challenges faced by SSF globally.

The SSF Guidelines are particularly relevant in Africa, where fisheries contribute significantly to food security, employment, and livelihoods; they are **5.2 million people**, which constitutes about **85% of all fishers** on the continent¹. The continent is home to numerous coastal and inland communities that heavily depend on SSF for sustenance and income. The Guidelines recognise SSF's social, economic, and cultural importance and emphasise the need for inclusive and participatory governance approaches. They call for the protection of tenure rights, gender equality, and the promotion of sustainable practices to ensure the long-term viability of SSF.

The SSF Guidelines' relevance to Africa lies in their potential to address persistent challenges faced by the region's small-scale fishers. These challenges include inadequate legal recognition and tenure rights, overexploitation of fish stocks, vulnerability to climate change impacts, and limited market access. By providing a comprehensive framework for sustainable management, the Guidelines aim to empower local communities, strengthen governance structures, and enhance the resilience of SSF.

Since adopting the SSF Guidelines, few African countries have made varying strides in incorporating them into their national fisheries policies and regulations. Some nations have demonstrated commitment by aligning their legal frameworks with the Guidelines, recognising the importance of community involvement, and establishing co-management systems for SSF².

However, challenges persist, including limited financial resources, capacity constraints, and the need for improved infrastructure. The diverse socio-economic and environmental contexts across the continent influence the performance of the SSF Guidelines in Africa. Success stories exist where the Guidelines have contributed to improved governance, strengthened community institutions, and enhanced sustainability. However, continued efforts in capacity-building, awareness-raising, and policy implementation are needed to ensure the human-rights of SSF.

¹ <https://360info.org/africa-offers-answers-for-small-scale-fisheries/> "Mechanizing non-mechanized schools" refers to introducing technology, machinery, or modern tools into schools that currently lack such resources. This could involve providing computers, digital learning tools, and modern equipment to improve the quality of education and facilitate practical training, especially in technical and vocational field

² <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/npoa-ssf/about-mpoa-ssf/en>

Historical Context of the SSF Guidelines

The endorsement of the SSF Guidelines by the Thirty-first Session of COFI in June 2014 was a significant triumph for natural resource-based people's movements worldwide. This achievement resulted from the tireless efforts of WFFP and WFF, the two global fisher movements that spearheaded a participatory development process along with other SSF organisations facilitated by the FAO. The Guidelines were developed through the input of 4000 fishers, civil society organisations, and state agencies from 120 countries. The Guidelines are noteworthy for their focus on a human rights-based approach, marking the first internationally agreed instrument dedicated to the SSF sector. This initiative was necessary to address the historical marginalisation of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples despite providing 90% employment **to 120 million** people employed in fisheries working in this sector with livelihood and food security³.

The SSF Guidelines have significantly contributed to the global recognition of SSF as more than just a sub-sector of the more significant fisheries industry. This achievement lies in recognising fishing as a way of life rather than a mere economic activity.

The SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples are unique in their relationship with the land-seascapes they are linked to, and the SSF Guidelines acknowledge this intrinsic bond by highlighting the profound interconnections between their identities, culture, language, sense of place, and belonging. For these communities and Indigenous Peoples, fishing is not just a means of livelihood but also a way of life that shapes their very existence.

The SSF Guidelines have effectively challenged the dominant narrative that has traditionally viewed the SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples solely through the lens of their economic contribution. Instead, they have put forth a more comprehensive and holistic perspective that recognises the SSF as custodians of the seas, oceans and internal water who possess a wealth of traditional knowledge and practices critical to sustainable marine resource management.

Despite their crucial role in the global fisheries sector, the SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples remain underrepresented and receive inadequate acknowledgement in public policy-making, governance, and fiscal planning. According to a recent FAO report, *Illuminating Hidden Harvests*, "Small-scale fisheries account for at least 40 per cent of the global catch from capture fisheries and employ the value chain for an estimated 60.2 million people, about 90 per cent of the total number employed in fisheries globally."⁴

The SSF Guidelines aim to shift the sector's focus towards a human-rights-based approach instead of the commonly used quantitative approach of measurement, governance, and understanding.

Conventional methods of evaluation, such as engine horsepower, maximum sustainable yields, and economic valuations, have been shown to have limitations and do not consider the fundamental human rights aspects of the sector. These shortcomings can often result in the exploitation of workers, discrimination, and inequitable distribution of resources. The SSF Guidelines strive to narrow the divide by highlighting the importance of several principles. These include human rights and dignity, respect for cultures, and non-discrimination. Additionally, gender equality and equity, equity and equality, consultation and participation, rule of law, transparency, and accountability are essential. Furthermore, economic, social, and environmental sustainability, holistic and integrated approaches, social responsibility, feasibility, and social and financial viability are emphasised.

³ <https://worldfishcenter.org/project/illuminating-hidden-harvests>

⁴ FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023. *Illuminating Hidden Harvests – The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4576en>

IPC and Related Mechanisms

THE AG SSF-GSF

In 2016, COFI endorsed the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (SSF-GSF)⁵. The SSF-GSF, is a partnership mechanism giving small-scale fishery actors, government representatives and other stakeholders a space to collaborate at a global level. One key objective is to give small-scale fishery actors an opportunity to advise others on how they would like to see the SSF Guidelines put into action. It is steered by an Advisory Group comprised of fisher leaders from WFF, WFFP, La Via Campesina (LVC) and International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and officials from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The SSF-GSF is supported by the 'Friends of the Guidelines' group, comprised of supportive COFI member countries and coordinated by FAO in its role as Secretariat. It also includes a Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP), which has not yet been developed.

THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC)

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) is an autonomous and self-organised global platform of small-scale food producers and rural workers organisations, Indigenous Peoples and social movements with a mandate to advance the Food Sovereignty agenda at the global, regional and national level.

The IPC Working Group on Fisheries (IPCFWG) is a space of alliance, solidarity, and coordination of the major global network representing small-scale fisher people and Indigenous Peoples from over 100 countries. The IPCFWG is composed of leaders from WFF, WFFP, LVC and IITC and recommend on the SSF Guidelines implementation through the Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF bringing the positions of their members.

The Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF benefits from the involvement of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries, ensuring a cohesive and participatory approach to implementing and monitoring the SSF Guidelines in line with international human rights standards and the Food Sovereignty principles.

Following the endorsement of the SSF-GSF by COFI in 2016, the IPC and the movement leaders serving on the Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF decided to create Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) - with the scope to ensure a bottom-up approach and to work and advocate at different levels – and decided to develop a people-centred methodology to assess the status of the implementation of the Guidelines⁶.

The RAGs serve as regional platforms within the AG SSF-GSF, entrusted with advancing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the regional level, involving movements and SSF organisations and regional FAO bodies. The RAGs play a crucial role in supporting their members within the region, in creating space of unity and solidarity among fishers folks and SSF Organisations and in contributing valuable insights and regional priorities to inform the AG SSF-GSF, which, in turn, informs Governments and other relevant actors in global political dialogues.

⁵ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/beba9187-0bcf-4f79-a8ab-dfe12e9982c7/content>

⁶ <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/people-centred-methodology-ssf/>

The SSF People's Centred Methodology

Developed by the AG SSF-GSF with the support of the Working Group on Fisheries of the IPC, the methodology seeks to be a tool to support and promote the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by gathering empirical evidence and qualitative information on the gaps regarding their uptake. It functions as a guiding document for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to gather relevant qualitative information on the status of the SSF Peoples concerning the human rights principles endorsed by the SSF Guidelines.

This methodology aims to evaluate the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the local, regional, and international levels.

By adopting a people-led approach, the SSF People-Centred mechanism strives to assess progress in implementing the SSF Guidelines, identify human rights violations affecting small-scale fisherfolks globally, and provide recommendations to Governments and duty- barriers.

At its core, the methodology serves as a comprehensive framework to guide SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in gathering relevant qualitative data that aligns with the human rights standards endorsed by the SSF Guidelines and the Food Sovereignty principles. It ensures that the voices and experiences of small-scale fishers are heard and valued throughout the evaluation process.

The methodology is firmly rooted in the guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines ⁷, which include:

Non-discrimination: The SSF People-Centred Methodology upholds the principle of non- discrimination, recognising that all individuals involved in SSF should be treated equally and without prejudice. It seeks to address any discriminatory practices or policies that hinder the full participation of small-scale fisherfolk.

Respect for all cultures and religions: The SSF People-Centred Methodology respects cultural diversity and religious beliefs. It acknowledges that different communities may have distinct customs, traditions, and spiritual practices influencing their engagement with SSF. The methodology ensures that these diverse perspectives are considered and integrated into the evaluation process.

Participation of all people: The SSF People-Centred Methodology encourages the active involvement of all individuals connected to SSF, including fishers, community members, local leaders, and relevant stakeholders.

It recognises that the success of evaluating the implementation of the SSF Guidelines relies on the meaningful participation of those directly affected by the Guidelines.

Equal participation of all genders: Gender equality is a fundamental principle in the SSF People- Centred Methodology. It seeks to ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities to participate in the evaluation process and have their voices heard. By addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusive decision-making, the methodology strives for a more equitable representation of perspectives and experiences.

Transparency: Transparency is a vital aspect of the SSF People-Centred Methodology. It promotes open communication, accountability, and information sharing throughout the evaluation process.

By fostering transparency, the methodology aims to build trust among stakeholders and create a conducive environment for constructive dialogue and collaboration.

Protection of human rights: The SSF People-Centred Methodology strongly emphasises safeguarding and promoting human rights. It seeks to identify human rights violations affecting small-scale fisherfolk, such as access to resources, labour rights, and social well-being.

By shedding light on these violations, the methodology aims to support advocacy efforts and drive positive change in policies and practices related to SSF.

⁷ **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).** (2015). Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. FAO, Rome. Page 8

COFI

The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) is an intergovernmental body established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

COFI is a global platform for member countries to discuss and address fisheries and aquaculture-related issues, policies, and initiatives.

The AG SSF-GSF could potentially play a crucial role in COFI, representing a semi-institutional space for the SSF Guidelines' implementation. Indeed it serves as a mechanism for providing recommendations, coordinating efforts, and ensuring that the implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines align with international human rights standards.

As part of the AG SSF-GSF, the Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) gather regional priorities and outcomes from the application of the IPC People-Centred Assessment at the local level.

In this context, the AG SSF-GSF functions as an essential link between small-scale fishers and the global fisheries policy landscape. It amplifies the voices and concerns of small-scale fishers, ensuring their perspectives are taken into account in the development and implementation of fisheries policies and initiatives at the international level. COFI is indeed a relevant space in which to bring those perspectives and to push for human-rights based decisions.

This Regional Assessment Report is focused on Africa. Specifically, the status concerning Botswana, Uganda, Senegal, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The methods used for this assessment were guided by the IPC SSF People-Centred Methodology⁸.

The final aim is to inform how best governments can move towards implementation. Simultaneously, it assists global movements in strengthening their understanding of the gaps and challenges along the way and provides best practices that can be adapted to other places.

The assessment was led by the RAG members in Africa (RAG AFRICA), who participated in a comprehensive, multi-step approach to conduct this assessment. It includes the following six steps:

- **1 — Creating a Steering Committee:** This committee is established to oversee the process, ensuring that all activities are aligned with the overall objectives and local context.
- **2 — Developing a Timeline:** A detailed timeline is developed to coordinate activities and ensure the process adheres to deadlines, accounting for the availability of resources and stakeholders.
- **3 — Identifying Relevant Policies and Laws:** A critical component of the process is the analysis of the country's existing policies and legal frameworks. This involves identifying key laws, regulations, and policies that impact the assessment's focus areas. The steering committee, with input from legal experts and stakeholders, reviews these documents to understand how they influence local conditions, practices, and opportunities for improvement.
- **4 — Distributing Questionnaires:** Surveys and questionnaires are distributed to collect data from various stakeholders. These are designed to capture qualitative and quantitative insights related to both local practices and the implications of policies on those practices.
- **5 — Conducting Case Studies:** Specific case studies are undertaken to provide deeper insights into how policies are implemented on the ground, highlighting both challenges and successes within local contexts.
- **6 — Facilitating Focus Group Discussions:** Focus groups bring together key stakeholders, including community members, policymakers, and legal experts, to discuss findings from the surveys and case studies. These discussions help to gather diverse perspectives on the impact of policies and potential avenues for reform.

⁸ People Centred Monitoring : <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IPC-report-FWG-EN.pdf>

Additionally, this process, carried out by regional members at the country level, culminates in an in-person meeting of the RAG Africa members.

This meeting is crucial for reflecting on the preliminary results of the assessment, including the policy analysis, and collaboratively identifying common regional recommendations. These recommendations are used to advocate for policy improvements or reforms where needed.

In March 2024, the RAG members participated in an in-person consultation from 11 to 14 March 2023 in Mbour, Senegal, to review the findings in the region. Thematic dialogue sessions were held on each section of the SSF Guidelines, where RAG members shared their experiences and empirical observations. This process helped highlight some of the similarities and differences across different countries. The main achievement of this meeting was to identify critical recommendations that could mitigate some of the issues that have been identified.

The Process of formulating recommendations

The recommendations presented in this report have been developed through an extensive and collaborative process involving multiple rounds of participatory workshops with members of the RAG Africa. The primary objective of these workshops was to formulate solutions-oriented recommendations that go beyond generalisations and provide detailed and specific guidance. Through discussions and knowledge exchange, RAG members shared their perspectives, identified similarities and differences in their respective contexts, and worked towards a nuanced understanding of how each of the Guidelines manifests in different countries.

The participatory workshops served as a platform for consensus building among RAG Africa members, fostering an environment of active engagement and mutual appreciation of diverse perspectives. The workshops encouraged open dialogue, enabling participants to delve into the intricacies and complexities of implementing the SSF Guidelines. By collectively examining challenges and opportunities, RAG members were able to draw upon their varied experiences and expertise, leading to the development of comprehensive and contextually relevant recommendations.

The depth of these recommendations stems from the rigorous and inclusive nature of the workshop process. RAG members brought unique insights, drawing from their on-the-ground experiences and understanding of local realities. The recommendations are, therefore, grounded in practical considerations and relate to the specific contexts in which SSF operate. This approach ensures that the recommendations are relevant and address the nuances and complexities that arise when implementing the Guidelines in different countries.

The recommendations developed target governments, intergovernmental institutions, and other actors, such as large environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) or philanthropic organisations, which are increasingly emphasising multistakeholderism diminishing the voice of the rights holders. These recommendations aim to guide these entities in their actions and decisions to promote the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.



CHAPTER 1

COUNTRY-WISE FISHERIES
AND MANAGEMENT
OVERVIEW
at glance



BOTSWANA

Inland Fisheries

Botswana's fisheries in the Okavango Delta are characterised by a unique and delicate ecosystem, with a diverse range of aquatic habitats supporting a variety of fish species. The Okavango Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to an intricate network of channels, lagoons, and floodplains. In this dynamic ecosystem, key fish species such as tilapia and catfish play crucial roles in the food web sustaining local wildlife and human communities dependent on fishing for their livelihoods.

Botswana's government, SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples regulate fishing activities by implementing fishing quotas, gear restrictions, and seasonal closures. These practices are designed to prevent overfishing, protect vulnerable species during critical breeding periods, and ensure the long-term health of the aquatic ecosystem.

Laws that are applicable to fisheries:

- 1 • Protection Act of 1975 Fish Protection
- 2 • Regulation 2016
- 3 • Wildlife Policy and the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act of 1992



UGANDA

Inland Fisheries

Uganda's fisheries play a vital role in providing a source of livelihood for many communities and contributing to the country's food security.

The fisheries sector is diverse, with both capture fisheries in lakes and rivers and aquaculture practices. Water bodies like Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, and the Nile River significantly contribute to Uganda's fish production. Fish is a staple food in Uganda, and the fisheries sector supports the incomes of numerous small-scale fishers and their communities.

SSF focused on Lake Victoria, situated in the nation's north-western quadrant, covering an area of 31,000 km² with a shoreline length of 1750 km. In 2014, the lake's fisheries contributed over half (54%) of Uganda's total landings, amounting to 467,000 metric tons.

The fishing industry on the lake involves approximately 65,000 fishers, 16,745 of whom are boat owners, with 12% being female⁹.

Numerous other individuals are engaged in various aspects of the fisheries sector, including trading, processing, transportation, and provision of fishing inputs and regulations.

Fishing vessels on Lake Victoria are primarily locally made and operated using paddles, outboard engines, or sails, with some fishers operating without vessels. Commercial catches are dominated by three main species: the small pelagic silver cyprinid, Mukene

or Nile perch, and Nile tilapia, each serving different markets. Nile perch is processed into chilled and frozen products for export to various international markets, along with Nile tilapia, which is primarily consumed locally, either fresh or sundried. Mukene is sun dried and used as human food and in industrial feed mills as a raw material for poultry, fish, and livestock feeds ¹⁰.

The government implements various policies and regulations through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries to ensure sustainable fishing practices. Common management strategies include the establishment of closed seasons, gear regulations, and fishing quotas to prevent over-exploitation of fish stocks but implementation remains questionable. Policies like the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy guide management practices, focusing on sustainable resource utilisation and community involvement.

Laws that are applicable to fisheries:

- 1 • National Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, 2022



SENEGAL

Marine Fisheries

The coastal nation is known for its diverse marine resources, and fishing plays a central role in the daily lives of many Senegalese communities. Major fish stocks off the coast of Senegal include species like sardines, mackerel, and various types of demersal fish. The artisanal fishing sector, consisting of small-scale and traditional fishing practices, is vital, contributing substantially to local economies.

Fisheries management in Senegal involves a combination of regulatory measures and community-based initiatives to ensure the sustainable use of marine resources. Through the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, the government implements policies to control fishing efforts, regulate fishing gear, and establish closed seasons.

The sector is governed by laws such as the Fisheries Code, and efforts are made to combat illegal fishing and promote sustainable practices through collaboration with local communities.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Inland Fisheries

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) boasts an extensive network of rivers and lakes, providing a diverse and potentially productive environment for fisheries. The Congo River, one of the world's largest rivers, along with other water bodies like Lake Tanganyika, Lake Kivu, and various tributaries, supports a variety of fish species. The fisheries sector in the DRC is a vital source of food and income for many communities, particularly those residing in the riverine and lakeside areas.

