**INPUTS OF**

**THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)**

Thematic report on the topic “The Right to Food and Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries”

of the SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD

in response to the call for inputs enclosed in the letter of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food of 30 October 2023

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This document does not reflect any official views of FAO Members.

**Introduction**

1. This document contains the inputs of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in response to the Call for Inputs issued by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr Michael Fakhri, on 30 October 2023, for an upcoming thematic report on the topic “The Right to Food and Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries”, which will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council at its 55th session in March 2024.
2. This document (hereafter “FAO inputs”) offers an overview of the relevant work undertaken by FAO in relation to small-scale fisheries, as well as of such work carried out in collaboration with partners.
3. FAO inputs focus on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) (FAO, 2015a), the first international instrument dedicated entirely to the small-scale fisheries sector. The SSF Guidelines were endorsed by Members of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of FAO in 2014. The development of the SSF Guidelines followed a bottom-up process with extensive consultations with more than 4 000 stakeholders, including representatives of governments, small-scale fishers, fishworkers, and their organizations, as well as academics and development partners, in total representing more than 120 countries.
4. FAO inputs are organized in nine sections, following this introduction: **first section** frames FAO inputs by providing production and sustainability status of global fisheries; **second section** highlights key issues for defining small-scale fisheries and related terms; **third section** covers the SSF Guidelines’ objectives, guiding principles, and relationship with other international instruments; **fourth section** addresses governance of tenure and resource management in small-scale fisheries; **fifth section** is about social development, employment and decent work; **sixth section** covers value-chains, port-harvests and trade; **seventh section** addresses gender equality; **eighth section** relates to climate change and disaster risks; and **ninth section** outlines initiatives relating to ensuring an enabling environment and supporting the SSF Guidelines’ implementation.
5. It is noted that next year, 2024, marks the 10th anniversary of the SSF Guidelines, providing an opportunity to showcase good examples and persisting challenges faced by small-scale fishers around the world, and to take stock of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
6. **State of global fisheries and aquaculture**
7. Global capture fisheries production, excluding plants, has remained remarkably stable since 1994, producing on average 92.1 Mt per year, although this global stability is not reflected across all regions (FAO, 2022a). In 2021, aquaculture produced a total of 90.9 Mt of aquatic animals, growing at an average of five percent per year since the turn of the century. As a result, the per capita consumption of aquatic foods reached 20.5 kg per capita in 2019. The per capita consumption of aquatic foods has been growing at twice the rate of population growth since 1961, thus making significant positive contributions to nutritional outcomes.
8. However, long-term monitoring by FAO of the assessed marine fish stocks demonstrates a declining pattern. An estimated 64.6 percent of marine fish stocks are within biologically sustainable levels, while 35.4 percent are overexploited. Nevertheless, despite worsening trends in number of sustainably exploited stocks, biologically sustainable stocks are estimated to account for 82.5 percent of the landings of marine fish products. This demonstrates that larger stocks, including some of the most valuable stocks, are managed more effectively (FAO 2022a).
9. **Defining small-scale fisheries**
10. There is no universally agreed definition of small-scale fisheries given its diverse and dynamic characteristics, which vary greatly across different countries and localities around the world. Different terms are used to refer to the small-scale fisheries sector (such as artisanal, subsistence, coastal, nearshore, municipal, customary) (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023; Smith an Basurto, 2019; Funge-Smith et al. 2023). Additionally, certain groups of Indigenous Peoples, Aboriginal, and Tribes also engage in small-scale fisheries.
11. According to the SSF Guidelines (FAO, 2015; para 2.4), it is important to ascertain which activities and operators are considered small-scale, and identify vulnerable and marginalized groups needing greater attention according to the particular context. It is important that this identification follows a meaningful participatory, consultative, and gender-sensitive processes. In this regard, the study “Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH)” (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023) provides a matrix approach that scores fisheries with respect to the scale of their operation across multiple characteristics. It is a standardized approach that can be applied to any fishery to determine where the fishery lies along the continuum of small-scale to large-scale fishing operations. This matrix helps in understanding the fishery and, by scoring each of the fishery characteristics using value ranges drawn from a variety of sources (e.g., from official censuses to expert elicitation), this approach is also suitable for data-limited fisheries. The matrix approach does not seek cutoffs or definitions but to understand small-scale fisheries from their characteristics and functions across a broad multidimensional spectrum.
