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SAFETY AT SEA, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DECENT WORK IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of recent FAO activities that support the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries with regard to safety at sea, social protection and decent work in fisheries and aquaculture.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This information document provides additional information in relation to working Document COFI/2022/9 (Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture) on the subject of safety at sea, social protection and decent work in fisheries and aquaculture.
2. In the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture¹ the FAO Members declare to “Promote the attainment of safe, healthy and fair working conditions for all in the sector, support efforts to prevent and halt forced labour, facilitate access to social protection programmes for fishers and aquaculture producers and their communities, support measures to improve safety at sea, and work towards enhancing the standards of living for all in the sector, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).”
3. Commercial fishing remains one of the world’s most dangerous occupations. FAO amended its global estimate of the number of fatalities in fisheries in 2019 to 32 000 casualties per year. However, new research by the PEW Charitable Trust, Lloyds Register Foundation, IMO, FISH Safety Foundation (FSF) and FAO, with contributions from many FAO Members, suggests that the number of fatalities within the fishing sector is likely much greater than 100 000 annually². Reasons for this significant loss of life include the lack of a comprehensive safety legislative framework and coordinated approaches to promoting safety at sea in the fishing sector. Most accidents and fatalities happen in small-scale fisheries. These fishers generally do not receive safety training, the vessels they operate are unsafe and safety equipment is lacking on-board. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is also a key driver of fatalities in fisheries. IUU fishing interacts with other drivers underpinning risk, such as overfishing, climate change, local conflicts, and poverty, to further increase the prevalence of fishing fatalities.

II. FAO ACTIVITIES ON SAFETY AT SEA IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

4. In 2021-2022 FAO developed capacity building programmes and materials on safety at sea for small-scale fishers. These activities were carried out jointly with government counterparts in the Caribbean, Near East and Northern Africa and Pacific regions and partners, such as the Fish Safety Foundation (FSF), various Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and national maritime safety authorities.
5. Caribbean-wide, FAO³ trained in 2019-2021 over 1 250 fishers in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), focusing on the three essential ICT devices for safety at sea for small-scale fishers: the VHF radio, Global Positioning System (GPS) and cell phones. FAO distributed 1 200 VHF radios to fisherfolk throughout the region to improve fishers’ ability to communicate in times of distress, to prevent accidents at sea, and to strengthen early warning for storms and hurricanes. FAO also built various repeater systems to increase the range of VHF radios as they only work in line of sight. In the Caribbean, FAO trained more than 1 900 fishers in basic safety at sea, including 56 on engine repair and maintenance in 2021-2022.
6. The FAO train-the-trainer on safety at sea for small-scale fishers course was delivered in 2021 to trainers from four Pacific island countries and in 2022 to trainers from 14 countries in the Near East and Northern Africa. The training package used is adaptive and includes general safety, personal safety, vessel stability, radio communication, survival at sea, emergency first aid, safety risk

¹ The 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture is available at: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3767en>

² Scientific research findings are under review.

³ The activities in the Caribbean region were supported by the GEF funded “Climate Change Adaptation for Eastern Caribbean Fisheries” (CC4Fish) project and the Norwegian Government funded project on “Supporting FAO member countries implement climate change adaptation measures in fisheries and aquaculture”.

management, marine traffic rules, and trainer fundamentals. The course package was prepared by the FSF.

7. A virtual regional refresher course for safety trainers in the Caribbean was held in 2022 with 60 participants to refresh the knowledge of safety at sea trainers and share the latest information on fishing safety, international agreements related to safety at sea and the training materials⁴. Webinar style basic safety training guidance for small-scale fisheries was also provided to stakeholders in the Mediterranean and in the Near East in 2021.

8. The FAO manual on Safety at sea for small-scale fishers⁵ has now been published in 16 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, French, Gujarati, Indonesian (Bahasa), Malayalam, Oriya (Odia), Portuguese, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, and Turkish. More than 70 percent of the global population speak these languages and have free access to a comic style manual with simple and clear guidance on fishing safety. The manual was developed in collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme –Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO).