⁹Adaptation Strategies to a Changing Resource Base: Case of the Gillnet Nile Perch Fishery on Lake Victoria in Uganda" Sustainability 14, no. 4: 2376. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14042376>

¹⁰ Mpomwenda, Veronica, Tumi Tómasson, Jón Geir Pétursson, Anthony Taabu-Munyaho, Herbert Nakiyende, and Daði Mar Kristófersson. 2022.

The industry comprises artisanal and industrial fishing activities, with artisanal fishing playing a particularly significant role in sustaining local economies.

Fisheries management practices in the DRC have faced numerous challenges, including governance, infrastructure, and sustainable resource use issues. The country has struggled with enforcing regulations and combating illegal fishing practices, leading to the overexploitation of certain fish stocks. Political instability and the legacy of armed conflicts have further complicated fisheries management efforts. The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as storage and processing facilities, has hindered the value chain for fish products.

Laws that are applicable to fisheries:

- 1 • Decree 21/April/1937 on fishing.
- 2 • Ord. Num 103/ agri, substances and fishing gear 18 January 1958
- 3 • Ruling. Departmental 002 of 09 January 1981
- 4 • Order 047/cab/MIN/ECNT18 Feb.1994 amending and supplementing Order 042/CM/ECN /92
- 5 • Law no. 16/008 of 15 July amending and supplementing Law no. 87-010 of 1 August 1987 on the Family Code.
- 6 • Decree no. 14-018 of 2 August 2014 setting out the procedures for allocating forest concessions to local communities.
- 7 • Decree No. 22/30 July 2022 on the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Pygmy peoples
- 8 • Ordinance No. 52- 442 of 21 December 1952 on measures to protect springs and aquifers, lakes,s and watercourses and to control the exercise of rights of use and access to them.



GHANA

Marine and Inland Fisheries

The sector is characterised by a diverse range of marine and freshwater resources, including the Gulf of Guinea, which supports a variety of fish species. Using small-scale traditional methods, artisanal fishing is predominant in Ghana, involving numerous fishing communities along the coastline. The sector also includes industrial fishing operations, contributing to domestic consumption and export markets.

The Fisheries Commission, responsible for regulating and managing the sector, implements policies and measures such as closed seasons, mesh size regulations, and effort controls to prevent overfishing and protect vulnerable species.

Fisheries laws such as the Fisheries Act regulate the sector, and the government is actively engaged in initiatives to combat illegal fishing and promote sustainable practices.

Laws that are applicable to fisheries:

- 1 • Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625)
- 2 • Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana (2015-2019)





GAMBIA

Marine Fisheries

Gambia, located along the West African coast, boasts a diverse and rich marine environment that supports its fisheries sector. The country's fisheries are predominantly characterised by artisanal and SSF activities, which provide livelihoods for local communities and contribute to national food security. The sector primarily targets various species, including pelagic fish, demersal fish, and crustaceans. Artisanal fishing, often carried out using traditional methods such as small boats and hand gear, forms the backbone of the industry.

Regarding fisheries management, Gambia faces challenges typical of many developing nations, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the need for effective governance.

Through the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the government of Gambia has been working to implement management practices to ensure the sustainability of marine resources. Initiatives include establishing seasonal fishing closures, promoting mesh size regulations to prevent overfishing, and introducing licences to regulate fishing activities. The country has also engaged in regional collaborations to address transboundary fisheries issues and promote responsible management practices.

Laws that are applicable to fisheries:

1 • Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Strategy (2017 – 2021)



GUINEA-BISSAU

SSF in Guinea-Bissau predominantly focuses on artisanal fishing methods, targeting species such as shrimp, sardinella, and other pelagic and demersal fish. Fishers use canoes and small boats, and the majority of the catch is sold in local markets, though a portion is also exported to neighbouring countries. The sector faces challenges such as declining fish stocks, inadequate infrastructure, and competition from industrial fleets.

Fisheries management in Guinea-Bissau is governed by a mix of traditional practices and state regulations, with the government playing a role through policies aimed at resource conservation and sustainability. The country has developed a National Fisheries Policy that includes regulations for sustainable fishing, including seasonal closures and limits on fishing gear.

Here is a list of relevant governance frameworks and policies from the provided information:

1. *Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC):*

Guinea-Bissau's commitment to climate change mitigation and adaptation through development policies and programs aimed at minimising greenhouse gas emissions. Small-scale fishermen are engaged in these efforts.

2. *Terra Ranka Framework:*

A sustainable development initiative focused on reducing gender inequality and empowering women, particularly in agriculture and tourism (Section 2-5).

3. *Second National Poverty Reduction Strategy:*

A policy that includes gender equality, empowerment of women, climate change adaptation, and improving nutrition as core components.

4. *Protocol on the Implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (2019-2024):*

Focuses on sustainable fisheries, resource management, and enhancing institutional capacity, while promoting gender equality in the fisheries sector (Section 07, Pages 03-11).

5. *Country Strategic Plan (2023-2027):*

This plan aligns with national priorities to improve food security, nutrition, and resilience to climate change for vulnerable populations, with a focus on women and youth (Strategic Outcomes 1-4).

6. *EU-Guinea-Bissau Fisheries Partnership Agreement:*

Aims to balance sustainable fisheries, economic development, and social well-being, with an emphasis on training, institutional capacity building, and recognizing women's roles in the fisheries value chain (Section 07, Part 2.5b).

7. *Guidelines on Gender Equality (Section 08):*

Gender-sensitive approaches, particularly in fisheries, agriculture, and tourism, integrating gender equality into all policies and practices, especially through sections 8.2 and 8.3.



CHAPTER 2

THE ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SSF GUIDELINES

This chapter delves into the SSF Guidelines, focusing on sections 5 to 13, which cover critical aspects of sustainable practices, human rights, and governance in SSF. By examining these sections in detail, the chapter aims to comprehensively understand the SSF Guidelines and their implications for the SSF community. Drawing upon insights from the African region, the chapter presents broad trends and observations regarding implementing the procedures in this diverse and significant area.

One of the primary objectives of this chapter is to offer evidence based recommendations that can enhance the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. By analysing the trends and challenges identified in the African context, specific recommendations are formulated to address the gaps and shortcomings.

These recommendations consider the unique socio-economic and environmental conditions prevalent in the region, ensuring their practicality and effectiveness in real-world scenarios.

The chapter highlights the importance of collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, including governments, SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, civil society organisations, and international institutions, to successfully implement the SSF Guidelines. It emphasises the need for comprehensive policy frameworks, capacity-building initiatives, and participatory decision-making processes that involve small-scale fishers as key stakeholders. Furthermore, the recommendations in this chapter underscore the significance of integrating traditional knowledge and practices into fisheries management strategies, recognising their valuable contributions to sustainable resource use and communities resilience.

• • • • • SECTION 5

GOVERNANCE OF TENURE IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Tenure systems in SSF determine who can access, use and control land and water resources related to their livelihood. It can allocate areas and prescribe how long and under what conditions these resources can be accessed. It's important to note that tenure systems can be based on written policies, laws, and unwritten customs and practices.

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (FAO)¹¹ assigns States the responsibility to “provide legal recognition for legitimate tenure rights not currently protected by law” and further goes on to say that people should be given adequate legal protection against forced evictions.

Broadly, governance related to Tenure Rights in SSF can be seen in two distinct ways. The first is formal tenure rights over land and water resources through legal provisions. The second is customary tenure rights exercised by SSF through locally adapted normative frameworks.

In many cases, these two types of tenure rights can exist separately and overlap. However, in cases where there has been a formalisation of customary governance systems, it means that it undergoes a process of making the rules entirely fixed, reducing the capacity of communities to adapt to change.

The SSF Guidelines aim to ensure secure, equitable, and culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources, fishing areas, and adjacent land and forests, with a special focus on the rights of women, Indigenous Peoples, marginalised groups, and ethnic minorities. They emphasise recognizing and respecting legitimate tenure rights, including local norms and customary practices.

The Guidelines also advocate for securing access to resources for small-scale fishers and their communities, protecting these rights from violation, and empowering communities by involving them in decision-making processes, especially in the context of conflict and disaster recovery.



¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

In the past, much of tenure rights in Botswana was grounded in the customary frameworks of diverse Indigenous Peoples that managed their inland fisheries resources. Studies have shown that SSF has historically used a diverse range of gears to adapt to the seasons, locations, and depths in the Okavango Delta. These range from techniques such as drive fishing, where anglers beat the water to scare fish into their nets, to gill nets, hook and line, fishing baskets, barrage traps, fishing spears, and mosquito nets ¹².

Today, fisheries are managed by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, whose principal mandate is biodiversity conservation.

Through the Fish Protection Regulation, the state's command-and-control management strategies now include restrictions on gear and fishing methods, requirement of licences for commercial fishing, restricting subsistence fishing to drying out pools on flood plains and delineation of fishing seasons. Together, their cumulative impact has meant that the management system has blocked fisher households' access to nutrient-dense fish resources, contributing to food and nutritional insecurity within impoverished riparian communities.

Further, it has been observed that any consultation with SSF communities occurs primarily in the context of development or industrial projects. For instance, during the construction of a fishpond, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is conducted, and SSF communities are consulted.

While this type of engagement with the SSF represents a step toward progress, it is far from a co-management system as expected by the SSF Guidelines. It is acknowledging the importance of SSF in sustainable resource management.



UGANDA

Customary tenure rights systems no longer exist in Uganda, highlighting the need for direct provision for tenure rights within the legal system. Such legal provisions could grant unique access, use, and control over fisheries resources, which is currently lacking. Moreover, the management of fisheries on Lake Victoria has undergone significant changes.

The dissolution of local Beach Management Units (BMUs) in November 2015, due to their perceived ineffectiveness in combating illegal fishing, led to their replacement by military enforcement.

This shift was driven by a surge in illegal fishing gear usage. The military's approach, which includes

removing indiscriminate fishing gear and vessels smaller than 28 feet, as well as seine nets exceeding eight panels, has inadvertently criminalised smaller-scale fishing, disproportionately affecting SSF communities, especially Nile Perch Fisheries.

This has meant a one-size-fits-all approach, which has led to SSF communities with smaller operations being deemed illegal.

Environmental Impact Assessments are mandated by law for industrial and development projects under the National Environment Act. However, SSF communities frequently have inadequate access to information regarding these projects, limiting meaningful consultation and potentially affecting their tenure rights.

Legal mechanisms for dispute resolution in Uganda, while available, are not explicitly tailored to SSF tenure rights violations. Financial constraints, physical distances to courts, and corruption hinder the accessibility of these mechanisms for many SSF communities, limiting their ability to address conflicts effectively.

In conclusion, Uganda faces several challenges related to SSF tenure rights, including corruption, poor law enforcement, and inappropriate taxation. Corruption among law enforcers leads to selective rule enforcement, adversely affecting marginalised local fishermen and women.

Poor law enforcement is evident in unequal access to fishing grounds, favouring elites and wealthier fishers. Excessive taxes and inappropriate taxation methods along with a centralised payment system to create financial burdens for SSF communities.

These issues collectively hinder the sustainable management of fisheries and the protection of SSF customary tenure rights in Uganda.



SENEGAL

In Senegal, tenure rights over fisheries resources differ significantly from traditional land rights.

The Fisheries Code framework governs the exploitation of fisheries resources, with access rights primarily reserved for industrial fishing, particularly targeting deep-water shrimp.

To ensure sustainable management, industrial fishers have formed cooperatives to oversee the deep-water shrimp fishery, reporting activities to fisheries authorities.

Senegal's fishing access is divided into two zones: a 6-mile zone exclusively reserved for SSF and a zone extending from 6 to 12 miles where industrial fishing operates.

Notably SSF are not restricted to a 6-mile zone. However, due to inadequate surveillance, industrial boats often encroach upon the SSF zone at night.

¹² Mmopelwa, G., Mosepele, K., Mosepele, B., Moleele, N., & Ngwenya, B. (2009). Environmental variability and the fishery dynamics of the Okavango delta, Botswana: the case of subsistence fishing. *African Journal of Ecology*, 47, 119– 127. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2028.2008.01058.x

Environmental and social impact studies are conducted when establishing fishmeal factories in fishing communities.

However, these processes are often criticised for bias, as SSF's opinions, channelled through NGOs, are inadequately considered. Despite ongoing complaints from SSF, these factories emit unpleasant smells, leak wastewater, and are sometimes situated less than 500 metres from dwellings, violating the Environmental Code.

Specific regulations aim to protect natural resources in Senegal's islands including prohibitions on the abusive cutting of mangrove wood, the establishment of periodic fishing ban zones for certain species, and biological rest periods are instituted, particularly for octopuses and specific crustaceans.

Night fishing in the sardinella fishery¹³ has been banned based on recommendations from local artisanal fishing councils (CLPA)¹⁴, validated by state authorities through prefectural or ministerial orders.



GAMBIA

In The Gambia, communities have taken proactive measures to safeguard their fisheries resources through socio-cultural practices and established bylaws. This grassroots approach involves community committees, alongside government-appointed watchdog officers, overseeing and guiding fishers' activities. The regulatory framework is robust, emphasising sustainable and collective protection of resources. Violations result in fines and penalties, reinforcing the commitment to responsible resource management.

Various communities, each unique in its geographical and cultural context, exemplify this tenure system. Bakau Fishing Community in the Kaniing Municipality, Tanji Fishing Community along the Atlantic Coast in the West Coast Region, Gunjur in the South West stretching from North to South of the Atlantic Ocean, Tendaba Fishing Community in the inland Artisanal fishing community located in the Lower River Region, and Wassu inland fishing community in the Central River Region all adhere to customary tenure practices. These practices intertwine with local ethnic and socio-economic dimensions, emphasising the deep-rooted nature of these customs.

This tenure system is customary and legally recognised, supported by policies and acts designed to regulate and protect the sector.

The Gambia Fisheries Act of 2007 is a cornerstone of managing and conserving fisheries resources while

regulating various aspects, from fishing on the High Seas to aquaculture and the import/export of fisheries products.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Policy (2017-2026) further underlines the deteriorating state of fisheries resources due to unsustainable practices, habitat destruction, pollution, and weak management structures.

The policy calls for coordinated development approaches, increased investment, improved aquaculture development, strengthened research-management linkages, and conflict resolution in cross-border contexts.

Despite these measures, preferential access rights are unavailable, ensuring an inclusive and equitable approach to fisheries resources in The Gambia.

The combination of customary and legal recognition, community-driven regulations, and national policies showcases Gambia's multifaceted strategy for securing tenure rights for SSF while addressing broader sustainability challenges.

In The Gambia, proposed industrial or development projects undergo comprehensive environmental and social impact studies, during which SSF communities likely to be affected are extensively consulted.

The National Environment Agency of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources and other stakeholders facilitate representation during these exercises. Moreover, the country has established legal mechanisms to address and resolve disputes arising from violations of SSF tenure rights, ensuring a framework for necessary actions against unlawful practices.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In the DRC, tenure rights are formally governed by law and require individuals to have an official fish identification card to determine their legal right to fish. However, these laws' non-consultative and non-participatory nature leads to persistent contestation by fishing communities. Although SSF communities have preferential access to fishing, especially in areas like North Kivu, where control is exercised the lack of a consultative approach perpetuates tensions.

SSF communities are also excluded from decisions regarding industrial projects that might impact fisheries resources and SSF tenure rights. Legal mechanisms exist for reporting or resolving disputes arising from violations of SSF regime rights, but there is a pressing need to enforce these regulations designed to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights.

¹³ Night fishing in Senegal, particularly for **Sardinella**, is a common practice where fishers use lights to attract large schools of this small pelagic fish. **Sardinella**, which includes **Sardinella aurita** (Round Sardinella) and **Sardinella maderensis** (Flat Sardinella), is a vital resource for local communities and a staple in the region's diet. However, the practice of night fishing has been linked to overfishing due to the high efficiency of catching large quantities of fish at once, leading to concerns over the sustainability of **Sardinella** stocks. To address these issues, the Senegalese government has periodically **banned night fishing** for **Sardinella** as part of broader efforts to manage declining fish stocks.

¹⁴ **CLPA** stands for **Conseil Local de la Pêche Artisanale** (Local Council for Artisanal Fisheries). The CLPA is a community-based management institution designed to involve local stakeholders, particularly small-scale fishers, in the governance of fisheries.



GHANA

In Ghana, SSF communities have tenure rights, exemplified by the Densu Delta fishery in the Greater Accra Region.

This coastal resource, technically a marine fishery, is managed through customary and legal frameworks. The fishing communities around the Densu Delta, such as Tsokomey, Bortianor, Tetegu, and Faanaa, showcase the co-management of the oyster fishery and traditional management of other fisheries.

Notably, the Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA) holds exclusive rights to harvest oysters, as outlined in the Fisheries Act of 2002.

The tenure rights for the Densu Delta oyster fishery are well-documented in the "Oyster Fishery Community Based Management Plan for the Densu Delta, Ga South Municipal Assembly, Greater Accra, Ghana," published by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Fisheries Commission in 2018.

Additionally, the general fisheries regulations in the country are stipulated in the Ghana Fisheries Act of 2002, which provides protective measures against harmful fishing practices, such as the use of explosives or driftnet fishing.

Regarding consultation and environmental impact assessments, the Fisheries Act mandates that industrial or development projects, excluding fisheries, undergo an environmental impact assessment before commencement. SSF communities, including those in the Densu Delta, are actively consulted in these development plans through collaboration with Traditional and Local Government Authorities, working with state organisations like the Environmental Protection Agency.

This collaborative approach ensures adherence to environmental and social considerations and underscores the consultative nature of tenure rights implementation in Ghana's SSF communities.

national cadastral system, harmonising traditional and official law systems, and providing support to improve land management capacities. Gender considerations, conflict management, environmental sustainability, and resource management are integral to this strategy.