12. From a policy and legal perspective, the definition of small-scale fisheries and related terms are important where the policy and law explicitly refer to the terms, so that it is clear to whom the references in the policy apply to, as well as to whom the rights and duties in the law apply to (Nakamura, Chuenpagdee and El Halimi, 2021). Examples of definitions of small-scale fisheries and related terms in national policies and laws can be found in the dedicated section of country profiles available at [SSF-LEX](https://ssflex.fao.org/), the online policy and legal database for small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2023a).
13. Relevant international law sources, especially the SSF Guidelines as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the latter adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018 (UNGA, 2018), can be used as basis upon which States and non-State actors could agree on minimum international legal criteria for characterizing small-scale fishers (Morgera and Nakamura, 2022).
14. **The SSF Guidelines’ objectives, guiding principles and relationship with other international instruments**
15. The SSF Guidelines’ objectives (para 1.1) complement and are supported by other voluntary instruments and technical guidelines developed under the auspices of FAO, especially:
    * Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) (FAO, 1995);
    * Voluntary Guidelines to support the realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (Right to Food Guidelines) (FAO, 2005a);
    * Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of national food security (Tenure Guidelines) (FAO, 2022b);
    * Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (FAO, 2014);
    * Operational guide on the Code and Indigenous Peoples (FAO, 2009a);
    * Operational guide on the Right to Food Guidelines and Indigenous Peoples (FAO, 2009b);
    * Technical Guideline for Responsible Fisheries (TGRF) relating to, inter alia: Inland Fisheries (FAO, 1997); Ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) (FAO, 2003); Increasing the Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security (FAO, 2005b); Human dimensions of the EAF (FAO, 2009c); and Safety at sea (FAO, 2015).
16. The objectives of the SSF Guidelines are to be achieved through the human rights-based approach (HRBA) (FAO, 2015; para 1.2), which seeks to ensure the non-discriminatory empowerment and participation of small-scale fishers in transparent and accountable decision-making processes relevant to or affecting them (FAO, 2021a; FAO, 2020a).
17. Promoting and applying the HRBA to small-scale fisheries involves acknowledging small-scale fishers, fishworkers, and their communities as primary right holders (FAO, 2017). Governments and regulatory bodies serve as duty bearers, responsible for ensuring and safeguarding the HRBA to small-scale fisheries. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions, international organizations, the private sector, and local communities play integral roles in empowering small-scale fishers, developing their capacity and promoting the protection of their rights.
18. The operationalization of the HRBA to small-scale fisheries requires robust legal frameworks, capacity building and development, and mechanisms for monitoring and accountability. Applying the HRBA to small-scale fisheries can enhance the wellbeing of small-scale fishers and their communities while contributing to the realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG targets 2.3 and 14b that specifically refer to small-scale fishers (FAO, 2022c).
19. The governance of small-scale fisheries is closely linked to the realization of the right to adequate food, which is fulfilled when people, alone or in a community, have access to adequate food or means for its procurement (FAO, 2017b). Availability of fish and the ability to access fishing grounds have a direct impact on the right to adequate food of local communities, and on the nutritional needs (protein and micronutrients) of vulnerable groups, including children. Consequently, sustainable small-scale fisheries can contribute to the protection of the right to adequate food and children’s right to development and health.
20. FAO has been supporting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in accordance with the guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines (FAO, 2015; para 3.1), namely: human rights and dignity, respect of cultures, non-discrimination, gender equality and equity, equity and equality, consultation and participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, economic, social and environmental sustainability, holistic and integrated approaches (including the EAF), social responsibility, feasibility and social economic viability. These principles can guide projects and activities for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
21. The SSF Guidelines are based on internationally accepted human rights standards and are to be implemented in accordance with those standards (FAO, 2015; para 3.1), recalling on the need for States’ compliance “with their obligations under international human rights law” (FAO, 2015; para 8.2). While voluntary in nature, the SSF Guidelines hold a legal significance by referring to principles and standards, to which States have already committed to through legally binding instruments (Nakamura, 2022). The following treaties are explicitly referred to in the SSF Guidelines:
    * United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC),
    * International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),
    * Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),
    * Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),
    * United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and
    * “relevant conventions of the international labour organization”.[[1]](#footnote-2)
22. States are not legally bound by the SSF Guidelines, but States are bound by the relevant treaties that they have ratified and therefore have an obligation to apply them in the context of small-scale fisheries (Nakamura, 2022). Various other international instruments of binding as well as non-binding nature are relevant to small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2022c; FAO, 2020a).
