

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

Sectors

Rural Policy Briefs

## Sustainable Fishing: Decent Working Conditions, Safety and Social Protection

*Capture fisheries and aquaculture are important sources of food, jobs and income and in many rural coastal communities, the principal, sometimes the only, ways of making a living. Fishing, however, continues to be one of the most hazardous occupations, warranting specific attention to improve the living and working conditions of fishers.*



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### Facts and figures

- Capture fisheries and aquaculture supplied the world with approximately 142 million tonnes of fish in 2008.
- World aquaculture output has increased substantially, from less than 1 million tonnes in 1950 to 52.5 million in 2008.
- Global capture fisheries production in 2008 had an estimated first-sale value of USD 93.9 billion, with trade in fish and fishery products representing about 10 percent of total agricultural exports.
- Employment in fisheries and aquaculture has grown substantially, with an average annual increase of 3.6 percent since 1980, providing up to 45 million jobs in 2008.
- At least 12 percent of people working in fisheries or aquaculture are women.
- For each person employed in capture fisheries and aquaculture production, approximately three jobs are produced in secondary activities, accounting for a total of over 180 million jobs.
- Over 41 percent of global fishing fleets are comprised of traditional craft ships operated by sails and oars. These are concentrated primarily in Asia (77 percent) and Africa (20 percent).
- Small-scale fisheries contribute over half of the world's marine and inland fish catch, employing over 90 percent of the world's 35 million capture fishers. They support another 84 million people employed in jobs associated with fish processing, distribution and marketing.

Source: FAO: *State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture (2010)*.

### Why action is needed

- Capture fishing provides rural communities with income generating activities that fulfil important food security and employment needs.
- Food from fishing provides protein and oils, which are important for nutrition and food security.
- Capture fishing provides millions of rural dwellers, particularly in Asia and Africa, with seasonal and supplementary incomes, which are especially important for rural agrarian communities that face seasonal employment shortages.
- Developments such as aquaculture provide new employment opportunities for rural communities.
- Fishing is a hazardous occupation compared to other occupations. Safety and risk vary depending on the size of the vessel, type of fishing operation, area of operation, equipment carried and the job of each fisher. Risks and dangers include, among others:
  - ◆ Extreme sea and weather conditions
  - ◆ Risk of fatality or injury by fishing gear and other equipment
  - ◆ Long hours, extreme temperatures, and harsh weather conditions
  - ◆ Loss of vessel power
  - ◆ Risk of capsizing from instability of vessels, snagged trawl or crossing surf
  - ◆ Sinking while pulling in large catch
  - ◆ Attacks by dangerous marine life
- Legal protection, with respect to working conditions of fishers, may be inadequate or unclear in many countries. Because fishing takes place at sea or on other bodies of water, working conditions can be difficult to monitor (e.g. by labour inspection) and it can be a challenge to enforce national or local laws and regulations.





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## Policy Options

### Promoting work opportunities and skills

- Consider setting aside some fishing grounds for exclusive access by local, traditional or artisanal fishing communities.
- Encourage and support the growth of small and medium enterprises through microfinance opportunities and programmes.
- Develop education and training programmes in business for fishing communities to improve local and regional value chains.
- Provide training and assist in the development of skills to help fishers and others in fishing communities to use new technologies and to transition to other types of work in areas where fish stocks are declining.
- Use local labour to help protect and maintain the environment.

- Multiple government entities often have jurisdiction over different aspects of the working and living conditions of fishers and these entities may not coordinate effectively. This may lead to fishers “falling through the cracks” with respect to laws and regulations governing labour conditions and their enforcement.
- Child labour is present in the fishing sector in many countries, particularly in rural communities. In one East African country, it is estimated that in both fisheries and aquaculture, children account for over 40 percent of the sector's labour force.
- Efforts to address the issue of overfishing may lead to reduced employment opportunities for fishers. This creates a need for training and skills development in fishing communities to provide alternative employment.
- Pollution, including shore-based pollution, often degrades fisheries. Coastal development often leads to loss of essential breeding and spawning areas.
- The earnings of most fishers are based on a share of the value of the catch. This method of payment may contribute to unsafe fishing operations and excess pressure on marine resources. In many countries, fishers paid on this basis are considered “self-employed” and they may not receive the same level of protection as other workers.
- Women are primarily involved in fish processing and marketing. Working conditions in these fisheries sub-sectors are often not sufficiently regulated.
- A relatively small percentage of fishers are members of trade unions, but they are members of community organizations and cooperatives. Community organizations, however, may not always be linked to more powerful and influential employer and worker representative organizations, limiting their members’ influence on government actions and policies that directly affect their livelihood.

### Improving working conditions

- Collect and publish disaggregated data and statistics concerning conditions of work in the fishing sector. In many countries, information on fishers is not currently disaggregated from that of agriculture workers.



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- Analyze laws, regulations and other measures to determine if they adequately address the working conditions of fishers, particularly fishers working in rural areas and engaged in small-scale fishing.
- Strengthen the capacity of labour inspectors and others to monitor and enforce national laws, regulations and other measures concerning the working conditions of fishers.