9. To promote better application of the maritime traffic rules by small-scale fishers FAO and partners developed an online training course. The Rules of the road at sea for small-scale fishers e-learning course is available in English from FAO’s eLearning academy⁶. In 2022 and 2023 the production of online versions in Spanish, French and Chinese is foreseen.

10. In 2021 FAO upgraded its website on safety in fisheries. The Fishing Safety⁷ website is available in all 6 UN languages.

III. DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

11. In the intersessional period, FAO continued working on mainstreaming the ILO Decent Work Agenda within fisheries and aquaculture, in line with FAO’s strategic narrative “Better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind” and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁸. Activities conducted included knowledge generation, advocacy in regional and global fora, and provision of country-level policy support to achieve basic labour standards, and to promote the access to social protection for fishers and fish workers.

12. Since 2014, FAO in collaboration with the Spanish Association of Wholesalers, Importers, Transformers and Exporters of Fishing and Aquaculture Products (CONXEMAR), has organized the “Vigo Dialogue” annually, which is an important benchmark event promoting decent working conditions within the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The Dialogue focuses on measures to combat human and labour rights abuses in fisheries and aquaculture value chains. It facilitates an open discussion to foster feedback and inputs from multiple stakeholders.

13. FAO and the Apostleship of the Sea, in cooperation with the IMO, ILO and the Central American Organization of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (OSPESCA) organized in 2021 a virtual regional technical seminar on the linkages between vessels’ safety, working conditions and IUU fishing. The seminar gathered experts from safety, labour and fisheries authorities along with trade unions, small-scale fishers representatives, national human rights institutions, UN agencies and fisheries associations, and resulted in a call for action.

14. During COFI 34, the continuation of the development of the FAO Guidance on Social Responsibility in Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains was supported by Members. FAO Guidance will be voluntary, non-binding and practical and compile the existing relevant international tools, conventions and standards already accepted internationally. It aims to increase social responsibility in fisheries and aquaculture value chains and to promote human and labour rights,

⁴ For more information, please visit: <https://www.fao.org/fishing-safety/news-events/events/detail/en/c/1469617/>

⁵ The manual in 16 languages is available at: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5772en>

⁶ Direct access to the e-learning course is available at: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=704>

⁷ Please see: <https://www.fao.org/fishing-safety/en/>

⁸ For more information, please visit: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

including decent work and social protection in the sector. Multiple stakeholder consultations worldwide were held in 2021 in order to discuss and consult with Members, the industry, international and regional organizations (e.g. ILO, IMO, OECD, and UNCTAD).

15. FAO attended the ILO Technical meeting on the future of work in aquaculture in the context of the rural economy that took place in Geneva (in hybrid format) from 13-17 December 2021. The meeting recommended to update the FAO-ILO Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture (2013) in order to improve the understanding of the nature, scope, causes, contributing factors and consequences of child labour in aquaculture, followed by capacity building activities at all appropriate levels.

16. In 2021 FAO published a policy brief entitled “The role of social protection in the recovery from COVID-19 impacts in fisheries and aquaculture⁹” which shows that social protection has been a key response mechanism used by governments to alleviate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions for fishery-dependent communities.

17. In 2021 and 2022, FAO developed capacity building programmes for policy makers and fishers, fish-farmers and fish workers on social protection. These activities included three courses on social protection in the fisheries and aquaculture sector as part of the Social Security Academy from the International Training Centre of ILO focusing on COVID-19, social security and shock-responsiveness.

18. In 2021 FAO launched its website for Component 4 of the GCP/GLO/352/NOR project “Social Protection in the Fisheries sector”¹⁰, and a thematic webpage on Social Protection in the Fisheries sector. Both websites are in English, Spanish and French.

19. In 2021 FAO supported the work of women in the post-harvest sector in Colombia, the *platoneras*, highlighting the importance of their access to social protection. FAO has worked with the government to recognize, promote and strengthen the work of the *platoneras*. The government established December 11 as the National Day of the *Platoneras*.

