Towards Support for Development of Guidelines for Voluntary Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries: Malawí Process

Mafa Hara & Merle Sowman
Introduction

• Malawi used as case to support development of the guidelines
• One of a number of cases worldwide
Malawi - Fisheries

- Fish contributes over 50% to animal protein
- Fisheries believed to contribute about 4% to GDP
- Over 60,000 people directly employed as fishers and over 300,000 employed in post-harvest sector
Approach

• National workshops (for DoF staff)
• Local workshops for local stakeholders (fishers, fish farmers, processors/traders, chiefs, women)
• Introduction to workshop objectives
• Outline of process for use of findings as contribution towards developing GSSSF
Guiding questions

• What are the critical issues facing fisheries?
• What problems did they face as fishers, fish farmers, women in fisheries, traders/processors or DoF staff
Fishers

• Declining catches
• Too many fishers
• Imported nets do not last long
• Lack or capital
• Competition with other sectors (e.g. increasing loss of access to beaches)
• Social issues - Lack of support and infrastructure in most rural fishing communities (schools, hospitals, poor roads, etc)
Fish farmers

- Slow growing species used for aquaculture
- High costs of feed
- Lack of capital
- Lack of technical support
- Theft of fish
Traders

• High competition for fish
• Lack of preservation & processing infrastructure
• Poor transport systems (predominant use of public transport)
• Post-harvest losses (especially during rainy season)
• Lack of storage facilities at markets
Women

• For married women
  ✓ Difficulties of straddling between family and fish trading (children, trust & image issues)
  ✓ Husbands still made decisions about use of earnings
• Inappropriate use of money by husbands
• Demand by fishers for sexual favours in return for fish
DoF staff

• Declining catches
• High levels of illegal fishing
• Inadequate funding for management and extension activities
• Lack of equipment and infrastructure
• Low morale
Insights on human rights approach

• Whose responsibility is it for provision of social amenities and infrastructure for fishing communities?
• Whose responsibility is to ensure sustainability of fishery?
• If it is government’s responsibility, does inability to provide social amenities, infrastructure and manage fishery constitute infringement of citizens’ human and social rights & abrogation of responsibility?
Implementation of human rights approach

• Should governments be compelled to implement the voluntary guidelines once they have signed up?
• If yes, how could this done and who should do this?
• Would pressure for international community (e.g. through aid) be used to apply pressure?
• Can communities be organised to pressurize their governments? How could they be organised for such action?
Problems

• Lack of organization among fishing communities around human and social rights
• Weak or lack of human rights civil society organizations that can help organize fisher communities round their human rights using the guidelines
Possible ways of compiling governments to implement the guidelines

• Awareness raising among communities around the guidelines and how these could be used to fight for their rights

• Organizing communities and other stakeholders around fighting for rights using the guidelines

• National human rights (civil society) organizations in coalition with international organizations around fisher human rights