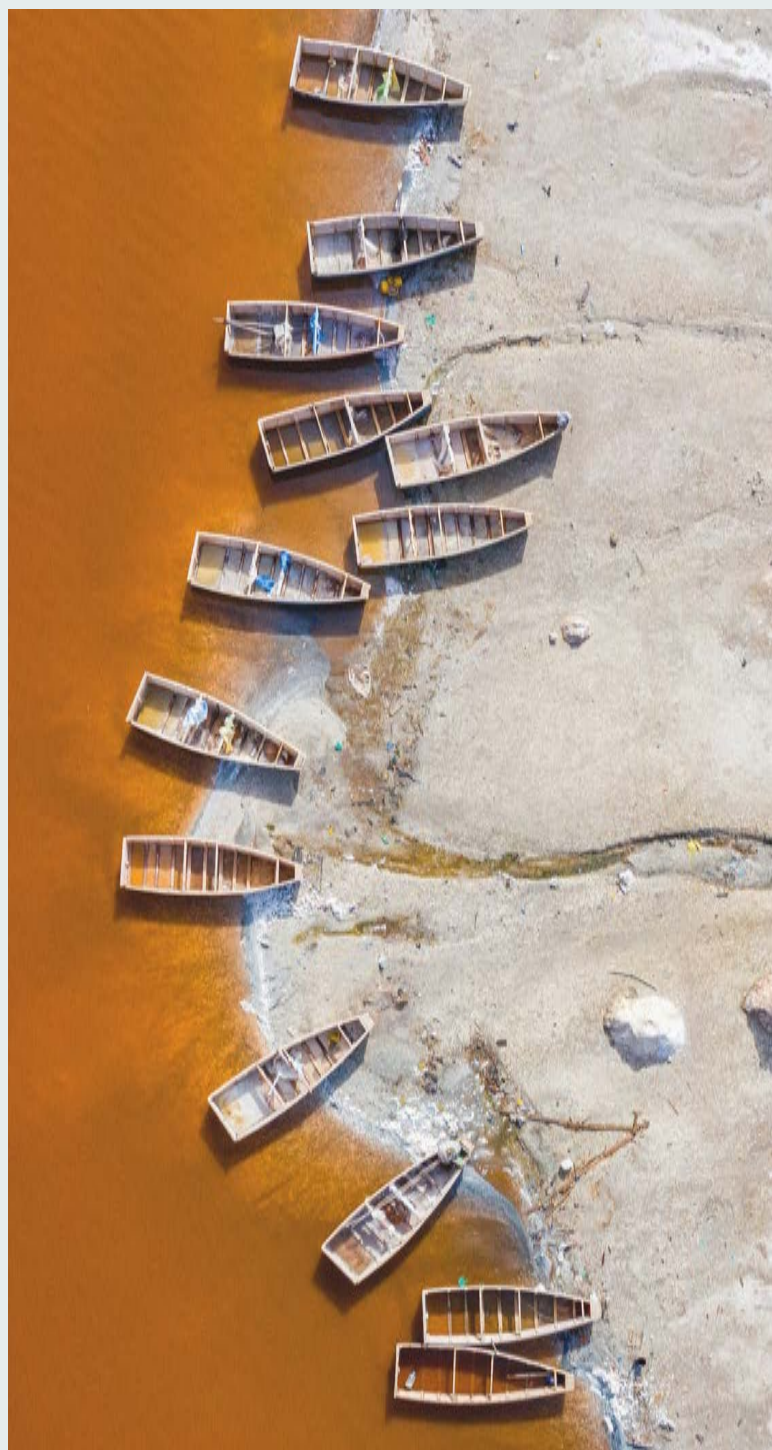
When industrial or development projects are proposed, environmental and social impact studies are conducted, with SSF communities being consulted and represented during the implementation of these initiatives. Legal mechanisms exist to report and resolve disputes arising from violations of SSF possession rights, ensuring that the interests of these communities are safeguarded.



GUINEA-BISSAU

In Guinea-Bissau, SSF communities have both customary and legally recognized tenure rights. The government has implemented measures to ensure these rights, which are essential for sustainable fishery management. Secure and stable access to fishing grounds is crucial for SSF, alongside access to resources such as land for bringing fish ashore, processing, and residential purposes. These tenure rights encompass land, fishery resources, and bodies of water, focusing on fair, transparent, and participatory recognition of these rights. Effective access to justice and accountability mechanisms also play a significant role.

In Guinea-Bissau, the government is working towards a comprehensive strategy to improve land rights security, combining official land rights systems with customary ownership rights. This effort involves developing a



CASE STUDY



BOTSWANA

Nestled within the serene expanse of Botswana's Okavango Delta lies a vital lifeline for SSF.

Despite being landlocked, Botswana's aquatic resources, particularly the Okavango Delta, contribute significantly to the national fish catch. However, the sustainability of these fisheries is threatened by myriad challenges, including ad hoc management practices and a lack of streamlined policies.

Traditional fishing practices in the delta are hindered by restrictive zone regulations and permit requirements, leading to a decline in fish catches.

The enforcement of these regulations, while aiming to conserve fish stocks, inadvertently impacts the livelihoods of SSF and exacerbates food and nutrition insecurity within impoverished riparian communities. Additionally, the intrusion of outsiders armed with permits further strains the delicate ecosystem and threatens the traditional and Indigenous Peoples' way of life.

Despite these challenges, the resilience of SSF shines through. Community members have banded together to form syndicates, pooling resources to create fish ponds and explore alternative livelihood options. These initiatives provide a source of income and serve as a testament to the community's adaptability in the face of adversity. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the need for capacity-building in fish production to unlock the sector's full potential and mitigate dependency on traditional fishing practices.

Collaboration between stakeholders is crucial in addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting SSF in the Okavango Delta. Engaging SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in policy-making processes, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and promoting sustainable fishing practices are essential steps towards ensuring the long-term viability of these fisheries. By harnessing the resilience and ingenuity of local fishermen and fostering partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organisations, Botswana can chart a sustainable path forward for its SSF, preserving both livelihoods and the rich biodiversity of the Okavango Delta for generations to come.



UGANDA

Records from the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics, a government body responsible for producing and disseminating statistical data on various aspects of the economy, indicate that income from fish export has been consistently reducing. In 2005, for instance, Uganda earned \$ 142 million in revenue from fish exports, then \$ 124.711 million in 2007, and \$ 103.3 million in 2009, and this continued for the subsequent years. This decline was attributed to

overfishing, sometimes referred to as illegal fishing, in SSF communities. In 2017, therefore, the President of Uganda directed the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) to deploy the army on Ugandan lakes to combat the so-called illegal fishing practices and increase the country's income from fish exports.

Since then, the army has been physically located in SSF communities with dreadful consequences, including destruction of property, deaths, human rights violations and complete loss of livelihoods. Although this has happened in all fishing communities across the country, FGD participants consulted from 19 landing sites in Mukono districts and Buvuma island have narrated their ordeals. From controlling illegal fishing to using nets and boats that the government had previously licensed, the introduction of cages for fish farming increased the restriction of SSF communities to fishing grounds. The fish cages owned by non-residents in fisher communities have resulted in reduced space in the form of fishing grounds, as SSF communities are not allowed to fish close to the cages. Those caught fishing near the cages are arrested by the army men guarding the fish cages and held in detention in ungazetted and sometimes unknown places. More so, allocating cages to individuals has granted them illegitimate ownership of the waters where they have allocated themselves spaces in the water.

This situation has been exacerbated by the establishment of the Lacustrine Protected Area (LPA) as a breeding place for fish. Whereas the LPA is a good initiative to protect breeding grounds and contributes to the sustainable rejuvenation of the fish stocks, this has now resulted in another basis for torture by the army. SSF communities have not been sensitised on the demarcation of the LPA and have no knowledge on where it starts and stops. In practice, they say, almost all water is either an LPA or close to a cage, thus nowhere to fish. As a result, they have to keep bribing the security guards that protect the cages so they can fish, or they have to keep on the run as they fish.

A number admitted that they run to cut down trees and restore their boats whenever their boats are destroyed. In contrast, others have resorted to charcoal burning as an alternative source of income that is allowed and, above all, has led to visible destruction of the environment in fisher communities. Many men and women have been pushed out of fishing with disastrous effects, including having their children drop out of school. The restrictions on fishing have also intensified land conflicts as SSF communities attempt to engage in alternative income-generating activities like farming. Several of them have encroached on nearby forests and are often hunted down by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) for the destruction of forests.

It is important to note that SSF communities have to be engaged and involved in decisions that affect them directly. Education and sensitisation following such decisions are also paramount to ensure compliance with rules. However, the laws have to be applicable and suitable to those who depend entirely on fishing.



SENEGAL

With the support of Japanese cooperation, the fishing communities of Nianing have benefited from a landing area built on the beach to improve the quality of the products landed and organise the marketing of the products. The project was carried out as a complement to the management measures applied to two species of fish products, namely HOPE and CYMBIUM.

The aim was to improve their reproduction using a biological study in which the fishermen participated. A biological resting period for octopus was applied, accompanied by the immersion of octopus pots and a return to the sea of baby cymbium.

A landing area was created to accompany and support these measures.

A Fisheries Resource and Marine Environment Management Committee (FRMC) was set up at the village fishing community level, bringing together local representatives of the various fishing techniques developed in the locality.

This committee acts as the project's sponsor. Setting up the landing area enabled the committee to organise the marketing of the products by imposing compliance with product conservation conditions and offering a higher price than that offered by other buyers.

The conditions were to take ice out to sea and preserve the products in suitable boxes. Previously, a higher price had been negotiated with the product processing plant than other suppliers who did not pay enough attention to product quality.

The profits from this operation also enabled the commission to help the community through donations and support for local schools, mosques and churches. In addition to improving the fishermen's income, acting on the resources, and preserving the environment, the project has introduced new behaviour at the community level.

To achieve this, the communities worked closely with the fisheries administration and the Municipality. The construction of infrastructures along the coast requires authorisation and other administrative support. It was also necessary to organise working sessions with the fishing communities to initiate the process that would lead to success, as the fishermen already had appointed buyers who they couldn't leave overnight. The project was successful because of strong commitment from the communities, as two major landing sites (Joal and Mbour) are close to the village of Nianing.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Located in the northwest of Guinea-Bissau, on the banks of the Cacheu River, the Cacheu Fishing Community is a vibrant inland community deeply rooted in traditional fishing practices. Alongside neighbouring communities like Bigene and Canchungo, Cacheu maintains customary tenure rights over its fishing grounds and associated resources. These rights are legally recognized by the government, reflecting a blend of traditional and formal governance structures. The community's socio-cultural and economic laws play a crucial role in regulating the sustainable use of fishery resources, ensuring compliance with established practices to prevent misuse and overfishing.

The Cacheu Fishing Community operates under a robust framework of customary tenure rights, which are enshrined in local practices and supported by national legislation. These rights grant the community secure and stable access to fishing grounds, land for fish processing, and residential areas. Governance within the community is participatory, involving various stakeholders, including local leaders, fisherfolk, and women's groups. This inclusive approach ensures that all voices are heard in decision-making processes. The community adheres to strict regulations concerning the types of fishing gear used, territorial fishing zones, seasonal restrictions, and fishing embargoes, all designed to promote sustainable fishing practices.

Despite its strong governance framework, the Cacheu Fishing Community faces several challenges. Inadequate infrastructure, such as limited storage facilities and processing units, hampers the community's ability to maximise its fishery resources. Additionally, external threats such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by foreign vessels pose significant risks to the sustainability of local fisheries. To address these issues, the community has collaborated with government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international bodies. These partnerships focus on capacity building, infrastructure development, and enhancing surveillance and enforcement measures against IUU fishing.

The Cacheu Fishing Community exemplifies several best practices in managing tenure rights and fishery resources. Regular community meetings and consultations ensure transparency and collective decision-making. The community also prioritises gender equity, involving women in governance roles and recognizing their contributions to the fishing industry. To further strengthen tenure rights and promote sustainable fisheries, it is recommended that the government and stakeholders invest in infrastructure improvements, provide training on advanced fishing techniques, and enhance market access for fish products. Additionally, integrating traditional knowledge with scientific research can help develop adaptive management strategies that are both culturally relevant and ecologically sound.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Investigate the national legal foundations that are conducive to supporting tenure rights.

Conduct a thorough analysis of existing land and resource tenure laws, policies, and regulations at the national level, assessing their alignment with international frameworks and best practices.

Engaging in stakeholder consultations with government agencies, SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, civil society organisations, and legal experts is crucial to gather diverse insights on tenure rights issues. Based on these findings, legal reform proposals or amendments should be developed to enhance the protection and governance of tenure rights.

Develop a database of customary and legal land tenure systems through mapping.

Develop a database of customary and legal land tenure systems through a systematic process of mapping, data collection, analysis, and organisation. Collaboration with key stakeholders, including SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, government agencies, and land experts, is essential to identify and document existing tenure systems in the target area. This process should involve field surveys, interviews, and document reviews to ensure comprehensive and accurate information is gathered for the database.

Conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of existing tenure rights systems and identify how they can be improved.

Assessing the effectiveness of existing tenure suitable systems involves comprehensively examining the legal, economic, and social frameworks governing land ownership and property rights.

This assessment entails evaluating tenure systems' clarity, enforceability, and inclusivity while also considering their impact on various stakeholders, including SSF communities, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups.

By identifying weaknesses and inefficiencies within these systems, policymakers and stakeholders can implement targeted reforms to enhance tenure security, promote equitable access to land resources, and foster sustainable land management practices.

Map existing law/policies/ projects that conflict with tenure rights.

Mapping existing laws, policies, and projects that conflict with tenure rights involves conducting a comprehensive review of legal frameworks, government policies, and development initiatives to identify discrepancies and inconsistencies undermining tenure security.

This process requires interdisciplinary collaboration between legal experts, policymakers, and community representatives to analyse the implications of these conflicts on land tenure arrangements, property rights, and access to natural resources.

By documenting these conflicts and their impacts on SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples,

policymakers can initiate targeted interventions to address legal ambiguities, mitigate tenure-related disputes, and ensure that land tenure systems uphold the rights of all stakeholders.

Understand the overlaps between Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT)¹⁵ and the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines.

This entails a thorough comparative analysis of both sets of Guidelines to identify commonalities and discrepancies in their principles, objectives, and implementation strategies.

This process involves engaging stakeholders from government agencies, civil society organisations, local communities and Indigenous Peoples to assess these Guidelines' practical implications and effectiveness in promoting sustainable and participatory resource management, securing customary tenure rights, and enhancing food security at the national and local levels.

By examining the intersections between the VGGT and SSF Guidelines, policymakers and practitioners can develop synergistic approaches that leverage the strengths of both frameworks to address tenure-related challenges facing SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

This study is instrumental in fostering coherence, alignment, and collaboration across policy domains, thereby facilitating the implementation of integrated governance strategies that support equitable access to land, fisheries, and forests while advancing food security objectives in a holistic and inclusive manner.

Ensure broad presentation of SSF in decision-making when Legal Tenure Systems are created.

Decision-making processes when creating legal tenure systems necessitate active engagement with SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, local stakeholders, and relevant authorities throughout policy development and implementation.

This entails facilitating inclusive consultations, balanced participatory mechanisms, and knowledge-sharing platforms to incorporate the diverse perspectives, needs, and priorities of SSF actors into tenure governance frameworks.

Such involvement is crucial for safeguarding SSF rights on tenure as it promotes transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of legal tenure systems.

By empowering SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to contribute to the design and implementation of tenure policies, decision-makers can ensure that these frameworks reflect the realities and aspirations of small-scale fishers, leading to more equitable, sustainable, and resilient tenure arrangements that support the livelihoods and well-being of SSF-dependent communities.

¹⁵ <https://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

Develop an implementation framework for SSF Customary Tenure Rights.

This process entails conducting comprehensive spatial mapping exercises to delineate land areas and identify existing land uses while simultaneously engaging with local communities, Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders to understand their customary practices and needs.

By establishing clear rules and regulations within the framework, such as defining property rights, land use restrictions, and dispute resolution mechanisms, legal certainty and security of tenure are enhanced, fostering investment and sustainable resource management. Moreover, incorporating legal guarantees and violation rules ensures that tenure rights are protected and enforced, deterring unauthorised encroachments and safeguarding against tenure insecurity.

Acknowledging fishing as a way of life is intrinsic to SSF's Right to Life.

This can be achieved by recognising the cultural, social, and economic significance of fishing activities within SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples and integrating this understanding into legal and policy mechanisms.

It involves creating policies that not only safeguard the rights of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to access and utilise marine resources but also support their traditional livelihood practices and cultural identities.

Emphasising fishing as a fundamental aspect of the right to life for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples underscores the importance of protecting their socio-economic well-being, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring food security for millions of people globally who depend on SSF for their sustenance and way of life. This is especially relevant in the case of "alternate livelihood" programmes targeting SSF.

Organise and support SSF to effectively co-manage fisheries resources where management systems are designed with SSF suggestions kept in mind.

Governments can facilitate effective co-management of fisheries resources by SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples through inclusive governance structures that prioritise and facilitate the incorporation of SSF suggestions and perspectives. This can be achieved by establishing collaborative decision-making bodies comprising government representatives, SSF leaders, scientists, and other

stakeholders, where SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples have a meaningful voice in designing and implementing fisheries management systems. Additionally, governments can provide technical and financial support to enhance the capacity of SSF communities in data collection, monitoring, and enforcement, empowering them to participate actively in resource management processes.

Prioritising SSF input in fisheries management is essential as it leverages local knowledge and ensures that management strategies are contextually appropriate, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

By fostering partnerships between governments and SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, co-management approaches enhance fisheries' resilience and productivity and promote social cohesion, economic empowerment, and food security for millions of people reliant on SSF for their livelihoods.

Ensure that Free Prior Informed Consent is a mandatory feature for any project proposed in SSF connect resources.

Governments can facilitate the recognition of SSF communities as the primary rights holders by incorporating the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a mandatory requirement for any project proposed in SSF-connected resources.

This entails establishing legal frameworks and policy guidelines that mandate meaningful consultation and consent from SSF communities before approving any development projects affecting their fisheries resources.

Governments can also provide capacity-building support to SSF communities to enhance their negotiation skills, knowledge of their rights, and understanding project implications.

Prioritising FPIC ensures that SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples have the autonomy to make informed decisions about projects impacting their livelihoods, culture, and environment, empowering them as key stakeholders in resource governance processes.

Recognising SSF as the first rights holders is essential for upholding their rights to self-determination, preserving their traditional fishing practices, and promoting sustainable development that aligns with the needs and aspirations of SSF communities while fostering social justice, environmental stewardship, and inclusive governance.



• • • • • SECTION 6

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT, AND DECENT WORK

Addressing socio-economic welfare is essential because most SSF in the region live in socio-economically precarious conditions.

These fishers face multiple challenges that threaten their livelihoods and well-being, including a diminishing natural resource base, competition from industrial-scale fishing operations, rising living costs and related debt traps, poor working conditions, poor access to health, food insecurity and malnutrition, and inequitable socio-political dynamics.

