**INPUT ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES**

**FIAN UGANDA, 2023**

1. **What are the main human rights challenges facing small-scale fishers and fish workers in your country?**

**Militarization, violence and denial of access to the lake.** In November 2017, the President of the Republic to the Uganda directed the People’s Defense Force to combat illegal fishing.[[1]](#footnote-1) Since then, the Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU) was set up and has been systematically violating the human rights of small-scale fishermen and women through unlawful arrest, destructing property like burning of the fishing gears and the boats and physical assault.[[2]](#footnote-2). Killings of several fishermen were even reported in 2020 in several districts[[3]](#footnote-3) [[4]](#footnote-4). Such actions from the army have denied so many small scale fishers access to the lake jeopardizing their human right to adequate food and nutrition. The Minister for Fisheries Hon Helen Adoa while addressing issues of irregularities by the Fisheries Protection Unit in Kalangala emphasized that the army will continue with its operations on the lakes[[5]](#footnote-5).

Women in the fishing business are particularly vulnerable to the indiscriminate violence by the soldiers because they are more likely to live in one place to take care of their children, while men are sometimes able to move from one fishing community to another as they run away from the soldiers.

**Over monetarization and commercialization of fish.** Fish is perceived less as food and more as a commodity for export. Fish exporters have earlier suggested a ban on domestic consumption of Nile Perch[[6]](#footnote-6). Commercialization of the sector is systematically depriving small scale fishers of their right to fish, and as such the trade based approach to fisheries in the country has denied access to fish for food for many Ugandans including those that entirely depend on fish. The desire to have more export earnings has led to the introduction of Aquaculture and cage fishing on the public waters, further worsening the tension and unrest among small-scale fishers in Uganda. In some fishing communities, the owners of the cages are positioning their cages next to the demarcated Fish breeding grounds (Lacustrine Protected Areas)[[7]](#footnote-7) and use the army already on the lake to protect them. Fishermen reported of their boats being confiscated by the army just because they were passing near the cages.

**Poor living conditions of fishing communities.** Roads connecting to most of the fishing communities are very poor making public transport very difficult and in some areas unavailable, children move longer distances to schools. The health services are far from communities and pregnant women have to trek over 30km to access antenatal and maternity services[[8]](#footnote-8).

1. **What good practices could be shared from your country that has strengthened the recognition, protection and remedies for small-scale fishers and fish workers?**

The government of Uganda recently passed a new law. The Fisheries and Aquaculture Act 2022. This law guides and regulates the participation of everyone in the management and conservation of fish resource including all people like women, youth and other groups[[9]](#footnote-9). FIAN Uganda supported the small scale fishers around Lake Victoria to take part in the discussion of this law.

Uganda has put in place a National Task Team comprised of CSOs, government workers and other stakeholders for the development of the National Plan of Action for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries. The task force was established in November 2022.

Civil Society Organizations in Uganda have organized platforms that bring together small-scale fishers and policy makers both at national, regional and international levels to dialogue on the state of small-scale fishers[[10]](#footnote-10). CSOs also engaging small scale fisheries to take part in international reporting like CEDAW and sensitizing and awareness creation on the SSF guidelines to the small scale fisheries in Uganda.

1. **To what extent small-scale fisheries, coastal communities, and fishery workers have been included in national and international policy processes related to the fisheries sector?**

Small-scale fishers and coastal communities are barely included in policy processes. During the discussions on the law on Fisheries and Aquaculture, the committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries in Parliament did not reach out to the small scale fisheries for consultation citing issues of limited resources to enable them reach the fishing communities.

**What are the main concerns regarding working conditions in the fisheries supply chain? Which parts of the supply chain are the most dangerous or problematic?**

Most challenges in the fisheries supply chain concentrate among fishers especially concerning restrictions to access the fisheries resources. In addition to access challenges, fisher people are also concerned about the exorbitant and many taxes charged from them in form of licenses and permits, as well as cumbersome payment procedures.

1. <https://www.independent.co.ug/mps-unhappy-with-updf-illegal-fishing-operations/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/illegal-fishing-rdc-directs-fpu-soldiers-to-stop-arresting-suspects-from-homes-4361456> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/fishermen-accuse-army-of-staging-accidents-on-lakes-2728546> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/kalungu-leaders-task-army-to-probe-death-of-two-fishermen-3321816> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/army-to-remain-on-lakes-4369918> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/ban-local-eating-of-nile-perch-exporters-3593536> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/6094/%E2%80%98demarcate-fishing-zones-safeguard-breeding-areas%E2%80%99> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-021-06973-5> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmis/views/c52ffe04-ce6a-4cb6-b4e0-1dd64d796f77%253B1.0> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://fianuganda.org/dialogue-on-fisheries-and-the-right-to-food-and-nutrition-in-africa/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)