20. Country-specific support was also provided to Colombia, Malawi, Namibia, Paraguay, Philippines and Tunisia through component 4 of project GCP/GLO/352/NOR on Social Protection in the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector, and in synergy with the FMM/GLO/155/MUL on “Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for gender equitable and climate resilient food systems and livelihoods”. In Brazil, FAO is conducting an impact evaluation of the fishers’ unemployment benefit, *Seguro Defeso*, and is supporting the government in revamping its fisheries registry.

21. FAO produced a report on the status of social protection in the Mesoamerican region, which was presented in the Mesoamerican forum on social protection for artisanal fisheries and aquaculture on 20 May 2022.

22. To promote better coherence between social protection and fisheries management strategies, FAO developed a Framework for analysis and action and Diagnostic Tool for Strengthening coherence between social protection and fisheries policies.

23. In 2021, as a specific contribution to the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour (IYECL)¹¹, FAO worked to increase the knowledge base on the magnitude, drivers and solutions to child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. Together with the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA), FAO conducted a regional study in Asia on child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and its linkages with migration in Asia. The regional study covered Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, and the findings were presented

⁹ This policy brief is available at: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3385en>

¹⁰ This website is available at: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/social-protection-for-fisheries-and-aquaculture/en/>

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/73/327), available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3814287?ln=en>

at a side event during the Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour (Durban, 16-20 May, 2022)¹².

IV. FISHING VESSEL SAFETY

24. To increase the safety of fishing vessels and support small shipyards with fishing vessel construction processes, FAO developed the Fishing Vessel Design Database (FVDD)¹³. The free-access database contains more than 200 vessel designs prepared by FAO naval architects and partners, in the period 1960-2005. The database helps to increase safety in fisheries through improving vessel design, construction, seaworthiness and safety of small-scale fishing vessels. The designs provide naval architects and boat builders examples to use, replicate and modify. In 2022 more recent designs will be added, together with step-by-step vessel building manuals.

V. CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT OF 2012 ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE 1993 PROTOCOL RELATING TO THE TORREMOLINOS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF FISHING VESSELS, 1977 (CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT)

25. The Cape Town Agreement, which was adopted in 2012, will enter into force 12 months after the date on which not less than 22 States with an aggregate number of their fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over, operating on the high seas, is not less than 3 600, have expressed their consent to be bound by it. As of March 2022, sixteen States have ratified the Agreement.

26. In addition to improving safety at sea in the fisheries sector, it is expected that the Cape Town Agreement would also become a useful tool in combating IUU fishing and thereby complement the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), since fishing vessels falling under the scope of the Agreement would be subject to port State control.

27. COFI 34 recognized the important role that the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and related Matters (JWG) plays in engaging multiple agencies and stakeholders, and supported the JWG's recommendation to review the terms of reference for the JWG in cooperation with Members through the COFI Bureau. In this regard, the FAO Secretariat has facilitated discussions with the Secretariats of ILO and IMO to draw up revised terms of reference, for adoption by COFI 35 and the relevant IMO and ILO governing bodies.

VI. THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING FOR FISHING VESSEL PERSONNEL, 1995 (1995 STCW-F)

28. The 1995 STCW-F, which sets the certification and minimum training requirements for crews of seagoing fishing vessels of 24 m in length and above, entered into force on 29 September 2012. As of February 2022, 33 States have ratified this convention. The IMO Secretariat is coordinating a process of a comprehensive review of the STCW-F Convention.

29. FAO has been participating actively in the review process to secure proper linkages between the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the STCW-F, particularly in aspects of training of fishers on safety and sustainability. Submissions were made to the 7th and 8th sessions of the IMO Subcommittee on Human element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) to incorporate fisheries sustainability training along with safety training in training programmes for all fishing vessel personnel.

¹² Please visit for more information: <https://www.5thchildlabourconf.org/en>

¹³ The FVDD can be accessed at: <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/collection/vesseldesign>

VII. THE ILO WORK IN FISHING CONVENTION, 2007 (NO. 188)

30. The Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) was adopted at the 96th International Labour Conference (ILC) of ILO in 2007. The objectives of the Convention are to ensure that fishers have decent conditions of work on board fishing vessels with regard to minimum requirements for work on board; conditions of service; accommodation and food; occupational safety and health protection; medical care and social security. The Convention entered into force on 16 November 2017. As of March 2022, the Convention has been ratified by twenty States.