Section 6 of the SSF Guidelines outlines the responsibility of states to promote equitable development, eradicate poverty, and improve the socio-economic conditions of fishing communities. It emphasises ensuring access to essential services like housing, education, clean water, and energy, as well as financial services such as savings, credit, and insurance.

The section also advocates for fair and secure working conditions, promoting decent work and fair wages for all involved in the fisheries value chain.

Additionally, it calls for measures to prevent crime, violence, and exploitation, ensuring access to justice for victims, and recognizes the rights and integration of migrant fishers and fish workers.

Ensuring access to these basic amenities can help to improve the socio-economic conditions of small-scale fishers, reducing their vulnerability to socio-economic challenges and enhancing their resilience.

Furthermore, addressing the socio-economic welfare of small-scale fishers can positively impact the overall development of coastal communities and the region.

When small-scale fishers have access to basic amenities, they are better equipped to engage in productive and sustainable fishing practices, contributing to the long-term health of coastal ecosystems and the sustainability of the fishing industry.

Additionally, improved socio-economic conditions can increase social mobility and opportunities for small-scale fishers and their families, promoting overall economic growth and development in the region.



MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

In Botswana, social indicators highlight significant challenges in crucial areas such as healthcare, education, and financial inclusion.

The healthcare sector faces inadequacies marked by a shortage of essential machines, facilities, and qualified staff to run healthcare centres effectively.

This scarcity negatively impacts the quality and accessibility of healthcare services, potentially compromising the population's well-being, especially in rural areas.

The education sector also presents notable concerns, particularly in SSF villages. The lack of nearby educational facilities forces most children to attend boarding schools, leading to challenges such as discrimination and cultural disconnection.

The absence of vocational training opportunities exacerbates the situation, limiting the skill development and prospects of individuals within these communities. Addressing these educational gaps is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable access to quality education, ensuring that the youth in SSF villages have opportunities for holistic development.

Moreover, financial inclusion remains a significant hurdle, as these areas have limited access to banking facilities. The low incomes prevalent in SSF villages further contribute to the financial exclusion of these communities.

The absence of accessible banking services hampers the economic growth and financial stability of individuals engaged in SSF, making it difficult for them to save, invest, or access credit for potential business endeavours.



UGANDA

In Uganda, social indicators within SSF communities reveal challenges akin to those the broader population faces. Healthcare accessibility poses a significant concern for SSF communities, mirroring the nationwide scenario.

Uganda's healthcare system, comprising both private and government-funded facilities, lacks national health insurance coverage, with only approximately 2% of the population covered by private health insurance companies.

Despite the 71.7% of Ugandans within an hour's walking distance of health facilities, fishing communities are more vulnerable due to the concentration of facilities on the mainland, often located up to 10 kilometres away from specific landing sites.

Fisher communities depend on private healthcare providers, often unqualified, who purchase medicines from the mainland and sell them without proper diagnosis.

Uganda's education, encompassing private and

government-aided institutions, faces challenges in SSF communities.

While private schools are widespread, the lack of sustainable livelihoods disrupts access to quality education.

Army control over fisheries has led to economic instability, prompting families to withdraw children from school due to financial constraints. Observations and interactions with fisher communities suggest a decline in parent's ability to afford education for their children since 2017.

The quality of available education services is compromised, with schools near landing sites often exposed to the elements and struggling to afford qualified teachers.

SSF communities in Uganda lack structured social welfare systems and predominantly rely on day-to-day earned income.

Women organised under entities like Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT) can save money monthly and access credit, but this service is limited and dependent on the organisation's capacity.

Other non-governmental organisations present in various communities have limited capacity to provide social security, with interest rates potentially restricting access to credit for the most vulnerable.

Insurance schemes are notably absent, and saving mechanisms are primarily informal, including physical saving boxes, group savings, and mobile money services provided by telecommunication companies, underscoring the need for enhanced social welfare interventions in SSF communities.

SSF community members lack access to traditional banking services and facilities, resorting to alternative methods for financial transactions.

They predominantly save using physical saving boxes, group savings with individuals, or mobile money services provided by telecommunication companies. However, these practices come with challenges. Saving boxes are vulnerable to theft, and the loss may go unnoticed for an extended period.

Mobile money transactions, while common, are susceptible to scams, and replacing a lost phone is cumbersome, with physical offices mainly located in cities and major trading centres, posing difficulties for SSF communities.

Regarding credit facilities, SSF community members can access both formal and informal options.

Banks and legally registered micro-credit institutions reach fisher communities, deploying credit officers who physically visit these areas to provide loans. However, formal lending sources often impose high interest rates, with commercial banks charging 20% and above and some microfinance institutions charging as high as 30%.

These rates contribute to deepening poverty and vulnerability within fisher communities.

Additionally, short payment periods, such as the six months required by some institutions, pose a challenge, making it difficult for fisher communities to meet repayment obligations and benefit fully from credit facilities.

In Uganda, the participation of both men and women in decision-making processes related to SSF policies is limited. Fisher communities, including women, had little consultation during the passing of the Fisheries bill. Efforts by organisations like Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT) in collaboration with FIAN Uganda aimed to support fisher communities in understanding and participating in policy development, resisting clauses that could negatively impact their lives.

The state officially recognises women fish workers in Uganda, issuing them identity cards and including them in state censuses at the same level as men. However, there are no specific fisheries-related schemes or subsidies targeting women in fisher communities, and such benefits are not available for men either.

Gender discrimination persists in the fisheries sector, with negative social norms and cultural demands limiting women's full participation.

Women attempting to directly engage in fishing face derogatory names, abuse, and sexual predation by men on the water.

Cultural beliefs stigmatise women in water, associating them with curses and misfortunes for the lake and its fish. The disruption caused by the army's control of fishing, particularly the prohibition of fish smoking, disproportionately affects women.

Since women are often involved in offshore activities like fish smoking and sun drying, these restrictions force many women out of the fishing sector.

Achieving gender equality in fisheries requires addressing these discriminatory practices and promoting women's equal participation in all aspects of the industry.



SENEGAL

In Senegal, the social indicators for SSF cover healthcare, education, social protection, and employment. In terms of healthcare, SSF communities generally have access to good quality health services. Health centres are well dispersed, providing care to all populations without discrimination.

However, specific recommendations include ensuring that all health posts have access to qualified doctors and midwives, especially in landlocked island areas.

There is no discrimination against children from fishing communities, who have the same rights as the rest of the population. The quality of education relies on good teaching conditions provided by qualified teachers. Recommendations for improvement include maintaining these standards and incorporating environmental education into the school curriculum, considering the impact of the fishing industry on natural resources.

Social protection and safety measures in Senegal include a Universal Health Coverage (CMU) system accessible to the entire population.

Mutual health insurance schemes, life insurance, and equipment insurance are available, ensuring comprehensive coverage. Additionally, mutual savings and loan associations provide SSF communities with access to credit.

Challenges in this area include high interest rates from traditional banks, while mutual savings banks seem more suitable.

In terms of employment, working conditions in the informal SSF sector are challenging, with no employment contracts or age requirements.

The existing law is set for amendment, providing an opportunity for SSF players to engage in the decision-making process. There are no specific restrictions on SSF communities investing in other sectors that offer income-generating opportunities. Fortunately, there are no reported forms of violence, corruption, or organised crime against SSF communities.

The safety of SSF in Senegal is governed by the Fishing Code, which regulates the exploitation of fisheries resources. However, challenges include the need for continuous review and improvement of the legal framework to ensure the sustainability of fisheries resources.

Overall, these responses shed light on the positive aspects and areas for improvement in the social indicators affecting SSF communities in Senegal.



GAMBIA

Social development within SSF communities in The Gambia presents both positive aspects and challenges across healthcare, education, social welfare, and security. In terms of healthcare, these communities have access to services through health posts, medical centres, and hospitals.

While pharmaceutical and ambulance services are available, challenges persist due to environmental pollution, smoke inhalation from fish smoking, sea-borne diseases, and the high cost of medicines. Additionally, issues like the rising cost of living, seasonal migrations, and coastal land degradation exacerbate healthcare difficulties.

Education is accessible, but the cost of higher education remains a barrier for many in SSF communities. Recommendations to improve access include providing scholarships, ensuring quality learning materials, offering free education for girls up to university level, and making education more inclusive. Although there are no specific vocational training programs for SSF members, general agricultural and carpentry skills training, especially related to boat construction, are available.

In terms of social welfare, SSF communities benefit from insurance services, microfinance loans, and credits, as well as support in the form of financial assistance, materials, and equipment.

Banking services, including microfinance institutions like Reliance Financial Services and Ecobank, are accessible.

However, challenges such as high interest rates, bureaucratic hurdles, and risks related to catch quality and storage persist.

Credit facilities managed by community-selected committees exist, but difficulties arise from political interference, high interest rates, lack of collateral, and weak governance and management structures.

Working conditions in SSF communities often fail to meet national and international human rights standards, with issues like inadequate infrastructure, seasonal work, and limited training.

Although alternative income-generating opportunities are available through government and donor projects, these efforts are hindered by a lack of capacity to develop bankable project proposals and weak financial resource mobilisation.

SSF communities also face violence and conflict in their work, including theft, sexual abuse, corruption, and disputes with industrialists over marine resources. Safety programs, such as Marine Military Services Units and regulations by the National Disaster Agency, are in place to protect SSF workers. Recommendations for improvement include providing safety training, access to safety equipment, establishing alert systems, and raising awareness about safety issues.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In the DRC, SSF communities struggle to access quality healthcare, mainly because illegal fishing worsens poverty and socio-economic conditions. As a result, there are higher mortality rates and a rise in incurable diseases, with malnutrition especially affecting children.

Access to quality education is limited due to poorly constructed schools and high unemployment among parents, which reduces opportunities for alternative sources of income. To improve education in these communities, it is recommended to build new schools, train teachers, provide adequate educational resources, and introduce vocational training programs. Additionally, mechanising non-mechanized schools¹⁶, setting up industrial fishing technique training centres, and stabilising production areas are advised.

In terms of social well-being and safety, SSF communities lack access to formal banking services and credit facilities, relying instead on informal systems like the Rotating Credit system. The absence of banks is attributed to past financial crises and mismanagement by cooperative leaders. Advocacy is needed to establish banking facilities and strengthen AVEC structures to improve credit access. Social protection schemes remain limited, with the Rotating Credit system serving as the primary form of financial support.

Employment opportunities in SSF communities are constrained, with working conditions often falling short of national and international human rights standards. Income generation is largely limited to individual fishing operations, and there are challenges related to fair production sharing between skippers and fishermen.

SSF communities also face job-related violence from naval and armed forces, including looting of fishery products, torture of fishermen, and bribery demands from regulatory agents. While legislation, such as the constitution and the ICCN-COPEVI convention, aims to address these issues, security challenges persist.



GUINEA-BISSAU

SSF communities in Guinea-Bissau have access to healthcare services through local health posts, medical centres, and hospitals.

These facilities, supported by the government and NGOs, offer essential medical services, pharmaceutical supplies, and ambulances. However, challenges persist, including environmental pollution and health issues related to fish smoking practices. The use of traditional ovens at landing sites and homes leads to smoke inhalation problems.

Additionally, the high cost of medications and essential services, exacerbated by inflation in fuel, electricity, and food prices, poses significant barriers to accessing quality healthcare. Seasonal migrations and coastal degradation due to erosion further complicate healthcare delivery.

Access to quality education remains a significant challenge for SSF communities in Guinea-Bissau. Many community members do not have access to standardised education facilities, which impacts their ability to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Social security schemes available to SSF communities in Guinea-Bissau are limited, primarily to loans with high interest rates and unsustainable credit facilities. While microfinance companies offer banking services and credit to small and medium enterprises, challenges include high interest rates, delays in fund access, and stringent conditions.

Furthermore, issues of collateral, limited business knowledge, and political interference hinder the effective utilisation of these financial services.

Employment opportunities in SSF communities often fall short of national and international human rights standards. Employment is mostly seasonal, with wages and allowances that do not meet adequate living standards. The lack of infrastructure, financial resources, and training exacerbates these issues. Additionally, SSF communities face threats such as theft, sexual abuse, and corruption, which undermine their safety and security.

¹⁶ Mechanising non-mechanized schools¹⁶ refers to introducing technology, machinery, or modern tools into schools that currently lack such resources. This could involve providing computers, digital learning tools, and modern equipment to improve the quality of education and facilitate practical training, especially in technical and vocational fields.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a Credit Union at fish landing sites/ fishing villages that provide loans at low interest rates.

Establishing a Credit Union at fish landing sites or fishing villages to provide loans at low interest rates can be achieved through collaborative efforts between government agencies, financial institutions, and local fishing communities.

This initiative involves setting up community-based financial cooperatives tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of SSF stakeholders, with a focus on accessibility, transparency, and accountability. By providing affordable credit facilities, these Credit Unions empower fishers and fisherfolk to invest in their livelihoods, such as purchasing fishing gear, maintaining boats, or diversifying income-generating activities.

Furthermore, this approach fosters financial inclusion and resilience within SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, reducing their dependence on informal lenders and mitigating the risks associated with high-interest loans.

Better healthcare facilities in close proximity to SSF villages

Establishing better healthcare facilities near SSF villages tailored to the specific needs of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples requires a collaborative effort between government health departments, local authorities, and community organisations.

This initiative involves conducting thorough needs assessments to identify the healthcare requirements of SSF populations, considering factors such as occupational hazards, remote geographical locations, and cultural practices.

Subsequently, healthcare services can be customised to address common health issues prevalent among SSF communities, such as musculoskeletal injuries, respiratory illnesses, and mental health concerns. Providing accessible healthcare facilities equipped with trained medical personnel, essential medications, and specialised equipment ensures timely diagnosis, treatment, and preventive care for SSF populations,

thereby improving their overall health outcomes and quality of life.

Additionally, investing in healthcare infrastructure near SSF villages not only promotes social justice and equity but also enhances productivity and resilience within these communities.

Better school facilities near SSF villages.

Improving the quality of education facilities in close proximity to SSF villages to deter dropout rates necessitates concerted efforts from government education departments, local authorities, and community stakeholders.

This initiative involves investing in the construction and maintenance of schools that are accessible to SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples and equipped with qualified teachers, updated curricula, and appropriate learning materials. Additionally, special attention should be given to addressing the unique challenges faced by SSF children, such as seasonal mobility, economic constraints, and cultural barriers to education.

By providing quality education facilities near SSF villages, dropout rates can be reduced as children have increased access to education and are more likely to remain enrolled.

Healthcare plan, awareness, immunisation against water borne disease in freshwater ecosystems.

Implementing a comprehensive healthcare plan focused on raising awareness and providing immunisations against waterborne diseases in freshwater ecosystems is essential for safeguarding the health and well-being of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

This initiative involves collaborating with local health authorities, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders to develop targeted awareness campaigns on the risks associated with waterborne diseases and the importance of preventive measures such as immunizations, safe water practices, and proper sanitation. Additionally, establishing accessible healthcare facilities equipped with vaccines, diagnostic tools, and treatment options tailored to address waterborne illnesses is crucial.



• • • • • SECTION 7

VALUE CHAINS, POST-HARVEST, AND TRADE

The value chain of SSF is often underestimated, yet it encompasses diverse actors engaged in producing, distributing, and consuming fish and fishery products. This includes fishers, traders, processors, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers, all interconnected through economic transactions and relationships that enhance the product's value.

The complexity of the value chain is evident, involving numerous intermediaries from the initial catch by fishers to the final sale to retailers or consumers following processing and distribution.

Post-harvest activities in SSF entail essential and meticulously coordinated processes transforming freshly caught fish into market-ready products.

Skilled fishers handle and sort the harvest, preserving its quality through methods like chilling, icing, smoking, drying, and salting to extend its shelf life.

Subsequently, the fish is transported for processing, involving expert cutting, filleting, and packaging in factories to create appealing portions suitable for consumption and distribution.

Transportation plays a crucial role, with refrigerated trucks or boats transporting fish from landing sites to markets or processing plants. Ultimately, this value chain's culmination occurs in marketing and sales, where products are distributed to wholesalers, retailers, and consumers.

The section on value chains in the SSF Guidelines indeed focuses on the activities that take place after the fish is caught and landed, highlighting the importance of women's roles and participation in decision-making processes. It underscores the need for capacity building, investment in infrastructure, and technology transfer to improve the value chain.

The section also addresses critical trade issues, emphasising the need to include all those involved in fishing, processing, transport, and sales in relevant decisions. It calls for investment in facilities and services to ensure the production of safe, high-quality fish products and improve market access for small-scale fisheries.

Additionally, it advocates for fair and responsible trade practices that benefit local communities without harming the environment, culture, or livelihoods.



MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

The status of the value chain and trade for SSF in Botswana reflects a mix of challenges and opportunities, with some positive initiatives and areas that require attention. Regarding state investments in infrastructure supporting SSF post-harvest subsectors, the government's current stance is not actively involved, leaving the responsibility to the SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

While promoting local empowerment, this decentralised approach poses challenges in providing essential infrastructure such as markets, cleaning facilities, sheds, processing units, and boat mending facilities.

The lack of government support hinders the overall efficiency and competitiveness of the SSF value chain.

SSF collectives in Botswana are legally registered associations, cooperatives, and informal groups, including fisheries syndicates and trusts. The state recognises and supports these collectives through legal registration processes, providing a formal structure for their operations.

However, challenges persist in ensuring these collectives have adequate resources and support to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the SSF sector.

Fishermen set the fish prices in Botswana, and currently, no major issues are reported. The recommendation is to continue with the existing system.

This decentralised pricing model aligns with the nature of SSF and ensures that those directly involved have a say in determining fair market prices for their catch.

Regarding market information, there is a notable gap in access to relevant and accurate data for SSF communities. The information is not easily accessible, not free of charge, and not available in local languages. Capacity-building initiatives for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples are recommended to address challenges related to literacy and the lack of human resources for training in market information.

Concerning the equitable benefits-sharing for women in SSF in post-harvest subsectors, the current situation indicates that they receive minimum benefits.

To enhance gender equity, there is a need for targeted interventions that ensure women's active participation, fair representation, and a more equitable distribution of benefits within the SSF value chain.



