How to monitor implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

We would like your feedback on the three topics and related guiding questions presented below.

Background information and links to relevant documents related to the SSF Guidelines, their context and the process by which they have been developed, are available at: www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en.

To help us analyze your comments, please indicate clearly to which topic(s) you are responding.

1. Defining progress towards securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

The SSF Guidelines are divided into three parts. Part 1 sets out the overall objectives, the scope, the guiding principles and the relationship with other instruments. Part 2 covers five thematic areas, namely responsible governance of tenure and sustainable resource management; social development, employment and decent work; value chains, post-harvest and trade; gender equality; disaster risks and climate change. Part 3 provides guidance for ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation addresses policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration; information, research and communication; capacity development; and implementation support and monitoring.

What do you think are the 5 most relevant chapters, paragraphs, and/or topics of the SSF Guidelines for assessing progress towards securing sustainable small-scale fisheries?

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The order of the chapters does not imply any prioritized order, as all principles are important and interconnected.

Please describe why you believe these chapters, paragraphs, and/or topics are most relevant.

Guiding Principles are relevant as they reaffirm international human rights standard as well as principles of human rights (e.g. human rights and dignity, non-discrimination, rule of law, accountability, etc.) which provide the basis for the SSF Guidelines. These should inform all implementation measures and therefore need to be a central part of monitoring as well.

Responsible Governance of Tenure is a crucial element because it determines if and how SSF communities have control over and access to access natural resources (both land and water), indispensable for the realization of the right to food and nutrition and many other related human rights.

Social Development, Employment and Decent work are important components as they affect a significant proportion of small-scale fishers. Social development includes access to social services and is a crucial dimension of SSF. Also, SSF is an important source of employment and income indispensable for the realization of human rights of small-scale fishers. Due to several challenges faced by SSF worldwide (e.g. expropriation due to port developments, urban development, nature conservation, oil and gas exploration, mining, privatisation of fisheries and climate change impacts),
SSF are threatened with dispossession from their fishing grounds, losing thus their main source of livelihood. Also, decent work must be ensured so safety and security of SSF is endured, social protection is provided, and participation in decision making, as well as equal treatment for women and men SFF, are ensured.

**Value chain, post-harvest and trade:** The expansion of the globalised food systems and increased export orientation negatively affect SSFs in the entire value chain. Despite differences in cultures and national practices, the general tendency is that often small-scale fishers involved in post-harvest activities (processing and trade) are expropriated from the sector. Women, who in most countries play a key role in post-harvest activities, are often the first to lose their livelihood because of privatisation and export orientation of fisheries.

The principle of **Gender Equality** and the realization of women’s rights is of immense importance in SSF for several reasons: 1) women play a key role in particular in the pre- and post-harvest activities; 2) women continue to be politically marginalised in most countries where SSF play an important role in terms of culture, providing healthy food and nutrition for the majority of the population, and the numbers of people involved; 3) women often also carry the double burden of having to maintain the households and families, with an immense amount of unpaid care work.

**Disaster risk and climate change:** It is well documented that coastal communities, in particular, are among the most affected by climate change and specifically in tropical regions (some of the countries with the largest numbers of SSF communities). It is also well documented that SSF communities – using low impact fishing gears and supplying local markets which both have a very limited carbon footprint – contribute very little to global warming. Furthermore, small-scale fishing communities play a critical role in preserving and sustainably managing marine and freshwater ecosystems, thus being essential for the conservation of biodiversity and the resilience of such ecosystems.

**At what geographical scale should progress be measured (e.g. local, national)?**

The progress should be first measured at the local and national levels. Given that the SSF Guidelines are based on human rights and focus on small-scale fishing communities, it is critical that monitoring starts at the local level. This is the condition for successful participatory monitoring (see section 3). The national level is of great importance because states are the ones who are required to implement the SSF Guidelines, based on their human rights obligations. To ensure coherence and compliance with the SSF Guidelines’ core principles, the GSF, and in particular, its Advisory Group, have been mandated to provide guidance to and oversee monitoring efforts at national and local levels.

**2. Meaningful and feasible indicators: How can we measure progress?**

There are many ways to measure progress - using quantitative or qualitative indicators that focus on outputs, processes and other aspects. To avoid additional burden and costs concerning data and information collection it may be good to explore existing indicators for related global or national or sub-national objective and initiatives that relate to the issues addressed in the SSF Guidelines and the principles they are based on (e.g. for the Sustainable Development Goals, or national food security and development plans).

Do you have suggestions for indicators that could be used to assess progress towards the priorities you identified under part 1? Please discuss whether you consider these indicators mandatory versus “nice to have.”

Indicators need to be developed according to a consistent monitoring framework, which is in line with the SSF Guidelines and its core principles. It is, therefore, crucial to establish clear principles
and objectives of monitoring, before developing indicators. Given that the SSF Guidelines are focused on the rights of SSF communities, the principles and objectives of monitoring, as well as the indicators need to be developed in close cooperation with the organizations that represent them. Rather than collecting very specific indicators at this stage, it is important to define a process that will lead to establishing a consistent monitoring framework, based on which appropriate indicators will be developed.