23. Since their endorsement, the SSF Guidelines have been considered in and complemented by other international instruments, including: the UNDROP, and the instruments adopted under the auspices of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) – CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crisis (CFS-FFA) and the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSN).
24. **Governance of tenure and sustainable resource management in small-scale fisheries**
25. The governance of tenure contributes to securing access to natural resources that small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities depend on, further supporting their livelihoods, culture, and food and nutrition security (FAO, 2013). Securing access rights to natural resources is crucial to avoid arbitrary displacement and tackle small-scale fishers’ vulnerability against competing economic interests from other users of the water and land, such as tourism, power production, industrial fishing, industrial aquaculture, or other interests (FAO, 2020b). An additional issue concerns the use of fish for feed products, including fishmeal for aquaculture, reducing the availability of fish as a nutritious source for small-scale fishers and their communities (Thiao and Bunting, 2022).
26. Small-scale fishers’ tenure rights are connected to their cultural rights given that, for many small-scale fishing communities, especially Indigenous Peoples’ fishers, the access to natural resources, fisheries, and fishing grounds is a pre-condition for the realization of their culture, customary rituals and practices, often representing their identity and cultural existence (FAO, 2021b; Nakamura, Erinosho and Strand, 2023). It is therefore crucial that the processes for securing tenure rights in small-scale fisheries give due account to the respect for local languages, such as dialects of Indigenous Peoples’ fishing communities, and the role of cultural heritage, including traditions and knowledge passed across generations (FAO, 2022c). The legal recognition of traditional or indigenous forms of governance structures, and their integration into contemporary fisheries management, including community-based fisheries management (Kuemlangan, 2004), as well as the integration of small-scale fishers’ knowledge and perspectives into policymaking is crucial for the sustainable governance of fisheries resources, and to fostering an environment of cooperation and inclusivity in environmental stewardship.
27. The lack of formal definition of the term “small-scale fisheries” or its related terms can hinder the legal recognition of small-scale fishers’ rights, including their tenure rights. Certain countries’ fisheries legislation have recognized, to different extents, small-scale fishers’ rights, but the implementation of such legal instruments remains a challenge (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
28. Small-scale fishers’ tenure rights are also inextricably linked to the advancement of women’s rights. In the same way that many rural women are not able to own or inherit land, many do not have formal access to fishing rights or fishing grounds, a situation that places them in a very vulnerable situation (FAO, 2019a). Supporting women’s participation in the application, use and management of fishing rights can further support women’s ability to equitably enjoy the benefits arising from sustainable fisheries management (FAO, 2022c).
29. The SSF Guidelines (FAO, 2015, para 5.7) promote the allocation of preferential fishing rights to small-scale fishers. This could be realized through granting exclusive fishing zones to small-scale fishers or by limiting or denying access to these zones by other fishers or groups. Legislation often designates special zones for small-scale fisheries and stipulates conditions that must be met to gain access (FAO, 2020c).
30. The SSF Guidelines promote the use of holistic and integrated approaches, such as the EAF (FAO, 2015; para 3.1[11]). The implementation of the EAF to ensuring sustainable fisheries management entails decentralization and participatory processes and arrangements for fisheries planning and management, including with the participation of small-scale fishers and local communities (FAO, 2003; FAO, 2009c). Decentralized fisheries management, such as co-management, fosters the notion that people dependent on fisheries resources should be central to decisions on how fisheries are used and managed. Co-management can serve as an effective fisheries management mechanism for power sharing, devolution of rights and duties from government authorities to the stakeholders, local communities’ empowerment, institution building, enhanced trust and social capital, collaborative problem solving, knowledge-sharing, social learning, and collective action (Pomeroy, R.S. et al., 2022).
31. **Social development, employment and decent work**
32. Fish and aquatic foods play a crucial role as providers of essential fatty acids, micronutrients and high-quality animal proteins that are critical to healthy growth and development, especially in key developmental periods such as the first 1 000 days and throughout adolescence. Promoting the consumption of fish can contribute greatly to improving small-scale fishers’ livelihoods. Although coastal communities often benefit from the nutritional value of fish and aquatic foods, people in rural and inland areas may face challenges in accessing them. States and other relevant stakeholders should facilitate the affordability of and access to healthy diets that include fish and aquatic foods, especially for vulnerable groups, through appropriate social protection programmes such as cash transfers and school feeding programmes (FAO, 2020d).