UGANDA

In Uganda, the state has made limited investments in infrastructure supporting SSF post-harvest subsectors. Fish handling slabs have been established at major landing sites catering to fish for export, such as Katosi and Kasenyi.

However, these developments are scarce, leaving many rural fisher communities with poor road conditions

exacerbated by unregulated sand mining. The lack of good infrastructure leads to high transport costs and challenges for support organisations to reach these communities.

While some fisher people with phone access communicate with colleagues in other markets to understand prices, there is no centralised mechanism for providing market information to SSF.

Various forms of SSF collectives exist, including both formal and informal associations. Women, in particular, organise in groups like the Katosi Women Development Trust, addressing challenges they face collectively.

However, some associations are formed by elites to provide services to SSF communities rather than representing true SSF collectives. The pricing of fish in Uganda is primarily influenced by the forces of demand and supply, especially in the export market.

The European Union accounts for 75% of total fish exports, increasing prices and limiting local consumption due to affordability issues within fishing communities.

Women in SSF struggle to achieve an equitable share of benefits from their work in post-harvest subsectors. Reproductive roles and societal expectations constrain women's effective participation, as they often rely on men to fish for them.

This reliance exposes women to various challenges, including theft and rape, contributing to the unequal distribution of benefits in the sector.

The absence of a centralised mechanism for market information further hinders women's capacity to navigate and benefit from the fisheries industry.



SENEGAL

In Senegal, the government has supported the SSF post-harvest sub-sectors through infrastructure investments. Projects funded by international cooperation (World Bank, African Development Bank, JICA, European Union) have led to the construction of landing quays, processing sites, and central markets. These initiatives, approved by the European Union, aim to improve product processing, marketing, and overall working conditions.

Challenges include increased landing sites, improved safety measures, and enhanced product quality. Recommendations include expanding the number of wharves and ensuring better landing conditions for user safety.

SSF collective organisations in Senegal are diverse, including cooperatives, grassroots community organisations, platforms, and networks. Professional organisations receive legal recognition through different recognition processes for non-profit associations and economic interest groups.

Local Artisanal Fishing Councils (CLPAs), responsible for resource management, are established by ministerial decree.

The decentralisation of decision-making processes increasingly involves local communities, providing an opportunity for bottom-up management measures.

Fish prices in Senegal are often determined by supply and demand, with buyers, mainly fish merchants, influencing prices.

Fishermen are recommended to establish marketing committees, enabling them to finance fishing campaigns independently and avoid deductions imposed by wholesalers. This recommendation aims to empower fishermen and give them more control over pricing, reducing dependence on external factors. Access to relevant and accurate market information for SSFs in Senegal faces challenges, with no structured market information system in place.

However, the use of mobile phones has facilitated information sharing among fishermen and traders, allowing them to adapt to market conditions.

Their ability to intervene depends on the resources at their disposal. Women processors often play a crucial role in meeting family needs and utilising their earnings without constraints.

While challenges exist in terms of capital access, the distinct roles of fish merchants and micro fish merchants are recognised. The study suggests that enhancing women's access to resources could further empower them within the post-capture sub-sectors.



GAMBIA

The Gambian government has invested in supporting the small-scale fisheries (SSF) post-harvest subsector through infrastructure development, including landing sites, standard ovens, storage facilities, ice production, cold vans, sheds, electricity, and access roads. The market system is relatively open, allowing easy access for both private sectors and SSF members to export fish and fish by-products overseas.

However, challenges remain, such as inadequate facilities to fully support SSF operations, lack of maintenance services for existing infrastructure, limited skills in value addition, and difficulties in managing post-harvest losses and sustainable resource management.

SSF collectives in The Gambia are diverse, including associations, clubs, networks, women and youth groups, marketing cooperatives, operator confederations, and committees in value chains. Specialised groups, like the National Oyster Association, and area-specific associations also play a role. These collectives receive state support through mechanisms like the Attorney General Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Fisheries.

Fish prices are set by producers or harvesters, with value-added products such as smoked and dried fish showing consistent pricing. Despite this, SSF members face challenges in accessing timely and accurate market information, which is provided weekly by government departments and supporting projects. The information, available in English and two local languages, is not easily accessible and requires

recipients to buy their own phone credits.

Women in the SSF post-harvest subsector often receive minimal benefits from their work, highlighting gender disparities in income generation and responsibilities within the sector.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In the DRC, the state's investment in fisheries infrastructure includes landing stages, sheds, markets, depots, cold rooms, and batteries, but there are still significant gaps. Key challenges include the lack of facilities for boat repairs and insufficient resources for traditional pirogue construction. To address these issues, there is a need for additional infrastructure, such as fish landing quays, processing centres, transportation vehicles, and cleaning facilities.

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) collectives are well-recognized, with the state offering legal recognition to various associations, cooperatives, and informal groups, reflecting its support for these organisations. However, fish pricing, currently set by fishermen and buyers, faces challenges due to unproductivity and unemployment.

A recommendation has been made for the state to intervene in price-setting to ensure alignment with currency values and economic stability.

Access to relevant and accurate market information is another challenge. Although the information is generally free and available in local languages, it is often outdated. To better serve SSF members, regular updates in various languages are essential.

Women play an active role in SSF, particularly in the post-harvest sector. Fishermen often share portions of their catch with women, allowing them to resell and earn a share of the profits.

This system ensures that women benefit financially and contribute to the sector's economic activities.

Despite these developments, artisanal fishermen in the DRC continue to face significant obstacles. A lack of infrastructure for processing and storage leads to substantial post-harvest losses, while environmental disruptions reduce fishing space, leaving riverside communities increasingly vulnerable.

Additionally, the absence of participatory consultation exacerbates land conflicts among riverside communities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on infrastructure development, alternative livelihood opportunities, and greater community involvement to secure sustainable and equitable tenure rights for artisanal fishermen.



GHANA

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) in Ghana has demonstrated a commitment to improving post-harvest infrastructure and support for SSF.

Notably, the commissioning of the €84 million Elmina fishing harbour in May 2023, equipped with essential facilities such as a Day Care Centre, fish market, auction hall, and toilets, signifies a significant investment in the sector.

Similar projects are underway at various landing beaches across the Central, Greater Accra, and Volta regions, highlighting efforts to modernise and improve SSF infrastructure nationwide. Despite these developments, many landing sites across the country remain deplorable, indicating the need for further investment and rehabilitation efforts.

In addition to infrastructure development, MoFAD has implemented measures to ensure the safety and hygiene of fish products.

This includes the procurement and distribution of 50 Torry metres to detect the use of chemicals at various beaches, with approximately 80 individuals trained on their usage. Such initiatives aim to promote hygienic practices and ensure the safe consumption of fish products, aligning with national and international food safety standards.

Furthermore, collaborative efforts between government organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector, such as the Ghana Fishery Recovery Activity (GFRA), are underway to enhance the capacity of fish processors.

These initiatives focus on achieving Safe Fish Certification and upgrading processing facilities to meet the standards for accessing national, regional, and international markets. By supporting SSF groups, both formal and informal, MoFAD recognises their importance as key stakeholders in the fisheries sector and aims to facilitate their participation in state-led activities and initiatives.

Examples of formal SSF associations include the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), National Fisheries Association of Ghana (NAFAG), and Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA), which play vital roles in collaborating with the state to advance the interests of SSF communities and contribute to sustainable fisheries management in Ghana.



GUINEA-BISSAU

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has made significant investments in infrastructure to support the post-harvest subsectors of small-scale fisheries (SSF). These include developing landing sites, standard ovens for fish smoking, storage facilities, ice production units, refrigerated vans, warehouses, and improvements in electricity and access roads. The open market system enables the export of fish and fish by-products, with both the private sector and SSF members playing active and well-defined roles. However, challenges persist, with post-harvest losses being a major concern.

Quality losses, which account for over 70% of total losses, significantly reduce the value and safety of fish products.

Physical losses are also common due to improper handling, transportation, and storage, worsened

by insufficient refrigerated storage facilities and fluctuating weather conditions. In tropical environments, dried and sun-dried fish are vulnerable to insect infestations, with blowflies laying eggs on fresh fish, leading to maggot infestations.

The lack of refrigerated storage and reliable transportation infrastructure further complicates efforts to maintain fish quality.

Predation by animals and birds during the drying process also contributes to physical losses, despite efforts to mitigate this with guards and deterrents. Additionally, overfishing reduces the quantity of catches, exacerbating post-harvest losses and affecting the livelihoods and food security of coastal communities dependent on fishing.





CASE STUDY



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The case study delves into the struggles faced by Congo River fishermen operating near Mbandaka, the capital of Equateur province. It sheds light on the profound impact of inadequate post-harvest infrastructure, particularly the absence of ice, on the region's fishery. Situated downstream from flood plains and forests, Mbandaka boasts an ideal location for fishing, with its channel opposite the town serving as a hotspot for easily accessible fish. However, despite these favourable conditions, the lack of essential infrastructure is a significant hindrance to the fishermen.

In this region of the DRC, fishermen are divided into two categories based on ethnic origin, fishing techniques, and the types of fish they target.

The river's waters, described as "clear" with a pH close to 7, carry acidic "black" water from marshes and flooded forests, supporting a variety of fish, notably Clarias and bard family fish.

Despite their efforts, fishermen often encounter challenges in preserving their catches due to the absence of refrigeration facilities. This limitation leads to significant losses as fish deteriorate rapidly in the tropical climate. Fishing occurs at night, and fresh catches are sold to market traders at daybreak. However, the lack of refrigeration means that fish preservation methods are limited, impacting both the quality and quantity of fish available for sale.

Almost all fish harvested from the river is transported to various arrival centres in Mbandaka, where hygiene conditions are dismal. Fish are often left exposed on the banks or traded on the ground, exacerbating contamination risks.

Moreover, during rainy days, these arrival centres transform into muddy, unsanitary environments, further compromising the quality of the fish.

The case study highlights the dire situation facing SSF in the Mbandaka region, as state bodies refuse to support Coopéqua, citing the absence of legislative provisions for modernising private markets and limiting loans to businesses. Consequently, fishermen are left unsupported, with the state showing minimal interest beyond tax collection, exacerbating the region's underdevelopment. This neglect contributes to rising post-harvest losses, estimated at around 30% by the FAO, driving some fishermen to resort to illegal and harmful fishing practices in a bid to compensate for losses.

The perpetuation of poverty and lack of support hinder efforts towards achieving food self-sufficiency, with cooperatives struggling to fulfil their conservation missions due to the absence of modern infrastructure. Additionally, without state support, local producers cannot access lucrative top-end catering and export markets, further perpetuating their economic marginalisation and contributing to the overall stagnation of the region's fisheries sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding the applicability of various forms of collectives- Unions, Associations, Cooperatives and SMEs and its benefits for different goals.

To enhance SSF access to value chains, understanding the applicability of various forms of collectives, such as Unions, Associations, Cooperatives, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is crucial.

This entails conducting assessments of local contexts and stakeholders' needs to determine which collective form best suits specific goals, whether they be market access, resource management, or social empowerment. Unions and associations may provide a platform for collective bargaining and advocacy, while cooperatives offer opportunities for joint resource management and market access.

SMEs, on the other hand, can foster entrepreneurship and innovation within SSF communities. By identifying the most suitable collective form, SSF stakeholders can leverage collective action to negotiate better prices, access credit facilities, share resources, and build capacity.

Reframe "Alternative" Livelihood to "In-Addition" Livelihood options.

Reframing "Alternative" livelihood as "In-Addition" livelihood options for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples involves shifting the narrative from viewing non-fishing activities as substitutes to fishing to recognising them as complementary sources of income and diversification. This can be achieved through targeted capacity-building programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of SSF populations.

By promoting a diversified livelihood approach, SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples can reduce their dependence on fluctuating fish stocks while simultaneously enhancing their socio-economic resilience and food security.

Additionally, embracing "In-Addition" livelihood options empowers SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to maintain their cultural identity and traditional fishing practices while exploring new economic opportunities that align with their values and environmental sustainability.

Regulate the monopoly of engine distributors by setting an affordable price.

This can be accomplished through government intervention and industry collaboration. Implementing price controls or establishing pricing guidelines can ensure that engine distributors do not exploit their dominant market position, thereby making engines more accessible to SSF communities.

By fostering competition and fair pricing, this regulation promotes economic equity and empowerment within SSF sectors, enabling fishers to afford essential equipment crucial for their livelihoods.

Moreover, breaking the monopoly ensures that SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples have access to quality engines at reasonable costs, enhancing their productivity and efficiency while supporting sustainable fishing practices.

Prohibition of one-size-fits-all solutions for infrastructure-related policies and programmes.

This entails adopting a tailored and context-specific approach that considers the unique needs, challenges, and characteristics of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples. This can be achieved through extensive stakeholder consultations, participatory decision-making processes, and localised assessments to identify the diverse requirements of SSF sectors across different regions and contexts. By acknowledging the heterogeneity within SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, policymakers can design infrastructure initiatives that address specific local conditions, such as varying fishing practices, environmental conditions, and socio-economic factors.

This approach ensures that infrastructure investments are responsive to the realities on the ground, promoting effective resource utilisation, enhancing resilience, and maximising the socio-economic benefits for SSF communities. Moreover, by avoiding generic solutions, this approach fosters inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainable development within the SSF sector, contributing to the overall well-being and prosperity of coastal communities.

Planning ergonomic spaces for landing, cutting, and cleaning with waste management and freshwater.

This can be achieved through participatory design processes involving SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, local authorities, and relevant stakeholders. This entails conducting comprehensive assessments of existing infrastructure, spatial requirements, and community preferences to inform the design of functional and user-friendly facilities that cater to the specific needs of SSF activities.

By integrating ergonomic principles into the planning process, such as optimising workspace layouts and equipment placement to minimise physical strain and improve workflow efficiency, these spaces can enhance the safety, productivity, and well-being of fishers and fisherfolk. Furthermore, incorporating waste management systems and access to freshwater ensures environmental sustainability and hygiene standards, reducing pollution and health risks while promoting resource conservation.

Minimum Support Price set and regulated by the government for fish sold to buys/traders.

Establishing a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for fish sold to buyers/traders, regulated by the government, is crucial for enhancing the livelihood security of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples. This can be achieved through collaborative efforts between government agencies, fisher associations, and market stakeholders to determine fair and remunerative prices that provide SSF actors with a stable income. By setting a floor price for fish products, the MSP ensures that fishers receive a fair return for their labour and investment, mitigating the risks associated with market fluctuations and exploitation by middlemen. Additionally, regulating the MSP helps in curbing unfair trade practices and ensures that SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples have access to essential resources and services, thereby strengthening their economic resilience and food security.

Ice, refrigeration, and preservation post-harvest must be decentralised and free access so that perishability is not used as a weapon to sell cheaply.

Decentralising and providing free access to ice, refrigeration, and post-harvest preservation facilities after the catch is paramount to enhancing the livelihood security of SSF communities.

This can be accomplished through government initiatives, partnerships with private enterprises, and community-driven efforts to establish decentralised infrastructure in fishing villages and landing sites.

By ensuring that fishers have access to these essential resources without financial barriers, the perishability of fish is no longer exploited as a tool for driving down prices. Instead, SSF actors can effectively preserve their catch, maintain its quality, and extend its shelf life, enabling them to fetch fair prices for their products in the market.

By safeguarding the value of their harvests and enhancing their bargaining power, decentralised access to ice, refrigeration, and preservation facilities empowers SSF communities, strengthens their livelihood security, and fosters sustainable economic development in coastal regions.



• • • • • SECTION 8

GENDER EQUALITY

Fishing is often considered a male-dominated industry globally, and fisheries management has been plagued by gender bias. This bias is partly due to narrow definitions of fishing and fishing that overlook key groups of fishers.

For instance, census data on occupation may exclude part-time and subsistence labour. As women are more likely to fish part-time, their participation in fishing often goes unnoticed. In some cultures, it is culturally unacceptable for women to fish; in such cases, both women and men may downplay or discount women's participation.

This may be further compounded by factors such as gender, social class, and wealth, where women's participation in fishing is viewed as an indication of poverty and shame.

Moreover, gender bias in fisheries management can lead to a lack of recognition of women's contributions to the sector and their needs. Women play crucial roles in various aspects of small-scale fishers. They are actively involved in fishing activities, harvesting and processing fish and aquatic resources, and sometimes in specialised tasks unique to women.

Additionally, women take on essential roles in marketing and selling these resources locally and in distant markets, as well as engaging in community organising and advocacy to promote fishing community interests. Women's responsibilities extend to household management, including preparing meals featuring fish or aquatic resources.

Furthermore, they possess valuable traditional knowledge related to fishing techniques, resource management, and the use of medicinal plants and natural resources, which are essential for the sustainability of SSF. This wealth of knowledge is passed down through generations, contributing significantly to the sector's resilience and continuity.

Section 8 of the SSF Guidelines outlines the responsibilities of the state to protect and fulfill the human rights of women, emphasising their rights to equal participation in decision-making, non-discrimination, and equitable tenure arrangements within the fisheries value chain.

The Guidelines underscore the obligation of states to adhere to binding commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which mandates the protection of women's rights to equality across various areas, including protection from sexual abuse, participation in political and public life, education, and employment.

This encompasses all aspects of the fisheries value chain, including work in non-monetized sectors of the economy, healthcare, family planning, and women's rights to land and resources.

The section advocates for women's involvement in managing fisheries and ensuring equal decision-making power for both men and women. It calls for

equal access to credits, legal support, and appropriate technology to facilitate their work, while also demanding an end to discrimination against women. Furthermore, it encourages the establishment of laws and policies that benefit both women and men equally, challenging discriminatory practices to promote greater equality within the small-scale fisheries sector.



MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

The status of gender equality for SSF in Botswana reveals challenges and certain recognition of women workers within the sector. When it comes to the participation of women in decision-making processes for policies directed towards SSF, the current situation is less than ideal. Women do not have rights or an active role in policy development, which is often conducted at a high level without adequate consultation with the SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

A key recommendation is to involve SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, including women, in the policy-making process to ensure that the policies are more inclusive and reflective of the sector's diverse needs.

While the state officially recognises women workers in Botswana through identity cards and representation in the state census, there is a lack of fisheries-related schemes or subsidies specifically targeting women fishers. This absence of targeted support hinders the potential empowerment and capacity-building opportunities for women engaged in SSF.