31. The FAO, IMO and ILO Secretariats have closely worked together to promote ratification and implementation of the Cape Town Agreement, STCW-F, C188 and PSMA through the preparation and dissemination of a range of policy briefs on these international fishing safety instruments. The “Joining forces to shape the fishery sector of tomorrow: Promoting safety and decent work in fisheries through the application of international standards¹⁴” policy briefs have been published and disseminated in English, French, Spanish and Tamil language versions. Country specific versions were published in Chinese, Dutch (Suriname) and Indonesian.

VIII. INSURANCE FOR INCREASING SAFETY AND DECENT WORK IN FISHERIES

32. FAO published the World review of capture fisheries and aquaculture insurance 2022¹⁵, which presents the findings of five regional and four national studies conducted in 2020. An estimated 450 000 fishing vessels worldwide are covered by marine hull insurance. Nearly all of the estimated 67 800 large-scale industrial fishing vessels are covered by marine hull insurance, as well as 50-60 percent of the estimated 430 000 semi-industrial fishing vessels. However, over 95 percent of the 2.3 million motorized small-scale fishing vessels operate uninsured. Most small-scale fishers do not have access to adequate insurance services. Between 2009 and 2019 underwriting experiences in fishing vessel insurance were generally reported as “Good”. Access to accident, life and health insurance services for crew on fishing vessels and small-scale fishers in developing countries has improved in recent years.

33. In 2020, the number of aquaculture insurance policies in force was estimated at over 40 000 worldwide, with China and Indonesia the largest markets for this type of insurance. While large-scale aquaculture producers are well served by the insurance industry, the provision of insurance is inadequate for medium-and small-scale farmers, particularly in Asia. Underwriting experiences for aquaculture stock mortality insurance were reported as “Good” to “Very good” (40 percent), or “Neutral” (36 percent) in the period 2009-2019. The insurance industry has consolidated the market and increased profitability in aquaculture insurance.

34. In collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) and the African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA), FAO carried out supply and demand assessments for credit and insurance in 2020-2022 in Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand, and nine Fish4ACP project countries in Africa. The focus was on increasing access of small-scale producers and value chain stakeholders to financial services. In the Caribbean, Barbados was support with the introduction of third-party liability insurance for small-scale fishing vessels. The FAO supported Global Network for capacity building to increase access of small-scale fisheries to financial services (CAFI SSF Network) organized various webinars in 2021 and 2022 to share experiences and promote access to insurance in the fisheries sector.

¹⁴ The policy briefs in 7 languages are available from: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0627en/>

¹⁵ The World review of capture fisheries and aquaculture insurance 2022 is available at: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9491en>

IX. FUTURE WORK ON SAFETY AT SEA, DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN FISHERIES

35. FAO will continue collaborating with IMO and ILO to build capacity for the implementation of international instruments on safety in fisheries. FAO's safety at sea capacity-building activities will focus on small-scale fishers, as over 90 percent of the world's fishing vessels are small-scale vessels.

36. Information collected on accidents and fatalities in fisheries in 2021, will be published in 2022 and follow-up activities will be developed with partners.

37. Following the review of the STCW-F Convention, which is expected to be completed in 2022-2023, FAO aims to develop practical training modules for fishers working on small-scale vessels, for use by vocational schools and training institutes.

38. FAO will continue its work in support of increasing social protection coverage of small-scale fishers, recognizing the role social protection can play in reducing fishers' vulnerability and to promote sustainable use of marine and living resources. Prospective work will include analysis of social protection programmes that address the socio-economic effects of fisheries management measures.

39. To increase knowledge of social protection schemes in the fisheries sector, FAO continues the work on a Social Protection Scheme in the Fisheries Sector Database. FAO also will continue to develop a database of Early Warning Systems (EWS) in Small-Island Developing States (SIDS) in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions.

40. The technical support for the development and improvement of fisheries credit and insurance programmes, with an emphasis on small-scale fisheries, will continue in collaboration with APRACA, AFRACA and the CAFI-SSF Network.