33. The small-scale fisheries sector is characterized by a high degree of informality, which contributes to fluctuating incomes due to the seasonal nature of fish availability. This unpredictability is exacerbated by the lack of adequate social protection measures; many fishers and fishworkers are unable to access social security schemes, or face challenges in joining programs that necessitate regular contributions. Traditional social protection schemes, which are typically designed for formally employed individuals, often fail to cater to the unique circumstances of small-scale fishers (FAO, 2022e).
34. Fishing is considered among the most dangerous occupations with significant number of fatalities and accidents. Working conditions at sea and on inland waters are often harsh due to long working hours, risks related to weather conditions, limited space on board, poor maintenance and seaworthiness of fishing vessels and lack of protective equipment and location-tracking systems, among other reasons (FAO, 2018). Declining fish stocks can force small-scale fishers to venture further out to sea, exposing them to harsher conditions, as many small-scale fishing vessels lack equipment that adequately meets safety standards for offshore operations (FAO, 2020e).
35. Improving occupational health and safety, and safety at sea has been for a long time a concern for States and intergovernmental organizations (FAO, 2019b; FAO, ILO and IMO, 2012). Another great concern in small-scale fisheries is the prevalence of child labour. Small-scale fisheries are often a family activity where boys and girls are involved in both on land and on sea fishing and fishing-related activities (FAO, 2021c). While children’s involvement in some of these tasks may be beneficial for knowledge transfer and skills development, some tasks may be hazardous and affect children’s health and wellbeing. Additionally, child labour may interfere with children’s right to education and can contribute to perpetrate the cycle of poverty from generation to generation. FAO and ILO produced specific guidance for policy makers and fisheries actors regarding the prevention and elimination of child labour in fisheries and aquaculture (FAO and ILO, 2013).
36. **Value-chains, post-harvest and trade**
37. The IHH report is the first attempt to estimate the contribution of small-scale fishers to formal exports of aquatic foods at a national level, providing the most comprehensive assessment of the interaction between global aquatic food and markets, which is challenged by the lack of market differentiation of products from aquaculture and capture fisheries in general, as well as large- and small-scale production. According to the latest estimates, small-scale fisheries accounted for at least 40 percent of the global landings from capture fisheries in terms of volume and 44 percent of the total value of the landed catch in 2016. The estimated average annual global landed value of small-scale fisheries capture during 2013-2017 was nearly USD 77.2 billion in nominal terms, with marine small-scale fisheries contributing over USD 58.1 billion and inland small-scale fisheries contributing over USD 19.0 billion (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
38. In the past fifty years, small-scale fisheries have contributed to expanding international trade in fisheries and aquaculture products. The sale of fishery products in global markets has potential costs and benefits: the potentially higher earnings must be weighed against the risk of reduced availability and higher prices for local communities as well as greater incentives for overexploitation. Therefore, it is paramount to understand the extent of participation of small-scale fisheries in international trade, among others, for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and achieving SDGs (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
39. Small-scale fisheries face difficulties in accessing formal financial products. Barriers include stringent collateral requirements, lack of credit history, and inadequate financial record-keeping. While informal credit schemes offer quick solutions, they often come with prohibitive interest rates (FAO, 2020h). Initiatives such as the FAO-supported CAFI SSF program (FAO, 2022f) seek to bridge this gap by facilitating access to financial services. A deeper understanding of the dynamics underpinning the role of small-scale fisheries in trade can enable more effective policy interventions and capacity development initiatives, including in the context of other international processes such as the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, adopted under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (IPC, GFCM and SSF Hub, 2022).
40. Women’s participation in small-scale fisheries is largely concentrated in the post-harvest sector, in activities such as selling, trading, and processing fish. However, as their role is often not recognized, they continue to face challenges based on gender inequality, and be excluded from relevant decision-making processes. There is a need to re-evaluate how the subsector is characterized to include the entire value-chain, with a focus on gender equality (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
41. Technological innovations are also needed to improve efficiency and empower women in the post-harvest sector. A good example of this is the FAO-Thiaroye processing oven, which allows to smoke fish in a healthier, more economic and sustainable way than traditional smoking techniques (Zelasney et al., 2020). This example has contributed to enhance women’s time management, reduce the workload (since the time for smoking fish was reduced from twelve to six hours) and increase their competitiveness in the markets (FAO, 2019c).