Gender discrimination in Botswana's fisheries is evident in customary practices prohibiting women from using gill nets in certain communities. Additionally, some taboos and norms disadvantage women within the sector. Achieving gender equality requires addressing these discriminatory practices, challenging cultural norms, and promoting inclusivity in all SSF activities. Priority issues include dismantling customs restricting women's involvement, creating targeted support programs for women fishers, and fostering a more gender-inclusive environment within the SSF sector. By actively working towards gender equality, Botswana can harness the full potential of its SSF sector, ensuring that women play an integral role and receive equitable benefits.



SENEGAL

In Senegal, the status of gender equality within SSF reveals ongoing challenges despite positive developments. Women in the fishing industry are still contending for meaningful participation in decision-making processes within mixed organisations, where they often hold auxiliary positions.

To address this, efforts are being made to support women in establishing their own organisations, fostering greater autonomy and representation.

Notably, Senegal has two dedicated women's organisations, Fédération Nationale des Femmes Transformatrices et Micro Mareyeurs du Sénégal (FENATRAMS) and the Réseau des Femmes de la Pêche Artisanale du Sénégal (REFEPAS), providing platforms for women's voices. While the state officially recognizes women in the fishing industry and initiatives are in place to issue professional cards,

there are persistent challenges.

Despite their recognition, women often face imbalances in representation, and positive discrimination measures are suggested to ensure their active participation.

Additionally, existing funding programs for women entrepreneurs might not fully address the unique characteristics of the fishing industry, prompting recommendations for tailored lines of credit that consider the seasonal nature of fishing activities.

Gender discrimination is not explicitly prevalent in Senegal, and recent efforts underscore the commitment to gender parity.

Nevertheless, ensuring women's leadership and addressing the challenges they face in the fishing sector remain priorities for achieving comprehensive gender equality. Encouraging the establishment of women's organisations and fostering their active involvement in decision-making processes emerge as vital strategies for advancing gender equality in Senegal's SSF.



GAMBIA

While policies are formulated at higher levels, women in The Gambia are recognised and represented, though the representation may not always be sufficient. The women representing their interests contribute actively during decision-making processes, such as consultations, meetings, and workshops.

However, there is room for improvement in ensuring equal representation and encouraging more women to take leadership positions in the decision-making processes related to policies for SSF.

The Gambian government officially recognises women fish workers, particularly those involved in the marketing and processing of fisheries products. Women who own boats, nets, and engines and employ workers for fishing are acknowledged during state censuses, with their inventory recorded.

State identity cards are issued to these women, and membership cards are provided if they belong to organisations or units within the fisheries sector.

Currently, there are no specific subsidies for women fishers in The Gambia. However, the government and partners/donors do provide support by offering processing equipment and storage facilities, with a focus on creating processing centres for women in the fisheries sector.

Gender discrimination in the Gambia's fisheries sector manifests in several ways, including offshore fishing being predominantly undertaken by men, ownership of most equipment being male-dominated, and a disproportionate allocation of support favouring men over women.

Challenges for women include limited access to collaterals and tenure systems that tend to benefit men more than women and youth.

Achieving gender equality in the sector requires addressing these disparities and creating an inclusive environment for women to participate and benefit equally.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Women's involvement in decision-making processes for policies related to SSF is limited, highlighting the need for increased representation and consideration of women in these discussions.

While women are actively engaged in post-capture activities, their working conditions are described as deplorable.

Best practices, challenges, and recommendations emphasise the imperative to enhance the role of women in decision-making, acknowledging their significant contributions.

The state officially recognises women as fishermen through censuses organised by ICCN-COPEVI, PEL, and ENVIRONNEMENT.

However, local customs dictate that fishing is exclusively conducted by men, despite the official recognition of women as fishermen.

This highlights a discrepancy between official recognition and traditional gender roles in fishing practices.

There are currently no specific programs or subsidies aimed at supporting women involved in cash fishing, highlighting a significant need for initiatives that could help structure and support women's Income-Generating Activities (IGAs) around Lac Edouard. Additionally, gender discrimination in fishing is apparent in this region, as local customs prohibit women from participating in fishing activities.

Despite this restriction, women play crucial roles in other areas of the fishing industry, particularly in fish processing.

To achieve gender equality, it is essential to challenge traditional gender roles and create opportunities for women to directly engage in fishing activities.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Women in Guinea-Bissau are involved in SSF policy decision-making processes, although their representation is often insufficient.

During consultations, meetings, and workshops, women representatives actively voice their concerns, highlighting the need for equal representation in decision-making roles.

To enhance their involvement, it is recommended to advocate for gender parity, provide training for women in interpreting and monitoring policies, and encourage them to assume leadership positions.

The state officially recognizes women working in the fishing industry, particularly in the marketing and processing of fishery products. Many women own boats, nets, and motors, employing workers and compensating them based on the catch landed.

They are included in the state census, possess state identity cards, and hold membership cards if affiliated with relevant organisations.

However, there are currently no specific schemes or subsidies targeting women fishers.

To support their contributions to the fisheries sector, the government and partners are encouraged to provide women with processing equipment, storage facilities, and additional processing centres.

Despite the recognition of women's role in the fisheries sector, gender discrimination continues to be a major challenge.

Offshore fishing is largely dominated by men, who own most of the equipment and benefit from the majority of available support. This existing ownership structure further disadvantages women and youth.

To achieve gender equality, it is essential to address these disparities and ensure that women receive equal support and opportunities in the fisheries sector.



CASE STUDY



UGANDA

Despite the gender inequality in many rural, including fisher communities in Uganda, a few women have engaged in the male-dominated fishing industry. For example, over 1,000 women have acquired loans in groups from KWDT, as many of them do not qualify for loans in official lending institutions due to a lack of collateral.

Unfortunately, acquiring loans and buying fishing equipment does not guarantee complete and unrestricted access to fisheries resources or success in the fishing business.

The socio-cultural constraints are still enormous and do not allow women to engage directly in fishing; thus, they must hire men to work on their boats.

The nature of the fishing business is such that the boat owner buys fuel and all equipment required for fishing, pays the fishermen, and when they bring the fish, he/she buys the fish from them, which is the norm. Fishermen, however, sometimes will sell the fish on the lake before they land and claim to have caught none. Results from the FGD held with participants from the 19 fishing villages indicate that this is a common incident for women who, because of cultural constraints, are unable to go to the lake to follow up with the fishermen. When women try to do this, they are sexually harassed and raped.

Besides rape, women, too, acknowledged that sometimes they have to yield to the sexual advances of the men that fish for them to try and keep a good relationship for them to benefit from their heavily invested fishing business.

The above implies that for several women to survive in the fishing business, they have to pay both in cash and through unwanted sexual intercourse.

This unequal access to ownership and control of natural resources has created a gender gap in their governance, placing women at a clear social and economic disadvantage.

The widely male-dominated fishing industry in Uganda, therefore, still poses several challenges for women who participate in it as they are exposed to various forms of abuse and violence. It is no surprise that HIV prevalence among SSF communities in Uganda is estimated to be three times higher than that of the general population and higher among women than men, as one man can potentially infect several women.

SSF communities, the state and organisations working in these communities ought to give more support to women engaged in fishing and related activities. Supporting them to access more credit facilities will empower them more and provide them with more options, reducing their vulnerability to various forms of abuse and exploitation.

Empowering women to report the multiple forms of sexual abuse is vital if these are to be addressed. Women, too, should be sensitised to the dangers

of such casual sexual relationships, and most importantly, studies are urgently needed to address existing knowledge gaps and inform policy and practice to reduce risky sexual behaviours.

There is also a need to improve access to health services in SSF communities.

The constitution of Uganda (1995) lays the foundation for gender equality and affirms temporary affirmative action to address historical imbalances, further supported by international commitments and Uganda's gender policy (2007).

However, despite these legal and policy frameworks, gender disparities persist, particularly evident in the unequal access to and control of productive assets, notably within fisher communities. While men and women contribute significantly to Uganda's economy, their roles often differ, leading to disparities in resource access and control.

Within fisher communities, women predominantly engage in ancillary activities such as fish smoking and sun drying, which are less profitable than direct fishing and trading.

Limited access to larger fish due to economic constraints forces some women to smoke immature or bi-catch fish for domestic consumption, highlighting their financial challenges.

Nevertheless, a minority of women, exemplified by Nantongo and Nakabuye from Buvuma Island, defy societal norms by actively acquiring fishing equipment and engaging directly in fishing activities, challenging traditional gender roles and achieving economic empowerment for themselves and their families.

Despite their success, these women face social stigma and scepticism from their communities, with derogatory nicknames and accusations of drug abuse undermining their achievements. However, Nantongo and Nakabuye persist in their endeavours, sustaining their businesses despite cultural pressures. Their determination underscores the potential for women's direct engagement in traditionally male-dominated sectors to enhance their economic status, although it exposes them to risks such as sexual assault.

Nantongo and Nakabuye's story is a compelling example of women's empowerment within fisher communities, highlighting the need to amplify such narratives and promote gender inclusivity in livelihood activities.

Their success underscores the importance of sensitising SSF communities on gender roles and the potential for women to excel in non-traditional roles, provided they receive adequate support. By challenging gender norms and fostering inclusive environments, women like Nantongo and Nakabuye pave the way for greater gender equality and economic empowerment within Uganda's fisher communities and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop schemes that target women in fisheries that provide fiscal and in-kind support.

This is crucial for advancing gender equity within SSF communities. These initiatives can be implemented through government programs, non-governmental organisations, and community-based organisations (CBOs), aiming to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women in the fisheries sector. By offering financial assistance, training programs, access to equipment, and market linkages tailored to women's needs, these schemes empower women to actively participate in fisheries activities, enhance their economic independence, and improve their social status within their communities.

Furthermore, by promoting gender-inclusive policies and interventions, such as promoting women's leadership roles in decision-making processes and providing childcare support, these schemes contribute to breaking down gender barriers, reducing inequalities, and fostering more inclusive and resilient SSF communities.

Ensure representation of women in fisheries decision making platforms in civil society.

This involves proactive measures to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity.

This can be achieved through initiatives such as targeted outreach programs, capacity-building workshops, and advocacy efforts aimed at increasing women's participation and leadership roles in fisheries-related organisations and forums.

By actively involving women in decision-making processes, their perspectives, priorities, and needs can be adequately addressed, leading to more informed and equitable policy outcomes.

Additionally, promoting women's representation fosters diversity, enhances social cohesion, and strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of fisheries governance structures.

Create supportive programmes and structures to support women's cooperatives.

This involves establishing dedicated initiatives that provide financial, technical, and capacity-building assistance tailored to the specific needs and challenges faced by women fishers and entrepreneurs. This can include offering access to credit facilities, training in cooperative management and business skills, and facilitating networking opportunities with other cooperatives and market actors. By empowering women through cooperatives, they can collectively address common issues such as access to resources, market opportunities, and representation in decision-making processes as well as self-organise to take care of family-related needs, for which they hold significant responsibility.

Furthermore, women's cooperatives serve as platforms for fostering solidarity, sharing knowledge, and advocating for gender equality within the fisheries sector.

Establish income and savings and credit facilities for women.

This can be accomplished through collaborative efforts between government agencies, financial institutions, and civil society organisations. These initiatives should prioritise accessibility, affordability, and flexibility to accommodate the unique needs and circumstances of women fishers and entrepreneurs. By providing opportunities for women to save, access credit, and invest in their businesses, these facilities empower them to overcome financial barriers, expand their enterprises, and improve their livelihoods. Additionally, fostering financial inclusion among women enhances their economic independence, decision-making autonomy, and resilience to shocks, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and gender equity within coastal communities. Ensuring that women have access to income savings and credit facilities is essential for unlocking their full potential.



• • • • • SECTION 9

DISASTER RISK AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change are expected to hit natural resource-based communities worldwide, with SSF located in coastal areas being especially vulnerable. This is due to an increase in average atmospheric and seawater temperatures and a higher frequency of extreme weather events, cyclones, storm surges, and coastal flooding and erosion predicted by the 2023 IPCC report. SSF must adapt to these circumstances. Still, their capacity to do so depends on the underlying conditions that either facilitate or inhibit the adjustment process and preparedness to face these situations. These transformations have a profound impact on the livelihoods of fishing and coastal communities, and it is therefore of greatest importance that states implement holistic approaches to address climate change, including adaptation, mitigation and aid plans for small-scale fisheries and ensuring availability of funds, facilities and technologies for climate change adaptation and mitigation, as described in the SSF Guidelines.

The Guidelines urge states to take measures to support the resilience of small-scale fishers and to mitigate the impact of climate change and related disasters that might occur. Disaster management is especially crucial in coastal areas.

According to an FAO study¹⁷, developing the capacity to adapt and manage the risks posed by climate change is necessary for the sustainable development of SSF. The study highlights the importance of identifying the potential impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable management practices, and implementing measures to enhance community resilience.

Furthermore, the interconnected nature of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples and their reliance on local ecosystems amplifies the need for collaborative efforts and comprehensive strategies. Integrated coastal management plans involving local stakeholders, governments, NGOs, and researchers can significantly build adaptive capacities. These plans should encompass not only ecological aspects but also socioeconomic factors, considering the livelihoods of fishing communities, their cultural practices, and the equitable distribution of resources. Addressing the climate and ecological crisis entails ensuring that the traditional and Indigenous knowledge and practices of small-scale fishing communities inform climate change policies, as stated in the SSF Guidelines.

As reported on numerous occasions by small-scale fisher organisations and Indigenous Peoples, the traditional knowledge has enabled communities to live in balance with nature and thus reduce their ecological and carbon footprint.

By fostering such collaborative approaches, SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples can develop adaptive strategies that address immediate challenges and promote long-term sustainability.



¹⁷ <https://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/concept/module-a1-introducing-csa/chapter-a1-1/en/>

MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

SSF in Botswana faces various natural disaster risks and climate change impacts, including storms, floods, and droughts. The Red Cross has been actively involved in providing assistance to affected communities by offering shelter and tents during disasters.

The direct impact on SSF is seen in fluctuations in fish availability, with periods of disappearance and subsequent return leading to a temporary decline in fish production.

These challenges highlight the vulnerability of SSF to climate-related events, necessitating effective management strategies.

The level of post-disaster response in Botswana is reported to be moderate.

While there are interventions such as shelter and aid provision, further improvements can enhance the overall effectiveness of response efforts. Recommendations include strengthening training initiatives on climate adaptation strategies for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples.

By imparting knowledge and skills related to climate resilience, communities can better cope with and recover from the impacts of natural disasters.

To enhance the resilience of SSF communities to climate change, additional recommendations focus on training these communities in alternative survival methods. Diversifying livelihood strategies can contribute to increased adaptive capacity, reducing the dependency on traditional practices that may be more susceptible to climate-related risks.



UGANDA

Fishing communities in Uganda face various natural disaster risks and climate change impacts, including strong winds that disrupt fishing activities and can lead to the destruction of boats, posing risks to fishermen. Changes in rainy seasons affect silverfish drying activities, predominantly carried out by women and children. Rising water levels, as witnessed in Lake Victoria in 2022, displaced SSF communities, destroying their homes.

Fire outbreaks are another risk, exacerbated by reliance on traditional lighting, temporary housing structures, and poor housing plans.

A recent fire incident in the Kiziru landing site affected over 880 households, requiring residents to pay a significant amount for reconstruction. Another reason has been attributed to outboard motor engines, which use petrol, which is highly flammable.

Engines are stored in the houses where open-fire cooking takes place, hence the breakout of fires. However, there was minimal government response, and official support following such disasters is generally lacking.

The level of post-disaster response is insufficient, with affected communities having to rebuild their houses at personal expense or migrate to new areas.

Delays and inadequate communication between local fisher communities and the government further hamper effective disaster response.



GAMBIA

SSF in Gambia faces various natural disaster risks and climate change impacts, both direct and indirect. These include floods, riverbank overflowing, diseases, disappearance of local fisheries species, heavy wind storms during rainy seasons, water pollution, stream drying, and pests like crocodiles in fishing ponds. Post-disaster response in Gambia involves support from various entities, including the government, UN agencies, NGOs, donors, members from the private sector, and philanthropists.

These stakeholders collaborate to assist victims affected by natural disasters.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

SSF in the area directly faces natural hazards such as flooding, storms, recurrent high winds, and rising water levels.

These environmental challenges pose a significant threat to the sustainability and livelihoods of the SSF communities.

Currently, there is no post-disaster response or humanitarian aid available in the area.

The absence of intervention mechanisms leaves the SSF communities vulnerable in the aftermath of disasters.

There is a notable absence of post-disaster response, emergency mechanisms, or relief initiatives to rebuild systems and infrastructure in the aftermath of disasters. The lack of a continuum of relief and development puts the population at risk and hinders recovery.

CASE STUDY



GUINEA-BISSAU

The community of Canchungo, situated in the Cacheu Occidental region of Guinea-Bissau, is located along several tributaries and streams.

This region has become increasingly important due to its reliance on mangrove ecosystems to sustain local livelihoods and biodiversity. However, recent years have seen significant challenges posed by climate change, necessitating community-driven efforts to address these issues.

In response, the residents of Canchungo, supported by various stakeholders, launched a comprehensive mangrove restoration project. Key participants in this initiative included members of SSF Committees, farmers, herders, environmentalists, village development committees, local authorities, youth, women, government officials, NGOs, CSOs, and media representatives. Their collective goal was to restore the mangrove ecosystems that play a crucial role in coastal protection and biodiversity support.

Local resident Paul Sanneh reported notable progress since the initiative commenced in 2020. The community has planted over 16,000 mangrove seedlings and restored 26 hectares of mangroves, engaging more than 30 communities in the process. These efforts are focused on reestablishing mangrove forests, which serve as natural barriers against storms, erosion, and sea-level rise, and are essential for carbon storage and supporting diverse marine life.

The positive impacts of this restoration effort are evident. Mangroves now provide critical habitats for various fish species, birds, and other wildlife, thereby enhancing local biodiversity.

Their dense root systems capture and store carbon dioxide, contributing significantly to climate change mitigation. Moreover, the restoration initiatives have improved the livelihoods of local residents by offering alternative income sources such as solar salt production and improved stoves, thereby reducing reliance on mangrove wood.

Despite these achievements, the community faces considerable challenges.

Projected temperature increases threaten agriculture, water availability, and the overall well-being of residents. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including storms, heavy rains, and prolonged droughts, disrupt livelihoods and damage infrastructure. Changes in precipitation patterns lead to crop failures, affecting food security, while high poverty rates and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these climate-related challenges.