## Box 1

### Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)

**Objective:** 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.

**Rational:** Advancements in navigational and fishing technology and changes in fisheries law have resulted in fishers working farther offshore. Smaller vessels are voyaging greater distances to undertake multi-day fishing operations, underscoring the importance of improving working and living conditions also on board small-scale fishing vessels. Distinct employer-worker arrangements can be seen in fishing operations employing vessels below 24m in length. Some fishing operations are gravitating towards an industrial mode of production. The Work in Fishing Convention may help prevent labour conditions in small-scale fishing from being overlooked, particularly in many developing country fisheries.

**Scope:** Applies to all fishers and fishing vessels engaged in commercial fishing operations.

**Action Plan:** The ILO has adopted an Action Plan for the widespread ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 188.

Source: International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF): *ICSF Guidebook: Understanding the Work in Fishing Convention* (International Collective in Support of Fishworkers: Chennai, India: 2007)

- Compare existing national laws, regulations and other measures with the provisions of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) to identify gaps and to propose possible changes to improve the legal protection of fishers.
- Stimulate national and community debate and social dialogue to determine the necessary changes in national legal requirements and programmes to improve the situation of fishers.
- Coordinate the work of all government agencies, ministries and other entities concerned with various aspects of working conditions in the fishing sector.
- Support and encourage the creation and strengthening of trade unions, fishers' and fishing vessel owners' representative organizations, to ensure the fishing sector has a voice in national discussions concerning improved working conditions in the sector.

■ Take specific and concrete steps to address the high fatality and injury rates of fishers. This might include putting in place laws and regulations, developing Occupational Safety and Health programmes for fishers and other measures.

- Improve medical services for fishers at sea and ashore.
- Review and improve social security protection programmes for fishers.
- Take specific and concrete steps to address child labour in the fishing sector. Make use of the forthcoming guidance tool on child labour in the fishing sector being jointly developed by the FAO and the ILO.
- Establish mechanisms for coordination among relevant authorities for the fishing sector at the national and local levels, as appropriate, and define their functions and responsibilities, taking into account their complementarities, national conditions and practice.

## Box 2

### ILO's Project for the Rational and Sustainable Development of the Fishing Sector

Funded by Spain, the project has supported the improvement of social and working conditions of workers in the fishing sector of four African countries (Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Morocco and Senegal) and two Latin American countries (Ecuador and Peru). Social dialogue was also included with a workshop held in Dakar in 2007 on labour inspection in the fishing sector developed a social dialogue platform establishing a mechanism of information and negotiation where tripartite actors of artisanal and industrial fishing are represented.

Source:  
[http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/eurpro/madrid/download/triptico\\_in.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/eurpro/madrid/download/triptico_in.pdf)

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## ILO's role

- Promoting decent work in the fishing sector, including promoting application of the ILO's fundamental rights and principles at work in the sector, and ratification and implementation of the ILO's Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), with special consideration given to the particular needs of rural fishing communities and small-scale fishers. ILO pursues this objective through technical advisory services, technical cooperation projects, training, international/regional/national meetings and seminars, as well as through the preparation of publications and training materials.
- Working in collaboration with other UN specialised agencies and external actors to improve safety and health and training of fishers, in particular with the FAO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- Working with other UN agencies to address child labour; for instance, through the 2010 FAO Workshop on Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture in cooperation with ILO, to generate inputs and guidance to the content and process of materials on policy and practice in tackling child labour in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Organizing meetings to promote social dialogue and address specific issues in the fishing sector; for instance, the Committee on Conditions of Work in the Fishing Industry (Geneva, May 4-13 1988), the Tripartite Meeting on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry (Geneva, December 13-17 1999), and tripartite expert meetings held in 2003-2006 that contributed to the development of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188).

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## Links

- ILO: *Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and related information*: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/mariti/fishing/standards-fishing.htm>
- ILO: *Technical Cooperation- ILO work in Africa and Latin America*: [www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/eurpro/madrid/eventos/index\\_pesca.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/region/eurpro/madrid/eventos/index_pesca.htm)
- FAO/ILO: *Safety for Fisherman*: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/mariti/fishing/socprot-safety.htm> or <http://www.safety-for-fishermen.org/en/>

## Tools

- ◆ ILO: *Brochure on Work in Fishing Convention No. 188 & Recommendation No. 199* (Geneva: 2007)
- ◆ ILO: *Handbook for Improving Living and Working Conditions on Board Fishing Vessels* (Geneva: 2010)
- ◆ ILO: *Training Manual on the Implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)* (Geneva: 2010)

- ◆ FAO/ILO/IMO: *Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels - 2005. Part A - Safety and Health Practice* (IMO: London: 2005)
- ◆ FAO/ILO/IMO: *Safety Recommendations for Decked Fishing Vessels of Less than 12 Metres in Length and Un-Decked Fishing Vessels* (IMO: London: 2010)
- ◆ ILO: M. Ben Yami: *Risks and Dangers in Small-Scale Fisheries: An Overview* (Geneva: 2000)
- ◆ FAO/ILO/IMO: *Document for Guidance on Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel* (IMO: London: 2001)
- ◆ ILO: *Work in Fishing Convention and Recommendation, 2007 Action Plan 2011-2016* (Geneva: 2011)

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