

CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE OCEANS & IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 14

Small-Scale Fisheries, Sustainable Development, and
Food Security: A Factsheet for Parliamentarians

Photo: Courtesy of WorldFish



OVERVIEW

1. The Large Impact of Small-Scale Fisheries (SFF)
2. The Economic and Human Rights Importance of Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF)
3. The Role of Parliamentarians (MPs) and Parliamentarian for Global Action (PGA)
4. About Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

THE LARGE IMPACT OF SSF

Small-scale fisheries (SFF) account for more than 90 percent of the world's capture fishers and fish workers and supply approximately 50 percent of all global fish catches.

SSF comprise a diverse and dynamic sub-sector whose precise characteristics depend on the location. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), artisanal or small-scale fisheries, are traditional fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amount of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels (if any), making short fishing trips close to shore and mainly for local consumption. They can be for subsistence or commercial purposes.

Indeed, SFF tend to be strongly anchored in local communities, bolstering social cohesion and embodying historic links to adjacent fishery resources, traditions and values. Additionally, SSF are often characterized by seasonal migration.¹

Access to fishery resources and land is paramount to ensure the livelihood and sustainable development of many small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities – including vulnerable and marginalized groups. Ensuring access to fisheries, accessory activities like processing and marketing, and housing highly depends on tenure rights to land in the coastal/waterfront area. These rights are not always appropriately ensured to SSF.

“
*Small-scale fisheries are crucially positioned at the economic and social core of their communities, underpinning livelihoods, providing food security and employment, and other multiplier effects.*²
”

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security, page 5. www.fao.org/3/i4356en/I4356EN.pdf

2. ibid, page 5.

THE ECONOMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF SSF

The SSF sector offers multiple social and economic benefits:

Employment Opportunities

- SSF employ more than 90% of the world's fishers and fish workers.
- Approximately half of those employed are women. Women are particularly significant in pre-harvest and post-harvest activities.
- Seasonal or occasional fishing and related activities contribute to the livelihoods of millions.

Contribution to Global Fish Catches

- SSF contribute about half of the global fish catches.
- From the catches directly destined to human consumption, SSF contribute two-thirds.

Contribution to Food Security and Nutrition

- SSF are a key source of food and nutrition for millions of coastal families and communities, both directly and in local, national and international markets.
- SSF generates income to support local and national economies, contributing to the thwarting of forced migration away from coastal rural areas.

Contribution to Sustainable and Equitable Development

- Fishing and related activities often underpin the local economies in coastal, lakeshore and riparian communities and constitute an economic engine with multiplier effects in other sectors.

Unfortunately, SSF currently face many challenges:

Non-participatory systems of allocation of benefits

- Centralized fisheries management systems, rapid technology developments, and demographic changes have affected customary participatory practices for allocating the benefits of SSF.

Overexploitation of Resources

- The over-development of the fisheries sector over the past three to four decades has threatened habitats and ecosystems.

Unequal power relations with related sectors

- There is increasingly high competition between SSF and other sectors. These sectors often have stronger political or economic influence, and they include: tourism, aquaculture, agriculture, energy, mining, industry, and infrastructure developments.

Multidimensional obstacles to development

- Multiple causes hinder the full development SSF. These include disadvantaged access to markets, lack of basic social services, as well as civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, greater susceptibility to pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change.³

THE ROLE OF MPs AND PGA

The FAO has facilitated the creation of Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). It is the first international instrument dedicated entirely to the SSF sector, and represents a global consensus on principles and guidance for its governance and development. The **SSF Guidelines** were developed in close collaboration with representatives of SSF organizations, and are directed at all those involved in the sector to work together for the benefit of small-scale fishers, fish workers, and their communities, as well as for society at large.

Together with the Environmental Law Institute (ELI), PGA has embarked on a project to identify effective legal instruments and model regulatory language for countries to achieve comprehensive policy reforms of their SSF and develop detailed governance roadmaps for strengthening rule of law in coastal fisheries management. The resulting SSF Regulatory and Governance Toolkit will be shared and discussed with all PGA Members, and include sections addressing the specific needs of lawmakers. The ELI-PGA consortium will further provide technical assistance towards necessary implementing legislation.

You, as Parliamentarians play a crucial role in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines by:

- Raising awareness among your peers and relevant Ministries.
- Supporting policy reform by the identification and sharing of best practices and improved collaboration with the scientific community and local NGOs.
- Ensuring fair representation at the local, national, and regional levels by discussing secure and sustainable SSF governance through attendance or hosting of meetings.
- Supporting implementation of the SSF Guidelines by ensuring establishment of a transparent and efficient monitoring system, strengthened partnerships, and increased collaboration of all stakeholders.
- Questioning your government on current regulations for SSF and how the community of local fishers is supported and protected.

We stand ready to support you in your work and efforts!

ABOUT PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is the largest non-governmental, multi-party international network of individual legislators with approximately 1,300 members in 140 parliaments around the world that informs and mobilizes parliamentarians to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination, and gender equality. This global network of parliamentarians acting in their individual capacity is supported by a PGA National Group structure in parliaments, which creates sustainability and ownership of issues at the national level, and by a Secretariat with relevant expertise. PGA is in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations with headquarters in New York; its office in The Hague, Netherlands fosters cooperation with The Hague-based International Organizations, including the ICC.

For more information or to request technical assistance, kindly contact:

Leyla Nikjou (LL.M), Senior Advisor
Oceans Campaign
leyla.nikjoul@pgaction.org

Saarah Monawvil, Program Officer
Oceans Campaign
saarah.monawvil@pgaction.org

Or visit our website: pgaction.org/ilhr/protection-of-the-ocean.html