Mangroves also face threats from human activities, such as cutting for housing and construction, leading to their destruction. Uncontrolled forest fires and the conversion of mangrove areas for agriculture, particularly rice cultivation using dykes, further jeopardise these critical ecosystems.

The disappearance of fish species that were once common in the area adds to the community's difficulties.

However, valuable lessons have been learned through these challenges. The community of Canchungo has recognized the essential role mangroves play in environmental protection and supporting their livelihoods. Mangroves' capacity to sequester carbon and provide habitats for marine organisms highlights their importance in mitigating climate change and maintaining biodiversity. Active community involvement in restoration efforts has proven crucial for sustainable management and resilience.

President Mariama Sonko of the Canchungo Fishing Community emphasised the need for collective action to protect and restore mangrove ecosystems.

The community, in collaboration with stakeholders and the government, works diligently to reverse the legacy of coastal degradation.

Initiatives to enhance mangrove restoration, develop partnerships, provide quality fishing gear, and conduct capacity development training for women and youth are ongoing.

The Canchungo Fishermen's Association has been instrumental in organising SSF to build resilience to climate change. Efforts to diversify livelihoods through technological improvements, enhanced processing techniques, climate-resilient infrastructure, and diversified local food systems have been central to this strategy.

Mangrove restoration has also provided habitats for young fishermen and served as breeding grounds for fish populations, ensuring the sustainability of marine resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct an assessment of climate change impact interactions with local ecological changes with SSF perceptions.

This can be achieved through participatory research methodologies that engage SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, scientists, and policymakers. This involves collaborative data collection, knowledge sharing, and analysis to understand the dynamic relationships between climate variability, ecological shifts, and SSF livelihoods.

By integrating local knowledge and experiences into scientific assessments, such as observing changes in fish populations, weather patterns, or habitat degradation, the assessment can provide valuable insights into the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of SSF communities. Furthermore, involving SSF stakeholders in the assessment process fosters ownership, awareness, and empowerment, enabling them to contribute to adaptation strategies and policy development that address their specific concerns and priorities.

Ultimately, conducting such assessments is essential for informing evidence-based decision-making, enhancing resilience, and safeguarding the livelihoods and well-being of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in the face of climate change.

Investigate false solutions to disaster management like sea walls and tetrapods and advocate for their prohibition.

Investigating false solutions to disaster management, such as seawalls and tetrapods, and advocating for their prohibition can be accomplished through rigorous scientific research, community engagement, and advocacy efforts led by communities and environmental organisations.

This involves conducting thorough assessments of such interventions' ecological, social, and economic impacts, highlighting their potential drawbacks and unintended consequences. By collaborating with SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to understand their traditional knowledge and practices for disaster resilience, alternative strategies that are more sustainable and community-centred can be identified and promoted.

Include SSF in the process of building climate adaptation strategies.

Incorporating SSF into the process of building climate adaptation strategies can be achieved through inclusive and participatory approaches that engage SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, policymakers, scientists, and civil society organisations.

This entails conducting collaborative assessments to identify the specific climate-related challenges faced by SSF sectors, such as changing fish stocks, extreme weather events, and sea level rise, and to co-develop adaptation measures that are contextually relevant and socially equitable.

By integrating local knowledge and experiences into adaptation planning, strategies can be tailored to the needs and priorities of SSF communities, enhancing their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Assessment of artificial reefs need to be conducted with SSF as key informant for planning.

Conducting assessments of artificial reefs with SSF as key informants for planning involves collaborative research efforts that integrate the expertise and perspectives of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples into reef design, placement, and management. This approach entails engaging SSF stakeholders in data collection, participatory mapping, and knowledge sharing to gain insights into their ecological expertise, fishing practices, and resource use patterns. By involving SSF as key informants, assessments can accurately evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of artificial reefs on fish stocks, habitat restoration, and SSF livelihoods. Additionally, integrating local knowledge into reef planning enhances community ownership, fosters social cohesion, and promotes sustainable management practices that align with the needs and priorities of SSF communities.

Establish SSF lead/governed MPA management with state agencies only supporting roles.

Establishing SSF governed MPA management with state agencies playing a supporting role can be achieved through collaborative governance models that empower SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes. This approach involves establishing co-management agreements between SSF stakeholders and government agencies, where SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples have a leading role in MPA planning, implementation, and monitoring, with state agencies providing technical support and capacity-building initiatives. By recognizing the traditional knowledge and stewardship practices of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, MPA management can be more contextually appropriate and effective, leading to improved conservation outcomes and sustainable resource use. Importantly, involving SSF in MPA governance enhances community ownership, fosters social cohesion, and strengthens the resilience of coastal ecosystems and livelihoods.

Adopt the Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) in the case of disasters due to pollution.

Adopting the PPP in the case of disasters resulting from pollution can be realised through robust regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that hold polluters accountable for the environmental and socio-economic damages they cause. This involves imposing financial liabilities on polluting industries or entities to cover the costs of cleanup, restoration, and compensation for affected coastal communities. By internalising the costs of pollution, the PPP incentivizes industries to adopt cleaner production methods, invest in pollution prevention measures, and adhere to environmental regulations, thereby reducing the risk of disasters and their associated impacts on coastal ecosystems and communities. Importantly, implementing the PPP promotes environmental justice by ensuring that those responsible for pollution bear the costs of mitigating its consequences, while also providing affected communities with resources to recover and rebuild their livelihoods. This approach underscores the importance of accountability, fairness, and sustainability in safeguarding the well-being and resilience of coastal communities in the face of pollution-related disasters.

Establishing a weather station which fishers can access easily.

Installing a weather station in coastal areas is essential for providing vital information to coastal communities, enabling them to better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of natural hazards.

By monitoring weather patterns, wind speeds, rainfall, and other meteorological data, a weather station can contribute to developing early warning systems that alert communities to impending disasters such as storms, tsunamis, or cyclones.

Access to timely and accurate weather information allows coastal residents to take proactive measures, such as evacuating to safer areas, securing property, or reinforcing infrastructure, thereby reducing the risk of loss of life and property damage.

Additionally, having a weather station in place enhances the resilience of coastal communities by facilitating informed decision-making, emergency planning, and adaptation strategies in response to changing climate conditions.

Ultimately, installing a weather station is crucial for safeguarding the well-being and livelihoods of coastal communities, ensuring their ability to cope with and recover from natural hazards effectively.



• • • • SECTION 10

POLICY COHERENCE, INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

The SSF Guidelines require effective coordination and cooperation between various governance mechanisms at different levels.

This includes horizontal and vertical governance mechanisms, which must work together to achieve the desired result. Horizontal governance mechanisms refer to coordination between other institutions and organisations at the same level.

In the context of SSF Guidelines, this means coordinating efforts between various national, regional, and international organisations to implement the guidelines effectively.

For example, National Governments may need to collaborate with regional organisations to align their policies and regulations with the Guidelines. Similarly, international organisations such as the United Nations and their agencies may need to work with regional organisations to ensure the procedures are implemented globally.

Vertical governance mechanisms pertain to how various levels of government, such as national and subnational administrations, collaborate and coordinate. In the case of SSF Guidelines, national governments must establish close cooperation with subnational government entities to guarantee the successful implementation of these Guidelines at the local level. To achieve this, federal authorities might be required to extend assistance and allocate resources to local government departments, empowering them to implement the SSF Guidelines effectively.



MAIN FINDINGS



UGANDA

In Uganda, the coordination between laws, policies, and programs affecting the realisation of human rights for small-scale fishers faces significant challenges.

While the constitution and specific laws outline ownership and regulations related to natural resources, the actual implementation on the ground, such as the army's involvement in controlling fisheries, creates obstacles for fisher communities to sustain their livelihoods.

This disconnect is evident in the underutilisation of local government structures, including fisheries officers rendered ineffective due to the centralisation of control by the army. To address this, there is a call for utilising existing local government structures, engaging community members in fisheries decisions, and promoting co-management of resources.

Regarding collaboration, the state lacks deliberate efforts to support partnerships between SSF civil society groups and local fisheries departments. However, there is recognition that fostering close collaboration between fisheries departments and civil society organisations could greatly benefit SSF communities.

An example is the KWDT, which conducts dialogues, meetings, and training sessions involving fisheries officers. This collaborative approach ensures that vital information, including SSF Guidelines, reaches local leaders and communities without access. Recommendations emphasise the need for the state to actively support and encourage such collaborations to enhance the overall well-being of SSF communities in Uganda.



SENEGAL

While there are periodic inconsistencies between laws, policies, and programs, a notable example is the tension between the Sectoral Policy Letter's recommendation to reduce fishing efforts and the granting of fishing rights for overexploited species. This indicates a need for greater alignment and coherence between regulatory frameworks and on-the-ground implementation.

There is room for improvement regarding collaboration between SSF agencies, civil society groups, and local fisheries departments. The existence of occasional inconsistencies indicates a lack of robust coordination mechanisms. Enhancing collaboration could involve establishing clearer channels of communication and coordination, ensuring that policies and programs align with overarching goals for sustainable SSF. Strengthening partnerships between government agencies, civil society, and local departments can lead to more effective and integrated approaches.

In the realm of information, research, and communication, traditional knowledge of fisheries management processes appears to be limited in Senegal. Recognising the value of local and indigenous knowledge is crucial for sustainable fisheries management. Recommendations include integrating traditional knowledge into formal decision-making processes, establishing platforms for knowledge exchange between communities and authorities, and

fostering a collaborative approach that acknowledges the importance of both traditional and scientific knowledge.

Additionally, the involvement of fishing communities in regularly updating artisanal fisheries statistics is not well-established. Engaging communities in data collection processes can provide valuable insights into fisheries' bio-ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Best practices may involve participatory data collection methods, incorporating community perspectives into statistical analyses, and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among fishing communities. Implementing these practices can lead to more accurate, comprehensive, and community-relevant fisheries data, contributing to informed decision-making and sustainable management.



GAMBIA

There is policy coherence in the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) policy, addressing the importance of various sectors, including fisheries, to the livelihood development of small-scale fishers and those dependent on related resources. This coherence is seen as positive, overcoming challenges and contributing to the holistic development of SSF communities.

The state supports an enabling environment for collaboration between SSF agencies, CSOs, and the Department of Fisheries. This collaborative approach is considered a best practice, fostering unity and common purpose among these entities. The collaboration is beneficial for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by SSF communities. Recommendations include sustaining and enhancing this collaborative framework for continued positive outcomes.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

While overall coherence exists in the laws, policies, and programs that impact the human rights of small-scale fishers, practical implementation remains a significant concern. There are violations, and certain laws, like the ICCN-COPEVI conservation law, face challenges due to a lack of consensus. The need for participatory laws to ensure practical and effective implementation is emphasised.

The state's support for collaboration between SSF agencies, civil society groups, and local fisheries services is acknowledged, but there is room for improvement. If directed to the grassroots level, the support could be more beneficial. There is a gap between the provision of support and its effective implementation at the community level. Recommendations include enhancing the reach and follow-up of support to ensure its impact at the grassroots level and fostering more effective collaboration among stakeholders.

In summary, while there is a framework in place, there is a need for refined and participatory laws for practical implementation. Additionally, improving the support system to reach the grassroots level and enhancing collaboration among various entities will contribute to a more effective and inclusive approach in promoting the human rights of small-scale fishers.



CASE STUDY



CLIMATE CHANGE IN BOTSWANA

In the panhandles of the Okavango Delta, Indigenous Peoples have long served as stewards of the environment, possessing deep knowledge of climate patterns and their impacts on the land and waterways. However, the effects of climate change are increasingly challenging their traditional way of life, with shifts in rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts leading to water scarcity and reduced fish stocks.

Despite these challenges, the small-scale fisher communities are resilient and proactive, adapting their fishing practices to mitigate the impact of climate change.

They have developed innovative techniques for catching and preserving fish during times of scarcity, such as drying and storing fish in traditional sand storerooms.

Additionally, women are actively involved in decision-making processes, ensuring their inclusion in adaptation strategies. However, SSF communities face numerous obstacles, including a lack of scientific knowledge and capacity-building initiatives to address climate change and limited consultation and consent in government-led projects.

Despite these challenges, SSF communities are eager to collaborate with government agencies and other stakeholders to develop effective climate adaptation strategies and policies safeguarding their traditional fishing practices and livelihoods.

Through collective action and collaboration, there is hope for SSF communities to navigate the complexities of climate change and ensure the sustainability of their fisheries for future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing coordination and inclusion between various SSF relevant international and regional processes and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

This can be achieved through enhanced dialogue, collaboration, and information-sharing mechanisms. This involves fostering partnerships between SSF organisations, governmental agencies, and civil society actors to ensure that the voices and concerns of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples are represented and integrated into broader food sovereignty agendas. By aligning SSF initiatives with the IPC's objectives, such as promoting sustainable food systems, protecting rights to resources, and enhancing food sovereignty, synergies can be leveraged to amplify advocacy efforts and drive policy change at global and regional levels. The importance of this coordination lies in advancing the recognition and support for SSF as a crucial component of food sovereignty, ensuring the protection of SSF rights, and promoting equitable and sustainable development for coastal communities worldwide.

Enhancing collaboration and coordination between the World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), and non-state actors in Africa.

This can be achieved through regular dialogue, joint initiatives, and mutual support mechanisms.

This involves strengthening partnerships between these organisations to amplify the voices and concerns of fisherfolk, fish workers, and SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples on a global scale while also addressing region-specific challenges and opportunities in Africa.

By sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, WFF and WFFP can work together to advocate for the rights, livelihoods, and sustainable management of fisheries resources while collaborating with non-state actors in Africa to address local priorities and support community-led initiatives. The importance of this collaboration lies in promoting solidarity among fisherfolk worldwide, enhancing collective advocacy efforts.

Increase engagement of Academic institutions with SSF groups in a country to set research priorities.

This can be done through participatory approaches that foster collaboration, dialogue, and mutual learning. This involves establishing platforms for meaningful engagement between SSF stakeholders and academic researchers, such as workshops, roundtable discussions, and collaborative research projects, where the knowledge and expertise of both groups are valued and integrated.

By actively involving SSF groups in setting research priorities, academic institutions can ensure that research agendas are responsive to the needs, challenges, and opportunities faced by SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, thereby producing more relevant and impactful research outcomes. Moreover, this collaboration enhances the capacity of SSF stakeholders to engage with research processes, promotes knowledge co-production, and strengthens partnerships between academia and SSF sectors, ultimately contributing to evidence-based decision-making.

Facilitate inter-country exchange visits of SSF groups to share information, insights and strategies.

This can be achieved through organised initiatives that promote networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples across different countries. This involves coordinating study tours, workshops, or conferences that bring together SSF stakeholders from various regions to learn from each other's experiences, best practices, and innovative approaches.

By providing opportunities for cross-border learning and interaction, these exchange visits enable SSF groups to gain valuable insights into different fishing practices, management systems, and socio-economic contexts while fostering solidarity and cooperation among participants. Importantly, facilitating inter-country exchange visits strengthens the capacity of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to address common challenges, advocate for their rights, and develop sustainable solutions that promote the resilience and well-being of coastal populations globally.



• • • • SECTION 11

INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

The effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines relies on three key components: information, research, and communication.

Information provides the foundation for crafting policies by offering accurate, up-to-date data on SSF, such as fish stocks and socio-economic conditions, helping policymakers address challenges and opportunities.

Research deepens understanding of SSF's complexities and ecosystems, promoting sustainable practices and giving fishers the tools to engage in policy discussions. Communication links stakeholders, facilitating knowledge exchange and fostering collaboration among governments, NGOs, academia, and fisherfolks, ensuring that all parties are informed and involved in decision-making.

Additionally, systematic data collection, valuing traditional knowledge, and involving SSF in research are vital to improving governance, transparency, and community empowerment.



MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

Traditional knowledge, mainly local and indigenous practices, plays a significant role in the fisheries management process in Botswana.

Best practices include the selective catching of fish for consumption, focusing on more prominent individuals to ensure sustainable harvesting. Additionally, the continued use of dugout canoes is an indigenous practice that minimises noise and fuel pollution, contributing to environmentally friendly fishing methods.

Another indigenous practice involves periodic changes in fishing lagoons, emphasising the importance of sustainable resource use. Recognising and incorporating these traditional practices into fisheries management processes can enhance the sustainability of SSF in Botswana.

Fisher communities in Botswana are actively involved in the regular and periodic updating of statistics on SSF. This involvement includes daily record-keeping by SSF communities, with the compiled data being submitted to the state.

This direct engagement in data collection ensures that the information reflects the current bio-ecological, social, cultural, and economic dynamics of the SSF sector. The best practice of daily record-keeping by communities contributes to more accurate and up-to-date statistics, fostering a collaborative approach between fisher communities and the state.

Recommendations to further enhance the status of Information, Research, and Communication for SSF in Botswana include the continued integration of traditional knowledge into formal fisheries management strategies. This could involve creating platforms for collaboration between traditional knowledge holders and government authorities to ensure a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to fisheries management.



UGANDA

In Uganda, the utilisation of traditional knowledge in fisheries management processes has dwindled, with current management practices often neglecting the valuable insights from local and indigenous wisdom. While fishing communities still hold and value traditional knowledge, such as techniques for dealing with strong winds, fishing holidays, and fish preservation methods, these practices are not actively incorporated into contemporary fisheries management. There is a recognition of the importance of preserving and passing on this traditional knowledge to younger generations.

Recommendations emphasise the need for the state to take deliberate steps to preserve, utilise, and transmit this valuable traditional knowledge.

Regarding the involvement of fisher communities in updating statistics on SSF, the current situation

indicates a limited role for community members. Although people in fishing communities are counted during official government censuses, they are often not directly engaged in the compilation of information by the state.

This exclusion hampers the active involvement of SSF communities, the custodians of fisheries resources, in the periodic updating of bio-ecological, social, cultural, and economic data.

The recommendations highlight the importance of actively engaging SSF communities in stock-taking and statistical updates, fostering a sense of ownership and promoting sustainable practices in fisheries resources.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Traditional knowledge is currently not integrated into the fisheries management process, with barriers imposed by the ICCN hindering its utilisation.

The non-production of the lake is attributed to the blockage of traditional knowledge by legal constraints, specifically under law 14/0014 on nature conservation. Recommendations emphasise the importance of allowing and actively involving local communities in fishing and the Ivindo National Park (IVNP) management to enhance productivity.