42. Food waste and loss is another important issue in small-scale fisheries’ post-harvesting. Global post-harvest fish losses lead to economic and food security issues by decreasing fish availability for consumers. Despite challenges in small-scale fisheries’ data collection due to unrecorded catch and informal trade, FAO estimates a ten percent loss in the world’s fish catch due to improper handling, processing, and storage (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
43. Another barrier faced by small-scale fishers in trade is the issue of certifications, the costs of which can inhibit or hinder small-scale fishers’ access to markets, as well compromise their food security (IPC, GFCM and SSF Hub, 2022).
44. **Gender equality**
45. An estimated 44.7 million women worldwide participate in small-scale fisheries value chains or engage in subsistence activities, which translates into 39.6 percent of the total people active in the subsector. Women represent 15.4 percent of total employment in the pre-harvest segment of the small-scale fisheries value chain (e.g., gear fabrication and repair, bait and ice provisioning, boat-building), 18.7 percent in the harvesting segment (including vessel-based and non-vessel-based activities), 49.8 percent in the post-harvest segment (e.g., processing, transporting, trading, selling) and 45.2 percent of the total actors engage in small-scale fisheries subsistence activities (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023).
46. Women face a wide variety of gender-based constraints as a result of sociocultural norms determining the gendered division of labour and shaping inequalities in their participation in the fisheries sector (FAO, 2022a). Women are usually engaged in informal and less remunerated work, and face limitations in accessing information, assets, services, social protection and decision-making opportunities. These inequalities and the related constraints that women face based on their gender prevent them from fully benefiting from their contributions to the fisheries sector, therefore directly impacting the efficiency and sustainability of fisheries value chains and their livelihoods.
47. The scarcity of gender‑disaggregated data, particularly within official national fisheries statistics, is a persistent problem (FAO, Duke University and World Fish, 2023). Gender disaggregation can be the minimum requirement for all monitoring and research activities aimed at informing fisheries policies and programs. Neglecting to account for gender differences or adopting biased collection methods disregards the crucial role of women in the sector and contributes to their invisibility, therefore impeding the inclusion of a gender perspective in decision-making processes and policy making.
48. In line with the SSF Guidelines’ principles (FAO, 2015; para 3.1[4]), gender equality and gender mainstreaming have been increasingly proposed as an integral part of small-scale fisheries development strategies. As noted above, the SSF Guidelines explicitly refer to the CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, while promoting the development of gender-responsive policies and measures for women in small-scale fisheries. FAO has been following up on this process with specific strategies, including the FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030 (FAO, 2020f) and, for the fisheries sector, the Blue Transformation strategy (FAO, 2022g). The latter provides guiding principles and targets that prioritize gender equality across different priority actions, including those for the equitable access to resources and services enhancing the livelihoods of fishers and fish workers, as well as building transparent, inclusive and gender-equitable value chains supporting sustainable livelihoods.
49. Technologies could be a key driver to women’s empowerment through the creation of new opportunities for employment, income generation and reduction of women’s work burden (IPC, GFCM, SSF Hub, 2022). However, gender dynamics should be carefully mapped in order to assess the risks related to the introduction of new technologies and promote awareness raising activities to support mitigation strategies within small-scale fishing communities. These risks include the possibility of proposing technologies that do not consider women’s needs and perspectives, but also increased household and gender-based violence as a result of the introduction of technologies disrupting existing power dynamics.
50. Gender-transformative approaches are fundamental to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities, thus pushing women and men to deconstruct social expectations and build equitable value chains in the long-term by dismantling gender dynamics that perpetuate inequalities across small-scale fishing communities. These approaches consider the intersectional perspective linking social dimensions that, when pulled together, build individualities each facing different challenges according to gender, but also to class, ethnicity, age, caste, religion and sexual orientation, for example.
51. **Disaster risks and climate change**
52. As small-scale fishers tend to face socioeconomic challenges and lack of government support, the negative impacts and risks imposed by disasters and climate change can further aggravate or exacerbate the existing problems faced by the sector.
53. In relation to disasters risks, the provisioning of in-kind support as a modality of social protection is a well-extended practice in the event of disasters as it can cover some of the most essential needs and basic items, like water or food, which may be inaccessible due to physical unavailability of the resources or fragmentation of livelihoods and lack of purchasing powers (FAO, 2022h).
54. Building resilient communities is key to dealing with protracted crises. To build resilient small-scale fishing communities and address the underlying factors of disaster vulnerability, it is crucial for communities to be empowered through capacity development and other initiatives that serve to provide them with the adequate tools to prevent, mitigate and prepare for hazards and crises. It is important to consider promoting resilient small-scale fishing communities in disaster prevention measures, and disaster risk management initiatives (FAO, 2020h).