If possible, please provide examples of where the indicators you suggest have been used successfully, including in data- and capacity-limited contexts.

Please describe any monitoring and evaluation frameworks and data sources you are aware of that could be drawn on to measure these indicators.

It is crucial to ensure that any data gathered can be easily accessed by SSF communities, and data collection must also ensure the participation of SSF communities and communities, thereby also prioritizing qualitative information. “Data” should therefore not be understood in a way that refers only or mainly to quantitative data, such as data from official statistics.

Monitoring of the SSF Guidelines should be based on human rights, which means that indicators should be guided and build upon already existing human rights-based instruments and guidelines, such as those promoted by social movements, indigenous peoples’ organizations and CSOs within the CFS. For example, the right to food guidelines and tenure guidelines, reflecting and linking to SDGs. Human rights-based monitoring of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines should go beyond data collection and specific actions of states, but rather analyse whether or not the states is fulfilling its human rights obligations and tackling structural issues related to small-scale fisheries which lead to violations of human rights, such as the right to food and nutrition. This is the basic framework used by the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition for its alternative monitoring “Peoples Monitoring for the Right to Food and Nutrition”. Some members of the IPC Fisheries Working Group are members of the GNRTFN and already engaged in this people-centred monitoring process.

3. Participatory monitoring: Key elements and experiences

Continuous learning and sharing of experiences is crucial for the effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Available lessons learned, best practices and tools should be used and reinventing the wheel avoided, but at the same time, the local context may differ to such a degree that specific tools and solutions must be modified or developed. Monitoring of progress will be important to keep track of what is working (and what is not) and participatory monitoring can help to make information available and shared.

Please share any experiences, both good and bad, as well as lessons learned related to participatory monitoring.

What do you think are key elements of successful participatory monitoring?

- Human rights-based approach (integration of norms, standards and principles of international human rights treaties and instruments in national laws, policies and programs)
- Centred on knowledge and participation of fisher peoples and their organisations
- Respect for freedom of expression and the right to autonomy of fisher peoples and their organizations, and protection against repercussions in cases where fisher people speak truth to power. This is of utmost importance in a serious of countries where authoritarianism is becoming increasingly pronounced.
- Ensure accountability
- Transparency
- Applied and contextualized to the national, regional, and international levels
- Need relevant and appropriate indicators that are constructed by SSF communities and supporting organisations
- Strengthening of the capacity of SSF to claim their rights, and to plan actions in line with their priorities and needs.

**What are your experiences with participatory monitoring?**

Through a series of national and regional level workshops on the use of the SSF Guidelines, we have learned some few lessons:

1) Small-scale fishing communities have profound knowledge and understanding of local and national level context relating to the objectives and principles of the SSF Guidelines
2) Small-scale fishing communities are knowledgeable well positioned to articulate views on the scale and extend of the implementation of the SSF guidelines. In numerous countries where national and regional workshops have taken place, it is clear that governments are lacking behind on all 5 above-highlighted principles.
3. loss of tenure rights is a serious threat all over the world: expropriation do provide space for aquaculture and tourism (Honduras), clearing of forests for large-scale agriculture or construction of dams (Brazil), privatisation of fisheries (South Africa), construction of artificial islands (Indonesia) are some of the evidence gathered at national level workshops on SSF guidelines.

Any monitoring framework should take into account the realities experienced by the SSF communities and their organisations.

**Who should be the key actors involved in or responsible for the design and implementation of a monitoring system for the SSF Guidelines?**

Key actors will differ depending on the levels:

**Global/international:**

Advisory Group (AG) of SSF-GSF plays an essential role in enhancing the monitoring of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and ensure that this is in line with the human rights-based approach of the SSF Guidelines. The GSF should guide monitoring by developing a consistent monitoring framework that is in line with the core principles of the SSF Guidelines, as well as indicators. These may be adapted at the national level, according to the specific context.

**National and local:**

As monitoring must be a tool to protect the rights of the SSF communities, SSF communities, Indigenous Peoples (and their traditional authorities), and their organisations must be the key actors in designing and monitoring the implementation of SSF Guidelines. As said before, state authorities are required to implement the SSF Guidelines based on their human rights obligations. Consequently, they need to ensure proper monitoring of advances and the human rights situation of small-scale fishers.

There needs to be a clear linkage between the national and international level. For example, the national level monitoring exercises conducted by SSF communities and their organisations, as well as monitoring efforts conducted by states, should contribute to and inform a global/international monitoring process. This means that a clear mechanism needs to be in place that ensures and promotes social movements’ and CSOs' participation in monitoring, for example, by producing
monitoring reports that can feed into the global monitoring process of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.