Regarding the involvement of fishing communities in updating SSF statistics, the current practice involves state institutions working alone without informing the fishermen. The summary underscores the need for a more inclusive approach, advocating for sharing statistical, biological, economic, and cultural data at all levels. The recommendation is to ensure that information is transparently shared with fishing communities to enhance their knowledge and involvement in managing SSF.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Traditional knowledge plays a significant role in the fisheries management process in Guinea-Bissau. Evidence of this includes the continued use of fishing calendars in some communities, the employment of small wooden boats and rowing techniques by inland fishermen, and local processing methods using mud ovens and firewood.

The ownership system in fishing communities respects traditional norms, and the roles and responsibilities in the sector acknowledge and incorporate indigenous knowledge. This integration of traditional practices ensures that local wisdom and sustainable methods are preserved and utilised in modern fisheries management.

Fishing communities in Guinea-Bissau are actively involved in the regular and periodic updating of SSF statistics. They contribute bioecological, social, cultural, and economic data through daily and weekly records of their catches, which are shared with government officials. This practice ensures that data collection is accurate and reflective of on-the-ground realities, facilitating better-informed decision-making and resource management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a fisheries social science department in fisheries colleges.

Establishing fisheries social science departments within fisheries colleges can be achieved by integrating interdisciplinary approaches and expertise into existing academic structures and allocating resources for faculty development, curriculum design, and research funding.

By incorporating social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science into fisheries education, colleges can equip students with a holistic understanding of fisheries management and governance's complex social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

This interdisciplinary approach enables future fisheries professionals to address real-world challenges SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples face, such as poverty, gender inequality, and governance issues, through evidence-based research and policy analysis. Moreover, creating fisheries social science departments emphasises the importance of incorporating social perspectives into fisheries education and research, promoting more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable fisheries management practices that benefit coastal communities and marine ecosystems.

Provide SSF with Information of SSF platforms and opportunities available for advocating SSF rights, especially SSF Guidelines.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) can provide SSF with information on SSF platforms and opportunities to advocate SSF rights, particularly the SSF Guidelines, through various channels. FAO could develop and disseminate comprehensive guides, toolkits, and online resources that outline SSF platforms, networks, and funding opportunities for SSF organisations and stakeholders.

Additionally, FAO could organise workshops, webinars, and capacity-building programs to empower SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to engage with SSF platforms and advocate for their rights effectively.

Consolidate RAG Africa-Asia and Pacific- Latin America and Caribbean reports on the assessment of SSF Guidelines to see similarities, differences, and alignment of priorities.

Consolidating Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) Africa-Asia and Pacific- Latin America and Caribbean

reports on the assessment of SSF Guidelines involves gathering and synthesising insights from these regions to identify similarities, differences, and alignments of priorities.

This could be accomplished through collaborative efforts between regional stakeholders, researchers, and international organisations, utilising participatory methodologies and comparative analysis.

A comprehensive understanding of the implementation status, challenges, and opportunities related to the SSF Guidelines across diverse geographical contexts can be achieved by consolidating these reports.

This process is crucial as it identifies common themes and areas for improvement, facilitates knowledge sharing and mutual learning among regions, and informs more targeted and effective strategies for advancing SSF rights, sustainability, and development globally.

Ultimately, consolidating RAG Africa-Asia and Pacific-Latin America and Caribbean reports enhances coordination, coherence, and solidarity in advancing the SSF Guidelines' objectives, contributing to the empowerment and well-being of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

Researchers, consultants, and government departments should conduct research studies about SSF that circulate back to the SSF community.

Ensuring that research studies conducted about SSF by researchers, consultants, and government departments are circulated back to the SSF community is essential for fostering transparency, collaboration, and empowerment within these communities.

This can be achieved through various means such as community meetings, workshops, newsletters, or online platforms where research findings are shared in accessible language and formats.

By circulating research studies back to SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into their own livelihoods, challenges, and opportunities, empowering them to participate more effectively in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Moreover, this feedback loop facilitates mutual learning between researchers and practitioners, enriching the quality and relevance of future research endeavours while promoting co-management approaches that are grounded in local knowledge and experiences.



• • • • SECTION 12

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity development is pivotal in fisheries management. It encompasses skill enhancement and knowledge dissemination and establishes robust support structures to sustain acquired capacities.

While upskilling and training remain essential, a comprehensive approach to capacity development recognizes the need for sustainable and inclusive practices.

Building the capacity of fishers, communities, and stakeholders involves fostering a deep understanding of the intricate interplay between ecological, social, and economic aspects of fisheries.

Capacity development must transcend mere technical expertise to manage effectively and sustainably utilise fishery resources.

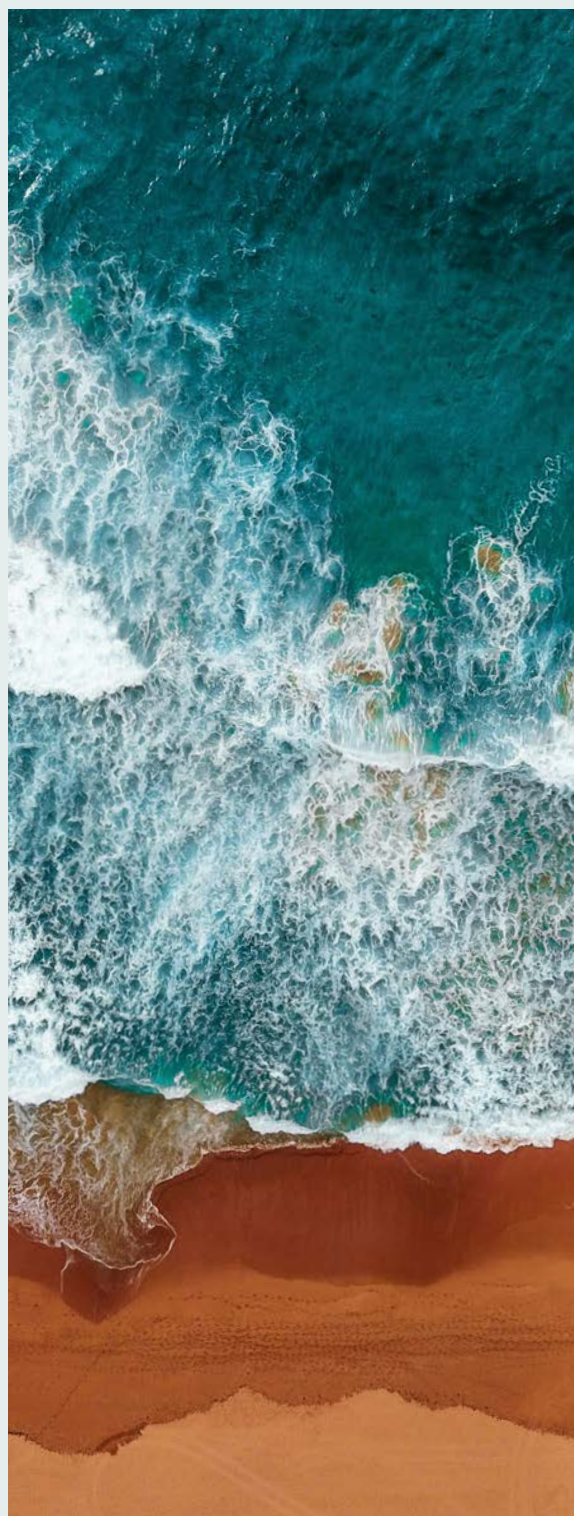
It should encompass institutional strengthening, empowering fishing communities to engage in participatory decision-making and co-management initiatives. By involving fishers in designing and implementing management strategies, capacity development cultivates a sense of ownership, encouraging responsible stewardship of resources.

Inclusive governance frameworks, enabled through capacity building, foster dialogue and collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and fishing communities, fostering collective responsibility for sustainable fisheries management.

Moreover, capacity development must account for SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples' unique contexts and challenges.

This requires tailoring programs to address fisheries' social, economic, and cultural dimensions, acknowledging local knowledge's centrality in resource management.

Equipping fishers with the capacity to harness traditional wisdom alongside modern techniques ensures the preservation of cultural heritage while embracing innovation for sustainable practices—aquatic ecosystems.



MAIN FINDINGS



BOTSWANA

Insufficient information



UGANDA

In Uganda, there is a notable absence of regular training programs conducted by the government at both local and national levels to enhance the capacities of SSF in producing and marketing fishery products. Providing training opportunities primarily falls on non-governmental organisations like the KWDT. KWDT, among others, takes the initiative to conduct various training sessions to build the capacity of SSF communities, primarily focusing on fish processing and facilitating access to diversifying livelihoods.

The identified types of capacity development required by SSF communities encompass a broad spectrum. Recommendations include the necessity for training programs related to fisheries resource management, as this would empower the communities to engage in sustainable practices. Additionally, there is a need for skill development in alternative income-generating activities, recognising the importance of diversified livelihoods. Moreover, safety on the lake is critical, requiring training programs to ensure the well-being of those engaged in fishing activities.

Lastly, training sessions to improve fisher communities' health, hygiene, and sanitation practices are vital for overall community well-being. In this regard, the absence of government-led initiatives underscores the importance of fostering collaborative efforts between the state and non-governmental organisations to address the capacity-building needs of SSF communities effectively.



SENEGAL

In Senegal, the capacity-building needs within SSF encompass a range of areas, including administrative and financial management. The response highlights the necessity for fishermen and women processors to better understand economic activities and business management. Many individuals involved in SSF may lack the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about investing in their businesses, leading to uncertainties about profitability.

The recommendation emphasises the importance of providing training and awareness programs tailored to the specific needs of SSF participants, particularly considering that a significant portion of them may be illiterate. Traditional fishing villages often see young individuals engaging in fishing activities from an early age, foregoing formal education. The response points out the potential long-term consequences of this trend, as a lack of advanced education may limit future opportunities for these individuals. Therefore, targeted capacity-building programs become crucial to equip SSF participants with the skills and knowledge required for sustainable and profitable fishing practices.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide business training for SSF in value chain management and value addition.

This can be achieved through targeted capacity-building programs, workshops, and mentoring initiatives tailored to the needs and contexts of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples. These training sessions can cover various topics including market analysis, product development, quality control, pricing strategies, branding, and marketing techniques. By equipping SSF stakeholders with business skills and knowledge, they can enhance their competitiveness, negotiate better product prices, and access higher-value markets. Additionally, value chain management training empowers SSF actors to diversify their income streams, reduce post-harvest losses, and capture more value from their fisheries resources, ultimately improving their livelihoods and resilience to market fluctuations. Moreover, by investing in SSF entrepreneurship and capacity-building, governments, NGOs, and development agencies can contribute to poverty alleviation, food security, and sustainable economic development in coastal communities.

Provide training in post-harvest disease prevention.

This can be accomplished through targeted educational programs, workshops, and demonstrations focusing on best practices, hygiene standards, and appropriate handling techniques. These training sessions can be conducted by government agencies, NGOs, or extension services, with collaboration from local SSF organisations. By educating SSF stakeholders about the risks associated with post-harvest diseases and the measures to mitigate them, such as proper sanitation, temperature control, and use of preservatives, fish quality can be preserved, reducing spoilage and economic losses. Moreover, training in post-harvest disease prevention enhances food safety, protects consumer health, and improves market access for SSF products, thereby contributing to the overall sustainability and profitability of SSF enterprises.

Create Capacity for fundraising and proposal writing for SSF groups.

This can be achieved through targeted training workshops, mentorship programs, and online resources provided by governmental agencies, non-profit organisations, or donor agencies. These capacity-building initiatives should focus on equipping SSF stakeholders with practical skills and knowledge related to identifying funding opportunities, developing project proposals, budgeting, and donor relations. By enhancing SSF groups' abilities to access external funding sources, they can implement sustainable development projects, strengthen their organisational capacity, and address pressing challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation within their communities. Moreover, building capacity for fundraising and proposal writing empowers SSF groups to articulate their needs and priorities effectively, advocate for their rights, and contribute to positive change in the fisheries sector.

Create capacity for SSF groups in terms of advocacy, lobbying and dialogue and negotiation with other actors.

Can be achieved through tailored training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives facilitated by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, or international institutions. These capacity-building efforts should focus on enhancing SSF stakeholders' understanding of policy processes, advocacy strategies, and effective communication techniques. By equipping SSF groups with the knowledge and skills to engage in dialogue and negotiation with government agencies, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and other relevant actors, they can effectively voice their concerns, influence decision-making processes, and advocate for policies and practices that support their rights, interests, and sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, building capacity for advocacy and dialogue strengthens the collective agency and empowerment of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, fostering more inclusive and participatory governance structures within the fisheries sector.



An aerial photograph of a turbulent ocean. The water is a deep teal color, and the surface is covered in intricate, swirling patterns of white foam and bubbles, suggesting a powerful current or a storm. The foam is most prominent in the lower half of the image, where it forms dense, interconnected clusters. The overall effect is one of intense natural energy and movement.

CONCLUSION

The SSF Guidelines represent a transformative tool to address the significant challenges faced by small-scale fisheries worldwide, particularly in Africa, where fishing communities are vital to food security, livelihoods, and cultural preservation. They are essential for safeguarding the rights and well-being of small-scale fishers, promoting inclusive governance, and ensuring the sustainable management of marine and in-land waters resources.

This report highlights varying degrees of progress across Africa in implementing these Guidelines. While notable advances have been made in areas such as recognizing customary tenure rights, improving social protections, and integrating gender equality into fisheries management, many regions still face persistent obstacles. These include insufficient infrastructure, restricted market access, overfishing, and the exclusion of women and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge from decision-making processes.

The report's recommendations stress the urgent need for collective action to ensure equitable resource distribution, inclusive social development, meaningful participation, and resilient fisheries management systems.

Crucially, the report calls for a human rights-based approach that acknowledges the fundamental role of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in co-managing fisheries.

Empowering small-scale fishers to engage in policy development, advancing gender inclusivity, and incorporating their ecological knowledge into sustainable practices are vital steps toward securing the long-term viability of SSF.

Looking ahead, the recommendations outlined provide a clear path for strengthening the resilience of SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples. Governments, civil society, and international partners must work collaboratively to broaden the reach of the SSF Guidelines, improve infrastructure, enhance market access, and enable small-scale fishers to take the lead in managing their resources.

These coordinated efforts are essential for fostering sustainable and equitable fisheries that not only support livelihoods but also safeguard marine ecosystems for future generations.

The recommendations in this report are the result of a comprehensive assessment of the status and challenges faced by SSF across Africa, combined with insights from a final workshop held in Mbour, Senegal in 2024. During this workshop, participants from the Regional Advisory Group, along with key allies, engaged in tireless discussions to identify common ground and develop strategies to advance the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. They present a roadmap for enhancing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and promoting more sustainable, equitable, and resilient fisheries.

Achieving this vision will require coordinated efforts from the Food and Agriculture Organization, national governments, SSF organisations, and allied civil society organisations.

RÉSUMÉ DES PRINCIPALES RECOMMANDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAO:

- **1 — Capacity Building and Training:**
Provide SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples with training on sustainable fishing practices, post-harvest loss reduction, and access to technology through workshops, webinars, and manuals.
 - **2 — Support for Global Advocacy:**
Provide SSF with platforms and opportunities to advocate for their rights, including access to global networks and funding opportunities, and share information about the SSF Guidelines.
 - **3 — Research and Data Collection:**
Facilitate participatory research methodologies involving SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples, scientists, and policymakers to assess climate change impacts and promote data-sharing.
 - **4 — Gender Equality Programs:**
Promote gender-sensitive strategies in fisheries management, ensuring equal participation of women and men in all decision-making processes.
 - **5 — Social Science Integration:**
Encourage the creation of fisheries social science departments within fisheries colleges to address the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of SSF.
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS:

- **1 — TENURE RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE:**
 - • • • **Formalise Customary Tenure Rights:** Recognize and protect both formal and customary tenure rights for SSF, ensuring that these rights align with international frameworks.
 - • • • **Co-management Systems:** Engage SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples in co-managing fisheries, involving them in decision-making processes related to tenure rights, resource management, and fisheries regulation.
- **2 — INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:**
 - • • • **Post-Harvest Support:** Decentralise and provide free access to post-harvest facilities like ice refrigeration, fish processing, and storage, especially in remote fishing communities.
 - • • • **Improve Landing Sites:** Governments should invest in improving landing sites, processing infrastructure, and transportation to ensure better safety and working conditions.
- **3 — CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:**
 - • • • **Disaster Response and Adaptation:** Strengthen post-disaster response mechanisms and support SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples with training on climate adaptation strategies, such as alternative livelihoods.
- **4 — MARKET ACCESS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT:**
 - • • • **Micro-financing and Credit:** Governments should improve access to financial services, such as micro-finance and loans, to support SSF in building alternative income sources and enhancing their bargaining power in market negotiations.
 - • • • **Marketing Committees for Fishermen:** Encourage the formation of marketing committees within SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples to ensure fair pricing of fish and reduce dependency on middlemen.
- **5 — POLICY COHERENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT:**
 - • • • **Policy Alignment:** Ensure that fisheries policies are coherent with the goals of sustainable SSF, integrating social, economic, and environmental sustainability into national development plans.
 - • • • **Coordination with Local Authorities:** Strengthen collaboration between national and sub-national governments to ensure effective implementation of SSF Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SSF COMMUNITIES:

- **1 — Participation in Policy Development:**
SSF should actively participate in local and national decision-making processes, advocating for the protection of their customary tenure rights, and co-managing fisheries.
- **2 — Gender Equality Initiatives:**
Promote the equal participation of women in SSF decision-making bodies, ensuring that women have access to financial resources and play an active role in value chains .
- **3 — Knowledge Sharing and Traditional Practices:**
SSF should leverage traditional knowledge in fisheries management, integrating it into scientific research and co-management initiatives.
- **4 — Data Collection and Management:**
SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples should engage in gathering bio-ecological, social, and economic data to inform fisheries management and advocate for sustainable practices.
- **5 — Marketing and Value Chains:**
Establish marketing committees within SSF groups to improve negotiation power and ensure that fishers retain more value from their harvests.
- **6 — Collaborative Management:**
SSF communities and Indigenous Peoples should partner with governments, civil society, and international bodies to co-manage fisheries resources, integrating traditional and scientific knowledge for sustainable practices.