55. Climate change poses a significant threat to large- as well as small-scale fishers and their communities. Fishers depend directly on a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. However, the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, altered ocean currents, and increased extreme weather events, disrupt the balance of aquatic ecosystems and challenge their viability without adequate adaptations. The detrimental effects of climate change are compounded by environmental degradation, and the destruction of critical habitats such as mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs, and salt marshes. These habitats are essential not only for the well-being of aquatic resources but also for the livelihoods of the communities that rely on them (Cook, Rosembaum and Poulain, 2021).
56. It is fundamental to ensure fishers’ participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of climate change prevention, adaptation and mitigation measures, policies and programmes, facilitating or enabling the contribution of fishers’ traditional knowledge and perceptions of climate change into those processes (Nakamura, Weston and Lennan, 2023).
57. **Ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation of the SSF Guidelines**
58. The SSF Guidelines call for States to recognize the need for and work towards policy coherence in relation to, inter alia, national legislation, international human rights law and other international instruments (FAO, 2015, para 10.1).States and non-state actors can use a policy and legal diagnostic tool, developed by FAO (FAO, 2022d), to assess the extent to which national fisheries policy and legal instruments align with the SSF Guidelines, and verify how States implement the international binding and non-binding instruments relevant to small-scale fisheries through their national policy and legal frameworks. This assessment helps in identifying strengths and gaps in such frameworks. Where States opt to legislate specifically for small-scale fisheries, States can use the FAO legislative guide for drafting small-scale fisheries specific legislation (FAO, 2020c).
59. The SSF Guidelines have and are being implemented through the following initiatives, among others:
    * the Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF), which is a partnership mechanism for groups directly involved in small-scale fisheries or representing the interests of small-scale fishers (e.g., small-scale fisheries social movements and CSOs), as well as government representatives and other stakeholders supporting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (FAO, WorldFish and CGIAR, 2021). The SSF-GSF has an advisory and facilitative role. Its members can share experiences, mobilize resources, develop synergies and coordinate efforts to advocate for policies and approaches that support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
    * the UN General Assembly designated the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) 2022. FAO acted as the lead agency for organizing and facilitating activities in celebration of IYAFA 2022. These activities raised awareness on the role of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, strengthened science-policy interaction, empowered stakeholders to take action, built new and strengthening existing partnerships, providing an important momentum for the beginning of a new era of support for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture (FAO, 2023c);
    * Small-scale fisheries summit, launched in September 2022, with the support of FAO, in collaboration with the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) working group on fisheries, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the SSF Hub. The SSF Summit promoted dialogue among small-scale fishers and fish workers, key partners and decision-makers, and is expected to be organized every two years, prior to the meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The SSF Summit took place over the course of three days, using a phased approach that first provided a secure space for small-scale fisheries actors and social movements and then opened up to other stakeholders (IPC, GFCM and SSF Hub, 2022).
    * a plan of action adopted at the 41st Annual Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), in 2019, by parliamentarians from 50 countries, promoting the adoption of legislation that recognizes, protects, sustains and empowers small-scale fishers, as well as supports the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (PGA, 2019);

* + the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF), adopted under the auspices of the GFCM, set out a ten-year roadmap (2018 – 2028) with specific concrete actions towards the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability of the sector in the region;
  + eight countries (Namibia, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, Madagascar, Malawi and the Philippines) are developing or implementing National Plan of Actions for Small-Scale Fisheries, following the HRBA, and with support from FAO (FAO, 2023b).
  + seventeen countries refer to the SSF Guidelines in their legal and policy frameworks. Costa Rica, for example, has a Decree that sets out the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (Costa Rica, 2015). Cabo Verde enacted a legislative decree stating that fisheries management plans promote and support the SSF Guidelines (Cabo Verde, 2020). More examples can be found on [SSF-LEX](https://ssflex.fao.org/) (FAO, 2023a). Case studies have also been examined to understand the extent to which existing national policy and legal frameworks align with the SSF Guidelines (Nakamura, Chuenpagdee and Jentoft, 2024).

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1. Examples: Revised Migration for Employment Convention (ILO Convention 97), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (ILO Convention 105),131 the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO Convention 169),132 the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO Convention 182), and the Work in Fishing Convention (ILO Convention 188). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)