

Call for signatures

Based on the Assessment Report conducted by the Regional Advisory Group in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka

The SSF Guidelines have significantly contributed to the global recognition of small-scale fisheries (SSF) as more than just a sub-sector of the larger fisheries industry. This achievement lies in recognizing the SSF as a way of life rather than a mere economic activity. The SSF communities 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, fishing is not just a means of livelihood but also a way of life that shapes their very existence.

Despite their critical role in the global fisheries sector, the individuals comprising the SSF communities remain underrepresented and receive inadequate acknowledgment in fisheries-related public policy-making, governance, and fiscal planning. As we approach the year 2024, it will mark the 10-year anniversary since the SSF guidelines were established. However, despite this milestone, effective implementation has yet to be realized. In light of this, it was deemed crucial for small-scale fisheries organizations to conduct people centered-assessments of the situation on the ground and actively inform governments about the challenges and opportunities faced by small-scale fishing communities. These assessments and informed dialogues with policymakers are vital to catalyze meaningful action and ensure that the vision of the SSF guidelines translates into tangible benefits for the small-scale fishing sector.

In light of the evidences provided by the Assessment Report Conducted by the Regional Advisory Group in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty calls on National Governments, Members of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Environmental NGOs and the FAO Regional Officers to use the following recommendations as a pillar for for enhancing the implementation of SSF Guidelines at the national and regional level.

PEOPLES' FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
SOVERANITÀ ALIMENTARE DEI POPOLI
SOVERANITÉ ALIMENTAIRE DES PEUPLES
SOBERANÍA ALIMENTARIA DE LOS PUEBLOS



PROPOSED BY
Regional Advisory Group
of Asia and the Pacific
of the International Planning
Committee for Food
Sovereignty - Working
Group on Fisheries

To sign the statement, write an email to ipc-cip@foodsovereignty.org

1

Ensure the establishment of a national-level definition of small-scale fisher to be developed in collaboration with SSF organizations

*It's essential to create a **comprehensive and all-encompassing national-level definition of small-scale fishers** that can adequately capture the specific context in question. The formal delineation of SSFs at the national level, in a more inclusive manner, which also encompasses related activities such as fish processing, marketing, and sales, holds the potential to appropriately acknowledge and value **women's substantial contributions to the fishing sector**. **Such a definition would also empower SSF communities to assert their rights**, which is often a challenge. This is because, in many cases, either the government lacks formal recognition of the sub-sector or fails to differentiate between small-scale artisanal fisheries and industrial fisheries.*

2

Conduct a comprehensive mapping of customary tenure rights

*The expansion of infrastructure for various projects like port-led development, tourism, industrial fish farming, energy, and marine conservation has led to **conflicts over coastal and marine spaces**. Consequently, fishers Peoples are being displaced due to large-scale land acquisitions without community consultation. **Conducting a comprehensive mapping of the tenure rights is crucial** as it enables a deeper understanding of the existing customary tenure rights and traditional governance mechanisms system, ensures its protection, provides essential information to policymakers, and identifies any gaps or potential conflicts with the current formal legal system. To implement this recommendation, **there should be collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and fishers Peoples** to conduct the mapping and documentation process.*

3

Strengthen policies promoting gender-inclusive participation in the SSF sector

*Recognizing women's significant contributions to the fishing sector allows for a more accurate representation of their roles, ensuring fair recognition of their invaluable work. States should create fisher identity cards that include information about the person's fishing activities and their allied activities. This would also help **document and recognize women's contribution to the fishing sector and ensure they have access to government support and resources.***

*With a formal and inclusive definition in place, States can **implement and monitor gender-sensitive policies and programs** that address women's unique needs and challenges in the fishing sector. This could include providing training and capacity-building programs for women, ensuring that women have **equal access to credit and financial resources**, and promoting **women's participation in decision-making processes** related to the fishing sector.*

4

Ensure direct and fair redistribution of profits from fisheries export revenue

*The establishment of an **export levy on large commercial fishing activities**, in combination with other **direct redistribution mechanisms**, represents a sustainable approach to benefitting small-scale fishers and coastal communities alike when it is not impacting nations food sovereignty. This form of taxation can generate revenue for small-scale fishers, which can be used to fund fisheries management, conservation efforts and support for coastal communities. Implementing a well-structured fisheries levy tax system is crucial, and it should be complemented by revenue-sharing arrangements where **a percentage of the profits from fisheries exports are distributed to local communities.** By reinvesting a portion of the revenue back into these communities, governments can bolster social and economic development. This could involve funding educational programs, healthcare facilities, infrastructure projects, and other vital services that contribute to the overall prosperity of the local population.*

5

Ensure SSF related market is collectively managed by SSF organizations

Governments and relevant stakeholders should prioritize establishing and supporting SSF markets as a means to empower small-scale fishers, promote fair trade practices, and enhance their economic sustainability. Creating **platforms where SSF can sell their catch directly to consumers** enables them to **receive fair product prices**. It provides an opportunity to establish direct connections with consumers, fostering trust and transparency in the seafood supply chain. Governments should collaborate with SSF organizations and local communities to **develop regulatory frameworks that allow SSF to set prices, regulate competition, and ensure market access**. Furthermore, providing necessary infrastructure, such as storage facilities and transportation networks, and facilitating market information and financial services can further strengthen the functioning of SSF markets.

6

Prioritize community-centered climate solutions

Prioritizing **community-centered climate solutions** honors local knowledge, aiding climate adaptation and promoting SSF livelihoods and ecosystem well-being. To enhance climate resilience, investing in such sustainable options like **beach nourishment, dune restoration, and managed retreat** is essential.

These alternatives restore ecosystems and mitigate risks. Structures like tetrapods and seawalls provide short-term coastal protection but disrupt natural processes, exacerbating erosion over time. Raising awareness about false climate solutions empowers informed decisions, ensuring ecologically sound approaches for a resilient future. In this framework, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and banks have a significant role in financing coastal infrastructure projects, impacting community development. **Pre-approving funds requires disaster risk assessments to safeguard fishers Peoples from natural disasters' impacts**. Assessments should cover infrastructure and community, ensuring livelihoods and resilience. Incorporating these assessments showcases responsible financing, aligning investments with sustainability, benefiting communities and coastal regions.