



GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries:

Bringing together responsible fisheries and social development

13-17 October 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand

It is widely recognised that small-scale fisheries have the potential to significantly contribute to sustainable development, in particular with respect to such key issues as poverty reduction, food and livelihood security, balanced nutrition, wealth creation, foreign exchange earnings and coastal-rural development. The important role of small-scale fisheries in equitable and inclusive development and attaining the millennium development goals (MDGs) has received growing attention in national, regional and international fora by governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, private sector groups and civil society organizations.

There are, however, a number of significant impediments to small-scale fisheries realising their full potential. Small-scale fishers often face precarious and vulnerable living and working conditions because of insecure rights to land and fishery resources, inadequate or absent health and educational services and social safety nets, and exclusion from wider development processes due to weak organizational structures and representation and participation in decision-making.

At its 27th Session, the FAO Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 5-9 March 2007 expressed its support for a strategy of action aimed at bringing together responsible fisheries with social development to strengthen capacity and incentives of fisherfolk to invest in defending their fishing rights based on a number of principles including the consideration of the rights of present and future generations.

Scope, focus and objectives

The Conference will have a broad scope allowing for the discussion of a wide range of issues including, inter alia, wider social and economic development and human rights issues, governance, fisheries policy processes and systems, fisheries management approaches and market access aspects and means of increasing post harvest benefits. A special focus of the conference, however, will be on the issue of securing access and user rights by small-scale fishers, indigenous peoples, and fishing communities to coastal and fishery resources that sustain their livelihoods.



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Within each of three broad themes, the Conference will address various sub-themes as follows:

- **Securing social, economic and human rights** – such as inclusion and integration of small-scale fisheries stakeholders in policy and decision-making; gender equality; meeting health and education needs of small-scale fishing communities; ensuring decent and safe working conditions and livelihoods; creating “safety-net” alternatives; as well as promoting basic democratic governance principles.
- **Securing sustainable resource use and access rights** – including access/user rights to fisheries resources, water resources, littoral and riparian areas; legal, practical and local prerequisites and requirements for decentralised and shared management; comprehensive assessments and monitoring underpinning strategic planning and effective management including coastal zone management and the conservation of ecosystems supporting small-scale fisheries; and preparedness, adaptability and resilience to natural disasters and climate change.
- **Securing post-harvest benefits** – including the role of the post-harvest sector in fisheries management, inclusion of fish processors, traders and other stakeholders in commercial, development, and fisheries management groups, and threats and opportunities created by increased (international) demand for fishery products, vertical integration and other market factors including eco-labelling and traceability.

The Conference will aim at generating the following outputs:

- improved knowledge of the factors supporting social development, establishment of sustainable livelihoods and use of responsible fisheries approaches in the small-scale fisheries sector; and
- a synthesis of key issues to secure small-scale fisheries and enhance their contribution to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

Participants

The subject matter and focus of the Conference is of particular importance to developing countries and stakeholders from directly concerned countries are encouraged to participate. Since management issues as well as valuable experience from different systems and approaches exist also in industrialised countries, those concerned with small-scale fisheries in the North and sub-tropics are also encouraged to participate.

The organizers look forward to the participation of fish workers, fisheries managers, social scientists, government officials, representatives of professional associations, NGOs and other civil society organisations, the private sector, and international and regional development partners and agencies.

Given the important role of women in the small scale fisheries sector, the organizers will ensure their presence and as wide as possible participation in the conference. Since the issues to be discussed combine social development and fisheries management, officials, professionals and representatives dealing with both – or one or the other – of the two issues are invited to participate. Representation from the local community level is sought.

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Conference Design

The programme of the conference is divided into plenary sessions and concurrent working group sessions. During plenary sessions simultaneous interpretation will be available for English, French and Spanish. Working group sessions will be facilitated to generate inputs from all participants on an equal basis, and their summarized outputs will be reported to the plenary. While working groups will work primarily in either English, French or Spanish, arrangements will be made to overcome language barriers through interpretation arrangements.

Conference partners and supporters

The Conference is co-organized by FAO and the Royal Government of Thailand. It is convened in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) and The WorldFish Centre.

To date, expressions of willingness to support the Conference have been received from the Canadian International Development Agency, Government of Norway, German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), The World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the World Bank's PROFISH Program.

For further information and registration, a conference web site will become active in March 2008: www.4SSF.org